

Social Support and Productivity of Academic Staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State

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Abstract

Employees' productivity remains the basis for organisational survival, growth and sustainability. Organisational relationship culture, concern for people, people-oriented ideals and notions in work organisations, among others, emphasise the importance of social support. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of social support on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria with particular focus on supervisors and organisational supports. A total of 300 academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State were randomly selected using systematic sampling technique. Data were collected with a 5-point likert scale questionnaire tagged "Social Support and Productivity Questionnaire (SSPQ). Two hypotheses were formulated and tested with multiple regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that supervisors and organisational support engender different levels of variations in productivity of the academic personnel as organisational support accounted for higher productivity of the academic staff than supervisors support. It was concluded that the two forms of social support examined are essentially important to engender desired level of academic staff productivity in terms of job morale, commitment, good work attitude, qualitative teaching, research efforts, etc. It was recommended, among others, that Polytechnics in Ogun State and other institutions of higher learning, government and other employers of labour should adopt workers-oriented policies and practices, offer appropriate and adequate support to their academic and other categories of staff with a view to improving their productivity.

Keywords: Social support, productivity, academic staff, polytechnics

Background to the Study

Every organisation has specific goals to achieve either in short or long run. The achievement of such goals which depicts the performance of the organisation and an indication of the level of the organisation's growth, depends considerably on the attitude and productivity of workers. Thus, the productivity of people in respective of their status in an organisation is of fundamental importance to the workers themselves, employers, organisation (commercial or non-commercial) and to the national economy at large.

Employees' efficiency and effectiveness at work are directly tied productivity or performance. The general thought is for members of a work organisation to diligently utilize their work hours. Productive employees focus on the right things at the right times (Akinyele, 2010; Padayachee, 2021). When employees are productive, they will manifest positive inclination towards every aspect of the organisation and make efforts to contribute to work engagement without any feeling of rsutration. Consequently, good performance reinforcement and outcome will result for the workers and their employer (Padayachee, 2021).

An important part of any national system is the education sector and prominent in the Nigerian education system is the Polytechnic sector. The Nigerian Polytechnic education is set essentially for the production of technical human labour that is required to achieve technological growth and sustain industrial expansion (Ibrahim, 2017). For the institutions in the Polytechnic sector to realise their fundamental objectives and strategic goals, it is crucial to have resources and mechanisms of engaging and utilizing competent and well satisfied teams of academic staff, among others. The academic staff in the Polytechnic sector are saddled with the mandate for the “promotion of technical and vocational education and training, technology transfer and skills development to enhance the socio- economic development of the country” in addition to teaching, learning, research (Amaniampong, 2014). However, Polytechnic academic staff, from time to time, face some constraints in terms of infrastructure, funding, lack of supportive research condition, uneven policy enactment and use among institutions owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria and those owned and funded by state governments, communication and decision-making problems, administrative style, workload, etc. As a result, many studies have examined different factors affecting the productivity of this category of workforce but little or none addressed the issue of social support for academic personnel in the Polytechnic sector of the Nigerian educational system. This shows that despite a number of studies that have established the importance and need for perceived and received social support on workers attitude and performance, there has been lack of focus and attention to these factors on the productivity of academic staff in Polytechnics. Hence, an investigation into the influence of social support on the productivity of academic personnel in Nigerian Polytechnics is significant.

Literature Review

Productivity is defined as “the contribution towards an organisational end result in relation to the amount of resources consumed” (McNeese-Smith, 1997). It is an indicator of desirable performance level of workers and a measure of work accomplished (Bain, 1982; Taiwo, 2010). Productivity remains a crucial determinant of organisation’s bottom line in both public and private enterprises (Maarleveld & Been, 2011). Hence, the goal of every organisation to maximise earning or ensure quality service offering is only realisable through the effort and contributions of the workers (Balogun & Olowodunoye, 2012).

Various combinations of factors characterize the productivity of people in a number of organisations and professions with varying level of impact on the productivity of the workforce (Gosnell, et al, 2019). One of such factors which remain a critical feature of the workplace is social support (Gottlieb, 2000; Rhoades, & Eisenberger, 2001; Eisenberger, et al., 2002; Chandra, 2012), yet a subject not popularly explored in the discourse of employees’ productivity (Pridgeon & Whitehead, 2013; Tommy, et al. 2019)

Since employees spend a major part of their time at workplace with a view to achieving economic benefits and meeting several personal and career needs, (Srivastava et al., 2007; Chou, 2015), the form of social support depicted by interpersonal relationship and workplace behaviour between workers and management as well as work group and team supervisors can enhance both psychological and behavioural functioning of the workers and their productivity (Harris, Winkowski, & Engdahl, 2007; Lu, Gilmour, & Kao, 2001; Chou, 2015). Krause (2004) noted that most people either at work or any form of association characterised by the interplay of human interactions, often turn to social resources in the form of help, compassion, recognition and value. The more one is integrated, the more one can cope with the effects of stressful events. In this way, employees’ perception of social support from the organisation reflects their belief on how

their employer or organisation portend either positive or negative disposition towards them and obviously shows how they are valued, how their efforts is recognised and the concern of the organisation for their welfare (Eisenberger, et al., 2002).

Social support is an intricate multi-faceted concept having diverse usage, types, source and foundational frameworks. It is described as the availability of individuals who show care, assistance, kindness and offer support to each other (Beehr & Glazer, 2001). It relates to the encounter which makes someone feel that he is recognised, valued, catered for and a notion of being a part of a group or team (Fernandes & Tewari, 2012). Gottlieb (2000) defined social support as “the process of integration in relationships which improves coping, esteem, belonging and competence through actual or perceived exchanges of physical or psychosocial resources”. It is the perception and reality of being cared for, assisted, and that one is part of a social network that is supportive (Taylor, 2012; Miguel, et al., 2014). Support can be received from a number of source and such as co-worker, friends, acquaintances, family, employer, etc. (Tamers, et al., 2011).

According to Williams (2005), social support entails the actuality of social relationships having structure, elements and forms that reflects the type and level of support that can be received. The supportive nature of any form of social network and relation depends on reciprocation among members, level of access to available support. Potential strong cooperation’s might be deliberate or inadvertent and adversely either the recipient or the provider. The effect of possibly steady communications is affected by acknowledgment of a singular's need and the degree to which strong ways of behaving are seen to have fulfilled the need or brought about a positive result for the beneficiary.

Different forms of social support in literature explain the differential relationship this variable has with outcomes and other variables (Uchino, 2009). Researches indicate that there are at least two specific aspects of social support: perceived and received (actual) social support (Gottlieb, 2000). Perceived support refers to “a recipient’s subjective judgement that providers will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need”. Received (also called enacted support) “refers to specific supportive actions (advice or reassurance) offered by providers during times of need” (Gurung, 2006). Perceived and received social supports are affected by the attribute and factors of the recipient such as their emotional condition, need assessment, self-concept, resources available efforts put in place. Characteristics and factors relating to the support provider such as willingness, enthusiasm for steps taken and confidence for possible outcome of their actions could influence social support (Williams, 2005).

Another two forms of support distinguished in literature are structural and functional forms of social support (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Beehr & Glazer, 2001; Uchino, et al., 2012). Structural support (social integration) is the “mere presence of supportive others in various life domains, including families, organisation, social and religious groups. It provides a sense of predictability and stability and therefore impacts a person’s overall sense of well-being” (Glazer (2006). Structural support addresses “the presence of supportive others without indication of how these structures are supportive and can be characterized by an employee’s network of co-workers and supervisors without regard to the specific functions they may serve” (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Beehr & Glazer, 2001). In contrast, functional support implies that supportive people are performing some function for the focal person, such as praise, positive feedback, approval or information (Uchino, et al., 2012). In other words, functional support is the actual provision of tangible or intangible support mechanisms.

According to Beehr & Glazer (2001), emotional and instrumental backings are different types of help that yield various results. As Ducharme and Martin (2000) noticed, basic encouragement is the arrangement of sensations of acknowledgment and care in a warm and amicable way and can be given deliberately or unwittingly and can be as simple as paying attention to somebody talking about their ongoing circumstance. Instrumental help is more directive and substantial than everyday support. It is characterized as actual assistance capable of solving problem or contributing to task accomplishment through the provision of necessary resources (Beehr and Glazer, 2001). This type of help incorporates arrangement of unmistakable assets, for example, monetary help, supplies to aid task performance as well as provision of essential information to aid job completion. A related type of instrumental help is alluded to as informational support, which covers the availability of information that could help organise, comprehend and adapt to problem situation (Cohen and Wills, 1985). For somebody to have the option to offer instrumental help, the person in question needs to know what the issue is, create time for it, exhibit good capacity and competence to manage it, and above all, truly wants to help (Glazer, 2006).

In an organisation, the different support types can be received from co-workers, supervisors and even the management of the organisation. Co-workers can provide emotional and instrumental support through the day to day interactions with their co-workers and healthy relationship among group members (White, et al., 2019; Sergeant & Terry, 2000). Support from supervisors often involves showing concern for the subordinates, offering encouragement, giving access to essential resources and tools, mechanism for control and feedback, opportunities for personal growth, information and assistance to deal with constraints and stress factors (Babin & Boles, 1996; Kaniki, 2003). This source of support might be more important to an employee than other sources of support because of the supervisor's position and hierarchy makes supervisory support more important to an employee than any other form of social support (Beehr & Glazer, 2001) as the supervisor is suitably positioned to guide and mentor the subordinate on group mandate, task behaviour, performance standard and goal accomplishment (Kaniki, 2003).

Perceived organisational support is the general feeling of employees about how they are valued by their employer, the significance of their role and how the organisation is interested in their wellbeing (Eisenberge, et al., 2002). Employees assign human characteristics to the organisation and perceive it as having a favourable or unfavourable orientation toward them. The extent to which employees perceive their organisation as supportive is influenced by promotions and developmental exercises, supervisor support (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997) involving fairness, organisational rewards and favourable job conditions. Numerous positive consequences arise when employees perceive organisational support, including reduced turnover, absenteeism, withdrawal behaviour and increase affective commitment and performance (Rhoades & Eisenberge, 2002). The present studies focus on supervisory and organisational forms of social support and determines their influence on the productivity of academic personnel of Polytechnics in Ogun State.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine the influence of social support on productivity of academic staff of polytechnics in Ogun State. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the combined and relative influence of supervisory and organisational forms of social on the productivity of academic personnel of Polytechnics in Ogun State.

Hypotheses

In line with the objective, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H₀1: There would be no significant combined influence of supervisors support and organisational support on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State.
- H₀2: There would be no significant relative influence of supervisors support and organisational support on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design in which questionnaire was employed as instrument of data collection on the variables under investigation. The population comprised all academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic, State Polytechnics and privately-owned Polytechnics in Ogun State. A sample of 300 academic staff was selected randomly from the Polytechnics in the State. In selecting the sample, 100 academic staff were chosen from the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro being the only Federal Polytechnic in the State, 140 from State Polytechnics and 60 from Private Polytechnics.

A structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point likert scale was used for data collection. The instrument was tagged “Social Support and Productivity Questionnaire (SSPQ) and used of existing structured scales with appropriate properties. Items for organisational support were adapted from Eisenberger, et al. (1986), Survey of Perceived Organisational Support; Shanock & Eisenberger, (2006) while items on supervisors’ support scale were drawn from Chou (2015) Social Support Scale and Rhoades, et al. (2001). Workers’ productivity scale consisted of 13 items adapted from Employee’s Performance and Productivity scales of Teseema & Soeters (2006). The Pearson Correlation test of the instrument yielded coefficients of 0.84 for social support and 0.82 for employees’ productivity.

Results and Discussion

Out of the 300 copies of the questionnaire administered, 290 were returned, 6 were improperly filled and thus rendered invalid. Therefore, 284 questionnaires were scored and the data were subjected to analysis. The prediction of the independent variables over the dependent variable was tested using regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis for combined influence of supervisors support and work environment to productivity

Statistics	Values
Multiple R	0.247
R-square	0.0618
Adjusted R square	0.054
F-value	9.148
Standard Error	5.97046

The result shows a positive relationship of between supervisors support and organisational support with productivity and indicates a regression value ($r = 0.618$) for the joint influence of the independent variables (supervisors’ support and organisational support) on productivity, meaning

that 61% variation in productivity of academic staff can be attributed to combined impact of supervisors' support and organisational support .

Table 4.8: Regression of supervisors support and organisational support with Productivity

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value
Regression	652.163	2	326.082	9.148	0.000
Residual	10016.636	281	35.646		
Total	10668.799	283			

Level of Significance $P \leq 0.05$

The result above indicates F-value of 9.148 and P-value of 0.000 which is significantly less than 0.05. Hence, the test is significant and the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it was upheld that supervisors support and organisational support have significant combined influence on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State.

Table 3: Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis for relative influence of supervisors support and organisational support on productivity.

Variables	Parameter Estimates	Std. Error	T	Beta(β)	P
Constant	80.728	5.104	15.815	-	0.000
Supervisors Support	-0.107	0.049	-2.185	0.130	0.030
Organisational Support	-0.162	0.053	-3.076	0.183	0.002

Level of Significance $P \leq 0.05$

Table 3 shows the relative influence of supervisors support and organisational support on productivity. Both supervisors support and organisational support have impact on productivity as supervisors support has a P-value of $0.030 < 0.05$ and β -value of 0.130 and organisational support has a P-value $0.002 < 0.05$ and β -value 0.183. The result suggests that supervisors support contributes 13% and organisational support contributes 18.3% to productivity.

Hypothesis one measured the combined influence of supervisors support and organisational support on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics. The result gives a positive combined relationship of $r = 0.247$ for supervisors and organisational supports with productivity of academic staff and it indicates that about 61% variation in productivity of academic staff can be attributed to the combined influence of supervisors support and organisational support in the Polytechnics.

Hypothesis two was postulated to determine the relative influence of supervisors support and organisational support on the productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State. The result shows that supervisors support and organisational will cause different levels of variation in the productivity of the academic personnel. The result is an indication that supervisors support has a relative influence of 13% on productivity which implies a low contribution to the productivity of the academic staff. On the other hand, organisational support has a relatively high impact on productivity of academic staff and can cause an influence of 18% in the productivity of academic staff Polytechnics. The result implies that there is a difference in the relative influence

of the two independent variables on the dependent variable, indicating varying extent to which each of the independent variables influences the prediction of productivity.

On the relative influence of supervisor support, the result suggests that when used alone will propel very low influence on productivity of academic staff. Other factors, such as gender, head of departments and other staff members, interpersonal relationship, status and job position, co-worker mutuality, etc. among members of the academic staff category could account for this. The result also revealed that perceived support from the organisation in terms of institutional policies and mechanisms for training and development, career progression, short and long term professional and academic advancement, teaching and learning policies, research interventions and grants, among others, drive academic staff to higher productivity. The results conforms with Lakey and Cohen (2000), Beehr and Glazer (2001) and Kaniki (2003) that social support from co-workers, supervisors and the organisation as whole are important in reducing work-related negative outcomes and driving the workforce to higher productivity. The productivity of the academic personnel is reflected in how they engage in quality teaching, learning and research. Productive lecturers are enthusiastic and will put in extra effort into knowledge acquisition of students, provide students with quality learning materials, meet deadlines on institutional responsibilities, assignment and cultivate good disposition to standard of education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that social support (perceived and received supervisors and organisational supports) are important work factors that cannot be ignored for good and effective performance and productivity of academic staff of Polytechnics in Ogun State and other similar organisations. Both supervisors support and organisational support are essentially important to engender desired level of productivity of academic staff productivity in terms of job morale, commitment, good work attitude, qualitative teaching, remarkable research efforts, etc.

Interpersonal relationships and interactions and sufficient co-workers, supervisors and organisational support, among other things, within the Polytechnics are extremely important to the functionality of the institutions determine how resourceful, efficient and effective the Polytechnics are in meeting their mandates. The process by which the goals of institutions and those of the individual academic personnel become increasingly integrated is important and can be achieved in a supportive and rewarding work situation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Academic staff of Polytechnics should be provided with adequate infrastructural support to promote effective classroom delivery. Management of Polytechnics should also provide adequate tools and conducive facilities to facilitate academic work effectiveness. In addition, new technology should be embraced to enhance a paradigm shift in work process and procedures and create a system that attracts, keeps and motivate the academic staff as well as encourage learning and research.
2. Efforts should be made by Polytechnics and other academic institutions to create effective work environment of creative, comfortable, satisfactory and motivating supports so as to give academic staff sense of pride and purpose in what they do.

3. Social interaction between heads of departments/units and academic staff should be encouraged and conflicts should be resolved immediately to improve employees' morale. Social events and interaction positively influence morale and generate enthusiasm to work.
4. Heads of departments and units should show empathy by actually entering into subordinates' experience and standing beside and for them in their feelings, rather than standing above them in pity.
5. Effort should be made to ensure that the social support desired by employees' match what is provided by the employers to avoid the psychological imbalances that may ensue if a different type of support is provided than what the recipient wishes to receive.
6. Employers should endeavour to emphasise the necessity and techniques of providing social support among members of a work group in different ways. Interpersonal relationship and social engagements should be encouraged by management of Polytechnics and other institutions. This will help to understand social exchange and how such exchange influences work related outcome positively.

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