

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE IN ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract: *The study examined the relationship between employee relations and academic staff performance in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The specific objectives include to; determine the extent of the relationship between regular payment of salaries and academic staff attendance to lecturers in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu and determine the degree relationship between research grants and academic staff volume of research publications in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 1,530 academic staff of Esut. The sample size of the study was 317 using Taro Yamena Formula. Questionnaire instrument was validated. Reliability of the instrument was checked using Cronbach alpha test. The study used convenience sampling techniques for selecting respondents. The findings revealed that regular payment of salaries had a significant positive relationship with academic staff attendance to lecturers in Esut and research grants had a significant positive relationship with academic staff volume of research publications in Esut. We concluded that employee relations had a significant positive relationship with academic staff performance through effective regular payment of salaries and research grants to academic staff of the university. based on findings, the study recommended that recommend that top management of the university should engage in effective regular payment of salaries and research grants as well as encourage employees to carried out effective discharge of duties well like keeping good attendance and improve on volume of research publications.*

Keywords: Employee Relations, Academic Staff Performance, Research Grants

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Every university has an objective either to produce goods or provide services and this could be for commercial purposes or charitable. University is also faced with increased cut throat competition and fast advancement of technology both at client and university level to becoming more pervasive, university need to keep performing at its best at all times. To achieve this, universities must have a workforce that is committed and motivated to giving their very best towards the institution's objectives. The most critical factor of production is the human

resource. This resource must be treated with a lot of care if the institution is to achieve its intended goals (Dessler, 2018).

Any institutional success greatly depends on management and employees' relationship. Employee commitment, productivity and loyalty are important role in the growth of the institution in a business environment that is competitive. In order to achieve a healthy and strong relationship between the workforce and organization, well-organized employee relations should be established. The relationship between employers and employees, communication, management of disputes and grievances is a key drive of competitive firms operating in the dynamic business environment (George and Jones, 2018). Employee relations suggests a wider employment canvas being covered with equal importance attached to none employment arrangements and white-collar jobs. It is concerned with the social economic relationship that forms and revolves around a contract between the parties to perform work in return for employment benefits such as remuneration (Perkins & Shortland, 2016).

Employment relationship is an economic, social and political relationships where employees provide manual and mental labour in exchange for rewards by employers (Lewis, Thornhill & Saunders, 2018). Due to increased global competition over the last three decades, institutions have emphasized on labour efficiency and cost control (Perkins & Shortland, 2016). This has called for effective employee relations strategies that enable the employees to dedicate their energy to the achievement of institutional goals. Firms actively seek good employee relations whether or not they are bound by union contracts. Proactive steps in anticipation of employee needs and expectations are therefore characteristic of strategic managers (Pearce and Robinson (2019). institutions should strive to satisfy their employees with good pay, good supervision and good stimulating work (Pearce & Robison, 2019).

Employee relations drive performance of any institutions in terms of effective communication. Communication aids in relaying the strategies of the institution to all the employees. In the era of increasing institutional accountability, it is imperative that institutions can communicate vision, strategy and demonstrate progress and outcomes in achieving that vision. According to Ivancevich *et al.*, (2017) top management should play a role in communicating the strategy to the institution employees and other stakeholders. Effective communication makes sure people have the information they need and is the foundation for any good relationship.

Harzing and Ruysseveldt (2014) noted that effective communication is absolutely critical to successful integration of employees. Performance expectations, if not properly communicated, are far more difficult to be achieved and thus management's openness to staff members' input, feedback, ideas and suggestions is the foundation of good communications and strong employee relationships. Based on this, the study seems it necessary to examine the relationship between employee relations and academic staff performance in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

Statement of Problem

Performances of academic staff are quite enormous in the university environment. Working at the university level of the education system is an inherently employee relations with long working hours, heavy workloads, difficult students, and conflicting demands. The physical and psychology demands of academic staff at the tertiary level of education, particularly university make them more vulnerable to high levels of employee relations. One of the major problems that is therefore facing the Enugu University of science and technology academic staff today seems to be lack of job engagement, job satisfaction and job commitment. It is widely believed that a worker who is well motivated and satisfied with his or her job is likely to be properly engaged

and perform his or her duties efficiently and effectively by conducting good relations with the customers of university community.

But despite the fact that several measures like regular payment of salaries and research grants have been implemented in a bid to ensure that academic staff are meaningfully involved with good employee relations, the reverse appears to have been the case. In other words, measures may no longer guarantee effective employee relations if there are other serious performance on the job. The effects of employee relations are evidenced in increased errors in memoranda, high poor attendance, lateness to work, low research grants, and low productivity and also extremely negative effects of occupational issues on the human body and work performance, many institutional administrators seem not to have put in any concrete measures to address these employee relations conditions that negatively affect academic staff performance.

Furthermore, it appears there has not been a conscious establishment of a linkage between employee relations and academic staff performance. It is in the light of these that this research investigated employee relations and academic performance in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to examine the relationship between employee relations and academic staff performance in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Specific objectives were included;

- i. To determine the extent of the relationship between regular payment of salaries and academic staff attendance to lecturers in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.
- ii. To determine the degree relationship between research grants and academic staff volume of research publications in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Employee Relations

The term employee relations in broadest sense cover all types of interaction among people, their conflicts, cooperative efforts, and group relations. It involves interactions between employees themselves, even their employers, (Reece, 2012). Employee relations refers to the effective way of how workers interact with one another at their places of work (Dalton, 2018). Performance is formally the quantity and quality of tasks being accomplished as assigned to employee. Therefore, performance of an employee will be determined basing on the nature of quality or quantity you produce after accomplishing tasks, (Kieima, 2018). Employee relations consist of all those areas of human resource management that involve relationships with employees directly or through collective agreements where trade unions are also recognized. In a broader sense employee relation is concerned with how fellow employees interact with one another and even their employers or managers (Armstrong, 2016).

Academic Staff Performance

Performance is formally quantity and quality of tasks being accomplished as assigned to employees. When in an institution this is no employee manager relation amongst employees themselves, this implies that there will be a breakdown in communication; people will not be motivated to work hence affecting the output or performance of employees in the institution. So, it is important for an institution to maintain the culture of good employee relations to enhance performance among workers (Kieima, 2018). In many institutions numeric rankings are

used to compare an employee's performance with the performance of other employees. Numeric ratings are frequent components of these systems, too. No matter how fair and non-discriminatory, these ratings are made to appear through endless establishment of criteria for rating, they basically boil down to the supervisor's opinion of an employee's performance.

The employee performance evaluation provides evidence of non-discriminatory promotion, pay, and recognition processes. This is an important consideration in training supervisors to perform consistent, regular, non-discriminatory employee performance evaluations. The documentation of success and failure to achieve goals is a critical component of the employee performance evaluation process. While employee performance evaluation systems take many forms from institution to institution, these are the components likely to be included. Some are more effective than others. But the goals for the employee performance evaluation system, or the appraisal process, or the performance management process are similar. The differences appear in the approach and the details. And, that can make all the difference in how the system is perceived by and carried out by employees.

Regular Payment of Salaries

Different definitions have been advanced on salaries by author's perspectives. Braton & Gold, (2013) basic salary is a fixed periodical payment for non-manual employees usually expressed in annual terms, paid per month with generally no additions for productivity. Surbhi (2015) also defined salary as a fixed amount paid to the employees at regular intervals for their performance and productivity. He further argued that while Salaried persons are generally said to be doing "white collar office jobs" which implies that an individual is well educated, skilled and is employed with some firm and holds a good position in the society in order to attend needs.

Research Grants

Grant under this category can be made to an institution or a group of institutions for carrying out a specific research project with one or more scholars directing it. These institutions will include universities, research institutes, and voluntary organizations, professional associations in the field of women and child development and similar organizations/agencies which have the capacity to do research. Institutions set up and fully funded by Central Government/State Governments/Public Sector Undertakings will also be eligible. The voluntary organization should have 3 (three) years experience after registration. It may also be given to an institution for a project which is of the nature of collective effort of a group of scholars writing papers on different aspects of a problem under a broad framework by the editors. Assistance can also be given for a group of projects to be undertaken sequentially by an institution(s) (Surbhi, 2015).

Academic Staff Attendance to Lecturers

A lot of scholars have expressed their views on the definition of attendance as applied to education. Many of them have also expressed their understanding on what attendance in schooling meant. Aden *et al.*, (2013) viewed attendance as the amount of time that lecturers participate in class activities, and is measured in hours per day, days per week, sessions per month and percentage of time. Olufunke and Oluwadamilola (2014) also defined attendance as the physical presence of the lecturers in schools/classes. Olufunke and Oluwadamilola, (2014) explained further that attendance at schools is not merely being bodily present but including actual participation in the work and activities of the school. Further, Olufunke and Oluwadamilola (2014) opined that

attendance can be divided into two extremes of being ‘a mere appearance of the lecturers at school’ and ‘the students present during the whole day’

Academic Staff Volume of Research Publications

Research is a systematic careful enquiry or examination to discover new information on relationships and to expand and verify existing knowledge.” John Best: Research is more systematic activity directed towards discovery and the development of an organized body of knowledge. A broad definition of research is given by Marty Shuttle worth "In the broadest sense of the word, the definition of research includes any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge. Publications make scientific information publically available, and allow the rest of the academic audience to evaluate the quality of the research.” Because publications form the basis for both new research and the application of findings, they can affect not only the research community but also, indirectly, society at large. Researchers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that their publications are honest, clear, accurate, complete and balanced, and should avoid misleading, selective or ambiguous reporting (Olakunle, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

The study anchored on human relations theory, employees in any giving organization especially in Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Human Relations Theory

The main focus of the human relations movement is on the human and social dimensions of work (Mayo, 1933). Elton Mayo and Abraham Maslow in their Hawthorne studies found that efficiency enhanced independent of the level of lighting. The studies accomplished that the employees were more reactive to social situations than to management controls. Abraham Maslow (1943) a major theorists of the human relations movement identified the different five levels of needs; physiological, safety, love, self esteems, and self-actualization needs. He suggested that human needs are organized in any order and that employees are motivated by unsatisfied needs though higher needs could motivate only after lower needs are satisfied. This helped managers understand the employee empowerment. Herzberg (1959) alienated employee motivation into two main factors, motivation factors and hygiene factors. Motivation factors are related to job satisfaction and different from hygiene factor which are related to dissatisfaction.

Empirical Review

The empirical literature reviewed could not find studies directly concerned with the relationship between of employee relations and academic staff performance.

Babagana & Dungus (2015) examined the effects of staff remuneration on the performance of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri students from 1995-2011 in Borno state. Questionnaire was served to 45 respondents who are academic staff of the polytechnic from the five schools within the polytechnic (school of environmental studies, school of engineering and applied science, school of agricultural science and technology, school of management studies, and school of vocational and technical education). The data was analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment correlation and regression analysis using Microsoft excel. The findings showed strong positive relationship between staff remuneration (fringe benefits and staff nature of working conditions) and performance of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri students

Zhu *et al.* (2018) conducted study on conflict management between employees from different department: contribution of organisational identification in China and found out that there is a relationship between conflict

resolution practice used and organisational outcomes. However, there was no significant relationship between gender, conflict resolution practice and organisational outcome. He used descriptive research design and collected data using cross-sectional design may have inflated the causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

A study by Ott & Dijk (2015) conducted on effects of ER on client satisfaction in nursing and care for the elderly, with special interest on personal development plan, additional job related training, job performance review during the past two years, regular departmental meetings and a recruitment protocol in case of a labour-shortage; predictable work schedules and leadership style of the manager which is transparent and supportive. The findings showed that regular departmental meetings and supportive leadership affect job performance; however, the study found that the correlations between the other variables and client satisfaction were generally insignificant.

Ngui (2016) examined the relationship between employee relations strategies and performance of commercial banks in Kenya with reference to communication established a positive effect of quality of communication between managers and staff and between employees among themselves on performance. When there was proper, continuous and efficient communication between employees and management and also with the unions it was found that the levels of trust increased and this in turn led the employees to be ready and willing to undertake their duties responsibly.

Ngari & Agusioma (2016) studied on how dispute resolution affects organization performance in private universities. Further according to the findings disputes can arise due to misunderstandings or mistakes and poor communication and decision making, tensions or personal difficulties, breaches of trust or of the law, infringements of personal dignity or human rights, inability or unwillingness to perform allocated work and unacceptable behavior.

Kanana (2016) studied on the influence of conflict resolution on job satisfaction at the Swissport Kenya Limited established that job satisfaction is significantly influenced by conflict resolution practices and that employees' job satisfaction can be affected by how they are treated by the employer during conflict management and also the decision made during conflict management. The study left a gap as it only shows that good conflict resolution practices improve job satisfaction of employees thus failing to show its impact on the overall organization performance.

Samwel (2018) conducted a study on effect of employee relations on employee performance and organizational performance in Tanzania. The aim of this paper is to examine the effect of employee relations on employee performance and organizational performance and at the same time identify various employee relations practices used by small organizations in Tanzania. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and used a stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 387 respondents from selected small organizations in Tanzania. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis and the results presented using tables. The findings of the study show that small organizations in Tanzania are aware of the benefits of maintaining good employee relations and correct remedial actions taken to minimize poor employee relations in the organization. The findings further indicate a positive significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance as well as between employee relations and organization performance.

Ulo & Ekpe (2019) investigated on employee relations and the performance of plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between employee relations and the performance of selected plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study was to: determine the extent to which programmed instruction relate to increase in sales volume and determine the extent to which computer/simulated games training relate to high return on investment in plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Descriptive research approach was adopted. Data was collected and analyzed with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and the results tested with t-statistics. The findings indicate that programmed instruction relates significantly to increase in sales volume and that computer/simulated games relate significantly to high return on investment in plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Tahir, Yousafzai, Jan & Hashim (2014) conducted a study on the impact of strategies on employee's performance and productivity in United Bank Limited, Peshawar City KPK Pakistan. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of strategies on employees' performance and productivity. The study adopted survey research design. Data collected through primary source was analyzed. The major finding was that there was a significant relationship between strategies and employee performance and productivity, and recommended that banks should invest in staff training.

Shaheed, Naqvi & Khan (2013) conducted a study titled "employee training and organizational performance: The study adopted survey research design. Data collected through primary source was analyzed. The result revealed significant and positive relationship exist between training and organizational performance.

Markos & Sridevi (2010) conducted a study on employee engagement in India. Employee engagement is stronger predictor of positive organizational performance clearly showing the two-way relationship between employer and employee compared to the three earlier constructs: job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour. Engaged employees are emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job with a great enthusiasm for the success of their employer, going extra mile beyond the employment contractual agreement.

Gaps in Empirical Review

The available literature indicates a serious lack of empirical studies designed to specifically explain the employee relations practices (Katou, 2018). The literature points out that the link between employee relations practices and customer loyalty is like a 'black box', that is lack of clarity regarding 'what exactly leads to what' (Gerhart, 2015). Serious gaps also still remain with respect to the causal ordering of the variables involved in the employee relations performance relationship (Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, & Swart, 2013).

Considering that previous researchers do not agree on the ER practices, policies, and systems employed, and accordingly the constructs developed scholars by (Boselie *et al.* 2015). Have argued that the results derived from these studies are not comparable. There is a great need for additional evidence to support the employee relations practices. Ngui, (2016) suggested similar studies to be done in other sectors of the economy such as the manufacturing sector, the transport sector and service sector among others in order to compare his findings with those from different sectors. In the reviewed body of knowledge, regular payment of salaries and research grants had not been analyzed with employee relations to universities. The related studies were carried out mainly in developed countries outside Africa. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Survey involves asking questions and obtaining answers from the respondents through the use of questionnaire or oral interview or both. Primary data were used for the study and this was sourced from the questionnaire issued to employees of the university. Population of the study comprised all the academic staff of Enugu State University of Science and technology. According to the university internal records, the total number of academic staff was 1,530. Questionnaire was the major instrument used in collecting data from the respondent. It was divided into three major parts. Part A was for bio-data of the respondents, Part B contains data on the major research questions (regular payment of salaries and research grants). Part C contains data on the dependent variable (staff attendance to lecturers and staff volume of research publications). The questions were constructed on a five-points likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Data collected for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentage while correlation test was used to test hypotheses.

Sample Size Determination

Since the population of academic staff was adjudged finite, Taro Yamani's formular was used in determining the sample size as follows: -

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = The required sample size.

N = Population of the study = 1,530

e = 5% limit of toreadable error

1 = constant

Substitution the values in the formular, we have

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{1,530}{1 + 1,530(0.5)^2} \\ &= \frac{1,230}{1 + 1,530(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{1,530}{4.825} \end{aligned}$$

n = Sample Size of Staff = 317.

Test of Hypotheses

Tests for Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Regular payment of salaries does not have significant positive relationship with academic staff attendance to lecturers in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

H_{a1}: Regular payment of salaries has significant positive relationship with academic staff attendance to lecturers in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis Result

Correlations				
My university pays workers continuously without delay. My university has settled any staff issues among themselves.	Pearson Correlation	1	.458**	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
My university pays workers continuously without delay. My university has settled any staff issues among themselves.	Pearson Correlation	.458**	1	.912**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
My university pays workers continuously without delay.	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.912**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation result shown above, we have regular payment of salaries and academic staff attendance to lecturers in Esut, with a probability value of .000 and $r = .912$ which indicates that there was significant positive relationship between regular payment of salaries and academic staff attendance to lecturers in Esut.

Decision for Hypothesis One

Evidence given probability value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significant and coefficient value of .912. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate concluding that regular payment of salaries had significant positive relationship with academic staff attendance to lecturers in Esut.

Test of Hypothesis 2

Tests for Hypothesis Two

H₀₁: Research grants do not have significant positive relationship with academic staff volume of research publications in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

H_{a1}: Research grants have significant positive relationship with academic staff volume of research publications in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Result

Correlations				
Our university promote based on number of lecturers publications. Free assess is the key to success in any academic job .	Pearson Correlation	1	.457**	.510**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
Our university promote based on number of lecturers publications. Free assess is the key to success in any academic job .	Pearson Correlation	.457**	1	.918**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
Our university promote based on number of lecturers publications.	Pearson Correlation	.510**	.918**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation result shown above, we have research grants and academic staff volume of research publications in ESUT, with a probability value of .000 and $r = .918$ which indicates that there was significant positive relationship between research grants and academic staff volume of research publications in ESUT.

Decision for Hypothesis Two

Evidence given probability value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significant and coefficient value of .912. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate concluding that research grants had significant positive relationship with academic staff volume of research publications in ESUT.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study shows that there was significant positive relationship between regular payment of salaries and academic staff attendance to lecturers in ESUT. This is in agreement with Ulo and Ekpe (2019) investigated on employee relations and the performance of plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Descriptive research approach was adopted. Data was collected and analyzed with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and the results tested with t-statistics. The findings indicate that programmed instruction relates significantly to increase in sales volume and that computer/simulated games relate significantly to high return on investment in plastic products manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

The result of this study shows that there was significant positive relationship between research grants and academic staff volume of research publications in ESUT. This is in agreement with study of A study by Ott and Dijk (2015) conducted on effects of ER on client satisfaction in nursing and care for the elderly, with special interest on personal development plan, additional job-related training, job performance review during the past two years, regular departmental meetings and a recruitment protocol in case of a labour-shortage; predictable work schedules and leadership style of the manager which is transparent and supportive. The findings showed that regular departmental meetings and supportive leadership affect job performance; however, the study found that the correlations between the other variables and client satisfaction were generally insignificant.

Summary of Findings

1. Regular payment of salaries had a significant positive relationship with academic staff attendance to lecturers in ESUT.
2. Research grants had a significant positive relationship with academic staff volume of research publications in ESUT.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that employee relations had a significant positive relationship with academic staff performance through effective regular payment of salaries and research grants to academic staff of the university.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, we recommend that top management of the university should engage in effective regular payment of salaries and research grants as well as encourage employees to carried out effective discharge of duties well like keeping good attendance and improve on volume of research publications.

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