

Assessment of Accountability, Religion and Ethnicity on Workers' Productivity in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Many organisations oftentimes need to contend with the effects of accountability, religion and ethnicity, which directly and indirectly affect workers' productivity while concerted efforts should be made to manage them to achieve optimal workers' productivity. The main objective of the study is to examine the perceived effects of accountability, religion and ethnicity on workers' productivity in Nigeria. The paper has adopted the Group Behaviour Approach as its theoretical framework, which is concerned with the study of groups and their religions, ethnic and cultural 'patterns' in organisations. The study area is the Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This research was designed in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Sixty-five (65) workers were randomly selected from the study area; the basis for the selection was conveniently appraised. A checklist of questions was raised in a well-structured questionnaire while the data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis. Findings show that accountability, religion and ethnicity largely affect workers' productivity in both public and private organisations. The paper recommends that accountability should be encouraged while religion and ethnicity would naturally play out in the affairs of employees but should be curtailed, to avoidable crises and conflicts that could affect workers' productivity.*

Keywords: *Accountability, Ethnicity, Organisation, Religion, Workers' Productivity.*

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I. Introduction

The role of workers in public and private organisations cannot be over-emphasised. They constitute the human resource assets of an organisation. Accountability is the bastion of any democratic governance while public accountability is the basic tenet of democracy (Cook, 1998). It is given serious attention in view of the fact that the government is the highest spender of public funds. Those in authorities assume fiduciary status with the attendant responsibilities requiring that they give their stewardship or render accounts to those for whom the authority is held in trust (Akinbuli, 2013:1). The general public is increasingly requiring public officers to be accountable by demonstrating effective use of public assets and funds in the delivery of services and the pursuit of government objectives (Obazee, 2006).

Religion has to do with the relationship between man and the Supreme Being. It is a spiritual relationship that arises in a renewed search for harmony that is essentially a spiritual journey (Cacioppe, 2000). It recognises that people work, not only with their hands, but also with their hearts or spirits (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). The consideration towards others by showing concern and high quality interpersonal work relationship leads to high workers' job satisfaction, low turnover, group cohesion, group performance and group efficiency (Bass, 1990; Champoux, 2000). Ethnicity is the relationship that exists among peoples of the same tribe and ethnicity. It is often used to mean tribalism, since tribalism has the pejorative connotation of backwardness or savagery (Ajayi, 2009). However, what is always uppermost on the minds of employers of labour is how to achieve optimal performance in terms of reduced cost of labour and high productivity by putting in place, a virile framework that would enable workers truly earn a living in tandem with their productivity (Kupoluyi, 2017). Therefore, there is the need to take into consideration, issues of accountability, religion and ethnicity in relation to workers' productivity in public and private organisations, using the sample area of Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

II. Statement of the Problem

The ultimate desire or goal of any employer is to ensure that its workforce, workers and employees put in their best to achieve the set or corporate objectives at minimal cost (Akinbuli, 2013). Many organisations oftentimes need to contend with the effects of accountability, religion and ethnicity, which directly and indirectly affect workers' productivity. To avoid the adverse effects of these factors, concerted efforts should be made to manage them to achieve optimal workers' productivity in organisations (Bass, 1990 & Champoux,

2000). It is on this basis that the study seeks to examine the place of accountability, religion, ethnicity in relation to workers' productivity.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the perceived effect of accountability on workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- ii. ascertain how religion is perceived to affect workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- iii. determine how ethnicity is perceived to affect workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- iv. suggest ways to enhance workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. How is accountability perceived to have effect on workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria?
- ii. How is religion perceived to have effect on workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria?
- iii. How is ethnicity perceived to have effect on workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria?
- iv. What are the ways to enhance workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria?

III. Literature Review

Accountability

Accountability has been defined as a form of social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his/her conduct to some significant other (Day & Klein 1987:5; Romzek & Dubnick, 1998:6) while Asobie (1991) sees accountability as the obligation owned by anyone occupying a position of trust or responsibility to provide appropriate response to all stakeholders, for action carried out and/or performance achieved in the discharge of his/her duties. Adebayo (1981) defines accountability as the requirement, which subjects public officers to detailed scrutiny by the legislature over objectives, use of resources and manner of performance. It is a process whereby one renders an account of his/her activities to someone who has the power to ask for it, evaluate and reward one's performance (Olowookere, 1986) while Onochie (2001) describes it as the duty to truthfully and transparently carry out one's duty and the obligation to allow access to information by which the quality of such services can be evaluated.

Religion

Religion provides employees with a sense of community and connectedness, which in turn, increases employees' commitment, belongingness and effectiveness (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Religion, therefore, can be seen as coming from within and it is beyond survival instinct of the mind. It is pertaining to our meaning and dreams, our patterns of thought, our emotions, feelings and behaviours (Turner, 1999). Religion at work addresses human activities relating to personal development, compassion, meaningfulness and joy at work, honesty, trust, job commitment and well-being of employees (Petchsawange & Duchan, 2012).

Successful organisations such as Chase Manhattan Bank, DuPont, and Apple Computer (Cavanagh, 1999), have created programmes to bring religious practices to the workplace. In Nigeria, there seems not to be enough research studies as to the combination of the perception of accountability, religion and ethnicity on employees at their workplace. However, Mojinyinola (2010) did a study on the role of spirituality in health, illness and treatment while Ajala and Mojinyinola (2013) discussed the need for the integration of religion in social work education. Furman, Benson, Canda and Grimwood (2005) perceived religion in terms of attitude or approach to encompassing a search for meaning, purpose and morally fulfilling relations with self, other people, the encompassing universe, and ultimate reality while Staude (2005) sees religion as a transformational process through which the different aspects of life are integrated (physical, emotional, occupational, intellectual and rational). That is, it involves a connectedness to oneself, others and nature and is strongly associated with creativity, play, love, forgiveness, compassion, trust, reverences, wisdom, faith and sense of oneness.

Guillary (2000) further states that it is specific form of work feelings that energises action (Dehler & Welsh, 1994). It makes it possible to have access to sacred force that gives life (Nash & McLennan, 2001) and the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through active participation (Delbecq, 1999). Promotion of encouragement of religion in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty, personal fulfillment and commitment, which ultimately lead to increased organisational performance (Ajala, 2013) while Reave (2005) points out the significant correlation between religion and life brings satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, hope and optimism.

Religion is an important aspect of life; it influences many great things. It depends on symbols and narratives that are usually employed to offer meanings to human existence and to explain the indices for the creation of the universe (Alamu, 2006:17). In addition, there are some religions that have ethical foundations

indicating how their adherents should behave in any given society by serving as a source and guarantor of individual and societal peace (Oluniyi, 2006).

It is noted that one aspect of religion that is applicable in all instances is that it is a public process. The basic requirement is that the religion, being a belief system must be held by a group of people, who publicly share its doctrine, dogma, creed, conviction and principles (Ayantayo, 2009). Religious practices encompass different religious activities such as worship, fellowship, communion, prayer, offering and almsgiving. Adesina (2005) believes that religious ethics are the moral principles that guide religions and set the standard for what is and is not acceptable behaviour from all indications, religious ethics covers every aspect of man's life. It is revelational, decision-oriented, scriptural, traditional, legalistic and life directed (Ayantayo, 2009).

Ethnicity

Religion is different from ethnicity, as most religions are constituted as institutions and are driven by institutional superstructures. Ethnicity has to do with the relationship that exists among people of the same ethnic group. According to Talcott Parsons, fiduciary responsibilities rest not only with the member, but more importantly with the religious groups' leadership, and the doctrines upon which the religion is based. One consequence of this is that ethnicity is not necessarily a function of social structural relationship, but rather results from the codified organisations of the people (Ajayi, 2009). Ethnicity allows people of the same tribe and ethnic background to develop natural affinity at the expense of others, and if not well managed in organisations, it could breed bigotry and discrimination among workers.

Theoretical Framework

The paper has adopted the Group Behaviour Approach, which is concerned with the study of groups and their religions, ethnic and cultural patterns in an organisation, as explained by Elton Mayo (1933). The term, 'organisation' is taken to mean the systems or 'patterns' of any set of group relationship in a company, government agency, or other kind of organised co-operative undertakings (Yalokwu, 2006:60). According to Barnard (1938), it means the co-operation of two or more persons with a common purpose, while Argyris (1957) refers an organisation to be the behaviour of all the participants in the group. It argues that workers' productivity or otherwise, is a function of the behaviour of the groups that is determined by the 'patterns' such as accountability, religion and ethnicity, which are the variables being studied in the paper. However, the major limitation of this approach is that it does not recognise that human resource managers could be in difficult situations to handle complex human behaviour. This invariably complicates problems for such managers while attempting to use insights from the behavioural sciences that regularly change when different behavioural scientists offer distinct alternatives.

IV. Methodology

The study area is the Odeda Local Government area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This research was designed in qualitative and quantitative terms. Sixty-five (65) workers were randomly selected from the study area; the basis for the selection of this study area was conveniently appraised. A checklist of questions was raised in a well-structured questionnaire, to elicit information from the respondents. A set of perceptual statements were subjected to a five point Likert type scale of Strongly Agreed (SA); Agreed (A); Slightly Agreed (SLA); Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and assigned ranking scores of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively, for positive statements and as 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for negative statements. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis.

V. Findings

Sixty-five (65) workers were interviewed for the study, using the questionnaire, to evaluate the perception of workers in the Odeda LGA of Ogun State in Nigeria on the relationship between accountability, religion and ethnicity and workers' productivity. The workers were categorised as both public and private workers, with less than half (43.1 per cent) having less than 10 years work experience while Higher National Diploma (HND) was the highest educational qualification (61 percent) of the categories of workers evaluated in the study area.

Accountability and Workers' Productivity

71 per cent of the respondents perceive accountability as being transparent in whatever work, one is found to be doing while (29 per cent) perceive accountability as rendering stewardship (Akinbuli, 2013). The respondents opined that accountability and workers' productivity are related; they also agreed that accountability is supposed to be a regular feature of work in offices. Based on the earlier definition, which stated that accountability is the practice of being transparent at work, other perceptions of the workers were expressed

such that accountability is made a necessary tool in any organisation because it does enhance workers' productivity and is key to responsive governance (Kupoluyi, 2016:22).

Using a Likert Scale, 56.9 per cent of the respondents agreed that accountability and workers' productivity are related; majority (83.1 per cent) also agreed that accountability is a regular feature of work in the office, interestingly, majority (81.5 per cent) strongly agreed that accountability is a necessary feature in an organisation (Asobie, 1991). Also, half (50 per cent) of the respondents strongly agreed that accountability enhances workers' productivity, and 62 per cent strongly agreed that accountability should be rewarded (Olowookere, 1986). The latter statement showed that workers in Odeda Local Government area believed that accountability is a major tool in any organisation and that workers, who get rewarded on their levels of accountability, get motivated to do more and they tend to get better aligned with the various commitments they have at their working places.

Religion and Workers' Productivity

Religion has been defined as the belief in and the worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. It is a cultural system of behaviours and practices, world views, sacred texts, holy places, ethics, and societal organisation that relate humanity to an order of existence. More than half (51 per cent) of the respondents claimed that religion is faith in Supreme Being and the remaining 49 per cent claimed that religion is having belief in God. Asking them if there were other definitions, 4.5 per cent opined that religion is a set of belief in Almighty Creator and it is also way of worshipping God. All the respondents believed that religion and workers' productivity are related, they also feel that active religious practices affect workers' productivity and that, religion is necessary in achieving organisational goals (Bass, 1990 & Champoux, 2000).

45 per cent of the respondents agreed that religion and workers' productivity are related, 29.2 per cent strongly disagreed that religion and workers' productivity are related while 20 per cent disagreed that religion and workers' productivity are related. On the relationship between active religious practices and workers' productivity; more than half (60 per cent) of the respondents disagreed that active religious practices affect workers' productivity, as this could be negatively or positively inclined because workers, who are active in religious practices, could be distracted such that, times needed for their works are divided while giving less time to what they were paid to do. In other words, workers who are actively 'religious' have a fear in them that, they should work for what they are paid to do, hence, they devote more time to their works.

78 per cent of the respondents disagreed that religious worships should be introduced to organisations, their reason could be due to some distractions that could arise from the practices of various religions; as a result of the problem/mix-up that could arise from religious fanaticism that could negatively affect workers' productivity (Turner, 1999). Interestingly, 80 per cent of the respondents agreed that religion is necessary in achieving organisational goals. This showed how much the workers believe in religion, but they do not want it to interfere with the dictates of the organisation, so that it will not be abused.

Ethnicity and Workers' Productivity

Ethnicity by workers in the Odeda Local Government in Ogun State was defined by 55 per cent respondents as the tribe that one belongs to. They also defined ethnicity as a category of people, who identify with each other, based on similarities. These respondents agreed that ethnicity and workers' productivity are related. They also assessed that ethnicity should be taken into consideration in organisations; they claimed that ethnicity both contribute to the attainment of organisational goals and equally promotes workers' job satisfaction.

84.6 per cent strongly disagreed that ethnicity and workers' productivity are related, while the remaining 25.4 per cent agreed that ethnicity and workers' productivity are related. It was found out from the result that 83 per cent of the respondents agreed that ethnicity affects workers' productivity in an organisation while 83 per cent also agreed that ethnicity should be taken into consideration in an organisation. Almost all (98 per cent) of the respondents claimed that ethnicity contributes to the attainment of organisational goals and 12.3 per cent are undecided about ethnicity, as promoting job satisfaction.

The respondents mentioned the ways to face the challenges bordering on accountability, religion, ethnicity and workers' productivity. They suggested the upholding of equity, honesty, regular salaries and incentives to workers, measuring of work output done in an organisational set up as well as sincerity and trustworthiness on the part of the workers (Ajayi, 2009). In line with the Group Behaviour Approach, other factors or 'patterns' that greatly affect workers' productivity are inadequate payment of salaries and gratification, irregular payment of salaries/wages, lack of motivation and reinforcement, non-promotion of staff and insufficient training, poor working conditions/facilities and welfare (Yalokwu, 2006:60).

VI. Conclusion

The study has examined the place of accountability, religion and ethnicity in relation to workers' productivity in the Odeda LGA of Ogun State, Nigeria. It shows that, based on the workers' perception, accountability, religion and ethnicity largely affect workers' productivity in both public and private organisations. To ensure that high productivity of workers is sustained, the human resources managers should ensure that a balance is maintained to ensure that accountability, religion and ethnicity are not excessively allowed to hold sway by preventing avoidable problems that may adversely affect the smooth running of organisations.

VII. Recommendations

The paper recommends as follows:

- i. Accountability should be encouraged among workers to create the necessary trust that would boost their performance.
- ii. The human resources manager should allow workers to practice their religion in the workplace provided it does not affect the freedom of others.
- iii. The effect of ethnicity should be minimised to prevent nepotism and tribal sentiments that may inhibit workers' productivity.
- iv. Corrupt practices should be curtailed in organisation by introducing the fear of God through religion.
- v. Workers should be motivated through regular payments of salaries, providing training, giving of commendations and conducive environment, to boost their productivity.

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