

Job Design and Employee Turnover in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State

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Abstract

This study, using empirical means, determined the relationship between job design and employee turnover in Nigeria Port Authority, Rivers State. The population of the study was 409 employees of the two NPA branches in Rivers State while its sample size was 202 as established using Taro Yamene. The study adopted the cross sectional survey design in its assessment of the relationship between the variables, as such; primary data were quantitative in nature and were obtained using the structured questionnaire. The analysis comprised of the use of both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The descriptive statistics for the demographic and univariate levels of analyses were carried out using simple percentage, frequencies and measures of central tendencies (mean) while the inferential was done with Spearman technique. The findings indicated that there is a reliable relationship between job design and the measures of employee turnover (involuntary quits and resignation). Given this outcome, the study concludes that effective job design is an antidote to employee turnover. It recommends that management of NPA should understand that the manner in which its jobs are structured or designed will either aid the firm to attract and retain reliable employees or creates an imbalance work-life that may lead to employee involuntary quits and resignation, hence caution should be exercised doing this.

Keywords: *Job Design, Voluntary Turnover, Involuntary Quits, Resignation*

Introduction

In view of the fact that all nations are interdependent, it is acknowledged that nations thrive on trade. This means that a nation in order to survive exchanges what it cannot produce for itself with what it has in abundance. The process through which this exchange is done is referred to as international trade. However, there are different transportation means a nation can adopt to trade with other nations. Consequently, in Nigeria today, sea port transportation is considered as one of the effective and efficient transportation systems through which international trade is carried out. This is why Robinson (2005) argued that over 95% of overseas trade to and from the US is by ship. Hiedeloff and Zachcial (2007) assert that sea ports are the connections between the various routes that link up activities in the maritime sector. Hence, a port is viewed as an organization that provides services and facilities for ship turnaround (Trujillo & Nombela, 1999). Sea port provides facilities for loading and offloading cargo from vessels. Although this pedestrian view of ports may not be an up-to-date view of the contemporary port today, it captures the critical role of a port that has not been undervalued. The significant interest in ports and the services they provide revolves around efficient loading and unloading of cargo. Therefore, a nation with stable maritime operations enjoys economies of scale in its international business activities. This is because it is cheaper and safe in the distribution of cargoes. This also affirms Alderton (2005) when the author stated that sea ports serve as primary access points, which have an economic multiplier effect. Currently, there are eight ports in Nigeria, namely, Apapa port, Container terminal port, Tin Can Island port, Roll on-Roll off (RORO) port, Port Harcourt port, Delta port, Onne port, and Calabar port. These eight ports constitute the primary port system, although there are smaller ports and oil terminals that operate under the ports' complexes.

As pointed out by scholars that all organizations are goal driven notwithstanding its size and scope, the Nigerian Port Authority is also acknowledged as purposeful organization. According to Jaja et al. (2019) these goals may include profitability, growth and expansion, good citizenship, goodwill, survival and others. With these array of goals in mind, organizations are today earnestly looking for ways of achieving them and gaining competitive advantage (Obiekweet *al.* 2019), over their competitors in the game of business. And one way organizations do this is by engaging the services of the right people with requisite knowledge and skills. This is why Tamunomiebi and Wobodo (2018) posit that the employees remain the life-blood of the organization as its success or failure depends largely on their performance and commitment towards the goals of the organization. Several empirical and theoretical studies have also affirmed the indispensable nature of the employees in the pursuit of corporate goals (Sofijanovna & Zabijakin-Chatleska, 2013; Hameed & Waheed, 2011).

Given that the employees are rational beings with array of wants and needs, the extent to which they align themselves with the goals of the organization and desire to remain with the organization is a function of how the management of the organization treats them in relation to these wants and needs. This explains why Chambers (1998) argues that when the level of commitment of workers is enhanced, it goes a long way to provide an intrinsic kind of motivation on workers' to enrich the feelings of self-worth and the workers feel valued and develop a psychological attachment to the organization. This psychological attachment by workers' improves the commitment of workers and helps the organization create a competitive advantage, higher productivity and low workers turnover level (Rodger & Peccond 2005) as cited in Subaka (2014). Similarly, Oludeyi (2015) maintains that the impact of employees in every organization is built on the fact that enhanced commitment brings about enhanced performance and diminished attitudes that is far from behaviors such as malingering, deliberate and unintentional turnover intentions, lack of interest, ineffectiveness and low morale. It is however, essential that managers ensure that the employees are provided with the necessary supports they need to remain committed and with the organization. This is because the moment an employee's normative commitment is drained; its consequences are often disastrous as different kinds of deviant work behaviors become imminent; and studies by various researchers have shown that employees' attitude, social, psychological, interpersonal and organizational factors are responsible for deviant behavior (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2007). More so, where such deviancy perpetuates over time, it culminates in employee turnover as initiated by the organization to purge the organization of such employees. But the implication of this action may also be harmful to the organization as it usually leads to increase cost in terms of replacement. Therefore, in an attempt to reduce turnover to the barest minimum, managers adopt different strategic actions. One of such strategies is attractive job design. This is because when an organization's job design is people friendly, it promotes job satisfaction and enhanced performance.

In a bid to provide solution to the problem of turnover in the organization, several studies have been carried out but none was linked to maritime sector in Rivers State. Some of these studies include Akintayo (2012) who investigated the relationship between work environment and quality of work life in industrial organizations in Nigeria. Domfeh (2012) examined the impact of employee retention strategies on the performance of selected rural banks in Ashanti Region in Ghana. Tewset *al.* (2013) studied the impact of coworker support on employee turnover in the hospitality industry. Thus, the study empirically investigates the relationship between job design and employee turnover in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The employee remains the most critical resource any organization can boost of. Unfortunately, some work organizations in Nigeria do not seem to understand this as can be seen in the various ways they treat their employees which often lead to job dissatisfaction and ultimately abnormal employees' turnover. Such ill-treatments manifest as follows: First, is in the area of poor compensation. Compensation is a factor that could affect the job satisfaction of employees and a major driver of

employee turnover. According to Saluy and Treshia (2018), compensation awarded to an employee influences his level of job satisfaction and motivation. Secondly, the problem of working under a not conducive work environment; this no doubt greatly poses a lot of health hazard on the employees and consequently threatens their job tenures with the organization. Studies show that the working condition prevalent in most organizations in Nigeria has been condemned severally and rated as being far below global standards, highly unsustainable and also as being counterproductive as evidenced from the behavior of the employees (Wobodo et al., 2018).

Conceptual Framework

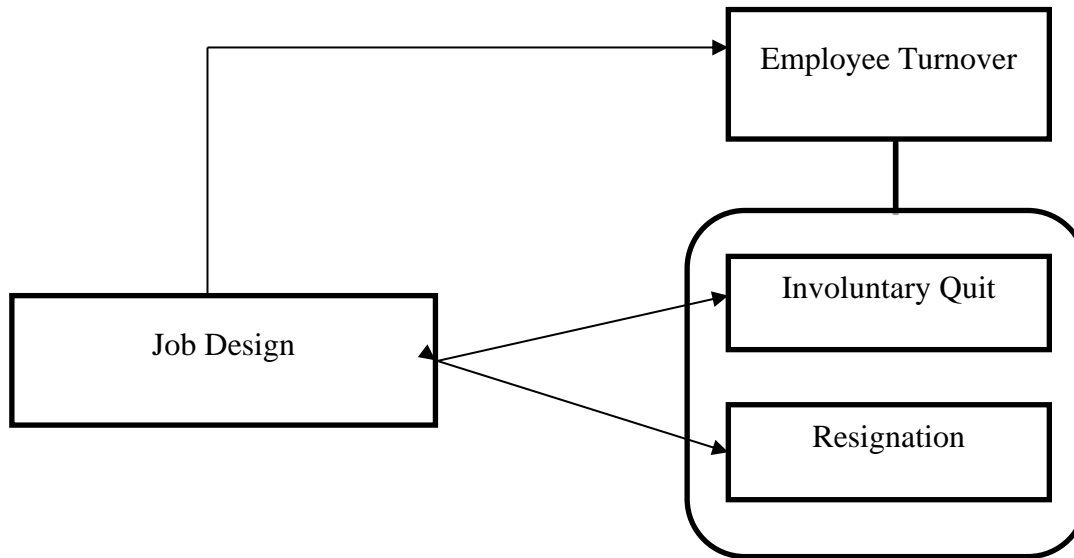


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework of Job Design and Employee Turnover
Source: Desk Research, 2021

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between job design and employee turnover in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State. Therefore, the objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the relationship between job design and involuntary quit in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.
- ii. To examine the relationship between job design and resignation in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were put forward:

1. How does job design relate with involuntary quits in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State?

How does job design relate with resignation in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between job design and involuntary quits in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between job design and resignation in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

Theoretical foundations

In this study, we adopted resource base view theory as our anchor point on the link between the study variables. Resource-Based View theory was originally conceptualized by Penrose (1959), and further enhanced in the work of Wernerfelt (1984) and Connor (1991). The theory argues that through effective utilization of an organization's internal resources such as employees, the organization gains competitive advantage over its competitors (Kraaijenbrink *et al.*, 2010). It explains that resources available or acquired by an organization are the basic drivers of its performance outcome (Wobodo *et al.*, 2018). It further states that if an organization is to attain a state of sustainable competitive edge, it must acquire and control valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resource and capabilities. In line with the assumptions of this theory, we assert that in today's knowledge driven economy, the human aspect of the organization remains a critical resource for any organization wishing to remain operationally sustainable amid competition. With the above views in mind, it means that for any organization to continuously maximize the potentials of its human resources, such organization must ensure that it not only acquires or hires the best but also ensures that it develop and adopt effective strategies that motivate employees to remain with the organization as they constitute rare competitive advantage for the organization.

Concept of Job Design

Job design has been one of the most effective instruments used as a precursor for employee performance. According to Knapp and Mujtaba (2010), job design is the act of changing the content and processes of a job to increase the employees' satisfaction, motivation and productivity. It is also connected with specifying the methods of any job in such a way that various requirements of the job holder can be effectively satisfied (Buchanan, 1979). According to Hackman and Lawler (1971), key features of job can precisely influence workers' attitude at workplace. However, the extent to which job features are perceived motivating by the

employees will mainly depend on how the job is designed. This is why Baumruk (2004) argues that effective job design brings involvement of an employee in work related activities which clearly forecasts employee output, departmental productivity and organizational success.

Accordingly, Bates (2004) posits that an appropriate designing of jobs in the workplaces engenders participation of members of staff in work interrelated actions which evidently projects employees' productivity, unit outcomes and organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, Harter (2002) iterate that the effect of job design on employees' wellbeing and quality of work-life should never be underestimated and any attempt to assume that job design is irrelevant to productivity and performance is hazardous to the good name and long term survival of any organization because absenteeism, high turnover of labor and low performance will each take its toll on the organization. Therefore, in designing job, managers adopt different contemporary work design tools, namely, job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment.

Job rotation system has been widely adopted in large organizations. It is considered as the systematic movement of employees from one job to another at planned intervals (Dessler & Varkkey, 2009). This thus, explains the reason job rotation is planned in the job training phase because it proves helpful while transferring employees from one job to another in order to learn more and increase their knowledge by doing various jobs (Zareen *et al.*, 2013). Job rotation create avenue for effective knowledge sharing in an organization. According to Wobodo *et al.* (2018) this is made possible through face-to-face contacts, workshops, brainstorming that takes place in that unit on a regular basis to upscale one another's skill. Job enlargement on the other hand, refers to the combination of different jobs and adding connected duties to job. In the view of Durai (2010), the essential purpose of this approach is to enhance the acceptance and self-fulfillment needs of the employees and also creates avenue for the employee to enhance their involvement in the organization, planning and control of task. Finally, job enrichment is the vertical loading of an employee's job to make it more challenging, interesting and to provide opportunities for responsibility, growth and recognition (Riggio, 2009). Other areas job design manifests at the workplace include part-time working arrangement wherein the employer allow the employees other flexible work options to carry out their tasks (Lee & DeVoe, 2012); autonomy of work, this the amount of job-related independence, initiative, and freedom either permitted or required in daily work activities. Frese and Zapf (1994) argued that a job design which allows employee discretion and control makes them to be more effective in resolving problems because they have the freedom to choose strategies to deal with context specific situation. This follow why over the years, scholars unanimously acknowledged work autonomy as one of the most essential distinctiveness of work and conceivably one of the most extensively studied work attributes (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Finally, rigid work arrangement, this occurs when the structure of the organization become so inflexible and formalized that it gives no room for application of discretion.

Employee Turnover

According to Ansari (2011), having a committed and dedicated workforce is a valuable asset that contributes to organizations' competitive edge. It is on bases of this notion that every organization takes the issue of employee turnover very seriously. Primarily because, whenever this happens, it causes an organization to lose their most valuable assets to their competitors and as well stand the risk of losing their intellectual property as a result of that, especially when it is voluntarily induced. Accordingly, Hom (2011) argues that since the beginning of the 20th century, how and why people quit jobs has intrigued practitioners and scholars. And till this day, the problem of employee turnover continues to draw attention across national frontiers. However, leaning on the view of Kaur and Mohindru (2013), it refers to a situation in which employees voluntarily or involuntarily leave their current organization. In the same manner, Abassi and Hollman (2000), assert that it explains

the rate of movement in the labor market of an economy between firms, occupations in relation with the level of employment and unemployment in an economy. Again, Mobley (1982) avers that it is linked with termination of the process of an individual obtaining material income from the organization.

Involuntary Quits

Involuntary quit is one type of turnover that occurs when an employee is terminated from a position. It occurs when employers fire or lay off workers (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011). Cao *et al.* (2013), in the same vein posit that it occurs when the closure of employment contract is initiated by the organization and not by the employee himself. These definitions affirm the inference made by Loquercio *et al.* (2006) that involuntary quit happens because of a managerial decision, such as human resource downsizing, misconduct dismissal, retirement and employees sick leaves. Many of the issues that cause involuntary turnover can be minimized by administering pre-employment tests in the hiring process. For example, one of the main causes of involuntary quit is that new employees do not digest and apply the training they are given in a satisfactory manner; aptitude and skills tests can predict learning ability and the likelihood that an applicant will successfully complete training. Similarly, certain personality tests can be used to assess how likely an employee is to engage in counterproductive work behaviors that can negatively affect an organization. Some examples of counterproductive work behaviors include theft, tardiness, fraud, and time-wasting.

Resignation

The problem of employee resignations is a reality for any business concern. According to Rattanavicharn *et al.* (2019) resignation is referred to as the formal act of quitting one's job. Similarly, Sayles and Strauss (1976) view it as the end of hiring employees, and hiring new employees to work instead of employment. These definitions thus show that employee resignation is a departure from the organization due to voluntary reason. Given that resignation is a willful action on the part of the employee, it is also pertinent to understand that employees do not just wake up one morning and decide to quit his or her job without a cause. There is always reason behind such action. In view of this, Shikiar and Richard (1982) identified push and pull factors as antecedents of employee resignation decision. They referred grouped push factors as forces within the organization that threaten employees' satisfaction; for instance, pressure from the organization policies, commanding of leader, organization work process, low educational opportunities, problems in the relationship between people in the organization etc. Pull factor on the other hand, refers to external factors that responsibly for the employee decision moving to a new organization. This manifests in the form of opportunity to have a better quality of work life, more career path development opportunity, and higher compensation.

Furthermore, Shukla and Sharma (2012) assert that some employee resignations have been beneficial for workplaces and were also socially desirable. This is as such situation results in the attraction of new skills and ideas to the organization as well as created new employment opportunities. Beyond this, if resignation becomes common in an organization, it may portend danger as the organization may wake up one day and find that its entire key staff is gone. In fact, a study shows that this kind of voluntary exit can lead to a downturn in productivity (Heibutzki, 2020). Resignations have been direct financial cost to employers. Specific costs vary between industries and occupations, and depend on the nature of the job and the difficulty in recruiting suitable replacement. It is observed that replacing an employee is time-consuming and expensive (Sherman *et al.*, 1998).

Job Design and Employee Turnover

Several empirical evidence on the relationship between job design and worker outcomes such turnover intention have proven that there is robust affiliation between them. According to Zareen *et al.* (2013), if the employees are not satisfied with their job design, they feel exhausted and unwilling to work effectively. They further stated that dissatisfied and de-motivated employees become a burden for the organization if they remain, and if they quit or shift to another company, they cause high employee turnover cost for the organization. It is also evidence that satisfied employees due to good career management practices such as creating work-life balance through effective job design tend to be committed to an organization (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005), and employees who are satisfied and committed are more likely to stay with the organization, thus reducing turnover rate. Sharma and Raval (2016) examined the impact job enrichment and employee turnover of Vodafone firms in Pakistan and found that employees of the organizations complained of lack of responsibility due to job monotony and it affected performance adversely.

Methodology

Research design is concerned with the blue print that enables the researcher to come up with solutions to problems and guide him or her in various stages of the research (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2009). While Baridam (2001) views it as a relevant question which borders on how the study elements will be incorporated into the scope of the research and how they will be employed within the research setting to yield the desired data. However, in this study, the cross-sectional survey type of the quasi-experiment research design was adopted. This is because the study is a correlational study and as such the study elements are not under the influence of the investigator. The study population is comprised of 401 employees of the investigated firms in Rivers State. The study sample size is 202 as determined using Taro Yamane formula. Data were gathered through the administration of structured questionnaire to the respondents. In the analysis of data, the Spearman Ranked Order Correlation Coefficient was used as aided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Correlations on Job Design and Employee Turnover

		Job Design	Involuntary Quits	Resignation
Spearman's rho	Job Design	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.576**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	194	194
Involuntary Quits		Correlation Coefficient	-.576**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	194	194
Resignation		Correlation Coefficient	-.735**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	194	194

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

Source: SPSS Output

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between job design and involuntary quits in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

The result of correlation matrix obtained between job design and involuntary quits was shown in Table 1. Similarly displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. The correlation coefficient of - 0.576 confirms the direction and strength of this relationship. The coefficient represents a negative strong correlation between the variables. The tests of significance shows that that this relationship is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.01$. Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between job design and voluntary quits in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between job design and resignation in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

The result of correlation matrix obtained between job design and resignation was shown in Table 1. Similarly displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. The correlation coefficient of -0.735 confirms the direction and strength of this relationship. The coefficient represents a negative moderate correlation between the variables. The tests of significance shows that that this relationship is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.01$. Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between job design and resignation in the Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the relationship between modernization of infrastructure and port performance in the Nigerian Ports in Rivers State. The finding of the study is in line with Brunel (2004) who opined that the demand for infrastructure optimization is a phenomenon that has been on the increase in Nigeria over the years. This is as a result of obvious infrastructural deficit to drive the nation's socio-economic progress. Since 1960, Nigeria had her independence several governments has come and gone both military and democracy, yet the much needed infrastructure to run the economy is still lacking. In this stance, Escribano *et al.* (2009) explain that the ways that infrastructure affects Africa's economic growth poses several difficulties because of the special characteristics of the African region. Estache (2005) takes stock of the basic characteristics of infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa and concludes that the impact of infrastructure in Africa may be different from other regions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The retention of employees is among the challenges bedeviling many organizations across the globe in this present 21st century. Management of organizations is faced with the task of retaining competent employees in order to avert high rate of employee turnover. Incidentally, the finding of this study proves that attractive job

design reduces tendency of employee turnover. This is because when people are comfortable with their work arrangements, it gives opportunity to balance their work-life and other parts of their lives; hence will not want to quit the organization. The study concludes that effective job design is an antidote to employee turnover. It recommends that management of NPA should understand that the manner in which its jobs are structured or designed will either aid the firm to attract and retain reliable employees or creates an imbalance work-life that may lead to employee involuntary quits and resignation, hence caution should be exercised doing this.

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