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Relaxation Activities and Work Environment as Correlates of Academic Staff Productivity in Universities in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined relaxation activities and work environment as correlates of academic staff productivity in Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity, likewise the relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity. The descriptive research of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population consisted of 8,724 academic staff of the public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample for this study consisted of 1173 academic staff who were selected from 6 public Universities (Federal and State) in the Southwest, Nigeria. Multi – stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of the sample for the study. The data for this study were collected through the use of two sets of self – designed instruments. The first one was tagged Work Environment Questionnaire (WEQ) which was administered on the academic staff. The second instrument was tagged Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (ASPQ) which was administered on the Heads of Departments. The face and content validity of the instruments (WEQ and ASPQ) were validated by specialists in Educational Management as well as Tests and Measurement. The reliability of the instruments was carried out test re-test method. A reliability coefficient of 0.806 was obtained for WEQ and 0.841 was obtained for ASPQ. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that relaxation activities and work environment were related to staff productivity. It was recommended among

others that the university management should make provision for relaxation centres for academic staff within the university premises.

Keywords: Relaxation Activities, Work Environment, Productivity, Academic Staff,

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Introduction

Staff productivity is simply denoted as the proportion in which goods or services are produced particularly output per unit of labour. It is also perceived as a measureable relationship between output and input (Nawab & Shafi, 2011). Productivity is an exceedingly significant measure that depicts organizational outcomes and achievement. According to Kumar in Togunloju (2016) referred to productivity as the relationship between output of goods and services and the resource inputs, both human and material, which are exploited in the production process.

Academic staff plays a key role in educational institutions since the strength of a tertiary institution depends on the quality of teaching and learning. Productivity is concerned with the total effectiveness and efficiency of getting things done. Academic staff productivity in Nigerian universities has a yardstick which is often measured based on the teaching of the students, amount of research conducted and directed by the staff in the universities, community service rendered by the staff.

Schacter and Thum (2004) affirmed that teacher productivity may be appraised in terms of what the teacher controls and truly do in classroom such as teaching effectiveness classroom performance. It appears some academic staff of universities no longer place great priority on their primary role, which is teaching. In the aspect of teaching, the researcher observed that some academic staff appear not to be punctual in classroom. Experience has shown that lecturers in some universities in Southwest no longer use relevant materials for teaching; some of them no longer deliver lectures in an interesting manner while some appear not to have mastery of the subject matter and some academic staff seem not to have total control of the class during lectures.

Research publication is considered as one of the major determinants of academic staff productivity as it helps to offer current information required for the growth and development of a society (Aregbeyen, 2010). Experience has shown that there is a decline in the level of research being conducted in our universities. It has been observed over the years that some academic staff seems to have poor attendance in conferences both in and outside their institutions, some academic staff seem not to be participating in conference planning and execution. There are reported cases of plagiarism by some academic staff while some academic staff seem to find it difficult to break new grounds in their research endeavour. Academic staff research work has to be credible enough by making substantial contributions to journals and contributing immensely to knowledge through publication of papers. It is through these means that their regular research work and findings are revealed.

It has been perceived that some academic staff seem not to be involved in performing public enlightenment programmes and some academic staff have been observed not to render selfless consultancy services to communities and agencies among others. With the amplified demand and subsequent expansion of higher learning, it appears that the quality of community service is becoming extremely compromised because of the overwhelming tasks performed by senior academic members seems to be no longer interesting but rather becoming overworked with teaching, marking of examinations; own research publications as well as management work as section/departmental heads. The importance of teaching, research, and community services cannot be overemphasised among academic staff in any tertiary institution. It appears that work environment and relaxation activities are some of the reasons that is responsible for the observed low academic productivity of the academic staff

Relaxation can principally be assumed as a state of discharging oneself of stress as it is one vital activity which should be observed as a regular routine. Relaxation does not plainly mean lying on the sofa, napping and being idle or as a position of being free both mentally and bodily (Williams & Carey, 2008).

Relaxation activities are referred to as activities that promote the health of staff in an organization (Mokaya & Gitari, 2012). These activities are however intended to upturn morale, motivate workers, and improve their job contentment and productivity. It has been perceived and viewed by the researcher that most universities lack adequate conveniences and facilities for relaxation activities and purposes. The researcher observed that the relaxation facilities that can enhance the engagement in recreational activities by academic staff to manage work stress are not up to standard and usable in some universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Therefore, academic staffs seems not to be appreciating the advantage of workplace recreational packages as this may bring down stress and affect their level of productivity to positively.

In a bid to curtail stress in the workplace, the working environment is expected to be conducive with, harmonious affinity, clearly stated and defined. Work environment can be referred to as elements within the work place, such as management style, inter- relationship among staff and opportunity to develop oneself. In addition, work environment includes programmes, guidelines, values, resources, working relationships, work location, and internal and external environmental factors, all of which determines the ways employees perform their job functions (Ibojo & Asabi, 2014).

However, experience has shown that the work environment of some academic staff seem not to be conducive. There are situations whereby two to four academic staff shares the same office. This is due to inadequate infrastructures needed in the office, like table, chairs and other materials. Besides this aforementioned factor on the facility aspect, policies and programmes that are not too workers' friendly are usually set by university management.

An improved work environment could result in stress reduction and will bring an increase in productivity. The work environment of academic staff is so crucial to their living conditions and defines how they organise daily activities. It has been observed that the significance of a conducive work environment in a university cannot be overemphasised, as creating a favourable work environment for the academic staff could go a long way to manage stress and improve job productivity.

This study therefore examined relaxation activities and work environment as correlates of academic staff productivity in Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity, likewise the relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity. The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity
2. There is no significant relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity

Methodology and Materials

The descriptive research of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population consisted of 8,724 academic staff of the public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The states in Southwest Nigeria were Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti. The sample for this study consisted of 1173 academic staff who were selected from 6 public Universities (Federal and

State) in the Southwest, Nigeria. Multi – stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of the sample for the study.

The data for this study were collected through the use of two sets of self – designed instruments. The first one was tagged Work Environment Questionnaire (WEQ) which was administered on the academic staff. The second instrument was tagged Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (ASPQ) which was administered on the Heads of Departments.

The Work Environment Questionnaire (WEQ) comprises of two sections, A and B. Section A contains items on the bio – data of the academic staff while section B contains 10 items on relaxation activities and work environment. The items in the questionnaire were on a 4-point likert type scale with four options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).

The Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (ASPQ) comprises three sections A, B and C. Section A contains items on the bio – data of the Heads of Departments. Section B contains items on the bio – data of the academic staff to be assessed and were completed by the researcher while section C consists of 25 items which elicited information on academic staff productivity in the area of teaching, research and community service. The items in the questionnaire were on a rating scale with five options ranging from Excellent to Poor: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2) and Poor (1).

The face and content validity of the instruments (WEQ and ASPQ) were validated by specialists in Educational Management as well as Tests and Measurement. The instruments were said to have facial relevance and concerned with the subject matter it claimed to measure. The reliability of the instruments was carried out test re-test method. The WEQ was administered on 40 academic staff in a public University that was not included in the sampled Universities for the study while the ASPQ was administered on Heads of Departments of the 40 academic staff. The instruments were administered twice within a period of two weeks. A reliability coefficient of 0.806 was obtained for WEQ and 0.841 was obtained for ASPQ.

The responses obtained were collated and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity

In testing this hypothesis, data on relaxation activities were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section B of WEQ (item 1 – 5) in the questionnaire. Data on academic staff productivity were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of ASPQ (item 1 – 25) in the questionnaire. Both were compared for statistical significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Relaxation Activities	1173	8.88	2.29	0.319*	0.000
Academic Staff Productivity	1173	88.69	4.37		

*P<0.05

Table 1 showed that the r-cal value of 0.319 is significant at 0.05 level of significance because the P-value (0.000) < 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is

significant relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity. Relaxation activities are lowly and positively related to academic staff productivity.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity

In testing this hypothesis, data on work environment sub-variable of stress management techniques were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section B of WEQ (item 6 – 10) in the questionnaire. Data on academic staff productivity were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of ASPQ (item 1 – 25) in the questionnaire. Both were compared for statistical significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Work environment	1173	10.68	2.31	0.511*	0.000
Academic Staff Productivity	1173	88.69	4.37		

*P<0.05

Table 2 showed that the r-cal value of 0.511 is significant at 0.05 level of significance because the P-value (0.000) < 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity. Work environment is moderately and positively related to academic staff productivity.

Discussion

The study revealed that there was significant relationship between relaxation activities and academic staff productivity. It is inferred that relaxation activities could have impact on staff productivity. In consonance with this, Samuel and Jackylene (2012) revealed that workplace recreation reduces stress and significantly contributes to employee productivity when viewed as part of rewards and benefits scheme.

The study also revealed that there was significant relationship between work environment and academic staff productivity. It could be inferred that when the work environment of academic staff are conducive, they do their work very well. The reason for this finding might be due to the benefits of conducive work environment. Idemobi and Onyeizugbe (2011) showed that work environment has significant effect on employees' performance and productivity. Abugre (2012) found that high-performing work environment reduces levels of workplace stress by fostering and nurturing a climate of social interaction whereby managers and team members engaged meaningfully and team members participated in organizational activities and decision-making processes.

Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of this study, it is concluded that relaxation activities and work environment are related to staff productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.
1. The university management should make provision for relaxation centres for academic staff within the university premises.
2. The government should make public university work environment conducive through provision of adequate offices and necessary facilities for academic staff.

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