

Sociological application of behavioural theories to work performance of academic staff in Nigerian universities

PRZEGLĄD KRYTYCZNY
2023 / 5(1): 47–56
ISSN: 2657–8964
DOI: 10.14746/pk.2023.5.1.4

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ABSTRACT: Several authors have researched workplace circumstances and employee performance in organisations. Personal observations, documented observations, and discoveries in the literature all provided an incentive for this investigation. Some systematic observations revealed that academic staff in Nigerian universities are subjected to some unfavourable workplace conditions, even though they are expected to perform well in teaching, publish quality research papers that can contribute to global knowledge and development, and engage in community development services. Major theories have attempted to explain employee productivity in the workplace. Using secondary data, this article explores the Two Factor model by Fredrick Herzberg, the Contingency theory of leadership and the Expectancy theory by Victor Vroom. They were most relevant in associating motivating factors with the work performance of employees in the organisation. The criticisms of each theory have paved the way for theoretical triangulation and, thus, a synthesis of all three theories to explain the work performance of academic staff members in Nigerian universities. The article resolved that incentives are indeed essential in order to increase the performance of academic staff in Nigerian universities.

KEYWORDS: theoretical review, behavioural theories, academic staff, work performance, Nigerian universities

BACKGROUND

Work performance is a highly relevant phrase that denotes the degree of human effort required to achieve the goals set by employees and management inside the organisation. The existence, or lack thereof, of motivation, willpower, and the capacity of an employee to complete a task largely determines performance (Oladejo,

2022). Several scholars have broadened their definitions of job performance to include results and behaviour rather than personal attributes since they are easier to monitor and describe (Beidel, Frueh & Hersen, 2014). Work performance is as vital for the employee as it is for the organisation, as implementing and accomplishing tasks at a high level are regarded as the foundation of contentment, with particular feelings of pride and mastery (Ogunola & Abrifor, 2015). According to Oladejo (2021), this type of performance is often compensated with financial and other benefits if recognised within the organisation, whereas not achieving goals and low performance can be frustrating and, sometimes, regarded as a failure.

Work performance can be best explained as the extent to which a worker measures up with the given templates required for a specific job (Dessler, 2014). Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2010), in their understanding, defined work performance as the degree of physical effort required to meet the goals set by workers and management within the organisation. A foremost criterion for success and career development in the labour market is work performance, and categories as extraordinary performers are upgraded more easily in an organisation, and this enhances their career prospects than low performers (Ndulue & Ekechukwu, 2017). Work performance is recognisable employee behaviour that seems relevant and crucial to achieving the organisation's goal (Ogunola & Abrifor, 2015). According to Ogunyemi, Adenuga and Lawal (2019), the behaviours can be measured to know employee proficiency in terms of each individual's level of involvement.

Work performance assesses whether a person does their work to the very best (Adisa & Oladejo, 2022). Positive performance is an essential principle for organisational accomplishment. In his own opinion, Campbell (1993) referred to job performance simply as what a particular employee does in an organisation, which is more on a personal level than the more integrating concepts of organisational performance, which are on the managerial level variables. In other words, workers' actions and behaviours are not the only factors that determine outcomes in organisations, and exceptions are to be considered when describing the performance as actions (Oladejo & Adenuga, 2021). As such, performance may also include psychological constructions or actions that are not noticeable in a direct way, such as decisions or answers (Oladejo, 2021).

Many academic staff members in Nigerian universities must face some unpleasant workplace situations. They are thus less inclined to teach, do excellent research, and engage in community development initiatives (Adisa & Oladejo, 2022). A multitude of social vices, including cultism, malpractice, corruption, and hooliganism, as well as insufficient budget, subpar facilities, and unsuitable instructional aids (laboratories, projectors, libraries, and computers), plague public institutions. The inconsistent or nonexistent pay at public universities in several parts of Nigeria proves this. According to Oladejo (2022), it is distracting for both the presenter and the audience for students to loiter during lectures in smaller, dilapidated classrooms. The offices and classrooms are ill-equipped, and there is irregular electrical supply.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES

1. TWO-FACTOR MODEL

The two-factor model was designed by Fredrick Herzberg in 1968. This model, which consists of two factors (satisfiers and dissatisfiers), was aimed at explaining the sources of performance and satisfaction of employees in any organisation (Armstrong, 2009). In understanding employee motivation and attitudes, some studies were carried out by Frederick Herzberg to understand the factors that instigated satisfaction or dissatisfaction for employees in their work environment. His findings became circulated in his book titled *The Motivation to Work* in 1959. Salary increases, conducive working relationships, chances for advancement and growth and job security were some incentives that satisfied and motivated workers to give their best in the organisation that organisations hurriedly provided (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011).

Herzberg, in trying to comprehend the motivation and satisfaction of employees in the organisation, embarked on a journey to establish the effect of motivation on employee behaviour by inquiring from people how they felt about their jobs. The responses he got from the people who found their jobs outstanding differed from responses from those who had terrible jobs (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011).

The outcome of the journey created the foundation for the theory. Herzberg further discovered that specific features of a job have some factors that are interrelated with employees and satisfaction and dissatisfaction at the workplace (Ratzburg, 2003). The factors were categorised into hygiene factors and motivator factors, which will be discussed below.

Motivation-Hygiene Model

Motivation-Hygiene model states that motivation can be attained when workers are given difficult but pleasurable work where they are allowed to demonstrate, grow, achieve and progress responsibly in the organisation. In a situation where the efforts of employees are acknowledged and even appreciated, motivation and satisfaction invariably occur. Factors that describe job satisfaction differ significantly from those that indicate job dissatisfaction. For Herzberg, workplace conditions such as low salaries, lack of ventilation and lighting, weak supervisory relationships, and poor environment constitute job dissatisfaction, while any meaningful and enjoyable job leads to satisfaction.

Hygiene Factors

Hygiene factors are those preservation factors that relate to the circumstances surrounding the job, and they include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, i.e. safety, love and physiological needs. These needs are not the direct motivators and equally not associated with the job directly but mainly function to make employees feel remorseful when they miss work even though its availability does not essentially construct solid enthusiasm (Gibson, 2000). These factors are positive workplace conditions, including salary, technical supervision, interactive associations among colleagues, subordinates and supervisors, good policy and administration, good status, and job security. Herzberg termed them 'hygiene factors' as they are very important in maintaining satis-

faction and can cause dissatisfaction if they are unavailable (Huling, 2003).

Motivation Factors

The motivation factors, according to Herzberg, are essential to the job itself and correlate directly to the content of the job. They encompass the biological requirements such as acknowledgement, success, the task itself, promotion, and the potential of individual development necessary for recognition and growth. These create substantial motivation that eventually gives rise to virtuous job performance. The hygiene and motivator factors have been combined and are discussed below:

Great hygiene plus great motivation: This results in employees being greatly motivated with little or no complaints attached to it.

Great hygiene plus minimal motivation: In this, employees make minimal complaints even though they are not extremely inspired and the job is just a paycheck to them.

Limited hygiene plus great motivation: This occurs when employees have numerous complaints but are still motivated to work.

Limited hygiene plus minimal motivation: This is often known as an appalling situation whereby employees are unmotivated and usually have lots of complaints.

The theory has been criticised by Mathis and Jackson (2004), Schroer (2008), Teck-Hong and Waheed (2011) and Stello (2011) for placing job performance on motivation with no regard for the natural efforts of the individuals. They argued that the theory can only be accepted because it is quite normal for people to try to lay faults on external components for their lack of satisfaction and take undue credit for their satisfaction. Also, individual differences distress people at work; thus, their being satisfied may not automatically indicate productivity or motivation (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011).

2. CONTINGENCY THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

According to contingency theory, an organisational leadership style may function well in certain conditions but not in others. The effort to comprehend the optimal approach to human management led to the creation of the notion that there is no single ideal method of organising or leading. The ideal organisational/leadership style, according to the theory of contingencies, is determined by a variety of internal and external constraints. The idea asserts that appropriate management actions rely on a certain parameter of every event by developing contingency principles based on the facts of the scenario. The core principle of contingency theories of leadership is that leadership success or failure is situational.

There are several sub-theories that fall under the umbrella of the contingency theory of leadership. However, for the sake of this article, Situational Leadership Theory,

Path-Goal Theory, Fiedler's Contingency Theory, and Decision-making Theory will be addressed. These theories offer their own distinct views on leadership, even though they are similar on the surface.

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership, often known as The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory, is a theory that emphasises the style of leadership and the competence of the workforce or subordinates. According to the notion, selling, delegating, telling, and participating are the four activities at the core of effective leadership. Additionally, there are a range of competence levels, from personnel who are unable or reluctant to do jobs to those who are able or ready. According to them, a good leader would modify their leadership styles to match the environment based on the competence level of the workforce.

Path-Goal Theory

Robber House developed the Path-Goal theory, combining the two well-known behaviour theories of goal-setting and expectancy. The principle holds that good leaders guide subordinates toward fulfilling their goals. Leaders under this theory have the obligation to support their subordinates with the information and resources necessary to accomplish their objectives. This theory proposes that effective leaders work to eradicate hindrances that may stand in the way of their subordinates and further create clear paths to achieve goals.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory

This contingency theory of leadership was introduced by Austrian psychologist Fred Edward Fiedler in his 1964 work "A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness." According to the notion, good leader-member interactions are essential for effective leadership, which is centred on the control the leader has over events and the leadership style employed. Leaders must be clear and formidable in their presentation of tasks with the procedures and goals visibly and plainly outlined, and must as well possess the courage and ability to administer rewards and punishments. Job-motivated and connection-motivated styles of leadership were described; job referred to achievement, while connection referred to social interactions. A scale of 'Least Preferred Co-Worker' (LPC scale) was adopted to evaluate leadership style; leaders who scored poorly on the scale were job-motivated, while those who scored highly were connection-motivated.

Decision-making Theory

Decision-making theory, often referred to as the Decision-making Model of Leadership of Vroom-Yetton-Jago, holds that good leaders evaluate conditions, gauge how much support the group can muster in terms of efforts and resolve, and then attempt to provide the strongest form of leadership.

However, as pointed out by critics like Aver, Aaver and Cadez (2009), Bastian and Andreas (2012), and Christ and Burrirt (2013), contingency theory generally falls short of explaining why some leadership philosophies work better in specific situations than

others. The theory did not clearly describe what ought to be done in the event of a discrepancy between the leader and the circumstances in the organisation. The scale's validity is also not well correlated with other conventional measures of leadership.

3. EXPECTANCY THEORY

Victor H. Vroom, a renowned behavioural theorist, invented expectancy theory in 1964 while studying the motivations of people behind their decision-making. Expectancy theory can be seen as a theory of motivation that believes in the connections that exist among the energy that people exert at the workplace, the performance achieved from using that energy, and the remunerations gotten afterwards (Lunenburg, 2011). The study suggests that employees act better because they are motivated by their knowledge of what the outcomes of such actions will eventually be. The motivation, in essence, is ascertained by the appeal of the expected result. However, cognitive processes are very central to the theory. In other words, people strongly believe that if they are motivated, they are more inclined to exert energy, which will bring forth good performance, eventually leading to the anticipated outcome. This theory has been known to have exact relevance to organisations.

According to Vroom (1964), expectancy theory is grounded on four basic suppositions. First, people go into employment having anticipations of good incentives, experience and needs, which give them a perspective of the organisation. Second, the mindful selection of the employee is totally dependent on their behaviour. Third, employees desire diverse entities like job security, good salary, challenge, and advancement from the organisation; and finally, employees eventually select from choices to enhance results for them (Lunenburg, 2011).

Vroom (1964) further expounded on the theory by identifying three crucial elements, namely Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence, which are essential in choosing one component over another. Expectancy deals with effort and performance, that is, the conviction that one's effort will give rise to anticipated performance objectives. Instrumentality deals with the performance and outcome, i.e., the conviction an employee has on being rewarded if there is any accomplishment, which sometimes takes the shape of feeling accomplished, promotion, pay increase or recognition. Valence has to do with the outcome and rewards, i.e. the importance an employee ascribes to compensation of a result, which is usually centred on values, sources, goals and needs of a motive. In other words, the energy exerted for an activity will bring about the satisfactory execution of work (expectancy), which will be compensated (instrumentality), with the value exceedingly encouraging and inspiring (valence). An individual can be inspired to achieve a goal if there is a definite connection between performance and effort. The outcome of a constructive performance will lead to an anticipated compensation, compensation from an act will placate a critical need, and the consequence gratifies their requisite enough to make an effort worthwhile.

Some scholars such as Slyke (2003), Johnston and Romzek (2008) and Shah, Jaffari, Aziz, Ejaz, Ul-Haq and Raza (2011) have criticised the theory based on their belief that the complication of the theory is quite challenging to experiment and execute. This

theory depicts that an employee has the favourable situation, resources, willingness, time or even the necessary skill to determine motivation, which may not be so. Likewise, Parijat and Bagga (2014) posited that the supervisors might also lack any of the abovementioned parameters to decide what motivates a particular employee. Thus, there may be a need to develop reliable measures of valence, expectancy and instrumentality.

APPLICATION OF THE THEORIES TO WORK PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

For Fredrick Herzberg, the reward is central to employees' performance in every organisation, either monetary or non-monetary, and it assumed that academic staff could describe the circumstances that determine how content or unsatisfied they are with their jobs using two elements—the hygiene aspects to the job (workplace circumstances) and motivation factors to the work itself (being an academic). This theory assumes that the reward system (either financial or non-financial rewards), if encouraging and consistent, would increase performance and improve productivity.

The overarching concept of contingency theories is that the environment, job, and people involved decide how effective a leader can be. According to the idea, the structure of any organisation should consider both the smaller and larger components, as well as the interrelationships inside the organisation. According to theories, the university system has many administrative tasks with diverse leadership roles that should lead as conditions arise since there is no one optimal leadership and management style that leads to effectiveness.

The last theory identifies that an employee will work harder when there are equitable assurances that their hard work will initiate an anticipated outcome. It can thus be inferred that any academic staff that believes that a salary increase is given to high performance will exert more energy towards the work. Academic staff lectures to get a favoured reward that motivates them, which serves as a mode of satisfaction. This expectation gears them to work harder and improve their work performance and leads to a high rate of positive competition. Moreover, this theory also states that there must be an emphasis on performance with a directly proportional relationship between performance and outcome. The work performance of the academic staff is improved due to outcomes such as improved terms and conditions, incentives, increments in salaries and wages, promotion, higher education reform, government financing, ability to attract funds from external sources, that is, grants, conducive working environment, mentorship, promotion chances, freedom from external control, better policies, adequate payment of salary and better and adequate infrastructural facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to increase the performance of academic staff in Nigerian universities, expectations such as covering government financing, funds from external sources, that is, grants, a conducive working environment, freedom from external control, better

policies, adequate payment of salary, better and adequate infrastructural facilities and ICT can be achieved to ensure a better working condition for the academic staff; which will in turn, enhance their level of performance as explained by the theories reviewed. It will also ensure productivity and efficiency, producing qualified graduates, quality research, quality teaching, and a higher knowledge of the international world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to every scholar who helped in the production of this article. You are highly appreciated.

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