



WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED TRANSPORT COMPANIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The transport companies in Anambra appeared to be making recruitment based on gender, religious and tribal bias. This study is propelled to determine the extent of relationship existing between workforce characteristics and employee performances of the selected transport companies in Anambra state. The work was anchored on Social-categorization theory associated with the work of Turner (1987). By the use of structured questionnaires, disseminated by face to face contact, the paper surveyed four transport companies with cumulative staff strength of four hundred and sixteen. Tables and regression analysis were used for data presentations and analysis respectively. Hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance. The study revealed that a positive correlation exists between the dependent variable (employee commitment) and the independent variable (biological construct; tribe, Gender, Age and Religion) with a correlation coefficient of .972. The result also revealed that a 94% change in the dependent variable is explained by changes in the independent variable as shown by the coefficient of determination (R Square = .944). Sequel to this, the study concluded that efficient and effective workforce composition has the ability of positively affecting the performance of the employees. It was therefore recommended that the studied firms should ensure that their workforces possess appropriate characteristics to enable them attain high performance and that no bias or discrimination should be enshrined in the recruitment processes of the studied firm so as to ensure that the right kind of employees with the requisite characteristics are employed.

Keywords: Workforce Characteristics, Employee Performance, Employee Commitment.

Introduction

The importance of human resources to the sustainability and survival of organizations is no longer a new phenomenon as a lot of scholars, researchers and management experts have come out with the position that human resources is the most important resources of most if not all organizations. This position was corroborated by Hangar (2011) who explicates that human resource is recognized as the largest and the most important asset in an organization which ultimately provides the goods and/or services that customers require or the solutions to their problems. Similarly, Yasser (2011) opine that in today's working environment, a company's human resource is a true source of sustainable competitive advantage. This is possibly why studies on human resources have attracted the interest of researchers and scholars alike.

These human resources or employees that have helped organizations to remain afloat amidst turbulent business environment are different in various regard. Their composition or characteristics differ from one employee to another. They may be different in terms of gender,

age, race, religion, or even in their skills and abilities. These differences in characteristics could be a source of improved performance when recognized and handled properly. This could be the reason interests of researchers have surged in this area. Aligning with this position, Koch an, Ely, Joshi and Thomas (2002) posit that the recognition of workforce diversity in characteristics as a source of competitive advantage has become a reality in organizations today and has generated an enormous amount of interest over the recent years among business leaders, governments and within the civil society.

The behaviour of employees which is necessary for the survival of an organization depends on so many variables, one of which is how they are managed and motivated by an organization Human Resource (HR) department. This will also go a long way in determining who stays and or who leaves the firm. This was the position of Grand and West regard-Nielsen (2005) who avers that an important task of human resource management is the development, motivation and retention of an efficient workforce. This job include making sure that there is an effective and efficient mix of employees with the required characteristics to function appropriately. This brings to the fore the concept of workforce characteristics as a determinant of performance in organizations.

Human Resources Management (HRM) is responsible for the evaluation of the workforce of a firm to ascertain if they possess the right qualities and characteristics mix to enable them perform most effectively. Workforce characteristic has to do with the composition of the employees of an organization. It deals with the gender of the employee, their age bracket (old or young), marital status, demographic factors and even their skill levels and work experience. There are basically four characteristics of an individual as an employee in relation to work. These four characteristics as opined by Robbins (1996) are: biographical, abilities, personality and learning. However, within the context of this study, the focus is on biographic factors. The biographical characteristics that appear and can be observed are: age, gender, marital status, number of family members (residents) and tenure (Robbins, 1996).

Studies have evaluated the efficiency of workforce by looking at their compositions (Abode, Ramah & Margolis, 1999; Haltiwanger, Lane & Spetzer, 1999; Kilduff, Angel mar & Mehra, 2000). The question most often asked include: “how many workers are between 18 and 35 years or between 36 and 60 years in a firm’s workforce?” “How many workers have university education?” “How many workers have professional affiliation?” “What is the gender balance in the workforce?” “Do you have to include one race or tribe in the workforce more than others?” Then an overall question is asked, “What is the effect of these workforce features on the firm’s performance?” This different questions are to be put into consideration, because if the right composition is not constituted, it could affect the performance of the employee and by extension, that of the organization. This was pointed out by Sootter (2000) who explicates that employee characteristics is closely linked to performance, meaning that there is a significant effect of workforce characteristics on performance.

The importance of the composition of the right mix of employee characteristics seem not to be recognized in the transport companies studied in Anambra state which are Transport Company of Anambra State (TRACAS), Anambra Integrated Development Strategies (ANIDS) Transport sector, GUO Motors and God is Good Transport Company Limited. This is because it was observed in these companies that the recruitment seems to be based on gender, religion and tribe which are part of the biographic workforce characteristics. They appear to be favoring male workers more than female workers in their recruitment processes, they also seem to be more

open to the Igbo tribe and Christians. This is evident in the employee mix they have as most of the employees are male and from a particular tribe and religion. These could have an effect on the performance of the transport companies as the gains that could have been garnered as a result of having employees with different characteristics in terms of age, gender, religion, education background and tribe seem to allude them. This could affect the commitment level of employees as they are denied the opportunity of learning from people of different characteristics and this could affect the performance of the organization. It is against this backdrop that this study was necessitated.

Studies available on workforce compositions and firm performance are based on employer-employee data generated in advanced countries of the world which make them less relevant to explain the Nigeria's background in general and the situation in the studied transport companies in Anmanbra State in particular. Thus, this study determine the extent of relationship existing between workforce characteristics and employee performances of the selected transport companies. Specifically, the study examined the extent of relationship existing between workforce biographic characteristics and employee commitment. With respect to the stated objective of this study, a thought-provoking research questions arose thus: to what extent do workforce biographic characteristics affect employee commitment in the studied transport companies? Based on the earlier mentioned questions, the study postulate hypothesis thus: workforce biographic characteristics do not exert significant influence on employee commitment.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Workforce

The expression workforce can be described in a broader sense as the total number of a country's population in the armed and civilian jobs, plus those unemployed people who are actually seeking paying work. The Nigeria's workforce represents the active segment of Nigerian's population. The workforce is the number of people between eighteen (18) and seventy (70) years who are physically and mentally sound and who are also ready and willing to work.

The narrower sense of the expression workforce does not look at the country as a whole but tries to define workforce as it relates to individual production unit. These are the smallest production entities; they range from the micro-firm to very big corporations. In this regard, workforce is described as the total number of employee (usually excluding the management) on an employer's payroll (Business Dictionary, 2013). It should, therefore, be seen that workforce refers to the entirety of an organization's human resource.

Workforce Characteristics

The difference between the productive ability of one country and another; one firm and another is sometimes largely dependent on the quality of the workforce. This has led to what is called workforce characteristics or simply put workforce composition. A workforce characteristic is used to explain the features of a company's human resources. Workforce characteristics describe the age, education, gender, race, among others, of employees which composed the workforce of a firm. Managers often embark upon workforce analytics to understand the nature of work and the required features of the workforce to carry out the work.

What is workforce Analytics?

Workforce analytics is the comprehensive and continuous assembly and evaluation of data on “who is doing what” and “how well” in an organization – around the building, around the country and around the world. Jason (2011) states that workforce analytics implies as below:

- i. It is a proactive approach to employing and retaining the best talent. It is human resource optimized.
- ii. It is much more than just monitoring behavior. Managers through workforce analytics, have access to a 360-degree view of who is doing what and how well they are doing it.
- iii. It is a way to gain visibility into the organization’s largest single expense-the flexible workforce. Workforce analytics help companies to identify human capital needs before they arise and efficiently allocate resources globally to staff projects appropriately.
- iv. It is a holistic approach. It is about how companies retain existing workers and attract new ones
- v. Workforce analytic is about a streamlining, inspired workforce firing on all cylinders so that a company does not just survive, but also thrives.

Dynamics of Workforce Characteristics

The characteristics of an employee are not static. They are moving variables in moving phenomenon. Grand and West regard-Nelson (2005) explain that the characteristics of employees change over time. A worker may decide to equip oneself for a particular job. It simply demands investment in money and materials. Also, it should be noted that as workers are exposed to business environment, their features change as they acquire experience. It should however be noted that workforce structure can be made static by deliberate plans of the management. Firms can build up the features needed in their operations and maintain it. Activities like; workshops, seminar, study leaves and so on can be applied by firms to make up the quality required in their workforces. Employees whose ages are no longer within the accepted standard of the firms may be retired or retrenched and paid off. Banks adopt this process to maintain their workforce structures.

The Age structure of workers

Age is a natural thing and it evolves over time across board in an organization. However two main ages are identified in a worker; the natural age and the age in service. Every economy has a way of classifying age. Nigeria has age category thus: below 18, 18-70 and 71 and above. All people within 18-70 represent the active population. This is predominantly referred to as workforce of Nigeria economy. The age of an employee, whether age in service or natural age, is a major determinant of workforce feature. Also, some say that homogeneous age is better where some say that heterogeneous age is better (Grand & West regard-Nelson, 2005). The fact is that age structure of a firm is dependent on the activities carried out by such firm.

Gender of workers

Gender issues relate to natural categorization of human beings into male or female. Some people share the views that women are naturally less productive. Beside the natural placement, women due to family roles are less disposed to perform in workplaces. For this reason women are sometimes being discriminated in workplaces (Yemini, Olusoji & Oluwakemi, 2012). There has been a lot of campaign to dismantle such retrogressive views and even governments of nations have made deliberate laws and policies to encourage women. Firms still employ more men than women in some kind of industries especially in manufacturing firms. Studies have shown that

workforces that have low number of women perform better (Haltiwanger, Lane & Spletzer, 1999; Liu et al, 2009).

Race/Tribe of workers

The race or tribe of a worker is sometime considered in employment procedure. Studies to find out whether this has the ability to affect the performance of firms' workforce has only but produced mixed submissions. Some studies hold that a group of related people, say the same race or tribe, perform better due to the effective communication; others hold that diverse race/tribe means many ways to approach work and could result to better performance (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Koch an et al, 2003).

Religion of Workers

Religion is also a determinant factor in employment activities especially in places where balance is sort between or among religions. Religion has no consensus as it relates to definition. However, it could be seen as a cultural system of designated behaviours and practices, word views, texts, sanctified places, prophesies, ethics, or organizations, that claims to relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion). It is associated with the way in which people or in this context employee relate and worship a being considered supernatural. In Nigeria and in Anambra state, the major religion of the people is Christianity and some elements of traditional worshippers.

Employee Performance

Employee performance as a dependent variable have gathered momentum since researchers found out that it is one of the most important determinant of overall organizational performance. This was corroborated by Armstrong (2006) when he states that individual performance has become a topical issue in today's business environment, so much so that organizations go to great lengths to appraise and manage it. On their part Georgeakopoulos, Stavropoulos and Dimitis (2010) explicate that there is an increased emphasis on people as a key source of competitive advantage, often being regarded as the key differentiator between organizations. Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola and Heisman (2014) opine that employees are the organization's key resource and the success or failure of organizations centre on the on their performance.

Employee performance is therefore the result of activities of employees. It is their effort in carrying out organizational activities that will aid the organization in achieving their core mandate. Employee performance is the results of a person's activities in terms of performing the assigned duties at any given time, meeting the predictive criteria or key benchmarks in the presented framework (Emamgholi, 2011). A lot of dynamics are considered in analyzing the performance of employees. So also are lots of factors that play a role in determining their performance. One of such factors is employee characteristics or composition. Presenting this clearly, Ely mad Thomas (2001); Koch an et al, (2003) state that it is argued that the conjunction of employees with divergent background (mainly race and gender) can act as strategic resource for firms as it determines employee performance.

Employee Commitment

Commitments as a concept have over the years attracted lots of interests in the academic circle. This is possibly because of the role it plays in determining the performance of organizations. This aligns with the position of Green (2008) who explicates that establishing a committed and loyal workforce may be associated with enhanced firm performance through less opportunistic

behaviour on the part of employees or through influencing their supply of effort, and hence output. It is seen as an employee's level of loyalty in an organization. Employees with higher levels of commitment are devoted to their professions and the organization, expect high demands from themselves, achieve superior results and demonstrate superior work performance (Kónya, Matic & Jasmina Pavlović, 2016).

Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian (1974) defines employee commitment as "a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership". A successful organization can emerge as a result of committed workers. This was the submission of Kónya, Matic and Jasmina Pavlović (2016) who aver that as a factor of employee motivation, the commitment level of employees to their work and their organization is considered one of the most important indicators for a successful organizational behavior.

Theoretical Review

This work is anchored on Social-categorization theory associated with the work of Turner (1987). The theory suggests that people belong to many different social groups (e.g nation, employer, or school). It predicts that individuals sort themselves into identity groups based upon salient characteristics and that they act in concert with their categories and favour contexts that affirm group identity (Hogg & Terry, 2000). In consequence, dissimilar individuals are less likely to collaborate with one another compared to similar individuals. In this way, social categorization may disrupt elaboration of task-relevant information because of possible biases towards in-group members and negative biases towards out-group members (Knippenberg, Kleef & De-Drau, 2007).

This is a theory of the self, group processes, and social cognition (Turner et al., 1987) which emerged from research on social identity theory. It is concerned with variation in self-categorization (in the level, content, and meaning of self-categories). It focuses on the distinction between personal and social identity. The theory seeks to show how the emergent, higher-order processes of group behaviour can be explained in terms of a shift in self-perception from self-categorization in terms of personal identity to self-categorization in terms of social identity.

This theory links to this work in that it recognizes the possibility of employee belonging to different groups depending on their characteristics such as age, tribe, religion and gender thus relating to the variables of the study.

Empirical Review

Scholars have undertaken some empirical studies on workforce characteristics and firm performance. This review reveals that essential characteristics of workforce interesting to researchers include; age structure, sex structure, workers level of education and race/tribe.

Grand and West regard-Nielsen (2005) analyzed the effect of age structure of the workforce on firm performance using data generated in Denmark. Using value added per employee as performance measurement, mean age and standard deviation of the employee to capture the age structure of the workforce, they generated scatter plots which shows a clear pyramidal or inversely U-shaped interrelation. Highest values for value added per employee are found in firms with an average age of employees of a little less than 40years. This result implies that firms with medium aged workforce are doing well. This same result was confirmed by estimating the multivariate linear model $\log(\text{value added per employee}) = \beta_1 \cdot \text{Mean age}$ by a method of ordinary least square (OLS) by the same authors. It was suggested that to have medium age

structure at a particular time, firms should balance the age of their workforces. It could be seen that this submission confirmed theoretical approach of Cremer (1986) which held that firms might benefit more if they seek workforces of uniformly distributed age cohorts.

Liu, Stove and Wang (2009) investigated workforce composition and firm productivity: Evidence from Taiwan. They used three criteria for performance measurement. These performance measurement criteria include; average product of labour (APL), Solow Residual and Total Factor Productivity (TFP). The independent variables which captured workforce composition/characteristics are firm age, age of employee, health capital, wage dispersal, fringe benefit, education, labour turnover, et cetera. The following findings were observed:

- 1) Firm age is not essential for the performance of firms. Those firms in the steel and transportation industries outperform others in both the average product of labour and the Solow residual measures.
- 2) Labour quality particularly middle –aged workforces (30-55yr old) with higher education, contributes significantly to firms' productivity.
- 3) The significant and positive relationship between wage dispersion and firm productivity is more in line with the tournament theory than the equity and theory. It is seen that market competition measured by exportability plays a crucial role in the performance of firms.
- 4) There is an employer-size premium with large firms paying higher wage, cash/noncash dividend, and/or retirement fringe benefit.

In relation to this study, Liu et al (2009) found that firms with middle age and highly educated workers out perform others. In other to acquire workforces with such compositions, firms should balance the age of their workforces and at the same time firms should always arrange for formal training courses to keep the level of education of their workforces very high at all time.

Olowookere (2012) examined the impacts of workplace characteristics on work-life balance of women in the Nigerian Public Sector. A total of 886 women were randomly selected from three states in south west Nigeria-Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states. These participants were selected from three federal and state ministries- education, health and information. Hypotheses were testing using student t-test and the finding revealed that there is a significant difference in work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector at $t=21.56$, $df =884$ and <0.05 significant level. A significant difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required were also observed at $t=18.24$, $df =884$ and <0.05 significant level was equally found. The study therefore concluded that many women are having work-life conflicts which are caused by unsupportive bosses and other hostile working environments. sequel to this, it was recommended that the on-going public service reforms in Nigeria should consider the welfare of women and make available work-life policies which include flexible work scheduling, family leave policies allowing periods away from work for employees to take care of family matters, and childcare assistance.

Iranzo, Schivardi and Toseti (2005) examined the relationship between skill mix and firms' performance. Using a matched employer-employee data set, they report that a firm's productivity is positively associated with the dispersion within occupational groups (production and nonproduction workers) and negatively associated with the skill dispersion between these groups.

Methodology

Survey design was adapted in this study. The labour characteristics of four transport companies were studied differently and concurrently. What influenced the choice of these companies for this study is that the firms have remained in operations since their establishments and they

command a huge number of employee strength. The population of the study is four hundred and sixteen (416) and these also formed the sample for the companies as complete enumeration was applied. 416 copies of structured questionnaire were used for the collection of data and 375 were analyzed. The questionnaires were administered by direct face to face contact. Test-retest procedure and content validity test helped to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument. The test re-test result produced a coefficient of .877 using Rank Order correlation to do the calculation. Least Square Regression Technique was used in analyzing the data as a result of the multivariate nature of independent variable (biography: gender, religion and tribe). The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Biographic Characteristics

Companies	Age			Gender		Religion			Tribe			Total
	18 – 30	31 – 50	51 & Above	Male	Female	Christian	Muslim	Other	Igbo	Hau	Yoru	
TRACAS	42	72	22	112	24	132	-	4	133	-	3	136
ANIDS	12	98	15	95	30	124	-	1	123	1	-	125
GUO	30	23	30	70	13	83	-	-	82	-	1	83
GIG	13	12	6	28	3	30	-	1	31	-	-	31
Total	97 (26%)	205 (55%)	73 (19%)	305 (81%)	70 (19%)	369 (98%)	-	6 (2%)	369 (98.4%)	1 (.3%)	4 (1.1%)	375

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table one (1) show the biographic characteristics of the employees in the studied transport companies. From the tables, it showed that, it shows that the companies had more workers within the age bracket of 31-50 with 205 employees representing 55% of the total number of sampled respondents. The result also showed that a greater percentage of the employees are male with 81% of the total respondents. From the result, it was also revealed that 98% of the respondents are Christians; none were Muslims while 6 respondents were categorized as others. On the tribal composition, the result indicated that just one of the respondent is Hausa, 4 were Yoruba while 369 respondents representing 98.4% were Igbo's.

Table 2: Distribution of responses on Biographic Factors (Age, Gender, Tribe and Religion) and Commitment

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)	Mean
	Age						
1	Younger employees perform better than older employees in my organization.	67	114	70	92	31	3.25
2	The age of a worker in my organization does not	121	60	99	95	-	3.55

	determine how the person performs.						
3	Older people do not have the capacity to do all the kind of jobs required in my organization.	96	132	80	60	7	3.67
	Gender						
4	The kind of job we do in my organization require more males to perform better.	117	80	101	57	20	3.58
5	Due to the difficulty of the job I do in my organization, men will perform better in it.	109	76	123	60	7	3.59
6	It does not matter whether it is male or female that is working in my organization.	68	129	152	20	6	3.35
	Religion						
7	My religion allow me to work all the time I am required to in the organization.	98	189	49	39	-	3.92
8	The religion of people does not matter in my organization.	178	79	49	40	29	3.90
9	We do not discriminate along religious line when recruiting.	79	28	70	101	97	2.71
	Tribe						
10	My tribe influenced my getting the job in do in the organization.	113	60	89	27	86	3.23
11	Everybody is given equal opportunity in my firm irrespective of our language.	98	170	20	21	66	3.57
12	There is language barrier in my firm because of people speaking different languages.	18	20	106	231	-	2.53
	Employee Commitment						
13	If we could have people of different religion in my organization, it will improve my moral in the organization.	34	109	92	140	-	3.10
14	I would prefer to work with people of different ages to learn from them.	213	144	18	-	-	4.52
15	Working with male and female in my organization will increase how I enjoy my job.	190	107	20	58	-	4.14
16	My work place will be fun if people that speak different tribe are employed so that we can learn other languages.	123	200	-	50	2	4.05
17	We will attend to customers better if people that have different characteristics are brought in to work in my organization	89	217	50	10	9	3.98

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3: Regression Output

Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.972 ^a	.944	.944	.964

Source: Summarized Field Survey computed result using SPSS 23, 2018.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance Output

ANOVA^s

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	5839.754	4	1459.939	1571.427	.000 ^b
Residual	343.750	370	.929		
Total	6183.504	374			

a. Dependent Variable: Comm.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tribe, Gender, Age, Religion

Source: Summarized Field Survey computed result using SPSS 23, 2018.

Findings and Conclusion

From table 3 which shows the result of the regression carried out, it indicated that a positive correlation exists between the dependent variable (employee commitment) and the independent variable (biological construct; tribe, Gender, Age and Religion) with a correlation coefficient of .972. The result also revealed that a 94% change in the dependent variable is explained by changes in the independent variable as shown by the coefficient of determination (R Square = .944). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) result further support the output of the regression with high F-statistics in 1571.427 with extremely low probability value of 0.000 which less than the 0.05 significance level.

Thus, based on these findings, the study concludes that efficient and effective workforce composition has the ability of positively affecting the performance of the organization as shown by the result that changes in employee commitment are determined by changes in biographic composition of the workforce.

Recommendations

In line with the conclusion, the firms generally (under consideration) should ensure that their workforces possesses appropriate characteristics to enable them attain high performances and the level of biasness or discrimination should be eliminated from the recruitment processes of the studied firm so as to ensure that the right kind of employees with the requisite characteristics that will aid performance are employed.

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