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# WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OTUOKE BAYELSA STATE, 2015-2022

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Article history:	Abstract:				
Received: December 11 <sup>th</sup> 2022 Accepted: January 11 <sup>th</sup> 2023 Published: February 20 <sup>th</sup> 2023	This study investigated the link between employee performance and the working environment within Nigerian public institution. Work environment enhances employee and organisational performance; hence, it plays a critical role in modern organisation and institution globally. The study reviewed the concepts of work environment and employee performance and was guided by two research questions and two objectives which are: what is the nexus between work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke; what are the strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke; what are the strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke. The study adopted expectancy theory by Victor Vroom as its theoretical framework of analysis and employed survey method and purposive sampling technique as the research design and sampling technique respectively. Primary and secondary data were generated for the study. The primary data generated from questionnaires items were presented in tables and analysed with the 4-point Likert scale with a 2.50 criterion mean as the standard while the secondary data was analysed with the use of content analytical method. The study findings amongst others proved that there is a positive relationship between conducive working environment and employee performance, employees are motivated to work when they are given motivational incentives. Conclusively, the study recommends amongst others; that university management should create a conducive working environment so as to attract and retain qualified employees who would increase institutional performance and that management should make adequate budgetary provision for the purchase of modern work place equipment and furniture.				

**Keywords:** Work, work environment, employee performance, motivation

## INTRODUCTION

Environment is a broad term that encompasses the physical, biological, and social components of the world in which we live (Kumar, 2018). Moreso, it includes the air, water, land, plants, animals, and other living organisms and the physical and chemical processes that occur in these systems and it also comprises of the social and cultural aspects of our environment, such as how people interact with and use the environment.

The work environment is a complex and dynamic system that can have a significant impact on employee performance, satisfaction, and well-being. It is composed of a variety of factors, such as the physical environment, organizational culture, job design, and leadership style. To Kumar (2018) the physical environment includes the physical layout of the workplace, the lighting, temperature, and noise levels. Organizational culture is the shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide the behaviour of employees while job design is how tasks are organized and structured. The connection between a positive working environment and productive employees is a complicated one, with a great number of external influences having an impact on the final result. Studies have shown that a positive work environment can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Kaur, 2019). A positive work environment can also lead to improved communication, collaboration, and trust between employees and management. In contrast, a negative work environment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and productiving, and productivity. It can also lead to decreased communication, collaboration, and trust between employees and management (Kumar, 2018).

The relationship between the work environment and employee performance seems to be complex and multifaceted. A good work environment may increase job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity, while an unpleasant work environment may decrease job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. Hence, work environment has a significant influence on employee performance. According to a study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, "the physical environment of the workplace can have a profound effect on employee performance, motivation, and satisfaction" (Gardner, 2017). The study found that employees who worked in a pleasant environment with adequate lighting, comfortable furniture, and natural elements such as plants, reported higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity. Additionally, a study conducted by the University of Michigan found that "employees who work in a supportive environment with positive relationships with their supervisors and colleagues are more likely to be engaged and productive" (Kumar, 2019). This implies that a favourable work environment might effect employee performance positively.

Every organisation exists for a reason, and that reason is typically referred to as the objective for which they were established; however, if the surrounding environment is unclean, it will be impossible to accomplish that objective. In spite of this, there is a record of low productivity in the majority of public institutions in Nigeria, such as Federal University Otuoke, because workers working in within the environment has become less productive owing to then condition of the work environment. Ushie et al. (2015) state that the working environment individuals are subjected to, especially in Nigeria are hazardous and detrimental to their health. This is especially true in some public institutions. This is due to the fact that we commonly have offices that are badly built, furniture that is incorrect, inadequate ventilation, improper lighting, excessive noise, insufficient safety procedures during fire situations, and a lack of protective equipment. This is also due to the fact that we frequently do not have enough protective equipment. Everything that has been said up to this point is in agreement with this perspective. Thus, we can state that there is a correlation between the manner in which the physical work environment is structured and the level of performance achieved by employees working in most public establishments.

Consequently, organisations and companies that are performance-focused go to great lengths to ensure that their employees have the necessary skills and knowledge to operate the machineries in order to boost performance by putting together a comfortable working environment. According to Akinyele (2010), a large number of organisations believe that the acquisition of skills is the only way to increase the productivity of their employees. The way in which these businesses achieve success is directly correlated to the nature of the working environment in which employees are expected to perform their jobs. He went on to say that the working environment of an organisation is responsible for approximately eighty percent of the problems with productivity. It is possible to guarantee the well-being of workers by creating a work atmosphere that is favourable, which inevitably will help them to exert themselves to their duties with all of the vigour that might result into better levels of production (Akinyele, 2007).

It has been observed that employees working in certain departments complain an excessive amount about a lack of necessary working materials, inadequate ventilation and lighting in certain offices, and other similar issues. Along with other factors, this contributes to poor performance in the workplace and raises levels of stress, both of which lower an employee's capacity for productive work. Therefore, this study sets out to investigate the nature of the link that exists between the work environment and the performance of employees at the Federal University Otuoke in Bayelsa State, between the years 2015-2020.

## **Research Questions**

- i. What is the relationship between work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke?
- ii. What are the strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke?

## **Objectives of the study**

- i. To examine the nexus that exist between work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke.
- ii. To proffer strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke

# **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Work Environment**

Work environment is the physical and psychological setting in which workers perform their duties (Gill, 2020). It includes factors such as the physical layout of the workplace, the availability of resources, the organizational culture, and the interpersonal relationships between employees. Work environment can have a significant impact on employee morale, productivity, and job satisfaction (Gill, 2020).

To Gellatly (2020) work environment comprises of the physical and social setting in which people work. It includes the physical environment, such as the layout of the workplace, the temperature, and the noise level, as well as the social environment, such as the relationships between coworkers and the organisational culture. The atmosphere at work has the potential to significantly influence employee morale, levels of productivity, and overall job satisfaction. The office environment has a significant impact on employee productivity, as well as their levels of motivation and general happiness. A negative work environment may contribute to lower levels of productivity, lower morale, and greater levels

of stress, while a good work environment can lead to increased levels of productivity, better morale, and higher levels of job satisfaction (Gill, 2020).

#### **Employee Performance**

Employee performance is an important factor in the success of any organisation. It is the measure of how well an employee is able to complete tasks and meet goals. Employee performance can be evaluated in a variety of ways, including performance reviews, surveys, and feedback from supervisors and peers. Employee performance is also affected by factors such as motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational culture (Gill, 2020).

To Gomez-Mejia et al. (2018) employee performance is defined as the level of effectiveness of an employee in their job role. It is typically measured by the employee's ability to meet or exceed the expectations of their job role, as well as their ability to contribute to the overall success of the organisation. Employee performance is typically evaluated through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, such as performance reviews, job evaluations, and feedback from supervisors.

Employee performance is an important factor in the success of any organization (Khan, 2020). It is essential for employers to evaluate the performance of their employees in order to ensure that they are meeting the goals and objectives of the organization (Khan, 2020). Performance evaluations can be used to identify areas of improvement, recognize employee achievements, and provide feedback to employees (Khan, 2020). Additionally, performance evaluations can help employers to identify potential areas of development and provide employees with the opportunity to improve their skills and abilities.

#### THE NEXUS BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Numerous studies conducted over the course of time have showed the significant link between the workplace and the performance of employees. According to Gonzalez, who is cited in Heath (2006), the working environment not only has a substantial influence on how effectively employees work, but it also supports strong employee attention. Altman (2000) came to the conclusion that there is a positive correlation between employee performance and the work environment, and that any change in the culture of the workplace has an effect on performance. The atmosphere of the workplace also plays a role in how satisfied an employee is with their employment.

The nexus between work environment and employee's performance is a well-established concept in the field of organisational psychology. It has been found that the quality of the work environment has a direct impact on employee performance (Kumar, 2018). A positive work environment is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, which in turn leads to improved performance. Conversely, a negative work environment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, resulting in decreased performance. The quality of the work environment is determined by a variety of factors, such as the physical environment, the organisational culture, the leadership style, and the level of support provided by the organization (Kumar, 2018). A positive work environment is characterized by a supportive organisational culture, a collaborative leadership style, and a supportive physical environment is characterized by a hostile organisational culture, an autocratic leadership style, and an unsupportive physical environment (Kumar, 2018).

In addition, Chandrasekhar (2011) claims that a pleasant working environment not only protects the health of employees but also makes it simpler for them to put in the effort required by their professions. This, in turn, may lead to enhanced performance and a higher level of engagement. The amount of workers' devotion, participation, motivation, and engagement, as well as their subsequent performance, is influenced by the quality of the working environment (Sehgal, 2012). Further research has shown that an office layout that is well designed encourages absorption, teamwork among employees, social interaction, attracts customers and employees, improves better results, boosts productivity and organisational performance, and lowers the risks associated with health and safety. Additionally, it is constructed with the convenience and security of the workers or consumers in mind. Hence, the nexus between work environment and employee performance is a well-established concept in the field of organizational psychology. A positive work environment is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, which in turn leads to improved performance. Conversely, a negative work environment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, resulting in decreased performance.

#### Research setting Federal University Otuoke

The federal university, Otuoke is a federal government owned university sited in Otuoke a town in Ogbia Local government area of Bayelsa state, southern Nigeria. The university is one among the nine new federal universities established by the federal government of Nigeria in February 2011 under the administration of president Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. The university is situated in the heart of the oil-rich Nigeria Delta Region of Bayelsa State. The University currently have six (6) facilities and offers degree courses at undergraduate levels. The university offers undergraduate programs in the faculty of education, engineering, humanities, social science, management and sciences. The current Vice-Chancellor is Prof. Charles Teddy Adias. She has a staff strength of nine hundred and fifty (Academic Staff 650 and Administrative Staff 300).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is employed the Expectancy Theory of Motivation. The theory proposes that an individual's behaviour is determined by their cognitive expectations of what would occur as a consequence of their behaviour (Vroom, 1964). According to this theory, an individual's motivation to execute a task is based on the anticipation that their effort will result in a desired outcome. Additionally, an individual's motivation is influenced by their estimate of the possibility that their effort will result in a desired outcome. The theory proposes that the behaviour we choose will always be the one that maximizes our pleasure and minimizes our pain. According to George and Jones, referenced in Epelle and Asiegbu (2021), expectancy theory places greater focus on performance factors; hence, an individual's motivation towards an activity is driven by the expectation that the effort will result in success.

In addition, the idea says that a person's motivation is influenced by their sense of the value of the desired outcome (Vroom, 1964). This notion has been the subject of much research in relation to work settings and employee performance. Scholars of expectancy theory states that a person's motivation to accomplish a task is governed by their anticipation of the activity's outcome and their appraisal of the effort required to complete the task. Consequently, the work environment can have a considerable impact on the motivation and performance of employees. For instance, a work environment that gives employees with clear expectations, rewards, and recognition for their efforts might boost their performance. Moreover, a work environment that offers individuals with autonomy and control over their job might enhance their performance motivation because they are more likely to experience a sense of ownership and responsibility for their work (Kanfer, 1990).

When considered in the context of this research, we recognise the working environment at Federal University Otuoke as a motivating factor that is essential for achieving higher levels of performance among staff members. Because humans are fundamentally psychological creatures, they need some kind of motivation—whether extrinsic or intrinsic in order to achieve both their personal and their organisational aims and ambitions. In today's society, when rivalry between people and between individuals and corporate organisations has taken on such a high priority level, motivation has become an even more essential component of success. Because of this, creating a work atmosphere that is favourable to productivity can benefit both the organisation and the individual in the long term. The aforementioned is compatible with the results of Chandrasekhar (2011), who asserts that a favourable office environment ensures the comfort of workers and promotes the exertion of energy into job tasks, which may convert into improved performance and engagement in any organisation. According to Chandrasekhar (2011), a conducive work environment ensures the comfort of workers and promotes the application of energy to job duties. According to the findings of this research, the quality of the working environment has an effect on the levels of commitment, participation, motivation, and engagement that workers have, as well as their subsequent performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For its design and sampling, the study used the survey method and the purposive sampling technique. Survey design makes it easier to collect data by using a questionnaire. It also lets the researcher survey a large group of people and is thought to be one of the best ways to do research. In order to meet the goals of the study, both primary and secondary data were collected. The subject-specific questions on the questionnaire were used to get the first set of data. The study used ten (10) questionnaire items and sent out two hundred (200) questionnaires to employees from six (6) faculties, in the university including the Faculty of Education, Engineering, Humanities, Social Sciences, Management Science, and Faculty of Sciences.

One hundred fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were found and used in the study without any problems. There were three parts to the questionnaire. The distribution numbers from the questionnaire are in Section 1, and there are ten questions about the subject in Sections 2 and 3. Frequency tables and percentages were used to show and analyse the answers from the respondents. The secondary data came from relevant journals, newspapers, online resources, and textbooks. The data were analysed using content analysis. The primary data from respondents was looked at using statistical tables and the criterion mean based on a four-point Likert scale. The mean and standard deviation were also calculated using the Likert scale method, which uses a 4-point scale. The findings of the analysis were used to determine whether or not the questionnaire items utilized in the research were appropriate. Methods for calculating the mean of a criterion: SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; SD = 1

Hence; criterion mean = Weighted total And; This  $4+3+2+1 = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$ 

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Therefore, the criterion mean is the total number of points divided by the total number of choices, which is 2.5. Any item with a mean score of less than 2.5 is seen as negative and therefore disagreed with, while any item with a mean score of 2.5 or higher is seen as positive and therefore agreed with

## **Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

S/N	Faculties	Number of questionnaires administered	Number of questionnaires retrieved without error
1.	Education	33	33
2.	Engineering	33	32
3.	Humanities	33	28
4.	Social sciences	33	20
5.	Management	33	22
6.	Sciences	35	15
	Total	200	150

#### **Questionnaire Distribution Table**

#### Source: Field Study, 2023

The surveys were sent to personnel from several faculties at Federal University Otuoke in variable numbers, totaling 200 copies. Despite the fact that the total number of questionnaires retrieved varied, 33 copies were successfully retrieved from the Faculty of Education, 32 copies from the Faculty of Engineering, 28 copies from the Faculty of Humanities, 20 copies from the Faculty of Social Science, 22 copies from the Faculty of Management Sciences, and 15 copies from the Faculty of Sciences, for a total of 150 copies successfully retrieved and validly used for this study.

#### **Research Question 1:**

What is the relationship between work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke? **Table 2: Statistical analysis of respondents' Perceptions on the relationship between work environment** 

	and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke								
S/N	The connection between Federal University Otuoke's work environment and the level of performance achieved by its employees	SA	Α	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision	
1.	A positive work environment is a key factor in employee satisfaction.	49 (196)	37 (111)	29 (58)	35 (35)	150 (400)	2.66	Accepted	
2.	Work environment has no influence on employee performance	30 (120)	34 (102)	36 (72)	50 (50)	150 (344)	2.29	Rejected	
3.	Working environment can influence employee interaction, collaboration and innovation.	36 (144)	69 (207)	20 (40)	25 (25)	150 (416)	2.77	Accepted	
4.	Staff in FUO do not understand what work environment is.	40 (160)	19 (57)	50 (100)	41 (41)	150 (358)	2.38	Rejected	
5.	Increased organisational productivity is a direct result of a pleasant working environment.	30 (120)	60 (180)	20 (40)	40 (40)	150 (380)	2.53	Accepted	

## Source: Field work, 2023

As mentioned below, Table 2 provides five (5) questionnaire questions on the issue that were interpreted based on the frequency of respondents' replies with varied degrees of percentages for each. The results of table 2 indicate that the work environment plays an important role in the job satisfaction of employees and that the work environment can influence employee interaction, collaboration, and innovation, as indicated by questionnaire items 1 and 3 with criterion frequencies of 2.66 and 2.77, respectively, indicating that the mean is greater than the 2.50 criterion mean standard. This is consistent with the findings of Mcguire and Mclaren (2007), who discovered that a working environment has a significant impact on the well-being of its employees and encourages interaction, collaboration, and innovation, in addition to boosting job satisfaction. In addition, responses rejected items 2 and 4, as shown by questionnaire item 2 with a frequency of 2.29 and item 4 with a frequency of 2.38, both of which are less than the criterion mean standard of 2.50, indicating that the staff at Federal University Otuoke understands what the work environment is and how it influences.

#### **Research Question 2:**

What are the strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke?

 

 Table 2: Statistical analysis of respondents' Perceptions on strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke

S/N	Strategies that can help improve work environment and employee performance in Federal University Otuoke	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
6.	Effective workplace communication	41 (164)	40 (120)	29 (58)	40 (40)	150 (382)	2.54	Accepted
7.	Increased workload on staff	20 (80)	39 (117)	41 (82)	50 (50)	150 (329)	2.19	Rejected
8.	All-inclusiveness in decision making process	44 (176)	50 (150)	26 (52)	30 (30)	150 (408)	2.72	Accepted
9.	Provision of clean and temperate offices	43 (172)	45 (135)	22 (44)	40 (40)	150 (391)	2.60	Accepted
10.	Proper structuring of work place facilities	46 (184)	39 (117)	26 (52)	39 (39)	150 (392)	2.61	Accepted

#### Source: Field work, 2022

Table 3 displays the opinions and replies of respondents about ways that might enhance the work environment and employee performance at Federal University Otuoke. Table 3 reveals that respondents approved things 6 with a mean score of 2.54, item 8 with a mean score of 2.72, item 9 with a mean score of 2.60, and questionnaire item 10 with a mean score of 2.61 since they are all above the mean standard threshold of 2.50. Nonetheless, respondents rejected item 7 with a mean frequency of 2.19, which is lower than the criteria mean of 2.50, demonstrating that workers in all organisations detest being overworked.

Again, respondents acknowledged that employee participation in the decision-making process, effective workplace communication, and improved offices with a temperate environment could increase Federal University Otuoke's productivity. Cassar (1999) found in his research that employee engagement, such as participation in collaborative decision making, correlates positively with good work attitudes and employee dedication.

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our study examined the impact of the work environment on employee performance in Nigeria public institutions with particular focus on Federal University Otuoke. The study focused on the relationship between the physical and psychological aspects of the work environment and employee performance. Finding from our study revealed that there is nexus between work environment and employee performance and that when public administrators provide conducive working environment for their staff it will enhance organizational performance.

## The following are therefore the recommendations of this study:

- i. Management should create conducive working environment that attracts, retains, and motivates employees in order to assist them in working comfortably and increasing organisation performance.
- **ii.** There is need for improved communication between management and employees. Management should establish avenues for communication through which their objectives and plans can be made known to their staff in order to realize the university's mission and vision.
- iii. The university management should make adequate budgetary provision for the purchase of modern work place equipment and furniture as this will further make employees comfortable and as well increase their moral and zeal for work.
- iv. There is need for management to introduce motivational packages or incentives for the employees. Incentives acts as a propellant which can increase employee commitment and performance on the job. Hence, there is need for employees to be given financial or non-financial incentives as this assures them of their place in the organisation.

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