

Influence of Work Specialization on Employees Productivity: A Case of Seven-Up Bottling Plant, Benin City- Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the perceived influence of work specialization on productivity in seven up Bottling Plant located in Benin City - Nigeria. The study is a case study type of research design. The major instrument used for primary data collection was a modified version of Employee Perception Scale (EPS), designed in four point Likert Scale format. Data collected was analyzed with descriptive statistics and Simple Linear Regression. Findings show an R value of .916 meaning that a linear relationship exists between positive perception of work specialization and productivity while the computed R square value of .838 is an indication that 83 percent of employee's productivity is influenced by positive perception of work specialization. Based on the findings, it was suggested that there was the need for managers and employers of labour to understand the perception of their employees so as to be able to create a strong work culture, improve employee engagement and productivity.

Keywords: Employee Perception, Influence, Work Specialization, Productivity

INTRODUCTION

Perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment (Robbins, 2004). Employee's perception is their awareness, understanding or the impression they have about their job and working conditions which may be positive, negative or neutral. Given the fact that perception is a subjective phenomenon, different employee may have different impressions of the same work environment therefore, understanding how employees differ is essential for all employers of labour to have a positive work environment, improve on workers level of job satisfaction and employee engagement across the board (Parker, 2023).

Studies have shown that employee's perception of the work place influences their behaviour, attitudes, and performance (Takele and RajiKiltu, 2014; Parker, 2023). For instance, the study carried out by Peter, Ibisola, Oluwatoyin, Omotosho, and Okagbue (2023) found out that employee's perception of work environment plays an important role in organizational survival and productivity. Olanipekun (2021) in a similar study, finds that a strong relationship exist between employees perception of work environment and job satisfaction while the study of Iqra, Zhu, Saba, Rafiq, and Khaliq Ur (2019) finds that perception of office environment positively affects the behaviour of employees and their performance. Also, Mwendwa, McAuliffe, Uduma, Masanja, and Mollel (2017) found out that employee's perception of their work environment influence their level of productivity while Johns and Saks (1997) asserts that employees perception of work environment plays a significant role in determining whether or not employees are disengaged, i.e. a situation whereby employees are at work but are minimizing their work contribution (Lewis, Pun and Lalla, 2007). Therefore, gathered information about how employees perceive their work specialization and its influence on productivity is fundamental for a better understanding of employee's engagement and the company's organizational culture.

Work specialization is the process whereby activities in a work place are divided into separate tasks, allowing employees to specialize in specific areas (Sujan, 2023). An individual worker is said to be specialized when he focuses his productive efforts on an increasingly narrow range of tasks (Kelly, 2021). Work specialization allows employees to concentrate on areas of interest and strength (Adeyoyin, Unazi, Oyewunmi, Adegun and Ayodele, 2015), focus on specific tasks, and build expertise and experience leading to higher level of productivity (Becker and Murphy, 1992, Vickers et al, 2007 cited in Madiedo, Chandrasekaran, and Salvador, 2020). With work specialization, an employee acquire both technical and organizational expertise, becomes more proficient and occasionally develop new techniques as well as increase efficiency and productivity (Staats, 2012; Vickers et al. 2007 cited in Madiedo et al, 2020; and Kelly, 2021). However, work specialization have been found to reduce multitask abilities of the employees' (Zareen, Razzaq, and Mujtaba, 2013), weakens creativity and innovation (Kimani, Gesimba and Gichuhi, 2020), and it makes it difficult for employees to adapt to different functions which may lead to boredom and job dissatisfaction (Lunenburg, 2012).

Despite the disadvantages of work specialization enunciated above, specialization becomes imperative in organizations where different tasks must be performed simultaneously like the production line. The bottling plant being one of such specialized facilities fitted with the bottling machinery to provide the service of filling empty containers with carbonated beverages and also to perform other essential services including packaging, warehousing and distribution of products to customers (Edwards, 2024), is managed by workers with the set of skills that are needed to meet the company's specific needs (Parker, 2023). Accordingly, the bottling process involves different tasks carried out by specialized employees in different sections. These sections according to Kelly (2021) are, rinsing and cleaning, premixing and filling, capping and sealing, labeling and packaging. Rinsing and cleaning involves cleaning the containers to avoid contaminating the liquid that is added to the bottle. Premixing is the use of a specialized machine to prepare the beverage prior to filling. Filling is adding the liquid to the bottles or containers. Capping and sealing refer to the process of adding the final cap to the bottle top and sealing to preserve the contents and preclude undetected tampering. Labeling operations provide the customer-facing information needed to promote a product and its brand. It also provides capabilities to apply needed data including production lot codes and expiration date before packaging the products for sale or for transportation to wholesalers and retailers.

From the above bottling plant process review, it is clear that the process involves separate tasks carried out by different workers of different specialties. However, it is unclear whether or not there is a relationship between employee's perceived influence of work specialization and productivity. The major research question therefore is does employee's perception of their work specialization influence productivity? This is the focus of the study and the gap in knowledge that the study sought to fill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Influence of Employee Perception

Perception is an inevitable outcome of man-environmental interactions and work place perception cannot be an exception. Perception construed as the process by which an employee organizes and interprets his/her impressions in order to give meaning to his/her environment has been found to significantly influence his/her workplace behaviour (Langton and Robbins, 2006). It is the quest to understand workers behaviour that has resulted in the growing interest in the study of employee's perception (Riggle, 2007). Consequently, perception has been described as an essential aspect of corporate responsibility for all companies that want to create a strong work culture and improve employee engagement and productivity (Parker, 2023).

The evidence available suggests that individual's perception of their work place influences their attitudes and behaviour (Takele and Raji Kiltu, 2014) and understanding employee perception has been considered crucial for companies that want to create a strong work culture and improve employee engagement and

productivity (Parker, 2023). There is no doubt that employee's positive perception of the workplace affects their behaviour, attitudes and performance however, perception of the workplace is influenced by many factors including their experience, personal values and expectations as well as the company's communication strategies, feedback mechanisms, and recognition programs (Parker, 2023). According to Parker (2023) employee perception can have a significant impact on the employee's job satisfaction, motivation and productivity because if an employee perceives their job as meaningful and fulfilling, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated in their work but if the employees perceive their job as boring or unfulfilling, they may become disengaged and less productive (Lewis, Pun and Lalla, 2007; Parker, 2023). Disengagement can exist when workers have a poor perception of their job or work environment. For instance, if employees perceive their work environment as positive and supportive, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated, which generally leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction, while, negative perception may result to less attachment and low productivity, leading to a decrease in job satisfaction and the rate of turnover (Parker, 2023). Thus, employee's positive perception of their job or work environment influences their behaviour in organizations including productivity.

2.2. Work Specialization

Specialization is focusing on one task rather than multiple tasks. Adam Smith (1776) believe specialization leads to growth, that as a company grows, it can hire more workers, and hiring more workers allows a company to divide the workers into certain roles, meaning they will have fewer responsibilities and are able to improve and specialize in one core skill. Once a worker becomes more efficient at their task, this will result in increased production levels, utilizing less time and less cost (Sujan, 2023). Kelly (2021) in his extensive literature review quoted Adam Smith Institute: The Wealth of Nations to have seen specialization along with its complementary concept of division of labour as the most important causes of economic progress. Similarly, it has been asserted that specialized workers are more likely to innovate, create tools or machinery to make their tasks more efficient (Sujan, 2023).

Specialization help to improve productivity-the ratio of inputs to output because tasks are divided among different employees of different specialties or jobs are designed for each segment and this allows multiple tasks to be done simultaneously and when they are needed (Lunenburg, 2012). According to Kelly (2021) with specialization, it is easier for all new employees to learn on the job and with the passage of time they also become specialists. The knowledge workers gain from specialization help to improve performance (Huckman and Pisano, 2006), because all such knowledge are in different areas including the specific set of steps to follow and type of the specialized tools being used (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2010). Specialization make tasks to be completed faster, more efficiently and at lower quality control costs. What is more, specialization does not only give the employees a sense of pride and job security but enhances the profits making chances for the organization (Kelly, 2021).

One of the most important aspects of job specialization is its potential to increase the workers level of productivity and organizations output (Huckman and Pisano, 2006). In fact, in Investopedia (2021) review entitled How Does Specialization Help Companies Achieve Economies of Scale?, stressed that economic theories and their actual implementation have proven that as the company's workforce specializes in specific skills, it leads to efficiency, which leads to more goods being produced. As more goods are produced, the cost of producing them is spread out, leading to economies of scale, an important competitive advantage for any company.

Despite the advantages enunciated above, work specialization has been observed to reduce the employees' multitask abilities (Zareen et al, 2013), weakens creativity and innovativeness (Kimani et al, 2020), and makes it difficult for employees to adapt to the handling of different functions and this may lead to boredom and job dissatisfaction (Lunenburg, 2012). However, it is to mitigate the problems associated with task specialization and enhance job satisfaction and employee engagement that many organizations now

introduce job rotation, job enlargement, and job enrichment (Zareen et al, 2013;Sujan, 2023).

Job rotation involves shifting employees between two or more tasks or between jobs at regular intervals to expose them to all the verticals of an organization (Sujan, 2023). Job rotation has been found to give the employees the opportunities to learn different skills, play diverse roles and handle more responsibilities (Zareen et al, 2013). Job enlargement is increasing the tasks relating to the same job or level within an organization. It widens the scope of team members to include more tasks and responsibilities (Sujan, 2023). Job enrichment is adding stimulators to the present job so as to make it rewarding. A job is said to be enriched when the incumbent has the power to make decisions and plans (Zareen et al, 2013), or to assign more tasks with the autonomy to perform all such tasks given to the employees (Adeyoyin et al., 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Site

Seven-Up Bottling Company PLC is a soft drinks manufacturer with its headquarters in Lagos State - Nigeria. It is one of the largest manufacturing companies in Nigeria, producing and distributing soft drinks including Pepsi cola, 7Up, Mirinda, Teem, Mountain Dew, Lipton Ice Tea, SupaKomando Energy Drink and Aquafina premium table water. Seven-Up Bottling Company has nine bottling plants with state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities strategically located across the country. Seven-Up Bottling plant locations are Oregun and Ijora in Lagos, Ibadan, Aba, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu, Benin and Ilorin (Olafuusi, 2017). However, largely due to the proximity of Seven-Up bottling plant Benin City to the researcher, time constraints and the high cost of travelling to other States with such facilities for the purpose of research, from October 2023 to January 2024, we investigated the perceived influence of work specialization on productivity among selected employees of Seven-Up Bottling plant located in Benin City -Edo State, Nigeria in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration of 1989 and also to protect the rights and interests of respondents, the employees were fully informed of the content and the purpose of the study in the course of the survey before they voluntarily participated.

Methods

This study is a case study type of research design. The population of the study is the staff of Seven-up Bottling Plant located in Benin City- Nigeria. Seven-up bottling company is among private companies in Nigeria where certain information is shrouded in secrecy including the actual number of staff (permanent, non-permanent, casual and contract staff) currently employed by the company for the purpose of research. Therefore, in the absence of an up - to - date data on the total number of staff, the purposive sampling technique was used to select sixty (60) respondents as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Designation and the Number of Respondents Selected

SN	Designation	Number	Percentage
1	Senior Staff	6	10
2	Junior Staff	24	40
3	Casual Workers	22	36.7
4	Contract Staff	8	13.3
Total		60	100

Source; Field Survey (2024)

Data presented in Table 1 shows the designation of participants and the number of participants selected and used for the study. From the table, six (6) senior staff representing 10% of the respondents, twenty- four (24) junior staff representing 40% and twenty- two (22) casual workers representing 36.7% was selected while

only eight (8) contract staff representing 13.3% was selected in the course of the study. The major instrument used for primary data collection for the study was a ten (10) item questionnaire in a modified version of the Employee Perception Scale (EPS) accredited to Lewis and Pun (2006) and Lewis, Pun, and Lalla, (2007). The items were drawn to cover four key areas of perception namely; perception of work specialization; motivation/satisfaction; engagement; and organizational culture and they were validated using the expert judgment approach. The response format was in four points Likert Scale namely: Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree which were also sequentially weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectfully. The mean response to each of the items was first collated and analyzed using Descriptive statistics and thereafter, the simple Linear Regression of the weighted mean scores of the independent and dependent variables was computed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistical analysis of data collected revealed that employee’s positive perception of work specialization (the response variable) had a weighted mean score of 65.40, and standard deviation (SD) equal to 12.03 while productivity which is the predictor variable had a mean score of 174.6 and SD equal to 18.5. The implication of these positive descriptive statistical values is that there is a positive relationship between the variables under study but they cannot sufficiently explain the nature of such relationship hence the need to compute the correlation coefficient. The computed correlation coefficient is .916 and this means that there is a strong association between employees’ perception and productivity since the value is positive and close to +1. This is presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std Deviation	N
Positive perception of work specialization	65.40	12.039	10
Employees productivity	174.60	18.542	10

Table 3: Correlation

		Positive Perception of Work Specialization	Employee Productivity
Pearson Correlation	Positive Perception of Work Specialization	1.000	.916
	Employees Productivity	.916	1.000
Sig (1 tailed)	Positive Perception of Work Specialization		.000
	Employees Productivity	.000	
N	Positive Perception of Work Specialization	10	10
	Employees Productivity	10	10

Using the appropriate SPSS command we run the linear regression to ascertain whether or not there is a significant (linear) relationship between employees’ perception and productivity. The model summary of the results obtained is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics							Durbin-Watson	
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change	Durbin Watson	Sig. F Change		
1	.916a	.838	.818	5.133	.838	41.510	1	8	.000	1.259	8	.000	1.259

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Productivity

b. Dependent Variable: Positive Perception of Tasks Specialization

From the results in Table 4: the model summary, the statistic R here takes the value .916 and it is equivalent to the Pearson correlation shown above. This high value of R (.916) indicates that a positive relationship exists between the two variables. R square value of .838 is simply the value of R squared (R multiplied by R) and it represents the proportion of variance in the response variable that is employee's positive perception of work specialization, and this implies that 83% of employee's productivity is influenced by perception of work specialization. Also, the F values of 41.5 and Beta value of .916 is an indication that employee's perception of work specialization influences productivity. The P-value of .000b is significant while the F-Ratio of 41.5 is an indication that the model is not only efficient but has sufficiently explained the relationship between the variables under study. In summary, the findings show that employee's perception of work specialization has 83% chances of enhancing their level of productivity.

Table 5: Anova

Model	Sum. of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	1093.630	1	1093.630	41.510	.000 ^b	41.510	.000 ^b
	Residual	210.770	8	26.346				
	Total	1304.400	9					

a. Dependent Variable: Positive Perception of Work Specialization

The results presented in Table 5 (the Analysis of Variance table) shows how well the predictor variable (productivity) accounts for the differences in the response variable (perception of work specialization). The table shows that Sum of Squares is 1093.630, F value is 41.510 and it is significant .000^b. This means that there is enough statistical evidence to conclude that employee perception of work specialization is a useful predictor of productivity. Based on this finding, it was concluded that it is the opinion of the employees of Seven-Up bottling plant in Benin City that there is a positive relationship between employee's perception of work specialization and productivity. This finding affirms the previous findings of scholars like Abraham, Assegid and Assefa (2014), and Mwendwa, et al (2017) who found out that employee's perception of work environment influences their productivity. Other studies with this same findings include Parker (2023); Olanipekun (2021); Iqra et al, (2019), and Takele and Raji Kiltu, (2014) who find that employee's perception of work environment plays an important role in organizational survival, productivity and job satisfaction. Langton and Robbins (2006) and Parker (2023) assert that employee's perception of their work place influences their attitude and behaviour, as well as their level of job satisfaction, motivation and productivity.

CONCLUSION

The cardinal objective of this study was to investigate the perception of employees work specialization and its influence on productivity because employee perception has been an issue of interest to researchers and human resources managers due to its impact on employees' attitude and behavior including their performance which in turn, leads to organizational performance. This study has successfully demonstrated that employee's positive perception of work specialization influences their level of productivity. The implication of this finding to policy, managerial and to existing knowledge is that it will help organizations to further understand the significance of employees' positive perception of work specialization and its relationship with productivity. It is concluded that it is crucial for managers and employers of labour to understand employees' perception of their tasks and work environment including organizational policies and programmes to further strengthen the existing work culture, improve employee engagement and productivity for the benefit of all stakeholders in this century.

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