Research Paper

Work Place Relationships and Employee Performance in Selected Telecommunication Organizations in the Niger Delta.

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Abstract
This study examined workplace relationships and employee performance in selected telecommunication organizations in the Niger Delta. The study adopted the use of cross section survey research design where questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A sample of 329 respondents formed the study population and this was drawn across three telecommunication organizations amongst which are MTN, GLO and Airtel in three selected states of the Niger Delta. This however was achieved through the use of the multistage and purposive sampling technique. The study findings showed that employees in the telecommunication organizations agree that their relationships in the work place could affect their level of performance, that managers and supervisors do not mentor subordinates in their organizations, that a friendly work environment will facilitate employee productivity and that that if the environment is structured to mentor subordinates, employees will be committed to organization goals. However, the study recommends the need for the creation of a friendly work environment where managers and supervisors will deliberately mentor the younger employees as this will improve productivity.
Keywords: *Work Place, Relationships, Employee, Performance, Telecommunication, Organizations.*

I.   Introduction

The most valuable asset with in any organization has been identified as the employees. This is because every other activity with the organization is galvanized by the employee, hence the growth of the organization and its development to a very large extent is hinged on their contribution. (Hagos and Zewdie, 2018). It is an obvious fact the utilization of other aspect of production is saddled on the employees, the use technology, finance, information and other managerial tools in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives can never be carried out without the input of the employee, this however explains the nature of their role in the performance of excellent and efficient service which in turn enhance the overall achievement of organizational goals.

These responsibilities the employees do not carry out in a vacuum, rather in a space where there is interaction and need for synergy with other team members to achieve set targets. This however states the need for operators and those in the managerial category in organizations to create a positive work environment. However, having a pleasant work relationship amongst employees makes it easier for employers to mobilize their energies with their employees to achieve results (Galer et al., 2005).

The workplace to a large extent determine how much an employee puts into his organization. Hodson (2004) opined that the workplace is a significant stage for social interaction for individuals in their life and serves as a major source of fulfilment in the modern world. The work environment is made of machines and human beings, and as a social environment, interactions will be expected vertically and horizontally. In an environment where the relationships are friendly horizontally or vertically such environment will thrive as interaction at all level will mostly gear towards the goals of the organization.

Employees need to find work as being meaningful if they are to be significantly engaged in their jobs (Kennet and Lomas, 2015). Davenport (2015) was emphatic that stress levels are intertwined with the fabrics of organization working environment and this impacts negatively on the employees as their personal fulfilment is limited. Workplace stress has the capability of inducing low productivity. According to Davenport (2015) over 120,000 deaths every year and is associated with health-cost totaling $190 billion in the United States. To

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Davenport (2015), managers and supervisors are in-charge of introducing stress-buffering conditions in the work environment, managers can act as mentors for employees with a view to heightening work engagement. Personal fulfilment can be denied if managers act as mentors for employees. This can be heightened when managers act as mentors for employees (Kennet and Lomas, 2015).

Managers should organize their work environment in such a way that workplace stressors are minimal. Mandhanya (2015) asserts that employees in an organization expect to perform their duties in a favourable environment, one that help them actualize their abilities and also satisfy their personal needs and improving their personal fulfillment. The workplace design is very important to organizational performance and employee performance. If a work environment is littered with stressors that way, the employee can decide to voluntarily exit the organization. It is therefore very pertinent to design the work environment with the objective of helping employees manage their work life and personal life. The work environment if properly managed will boost the interpersonal relationship within the work environment. Emilova (2014) described interpersonal relationships as visible and invisible traits of society. The behaviour of an individual reflects their relationship with people. Emilova posits that formal interpersonal relationship tend to be objective in nature. The interpersonal relationships that manifest in the workplace include, manager – employee, manager – manager and employee – employee (Emilova, 2014). Singh and Pathat (2017) asserts that in the workplace, individuals have different priorities, goals and values on both personal and professional events. These often become forms of impediment to developing strong connections with others. Singh and Pathat (2017) asserts that aspects such as job insecurity, preconceived notions and premature evaluation are barriers to effective interpersonal relationship. Subsequently, the organization workplace becomes a conflict zone where individuals fight over opposing goals, values and priorities. Such conflict limit job satisfaction, as employees lack motivation to work in such an environment. Kato (2015) states that workplace interpersonal stressors correlate with psychological dysfunction, brownout and depressive symptoms.

Human Resource Management encompasses various activities which are designed to provide for and coordinate the human resource of the companies, and also facilitates the most effective use of people (employees) to achieve company and individual goals (Byars & Rue, 2003). Human resource management involves attracting, developing, and maintaining a talented and energetic workforce (Schermerhorn, 2008). Its major responsibilities include: (1) attracting a qualified workforce, which involves human resource planning, recruitment and selection; (2) developing a qualified workforce, which involves employee orientation, training and development, and performance appraisal; and (3) maintaining a qualified workforce, which involves career development, work-life balance, compensation and benefits, retention and turnover, and labour-management relations. Human resource development is another Human resource management function but it is possible for the Human resource development function to stand alone. However, to optimize Human resource development goals, it is necessary to interact with other Human resource management functions. Human resource management functions have direct association with dimensions of employee relations, rewards management, performance management, recruiting and selection (Thornhill et al., 2000). In another study, it was found that the primary Human resource management functions which have relationships with effective Human resource development included human resource planning; job analysis; staffing (recruitment and selection); compensation and benefits; equal employment opportunity; training and development; employee and labour relations; health, safety, and security; companies and job design, performance management/ performance appraisal systems; research and information systems (Saha, 1993; Tung & Havlovic, 1996; Kleiman, 2000; Byars & Rue, 2003; Bohlander & Snell, 2004; and Werner & Desimone, 2006 in the study of Puvitayaphan, 2007). This study however is carried out to examine workplace relationships and employee performance using the telecommunication industry in the Niger Delta as a case study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study area is the Niger Delta Region, which is made up of nine (9) states of Nigeria, namely, Abia, Akwa/Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States. The Region is known as the hub of oil and gas activities. The population of the study is one thousand eight hundred and forty - two (1,842) employees of MTN, Glo and Airtel distributed across all the major offices and retail outlets of the telecommunication companies stated above in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa/Ibom states as extracted from the annual publications of MTN, Glo and Airtel Nigeria in 2020. MTN has a total of 763, GLO 599 and AIRTEL 480 persons across the three states bringing to a total 1842. Using the multiple stage sampling technique and the simple random sampling technique the states of the study and the staff of the organization as selected which gave rise to three States and three telecommunication organization which are MTN, GLO and AIRTEL which were selected purposively.

Taro Yamane Formula for sample size determination and this gave a sample size of 329. Primary and secondary date sources were used for the study. The Likert type questionnaire was usd as the instrument for data

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collection and this was administered at the various offices and outlets of the companies. The questionnaires were distributed using the proportionate sampling technique, this gave rise to; Rivers 145, Bayelsa, 69 and Akwa Ibom 116, hence in Rivers State, MTN 62, GLO 44 and Airtel 39, Bayelsa MTN 29, GLO 26 and Airtel 16 and in Akwa Ibom MTN 45, GLO 38 and Airtel 32. The study adopted descriptive statistics in the analysis of data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Table 1: Work relationship affects employee performance in their organization

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	204	62.0
No	125	38.0
Total	**329**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The respondents were asked if their relationship in the work environment could affect their performance. The outcome is displayed in Table 1, where, 204 respondents agree that their work relationship could affect their performance while 125 disagree. This means 62 percent of the employees in the telecommunication organizations agree that their relationships in the work place could affect their level of performance. The average hour an employee spends at the work environment is 8 hours. This means the worker spends most of his active hours of life in the work environment; hence it has a lot of influence on the behavior of the employee. In a work environment where the relationship is not friendly, the behavior of the employees will be antagonistic. The stressors will make them jumpy in their actions and inactions and it will definitely affect their performance. A friendly work environment will boost employee morale, as employee will feel loved all the time and will be willing to spend extra hours off work in the environment because of the friendly atmosphere. Subordinates will freely approach their superiors in areas they feel they should contribute, and in some cases there is deliberate mentorship of subordinates in such friendly work environments. As agreed by over 60 percent of the employees of the telecommunication organizations, a friendly work environment will boost inter-personal relationships, and they will definitely enhance employee's performance all round. We therefore encourage the telecommunication organizations in the Niger Delta Region to deliberately create work relationships that is friendly and cordial as it will definitely enhance the performance of the employees in a competitive business environment.

Table 2: Managers and supervisors deliberately mentor subordinates.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	21.0
Agree	59	17.9
Neutral	59	17.9
Disagree	112	34.1
Strongly Disagree	92	28.0
Total	**329**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The respondents were also asked if managers and supervisors deliberately mentor subordinates in their work environment. Their responses are in table 2, where 7 respondents strongly agree, 59 respondents agree, 59 respondents are neutral, 112 respondents disagree while, 92 respondents strongly disagree. This means 62.1 percent of the employees of the telecommunication organizations disagrees that managers and supervisors deliberately mentor subordinates in their organizations. Employee mentorship is one scheme that can change the fortunes of organizations rapidly. But it is not very common as everybody is busy to meet set organizational targets and less attention is given to mentorship as evident in table 2. Over 60 percent of the employees of the telecommunication organizations disagreed that there was mentorship in their organizations at the time of this study. It is very important for organizations to consider deliberate mentorship of subordinates as it will make them committed to the organizational objectives. Organizations where mentorship is a priority, there is what they call "Organizational Culture". The culture of transfer of knowledge from managers and supervisors to subordinates. This will make subordinates put in their best hoping to grow to mentor others in in the future. This study therefore encourages the telecommunication organizations to embrace the culture where managers and supervisors will deliberately mentor their subordinates. It will definitely motivate employee productivity and commitment to organizational goals.

Table 3: A friendly work environment will facilitate productivity.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	122	37.1
Agree	101	30.7
Neutral	53	16.1
Disagree	46	17.9
Strongly Disagree	7	2.1
Total	**329**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The respondents were further asked if a friendly work environment could facilitate productivity, and their responses are in table 3, where, 122 respondents strongly agree, 101 respondents agree, 53 respondents are neutral, 46 respondents disagree while 7 respondents strongly disagree. This means 67.8 percent of the employees affirm that a friendly work environment will facilitate employee productivity. The environment where one works will affect once level of productivity. A friendly work environment will facilitate productivity while a hostile work environment will definitely lead to low employee morale, low productivity and high employee turnover. The essence of compensation management is to unravel the best way of bringing out the best from the employee. And one way of making an employee work at his optimal level is to provide a friendly work environment that will attract the employee to want to come to work always and put in his best. A friendly work environment will definitely motivate employee, boost employee morale, and influence employee productivity and general performance. This study therefore, encourages the telecommunication organizations operating in the Niger Delta Region to ensure that they keep an employee friendly work environment as the environment has a lot of influence on the productivity of the employees.

Table 4: If the organization is structured to mentor subordinates, employees will be committed to organizational goals.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	76	23.1
Agree	118	35.9
Neutral	59	17.9
Disagree	69	21.0
Strongly Disagree	7	2.1
Total	**329**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The respondents were asked if they will be committed to organizational goals in an environment where managers and supervisors mentor their subordinates, and their responses are in table 4, where 76 respondents strongly agree, 118 respondents agree, 59 respondents are neutral, 69 respondents disagree while, 7 respondents strongly disagree. This means 59 percent of the employees of the telecommunication organization affirm to the fact that if the environment is structured to mentor subordinates, employees will be committed to organization goals. Employee mentorship is like building a family chain. Where the organization deliberately include employee mentorship in the organizational policy it will be like building a generational chain, where managers and supervisors will mentor the subordinates, the subordinates will be committed to their work hoping to grow to take over as supervisors to train others that will come in after them. Mentorship will build a bonded relationship in the work environment that will have a family resemblance. It is evident from table 4, that there is no mentorship scheme in the telecommunication organizations operating in the Niger Delta Region. This study however encourages the telecommunication organizations operating in the Niger Delta to embrace the mentorship scheme as it will enhance commitment of workers to the organizations.

IV.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study interrogated how work relationships affect employee performance. It is obvious that people go to the workplace with different levels of needs, and different states of mind. There are several stressors in the work environment, and since the average employee spends at least 8 hours of his day at the workplace it is necessary that the work relationships be friendly and intentional. A friendly work environment will engender the kind of solidarity amongst workers that their productivity will increase. From the findings of this study, over 70 percent of the respondents affirmed that there is a relationship between work relationships and the performance

of the employees. For the telecommunication organizations to meet their desired goal in the Niger Delta, one factor they must be serious with is the creation of a friendly work environment where managers and supervisors will deliberately mentor the younger employees.

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