

Literacy Education and Employees' Job Engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

By

Asuquo, Roseline Victor (Ph.D)

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between literacy education and employees' job engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Ex-post Facto research design was adopted for the study. A population of 205 respondents was used in the study. All the 205 respondents formed the sample of the study. The Literacy Education and Employees' Job Engagement Questionnaire (LEAEJEQ) was the instrument used for data collection. 195 copies of questionnaire administered were successfully completed and retrieved for analysis. The reliability of the instrument was established with Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method with an internal consistency of 0.82. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was adopted to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance with relative degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis revealed that, digital literacy and information literacy significantly relate with employees' job engagement. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that employees should be exposed to training on digital and information technology literacy to enable them acquire skills and knowledge that will enhance their job engagement for the achievement of organizational goals.

Keywords: Literacy Education, Job Engagement, Employee, Organization, Performance

Introduction

The achievement of organizational goals of any organization be it private or public is determined by the level of employees' job engagement. Organizations that prioritize employees' job engagement strategies such as continuous feedback, professional growth opportunities and inclusive culture initiatives tend to see gains in productivity, innovation and overall business performance. When there is high level of employees' job engagement, employees feel satisfied and motivated to perform well for the good of the organization. This leads to a happy, harmonious work environment, high morale and increased profitability. It also fosters collaboration and innovation throughout the organization. Understanding and implementing the fundamental components of the employees' job engagement by management can facilitate the development of actionable strategies that promote a motivated and high performing workforce. (Harter et al 2020)

Employees' job engagement has become increasingly essential for enhancing productivity, fostering commitment and cultivating a positive organizational culture. Engaged employees act as ambassadors of organizational culture, tend to exhibit better performance and maintained loyalty to the organization. Maintaining a strong employees' job engagement is a key factor in long-term organizational success and is of fundamental importance to the employee, the organization and the nation at large. It is the emotional commitment, motivation and passion employees feel for their work and organization leading them to invest discretionary effort, go the extra mile and actively contribute to organizational goal, going beyond mere satisfaction or just doing what is required. When employees are engaged in their jobs, they are enthusiastic, loyal productive and act as advocates for their workplace impacting success, retention and innovation. It also describes the level of commitment, motivation and emotional investment employees bring to their work and to the organization's success. (Bakker, 2019)

Macey (2018) stated that employees' job engagement plays a major role in enhancing higher productivity, higher profitability, improved performance, improved communication, fosters team work, innovation and increases economic growth and development. It has a significant impact on employees' well-being, how well employees are able to serve customers, help employees create a positive work environment and brings about improvement in the standard of living of employees. It goes beyond simple job satisfaction, measuring how connected employees feel towards their team, leaders and the organization's mission. An improvement in job satisfaction leads to improvement in performance, loyalty and cultural alignment which inspires true dedication to the organization's mission and vision.

It has been observed by the researcher that the level of employees' job engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State seems to have declined indicating low level of job engagement. Some employees of this organization exhibit a nonchalant attitude towards their jobs, some report to work late, some are not committed and consistent in the performance of tasks assigned to them and their customer service is poor. Some do not understand the work parameters. Perhaps, due to lack of skills and knowledge necessary for the efficient and effective performance of tasks assigned to them. Some of the employees are willing to take initiative and collaborate with colleagues. The issue of low level of job engagement by employees of Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State has been a matter of great concern to the management of this organization and members of the public. The management of this organization has made attempts

to solve this problem by the application of various management techniques, providing incentives, organizing seminars and workshops and giving awards to deserving employees, but the problem still persists.

The consequences of low level of job engagement on the organization, the employees, the government and the economy at large cannot be overemphasized. It results in declining revenue, loss of public confidence in the organization, loss of job by some employees, slows down economic activities, cripples the economy, low return on investment and low employee retention rates.

To tackle this problem, the independent variable of this study which is literacy education is discussed using its sub-variables which are; digital literacy and information literacy. Employees who are exposed to digital literacy and information literacy are more creative and highly productive than those who are not. Without a fully literate workforce, employers wrestle with low employee's retention rates, low productivity and a reduction in revenue.

It is against this background that the researcher investigated whether any relationship exists between literacy education and employees' job engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

In the 21st century where knowledge is constantly changing and expanding exponentially, it is expected that employees should move along in the changing world of knowledge and technology so as to enable them contribute to national development, operate successfully and confidently in a technologically driven society. Hence, the need for literacy education, digital literacy and information literacy in order for employees to be updated with the changes in the world, acquire occupational skills, technical skills, professional skills and improve their personal skills in different areas which contribute immensely to improvement in their job engagement (Jedikowska,2020).

Guzzetti (2019) pointed out that literacy education is the process of teaching and learning the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to communicate effectively and understand the world. It has evolved to include a broader set of skills beyond traditional reading and writing such as digital, media and information literacy which are crucial for success in modern society. The goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and ability to function in society, achieve their goals and develop their potentials. It is significant for employment because it boosts individual earnings, improves job performance and increases the probability of formal

employment. It also provides a foundation for digital literacy which is increasingly vital for career success as it help individuals adapt to new technologies, engage in lifelong learning and remain competitive in modern workforce which enhances productivity.

Mustafa (2022) supported that literacy education has a significant positive relationship with employees' job engagement largely because it contributes to skills development, adaptability, job satisfaction and a sense of personal growth. Engaged employees in turn exhibit higher performance, productivity and commitment to their organizations. It boosts employees' job engagement by improving employees' confidence, communication and opportunities for career advancement.

Roser (2020) asserted that literacy education increases self- confidence. Employees with improved literacy skills feel better about themselves and are more likely to take on new responsibilities and challenges. It enhances better reading, writing, speaking and listening skills which allow employees interact effectively with colleagues and clients which is highly valued soft skill. It is a foundation for understanding, evaluating and questioning information. It help individuals to develop and communicate their ideas to take action.

Hunter and John (2020) observed that literacy proficiency is often a pre-requisite for job transfer, promotion and vocational training, providing clear pathway for advancement and motivating employees to stay with the organization. Literacy skills including digital and information literacy enable employees to learn new technologies and adapt to evolving job requirements, essential in a fast changing environment. A more literate workforce can better understand safety instructions, operational procedures and complex documents, leading to fewer safety incidents and high level of job engagement. To achieve a competent workforce that promote high level of employees' job engagement in organizations, employees should be exposed to digital and information literacy in organizations.

Hunter (2019) described digital literacy as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information requiring both cognitive and technical skills. It is awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use and interact with digital technology tools to easily and effectively access information in different formats e.g text, videos and images in a digital environment. This equips employees with skills, knowledge and abilities that fill the gap between existing and needed digital competencies for improving job engagement. It helps employees cope with increasing complex information

environment at workplace and gives requirements for higher productivity and better job engagement.

Colbert et al (2020) affirmed that digital literacy is the ability to use digital technology to access, manage and communicate information. Digital skills are essential for job engagement, leading to better job performance and higher wages. It helps individuals navigate e-services, manage finances and access information needed for everyday tasks. Digital literacy helps employees to create critical thinking, learn to evaluate on-line information which is crucial for discerning credible sources and avoiding misinformation in the workplace. A digitally literate employee possesses the technical and operational skills to use technology for various reasons. Employees are expected to be knowledgeable with the use of ICT and have ability to properly operate digital technologies such as the internet, computers, company's internal web portals and platforms in the workplace. To succeed in today's working environment, employees must be able to use a diverse range of technologies to improve their job engagement.

Compaine (2021) posited that in the digital era and in the workplace context, digital literacy goes beyond functional IT skills and includes a richer set of digital behavior, practices and identities. It involves more than the mere ability to use software or operate a digital device. Employees with low digital literacy are less likely to be critical about the usefulness of technology or may find it difficult to use the work-related technology. While those with higher digital literacy may be more confident to adopt the technology and establish a positive attitude towards the use of technology on their jobs. This goes a long way in improving their performance.

Marsh (2020) conducted a study on the effect of digital literacy on employees' performance in technology sector in Pakistan. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 2,500 respondents. A sample of 250 representing 10% of the population was randomly selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Data were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation. The result revealed that the standard deviation of 1.14 and the mean value of 2.50 indicating that the respondents agreed that digital literacy have effect on employees' performance. This implied that digital literacy has a role to play in employees' performance by equipping them with skills relevant in today's world. The study recommended that employees should be exposed to digital literacy to educate and equip them with skills through the use of modern technology required in the workplace.

Kirton and Barham (2019) highlighted that information literacy involves finding, evaluating and using information effectively. It is the ability to recognize when information is needed and to find, evaluate, organize and use it effectively. It includes critical thinking skills to navigate a vast amount of information, determine its credibility and use ethically for decision making, problem solving and learning. Furthermore, it will enable people to master information contents and extend their investigation to recognize when information is needed and to effectively locate, evaluate and use the needed information. An information literate employee is a critical thinker who can locate and productively evaluate web-based information for better performance. Such employee has the ability to effectively use information, locate evaluate, store, retrieve and communicate for the success of the organization and for improved job engagement.

Forster (2020) noted that information literacy is one of the basic competency requirements for employees. It is the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use and communicate information in all its various formats, most notably in situations requiring decision making, problem solving or the acquisition of knowledge. It is a combination of research skills and communication skills. It is essential for effective functioning in the workplace and participation in the society as knowledgeable citizens. Information literacy enable employees to make informed choices about credible and relevant information. It is the ability to initiate search strategies, locate, evaluate, assess, analyze and effectively use information needed and to make decisions. Employees must interact with information both individually and with colleagues to achieve organizational goals.

Gilbert (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between information literacy and workers' productivity in banking sector in Europe. The study adopted a survey research design. The population consisted of 800 respondents and a sample of 400 representing 50% of the population was randomly selected using the simple random sampling technique. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was adopted to analyze the data collected. The result revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.62 is higher than the critical r-value of .059 at .05 level of significance with 398 degrees of freedom. This result implied that there is a significant relationship between information literacy and workers' productivity. The study recommended that employees should be equipped with information literacy skills in the workplace in order to enhance their productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Employees' job engagement entails employees showing up to work with a sense of purpose, a deep commitment to the organization, dedication to performing well, a collaborative attitude, good communication with co-workers and leaders, the ability to give and receive feedback positively. But contrary to this, employees' job engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, have fallen below expectation thereby resulting in low level of employees' job engagement which is evident in the poor attitude of the workers towards their jobs. It is observed by the researcher that some employees do not put in their best in the performance of their duties, there is high rate of absenteeism, poor customer service, some report to work late, there is high rate of grievances among the employees, etc.

The effect of this is very devastating as it results in loss of job by some of the employees, loss of profitability, a decline in revenue, loss of public confidence in the organization, slow rate of economic growth and development, etc. There have been concerted efforts over the years by the management of this organization to improve employees' job engagement by organizing seminars, conferences, workshops and provision of merit awards to deserving employees. However, in spite of all these efforts, the problem still persists. In the light of this, the researcher sought to investigate whether there is any relationship between literacy education and employees' job engagement in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement as well as determine the relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested

- i. There is no significant relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement
- ii. There is no significant relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the Expost Facto research design. The area of the study is Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study is 205 which consisted of all the workers in Akwa Ibom Transport Company, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Using the total enumeration

sampling method all the 205 workers formed the sample of the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled Literacy Education and Employees' Job Engagement Questionnaire (LEAEJEQ) designed by the researcher. The instrument had three sections A, B and C. Section A was designed to collect respondents' personal data. Section B consisted of 10 items on literacy education with respect to digital literacy and information literacy, while Section C consisted of 15 items that were used to gather information from the respondents on job engagement. A four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at 0.82 using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method. The copies of questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher with one research assistant trained for the purpose. At the end of the exercise, 195 copies of questionnaire were retrieved for analysis. Codes were assigned to each item and a coding schedule was prepared. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis. Each of the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement (N=195)

| Variables | \bar{X} | SD | r-value | Sig |
|------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|
| Digital literacy | 14.53 | 1.16 | 0.42* | .000 |
| Job engagement | 15.84 | 1.50 | | |

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .052$, $df = 193$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.42 is higher than the critical r-value of .052 at .05 level of significance with 193 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement was rejected. This result implies that, digital literacy has a significant relationship with employees' job engagement. The positive r implies that the higher the digital literacy, the higher the employees' job engagement tends to be.

On the other hand, the lower the digital literacy, the lower the employees' job engagement tends to be.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement (N=195)

| Variables | \bar{X} | SD | r-value | Sig |
|----------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|
| Information literacy | 14.51 | 1.52 | 0.73* | .000 |
| Job engagement | 14.75 | 1.50 | | |

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .052$, $df = 193$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.73 is higher than the critical r-value of .052 at .05 level of significance with 193 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement was rejected. This result indicated that information literacy has a significant relationship with employees' job engagement. The positive r implies that the more positive information literacy is, the higher employees' job engagement tends to be. On the other hand, the lower information literacy is, the lower employees' job engagement tends to be.

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between digital literacy and employees' job engagement. This result is in line with the assertion made by Hunter (2019) that digital literacy equips employees with skills, knowledge and abilities that fill the gap between existing and needed digital competencies for improved job engagement. It also help employees cope with increasingly complex information environment in the workplace and gives them the ability to adapt to changing and evolving job requirements for higher productivity and better job engagement. This result is also in consonance with Colbert et al (2020) who affirmed that a digitally literate employee possesses the technical and operational skills to use technology for various reasons and to succeed in today's working environment, employees must be able to use a diverse range of technologies to improve their job engagement. This outcome also support the

views of Harter et al (2020) who noted that employees with low digital literacy are less likely to be critical about the usefulness of technology, while those with higher digital literacy may be more confident to adapt the technology and establish a positive attitude towards the use of technology and their jobs. From this findings, it can be argued that some organizations do not place importance on training their employees on the use of digital technology and this affect their job engagement which in turn affect their productivity. Thus, employees should be exposed to digital literacy to enable them cope with the latest development and technological changes that increases their job engagement.

The result of this study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between information literacy and employees' job engagement. This result collaborates with the opinion of Kirton and Barham (2019) who agreed that an information literate employee is a critical thinker who can locate and productively evaluate web-based information for better performance. These findings also support the views of Forster (2020) who maintained that information literacy is one of the basic competency requirements for employees and essential for effective functioning in the workplace. Furthermore, it enables employees to make informed choices about credible and relevant information. From this finding it can be argued that information literacy is lacking in some organizations, thereby affecting the ability of employees to interact with information both individually and with colleagues to achieve organizational goals. Thus, organizations should expose their employees to information literacy to enhance their job engagement.

Conclusion

Literacy education plays a vital role in enhancing employees' job engagement. Due to changes in technological advancement and changes in the workplace, digital literacy and information literacy are required in order to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective performance of tasks. By investing in literacy education, organizations can develop a more competent, adaptable and highly engaged workforce, leading to increased productivity and competitive advantage. Essentially, digitally and information literate employees feel connected to their work, team and organizational goals, leading them to contribute more enthusiastically and effectively to organizational goals.

Recommendations

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

1. Management should train employees on the use of digital technology in order to acquire skills and knowledge for improved job engagement.
2. Management should be transparent in their communication opportunities for career development and recognition.
3. Employees should be appreciated and recognized to boost their morale for better job
4. Employees should cultivate a culture of having open communication between employees, management and executives.

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