Administrative Environment And Employee Productivity In Higher Education A
Theoretical View

Dr. Jamal Asad Mezel\textsuperscript{1}, Dr. Kiran Das Naik Eslavath\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Professor, Center for Research and strategic studies, Lebanese French University, Erbil
Kurdistan Region of Iraq

\textsuperscript{2}Assistant Professor, Center for Research and strategic studies, Lebanese French University,
Erbil Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Abstract

Ensure that from the above theoretical review on administrative context and employee productivity in higher education and there is a positive association between work engagement of faculty members and administrative staff motivate the employees in accomplishing their work regardless of any result that they are more productive. Researchers argue the fact that the physical environment of the institutional and administrative, employees effect job perception attitudes and job satisfaction which is in sequence affects the job performance and employee productivity. Improving the work environment in higher educational institution there is a dissatisfaction and complaints of employee while increasing their productivity the more satisfied employee are with their jobs in high performance and productivity.

Keywords: productivity, higher education, employee productivity, administration

Introduction

Improving employee productivity has been one of the most important objectives for several organizations. This is because higher levels of employee productivity provide an organization and its employees with various advantages. For instance, higher productivity leads to favourable economic growth, large profitability and better social progress (Sharma & Sharma, 2014). Additionally, employees who are more productive can obtain better wages/salaries, better working conditions, and favourable employment opportunities. Moreover, higher productivity tends to maximize organizational competitive advantage through cost reductions and improvement in high quality of output (Baily et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2014; Wright, 2004). All of
these benefits have made employee productivity worthy of attention. Therefore, looking at its antecedents is very important to ensure organizational survival and long term success.

Markos and Sridevi (2010) demonstrated that employers should consider investing in workforce engagement, because recent researches on this topic have clearly indicated that there was a positive association between work engagement and performance outcomes, such as employee retention and productivity. Certain scholars (Richman, 2006; Fleming & Asplund, 2007) added that employees who are engaged or involved with their jobs are perceived to be more productive because they are motivated toward accomplishing their work beyond any personal factors. They are also more focused than those of disengaged counterparts. Furthermore, employees who are engaged are in most cases assumed to work more efficiently and with the aim of putting the success of the organization in their minds as a top priority. Although several researches have emphasized about the significance of employee work engagement in driving performance and positive business outcomes, there are only few empirical evidences to support such claims (Saks, 2006). It is also noted that engagement should to be considered as a key organizational strategy that involves all the levels of an organization (Frank et al., 2004). Saxena and Srivastava (2015) reported that work engagement has become one of the main challenges/activities that need to be well managed to fulfil organization objectives. They also demonstrated that there is a need to test its effect on performance outcomes. In fact, the issue of employee productivity has recently emerged in the literature and carries extreme significance. For instance, previous research works surrounding the topic of employee productivity in service contexts have been largely neglected (Brown et al., 2009; Filitrault et al., 1996). As such, the definition of employee productivity has been hard to conceptualize and measure. For instance, the common definition of productivity has mainly emphasized on the ratio between input costs and output value, despite existing associated implications that it could depend on the nature of business. Overall, there appears to be an ambiguity in conceptualizing, measuring, and testing the antecedents of employee productivity. Hence, this study aims to test the effect of work engagement on employee productivity in Malaysian higher education sector to cover existing gaps in the literature. The next section presents the literature review concerning previous research on employee productivity and work engagement. It also explains the possible link between both variables.
Concept of the Work Environment and Productivity

According to Leblebici (2012), many executives are under the mistaken impression that the level of employee performance on the job is proportional to the size of the employee's compensation package. Work environment is the combination of factors (social support, physical working conditions, job characteristics, training and development and communication process) that influence work. Wells (2000) in recent years, says that employees comfort on the job, determined by workplace conditions and environment has been recognized as an important factor for measuring their productivity. Researchers have demonstrated that the physical environmental quality expectation of employees' facilities affect job perception, attitudes, and job satisfaction (Leather et al., 2003; Lee & Brand, 2005). Evidence is accumulating that the physical environment in which people work affects both job performance and job satisfaction (Clements-Croome, 2000; Shaw & Readon, 2004).

Srivastava (2008) argues that perceived adequacy or inadequacy of work environment both physical and psychosocial, extends noticeable effect on employees' job satisfaction performance and perception of effectiveness of an organization. Productivity is an important factor in every organization. The term 'work environment' is used in stress research to incorporate psychosocial dimensions as well as employee-employer relations, motivation and advancement, job demands and social support. Barber (2001) undertaking a study to ascertain factors that affect employees' productivity found that aspects regarding technology, storage space, quiet space, climate control, personalizing the workspace and its visual appeal were the most important factors. Research indicates that improving the working environment reduces complaints and absenteeism while increasing productivity (Roelofs, 2002). Wells (2000) notes workplace satisfaction has been associated with job satisfaction. Studies show the link between employee health and aspects of the physical environment at work such as indoor air quality, ergonomic furniture and lighting (Dilani, 2004; Milton, Glencross, & Walters, 2000; Veitch & Newsham, 2000). Block and Stokes (1989) also found that the layout of an office influences productivity, with the extent of influence depending on the kind of work being undertaken. People carrying out difficult tasks are happier and also perform better in private offices than in non-private offices. Conversely, employees performing simple tasks perform better in non-private settings. Working in an open-plan office can, however, lead to distraction and disruption,
which have a negative effect on performance (Hedge, 1982). A study by de Frias and Schaie (2001) found significant differences in perceived work environment based on age, gender, and occupation type. Employees aged 50-56 had the highest perceived autonomy, control, and innovation in the workplace. Men, in all occupation types expectable collar, tended to have a higher perception of the work environment. Patterson et al., (2003) found that the more satisfied workers are with their jobs the better the Organizations is likely to perform in terms of subsequent profitability and particularly productivity. Sekar (2011) argues that the relationship between work, the workplace and the tools of work, workplace becomes an integral part of work itself.

The Physical Environment and Employee Productivity

Contemporary literature on stress in the work environment typically focuses on psychosocial factors that affect job performance, strain and employee health. Some theoretical models of stress at work have included the physical environment as a factor (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). McCoy and Evans (2005) say that physical elements and workspace design have an important role in determining social relationships and networks that develop at work. In addition, the researcher increasingly found many links between employee health and aspects of the physical environment at work such as indoor air quality, ergonomic furniture and lighting (Dilani, 2004; Milton, Glencross, & Walters, 2000; Veitch & Newsham, 2000).

In their overview of stress related to the physical work environment, McCoy and Evans (2005) go beyond ergonomics to characterize as stressful those situations where elements of the physical environment interfere with the attainment of work objectives. Studies have found that aspects such as openness, noise, lighting and temperature can affect productivity. Lan et al., (2010); Niemela et al., (2002) have revealed that temperature has an effect as long as the task concerned lasts at least 60 minutes (Lorsch & Ossama (1994) in Lan et al., (2009). Lan et al. (2010) investigated the impact of three different indoor temperatures (17°C, 21°C and 28°C) on productivity. They found that employees felt slightly uncomfortable in both the coolest and warmest of these climates and were less motivated and that they experienced their workload as more onerous, with a consequent decline in productivity.

Leblebici (2012) acknowledges that higher salaries and compensation benefits may seem the most likely way to attract employees. However, quality of the physical workplace
environment may also have a strong influence on an organization's ability to recruit and retain talented people. Ryan and Deci (2000) also note that although compensation package is one of the extrinsic motivation tools, it has a limited short term effect on employees' performance. A widely accepted assumption is that better workplace environment motivates employees and produces better results. Some factors in workplace environment may be considered keys affecting employee's engagement and productivity. It is found that working conditions are attached with employees' job involvement and job satisfaction that ultimately leads to better performance of the employees (Scott et al., 2000). Studies indicate that, the physical layout of the workspace, along with efficient management processes, is playing a major role in boosting employees' productivity and improving organizational performance (Uzée, 1999; Leaman and Bordass, 1993; Williams et al. 1985).

An organization's physical environment and its design and layout can affect employee behavior in the workplace. Brill (1992) estimates that improvements in the physical design of the workplace may result in a 5-10 percent increase in employee productivity. Statt (1994) argues that the modern work physical environment is characterized by technology; computers and machines as well as general furniture and furnishings. 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 business results (Mohr, 1996) and employee well-being (Huang, Robertson & Chang, 2004).

Rowan and Wright (1995) highlight the importance of ergonomics in a workplace, as injuries and illnesses interface the employee and machine system. So, they opine the need for ergonomics in a workplace. They proposed that physical environmental factors like temperature, noise, flow of air, humidity, and furniture affects the employees' productivity. The office environment in which employees work and undertake most of their activities can impact on their productivity. The quality and quantity of work generated by employees are influenced by the office environment (Keeling & Kallaus, 1996), while Quible (2000) points out those poor environmental conditions can increase in efficiency as well as reduce their job satisfaction, which in turn will impact on the financial well-being of the organization. Huges (2007) survey of
two thousand employees in various organizations at multiple levels found that a better workplace affects attitude of employees and enhance their productivity. There are several elements of the physical work environment that may affect the productivity of the staff in the organization. The next section of the study literature review covers these sub-themes.

**Literature Review**

**Employee Productivity**

One of the key issues that most organizations face nowadays is the need to improve employee productivity. Employee productivity is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. In actual terms, productivity is a component which directly affects the Organizations’s profits (Gummeßon, 1998; Sels et al., 2006). Productivity may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time. Typically, the productivity of a given worker will be assessed relative to an average out for employees doing similar work. It can also be assessed according to the amount of units of a product or service that an employee handles in a defined time frame (Piana, 2001). As the success of an organization relies mainly on the productivity of its employees, therefore, employee productivity has become an important objective for businesses (Cato & Gordon, 2009; Gummeßon, 1998; Sharma & Sharma, 2014). Many studies have focused on one or two ways to measure productivity and since many different approaches are taken, it can be challenging to compare the results (Nollman, 2013). Overall, there is a lack of an effective and standardized way to assess productivity. According to Sharma and Sharma (2014), employee productivity is based on the amount of time that an employee is physically present at his/ her job, besides the extent to which he/ she is “mentally present” or efficiently working during the presence at the job. Companies should address such issues in order to ensure high worker productivity. Ferreira and Du Plessis (2009) indicated that productivity can be evaluated in terms of the time spent by an employee actively executing the job he or she was hired to do, in order to produce the desired outcomes expected from an employee’s job description. Previous literature has clearly discussed the advantages of employee productivity which would lead to organizational success. According to Sharma and Sharma (2014), higher productivity results in economic growth, higher profitability, and social progress. It is only by increasing productivity, employees can obtain better wages/ salaries, working conditions and larger employment opportunities. Cato and Gordon (2009) also demonstrated that
the alignment of the strategic vision to employee productivity is a key contributor to the success of an organization. This alignment as a result would motivate and inspire employees to be more creative, and this ultimately can improve their performance effectiveness to accomplish organizational goals and objectives (Morales et al., 2001; Obdulio, 2014). Moreover, higher productivity tends to increase the competitive advantage through reduction in costs and improvement in quality of output. The above discussion has clearly discussed the concept of employee productivity. It indicates that employee productivity is a key determinant of organizational profitability and success. In the following section, work engagement as key human resource practice and its effect on employee productivity is presented.

**Work Engagement**

Employee work engagement is one of the main business priorities for organizational executives. According to McEwen (2011), engagement depends on employees’ perceptions and evaluations of their working experience, including their employer, organizational leaders, the job itself, and work environment. Echols (2005) advised that in order to enhance employee engagement, managers should pay attention to the skills, knowledge and talents of their staff. The author added that when employees are aware of their strengths and talents, their level of engagement will be higher, and this ultimately leads to better performance. Rothmann and Storm (2003) demonstrated that work engagement can be reflected through the energy, behavioural satisfaction, efficacy and involvement. Swaminathan and Rajasekaran (2010) also concluded that engagement results from employee satisfaction and work motivation. Several definitions of employee engagement exist in the literature. Fleming and Asplund (2007, p. 2) describes employee engagement as, “the ability to capture the heads, hearts, and souls of your employees to instil an intrinsic desire and passion for excellence”. Certain scholars also viewed employee engagement as a construct which consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements that are related to the role of employee performance (Shuck et al., 2011). It reflects the commitment and involvement of an employee towards his/ her work that is aimed to improve organizational performance (Sundaray, 2011). Furthermore, Bakker and Demerouti (2008) defined engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by Vigor, dedication, and absorption”. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2008), Vigor can be described in terms of an employee’s levels of energy and the mental resilience while doing his her work. Shirom
(2003) indicated that Vigor refers to the mental and physical health of an employee. On the other hand, Harpaz and Snir (2014) expressed dedication in terms of being highly involved in the work and is reflected through the feelings of enthusiasm, challenge, and significance. The other dimension of work engagement which is known as absorption was previously described by being fully focused and happily attached in one’s work, whereby the employee feels that time passes quickly and has difficulties with detaching himself from work (Truss et al., 2013).

Employee engagement is a key organizational issue that should be strictly given enormous consideration by organizational management in the current scenario of challenging business environment (Saxena & Srivastava, 2015). This is because highly engaged and motivated employees reflect the core values of the organization, and this resultantly reinforces overall brand equity (Ramanujam, 2014). The review of literature reveals that engaged employees yield positive organizational outcomes. In the rapidly changing markets, business leaders recognize that highly engaged employees can increase their productivity and firm performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). In other words, engaged employees feel passionate about their work, happy to work in their organization, and have the enthusiasm to go to their work every day (Ramanujam, 2014). Besides that, employees who are engaged in their work are deemed very important for their organizations in maintaining competitive advantages; coping with changes, and ensuring work innovations. Studies found (Abraham, 2012; Anitha, 2014; Echols, 2005; Haid & Sims, 2009) found that work engagement had a significant positive effect on employee productivity. According to Zahargier and Balasundaram (2011), a successful and highly productive business can be achieved by engaging its employees in improving their performance. Similarly, Harter et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of data on 7,939 business units from 36 firms that represent different sectors and found out employee engagement had a significant positive impact on increased productivity. In line with the study of Markos and Sridevi (2010), employers should consider investing in workforce engagement because it has a positive impact on performance outcomes such as employee productivity.

**Employee Training**

Training is the organized way in which organizations provide development and enhance quality of new and existing employees. Training is viewed as a systematic approach of learning
and development that improve individual, group and organization (Goldstein & Ford, 2002) in Khawaja & Nadeem (2013). Thus it is the series of activities embarked upon by organization that leads to knowledge or skills acquisition for growing purposes. Thereby, contributing to the well being and performance of human capital, organization, as well as the society at large. According to Manju & Suresh (2011), training serves as an acts of intervention to improve organization’s goods and services quality in stiff the competition by improvements in technical skills of employees.

**Employee Development**

Development refers to activities leading to the acquisition of new knowledge or skills for purposes of growing. Organizations provide employees with development programmes in order to enhance their capabilities. Employee development is gaining an increasingly critical and strategic imperative in organizations in the current business environment (Sheri-lynne 2007) in Abdul Hameed (2011). Thus organizations need to invest in continuous employee development in order to maintain employees as well as the organization success (Khawaja & Nadeem 2013).

**Employee Training and Employee Productivity**

Training has been invaluable in increasing productivity of organizations. It does not only enhance employees resourcefully, but also provides them with an opportunity to virtually learn their jobs and perform more competently. Hence, increasing not only employees productivity but also organizations’ productivity. Various researches indicate the positive impact of training on employees’ productivity. Training as a process is one of the most pervasive methods to enhance the productivity of individuals and communicating organizational goals to personnel (Ekaterini & Constantinos Vasilios, 2009). Rohan & Madhumita (2012) also supported that investing in training employees on decision making, teamwork, problem-solving and interpersonal relations has beneficial impact on the organizations’ level of growth, as well as impacting on employees’ performance. Training affects employees’ behavior and their working skills which results into employees enhanced performance as well as constructive changes (Satterfield & Hughes, 2007). Training is most effective way of motivating and retaining high quality in human resources within an organization (Kate Hutchings, Cherrie J.Zhu, Brain K, Cooper, Yiming Zhang & Sijun Shao, 2009). Also added by Lowry, Simon & Kimberley (2002), training is a way of enhancing employee commitment and maximizing employee potential. According to Konings &
Vanormelingen (2009), Colombo & Stanca (2008) and Sepulveda (2005) training is an instrument that fundamentally affects the successful accomplishment of organizations’ goals and objectives. However, the optimum goal of every organization is to generate high revenue and maximize profit and a vital tool to realize this is an efficient and effective workforce. Thus, a workforce is only efficient and effective if the appropriate training and development is provided for such and therefore leading to productivity.

**Employee Development and Employee Productivity**

Development programs worth investing so much into, as most successful organizations consider the progress of workforce and therefore invest in their training. This results to increase in skill and competence that improve morale and productivity (Sheeba, 2011). Development seems to reduce the turnover rate of employees (Deckop et al. 2006). Thus advancement opportunities do not only reduce absenteeism, but it increases employee’s commitment and satisfaction that helps reduce turnover (Atif et al. 2010).

**Conclusion**

Ensure that from the above theoretical review on administrative context and employee productivity in higher education and there is a positive association between work engagement of faculty members and administrative staff motivate the employees in accomplishing their work regardless of any result that they are more productive. Researchers argue the fact that the physical environment of the institutional and administrative, employees effect job perception attitudes and job satisfaction which is in sequence affects the job performance and employee productivity. Improving the work environment in higher educational institution there is a dissatisfaction and complaints of employee while increasing their productivity the more satisfied employee are with their jobs in high performance and productivity.

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