

EMPATHY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AS PREDICTORS OF JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG WORKERS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated empathy and psychological wellbeing as predictors of workers' job performance in tertiary institutions in South-West, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted. Four tertiary institutions were purposively selected from three states in South-West, Nigeria (Ogun Osun and Oyo States). Proportionate random sampling techniques were used in selecting 1,820 academic and non-academic staff in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (369), University of Ibadan, Ibadan (392), Osun State University, Osogbo (443) and Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (616). The three research instruments used were: Workers' empathy ($r=0.74$), Workers' psychological well-being ($r=0.70$) and Workers' performance rating ($r=0.72$) scales. Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance. Findings shows that there were significant relationships between Empathy ($r=.55$) and Psychological Well-being ($r=.69$) respectively. Empathy and psychological well-being jointly predicts workers' job performance ($F_{(4,1815)} = 491.05$) accounting for 52.0% of its variance. Psychological well-being ($B=.52$), empathy ($B=.09$) had relative predictive weights on workers' job performance. Empathy and psychological well-being have influence on workers job performance in tertiary institutions. Based on the finding management of tertiary institutions should provide work environment that would enhance and promote the development of these factors among the workers.

Keywords: Empathy, Psychological Well-Being, Workers' Job Performance, Tertiary Institutions, South-West Nigeria.

Introduction

The attainment of organisational goals which takes a paramount position in the thoughts of management depends largely on the availability and optimal usage of resources (human, material and financial) at the disposal of management of every organisation. However, the most potent among these resources for better goal achievement is the human resources measured by their level of job performance (Adeleke, 2010). Since the core strength of any organisation is in its employees, it is therefore essential that as organisations grow, there is the need for such organisations to support its employees to perform optimally (Alo, 2000). Succinctly put, every management must be so committed to help and support her employees to develop their full potentials (Banjoko, 2008; Adeleke, 2010).

Akinlade (2009) avers that, the attitudinal and behavioural disposition of workers who work in the industry has changed due to the aftermath effects of the economic downturn. And this has manifested in

the employee's low ability, over-difficult tasks, low individual aptitude, skills and knowledge, poorly matched with jobs that workers are not fitted, and lack of improvement over time and above all, the rate at which the industry continues to reduce in quality and in quantity staff capacity (labour turnover, rightsizing, brain drain). Though, the experiences of individual employees across industries vary considerably (Obasan, 2001).

In a similar manner, a feeling that does not make the workers feel challenged on their job or appreciated by the organisations they work for, equally make the workers perform poorly (Adeloye, 2010). Adeleke (2010) gave instances whereby an employee in the industry that is challenged is assigned responsibilities that require physical strength or good educational background, which the worker does not possess and in such situation; the worker's fitness would definitely affect his or her job performance.

Above all, the expected vigor that is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work,

and persistence even in the face of difficulties, dedication by being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge, absorption by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work are lacking in workers. Consequently, these lead to low job performance.

Poor performance is not a status that cannot be changed as noted by Steven (2007). Even though, changing a system is not an easy process but then evidences (Davenport, 2005; Spencer, & Spencer, 2009) have clearly shown that it is possible, given enough time, dedication, strong commitments with clarity of vision, and strong degree of cooperation and involvement of everyone in the industry. It is therefore a trite knowledge that the general performance of workers in the food and beverage industry can be positively turned around, so that the industry can maintain its rightful position in the Nigeria economy.

Steven (2007) avers that, changing the performance of any worker is embedded in three levels namely the individual, the organisation and the general work environment. The first level which relates to the individual worker though seems simple, but the most complex and difficult because it is psychological in nature. Man unlike other animals is highly unpredictable, and not easily changeable; thus, every interaction towards improving performance begins with the individual worker, and must be detailed and systematic to be effective (Salami, 2014). Arising from this, any intervention towards improving the general performance level in the food and beverage industry should be targeted primarily towards the employees as well as the hygiene factors (extrinsic) (Adeleke, 2010; Hassan, 2005; Richard, et al 2001).

Methodology

Research design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design of the *ex-post facto* type. This research design was adopted because it enabled the researcher to collect and report every data collected factually without the manipulation of any of the variable.

Population of the study

The population for the study covered the entire staff (academic and non-academic) of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Federal University of

Agriculture, Abeokuta, Osun State University, Osogbo and University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Sample and sampling techniques

The multi stage sampling procedure was adopted.

Research instruments

The instruments' that were used for data collection for this study were quantitative and qualitative instruments. Three quantitative instruments were used for data collection each measuring the trait of the two independent variables and one dependable variable. The instruments are described below.

Employees' Empathy Questionnaire (EEQ) is a structured questionnaire that measures the harmonious and productive relationships in the workplace, as much as in personal life. It is designed on the 4-point response format of Always (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2), and Rarely (1). The results obtained from the test re-tests was subjected to Cronbach alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.74.

Workers Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (WPWBQ) is a structured questionnaire that measures workers performance based on physical and emotional stability in the workplace. It is designed on the 4-point Liker scale format of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2), Disagree (1). The results obtained from the test re-tests was subjected to Cronbach alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.70.

Work performance Rating Scale' Questionnaire (WPSQ) is a structured questionnaire that measures the efficiency and effectiveness of workers performance in the workplace. It is designed on the 4-Likert scale format of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2), and Disagree (1). The results obtained from the test re-tests was subjected to Cronbach alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.72.

3.5 Procedure for Administration of Instruments

The instruments were administered by the researcher with the help of 4 trained research assistants in the respective tertiary institutions covered by the study.

Data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, information collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using correlational matrix, t-test and multiple regression.

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between Empathy and Workers' performance in tertiary Institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria

Table 1: Relationship between Empathy and Workers' performance in tertiary Institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Workers performance	26.3082	5.1403	1820	.547**	.000	Sig.
Empathy	26.7429	5.1974				

** Sig. at .01 level

Table 1 above shows that, there was a significant relationship between Empathy and Workers' performance in tertiary institutions ($r = .547^{**}$, $N = 1820$, $P < .01$). Hence, Workers' Empathy had influenced workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria. Null hypothesis is rejected.
 Ho 2: There is no significant relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Workers performance	26.3082	5.1403	1820	.692**	.000	Sig.
Psychological well-being	27.2044	4.8961				

** Sig. at .01 level

Table 2 above shows that, there was a significant relationship between Psychological well-being and Workers' performance in tertiary institutions ($r = .692^{**}$, $N = 1820$, $P < .01$). Hence, Psychological well-being had influenced workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria. Null hypothesis is rejected.

Table: 3a Multiple Regression analysis showing the joint contribution of Empathy and Psychological well-being on Workers' performance in food and beverage industries in Southwestern, Nigeria.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.721	.520	.519	3.5662

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	24979.740	2	6244.935	491.049	.000	Sig.
Residual	23082.337	1815	12.718			
Total	48062.076	1819				

Table 3a above shows the joint contribution of the two independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable i.e. Workers' performance. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation ($R = .721$) and a multiple R^2 of .520. This means that 52.0% of the variance was accounted for by two predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested

at $P < .05$. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F-ratio of 491.049 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table: 3b Relative contributions of Empathy and Psychological well-being on Workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Stand. Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	2.898	.557		5.205	.000
Empathy	9.274E-02	.022	.094	4.124	.000
Psychological well-being	.519	.024	.495	21.260	.000

Table 3b reveals the relative contributions of the two independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: empathy ($\beta = .094$, $P < .05$) and psychological well-being ($\beta = .495$, $P < .05$) respectively. Hence, Empathy and Psychological well-being can independently and significantly predicts workers' performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria. The table also shows that psychological well-being ranked first, this is followed by empathy.

Discussion

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between empathy and workers' job performance. Empathy significantly predicts workers job performance. This trend of relationship is not unexpected when the nature and role of empathy is considered in workers job performance. Empathy enhances workers ability to see other peoples' point of view, feel, and understand each other in any workplace. Finding of Dyer & Nobeoka (2000) shows that empathy has been found to promotes workers' performance, because it is just part of good relationships in the workplace. In a similar study by McClelland (2008) who reviewed data from more than thirty different organizations and for executive positions in many professions, from banking and managing to mining geology, sales, and health care. His finding showed that a wide range of empathy in the workplace (and a narrow range of cognitive ones) distinguished top performers from average ones. Banjoko (2008) finding in a study conducted have shown that empathy is a stifled phrase in the leadership literature, but it's an indispensable leadership concept. It's one of the yardsticks for measuring the Emotional Quotient (EQ) of a leader. It enables leaders in an organisation to establish ties of trust with the co-workers and those they lead; and gives them insights into what their feelings or thoughts may be.

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between psychological well-being and workers' job performance. This therefore

means that there was a significant relationship between psychological well-being and workers job performance. And that a workplace that provides the daily essentials of psychological well-being helps workers feel good about themselves and to do well at work. Simeon (2009) finding shows that workers having a flexible hours at work, promotes well-being and enhances their job performance. Jackson (2002) in the same vein, submits that psychological well-being has impacted the health and performance of workers with the attendant effects on their attitude to work. The author affirmed that when the working environment is perceived to be conducive, there is less stress and job performance is greatly enhanced. Studies, (Ghorbani, et al 2008; Jackson, 2002; Oba, 2012) have shown that psychological well-being has significant effect on workers' job performance. McClelland (2008) finding also assert that workers who feel observed and evaluated tends to perform better on simple or previously acquired task.

The joint effects of how empathy and psychological well-being predict workers job performance in tertiary institutions in Southwestern, Nigeria is provided in Table 3b above which shows the joint contribution of the two independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable i.e. Workers' job performance. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation ($R = .721$ and a multiple R^2 of $.520$). This means that 52.0% of the variance was accounted for by two predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $P < .05$. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F-ratio of 491.049 significant at 0.05 level. This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

This supports Gervine (2008) finding that organisation that provides their workers with guided mastery experiences, conducive work environment, effective co-workers as models, and enabling performance

feedback, enhance employees' emotional well-being and satisfaction, enhances their workers job performance. Thus, also is the finding of Bandura (1997) that an individual who feels adept and proficient in his or her occupation is likely to have confidence in several of the specific tasks that are to be performed as well as feeling able to handle and use judgment in dealing with unanticipated circumstances.

The basic idea behind the positive correlation between the joint contributions of the two independent variables (empathy and Psychological well-being) to the dependent variable (workers job performance in tertiary institutions) is that either individually or collectively, workers' job performance are in part determined by how effective people believe they can succeed in any given task in the workplace (Bandura, 1997). This result was further corroborated with the finding of Hassan, (2005) when she emphasized on the relationship between workers' job performance and self-oriented variables as self-knowledge, empathy and psychological well-being as been dearth, despite, it would not be out of order to conceive a logical relationship between these variables which have been found to be related to psychological behaviour. The study found that psychological well-being alone accounted for a very high percentage of the variation in workers job performance. And by the very nature of empathy which is capacity to feel, perceive understand and identify with other people's needs, interest and viewpoints. Lampert (2011) have also established that empathy is psychologically healthy for workers job performance. Contrary to the findings of Hassan (2005), McBane, (2011) findings showed that workers that are low in self-efficacy, tend not to believe they can cope effectively, they tend to dwell on deficiencies, and exaggerate difficulties. Such individual's worker tends to demonstrate more maladaptive coping strategies. While in a separate study by Gervine (2008) establish that individual worker with high self-efficacy, with high expectations and a greater degree of perceived performance competence always complete assigned task without monitoring. Such Individual worker also shows willingness to challenge difficulties and persist in the face of perceived obstacles.

Conclusion

The study have been able to show that the seemingly dwindling workers job performance in the tertiary institutions in South-West, can be easily corrected and improved upon with a better understanding of the level of the existing empathy and psychological well-being.

The higher the employees' empathy and psychological well-being, the better will be the workers level of job performance, and the better the overall goal accomplishment of the organisations and the industry at large.

Above all is the level of job performance rate between the academic and non-academic staff across tertiary institutions in South-West Nigeria. Besides the fact that the strength of any tertiary institution comes from its work force at all levels of work, yet the importance of non-academic staff who are seen as supporting staff can hardly be overemphasized in view of the fact that they are directly responsible for the day to day administration of the institutions. Hence their efforts need be examined in terms of how their empathy and psychological well-being predict their job performance.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

- That Council and Management of tertiary institutions should provide work environment that would enhance the development of empathy and psychological well-being in these tertiary institutions.
- Opportunities should be provided for the workers to achieve at the level not significantly above their capabilities.
- Job posting should be commensurate with the qualifications and aptitude of staff in the tertiary institutions.
- That irrespective of the category of staff in any tertiary institutions, job description and job allocation should be clearly spelt out to avoid structural performance problem especially among the non-academic staff.

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