

Influence of Physical Environment on Academic Staff Productivity in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi towards Rebuilding Educational System

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Abstract

It is an established fact that the standard of education in Nigeria is falling; the fallen standard of education of any country means the country is falling as well. This study examined the influences of physical environment on the productivity of Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, with the view of rebuilding the academic system of the country. Related literature were reviewed and survey design was used. The work was guided by three research questions with a structured questionnaire with 19 items. The area of the study was School of Business Studies of Federal Polytechnic Bauchi. The population of the study was 91 academic staff. Because the population size was manageable, the researchers used the entire population. Mean was used to answer the research questions. From the result of the study, it was found among others, that the sizes of windows in office accommodation are not crossed ventilated as such do not provide enough ventilation, electricity light provided is not adequate. It was concluded that with good working environment, the morale of Academic staff increases, would make them more productive. It was recommended among others that in designing office accommodation, the sizes of windows should be wide enough to provide enough natural light and crossed ventilation; the offices should be provided with constant electricity supply.

Keywords: Physical Environment, Academic Staff, Productivity, Rebuilding Educational System.

Background of the Study

Humans are influenced by activities around their working environment which could be positive or negative; a work environment can be identified as the place that one works, which means the surrounding of a person. It is the social and professional environment in which a person is supposed to interact with people. Bello (2015) explained that, work environment includes a friendly, well-designed, safe physical space, good equipment and influence effective communication, which will improve productivity. Well-designed and organized environment makes significant differences on how people feel about their work, (Chandrasekar, 2011). A satisfied, happy and hardworking Staff is the most valuable asset of any organization. Good work environment encourages the employee with their job that ultimately influences the growth of an organization. One of the challenges in Management is to form an environment that attracts, retain and motivate its workforce, the responsibility lies with managers and supervisors at all levels of the organization. Work environment affects employee morale, productivity and engagement, both positively and negatively, (Chandraseker, 2011).

A conducive work environment has been identified as one of the critical factors that can enable any organization, regardless of context can attract, deploy and retain talented employees (Ruchi & Surinder, 2014). The quality of the employee's workplace environment that most impacts on the level of his motivation and subsequently productivity. Ajala (2012); Amir (2010) and Abdullah (2010) observed that a well-designed office environment adds more values to staff and encourages them to put in their best. Office design therefore is one of the factors that affect Staff productivity. Khan (2011) investigated the impact of workplace environment and infrastructure on employees' performance from the education in Pakistan and concluded that incentives at workplace had a positive impact on employees' performance. Hameed and Amjad (2009) in a survey of 31 bank branches showed that comfortable and ergonomic office design motivates the employees and increased their performance.

Ratti & Caudel (2016) identified several factors that influence individuals at work, psychological factors of the employees should be taken into consideration when designing an office space. This can be explained by the need to participate in knowledge sharing, develop ideas, and stimulate the human mind, which can be especially important in creative industries. The issue of the physical work environment is not an unfamiliar subject, as early as 1973, Kotler wrote about the importance of enhancing the work environment, and how this was an investment to improve employee productivity.

Today, office design focuses on personal interactions, performance and innovations, this can be seen in Silicon Valley as *the new way of office design* (Waber, 2014). The strong integration of technology both at home and in the workplace, has called for new ways of working, and despite the continuous innovations in technology, office workers still spend a considerable amount of time on office buildings. A new generation of employees and new lifestyles also require other demands in terms of office design; offices should reflect ideas about what kind of organization it is, and opinions about how the work should be performed. These ideas tend to change over time, which is why the idea of what an office should look like also changes. Work environment is designed to produce specific performance outcomes, one space can be designed specifically to increase productivity, (Waber, 2014). This concept has often served as an incentive for organizations to excessively redesign the physical work environment, as it is a simple and practical improvement to carry out. Although the physical work environment is designed to encourage certain behavior. Physical environment affect how employees in an organization interact, perform tasks, and are led. Physical environment as an aspect of the work environment has irectly affected the human sense and also changed interpersonal interactions and thus productivity. This is so because the characteristics of a room or a place of meeting for a group have consequences regarding productivity and satisfaction level, (Bello, 2018).

Landscape, according to Adekunle and Basorun (2016) is the art of designing, planning and management of land, arrangement of natural and man-made elements there on, through application of cultural and scientific knowledge with concern for resources conservation so that the resultant environment can serve a useful, healthy and enjoyable purpose. It deals with the beautification and management of the environment by the organization of spaces with adequate cognizance of the basic principles of design. Landscaping is an integral part of our culture and plays an essential role in the quality of our environment, economic wellbeing of the people, as well as their physical and psychological health. Landscaping is a way of maintaining and enhancing the quality of human life by protecting the health of the biosphere and husbanding the key resources of the air, water, land

and minerals, Duru and Shimawua,2017). Adekunle and Basorun (2016) identified three basic types of landscape, viz: Primary, natural and cultural landscapes. Primary landscape occurs from the purely natural factors without human interference. The natural landscape is a creation that emanates from the first stage of transformation of the natural environment by human interference. The cultural landscape becomes obvious when the changes introduced by human activities are so deep and basically involve maintenance of the newly attained stability only by constant interference of man.

If workers appreciate and are comfortable with physical environment, productivity increases naturally. Some of the things that make workers feel at home with physical environment include throwing open office blinds, where it makes provision for sunlight, noise control, which helps workers concentrate on the work they are doing and temperature control means of providing fan, air conditioners and enough provision for ventilation, (Senata, 2014 and Hansen, 2017).

Office ergonomics refers to the scientific of a workplace to fit an employee's unique capabilities, limitations, and even job tasks. This practice applies physiology, kinesiology, and biomechanics to best determine how employees should position their body within their work environment to prevent discomfort and injuries. Factors such as an employee's height, weight, sight, and feel all come into the equation when developing ergonomic solutions in the workplace, (Ovbiagele, Olukkarán and Gunaseelan, 2001). With the right ergonomic design, workers can avoid developing repetitive strain injuries as well as musculoskeletal disorders, which are common in the office environment. Many organizations rely on specialized ergonomic office equipment and furniture, such as chairs, desks, and computer equipment to keep employees comfortable and safe, but that's just one solution, (Amir, 2010). These can be achieved if the furniture are designed using the recommended materials, following the designed and machines acquired based on specifications to meet up the desired goal, (Amiaya, 2017).

An ergonomic workplace should promote the employees' satisfaction and well-Being. Viser (2008) developed the environmental comfort model of workspace quality, in designing the ergonomics of an office, there are three level of comfort: Physical Comfort, Functional Comfort and Psychological Comfort. According to Viser's model, Physical comfort is the basic human needs such as safety, hygiene and accessibility, which must be assured usually through applying existing building codes and standards which consider the comfort, relative humidity, air speed and freshness for ventilation comfort, brightness and contrast condition for lighting. Functional comfort is the environmental support for users' performance of work-related tasks and activities. In terms of the building system, the functional comfort includes the dimensions of air quality, noise, building interior, privacy and people noise. The benefits of functional comfort include the promotion of functional and productivity enhancement in the workplace by facilitating work flow and task requirements, cross team efficiency by good cooperation within and between the team and external persons. The Psychological comfort is feelings of belonging, ownership and control over the workspace. Psychological comfort is a good level of comfort in the environmental comfort model of workspace quality, (Chim, 2014; Amofa, Monica, Ansah and Gabriel, 2017).

From what is obtainable in office today, the office ergonomics is not in practice in some organizations. The problem of not having proper workstation design may be due to lack of knowledge or poor application of ergonomic principles. For example, workstation designs affect working posture, which contributes to physical symptoms experienced by Visual Display Unit (VDU) operators. The adverse health consequences of this difference mostly

include discomforts. In most cases, symptoms of computer vision syndrome or digital eye strain occur because the visual demands of the task exceed the visual capability of the individual to easily perform them. These symptoms may be caused by ergonomic workstation failures such as poor lighting, brightness on digital screens, inadequate viewing distances, poor seating practice, and a combination of these factors among others, (Kumah, Akuffo, Affram, Ankamah and Osae, 2016).

By keeping employees healthy through an office ergonomics program, some of the major benefits include increase in productivity, improving employee performance, cutting organizational costs, creating a trust and protecting organization's reputation. In the office environment, organizations across many industries typically see the same common ergonomic symptoms plague the employee population. The most common ergonomic symptoms in the office include tingling or numbness in the hands and fingers joint swelling, stiffness, or inflammation, muscle weakness, tightness, spasms, cramping, or pain, shoulder, neck, or back pain or discomfort and through the arms or legs, (Chandrasekar, 2011).

A job is not necessarily fun or enjoyable, work is hard. One of the important lessons that many leading companies have learned is that encouraging and fostering a work environment that inspires employees to take joy in their work can reap enormous benefits. Happy employees are loyal, and can perform amazingly. Here are reasons why creating a conducive work environment that people love is critical for performance: multiplying influence on fellows workers, becoming successful in work, right attitude towards work, reducing stress and increases in productivity, encouraging risk-taking, supporting each other at work, not afraid to make mistakes, leading by example, inspiration for creativity, (Mutia and Damary, 2014).

In the view of Sujit, (2014), productivity as an overall measure of the ability to produce a good or service. More specifically, productivity is the measure of how specified resources are managed to accomplish timely objectives as stated in terms of quantity and quality. Productivity may also be defined as an index that measures output (goods and services) relative to input. Organizations have many options for use of this formula, labor productivity, machine productivity, capital productivity, energy productivity, among others. A productivity ratio may be computed for a single operation, a department, a facility, an organization, or even an entire country. Vischer, (2007) looked at productivity is an objective concept. Organizations can monitor productivity for strategic reasons such as corporate planning, organization improvement, or comparison to competitors. It can also be used for tactical reasons such as project control or controlling performance to budget. Productivity is also a scientific concept, and hence can be logically defined and empirically observed. It can also be measured in quantitative terms, which qualifies it as a variable.

Amusa and Iyoro (2013) reveals that productivity is useful as a relative measure of actual output of production compared to the actual input of resources, measured across time or against common entities. As output increases for a level of input, or as the amount of input decreases for a constant level of output, an increase in productivity occurs. Therefore, a "productivity measure" describes how well the resources of an organization are being used to produce input. When employees are motivated positively it is a catalyst for higher productivity. Moreover, there is relationship between the attitude of employees and the satisfaction with the reward they expect as a return of their Productivity. An employee's positive attitude increases his satisfaction level, (Samson, Waiganjo and Koima, 2015). To achieve high levels of employee productivity, organizations must ensure that the physical

environment is conducive to organizational needs facilitating interaction and privacy, formality and informality, functionality and cross-disciplinarily. Consequently, the physical environment is a tool that can be leveraged both to improve organization results Ensuring adequate facilities are provided to employees is critical to generating greater employee commitment and productivity. The provision of inadequate equipment has been shown to affect employee commitment and intention to stay with the organization, (Anya, 2014).

It is an established fact that the standard of education in Nigeria is falling, the performance of students from primary, secondary and tertiary institution is not like before. It is an established fact that some students (with the support of some of their parents) register to write standard exams like West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) at “miracle centers”. These centers charge between N12,000 and N30,000, depending on the services required ranging from the student staying away from classes and appearing on the days of examinations, writing examinations by proxy among others, (Onyedinefu, 2019 and Oyetola, 2020). Graduates from tertiary institutions cannot write an application letter to seek for job. These are examples of evidences that the educational system is not standing as it was before. The performance and productivity of workers among others, depends on a motivation received for the employer. One of the way to motivate the worker is to provide conducive working environment both psychologically and physically. The falling standard of station will be rebuilt and restored through providing good physical environment, where the workers will feel comfortable and put in their best. This inevitably conducive physical environment will have impact on academic staff productivity, (Bello, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The State of the Academic Staff physical environment is a matter of concern. The environment has relatively brought low performance by the staff. In most cases the physical work environment as observed in the majority of the Polytechnics is bad and little has been done to arrest the situation. This is supported by the fact that, most of the building in the Polytechnics have; poorly designed offices; poor ventilation system; unsuitable furniture; inappropriate lighting; insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies; and lack of personal protective equipment for staff, among others. Academic staff working in such environment is prone to occupational hazards.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of physical environment on the Academic Staff productivity of the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi Specifically, the study seeks:

1. To examine Office Ergonomics in the School of Business Studies of the Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
2. To assess the landscaping in the School of Business Studies environment, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.
3. To examine the suitability of the structures in the School of Business Studies Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Research Questions

1. To what extend does Office Ergonomics improve the productivity of Academic Staff of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi?

2. To what extent does landscaping improve the productivity academic staff of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi?
3. To what do building structures improve the productivity of the academic staff, School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi?

Methodology

The study adopted the survey method to gather data. The survey research according to Yusuf (2013) is a process of gathering data from a target population through the questionnaire or interviews and subjecting such a data to statistical analysis for the purpose of reaching conclusion on subject matter of study and providing solutions to identified research problems. The area of study of this research work would be the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi. The study covers the Academic Staff of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi which comprises a total of Ninety one (91) Academic Staff. The researchers used all the Ninety one (91) Academic Staff of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi. This is because the total number of Academic Staff in the School is manageable. The research instrument for data collection which was questionnaire on *“Influence of Physical Environment on Academic Staff Productivity in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi towards Rebuilding Educational System” (IPEASPFPTBRES)* was validated by three (3) Lecturers of the Office Technology and Management (OTM) Department. Both the content and face validation took place. Questionnaire was administered by the researchers to collect data and with the help of trained research assistants it was retrieved. The research assistants engaged in collecting data from the respondents were the six secretaries of the Departments in the School of Business Study. In analyzing the data the researchers used mean. The Decision rule that, any Mean score within the range of 3.5 - 4.00 (Very High Extent), 2.5 - 3.49 (High Extent), 1.5 – 2.49 (Low Extent) and 0.5 – 1.49 (No Extent).

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: To what extent does Ergonomic improve the productivity of Academic Staff of School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi?

Table 1: Summary of Mean Score Showing the Extent of Ergonomic on the Productivity of Academic Staff School of Business, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

S/N	Variable	\bar{X}	Remarks
1.	The design of the table for my work is comfortable	2.14	LE
2.	The design of the chair for my work is comfortable	2.41	LE
3.	The space in my office is sufficient for free movement	2.47	LE
4.	The book shelf provided is big enough to accommodate my books.	2.08	LE
5.	The Office cabinet is enough to accommodate files	2.42	LE
6.	The office is spacious enough to address two or more students at a time.	2.69	HE

Source: Field Survey 2019

Result from Table1 is clear that the mean score for Ergonomic ranges from 2.08 to 2.69, and they were all below the cut off points of 2.5 as such they were at low extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does landscaping improve the physical environment of School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi?

Table 2: Summary of Mean Score Showing the Extent of Landscaping On the Productivity of Academic Staff School of Business, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

S/N	Variable	\bar{X}	Remarks
7.	The environment of the School of Business is landscaped	2.45	LE
8.	Landscaping of School of Business Studies adds beauty to environment and boost your morale and increase my productivity	2.81	HE
9.	The landscaped area in the School of Business Studies is very attractive.	2.73	HE
10.	The good landscaped environment has a positive influence on Staff productivity	3.01	HE
11.	The level of cleanliness in my work environment is very excellent as a result of good landscaping.	2.34	LE

From Table 2, it is obvious that, some part of the School of Business Studies is not landscaped as indicated by a mean score of items 7 and 11 shows between 2.34 to 2.45 indicating Low Extent while items 8, 9 and 10 has between 2.73 to 3.01 showing High Extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent does building structure on the productivity of Academic Staff of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi?

Table 3: Summary of Mean Score Showing the Extent of building structure On the Productivity of Academic Staff School of Business, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

S/N	Variable	\bar{X}	Remarks
12.	The Design of the office building is attractive	2.25	LE
13.	The sizes of the windows are wide enough for natural lighting	2.36	LE
14.	The sizes of the windows are wide enough for ventilation	2.31	LE
15.	The design of the door and windows provides good ventilation	2.19	LE
16.	Provision for electricity light is Adequate	2.11	LE
17.	Provision for Fan/Air Conditioner is adequate	2.31	LE
18.	The location of convenience is Conducive	2.42	LE

Source: Field Survey 2019

In Table 3 it is evidently clear that, the design of the office building of the School of Business Studies is showing mean score between 2.11 to 2.25, indicating that it is to a Low Extent.

Discussion of Findings

The objective of research question one was to examine Ergonomic in the School of Business of the Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi. Based on the analysis of data collected, it was discovered that, most of the Academic Staff in the School of Business Studies are not comfortable with their chairs and tables. The analysis also showed that there is no sufficient space for free movement in staff offices. It is also obvious that the book shelves provided in the offices are not big enough to accommodate staff books. The study and findings also indicated that Office cabinet in Academic Staff is not enough to accommodate their files. It is obvious that the offices of the Academic Staff is not large enough to address two or more students at a time. The findings proved that ergonomic in the school of Business Studies is very poor and this has a serious influence and cannot improve the productivity of Academic staff as opined by Hansen (2017) that if workers like their physical work environment, productivity and satisfaction levels would naturally increases.

The objective of research question two was to assess the landscaping in the School of Business Studies environment. From the results of the analysis, the environment in the School of Business Studies is not properly landscaped. It also indicated that if the area of the School of Business Studies is landscaped it could have added more beauty to the environment, boost the morale of Academic Staff and ultimately increase their productivity. The assertion that Landscaping is an integral part of our culture and plays an essential role in the quality of our environment, economic wellbeing of the people, as well as their physical and psychological health, this was supported by Anya (2014).

The objective of research question three was to examine the suitability of the structures in the School of Business Studies. From the results of analysis, it showed that the design of office building in the School of Business Studies is not attractive. It also reveals that the sizes of the windows are not wide enough for natural lighting and ventilation. It was revealed that the provision for electricity light is not adequate and the provision for fans and air conditions in the offices of Academic Staff in the School of Business Studies is inadequate. It is evidently clear from the responses, that the location of conveniences in the School of Business Studies building is not conducive. This agreed with the study of Hameed and Shela (2009) on impact of office design on employees' productivity.

Conclusion

In conclusion the influence of physical work environment can be positive or negative. The study concluded that, the physical work environment has a far reaching influence on the morale of Academic Staff. When staff environment is shabby, depressing and dejected, it reduces employees' morale while the provision of good physical working environment generates interest and increases productivity. Provision of good physical working environment, that is conducive, pleasant and comfortable increases staff productivity.

Recommendations

The study recommends that, since good physical working environment enhances the productivity of Academic Staff. It is therefore recommended that in designing and constructing offices, government and relevant stakeholders should ensure that:

1. The sizes of windows are wide enough to provide enough light and good ventilation.
2. The offices are provided with constant electricity, adequate Fans/Air Conditioners.
3. The environments are kept clean and conveniences should be located where it would not disturb staff in their offices.

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