

Article

Work Environment and Employee Performance at The Rivers State University, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined how the work environment affects the performance of workers in the public sector using the Rivers State University (RSU) as a paradigm of analysis. Its objectives were to identify the different types of work environment, examine how the work environment influence performance of staff at work, and ascertain which work environment can enhance employee performance at the Rivers State University. It adopted the Scientific Management Theory as propounded by Frederick Winslow Taylor as theoretical framework. The study is quantitative and therefore utilised primary data derived from information provided by respondents. The Taro Yamene Statistical Formula was used to determine the sample size for the study. A total of 312 questionnaires were distributed out of which 308 were retrieved from respondents making 98% response rate. Data were analysed using the simple percentage technique. Findings from the study indicated that the work environment at the Rivers State University has a great impact on the performance of the workforce and that despite the reality that authorities of the Institution provide basic work facilities within the limits of their resources, it yielded a negative impact on the performance of workers on the job. Based on the findings, the study recommended, amongst others, that management/authorities of the University should enhance the working environment by providing facilities and equipment that would improve staff performance and efficiency at work, in order to achieve organisational goals.

Keywords: Workplace, Efficiency, Employee Performance, Public Sector, Rivers State University.

Citation: Ozims Ekwutosi Impact of Women Entrepreneurship on Economic Growth. A Study of Selected Sme's in Imo State International Journal of Business Diplomacy and Economy 2024, 3(5), 226-236

Received: 10th Oct 2024

Revised: 11th Oct 2024

Accepted: 24th Oct 2024

Published: 20th Nov 2024



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1. Introduction

Organisational goals and objectives are achieved through the human resources at its disposal. This is as a result of the importance of staff of an organization in the attainment of its goals and objectives. To this end, performance management is an important human resource tool because of its numerous benefits (Amah, 2006). In relation to assessing performance of individuals in an organisation are environmental factors associated with, where the individuals carry out their duties, hence the importance of the work environment. Work environment implies those factors that involve the setting in which employees function and carry out their activities. Employees are significantly impacted positively or negatively by the setting or environment in which they operate. As a result, the importance of the work environment in the attainment of the overall objectives of organisational goals cannot be over emphasized. This is against the backdrop of the reality that organisational goals are achieved through individuals who work in such organisations and the extent to which the goals are achieved is a function of the level of performance of such individuals.

The facilities at work constitute the environment and are a determinant factor to the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional goals and objectives. Office environment influences the behaviour of individual employees. Thus, the importance of working environment acts as an essential function in determining the level of employee and workers motivation, productivity and performance (Sharma, Dhar and Tyagi, 2016).

The work environment involves the social interactions with peers, subordinates and managers. It is also associated with physical conditions of the building, safe and healthy environment, provision of the needed facilities and infrastructure that would enable employees perform their duties without hitches. Where there is inadequacy in these infrastructure, there is evidence of an unhealthy work environment.

Both public and private organisations pay significant attention to workplace environment in order to achieve their overall aims and objective. In this regard Epelle (2020) identified political environment as a contradistinction between public and private administration. Although, public and private organisations are goal oriented, the process of achieving such goals are quite different and thus the workplace environment also (Sharma, Sadana, and Harpreet, 2012) .

In the Nigerian public sector, there is a growing concern over the situation at the workplace and how to achieve improved service delivery through high performance of the work force. It is in this light that this paper examines the Rivers State University, a public tertiary educational institution established by the Rivers State government. The primary objective for setting up an Institution is to produce manpower in diverse fields of endeavour that would solve societal problems and so we examine how the workplace situation has helped to enhance staff performance at work in the Institution. We shall examine work policies as they have to do with enhancing the performance of employees at work. This is necessary because as Otto (2021) puts it, the essence of workplace policies, ethics and procedures is to mitigate the effects of the assorted cultural influences and conflicts, whilst helping to direct employees towards uniform standards of conduct. These are, indeed, affected by the environment of work.

These shall be achieved through the following sections: Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, Objectives of the Study, Theoretical Framework, Literature Review, Data Presentation and Analysis, Discussion of Findings, Summary and finally it ends with Conclusion and Recommendations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian public sector has been, variously, described and examined from a negative perspective. This is owing to the weak nature and low capacity in service delivery. The purpose of every public organisation is to provide quality services to the citizenry. Over the years, the declining service delivery of public institutions has continually been noticed, hence successive Nigerian administrations have engaged in series of reforms to strengthen the public service. This has had negative impact on the educational sector. The declining funding of the educational sector by successive governments in Nigeria, has affected the capacity of university authorities to provide the needed infrastructural development that would make for a good and productive working environment in Nigeria. The resultant effect is the poor ranking of Nigerian universities vis a vis their counterparts all over the world. This situation portends grave dangers for the future growth and development of Nigeria. This is so because a nation can only develop in line with the quality of its human resource. When the quality of human resource is low, the growth and development of the country will be poor. On the other hand, when it is high, the opposite become the case. So then, the workplace in Nigerian tertiary institutions must ensure high and quality performance that would improve and enhance qualitative education for the development of the country.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The study is anchored on the under stated research questions:

- i. What are the different types of work environment at the Rivers State University?
- ii. How does the prevalent work environment influence performance of staff at Rivers State University?
- iii. Which work environment can enhance job performance at Rivers State University?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the study are, to:

- i. identify the different types of work environment at the Rivers State University.
- ii. examine how work environment influence performance of staff at Rivers State University.
- iii. ascertain which work environment can enhance employee performance at Rivers State University.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on the Rivers State University, a Rivers State Government owned tertiary educational institution. The study is further focused on the non-teaching staff members of the institution. They are fundamental in the attainment of the overall goals and objectives of the Institution. The non-teaching staff comprise of the Senior Professional, Administrative and Technical Staff (SPATS). The period of study is from 2015 to 2020.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholars and researchers have made attempts to study the relationship between work environment and employee performance. This is against the backdrop of the relatedness of the two concepts in the attainment of organisational goals and objectives. Studies have shown that employee performance at work is a function of the impact of environment on his capacity to deliver on the job. Evidently, the worker is motivated or de-motivated by the conditions at work. Karmarulzaman, Saleh, Hashim, Hashim and Abdul-Ghani (2011) assert that workplace environment is an important component of work life for employees, as they spend significant part of their time at work and it affects them in one way or the other. For them, employees who are satisfied with their work environment have a high propensity to deliver on their job and be more productive. The importance of looking for the satisfaction of the worker can be viewed from the prism of changing times and needs of individuals. Perhaps it is on this premise that, Pech and Slade (2006) argued that the employee disengagement is increasing and it becomes more important to create work environment that positively influence the workforce. This is instructive when looking at the perspective of Vischer (2006) who opined that a good working environment will lead to better management between work environment and employee results in improving behavior and stress related emotions. No doubt, factors like working conditions, remuneration and promotions play important roles for employees' level of job satisfaction. As a matter of reality, a positive work environment makes employees feel good about coming to work and thus provides motivation to sustain them throughout the day (Duru and Shimawua, 2017).

Studying the impact of work environment on employee performance, Hafeez, Yingjun, Hafeez, Mansoor, and Rehman, (2019) were of the view that working environment is one of the most important components which influence employee performance within an organisational setting and that in today's competitive business environment, monetary benefits alone are not enough for employees to achieve higher performance level. They were of the view that a combination of monetary and non-

monetary reward is more effective in achieving higher levels of employee performance, which in turn leads to achievement of organizational goals.

Environmental factors that affect job performance include: Physical environment, Legal Environment, Socio-cultural environment, political environment, Edom graphic Environment, Technological Environment, Economic Environment, as well as income Distribution (Duru and Shimawua, 2017).

In their study of work environment on employees productivity, Massoudi and Hamdi, (2017) found out that there is a relationship between office environment and productivity of employees, and that behavioural components of office environment have a greater effect on productivity than the physical component alone, hence satisfaction of employees towards overall workplace environment leads to high productivity.

Examining the effects of work environment on employee productivity in Edo State Transport Service, Duru and Shimawua (2017) opined that if good office environment is provided for employees, it will go a long way to enhance their morale and performance; good physical working environment inspires workers to spend more time in their various offices, employees responded emotionally better towards the provision of good office environment by not absenting themselves from work, lateness to work and other negative attitudes will be drastically reduced; Good working environment increase output thereby leading to growth of the organisation.

While Duru and Shimawua (2017) argued that a positive work environment makes employees feel good about coming to work and this provides the motivation to sustain them throughout the day, they identified: Transparent and Open Communication; Work Life Balance; Training and Development Focused; as characteristics of a positive environment, while the hostile work environment exists when ones behaviour within a work place creates an environment that is difficult for another person to encounter.

In the opinion of Chandrasekar (2011), employees within an organisation can be motivated in different ways in order to get maximum output and productivity. These rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Internal rewards are usually for accomplishing challenging assignments and internal rewards are given for accomplishing challenging assignments and external rewards cover honourable recognitions or sophisticated compensation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on Frederick Winslow Taylor's Scientific Management Theory, which was spelt out in detail by him in his book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911. The scientific management pioneers sought answers to the problem of human motivation and satisfaction in the work environment. This was necessitated by the environmental factors that hampered productivity and efficiency at the work environment. It was the opinion of scientific management proponents to device measures that would increase and improve performance of the worker to the satisfaction of management. In their study, Taylor and his colleagues realized that a new approach was needed to accomplish rightly unit goals (Sapra, 2013). Taylor believed in specialization of work as the key to efficient performance. According to him, this will make for utilization of talent in organisation. He analyzed the relationship between physical nature of work and the physiological nature of the worker in order to determine job definition (Ihejimaizu, 1995).

Taylor propounded his ideas which reflected the need for a qualified manager who was capable of coping with the emergent technological complexity and motivation of workers. According to him, the satisfaction of this need lay in the scientific management. He developed a shop system which he conceived to be the objective of scientific management to overcome the shortcomings earlier highlighted. After a long research and series of experiments at the Medvate Steel Company and at the Bethlehem Steel Works, he

developed a high-speed cutting steel, improved the design of machines and set forth methods for the most efficient use of the improved tools. Based on his experiments he converted his views and concepts to what he described as Scientific Management and identified the following methods involved in the development of his shop system. Use of scientific research methods, standardization of tools and materials, selection and training of workers, need for good supervision and working conditions, payment in accordance with output (Sapru, 2013).

The objective of scientific management, amongst others, are to: eliminate factors of the environment which are irritating and the causes of frictions and to promote causes of frictions and the causes of frictions, and to promote common understandings, tolerances and the spirit of teamwork (Sapru, 2013). These are external factors in the environment which influence the employee productivity at work and thus management or supervisors must make efforts to make such environment conducive for the worker.

We observe that the intended results of the scientific management theory is to ensure industrial efficiency, high productivity, lower cost, high pay for workers with high productivity, scientific approach through observation, measurement, experiment and comparison (Obikeze and Anthony, 2008). So then, to ensure high productivity and quality service delivery

Reflection on work environment is taking an unprecedented toll as a critical phenomenon in institutions. Managers and work behavior researchers are showing increasing concerns on workers performance. Taylor and his associate's studied work process scientifically. They studied how work was performed, and they looked at how this affected workers productivity.

Studies have shown that employee performance at work is a function of the impact of the environment on the workers' capacity to deliver on the job. Evidently, the worker is motivated or de-motivated by the conditions of work. Taylor's theory focused on the idea that making people work in an unfavourable environment was not as efficient as optimizing the way work was done in a conducive atmosphere.

Taylor proposed that by optimizing and simplifying jobs, productivity would increase. He also advanced the idea that workers and managers needed to cooperate with one another. This was very different from the way work was typically done in the business. A factory manager at the time had a very little contact with the workers and he left them on their own to produce the necessary product.

There was no standardization and a worker's main motivation was often continued employment. So there was no incentive to work as efficiently as possible. Taylor believed that all workers are motivated by the nature of the environment, money so, so he promoted the idea of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

If we agree with Ihejiamaizu's (1996) assertion that a theory is a set of ideas or concepts which provides explanation for something, then Scientific Management Theory is most relevant and provides a sound theoretical base for this study.

Materials and Methods

The study is qualitative and thus derived data through questionnaires administered to 460 respondents who are serving non teaching staff of the University. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information that would achieve the intended objective. A total of 356 questionnaires were retrieved making a total of 77% response rate. The information obtained were analysed using simple percentage technique from where conclusion was drawn.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study is 1,412, being the total number of senior non teaching staff in the Rivers State University (RSU, 2021). It is from this figure that the sample size was determined.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for this study is 312. It was determined using the Taro Yamene statistical formula as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

where n is the sample size

N is the population of the study

e is the margin of error in calculation

Therefore:

$$n = 1412 / (1 + 1412(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 1412 / (1 + 1412(0.0025))$$

$$n = 1412 / 1 + 3.53$$

$$n = 1412 / 4.53$$

$$= 312$$

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The study is quantitative and therefore obtained primary data for discussion and analysis through a research instrument structured to elicit the desired information. A

S/N	Characteristics of Respondents	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	238	77
	Female	70	23
2	Academic Qualification		
	FSLC	Nil	Nil
	OND/HND	44	14
	B.Sc./BA	244	79
	Higher Degree	20	7
3	Department		
	Registry	40	14
	Library	18	5
	Bursary	32	11
	Works and Services	30	11
	Faculty	173	56
	College	15	4
4	Length of Service		
	1-5 years	26	7
	5-10 years	39	14
	10-15 years	197	59
	15-20 years	14	4
	20-25 years	25	12
	25-30 years	7	4

total of 312 questionnaires were distributed and 308 of them were retrieved from respondents. This gave 97% response rate.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data obtained for the study were analysed using the simple percentage technique.

Results

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 Showing Demographic Statistics of Respondents

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 1 above shows demographic statistics of the respondents in the study. It covers Gender, Academic Qualifications, Departments and Length of Years of Service of

respondents. The Table shows that 238 respondents representing 77% were male, while 70 respondents representing 28% were female. From the Table also, there was no respondent with First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), while a total of 44 respondents, representing 14% had Ordinary National Diploma/ Higher National Diploma (OND/HND); 244 respondents, representing 79% possessed Bachelors (BA/B.Sc) degrees and 20 respondents, representing 7% had Higher Degrees. The Table further indicates that 40 respondents, representing 14% were from the Registry Department, while 18 respondents representing 5% were from the Library Department; 32 respondents representing 11% were from the Bursary Department; 30 respondents, representing 11% were from the Works and Services Department; 173 respondents, representing 56% were from the various Faculties in the University, while 15 respondents, representing 4% were from both the College of Health Sciences and College of Continuing Education. It further shows that 26 respondents, representing 7% had served in the University between 1-5 years; 39 respondents, representing 14% had served between 5-10 years; 197 respondents representing 59% had served for 10-15 years, 14 respondents, representing 4% had served between 15-20 years; while 7+ respondents, representing 4% had served between 25-30 years.

Table 2 showing response for Research Question 1: What are the different types of environment at the Rivers State University?

Response	No of Respondents	% Respondents
Computers	34	11
Stationaries	56	18
Official vehicles	46	15
Tables and chairs	100	32
1 and 2	120	39
1, 2 and 3	73	24
All of the above	3	1

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 2 above shows that 34 respondents, making a response rate of 11% had computers for use in their offices, while 56 respondents, making 18% had stationaries for use. 46 respondents making 15% had official vehicles, 100 respondents, making 32% had tables and chairs for use; 120 respondents, making 39% had both computers and tables, 73 respondents, making 24% had both computers, stationeries, as well as office tables and chairs, while 3 respondents representing 1% had all the items.

Table 3 showing response to question on, which of these enhances your performance at work?

Response	No. of Respondents	% Respondents
Computers	26	8
Stationaries	36	12
Official vehicles	26	8
Tables and chairs	220	71

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 3 above indicates that 26 respondents making a total of 8 % affirmed that the provision of computers enhanced performance in their work, while 36 respondents making 12% agreed that provision of stationeries enhanced their work, 26, respondents, making a total of 8% affirmed that provision of official vehicles made their work easier, while 220 respondents, making a total of 71% agreed that provision of tables and chairs were instrumental to the enhancement of their work.

Table 4 showing response on Research Question 2: How does the prevalent work environment influence performance of staff at Rivers State University?

Do you have the requisite facilities for work?

Response	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	101	33
No	207	67
Total	308	100

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 4 above indicates that 101 respondents, making a total of 33% affirmed that they have requisite facilities for work, while a total of 207 respondents; making 67% did not agree that they have the requisite facilities for work. It shows a higher rate of employees who do not requisite have equipment for work in their offices.

Table 5.

Do the facilities you have for work enhance your job performance?

Response	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	114	37
No	194	63
Total	308	100

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 5 above shows that 114 respondents making 37% agreed that the existence of requisite facilities for their job enhanced their job performance, while 194 respondents, making a total of 63% did not agree that the requisite facilities enhanced their job performance. The result from this Table affirms the earlier position of the dissatisfaction of employees on lack of requisite facilities/equipment for work.

Table 6 showing Response to Research Question 3: Which work environment can enhance job performance at Rivers State University?

Does the prevalent work environment motivate you for work?

Response	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	115	37
No	193	63
Total	308	100

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 6 above indicates that 115 respondents, making a total of 37% agreed that the prevalent work environment motivated them for enhanced job performance, while 193 respondents, making a total of 63% did not agree that the prevalent work environment motivated them for enhanced job performance. This affirms that the relationship between the work environment and employee performance at work.

Table 7.

Is the working environment conducive for efficient and effective productivity at work?

Response	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	106	34
No	202	66
Total	308	100

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 7 above shows that 106 respondents making 34% agreed that the working environment is conducive for effective and efficient productivity at work, while 202 respondents, making 66% did not affirm that the working environment is conducive for effective and efficient productivity at work. The overall impression given here is inadequate workplace environment at the Rivers State University.

Discussion

We have been able to highlight the importance of work environment on either positive or negative outcome of performance of individuals at the workplace. In relation to this study, the research instrument elicited responses as to how the environment at the Rivers State University, either positively enhanced or negatively demotivated workers in the course of their job performance. To this end, this study observed that the authorities of the Rivers State University provided certain basic facilities that would help staff carry out their official responsibilities, within the limited resources available to them. It also revealed that workers at various levels and departments have different needs to enhance their work performance. In other words, what a worker needs to perform his responsibilities might be different from what another worker needs and so it is necessary for the authorities represented by Heads of Department and supervising administrator to understand the various needs of staff and ensure that they are provided. From the study, the Rivers State University consists of non teaching staff members with requisite academic qualifications to discharge their responsibilities. With such level of manpower, it is expected that there would be maximum output and performance by the staff for improved and enhanced service delivery.

This study was able to find out that like in every organisation, whether formal or informal, provision of basic infrastructure is vital in ensuring a good working environment, which would, in return, enhance work performance. It also found at various Departments such facilities helped and promoted the output in the performance of the job of staff. However, there is varied degree of output of such facilities by individual workers. Perhaps the human relations and behavioural approach to management would be able to address issues related to such situations in the workplace environment.

The study also revealed that despite the provision of these basic facilities in the workplace at the Rivers State University, there is some level of dissatisfaction by worker, which indicates that the authorities need to do more in the provision of such facilities for work.

This study further revealed that workers are dissatisfied with the workplace environment at the Rivers State University. In order words, the poor nature of the environment impacts on improved and high-quality service delivery that would enhance the quality of administrative and support services for the attainment of the overall institutional goals and objectives.

Conclusion

The study took a conceptual look at the work environment and how it affects the productivity of employees at work. Specifically, it investigated the relationship between work environment and employee performance.

From the foregoing, there is no doubt that a healthy work environment promotes and improves productivity, as well as enhanced quality service delivery in an organisation. The Rivers State University is one of the tertiary educational institutions which objective is to produce capacity in diverse fields of endeavor for manpower development of the country. To this end, the quality of manpower is vital for national growth and development. The administrative staff of tertiary educational institutions provide the needed support services that ensures that the University system functions properly. When this section of the University system does not function properly, it affects the entire University system and hence, constrains the overall objectives of the system. It is evident that despite the efforts made by the authorities of the Rivers State University to ensure a positive work place environment for administrative staff, it has not yielded the needed positive impact and so it is difficult for the Institution to achieve the needed quality service delivery which in turn negatively affects the quality of graduates in the Nigerian educational system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Management of Rivers State University should prioritize the provision of work facilities and equipment in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Institution.
- ii. Management of the Rivers State University should adopt specific approach for improving work environment to specific departments. That is to say that, there is no one fit for all requirement for each Departments in the Institution and so management should identify the peculiar needs of each Department in order to provide the needed facilities to achieve the goals and objectives of the Institution..
- iii. Consequent upon this, Heads of administrative Departments and supervising officers should be trained and given adequate orientation to identify, individual needs of workers in the Institution.

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