

## **Work Environment and Job Attitude among Employees in a Nigerian Work Organization**

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The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between work environment and job attitude of employees in a service-oriented work organization in Ilorin, capital city of Kwara state, Nigeria. Method involved the use of questionnaire to collect first hand data from one hundred and twenty (120) respondents from the work organization. Four hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistical method. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between work environment and respondents' attitude to job. Specifically, the work environment was found to be socially and physically challenging, thereby leading to some negative behaviours on the part of the workers such as absenteeism, low commitment and apathy. The study concludes that in view of the importance of work environmental factors to positive job attitude, programmes such as the introduction of financial incentives, closer communication and positive leadership style should be embarked upon by management in work organizations.

Keywords: work, work environment, job attitude, motivation, satisfaction, productivity, management

### **Introduction**

Many enterprises limit their productivity enhancement of employees to the acquisition of skills. The type of work environment in which employees operate determines the way in which such enterprises prosper. According to Akinyele (2010), about 80% of productivity problems reside in the work environment of organizations. Business is full of risks and uncertainties and the ability of any organization to respond successfully to the challenges posed by the present dynamic nature of economic situations will largely depend on how well the organization can effectively and efficiently utilize the human resources at its disposal. It is a generally accepted fact that the success of any business organization will largely depend upon the effective and meaningful utilization of its financial and physical resources. The performance of a corporate organization, which determines its survival and growth, depends to a large extent on the productivity of its workforce. Yesufu (2000) asserted that the wealth of the nation as well as socio-economic well being of its people depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of its various sub-components. However, labour is generally regarded as the most dynamic of all the factors that are employed for the creation of wealth, having the potential to energize and serve as catalyst to all the other resources.

Conducive work environment ensures the well-being of employees which invariably will enable them exert themselves to their roles with all vigour that may translate to higher productivity (Akinyele, 2007).

Employees have attitudes about many aspects of their jobs, their careers, and their organizations; however, the most focal employee attitude is job satisfaction. Looking at a group of people performing the same job for some time, we cannot but observe that some people do it better than the others. One will want to know the factors that account for these differences in performance. One factor is that the differences reflect varying degree of skills or abilities displayed by individual workers, while the other factor is motivation. Motivation on the other hand simply refers to the urges, aspiration, drives and needs of human beings that direct or control or explain their behaviour.

In employment, two parties are involved, which are their skills, and the other part with their money. The imbalance of this therefore could result in job dissatisfaction which may lead to resignation and low performance of some workers. The issue of job satisfaction has been a great concern and has led employers of labours to devise way of selecting the best people for any given job. There is the belief that the best way for an organization to efficiently and effectively achieve the organizational goals is to place the best people on the jobs. Productivity is thus of fundamental importance to the individual worker of whatever status, to the organization whether commercial or not and to the national economy at

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large and accordingly therefore, to the upliftment of the welfare of the citizens (Yesufu, 2000; Akinyele, 2007). Brenner (2004) asserted that the ability of employees within an organization to share knowledge throughout the system depends on the conditions of their work environment. Some employees tend to be more productive in a well facilitated work environment. More so, the quality of comfort variable from work environment determines the level of satisfaction and productivity of workers. Workers productivity cannot be optimal, if the conditions of work environment are not favourable. Improved work environment enhances employee's productivity. This study is premised on the fact that both management and workers of enterprises are less considerate of work environment as having a great influence on productivity of workers as resulting from workers negative attitude to work while the workers view of low productivity may stem from poor pay system, absence of fringe benefits, inappropriate leadership style, wrong job location, unfavourable organizational change among others.

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between work environmental factors and job attitude among workers in a Nigerian work environment. For the purpose of the present study workers of the University of Ilorin were used as subjects. Other specific objectives are to:

- Examine work environment of workers in selected organization.
- Investigate attitude to work demonstrated by workers in the selected organization.
- Determine the impact of work environment on job attitude of workers
- Determine the relationship between financial rewards, motivation and job attitude among workers in the selected organization.
- Suggest measures for improving job attitude of Nigerian workers.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Meaning of work environment***

The need to provide a safe work environment for employees has had a long history in human resource management. Spector and Beer (1994) acknowledged that work systems cannot only affect commitment, competence, cost effectiveness and congruence but also have long term consequence for workers' well being, there are some evidences to indicate that work systems designs may have effects on physical health, mental health and longevity of life itself. Conducive work environment ensures the well being of employees which invariably will enable them exert

themselves to their roles with all vigour that may translate to higher productivity (Akinyele, 2007).

Kohun (1992), defines work environment as an entirety which comprises the totality of forces, actions and other influential factors that are currently and, or potentially contending with the employee's activities and performance. Work environment is the sum of the interrelationship that exists within the employees and the employees and the environment in which the employees work. Brenner (2004) was of the opinion that "the ability to share knowledge throughout organisations depends on how the work environment is designed to enable organisations to utilise work environment as if it were an asset. This helps organisations to improve effectiveness and allow employees to benefit from collective knowledge". In addition, he argued that work environment designed to suit employee's satisfaction and free flow of exchange of ideas is a better medium of motivating employees towards higher productivity. However, work environment when appropriately designed, motivates employees toward higher productivity.

Work environment, according to Opperman (2002), is a composite of three major sub-environments via: the technical environment, the human environment and the organisational environment. Technical environment refers to tools, equipment, technological infrastructure and other physical or technical elements. The technical environment creates elements that enable employees perform their respective responsibilities and activities.

The human environment refers to peers, others with whom employees relates, team and work groups, interactional issues, the leadership and management. This environment is designed in such a way that encourages informal interaction in the work place so that the opportunity to share knowledge and exchange ideas could be enhanced. This is a basis to attain maximum productivity. Organisational environment include systems, procedures, practices, values and philosophies. Management has control over organisational environment. Measurement system where people are rewarded on quantity, hence workers will have little interest in helping those workers who are trying to improve quality. Thus, issues of organisational environment influence employee's productivity.

Kyko (2005) posited that there are two types of work environment. These are identified as Conducive Work Environment and Toxic Work Environment. Conducive work environment gives pleasurable experience to employees and enable them to actualize their abilities and behaviour. It also reinforces self-actualizing behaviour. For instance, an irresponsible employee changing into a responsible employee in a

conducive work environment. Toxic environment according to him brings about unpleasant experiences and at the same time, deactualize employees' behaviour. It reinforces low self-actualizing behaviours and it leads to the development of negative traits of the employees' behaviour. However, in a toxic work environment, responsible and sensible employee can change into irrational and irresponsible employee as a survival strategy (Kyko, 2005). He identified six factors which contribute to a toxic work environment hence contributing to low productivity of workers. These factors are opaque management, biased boss, company's policies, working conditions, interpersonal relationship and pay.

According to Yesufu (1984), the nature of the physical condition under which employees work is important to output. Offices and factories that are too hot and ill-ventilated are debilitating to effort. There should be enough supply of good protective clothing, drinking water, restrooms, toilets, first aids facilities etc. Both management and employees should be safety conscious at all times and minimum or requirement of the organisations act must be respected. These factors may be important; yet believing that the attitude and management style of mid-level managers are what really influence employee productivity. Though one of the primary tasks of the managers is to motivate people in the organisation to perform at high levels (Steers & Porter, 2000; Christensen, 2002).

It is generally agreed that the more manager can answer the question of what motivates their employees accurately, the more effective they will be at enhancing performance and advancing the notion of organisational accountability (Chernis & Kane, 2004). Lambart (2005) opines that "labour productivity is rarely measured directly but inferred from changes in employees' attitude and behaviour such as organisation commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction". An effective work environment management entails making work environment attractive, creative, comfortable, satisfactory and motivating to employees so as to give employees a sense of pride and purpose in what they do (Brenner, 2004).

### **Work attitude**

Attitudes are propensities, or tendencies, to react in a favourable or unfavourable way toward an object. The object could be almost anything in the world around us. Attitudes reflect a person's likes and dislikes towards other persons, objects, events and activities in their environment. It makes sense to study and know about attitudes because strong attitudes will very likely affect a person's behaviour; attitudes toward supervision, pay, benefits, promotion or anything that

might trigger positive or negative reactions. As a result, employee satisfaction and attitudes represent one of the key area of measuring organisational effectiveness. Because of the importance of the links of tasks, contextual, and ethical performance with important measures of organisational effectiveness, one of the key goals of managers should be to create linkages between employee performance and their satisfaction. However, it is not easy to change a person's attitudes about their work. Attitudes and satisfactions at work can and do change, sometimes quickly, as events change, employees who are happy and productive can become dissatisfied and resentful overnight as a consequence of some managerial actions. Employee attitudes can provide important information about the effectiveness of different management strategies. Job related attitudes play a major role in shaping the work behaviours of managers in organisations. Lynn et al., (1990) described the differential relationship that organisational attitudes (organisational commitment and satisfaction) and job attitudes (job involvement and satisfaction) have with several behaviour intentions (turnover, absenteeism and performance).

Many researchers agree that job attitude has a positive impact on performance (Manikandan, 2002). According to Robbins and Coulter (2005), attitudes are evaluative statements that have three components. The cognitive component is the beliefs an individual holds. The emotional or feeling part of an attitude is the affective component, and the behavioural aspect is the intention component.

### **Factors influencing employee attitude**

In general, practitioners understand the importance of the work situation as a cause of employee attitudes, and it is an area that can help influence through organisational programs and management practices. However, in the past two decades, there have been significant research gains in understanding the two major causes of employee attitudes which are dispositional and cultural influences on job satisfaction. In addition, one of the most important areas of the work situation to influence job satisfaction is the work itself, which is often overlooked when addressing job satisfaction.

### **Dispositional influence**

Several innovative studies have shown the influences of a person's disposition on job satisfaction. One of the first studies in this according to Staw and Ross (1985) demonstrated that a person's job satisfaction scores have stability over time, even when he or she changes jobs or companies. In a related study, childhood

temperament was found to be statistically related to adult job satisfaction up to 40 years later (Staw et al, 1986). Evidence even indicates that the job satisfaction of identical twin reared apart is statistically similar (Segal et al., 1989). Although, the dispositional influences had been criticised by House, Shane and Herold, (1996) indicating that difference in job satisfaction across employees can be traced, in part, to differences in their disposition or temperament. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) suggest that disposition may influence the experience of emotionally significant events at work, which in turn influenced job satisfaction.

Furthermore, theoretical models were developed by scholars in an attempt to better understand the relationship between dispositions and job satisfaction. In this direction, (Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et al, 1998) found that a key personality trait, core self-evaluation, correlates with employee job satisfaction. They also found that one of the primary causes of the relationship was through the perception of the job itself. Thus, it appears that the most important situational effect on job satisfaction which is the job itself is linked to what may be the most important personality trait to predict job satisfaction that is core self-evaluation.

Some other personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness can also influence job satisfaction (Judge et al, 2002). These various research findings indicate that there is in fact a relationship between disposition or personality and job satisfaction. Even though organisations cannot directly impact employee personality, the use of sound selection methods and a good match between employees and jobs will ensure people are selected and placed into jobs most appropriate for them, which, in turn, will help enhance their job satisfaction.

### ***Cultural influence***

In terms of other influences on employee attitudes, there is also a small, but growing body of research on the influences of culture or country on employee attitudes and job satisfaction.

The most cited cross-cultural work on employee attitudes is that of Hofstede (1980, 1985), cross-cultural dimensions. Hofstede (1980) identified four cross-cultural dimensions: individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance versus risk taking, power distance; and masculinity-femininity. Hofstede (1980) was of the view that the individualism-collectivism is the degree at which individuals are integrated into groups. He posited further that on the individualist aspect, we find societies in which the ties between

individuals are loose, everyone is expected to look after himself and his immediate family.

Furthermore, on the side of the collectivists side, societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive in-groups, often extended families which continue protecting them in exchange of unquestioning loyalty. Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, thus man's search for truth (Hofstede, 1980). People in uncertainty avoiding societies are more emotional and motivated by inner nervous energy (Hofstede, 1985).

According to Hofstede (1980), he argued that power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations and institutions accepts and expect their power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality defined from below, not from above. Hofstede suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. However, power and inequality of course are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that "all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others" (Hofstede, 1985). From Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions (1980), he posited that roles are distributed between the genders which are another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found.

### ***Work situation influence***

The work situation also matters in terms of job satisfaction and organisation impact. The most notable situational influence on job satisfaction is the nature of the work itself often called "intrinsic job characteristics". Researches shows that organisations, and types of jobs, when employees are asked to evaluate different facets of their job such as supervision, pay, promotion opportunities, co-workers and so forth, the nature of the work itself generally emerges as the most important job facet (Judges & Church, 2000; Jurgensen, 1978). It is not that well-designed compensation programs or effective supervision are unimportant, rather, it is that much can be done to influence job satisfaction by ensuring work is as interesting and challenging as possible.

Unfortunately, some managers think employees are most desirous of pay to the exclusion of other job attributes such as interesting work. Of all the major job satisfaction areas, satisfaction with the nature of work itself which includes job challenge, autonomy variety and scope best predicts overall job satisfaction, as well as other important outcomes like employee retention (Weiner, 2000; Parisi & Weiner, 1999).

## *Types of work attitude*

### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction is defined as “the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs” (Spector, 1997). This definition suggests job satisfaction is a general or global affective reaction that individuals hold about their job. While researchers most often measure global job satisfaction, there is also interest in measuring different “facets” or “dimensions” of satisfaction. Examination of these facet conditions is often useful for more careful factors. Traditional job satisfaction facets include: co-workers, pay, job conditions, supervision, nature of the work and benefits.

Job satisfaction describes how content an individual is with his or her job. The happier people are within their job, the more satisfied they are said to be. Job satisfaction is not the same as motivation, although it is clearly linked. Job design aims to enhance job satisfaction and performance; methods include job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment.

Other influences on satisfaction include the management style and culture, employee involvement, empowerment and autonomous work position. Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job; an affective reaction to one’s job; and an attitude towards one’s job.

Weiss (2002) has argued that job satisfaction is an attitude but points out that researchers should clearly distinguish the objects of cognitive evaluation which are affect (emotion), beliefs and behaviours. This definition suggests that we form attitudes towards our jobs by taking into account our feelings, our beliefs, and our behaviours. Job satisfaction can also be seen within the broader context of the range of issues which affect an individual’s experience of work, or their quality of working life. Job satisfaction can be understood in terms of its relationships with other key factors such as general well-being, stress at work, control at work, homework interface, and working conditions.

### *Organisational commitment*

Meyer and Allen (1997) state that organisational commitment is “a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationships with the organisation; and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organisation”. Other researchers use similar definitions that refer to an employee’s attachment, goal congruency, identification, loyalty and allegiance to their organisation. Researchers

generally agree there are three “foci” used to classify types or organisational commitment. The three types of commitment are: Affective Commitment; Continuance Commitment; Normative Commitment. Affective commitment has been defined as the employee’s positive emotional attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1993). An employee who is affectively committed strongly identifies with the goals of the organisation and desires to remain a part of the organisation. This employee commits to the organisation because he/she “wants to” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1993).

On the other hand, continuance commitment according to Meyer and Allen (1991, 1993) revealed that when an individual commits to the organisation because he/she perceives high costs of losing organisational membership, including economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) that would be incurred. The employee remains a member of the organisation he/she “has to” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1993).

However, normative commitment has to do with the individual’s or employee’s commitment to and remains with an organisation because of feelings of obligation. These feelings may derive from many sources. For example, the organisation may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels a “moral” obligation to put forth effort on the job and stay with the organisation to “repay the debt”. It may also reflect an internalised norm, developed before the employee joins the organisation through family or other socialisation processes, that one should be loyal to one’s organisation. The employee stays with the organisation because he/she “ought to” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1993).

These three prolonged classification allows for identification of the underlying basis for each type of commitment and researchers have clarified the unique antecedents and outcomes related to each type (Meyer, et al., 2002). Like job satisfaction, reliable measures of the three types of commitment have also been developed and validated (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1993).

## **Methods**

Survey method of research design was used for the present study. Sampling techniques adopted in this work was covered by the entire population under study. The study was conducted between June and August, 2011.

To ensure that the sample is properly representative of the population, the sampling techniques were based on stratified random sampling. The population was therefore stratified into various

strata using departments, occupational status, age, sex etc. In this study, the sample consist a total of One Hundred and Twenty (120) respondents chosen from the population. The sample includes all categories of workers, including both male, female, junior staffs and senior staffs from the various departments of the organisation. However, the study covers gathering information from staffs of the selected organisation. Data were gathered by the use of both the primary and secondary source of information.

The use of questionnaire was the main research instrument utilized in gathering information from the subjects. The questionnaire was pretested on some employees in the University of Ilorin so as to ascertain its reliability and validity. The Questionnaire was then distributed to the subjects (120 respondents) and was completely returned.

Data analysis was done through the use of simple percentage and frequency tables and the relationship between the variables determined through cross tabulation and test of hypotheses. The data from respondents were analysed and figures from from findings were tabulated. The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical test was used to investigate the relationship between the variables. After presentation of the table and determination of the  $X^2$  value, a decision is taken, where necessary.

## Results

Data from our finding shows that majority of the respondents (61 percent) are male while only 39 percent are female. This finding reflects the gender distribution of the Nigerian labour force in which the males are in larger proportion. On the respondents opinion on their working condition, our finding shows that the largest proportion of the respondents

(67 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with their present working condition with 16 percent indicating that they were very satisfied. Only 7 percent of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied while 4 percent opined that they were very dissatisfied.

This finding reflects that majority of the respondents were of the view that they were satisfied with their working condition. This finding may seem strange because many Nigerian workers are faced with enormous economic challenges. However, the finding could be understood in the light of the fact that many of these workers considered themselves to be a privileged group for being employed against the backdrop of mass poverty in the country. The next finding reflects respondents' expression of the types of rewards given at the workplace. Majority of them (86 percent) expressed that they were praised by their superiors while 10 percent maintained that they were promoted and 4 percent indicated that they received financial reward.

With regards to this finding, it could be observed that while only few proportions of the respondents received financial reward, yet they are satisfied with their working condition. As said earlier, the many workers in Nigeria are ready to secure their jobs even if the financial reward in forms of wages, bonus and others are not attractive.

### Testing of hypotheses

In testing of hypotheses in this work, two hypotheses were formulated and tested.

*Hypothesis IH<sub>0</sub>*: There is no significant relationship between work environment and workers' attitude to job. *H<sub>1</sub>*: There is significant relationship between work environment and workers' attitude to job

Table 1. Cross tabulation of work environment and attitude to work.

Work environment	Attitude to work			Total
	Positive	Negative	Undecided	
Conducive	67	7	4	78
Not conducive	22	3	3	28
Undecided	10	2	2	14
Total	99	12	9	120

$$X^2_c = 12.55; df = 4; X^2_t = 9.49; H_0 = \text{Rejected}$$

*Hypothesis II*: *H<sub>0</sub>*: The outcome of employees' Perception of reward to those of others is not likely to determine job satisfaction. *H<sub>1</sub>*: The outcome of

employees' Perception of reward to those of others is likely to determine job satisfaction.

Table 2. Cross tabulation of employee perception of reward system and job satisfaction.

Employee Perception of reward system	Job satisfaction				Total
	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Favourable	13	41	5	3	66
Not favourable	4	30	2	1	39
Undecided	2	10	1	1	15
Total	19	81	8	5	120

$\chi^2_c = 3.01$ ;  $df = 8$ ;  $\chi^2_t = 15.5$ ;  $H_0 = \text{Accepted}$

## Discussion

The results of the two hypotheses formulated revealed the following results. Firstly, there is a significant relationship between work environment and workers' attitude to job. This means that the work environment have an impact on the workers' attitude to job. This may range from conduciveness of the environment and management style. This is in line with Spector and Beer (1994) argument that work systems cannot only affect commitment, competence, cost effectiveness and congruence but also have long term consequence for workers' welfare, and there are some evidences to indicate that work systems designs may have effects on physical health, mental health and longevity of life itself. Additionally, Akinyele (2007), adds that conducive work environment ensures the welfare of employees which invariably will enable them exert themselves to their roles with all vigour that may translate to higher productivity. Secondly, the outcome of employees' perception of reward to those of others is not likely to determine job satisfaction. This is because key factors which determine job satisfaction include among others, the pleasure and satisfaction workers get from their co-workers, job conditions, supervision, benefits and the nature of the work (Spector, 1997; Weiss, 2002).

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could however be concluded that work environment affects job satisfaction and achievement of organizational goals. The phenomenon of job satisfaction is influenced by many factors ranging from financial rewards and non-financial rewards. Financial rewards have been found to be necessary but not sufficient condition for job satisfaction also non- financial rewards are important determinants of job satisfaction.

Therefore, the work environment of most Nigerian organizations must be accorded with high priority while adequate consideration must be given to other rewards that give positive attitudes to workers in order to be satisfied with their job. Work

environment has been found to be necessary condition for the achievement of organizational goal but over emphasis on work environment policies without due monitoring of employees may eventually have a negative effect on achievement of organizational goal.

Deriving from the above, it is recommended among other measurers that management need to improve the system of communication with their employees; should create a motivating climate to increase productivity and clear reward system to all members of the organisation; since work environment is the key determinant of job satisfaction, emphasis should be on how to improve the work environment, making it more conducive to employees in providing loans and other scheme that uphold and sustain employees' commitment and dedication to their jobs. Lastly, management should clearly set structures and work system as to achieve goals and objectives.

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