

# The Impact of Work Environment on Workers Performance: A Study of Federal Polytechnic Ekowe, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract:** Organizations need to try new ways of working and create a happy environment where people feel valued and motivated. The study looked at how the work environment affects employees' performance at Federal Polytechnic Ekowe. It surveyed 400 staff, including senior and junior members, using questionnaires. The results showed that the organization's environment affects its members, and solving identified problems could boost employee performance. These problems include employee performance feedback, job aid and physical work environment. The study suggests that the organization should hold regular meetings for employees to discuss concerns with management, which could motivate them. Also, management should try as much as possible to build a work environment that attracts, retain and motivate its employees so that to help them work comfortable and increase organization productivity.

**Keywords:** Work Environment and Workers Performance

## I. Introduction

The performance of employees is significantly influenced by the working environment, which can have either positive or negative effects (Chandrasekar, 2001). International organizations worldwide engage in discussions regarding employee rights, recognizing that individuals spend roughly half of their lives in indoor settings, profoundly affecting their mental state, behavior, capabilities, and performance (Dorgan, 1994). It is widely assumed that a conducive workplace environment leads to better outcomes and increased productivity. A well-designed physical office environment uplifts employees, thereby enhancing their productivity. Extensive literature on various offices and office buildings indicates that factors such as dissatisfaction, cluttered workspaces, and the physical environment significantly impact employees' productivity (Carnevale, 1992; Clements-Croome, 1997).

During the 1990s, changes in social dynamics, advancements in information technology, and flexible work organization methods transformed the factors influencing the work environment (Hasun&Makhbul, 2005). Physically and emotionally fit employees exhibit greater motivation to work, resulting in improved performance outcomes. Furthermore, a suitable workplace environment reduces absenteeism, thus enhancing employees' performance and overall productivity (Boles et al., 2004).

As reported by the Economic and Social Council in 2007, global economic growth has failed to generate sufficient new and improved jobs to alleviate poverty. Despite robust economic growth in many developing nations, unemployment rates are increasing, a significant portion of the workforce earns wages below the poverty line, and the majority of non-agricultural jobs are informal. Consequently, there has been a shift in focus from mere economic growth to a broader concern for enhancing the quality of work. Governments across Africa have urged action to address these challenges. The African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and

Poverty Alleviation in Africa, held in Ouagadougou (2004) strongly endorsed the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, emphasizing the creation of quality employment opportunities.

According to Noble (2009), it is imperative to prioritize the identification and management of the working environment, as employees who perceive their environment negatively may experience chronic stress. Opperman (2002) further elaborates on the concept of the working environment, defining it as encompassing various elements such as processes, systems, structures, tools, and conditions within the workplace. These elements can exert either positive or negative effects on individual performance. Moreover, the working environment extends to include policies, rules, organizational culture, available resources, interpersonal dynamics, physical workspaces, as well as internal and external environmental factors. Collectively, these components shape the manner in which employees carry out their job responsibilities and interact within their work environment.

### **Objectives**

The overarching aim of this research is to evaluate how the working environment influences the performance of employees at Federal Polytechnic Ekowe, Bayelsa State. The Specific Objectives to consider are:

- i. To analyze the impact of performance feedback on employees' performance.
- ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of job aids in enhancing employees' performance.
- iii. To investigate the correlation between the physical work environment and employees' performance.

### **Research questions**

1. In what specific ways does performance feedback contribute to the improvement of employees' performance?
2. How does the utilization of job aids lead to the enhancement of employees' performance?
3. What particular aspects of the physical work environment positively impact employees' performance?

### **Literature**

The intrinsic connection between employees' motivation and their productivity has long been recognized, dating back to seminal works in management theory such as Frederick Taylor's "The Principles of Scientific Management" in 1911 and Henry Gantt's "Works, Wages, and Profits" in 1913. These early theories underscored the pivotal role of motivation in driving employees to perform optimally. However, modern approaches to employee motivation management have departed from Taylor's "differential piece rate work" and Gantt's "task and bonus wage" systems, evolving towards more employee-centric and efficacious methods (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, proposed in 1943, elucidates various facets of motivation, ranging from basic survival needs to higher-order psychological and self-fulfillment needs. According to Maslow, individuals are driven to work not only for financial compensation but also for social connections, security, achievement, recognition, and fulfillment. Job satisfaction emerges as a critical determinant of high performance among employees across diverse workplaces.

Taylor's assertion that salary and wages serve as primary motivators for workers remains pertinent, as he contended that non-incentive wage systems fostered low productivity. His argument suggests that equitable compensation linked to individual contributions incentivizes employees to exert greater effort. Conversely, Taylor posited that fixed wages irrespective of performance could undermine motivation, leading to decreased productivity, an observation supported by contemporary studies (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). According to Kohun (1992) in Bushiri (2014) defines the working environment as everything that affects an employee's activities and productivity, including various forces and factors they deal with at work. It's essentially the relationship between employees and their work surroundings. Brenner (2004) suggests that organizations can enhance productivity by designing the work environment to facilitate knowledge sharing. When the environment encourages satisfaction and open exchange of ideas, employees are motivated to perform better and benefit from collective knowledge. Opperman (2002) breaks down the working environment into three main parts: the technical environment, the human environment, and the organizational environment. The technical

environment involves tools and equipment necessary for tasks, while the human environment includes interactions with colleagues, teams, and leadership. Lastly, the organizational environment encompasses systems, procedures, and values set by management, which can significantly impact productivity. For instance, a reward system focused solely on quantity may discourage quality improvement efforts among workers. Sinha (2001) emphasizes that employees' productivity hinges greatly on their willingness and openness to perform their duties. According to him, when employees are motivated and eager to engage in their tasks, it naturally enhances their productivity, thereby contributing to overall organizational success.

Stup (2003) elaborates on the importance of aligning employees' tasks with organizational goals to ensure standard productivity levels. By keeping tasks on track, employers can effectively monitor employee performance and provide necessary support to enhance productivity. Additionally, Stup advocates for the implementation of a reward system based on productivity to incentivize employees and encourage task performance.

In further detail, Stup (2003) outlines various factors crucial to enhancing employees' productivity. These factors include the physical work environment, availability of equipment, meaningfulness of work, clear productivity expectations, feedback mechanisms, reward systems, adherence to standard operating procedures, and the development of employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. On the other hand, Franco et al. (2002) underscore the significance of internal motivation in driving productivity, but they also highlight the influence of internal factors such as skills, intellectual capacity, and available resources. Employers are therefore urged to provide conducive working conditions to ensure that employees can meet productivity standards effectively. This necessitates creating an environment that fosters motivation and provides necessary resources and support for employees to excel in their roles.

### **Factors in the Working Environment Influencing Employee Productivity**

A conducive and supportive working environment provides the necessary conditions for employees to perform effectively, leveraging their knowledge, skills, competencies, and available resources to deliver high-quality organizational services. This study examines the following factors:

**Supervisor Support:** A supervisor, often regarded as an experienced leader and problem solver, serves as a crucial figure at the forefront of organizational management (Adair, 1988; Nijman, 2002). As experienced leaders, supervisors are frequently involved in various training programs, including establishing objectives, selecting trainers, developing lesson plans, choosing program methods and techniques, preparing materials, scheduling sessions, and conducting training needs analyses (Adair, 1988; Elangovan&Karakowsky, 1999). According to Rabey (2007), supervisors also function as trainers, guiding employees through operational processes, especially when introducing new procedures. While supervisor support can positively impact employee productivity, instances of inadequate support can hinder performance. For instance, miscommunication between supervisors and employees regarding job-related information or processes can impede productivity (Harris et al., 2000). To optimize employee productivity, both supervisors and employees must actively commit to their relationship. Full commitment from both parties is essential for fostering positive performance outcomes among employees (Blau, 1964).

**Positive Interpersonal Relationships among Colleagues:** The cultivation of positive relationships among coworkers represents a unique dynamic with significant implications for both individuals and the organizations in which these relationships develop. Research indicates that the quality of workplace relationships directly influences an individual's capacity to succeed professionally. Given the substantial amount of time employees spend averaging around 50 hours per week in the workplace, it is not surprising that strong bonds often form between colleagues. These connections have the potential to be mutually beneficial, fostering cooperation and camaraderie, but they can also pose risks if conflicts arise or if relationships turn sour.

**Employee Training and Development:** Employee training and development encompass the acquisition of knowledge, skills, techniques, and practices relevant to one's role within an organization. It serves as a cornerstone of effective human resource management, as it can enhance productivity on individual, team, and organizational levels. Recognized as a process aimed at expanding individuals' capacity for action, organizations are increasingly prioritizing collective learning and development. Organizational learning, in particular, involves the efficient processing, interpretation, and response to both internal and external information, primarily of an explicit nature. According to Easterby-Smith (1999), the emergence of the concept of organizational learning represents a shift from previous perspectives, which tended to emphasize the commercial significance of learning without sufficient empirical understanding of the underlying processes involved.

**Workplace Incentive and Recognition Strategies:** Organizations strategize to identify what motivates their employees and establish both formal and informal frameworks for rewarding desired behaviors. Rewards can take various forms, including internal incentives like challenging assignments and external incentives such as increased compensation and peer acknowledgment (Chandrasekar, 2011). The productivity of professional employees may suffer not only due to factors within the working environment but also due to deficiencies in human resource management practices, including inadequate recognition of high-performing employees, substandard working conditions, the absence of a comprehensive productivity appraisal system, and inadequate feedback on productivity outcomes. Consequently, significant adjustments in areas such as promotions, compensation, and benefits are crucial for maintaining employee satisfaction and, consequently, enhancing overall production.

**Optimal Workload Management:** Effective workload distribution tailored to enable employees to achieve peak productivity levels is essential. A well-balanced distribution of workload empowers organizational management to optimize the productivity of their workforce. As workload demands escalate, employees become increasingly vulnerable to stress and burnout, which can significantly impact organizational productivity.

**Job Security and Workplace Safety:** Job security pertains to the perceived or actual likelihood that an individual will retain their job. Factors influencing job security encompass the terms stipulated in employment contracts, labor laws governing termination, the presence of labor organizations such as unions, and prevailing economic conditions. Additionally, employees' sense of job security may fluctuate based on their employer's conduct and commitment to ensuring a safe and secure work environment.

The issue of work environment on employees performance cannot be overemphasized as work environment significantly impacts workers' performance. Positive interpersonal relationships among colleagues, effective training and development programs, and workplace incentive and recognition strategies contribute to enhancing productivity. Additionally, optimal workload management and job security are crucial factors that influence employee performance. A supportive and conducive work environment fosters motivation, collaboration, and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to improved performance and organizational success. Conversely, negative factors such as poor working conditions, inadequate recognition, and excessive workload can hinder productivity and lead to stress and burnout among employees. Therefore, creating and maintaining a positive work environment is essential for maximizing workers' performance and achieving overall organizational goals. Ensuring job security for employees is a vital part of enforcing occupational health and safety rules. Government health and safety agencies in various places protect employees' job security when they report injuries, illnesses, or safety concerns at work. These rules prevent employers from discouraging workers from reporting health and safety problems and stop them from retaliating against workers who do.

**Job security:** Job security means how likely it is for someone to keep their job. A job with high job security means there's a low chance of losing it. Workplace safety is when employers take steps to prevent dangers to employees' health and safety. This includes making plans and rules for employees and managers at work. It also means having policies and emergency supplies available for employees and managers to use at the workplace.

**Physical Work Environment:** Physical working environment can result a person to fit or misfit to the environment of the workplace. A physical work environment can also be known as an ergonomic workplace. Researches on the workplace environment need to be done in order to get an ergonomic workplace for every each of the employees. By having this ergonomic physical workplace at their workplace, it will help employees from not getting the nerve injury (Cooper &Dewe, 2004). Furthermore, McCoy and Evans (2005) stated that the elements of working environment need to be proper so that the employees would not be stressed while getting their job done. In their article, they also stated that the physical element plays an important role in developing the network and relationship at workplace. Result of the employees' productivity can be increased from five to ten percent depending on the improvement of the physical workplace design at their workplace (Brill, 1992). Further, Amir (2010) mentions elements that related to the working environment. There are two main elements which are the office layout plan and also the office comfort. Amir (2010) also stated that a physical workplace is an area in an organization that is being arranged so that the goal of the organization could be achieved.

**Performance Feedback:** Performance feedback is an information exchange and conflict resolution process between the employee and supervisor. This consists of both positive feedback on what the employee is doing right as well as feedback on what requires improvement. Managers and supervisors will need to be comfortable with working with the whole range of workplace factors that influence employee performance. While the supervisor gives his/her feedback and requirements, the employee enables to give his her feedback regarding his/her requirements. Although this process is formal, it could be managed informally by gaining closer relations for two sides (Chandrasekar, 2011).

## II. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive research survey design, which involves collection and analysis of primary data collected with the help of structured questionnaires. The population of this study consists of 850 staff of Federal Polytechnic Ekowe in Bayelsa State, comprising of teaching and non-teaching staff. 400 respondents (staff), which includes teaching and non teaching staff, were selected for the study using simple random sampling techniques. The research instrument used in gathering data for the study is a self constructed questionnaire prepared by the researcher titled The Impact of Work Environment on Workers Performance Questionnaire (TIWEWPQ).The tools used for data analysis is frequency, percentages and cumulative percentages

## III. Results and Discussion of Findings

**Research Question 1:** In what specific ways does performance feedback contribute to the improvement of employees' performance?

The following responses explained how employees performance feedback applied by supervisor towards employees 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

As shown from the table above 39.25% of workers said they rarely receive performance feedback from their superior, followed by 20.75% who said they never get performance feedback from their superior. 12.75% of workers said they are not sure getting performance feedback, 11.5% said they sometimes receive performance

feedback whereas 9.5% said they usually receive their performance feedback and lastly 6.25% are of the opinion that they always receive performance feedback from the superior. Employee performance feedback contributes on employee performance because it consists of both positive feedback on what the employee is doing right as well as feedback on what requires improvement.

**Research Question 2:** How does the utilization of job aids lead to the enhancement of employees' performance? The following response explained the presence of job aid at the organization which contributes on 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

The table above shows that 52.5% of workers strongly disagree that there are no presence of job aid at the organization which will contribute much in their job performance. 40.75% of workersdisagrees on the presence of job aid at the organization to contribute their job performance, while 4.25% of workers strongly agree on the use of job aid to enhance performance. And finally 2.5% of workers agree on the presence of job aid being the factor for their performance. The presence of job aid at the organization supports workers performance and makes work easier which also helps to minimize error rates.

**Research Question 3:**

What particular aspects of the physical work environment positively impact employees' performance?

In this study, the physical work environment has been identified as a factor influencing employees' performance, as indicated by responses gathered through 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

From the table above, majority of the employees which constitute 41.7% described their physical working environment towards performance as bad. This has not influence them to stay in the school environment and work comfortable. 21.5% of the employees said the physical working environments is very bad for them to stay in while 14% of the employees describe the physical working environment towards performance asbeen moderate, 13.25% described the physical work environment as good and only 9.5% describe the physical work environment as very good. Majority of employees agree that there exists a strong relation between physical working environment and motivation for workers to perform. The study shows that the physical work environment do not encourage workers to perform effectively. The organization needs to provide friendly working environment which will influence employees to work comfortable and perform their job.

**Discussion of findings**

Performance feedback is crucial to every organization and an employee performance feedback contributes on employee performance because it consists of both positive feedback on what the employee is doing right as well

as feedback on what requires improvement. It is also important to note that the presence of job aid at the organization supports workers performance and makes work easier which also helps to minimize error rates. Finally the study shows that most workers complained about the organization physical environment and how it affects their performance. This shows that it is the responsibilities of the organization to provide friendly working environment which will influence employees to work comfortable and perform their job. By having a good environment, the employees could apply their energy and their full attention to perform work Vischer, (2007).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Working environment plays a vital role in motivating employees to perform their assigned job. Since money is not a sufficient motivator in encouraging the workplace performance required in today's competitive business environment. The ability to attract, keep and motivate high-performance is becoming increasingly important in today's competitive organizational environments. The study also revealed that employee's will improve their performance if the problems identified during the research are tackled by the management. At the end of the research, it was realized that the employee's working environment affect their productivity greatly. Therefore it is the responsibilities of the organization to provide friendly working environment which will influence employees to work comfortable and perform their job.

#### **Recommendations**

- 1) Periodic meetings with employees to air their grievances to management to serve as a motivating factor to the employees.
- 2) Managers should also be counseled on their relationships with their subordinates.
- 3) The organization should have a good program in place for their employees work life balance as this can be a great factor to motivate and retain them.
- 4) Management should try as much as possible to build a work environment that attracts, retain and motivate its employees so that to help them work comfortable and increase organization productivity.

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