



Assessing the Impact of Work Environment on Worker Performance at Federal Polytechnic Ekowe, Bayelsa State

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Abstract

Organizations must explore innovative work practices and cultivate a positive environment where employees feel valued and motivated. This study examined the impact of the work environment on employee performance at Federal Polytechnic Ekowe. A survey was conducted with 400 staff members, encompassing both senior and junior employees, through the use of questionnaires. The findings indicated that the work environment significantly influences employee performance, and addressing identified issues could enhance productivity. Key challenges include feedback on employee performance, job support, and the physical work environment. The study recommends that the organization organize regular meetings for employees to voice management concerns, fostering motivation. Furthermore, management should focus on creating an environment that attracts, retains, and motivates employees, promoting a comfortable workplace and boosting overall organizational productivity.

Keywords: Work Environment, Employee Performance, Organizational Productivity,

Introduction

The work environment plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance, with its impact being either positive or negative (Chandrasekar, 2020). Global conversations about employee rights highlight that individuals spend a significant portion of their lives in indoor spaces, which profoundly affect their mental health, behaviour, abilities, and overall performance (Dorgan, 2014). It is widely believed that a supportive workplace environment fosters improved outcomes and boosts productivity. A thoughtfully designed office space can uplift employees, thereby enhancing their efficiency. Research on office settings consistently shows that factors such as dissatisfaction, clutter, and the physical surroundings of the workspace significantly influence employee productivity (Carnevale, 2002; Clements-Croome, 2007). In the 1990s, shifting social dynamics, technological advancements, and the rise of flexible work structures changed the key elements influencing the work environment (Hasun & Makhbul, 2015). Employees who are both physically and emotionally well are more motivated and exhibit higher performance levels. Additionally, a positive workplace environment has been shown to reduce absenteeism, further boosting performance and overall productivity (Boles et al., 2018). Despite strong economic growth in many developing countries, the Economic and Social Council (2017) reports that global economic progress has not generated enough quality jobs to combat poverty. Rising unemployment, wages that fail to meet the poverty line, and an increasing proportion of informal jobs are persistent issues. This has shifted the focus from purely economic growth to improving the quality of work itself. Governments across Africa have called for action, with the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa 2004 strongly supporting the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda, which emphasizes creating quality employment opportunities.

Noble (2009) stresses the importance of managing the work environment, as employees who perceive their surroundings negatively may face chronic stress. Opperman (2022) further defines the working environment as encompassing processes, systems, structures, tools, and overall conditions within the workplace. These factors can have either a positive or negative impact on individual performance. The working environment also includes

policies, rules, organizational culture, available resources, interpersonal dynamics, physical workspaces, and both internal and external environmental factors. Together, these elements shape how employees perform their tasks and interact within their workplace.

The relationship between employee motivation and productivity has been recognized for over a century, tracing back to foundational works like Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) and Henry Gantt's *Works, Wages, and Profits* (1913). These early theories emphasized the importance of motivation in driving employees to perform at their best. However, modern approaches have shifted away from Taylor's focus on "differential piece rate work" and Gantt's "task and bonus wage" systems, moving toward more employee-centered, effective strategies (Gardner & Lambert, 2018). Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (1943) provides an in-depth framework for understanding motivation. It suggests that employees are not only motivated by financial rewards but also by a range of needs, including social connections, job security, personal achievement, and recognition. Job satisfaction, therefore, emerges as a key factor in driving high performance in the workplace. While Taylor's assertion that salary and wages are key motivators is still relevant, he argued that non-incentive wage systems lead to lower productivity. He believed that linking compensation to individual performance would drive greater effort. This idea remains significant today, as studies continue to support the notion that fixed wages, irrespective of performance, can reduce motivation and productivity (Gardner & Lambert, 2018). According to Kohun (2019), the working environment, as defined by Bushiri (2020), refers to all the factors that influence an employee's activities and productivity, including the relationship between employees and their work surroundings.

Brenner (2014) suggests that organizations can boost productivity by designing a work environment that encourages knowledge sharing. When the workplace fosters satisfaction and the free exchange of ideas, employees are more motivated and perform better, benefiting from collective knowledge. Opperman (2022) categorises the working environment into three components: the technical environment, the human environment, and the organizational environment. The technical environment includes the tools and equipment necessary for tasks, the human environment focuses on interactions with colleagues and leadership, and the organizational environment encompasses management systems, procedures, and values all of which influence productivity. Sinha (2011) emphasizes that employee productivity depends largely on their willingness and motivation to engage in their work. When employees are motivated and eager to perform their tasks, their productivity increases, contributing to the overall success of the organization. Stup (2013) further underscores the importance of aligning employee tasks with organizational goals to maintain standard productivity levels. By keeping tasks on track, employers can monitor performance and provide the necessary support to enhance productivity. Stup also advocates for reward systems based on productivity to incentivize employees and boost performance.

In addition, Stup (2013) identifies several key factors that enhance employee productivity, including a conducive physical work environment, access to necessary equipment, the meaningfulness of work, clear productivity expectations, feedback systems, reward mechanisms, adherence to standard operating procedures, and the development of employees' knowledge and skills. Similarly, Franco et al. (2022) argue that while internal motivation plays a significant role in productivity, external factors such as skills, resources, and workplace conditions also influence performance. Employers are thus encouraged to create environments that motivate employees and provide the resources and support needed for them to excel in their roles.

Factors in the Work Environment Influencing Employee Productivity

A positive and supportive work environment plays a critical role in enabling employees to perform at their best, leveraging their skills, knowledge, and available resources to deliver high-quality results. This research explores several key factors that significantly affect employee productivity:

Supervisor Support

Supervisors are pivotal figures in organizational management, often serving as experienced leaders and problem-solvers (Adair, 2008; Nijman, 2022). They play a central role in training, including setting objectives, selecting trainers, creating lesson plans, and facilitating development programs (Adair, 2008; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 2019). Supervisors are also instrumental in guiding employees through new operational processes (Rabey, 2017). However, a lack of supervisor support can have a detrimental impact on productivity. Miscommunication or inadequate guidance from supervisors can hinder performance, as employees may struggle with unclear job expectations or procedures (Harris et al., 2020). To enhance productivity, both supervisors and employees must

invest in fostering a strong, supportive relationship, which is crucial for optimal performance outcomes (Blau, 2014).

Positive Interpersonal Relationships among Colleagues

The quality of relationships among coworkers has profound implications for both individual and organizational success. Strong interpersonal relationships foster cooperation, trust, and a sense of camaraderie, all of which are essential for workplace productivity. Given that employees spend a significant portion of their time at work around 50 hours per week it is no surprise that meaningful bonds form among colleagues. While these relationships can enhance teamwork and productivity, conflicts or deteriorating relationships can negatively affect work dynamics and hinder individual and collective performance.

Employee Training and Development

Training and development are integral to employee growth, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to excel in their roles. Effective human resource management prioritizes employee learning, which can lead to enhanced productivity at both the individual and organizational levels. Organizational learning, which focuses on processing and responding to internal and external information, has become increasingly important (Easter & Smith, 2009). This shift in focus highlights the importance of fostering a learning culture to optimize employee performance.

Workplace Incentive and Recognition Strategies

Organizations often use various incentives to motivate employees, with rewards ranging from internal recognition, such as challenging projects, to external benefits like salary increases and peer recognition (Chandrasekar, 2020). Employee productivity can be significantly impacted by the absence of adequate recognition and rewards. Factors such as poor working conditions, lack of feedback, and a subpar recognition system can undermine motivation. Therefore, organizations must address these areas by implementing reward systems that foster employee satisfaction and, consequently, improve productivity.

Optimal Workload Management

Distributing workloads effectively is crucial for maintaining high levels of productivity. A well-balanced workload allows employees to perform at their best, while excessive workload demands can lead to stress and burnout, which ultimately affects organizational performance. Employers must ensure that workloads are manageable and aligned with employees' capabilities to maintain a productive and motivated workforce.

Job Security and Workplace Safety

Job security is a key factor in employee satisfaction and performance. It refers to the perceived or actual likelihood that an employee will retain their job. Factors influencing job security include employment contract terms, labor laws, union presence, and economic conditions. A secure job environment also goes hand-in-hand with workplace safety. Ensuring that employees feel secure in their roles and work in a safe environment can significantly boost their confidence and productivity. Safety protocols and the protection of employees' rights, particularly when reporting injuries or hazards, contribute to overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Physical Work Environment

The physical work environment can have a significant impact on employee well-being and productivity. An ergonomic and well-designed workspace helps prevent physical strain and injuries, thereby reducing the risk of productivity loss due to health issues (Cooper & Dewe, 2014). Proper workspace design also influences workplace relationships, as employees are more likely to interact in a comfortable and supportive environment. Studies have shown that improvements in the physical office layout can lead to a 5-10% increase in productivity (Brill, 2012). Elements such as office layout and comfort are essential to achieving an optimal work environment that supports both productivity and employee satisfaction (Amir, 2020; McCoy & Evans, 2015).

Performance Feedback

Performance feedback is a crucial process for employee development and productivity enhancement. It involves an exchange of information between employees and supervisors, offering both positive reinforcement for good performance and constructive guidance for improvement. This feedback loop is essential for aligning employee efforts with organizational goals. While the formal structure of feedback is important, informal interactions that

foster open communication can also play a significant role in motivating employees and improving their performance (Chandrasekar, 2020). Regular, clear feedback helps employees understand expectations, refine their skills, and ultimately contribute more effectively to the organization.

The work environment plays a pivotal role in shaping employee productivity. Positive factors such as supervisor support, strong interpersonal relationships, effective training, and well-structured incentive systems contribute to enhanced performance. Additionally, optimal workload management, job security, and a safe physical environment are crucial for maintaining employee well-being and motivation. By fostering a supportive and conducive work environment, organizations can maximize employee productivity, resulting in greater overall success. Conversely, negative factors like poor working conditions, lack of recognition, and excessive workload can have the opposite effect, leading to decreased performance and higher levels of stress and burnout. Therefore, creating and maintaining a positive work environment is essential for achieving both individual and organizational goals.

Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to assess the impact of the working environment on employee performance at Federal Polytechnic Ekowe, Bayelsa State. The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To assess how performance feedback influences employee performance.
- ii. To evaluate the role of job aids in enhancing employee productivity.
- iii. To explore the relationship between the physical work environment and employee performance.

Research Questions

1. How does performance feedback contribute to improving employee performance?
2. In what ways do job aids enhance employee performance?
3. Which aspects of the physical work environment have a positive impact on employee performance?

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research survey design, which focuses on gathering and analyzing primary data through the use of structured questionnaires. The target population for this research consists of 850 staff members from Federal Polytechnic Ekowe in Bayelsa State, including both teaching and non-teaching personnel. A sample of 400 respondents, comprising both groups, was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The data collection instrument was a self-designed questionnaire, titled *The Impact of Work Environment on Workers' Performance Questionnaire (TIWEWPQ)*, created by the researcher. Data analysis was conducted using frequency distributions, percentages, and cumulative percentages.

Results

Research Question 1: How does performance feedback contribute to improving employee performance?

The responses provided insights into how performance feedback from supervisors influences and improves employees' work performance.

Table 1: Employee Performance Feedback

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Always	25	6.25	6.25	6.25
Usually	38	9.5	9.5	15.75
Sometimes	46	11.5	11.5	27.25
Rarely	157	39.25	39.25	66.5
Never	83	20.75	20.75	87.25
Not sure	51	12.75	12.75	100
Total	400	100	100	

As indicated in Table 1 above, 39.25% of employees reported that they rarely receive performance feedback from their supervisors, while 20.75% stated that they never receive any feedback. 12.75% of employees were unsure about receiving performance feedback, 11.5% mentioned that they occasionally get feedback, 9.5% said they typically receive feedback, and 6.25% affirmed that they always receive performance feedback from their

supervisors. Employee performance feedback plays a role in enhancing performance, as it includes both positive reinforcement for tasks well done and constructive feedback for areas needing improvement.

Research Question 2: In what ways do job aids enhance employee performance?

The following responses highlight the role of job aids within the organization and their impact on enhancing employees' job performance.

Table 2: Job Aid

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly Disagree	210	52.5	52.5	52.5
Disagree	163	40.75	40.75	93.25
Agree	10	2.5	2.5	95.75
Strongly Agree	17	4.25	4.25	100
Total	400	100	100	

The table above reveals that 52.5% of employees strongly disagree with the idea that the absence of job aids in the organization has a significant impact on their job performance. Additionally, 40.75% disagree with the notion that job aids are absent and contribute to their performance. On the other hand, 4.25% strongly agree that job aids help enhance their performance, and 2.5% agree that the presence of job aids plays a role in improving their performance. The availability of job aids in the workplace supports employee performance by making tasks easier and reducing the likelihood of errors.

Research Question 3: What specific elements of the physical work environment have a positive effect on employees' performance?

In this study, the physical work environment was identified as a key factor influencing employees' performance, based on the responses collected through the distributed questionnaires.

Table 3: Physical Work Environment

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Very bad	86	21.5	21.5	21.5
Bad	167	41.75	41.75	63.25
Moderate	56	14	14	77.25
Good	53	13.25	13.25	90.5
Very Good	38	9.5	9.5	100
Total	400	100	100	

According to the table above, the majority of employees, making up 41.7%, rated their physical work environment as poor in terms of its impact on their performance. This poor environment has affected their comfort and ability to work effectively within the organization. Additionally, 21.5% of employees described the physical work environment as very poor, while 14% rated it as moderate. Only 13.25% of employees considered the environment to be good, and a small 9.5% believed it to be very good. Most employees agree that there is a strong correlation between the physical work environment and motivation, which ultimately influences their performance. The study suggests that the current physical environment does not effectively encourage workers to perform at their best. Therefore, it is crucial for the organization to create a more comfortable and supportive work environment that motivates employees to perform their tasks effectively.

Discussion

Performance feedback plays a significant role in any organization, as it provides employees with both positive reinforcement for tasks well done and constructive guidance for areas needing improvement. Furthermore, the presence of job aids in the workplace is essential, as it helps make work easier and reduces errors, contributing positively to employee performance. The study also highlighted that many employees expressed dissatisfaction with the physical work environment and its negative impact on their productivity. This underscores the organization's responsibility to provide a more conducive and comfortable working environment, which would, in turn, motivate

employees to perform their duties more effectively. As noted by Vischer (2007), a well-designed work environment allows employees to focus their energy and attention on their tasks, enhancing overall performance.

Conclusion

The work environment plays a crucial role in motivating employees to effectively perform their tasks. In today's competitive business landscape, monetary incentives alone are not sufficient to drive performance. The ability to attract, retain, and motivate high-performing employees is becoming increasingly essential. The study also revealed that employees would likely improve their performance if the issues identified during the research are addressed by management. Ultimately, it was found that employees' working conditions significantly impact their productivity. Therefore, it is the organization's responsibility to foster a positive and comfortable work environment that supports employees in performing their jobs to the best of their abilities.

Recommendations

1. Regular meetings should be held with employees to discuss their concerns, allowing management to address grievances, which can serve as a motivational factor.
2. Managers should receive counselling to improve their relationships with subordinates, fostering a more positive workplace culture.
3. The organization should implement a solid program to support employees' work-life balance, as this can be a powerful motivator and help with retention.
4. Management should prioritize creating a work environment that attracts, retains, and motivates employees, thereby improving comfort and increasing organizational productivity.

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