

**WORKPLACE INNOVATION AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION
AS DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEES' QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE IN
DISTRIBUTIVE INDUSTRIES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out if workplace innovation and organisational communication serve as determinants of employees' quality of work-life among workers in distributive industries in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopts the survey research design. The target population for the study comprised 800 employees in two selected distributive industries while the sample size, selected through proportionate sampling technique, consists of 160 respondents. Two sets of questionnaires: Workplace Innovation Questionnaire ($r=0.76$) and Organisational Communication Questionnaire ($r=0.68$) were used to obtain data for the study. One research question and two hypotheses were postulated and tested. Data obtained were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings reveal that creativity/innovation and organisational communication had significant effect on workers' quality of work-life in the distributive industries. The relative contributions were: workplace innovation ($\beta=.153$) and organisational communication ($\beta=.700$). Similarly, findings show a significant positive relationship between independent variables (creativity/innovation and organisational communication) and dependent variable quality of work-life in this order: creativity/innovation ($r=.743$) and organisational communication ($r=.349$). Therefore, it is recommended that the goal(s) and objective(s) of the organisation should be well defined and clearly known to all categories of employees because this will help enhance the capacity and capability of employees, irrespective of their status in the organisation, to come up with creative and implementable ideas that can move the organisation to its desired level, and place it in a competitive advantage over its rivals.

Key Words: Workplace Innovation, Organisational Communication, Employees' Quality of Work-Life, and Distributive Industries

Introduction

Work-Life quality and balance have become the most pressing issues experienced by workers today. Quality of work life (QWL) is one of the major concepts of behavioural science and it was first introduced by Davis in 1972 (Mathur, 1989; Hian and Einstein, 1990). QWL practice involves acquiring, training, developing, motivating and appraising workers for the best performance of the employees as regards organisational objectives. According to Pot (2011) Quality of Work Life is “a process by which an organisation responds to employees needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work”. Similarly, Islam and Siengthai (2009) define it as “the favorable condition and environment of employees benefit, employees’ welfare and management attitudes towards operational workers as well as employees in general”. Bhattacharyya (2005) says “achieving work-life quality and balance requires the complementary efforts of an organisational support system and implementation of manager/supervisor/employee designed work-life process.

Literature has recognised the key elements of Quality of Work Life to include job security, job satisfaction, better reward system, employee benefits, employee involvement and organisational performance (Havlovic, 1991; Scobel, 1975). They equally reveal that there are

two kinds of indicators for defining quality of life. One is an objective indicator, for example money and the other is subjective indicator, such as financial status, living standard, job and the like. Similarly, Lau & May, (1998); Hackman & Oldham, (1980); Taylor & Bowers, (1972) assert that the core elements of Quality of Work Life are working conditions, employees’ job satisfaction, employees’ behavioural aspects, and employees’ financial and non-financial benefits, growth and development, and supervision.

Irrespective of the various core elements of Quality of Work Life mentioned above, workplace innovation has equally been seen as a very important contributor to QWL (McLean, 2004). Even though the terms creativity and innovation are often used interchangeably (Man, 2001), the two terms differ. Levitt, (2010) defines innovation “as doing new things” and creativity as “thinking up new things”. Similarly, Amabile (2004) differentiates creativity from innovation as follows: “creativity means the production of novel and useful ideas, in any domain, while innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation”. The former refers to the generation of ideas while the latter implies the implementation of such ideas. This connotes that innovation is the aftermath of creativity. Buttressing this fact, Bushnell, (2010) contended that “everyone who’s ever taken a shower has had an idea. It’s the person who gets out of the shower, dries off and does something about it who makes a difference.”

Therefore, for this study, workplace innovation is adopted in place of workplace creativity. It is defined, in this study, as the implementation of new and combined interventions in the fields of work organisation, human resource management, and work relations. Every organisation benefits from innovation beyond direct sales, growth, or improvement in efficiency. Bhattacharyya, (2005) asserts that an organisation that establishes an effective innovation policy and process is more likely to realise social benefits that arise from teamwork and employee's motivation.

Similar to workplace innovation as being very essential to Quality of Work Life is Organisational communication (Holtzhausen, 2002; Litterst and Eyo, 1982). According to Adeleke (2004), "it is through communication that people are linked together for relationship to be created". Through communication, individuals, in different units in the organisation, relate and interact with each other for the attainment of organisational goals. Cooren (1999) contends that communication constitutes the lifeblood of an organisation because it entails organising, informing, coordinating, arranging, staffing, and other functions of management. Orpen (1997) concludes that "communication has a vital role in the accomplishment or failure of any organisation".

In the same vein, Kreitner, Kinicki, and Buclens, (2002) enumerate the advantages of communication in organisational setting

as follows: communication is the glue that binds people together; it assists organisational members in accomplishing individual and organisational goals; it allows members to implement and respond to organisational change; it helps members to coordinate organisational activities and engage in virtually all organisational relevant behaviours; it promotes, in a group, the sharing of ideas, transmission of basic norms and values; and coordination of group activities towards the achievement of set objectives. It can, then, be concluded that communication is the life of any organised group, a prerequisite for the attainment of organisational objectives, an invaluable resource for positive development of an organisation, (Sybil, Isaac, and Oludayo, 1995), and one of the basic tools of management.

This study is therefore, designed to measure the effect of workplace innovation and organisational communication on Quality of Work Life which has largely been neglected in literature.

Statement of the Problem

The various core elements of Quality of Work Life cited by scholars in literature, as discussed above, show that workplace innovation and organisational communication have not been given due attention in relation to Quality of Work Life. Even though these two concepts are considered as very important to Employees Quality of Work Life, they have not been sufficiently researched to

actually determine their effects on QWL. This study is therefore, carried out to fill this vacuum in literature on QWL. In other words, this study is carried out to measure the effects of workplace innovation and organisational communication on employees' Quality of Work Life in distributive industries in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are as follows, to:

1. find out if workplace innovation has significant relationship with employees' quality of work-life among workers of distributive industries in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. ascertain if organisational communication has significant relationship with employees' quality of work-life among workers of distributive industries in Lagos State, Nigeria, and
3. determine the joint and relative contributions of workplace innovation and organisational communication on employees' quality of work-life in the distributive industries.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised to guide this study.

1. What effect is the joint contribution of workplace innovation and organisational communication to employees' Quality of Work-Life in the distributive industries?
2. What is the relative contribution of workplace innovation and

organisational communication to employees Quality of Work Life in the distributive industries?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design is adopted for this study because both the independent variables (creativity/-innovation and organisational communication) and the dependent variable (employees' quality of work-life) have already occurred without any need for manipulation by the researchers. Since the study is designed to measure the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, the descriptive survey research design was considered most appropriate to adopt for this study. Employees of two purposively selected distributive industries in Lagos State with total staff of 800: Abams Chemicals Nigeria Ltd, (220) and Conoil Plc, Lagos (580) constituted the target population. A proportionate sampling technique of 20 per cent was used in selecting the sample size of 160 employees as the

respondents of the study. Creativity and Innovation Questionnaire ($r=0.76$) and Organisational Communication Questionnaire ($r=0.68$) were the instruments used to obtain data. 154 correctly filled-questionnaires were used for data analysis. Data obtained were analysed through multiple regression analysis.

Results

Research Question: What is the contribution of workplace innovation and organisational communication to employees' quality of work-life in the distributive industries?

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the Joint Effect of Workplace Innovation and Organisational Communication on QWL among Distributive Industries in Lagos State, Nigeria

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate			
.757	.53	.568	5.4311			
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	5981.601	2	2990.801	101.394	.000	Sig.
Residual	4454.035	151	29.497			
Total	10435.636	153				

- Predictors: (constant), creativity/innovation, organisational communication
- Dependent Variable: Quality of work-life

Table 1 shows the joint contributions of the two independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable that is quality of work-life. The table reveals a coefficient of multiple correlation ($R=.757$ and a multiple R^2 of .573). This means that 57.3% of the variance is accounted for by two predictor variables when taken together.

The analysis of variance for the regression yields an F-ratio of 101.394 as shown in the table. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $p < .05$. This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable is significant. Similarly, the result of the relative contribution of the independent variables (workplace innovation and organisational communication) on employees' quality of work-life is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables (Creativity/Innovation and Organisational Communication) on Employees' Quality of Work-life

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Standard Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	22.161	3.296		6.912	.000
Organisational Communication	.884	.321	.153	2.756	.007
Creativity/Innovation	3.304	.261	.700	12.637	.000

Table 2 reveals the relative contributions of the two independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weight: workplace innovation ($\beta=.153$, $p<.05$) and organisational communication ($\beta= .300$, $p<.05$). Thus, the two independent variables were found significant. The finding shows that workplace innovation and organisational communication had significant relationship with employees' quality of work-life among distributive industries in Lagos State, Nigeria. This finding agrees with that of Bhattacharyya (2005) who asserts that "organisational innovation will enhance innovational excellence...." The implication of this finding is that workplace innovation is very essential to organisational productivity.

Discussion of Findings

Workplace innovation, in line with the findings of this study, can be associated with quality of work life movement. One important issue to emphasise is that top management in every organisation holds the power to set the tone and thus plays a

key role in whether an organisation will be innovative or not. However, every employee in the organisation must be carried alone to be innovative as well in order to make the organisation have a competitive edge over its competitors. Hargadon and Sutton (2000) contend that "Management must ask for technical innovation, demand it, encourage it, stimulate it, fund it, and reward it. Management must truly want and be committed and be willing to sacrifice short term results for workplace innovation".

Two factors are very germane to improving Quality of Work Life in workplace environment conducive to innovation. They are knowledge and creative motivation. Amabile (1998), however, argues that in the workplace, it is easier to influence creative motivation than to influence knowledge or creative thinking styles which are long term pursuits. She concluded that creative motivation can be fostered on the employees through challenge, freedom and autonomy, resources in time and money, work group/team features, supervisory

encouragement, and organisational support by tolerating failure and encouraging risk taking.

Similarly, communication flow is also a crucial aspect of promoting innovation throughout the organisation. According to Mauzy and Harriman (2003) “creative healthy organisations have a high volume of diverse information that flows freely throughout the organisation, increasing the likelihood of collision among beliefs, presumptions, possibilities, and new facts”. Applying this concept to the flow of even unrelated communication is important in every organisation. Therefore, designing the physical workspace to create opportunities for interaction among otherwise separate workers will also help to improve the flow of unrelated information to spark new connections leading to innovation. Organisational structure also plays a key role in communication flow. Mauzy and Harriman (2003) argue that ideas tend to move more easily through more fluid organisations with less structured roles and authority than they do through large, bureaucratic organisations. A rigid environment that adheres to strictly to procedure does not foster innovation.

Conclusion

Understanding how employees Quality of Work Life can be enhanced in every organisation is the first step for developing a conducive workplace environment which will ensure organisational growth and success. The primary contribution of this study is that workplace innovation and organisational communication can also be considered as core elements of

Employees’ Quality of Work Life even though they have not been so considered in literature, especially, among workers in distributive industries. Therefore, the findings of this study are important contributions to existing knowledge documented in literature on employees Quality of Work Life since previous studies had largely concentrated on other variables such as: employees’ job satisfaction, wage policy, organisational policy and structure, unionism among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Management should encourage and welcome new, alternative, and innovative ideas from all categories of employees. In other words, management must build diverse teams and create mechanisms by which individuals with different perspectives can interact productively.
2. Innovative ideas, generated by the workers, and found to be beneficial to the attainment of the goals and objectives of an organisation should be promptly implemented.
3. Management should give room for both upward and downward communication flow within the organisation so that employees will be empowered with correct pieces of information devoid of rumours.
4. The goal(s) and objective(s) of the organisation should be well

defined and clearly known to all categories of employees. This will help enhance the capacity and capability of employees, irrespective of their status in the organisation, to come up with creative and implementable ideas that can move the organisation to its desired level.

5. Management should accord due recognition to the workers quality of work-life by encouraging them to be creative and innovative in the generation of ideas that can place the organisation in a competitive advantage over its rivals. This effort will result in greater effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation which will have direct impact on workers quality of work-life.

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