

Workplace Trust and Employee Performance: Evidence in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT: The perceived occurrence of hostilities and incivilities in the workplace prompted this study. The main objective of the study was to examine the extent of relationship that exists between organisational trust and employee performance in National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in Lagos State. The study objectives was based on three dimension of workplace trust; trust to supervisor, trust to colleagues and trust to the organisation. The study adopted a Survey Research Design. The population of the study was 124 members of the selected organisation and the sample size of 95 were determined with the Taro Yamane's Statistical formula. However, the data analysis were based on 89 valid responses that were retrieved from the respondents. Data was collected through questionnaire and analysed. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Correlation Table of Test of Significance. From the result of the analysis, itrevealed that workplace trustdimensions (interpersonal trust and organisational trust) and employee performance has a statistically significant positive relationship in examined organisation, that75% and 64% change in job performance was accounted for by changes inworkplace trust dimensions respectively.Following this result, it was concluded that trust is a very important issue in the organisation. Itwas therefore recommended that the management should encourage honesty and make the employees work in unity as this will make the jobs of the employees more satisfying.That management of companies should create a very friendly environment to enable the employee develop trust in the management which will go a long way to improve productivity.

KEYWORDS:Employee Performance, Trust; Interpersonal Trust, Organisational Trust,Public Sector,

I. INTRODUCTION

Several environmental factors both from the internal and external environment in recants times have been identified to be influencing behaviour of organisational members(Ganesh, 2015). Organisational behaviour is concerned with people's thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions in a work setting. Understanding an employees' behaviour is in itself a challenge, but managing employees' behaviour to become functional to the benefits of the organisations is more challenging (Ganesh, 2015)

Organisations exist to satisfy customers and clients expectations; it is in doing this that their survival and advantage would be assured. Maximally customers' expectations either in the form of offering quality services or quality product or both will go a long way to define the strength and acceptability of the firm in the market place. However, central to achieving these targets of competitive advantages are the employees who are said to be the bedrock of any kind of organisation (Gabcanova, 2011). This is because the behaviour, actions and inactions of employees have a great role to play in organisations'survival. In this same line, Eber, Abdurrahim and Yasar (2014) posit that the behaviour, actions and inactions of theemployees is very major for the realization of the organisation's mission, vision, goals and objectives. Employee'sbehaviours depend on so many things among which are the level of engagement and participation, structure of the organisation, leadership factors; others are the level of trust, motivation, the job itself and satisfaction. In this study however, the major concern is trust

and the role it plays in determining the performance of employees ((Baştug, Pala, Kumartaşlı, Günel & Duyan, 2016).

Trust within the organisational context, comes in several forms. Interpersonal trust involves employee's trust in superiors, peers, or subordinates, while workplace trust can be referred to as employees' collective perceptions and expectations towards their organisation. Trust has become an important concept in management as a result of its influence on not just the performance of the employees but also of the organisation in general (Baştug, Pala, Kumartaşlı, Günel & Duyan, 2016).

As posited by Parastoo and Karimi (2015) management based on trust is a new expression of old thoughts and its position is observed well in current relations and using its mechanisms can be effective in achieving good individual and organisational results. The perception of trust in the workplace is essential for organisational performance and competitiveness in an increasingly competitive business environment. Trust has also been linked to organisational outcomes such as higher sales and profits, lower employee turnover, increased job satisfaction among employees and increased levels of cooperative behaviour among employees (Chinedu, Lilian, Samaila & Justina, 2018).

Trust is critical to organisational excellence in the 21st century (Baştug, Pala, Kumartaşlı, Günel & Duyan, 2016). Trust exists in many human facets in life; it could be trust in homes, trust in one's partner, in government, in social setting etc. In the context of this study, it is concerned with trust that exists in organisations known as workplace trust (OT). Just like there are several opinions in trust definition, so also is the fact that the views on OT has diverse interventions. It is a discrete but concretizing process with behaviours of individuals in an organisational structure in a feeling of accuracy, belief, commitment and sincerity to each other (Bakiev, 2013). It is a psychological state providing a feedback of how employees perceive the problems in the situations in which the organisation is endangered (Baştug, Pala, Kumartaşlı, Günel & Duyan, 2016). Koç and Yazıcıoğlu (2011) in their study concerning trust in organisations; they posited that workplace trust can be viewed from three dimensions such as trust in institution, trust in management and trust in colleagues or interpersonal trust. In this study, concentration shall be on these dimensions as presented.

Interpersonal trust is divided into Lateral Trust and Vertical Trust. Lateral Trust is defined the

trust of employees with each other and vertical trust is the trust between the employees and managers in organisation (Bakiev, 2013). Institutional Trust refers to one's belief regarding the position of institutional structures to fulfill the successful attitude and future of a person (Afşar, 2013). Thus, the process of workplace trust creation in public organisations is the responsibility of qualified managers and leaders. The role of managers and leaders in reforms in organisation is of great importance. For successful feedback and observation of advanced organisational behavior, we need high level of interpersonal trust among the co-workers in organisation (Bakiev, 2013).

In new era, responding the basic needs of employees in each organisation is on priority and one of the most important needs of employees in organisation is establishing trust among them and organisation. High level of trust in organisation creates low costs of evaluation and other control mechanisms. Trust in organisation refers to the relationship established among the employees and organisation based on messages regarding organisational expectations and perception of employees of the measurements of organisation managers in the Nigeria public institutions (Chinedu, Lilian, Samaila & Justina, 2018).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studies over the years, has revealed that public institutions appeared to be on the receiving end of several criticism that relates to trust in one way or another (Parastoo & Fariba, 2015). Employees of public institution themselves seem to be viewing the trust conditions in their organisation from a negative perspective. Because public organisations are also expected to be up and doing in terms of performance and quality service output, then the issues of trust among organisational members has called for intense considerations in present situations.

In terms of coverage, the subject matter seems not to have receive a wider attention among local researches, most of the available studies on workplace trust was from the international scene, and again the few local studies on workplace trust have all been carried out within the private sector organisations thereby leaving a vacuum of the relevance of the subject matter in the public institutions,.

Another issues is that most of the literature examined have all anchored studies on social exchange theory as posited by Thorndike, making it look like the only possible theory that can be used to explain workplace trust. Based on these problems, the present study would attempt

to investigate the relationship between workplace trust and employee performance among staff of National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria using the Equity theory.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is:

To determine the relationship that exists between workplace trust and employees' performance in National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in Lagos State.

The specific objectives of this study include:

- i. To investigate the relationship between the interpersonal trust and employees' performance.
- ii. To examine the relationship between the organisational trust and employees' performance

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is expected to provide answers to the following questions:

- i. What is the relationship between the interpersonal trust and employees' performance?
- ii. Is there any relationship between organisational trust and employees' performance?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In line with study objectives, the following hypotheses are stated

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal trust and employees' performance

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between organisational trust and employees' performance

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Concepts of Trust and Workplace trust

Trust is an aspect of all kinds of relationships and it is a concept that keeps people together and induces the sense of safety (Vito & Mekuri-Ndimele, 2020). Trust represents that positive expectations of a person from other people around them since it is a concept which is considered by everyone at all stages of life both from their own and from other's points of views and at its most encompassing description, that depends on honesty and truthfulness (Parastoo, & Fariba, 2015). Bakiev(2013) indicates that trust is a key variable in estimating individual behaviour whereas Chinedu, Lilian, Samaila and Justina, (2018) describes trust as "willingness to take risks" and proceeds to show that the degree of trust is an indication of the amount of risk required to be taken. In brief, trust is described as affecting emotions or cognitive expectations and risk taking behaviour, or the willingness to commit to such

behaviour. In the same vein, Workplace trust represents the factors such as truthfulness, belief, loyalty and sincerity the members of an organisation within an organisation would have towards each other where these factors are made tangible with behaviour (Brown, Gray, McHardy & Taylor, 2015). It is accepted that trust necessary for organisational success is not something that can be affected in a short while but would require long and arduous effort (Anitha, 2014).

Workplace trust has its internal aspects such as trust of employees towards the managers, trust of employees to each other, trust of employees towards the organisational structure and organisational system as well (Hough, Kenneth & Plumlee, 2015). Attempting to integrate all essential components based on the different approaches used to investigate trust in organisations, Karatepe (2013) define workplace trust as 'the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

Trust therefore involves the willingness to be vulnerable and take a risk concerning the possibility that the other party will not live up to the expectations of this benevolent behavior (Matta, Scott, Koopman & Colon, 2015). Thus, workplace trust includes both types of trust among members in the organisation (interpersonal trust) and trust in the organisation structure and system (workplace trust) (Stander, De Beer, & Stander, 2015). In this study workplace trust refers to trust between employees working together or depending on each other, trust between supervisors and their subordinates, and trust to the organisation as a whole.

Interpersonal Trust: Employee trust towards their managers is considered within the framework of trust of individuals in the organisational structure towards each other. For this reason, trust of an individual towards their manager is shaped by the ethics and equity their manager exhibits (Rua, & Araujo, 2016). Trust of employees to their peers is described as the collection of beliefs that their colleagues are qualified, fair, and trustworthy and would exhibit ethical behaviour (Hough, Green, & Plumlee, 2015). Trust in colleagues directs the employees towards equity in word and action. In organisations with high level of peer trust, a safe climate is formed among the employees, people form long term relationships, collaboration increases, employees participate in decision making processes, feel happy coming to work, be

happier, more fun and creative while doing their work as well as consider their organisation's future and organisational goals (Semercioğlu, 2012).

Trust in the organisation: on the other hand, is described as the employees' belief that the organisation is structured in a manner as to ensure success. Since the employees consider managers the representatives of the organisation, they may transfer their trust in their manager to the whole of the organisation. For this reason, employees' trust in their organisation is related to their trust in their managers but categorised separately (Sevinç, 2013). Structure, culture, system and good human resources policies of an organisation would both give rise to an environment with high degree of trust and help improve the way the managers hold on their employees (Judeh 2012).

Workplace trust is a strong belief in positive and sometimes, negative results of such actions and activities characterised with two way communication and influence in organisations (Top, 2012).

Employees' Performance

Performance as a term has been generating a lot of controversies from management experts and researchers alike. They have defined performance differently depending on the field or the expertise of the person defining the term. For example, Stander, De Beer, and Stander, (2015) opines that performance is the ability to achieve organisational goals and objectives while Quach (2013) explicates that performance as it has to do with organisations is the organisation's ability to accomplish its aims through the use of resources in a properly structured manner. On the other hand, Judeh (202) posits that performance is a measure of the state of an organisation, or the outcomes that results from management decision and execution of those decisions by employees of the organisation. This brings to limelight the importance of employees in determining the performance of organisations.

Trust has been found to determine the performance of employees; it has the capability to influence the way and manner employees go about their duties in an organisation. It is becoming more and more accepted that trust in the organisations and workplace is a critical factor leading to better employee and organisational performance (Top, 202). Research has revealed that the trust of employees is linked to their working attitudes and behaviours (Chinedu, Lilian, Samaila & Justina, 2018). Studies using experimental methods have also confirmed the influence of trust on individual work performance. Trust is so important to

performance because it is a critical precursor to those exchanges that are tied to so many performance outcomes (Paliszkievicz, 2012).

Viewing the influential role played by trust in organisations, Bakiev (2013) posits that it increases creativity and critical thinking at the employee level. Judeh (2012) also suggest that employee performance tended to surpass the expectations of management and that workers felt greater freedom to express their ideas when leaders created trusting environments in their organisations. Sevinç (2013) found that organisations with higher levels of organisational trust were more successful and innovative than institutions with lower levels of trust. Organisations with higher level of trust amongst the employee and management are expected to have performances that surpass organisations with lower trust in the organisation, management and colleagues. Supporting this, Top (2012) state that it is expected that with high level trust, it should result in high level business manners (work satisfaction, organisational commitment), positive organisational behaviours (such as organisational citizenship behaviour) and high level performance. Trust allows parties to make themselves vulnerable to such risk with the expectation that positive outcomes will appear (Chinedu, Lilian, Samaila & Justina, 2018).

The performance of organisation can be enhanced by giving employees the opportunities to have positive perceptions about the organisation. Another element which plays a vital role in improving performance is the sense of trust and believed in the organisation philosophy by the employees. An element of trust is the result of relationship among individuals and brings out a change in the system. Trust was seen as a significant contributor to organisational performance because employees' discretionary contributions cannot be easily replicated or imitated (Quach, 2013).

Therefore, it is suggested that maintaining good relations with employees can help increase job performance level.

A review of Workplace trust and performance studies

The majority of the literature seems to agree that workplace trust has important benefits for organisations, implying that it promotes organisational success (e.g; Stander, De Beer, & Stander, 2015; Rua, & Araujo, 2016; Hough, Green, & Plumlee, 2015). Workplace trust can be an essential factor in improving business

performance and a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

A firm's ability to remain competitive in an increasingly global and turbulent market may hinge on its ability to build trusting relationships (Rua, & Araujo, 2016), since advantages accrue to organisations that foster an internal climate of trust (Rua, & Araujo, 2016). Workplace trust is often perceived to be as the 'lubrication' that makes it possible for organisations to work, an integrative mechanism creating and sustaining social systems and the source of increased efficiency and effectiveness (Stander, De Beer, & Stander, 2015; Rua, & Araujo, 2016).

In addition, a climate of mistrust within the firm results in lower product or service quality, satisfaction, and subsequent loyalty. In contrast, higher levels of workplace trust are linked with improved customer loyalty (Sonnenberg, 2014). Trust in organisational settings results in more positive attitudes (Hough, Green, & Plumlee, 2015) such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Generally, positive employee attitudes toward work also positively affect customer satisfaction (Semercioglu; 2012).

Top (2012) found that employees' attitudes toward their company and their jobs lead to positive employee behaviors toward customers. They call this phenomenon the service profit chain, proposing that worker capability, job satisfaction, and commitment are linked to customers' perceptions of value. That value perception would lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Although the literature appears to recognize that trust is a variable positively affecting organisational performance (Gilbert, Halliday, Heavey, & Murphy, 2011), the empirical evidence that has analyzed the effect of trust on organisational performance has generated contradictory results (Gaur et al., 2011).

Indeed, despite the diversity of approaches used to study trust, and the fact that practically all the studies emphasize the benefits of trust for the parties involved; some researchers have also referred to the possible damaging effects of trust. For example, Barkley (2013) point out that trust can generate negative, as well as positive effects. Similarly, Halliday, Heavey, and Murphy (2011), state that trust also involves the risk of being betrayed. Hough, Green, and Plumlee, (2015) also suggest that, although trust-driven behaviors are generally beneficial, extreme levels of these same behaviors can have negative effects on organisational performance. Therefore, merely having a high level of workplace trust may not

necessarily improve firm productivity or profitability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

This work is anchored on the **Social Exchange Theory (SET)** which evolved from Thorndike's (1932, 1935) work on the development of reinforcement theory. Modern-day influences have been derived from the work of sociologists such as Blau (1964). However, the SET have mostly been credited to Blau (1964) which has its origin in the norm of reciprocity earlier proposed by Gouldner in 1960.

The SET is all about exchanges and the norms of reciprocities. SET is based on the premise that human behaviour or social interaction is an exchange of activity, tangible and intangible particularly of rewards and costs. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In this exchange, people consider the benefits and risks involved in a social relationship between or among them. After this consideration, when they envisage that risks involved outweigh the rewards to be gained, people will likely abandon or end the relationship. It treats the exchange of benefits notably giving others something more valuable to them than is costly to the giver, and vice versa, as the underlying basis or open secret of human behaviour and so a phenomenon permeating all social life (Hough, Green, & Plumlee, 2015).

Social exchange between or amongst people are based on trust that the people in an exchange will act accordingly. Blau (1964) states that social exchange relationships are based on trust. That is, when an individual gives to another, they do so trusting that the other party will reciprocate. Therefore, unlike economic exchange, social exchange is not an explicit, contractually based arrangement. Eventually, such relationships evolve over time into trusting, reciprocating, loyal, and mutual relationships. The result of the exchange is mostly left to the discretion of the parties involved. Blau (1964) posits that: "social exchange involves favours that create diffuse future obligations, not precisely specified ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one whomakes it... Since there is no way to assure an appropriate return for a favour, social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations.

Trust has been observed to be the major ingredient in an exchange relationship. The trust here could be trust in management, the organisation, or colleagues which will engender an obligation to

reciprocate resulting in better performance by employees in form better job satisfaction.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

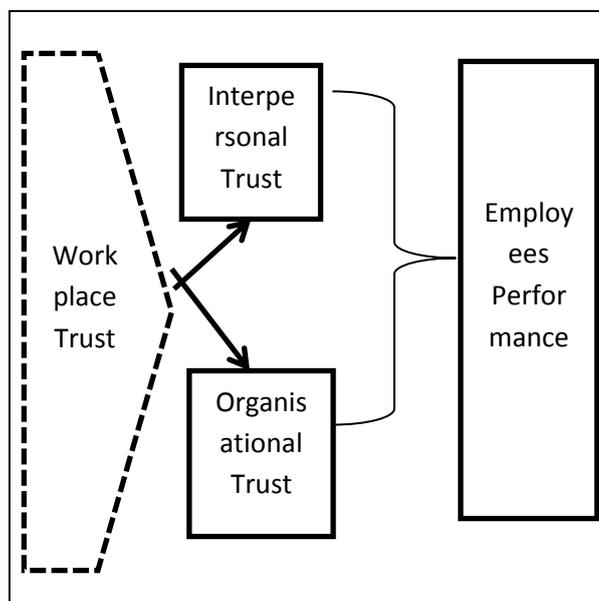


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of Workplace trust and Employee performance

Source: Researcher’s conceptualisation (2022) adapted from Evren & Şerif (2014).

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted Survey Research design because the study seeks to examine the type of relationship that exists between two variables of the study. To do this, opinions of employees in the focused organisations was sampled through the use of an adapted questionnaires, evaluated and analyzed. This makes Survey Research design the most appropriate design to be adopted in this study. The instrument on the subject matter was adapted from from Omarov (2009) and consists of 20 items and covered 4 dimensions with 5 items to trust to supervisor, 5 items to trust to colleagues and 5 items trust to organisation and the last 5 to test performance. Along these dimension questions the instrument also contained questions on

demographic characteristics such as o age, gender, marital status, work status and working years in the establishment,

The population of the study comprised of staff of National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN), Lagos State, Nigeria. According to the Administrative Department, there were 124 employees at the College at the time of the study. Of these employees; 75% were senior staff which comprises of Executive Staff members (College President, Registrar and Deputy Registrars), managers and Head of department while the remaining 25% were junior staffs. Taro Yamane’s Statistical formula was used to determine the sample size of the study which is 95 employees.

Table 1: Staff Spread in NPMCN

Categories	Population of Staff
Management staff	8
Senior Staff	72
Junior Staff	44
Total	124

Source: Admin Record NPMCN (2021)

The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the aid of (SPSS) computer software for the analysis. From the ninety five instrument administered to the

participants ninety three (93) were actually retrieved but only eighty nine (89) copies of the instruments were properly filled and which was then used for the analysis..

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated earlier were tested using the responses from the research instrument administered.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between interpersonal trust and employees’ performance

The analysis from the correlation table above shows that the p-value < 0.01 (at a 2-tailed test). This means that the result is statistically significant at 1% confidence level. The r value 0.705 (71%) shows that there is a strong positive relationship between interpersonal trust and employees’ performance.

Table 2: Correlation analysis of Hypothesis One

		Interpersonal trust	Employee Performance
Interpersonal trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.705***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	89	89
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.705***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	89	89

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Two:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between organisational trust and employees’ performance

Table 3: Correlation analysis of Hypothesis Two

		Organisational Trust	Employee Performance
Organisational Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.645***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	89	89
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.645***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	89	89

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows that p-value < 0.01 (at a 2-tailed test). This means that the result is statistically significant at 1% confidence level. The r value 0.645 (65%) shows that there is a strong positive relationship between organisational trust and employees’ performance

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the findings revealed a positive relationship between the dimensions of workplace trust and employee performance. From the correlations tables above, certainty coefficient, calculated in connection with workplace trust, was found to be positively correlated to performance. The highest relation level between workplace trust

and sub dimensions and job performance of the employees was between general organisational trust perception and job performance, whereas correlation level between interpersonal trust perception (r=0,71 p=0,000<0,001) as well as organisational trust (r=0,65 and p=0,000<0,001) and job performance was following the above.

According to these results, workplace trust is found to be highly correlated to employee’s job performance. The result indicated that the more employees trust the competences of their colleague, trust their honesty and believe in their genuine concern for others, the more the employees will be relaxed in carrying out their duties which will metamorphose into a

satisfactory work experience as shown by the analysis. These findings align with the study of Olamiposi, Adedeji and Effiong (2015) who examined the influence of organisational trust and job satisfaction and showed that organisational trust significantly influences job performance among teachers in Ekiti State. Also aligning with the findings of this study is that of Mohamed, AbdulKader and Anisa (2012) that carried out a study to examine the relationship between job satisfaction, organisational trust and organisational citizenship behaviour. The results indicated the fact that job performance is positively related to organisational trust.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that trust is a very important issue in the organisation as it has the potential of determining and influencing the performance of the organisation. Organisation trust seems to be an antecedent of employee performance. Job or work activities experienced at either the employees or organisational level is associated with employee trust. From the findings it was established organisational trust and employee performance have significant individual influences on the job performance.

The following are recommended that:

- a) The organisations studied should endeavour to employ competent hands to handle the affairs of the organisation as this will engender healthy competition among the employees.
- b) The organisation should also encourage honesty and make the employees work in unity as this will make the jobs of the employees more satisfying.
- c) That management of companies should create a very friendly environment to enable the employee develop trust in the management which will go a long way to improve productivity.
- d) It is suggested that to create a conducive working environment management must promote cultures that is accommodating and that will induce trust among members of the organisation.
- e) Management in the public sector should be more open and friendly in dealing with subordinates so as to create trust and believe in the subordinate.
- f) Management should ensure that operational policy is open to all so allow friendly networks and teamwork among the employees.

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