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Work environment as a tool for improving Employees performance and organizational productivity

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the influence of work environment on employee's performance and organizational productivity in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. The research design was descriptive survey to investigation and observed the influence of organizational environment on employee's performance and organizational productivity. It is of paramount important for manufacturing firms within this region to provide conducive work environment and put up policies that promote healthy work environment. Findings from the research shows that when the environment of organization is conducive for job task to be carried out, it does not only increases the performance of the employees but also increases the organizational productivity hence, allowing the management to achieve its objectives. Sequel to the above, it is very important for this firms to take the environmental factors that influences performance seriously since it has a negative effect on both the employees and the organization. it was concluded that environment of organizations has a great impact on both the workers performance and organizational productivity since the organization depends on its environment for its survival. Some recommendations were put forward to resolve some of the issues of the research.

Keywords: Work environment, employees, performance, productivity and organization

Introduction

One of the most important goals in every organization is to improve the level of productivity, Given that manpower plays an essential role in creation of productivity, requests in the organization are of great importance. The work environment which encompasses several factors impacts on the way the employees perform their work. A comfortable and conducive workplace environment will boost the employees' performance hence boosting the organizational performance. The success of any organization is closely tied to the job performance of its employees. The quality of the employees' workplace environment impacts on their motivation level and hence performance (Heath, 2006) [12].

According to Tripathi (2014) [27] work environment can be defined as the environment in which people work that include physical setting, job profile, culture and market condition. Each aspect is inter linked and impacts on employees overall performance and productivity. It is the quality of the employees' workplace environment that most impacts on their level of motivation subsequently performance. Work environment can be seen as the environment in which people work (Briner, 2000) [6] as such; it is a very broad category that encompasses the physical setting (e.g. heat, equipment), characteristics of the job itself (e.g. workload, task complexity).

According to Farh (2012) [9], employees will always be contended when they feel that their immediate environment states are in tandem with their obligations. Chandrasekar (2011) [8] stated that the type of workplace environment in which employees operate determines whether or not organizations will prosper. The workplace environment is made up of physical factors which include the office layout and design among other factors; while the psychosocial factors include working conditions, role congruity and social support. Other aspects of the workplace environment are the policies which include employment conditions. A better physical workplace environment boosts employees' performance. Armstrong (2005) [6] sees performance as the development of quantified objectives. Performance is not only a matter of what people achieve but how they achieve.

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Sultana *et al.* (2012) [46] sees Performance as the achievement of specified tasks against predetermined or 3 identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed.

According to Platt and Sobotka (2010) [37], employee's performance is the combined result of effort, ability and perception of tasks. Armstrong (2009) [7] noted the followings as factors that affect the level of individual performance which are motivation, ability and opportunity to participate. He viewed performance as a function of ability and motivation. The followings some of the factors that affect employee performance, the workplace environment impacts most their level of motivation hence their performance. Stup (2003) [44] also suggested several factors that affects the success of employees' performance. These factors are as follows: physical environment, equipment, meaningful work, performance expectation, feedback on performance, bad system among others. He adds that, to have a standard performance, employers have to get the employees task done on track so as to achieve the organizational goals.

When there is a conducive and comfortable work environment, it creates enthusiasm from employees in work and improves performance and work discipline in each job. Comfortable work environment, adequate facilities, and good employee relations will affect employee performance. When employees feel comfortable with the environment in which they work will certainly bring them to be more disciplined and can improve their performance in achieving the goals of the organization.

El-Zeiny (2013) [10] saw numerous factors that affect the performance of employees in organizations. He added that Workplace environment plays an essential role towards workers' performance and productivity in any organization. A conducive workplace environment increases employee performance in organizations (Shikdar & Shawaqed, 2003) [25]. When employees are expose to conducive working environment that suit their physical and mental abilities, the right fit between the person and work task is accomplished.

This study seeks to answer the research question, what is the effect of workplace environment on employee performance and organizational productivity in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

Objectives of the study
The specific objectives of the study are:
1. To study how work environment affects employee performance
2. To examine how work environment effect organizational productivity
3. To examine how work environment affects the organizational image

Review of related literature
According to Bam bang (1991) [5] the work environment is one of the factors that influence the performance of an employee. The research conducted by (Ali, 2015) states that the results of the research show that the work environment in the agency can have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The research of Budianto and Amelia (2015) [7] also agrees with that of Bam bang (1991) [5] when they stated that the work environment influences employee performance. Ismail *et al.* (2010) [30] noted that the conditions of physical workplace environment influence

the employees' functions and it will determine the well-being of organizations. They also suggested that the physical work environment includes the internal and external office layout, temperature, comfort zone and also the work setting or arrangement. The physical workplace environment factors also include lighting (both artificial and natural), noise, furniture and spatial layouts in workplaces. Vischer, (2008) [49] also noted that the physical workplace environment includes comfort level, ventilation and heating, lighting. These features aids on functional and aesthetic side, the decor and design of the workplace environment that ultimately help improve the employees' experience and necessitate better performance.

The comfort level and temperature also substantially influence health of employees. According to Niemela *et al.* (2002), they found out that there is decrement in work performance when temperatures are high, and low temperature has relation to performance of manual tasks. (Al- Anzi, 2009) [2] Also found out that Office design encourages employees to work in a certain way by the way their work stations are built. Spatial layouts contribute a lot towards how the employees perform their tasks. Also, closed office floor plan, which may consist of each employee having a separate office of their own or a few people in each office, allows employees a greater amount of privacy than open plan office layout. It allows employees to work in peace and quiet, keeping them focused on their tasks without a lot of distraction. It also offers employees a thinking frame and creativity without much distraction. According to McCoy and Evans (2003) [33] who stated that the elements of physical work environment need to be proper to ensure that the employees would not be stressed while doing their job. Physical elements play an important role in developing the network and relationships at work.

Factors that affect employee performance in a work environment
There are many factors that affect employee performance at the workplace. These factors can affect performance of employees individually and collectively as it present itself.

Motivation
According to Dressler (2001) who defined motivation as the intensity of a person's desire to engage in some activity. The two major types of motivation are intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation refers to the external factors which can be measured in monetary terms e.g. salary and benefits, promotion and Disciplinary. Extrinsic motivation has immediate and powerful effect but does not last long. Intrinsic motivation refers to external factors e.g. responsibility, freedom to act, scope to use and develop skills and abilities and challenging work and opportunities for development. Intrinsic motivation lasts longer since they are concerned with quality of working life. Nel *et al.* (2001 [35] assert that a motivated person has the awareness of specific goals that must be achieved in specific ways; therefore his efforts are directed at achieving such goals. According to Mullins (2006) [18] motivation is a key ingredient in employee performance and productivity. Despite the fact that people might have clear work objectives, the right skills and encouraging work environment, they will not get the work done without satisfactory motivation to achieve those work objectives. He added that motivated employees are willing to exercise a

particular level of effort, for a certain amount of time, toward a particular goal. Motivation is seen as the complex forces and needs which provide the energy for an individual to perform a particular task. A motivated employee is always conscious of the goal to be achieved and directs his efforts towards attaining it.

Organizational culture
Purcell *et al*., (2003) [38] saw Organizational culture as a system of shared beliefs about what is important, what behaviors are important and about feeling and relationships internally and externally? It can improve employees' performance if what sustains it can be understood. Thus, the culture of an organization acquaints employees with the firm's history as well as current methods of operation that shows and guide employees on expected and accepted future organizational behaviors and norms.
Bulach *et al*. (2012) [12] posit that the effects of organizational culture can be summarized as; knowing the culture of an organization allows employees to understand both the organization's history and current methods of operations. Secondly, organization culture can foster commitment to the organization's philosophy and values. Thirdly, organizational culture, through its norms, serves as a control mechanism to channel behaviors towards desired behaviors and lastly, certain types of organizational cultures may be related directly to g; reader effectiveness and performance than others.

Organizational commitment
Organizational commitment is a situation whereby an employee is in line with a specific organization as well as with the goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization (Robbins and Judge, 2007) [40]. Studies have shown relationship between organizational commitments was significantly associated with productivity in Auto Component Industry. Riketta (2002) [21] pointed out that the organizational commitment has a great impact on almost all behaviors related to the organization like; staying with organization, attendance and performance.
Organization commitment corresponds with important factors such as improvement of working efficacy, job movement reduction, and more satisfaction both in organizational and professional levels (Elias, 2006) [22]. Related studies have also shown that higher levels of commitment in employees result in /more satisfaction and motivation and decrease the probability of leaving the organization (Huang, 2006) [13]. Furthermore organization commitment probably affects working behaviors of employees such as their observable attitudes, the judgments of ending, and their involvement in professional groups. Organizational commitment corresponds with positive behaviors which are useful for the organization. A committed employee tends to keep on his membership and shows tremendous effort not because of his own advantage but for the belief that he must act in this manner because that is what is expected of him.

Workplace environment and employee performance
Various studies have been carried out on workplace environment as a factor that determines employee performance. In his study, Temessek (2009) [47] analyzed the extent to which employees perceive their workplace environment as fulfilling their intrinsic, extrinsic, and social

needs and their need to stay in the organization. He also analyzed the impact of perception of workplace environments on employee commitment and turnover in the organization, he concluded that if the employees are provided with enabling workplace environmental support, they will be highly satisfied and show high level of commitment towards their organization and hence low turnover rate. A research by Reoloefsen (2002) indicates that improving the working environment reduces complains and absenteeism while increasing productivity. Better physical workplace environment will boost the employee and ultimately their performance and in turn increase organizational productivity.

Factors that enhances employee's performance and organizational productivity
In every organization, there are many factors that contributes in enhancing workforce morale to achieve a particular purpose and such conditions are:

Safety measure
The level of safety measure in an organization helps to improve employee's morale and make them contribute hugely toward the productivity of the organization.
According to Anderson (1980) [8] who stated that safety measures are important in every organization. To him, in as much as people want and are not only interested on the salary scale when seeking for employment, they also want good working conditions which includes the health and safety of employees. In addition, he also stated that inadequacy of fire extinguishers, first aid box etc. In the office will affect employees negatively. He further emphasized that the morale interest and attitude of workers will not be boosted if they understand that they are not cared for.

Prevention of overcrowding
According to Duru and Shimawua (2017) [18], office is safe for employee when overcrowding is avoided. This ensures free movement of both employees and materials as well as enhances effective operational process. Also overcrowding can result to inadequate ventilation in work environment. In our opinion, we recommended that adequate effect should be put in place in the organization to see that overcrowding is been prevented in an office. Since environment comfort is achieved by controlling the movement of materials in the office.

Poor ventilation
According to Grott (1964) [29] who posited that a stuffy atmosphere reduces capacity to think and act, this reduces output, and he went ahead to say that proper ventilation, makes for a healthy working environment devoid of fatigue, laziness, drowsiness etc. and consequently creates room for workers efficiency. Also poor ventilation creates environmental distress to workers.

Environmental factors that affect job performance
All organizations operate within an environment which to a greater extent has impact on it. Environment is viewed as the surrounding areas where work take place or where things and objects live. We have two types of environments; internal and external. The internal environment is the one within the control of an organization while the external

environment is beyond the control of the organization. The external environmental factors that play a great role in influencing job performance are as follows

a. **Physical environment:** This relates to the land area, climate, topography, drainage system, vegetation and soil types as they affect the sources of inputs, the conversion of inputs to output, the location of business and consumer location. In respect to our study, the physical environment has to do with the proximity to customer.

b. **Legal environment:** By this we mean complying with the legal requirements for establishing and operating business in such environment. Example is the registration of the business through the appropriate Nigerian law. A business not properly registered can have effect on employee productivity as the freedom to operate freely will not be there.

c. **Socio-cultural environment:** The socio-cultural environment has to do with the norms, traditions, tastes, preferences and habits of the target population within which the business operates. It has to do with the values of the people where the business operates. Citing a beer production facility in the far north without taking consideration of the norms, culture, and tradition of the people in the area may be counterproductive.

d. **Political environment:** This relates to government policies which determine business practices and investment climate in the economy. As a result, the stability of government and the priority of the political party in power would affect business operations and productivity.

e. **Demographic environment:** Here, the population and its distribution, which constitutes the target markets for goods and services, have to be considered too as such will affect productivity.

f. **Technological environment:** This is an external factor that can affect employee productivity since technological changes makes previous practices obsolete, such as the use of computer in business operations. The organization has to change positively to changes in technology. There has to be constant and consistent update in the system.

g. **Economic environment:** this is one of the major factor that can have effect on business productivity. By this, we mean the general condition of the economy has to be considered to ensure the business is feasible. If the economy is performing well there will be more demand for goods and services, as a result more revenue will be generated for the organizations.

Similarly, if the economy is in depression, fewer goods will be demanded and this will mean fewer revenue for the organization.

h. **Income distribution:** It has also been observed that expenditure patterns, savings capability of consumers all affect demand for goods and services. So management of organization should always find out information concerning the state of the economy.

Environmental factors that cause's poor productivity
Unsafe equipment and tools
This is one of the factors that causes poor productivity. According to Oliver (1975) stated that congested office makes employees to feel uncomfortable. He further stated that some people work in what he called "store" all in the name and this tendency is that there will be no free movement of man and materials especially where the workers share small floor space, thus the morale of employee will be negatively affected.

Temperature of poor weather condition
According to Duru and Shimawua (2017) [18], who stated that?
Employees will not thrive in bad weather such as high sunny and raining weather because it May affect the productivity of employees.

Poor lightening system
Duru and Shimawua (2017) [18], noted that poor standard of light obviously affect employees interest and attitude towards their work and fatigue. He added that office shop and railway premises Act of (1863) stipulated that sufficient and suitable light either natural or artificial should be made available in the office.

Poor office setting
According to Duru and Shimawua (2017) [18], he itemized this under the following:
1. Loss of constraint town business associate and customer which may result in loss of good
2. Will and reduction in motivation.
3. It will be deficient for staff to transport themselves when the location is bad.
4. Absence of shops and restaurants etc. may render recruitment and retention of staff

Difficult because employees find it difficult for them to locate other material needed. This MAY hinder performance since they travel from their office to produce some materials that the lack and is needed for use

Workplace internal environmental factors that affects employee's performance and organizational productivity and performance
The simplest definition of productivity is the ratio between output and input, or in other words, the mathematical ratio of production to the amount of resources consumed in the production.
Resources can be land, materials, factories, machinery, tools, and workforce (William & Stevenson, 2007). Productivity is essentially an economic concept which later on has entered into management. Jan Kenrek (1977) defines productivity as the relationship between goods and services or human and non-human resources that have been used in the production process.

Organizational culture
In another study, Mohammad, Uddin, Huq and Saad (2013) [17] on the impact of organizational culture on employee performance and productivity, the results showed positive association between a strong culture and performance improvement. It was therefore on the basis of this study, that organizational culture has a positive impact on the employees 'job performance. Schein (1990) [43], as cited in Ahiabor (2014), also states that an organization's norms and values have a strong effect on all those who are attached to the organization and, as considered by the scholar, norms are invisible. Earlier studies indicated a relationship between organizational culture and employees 'performance. Magee

(2002) [32], as cited in Agwu (2014), argued that organizational culture is inherently connected to organizational practices which in turn influence employees' performance but Hellriegel and Slocum (2009) [24] contend that organizat ional culture can enhance employees' performance if what sustains it can be understood. Thus, the culture of an organization acquaints employees with the organization's history as well as current methods of operation that guide employees on expected and acceptable future organizational behaviours and norms. Ferris *et al* (1998) [20] assert that effective human resource system is based on supporting values that create a positive impact on employees 'attitudes and behaviours which in turn influence their performance but from numerous-surveys on culture‖, it has been claimed that employee performance can be improved by developing and creating certain kinds of organizational cultures (Sackman and Bertelsman, 2006) [42].

Organizational communication

According to Hellweg and Phillips (1982) [32], employee performance increases when there is communication within the organization and, besides other things, communication within the organization helps the employees to perform their tasks well, to have information about the duties they have to perform, and about the goals of the organization. They argue that existence of communication within the organization leads to effective decision-making.

According to Goris, Vaught and Pettit (2000), job performance and job satisfaction can be achieved only when there is a balanced relationship between employees 'needs for growth and job characteristics. They found that high level of downward communication in organizations make employees feel dependent on their bosses, unlike when there is too much upward communication that employees sometimes assume that their superiors do not know how to perform their tasks and duties. They further argue that having excess of everything is dangerous in the same way as having excess of any communication direction in the organization because it creates trouble for workers. They further observe that if there is too much communication, employees start to compare themselves with their co-workers and this negatively affects their satisfaction and performance.

Organizational commitment

According to Clarke (2006) [14] who studied the commitment and employees 'performance in UK-based healthcare units and found out that commitment is likely to play a significant role specifically with performance outcomes. The researcher found that, statistically, both affective and normative forms of commitment have significant impact on employee performance. Affective commitment was positively related to employee performance. The finding that continuance commitment was negatively related to employee performance suggests that the relationship between commitment and performance within organizations is certainly not straightforward.

Environmental factors that affects organizational image

Organizational image simply constitute both the presentation and impression an organization forms in the mind of its stake holders and how the general public view and perceived them. From the perspective of social psychology it is how individuals and organization present

themselves to others to be perceived favorably by others (Hooghiemstra 2000). Most of the literature on impression management focuses on using impression management tactics adopted by individuals and organization in order to be liked and be seen attractive (Cole, Rozelle, 2011) [15]. Another theory proposed by Jones and Pittman (1982) [31] showed that impression management strategies used by individuals and organization aims to protect and maintain one's power. They offered five strategies of impression management as,

Self-promotion
Involves pointing out your abilities and achievements to others so that one can be seen competent by others (Jones and Pittman 1982) [31].

Intimidation and supplication
Strategy where people try to exhibit their power or potential to be seen as dangerous by observers (Jones and Pittman, 1982) [31]. The individual tries to increase the credibility of his threats to make others agree to his demands (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). The fear created by intimidator is used to coerce and that gives a chance to intimidator to make others to submit to his demands (Cole, Rozelle, 2011).

Ingratiation
Ingratiation involves doing a favor or use of flattery to be likable by the observers

Exemplification
Exemplification involves showing of oneself to look overly dedicated and committed while creating a feeling of guilt among others (Arif *et al*., 2011) [3]

Supplication is a strategy where individuals point out their weaknesses, in order to be seen needy for help or favors (Jones and Pittman, 1982) [31].

Following all the related literatures reviewed in the study, the findings revealed that each of the various conditional factors of work environment is important in enhancing the employee's performance. However, the ability of an organization to provide an ideal environment that encourages employee's job satisfaction and work motivation is necessary for its survival.

The literature also showed that the employees can be able to enhance their performance towards the achievement of the organizational goal if a healthy work environment which helps in improving the organizational productivity is in place.

Conclusion
The most vital resource of any organization is the human resources who are the employees. From the analysis, we can state that conducive work environment enhances employee performance and increases firm's productivity and thus promotes its image positively.

Employees will make every effort to perform when they feel that their direct environment state corresponds with their obligations. The type of work environment in which they operate will b a function of their performance (Weather positively or negatively), it's through their performance that organizational performance can be realized. The workplace conditions will determine the employees' comfort to work and boost their performance. Good working environment

increases individual output therefore leading to growth of the organization. A good working environment inspires workers to spend more time in their various offices, employees responds emotionally better towards the provision of good office environment by not absenting themselves unnecessarily from work, lateness to work and other negative attitude will be drastically reduced.

For any organization to progress, the employees should be provided with good working environment which will motivate them to greater action so as to achieve the set objective of the organization.

From the study findings, it can be concluded that for an organization to have a competitive edge over others and improve and sustain its productivity, it must ensure that a positive and conducive work environment devoid of all the factors that influence employee performance are put to halt since a positive workers performance directly improves organizational productivity.

Recommendation
Since findings suggested that the environment in which a job is performed motivates the employees to perform better. The study recommends the following as a means for organizations to achieve its objectives.

1. The management of an organization should ensure that the workplace environment is comfortable enough to support employee performance by improving the working conditions and other motivational factors.
2. Organizations should take work place safety as a top priority throughout the organization. This is because when employees know and feel safe they intend to be motivated this will enable them to carry out their tasks smoothly.
3. The management of organizations should ensure that the work environment supports their employee performance since it has been identified as a factor that influences performance
4. To increase workers performance and improve organizational productivity management should make sure that not only should motivational factors be taken into consideration but also in conjunction the conduciveness of the work environment. This will enhance productivity both in employees and organization.

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