Job Design and Sustainability of Tertiary Institutions in South East, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author OFC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author OCH managed the analyses of the study. Author ITT managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Tertiary institutions in southeast Nigeria have in the past been bedeviled with the challenge of achieving optimal performance as a result of seemingly poor job structure as exemplified by low skill variety and poor task identity which has lead to various industrial actions. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between job design and sustainability of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Characteristics Model (JCM). The population of the study consisted of 9240 academic and non-academic staff of six tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 383. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 5% significance level. The findings confirmed that there was a significant correlation between skill variety and employee empowerment and between task identity and workplace flexibility. It was therefore recommended among others, that managers of tertiary institutions in the South-East should take a proactive role in designing jobs that take care of the main job characteristics in the institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

No one person can do all things alone because of man's inherent natural limitations. It is therefore in a quest to overcome these limitations that prompted many to team up with others in pursuit of set goals. The fundamental idea behind this cooperation centres on how to coordinate the effort of others towards mutual help. It is this teaming up of people that underline the concept of organization. Organizations in this concept are human organizations made up of people who work jointly in actualization of goals. As there are different goals such as religious, political, cultural, profit, social, so also are there various forms of organization. The focus of this research, however, is on educational organizations.

Education is said to be the foundation of successful societies, and it is also one of the most efficient ways through which societies can surmount its challenges and carve out progressive future. It is also one of the powerful instruments for minimizing poverty and enhancing health, gender equality, peace, and stability [1]. Globally, it is agreed that education is a route which facilitates the development of a human being bodily, academically, ethically, politically, communally and scientifically so as to empower him/her to function in any surroundings [2]. It empowers the individual by enhancing inherent talents in a person, seeing that it contribute positively to the functioning of the society.

Educational sector is categorized into many levels; the kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This study focuses on the tertiary level. The National Policy on Education (2013) defines tertiary education as 'the learning given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, mono-technics and including those advanced schools offering communication courses. The tertiary sector as a whole offers opportunity for undergraduate, graduate, professional and technological education [3]. This stage of education help in molding people intellectually, morally and socially when structured and managed properly. However, with the recent occurrences in tertiary institutions, especially in the public institutions where the structure has been halted in many occasions as an effect of incessant strike actions, where infrastructure is abysmal and the morale of staff seem low due in part to poorly designed jobs, the goals of setting up the institutions appear not to be met.

Job design plays a major role in determining the functionality of human resources in organizations. A poorly designed job could dampen the morale of employees and create job dissatisfaction. The Nigerian tertiary schooling organism has been observed not to be meeting its mandate. This is occasioned by a poor educational standard; students from the institutions find it hard to measure up with their counterparts around the world. There has been a massive brain drain of teaching staff in the system and the commitment level of those still in the system seems low. The non-teaching staff do the same thing over and over again with little or no flexibility in their duties and job structures. These problems appear as an offshoot of poorly designed jobs. A system where the job is not demanding, it is monotonous and boring. The absence of opportunity to use different skills in different areas appears to hamper the performance of staff which puts the sustainability of the system in jeopardy if not handled. It is these observed problems that necessitated this study to ascertain the nexus between job design and sustainability of Tertiary Institutions of South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

a) Determine the degree to which skill variety affects employee empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.
b) Ascertains the extent of the relationship that exists between task identity and workplace flexibility in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Job Design

A Job design is a valuable tool which enhances the performance and meets the needs of workers and also gratifies the welfare of the organization. It involves incorporating job responsibilities, content and certain experience that are necessary for performing the job. It sums up everyday jobs very clearly in addition to drawing the right applicant to the right job [4]. Adding up to this, [5] states that, it is "the content and organization of one's work, tasks, activities, relationships, and responsibilities" to do the job and also its qualifications. The prerequisite

required to do the work, how the job is to be carried out and the responsibilities and duties thereof are all embedded in job design.

The creation and composition of a complete work is the hallmark of a good job design. Capturing this, [6] defined it as "the study, creation, and modification of the composition, content, structure, and environment within which jobs and roles are enacted. [7] opine that it is the content of the job that an individual or group undertakes (for example, the tasks and roles they fulfil) and the technique they use to carry out their job." It is "the method in which everyday jobs is pooled to form an entire job" [8]. Job designs usually specify the work tricks of an individual member of staff or group and can be distinguished by the extent of employee participation in the day-to-day work behaviour [9].

2.2 Skill Variety

Variety has to do with types or kinds. With respect to jobs and skills, it deals with deploying various kinds of skills in carrying out a job. It is acquiring and utilizing several skills to carry out a job. [10] aver that skill variety refers to the degree to which the job necessitates the worker to draw from a number of diverse skills and capability as well as upon an array of knowledge in discharging duties at work. Applying different skill set and knowledge in discharging a function makes for a reduction in monotony and boredom. [11] posits that the theory following providing skill variety in job design is that it reduces monotony, thereby mounting job satisfaction and enthusiasm. This is true as long as the member of staff enjoys the skills and sees the additions and mix of skills to be an advantage to the job. But adding diversity of skills that the employee finds taxing, or simply adding basic duties and minimal skills without adding to the inherent value of the job could have the opposite effect and increase frustration.

Jobs that require skill varieties challenges the job proprietor to put in more effort and therefore improving the motivation of the employee to perform better. Skill variety is the level to which task challenges the job owner to use different kinds of skills, abilities and talents. When one skill is used in performing tasks repeatedly, it brings exhaustion, strain and monotony which have an effect on the drive and efficiency at the place of work. [12] state that movement of workforce from one career to another inside a

particular business and allowing them to take on a variety of everyday jobs in their work helps in avoiding dullness, lifelessness and tedium. Skill variety provides means of keeping hold of, along with inspiring workers for higher performance. It is necessary for completing an assignment as well as those skills that are of worth to the organization [13].

2.3 Employee's Empowerment

Vecchio [14] opines that employee empowerment is a set of motivational techniques that are designed to improve employee performance through an increased level of employee participation and self-determination. It is seen as organizational planning that gives people more autonomy, prudence and decision-making accountability [15]. In order words, the lower level workforce is given more power, responsibility and freedom to make choices about how to act upon their job and how to deal with any of their work-related problems. Employee's empowerment encompasses an innovative approach in working with the populace and a shift of power from the top administration control to junior level management of the organization [16]. It allows people to add to organizational efficiency since it permits all the faculty and facts of staff to be utilized.

Anderson and Mittal [17] posit empowerment is simply gaining the authority to make your voice heard, to have a say to plans and decisions that affect you, to use your expertise at work to improve your performance and that of the organization. Empowerment is a procedure of allowing or authorizing an employee to consider, behave, and take action, be in charge of work and decision-making in a self-sufficient way [18]. Empowerment of human resources tends to be useful for organizations because it is interrelated to outcomes such as worker innovativeness, managerial competence and member staff dedication to the organization, consumer satisfaction, job performance, and behaviours that profit the company and other human resources [19]. It is vital to note however that empowerment may not essentially be fitting for all workforce. Those persons with low development strength or low achievement need may not profit as powerfully from empowerment. Moreover, the thought of empowerment is not always simple to put into practice, because some managers may feel in jeopardy when subordinates are empowered.

2.4 Task Identity

Task identity is the degree to which a person is in charge of completing a particular piece of work from beginning to end. It is the extent to which the job requires the finishing point of a whole piece of work; which is doing a job from beginning to end with an evident outcome [20]. It becomes relevant when a task is completed and employees can attribute the worth of their efforts [21]. It is to facilitate part of job characteristic that stimulates individual growth and improvement and can help employees achieve their work goals.

When recruits are given the chance to make the most use of their aptitude and capability for taking identifiable and worthy result or aim, they are more likely to think about their job as one that helps them meet their ambition and aspiration. Task identity is when a member of staff reaches a point which enables him to perform a complete job with meaningful results and value. This performance will be linked to the employee name [22]. When a worker is aware of the significance of his job results, this awareness will be reflected in his behaviour as encouraging reaction toward his job. Furthermore, it is a job element that leads to the self-motivation of employees. It is central and vital component of employee performance. Here, the whole career is analyzed from a holistic point of observation and not from its components. [23] observes that individuals who build an entire product from commencement to the finish will likely find his job to be meaningful and interesting than employees who focused on segments or element of a product.

2.5 Workplace Flexibility

When a job or task gives an employee the chance to alter the schedule or timing of the job, that work is said to be flexible. Workplace flexibility is therefore the prospect to adjust the place, at what time and how the work will be carried out [24]. [25] state that it appeared as a response to adjust employee's schedule to meet other needs by allowing certain elasticity in deciding times they begin or end their workday tasks. In this connection, workplace flexibility can be separated into two categories: formal (specified in employee's work contracts) or informal (temporal agreements between managers and workers that are not particular in a work contract). It can also be categorized into three different groups depending on the nature of the arrangement [26]. Firstly, Scheduling of worked hours e.g. alternative work schedules, compressed workweek shift break schedules. Secondly, the amount of worked hours: e.g. part-time job and job sharing. Lastly place of work: e.g. Home, Tele-working and satellite location.

Workplace flexibility is what workforce practice with reverence to what time they work, the place they work, and the message medium in the course of their working [27]. Flexibility can be looked upon as one of the key concepts of the contemporary workplace [28]. It is part of the work-life balance and work-family conflict literature that focus on how individuals construct, manage, and negotiate boundaries, individual identities, and relationships across the work, family, and community spheres [29]. What is more, human resources are always looking for more elasticity in how to align their occupation with their own lives [30], and in how they build up their livelihood [29]. It is what organizations along with employees do to develop an environment that aids in balancing the stress of work and demands of life commitments [31]. It is more than the existence of policies; it's the way of arrangements regarding time, structure, and nature of work interface with and socially put up variability, autonomy, and flexibility at work.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Hackman and Oldham job characteristics model of 1975. It is one of the most influential attempts to design jobs with increased motivational properties [32]. The theory is based on the assumption that jobs can be designed not only to help workers get enjoyment from their jobs but also to help workers feel that they are doing meaningful and valuable work. The model categorize five core job characteristics that help create three critical psychological states, leading; in turn to several personal and work outcomes. The Job Characteristics Theory has three primary components: core job dimensions, Critical psychological states, and Personal and Work Outcomes. Core job dimensions comprises of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback while Critical psychological states is made up of experience meaningfulness of work, experience responsibility for work outcomes and knowledge of the actual results of the work activities. Finally Personal and Work Outcomes comprises of high internal work motivation, high growth satisfaction, high general satisfaction and high work effectiveness.

Moen and Sweet [31] noted also the differences among individuals, they recognizes that not everyone wants a job containing high levels of the five core job characteristics. Therefore, they incorporated this conclusion into their job characteristics model by identifying three attributes that affect how people respond to job enrichment. The moderators identified in the job characteristics model influence how employees respond to enriched jobs. They include knowledge and skill, growth-need strength and context satisfaction. These moderators have an impact on the relationship between the core job characteristics, critical psychological states, and ultimately personal and work outcomes. The relevance of this theory to the present study is that, the theory has the core job characteristic (Skill variety, skill identity, skill significance, autonomy and feedback) which are use by the researcher as decomposed variables of job design. More still the theory throws more understanding on the core job characteristics, how they relate and interact with other components to produce efficient work out comes like job satisfaction and work effectiveness.

2.7 Empirical Review

Prisca and Friday [33] evaluated the effects of task identity on employee motivation in Eldoret Polytechnic, Kenya. The research design used was correlation research design. A sample of 110 employees was obtained from a population of 364 employees. Method of data analysis adopted by the study was descriptive and inferential statistics. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Findings showed a correlation between task identity and employee motivation.

Omid and Alborz [34] studied the relationship between job characteristics (task significance and task identity) and organizational learning in Iran. The study adopted descriptive-survey research. Sampling was done by random sampling method. The statistical method employed in the study are; questionnaire's reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha), Komogorov Smirnov single sample test; to define normality or un normality of the collected data through questionnaires, and correlation analysis. The results indicated that job characteristics have positive and significant relation with organizational learning; task identity has a positive and significant relation with organizational learning; task significant has a

positive and significant relation with organizational learning.

Kemboi et al. [35] carried out a study in Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital Eldoret, Kenya. Explanatory study was used in the study. The population was 1945 nurses while the sample was 320 nurses selected using simple random sampling. Questionnaires were used as a tool for collecting data. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used in analyzing data. The findings showed that staff ought to be provided with more training to improve their skills and to improve their job performance.

Job characteristics and employee performance were examined by [36] in Private Equity Firms in Kenya. Descriptive research design was used which involved census of all 210 employees in 25 different private equity firms in Nairobi City County in Kenya. Primary data was conducted using questionnaires. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics which included a test of hypotheses using stepwise multiple regressions. The findings revealed that a variety of skills; task identity, autonomy and feedback were found to affect the performance of employees.

Job design and its impact on the job strain in Private Hospitals in Irbid was assessed by [37]. The population consisted of all employees in five selected hospitals, totalling 302 employees. Questionnaire was used with a sample of 170 employees. Multiple and simple regression analysis were done in the study using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that job design process dimensions (skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) had a statistically significant impact on job strain at the private hospitals studied.

Job Design and Employee Performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc, Benin City was examined by [38]. A descriptive method was adopted. The survey sample size was 309 and out of which 237 questionnaire were duly filled and returned representing 76.7% response rate. The responses obtained were subjected to analysis with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and adoption of Pearson correlation and Regression Analysis method. The study found that job design which comprises of job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment has a positive correlation with employee performance.

Relationship of Job Design, Organizational Commitment on Compensations of Physicians in a Private Hospital, Philippines was examined by [39]. The research design was corelational using a t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), regression and Pearson Correlation. Fifty hospital physicians were conveniently selected to answer a self-constructed questionnaire. The study revealed that job design and organizational commitment has a positive correlation to compensation in a health facility. The study also revealed that attention should be given to organizational commitment. Organizational commitment predicted a positive relationship to compensation, but job design in terms of prediction, could not predict compensation though it had a positive relationship.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS OF DATA

The study made use of survey research design. The reason for this is to involve investigation of the opinion of a large number of people along with inferences drawn from such investigation. The population consists of 9240 academic and non-academic staff of six tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. The sample size arrived at using Taro Yamane formula is 381. The instrument for data collection is a Likert structured questionnaire. Content validity was employed in ascertaining the validity of the instrument while the reliability was done using Cronbach alpha reliability technique and the

result was 0.860. The analytical technique that was used in this research was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significant.

3.1 Test of Hypothesis One

H_{o1}: Skill variety has no significant effect on employee empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Table 1 shows the correlation analysis and test of hypothesis for skill variety and employee empowerment in the selected Tertiary institutions south-east, Nigeria. From the result, it is revealed that there is a very low positive relationship existing between the variables with a coefficient of .130. It also revealed that the relationship experimental is statistically significant with a p-value of .029 which is a lesser amount than .05 (p-value < level of significance). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant positive relationship between skill variety and employee empowerment in the selected Tertiary institutions in south-east, Nigeria.

3.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between task identity and workplace flexibility in Tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Table 1. Correlations result for hypothesis one

		Skill variety	Employee empowerment
Skill variety	Pearson Correlation	1	.130[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.029
	N	283	283
Employee empowerment	Pearson Correlation	.130[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	
	N	283	283
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2. Correlations result for hypothesis two

		Task identity	Workplace flexibility
Task Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	.341[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	283	283
Workplace Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.341[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	283	283
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis and test of hypothesis for task identity and workplace flexibility in the selected Tertiary institutions south-east, Nigeria. From the result, it specifies that there is a low positive relationship existing between the variables with a coefficient of .341. It also revealed that the relationship observed is statistically significant with a p-value of .000 which is less than .05 (p-value < level of significance). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that the alternate hypothesis is accepted. The alternate states that there is a significant positive correlation between task identity and workplace flexibility in the selected Tertiary institutions in south-east, Nigeria?

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result from the test of hypotheses one reveals that there is a very low significant relationship between skill variety and employee empowerment in the selected Tertiary institutions south east, Nigeria. This means that when staff are empowered to use their talents with various skills in carrying out their jobs, it will lead to sustainability of tertiary institutions in south east Nigeria. This finding collaborates with the findings of [40] whose findings revealed that skill variety has significantly affect on job performance.

The result from the test of hypothesis two revealed that there is a low significant relationship between task identity and workplace flexibility in the selected Tertiary institutions south east, Nigeria. This suggests that creating a flexible working condition in which staffs have opportunity to perform a task from beginning to the end with a visible outcome will help to stimulates personal growth and development. These findings align with that of [33] whose findings showed a correlation between task identity and employee motivation.

5. CONCLUSION

Organizations cannot function without employees, as they are the most important asset of the current knowledge economy. For the employees to function efficiently, the jobs they perform and the structuring and design of it needs to be appropriate. This is because, as observed from the findings of this study, the designs of jobs play a major role in determining the performance of employees, and by extension, defines the suitability of such organizations. The study therefore concludes

that job design plays an essential role in not just the performance of employees and the organizations at large, but also determines how sustainable the organizations will be at long run.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Managers of tertiary institutions should design task that allows movement of the employee from one job to another, and one that challenges and empowers the job holder to use different kind of skills, abilities and talents for the sustenance of the organization.
2. A proactive role measures need to be taking by the management of high institutions in coming up with jobs that have task identity and to use psychological approach to job designing, so that when coming up with job descriptions, they will consider the aspects in a given task that can motivate the workers.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, participant's written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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