

Gender Difference In The Influence Of Counselling On The Performance Of Industry Workers In Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The quest to increase industry workers performance is on the increase globally. This is because the organizational strength is dependent on the organizational workers as their efforts are the by-product of organizational outcome. Therefore, the study deems it necessary to understand the role of counselling on industry workers job performance especially on gender difference. Findings from the study among others revealed that there are some far- reaching occupational implications for both male and female who are supposed to fight this ugly trend of poor organizational outcome, there will be hindrance in achieving expected organizational goal if issue of counselling services were not properly addressed among employees because the ugly wave will degenerate depression among workers in attaining their occupational aspiration.

Key words: Counselling, Counsellor, Gender, Industry Workers

INTRODUCTION

Recent decay and unproductive in workplace is throwing heavy weight of hunger and increasing alarming state of death among the Nigerian citizenry. To Alarcon (2011) stated that to maintain effective life-wire in workplace demands engaging employees for effective and interactive counselling session. That is to say that counselling might have significant role to play among industry workers of Enugu state. To this, Sekiguchi, Li, and Hosomi (2014) were of the view that effective counselling is achievable if a professional counsellor is involved. This, according to the authors is because they are the only ones who can stimulate personal growth in others; offer help in addressing many situations that cause emotional stress, including, but not limited to: anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional problems and disorders, family and relationship issues, substance abuse and other addictions, sexual abuse and domestic violence, absenteeism, career change and job stress; social and emotional

difficulties related to disability and illness, adopting to life transitions, the death of a loved one and for appropriate referrals after assessment.

Considering the relevance of counselling cum counsellors in an industry, Alarcon (2011) was of the opinion that industry managers should be equipped with basic counselling tips/skills in order to assist employees when need arises in the absence of the counsellor. The author further noted that a counsellor in a work place can work with designated personnel as a thinking partner, a revealing mirror, and a pacesetter among others; a counsellor can help in leveraging core capacities of employees and could help to create a culture for greater synergy in organizational learning and development. Accordingly, Erdogan and Bauer (2005) added that industry counsellor can increase employees' self-awareness regarding their thinking patterns and behavioural tendencies so as to make them more effective as an individual and in turn effective in their job also.

More so, the above claims of scholars simply suggested that counsellors or managers might employ basic counselling services in boosting work morale of industry employees. According to Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) counselling is effective and preventive in nature. The authors further noted that counselling is a remedy assistance offered to employees' or organization in order to better manage stress, organizational/personal issues or work related problems for adequate adjustment. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli buttressing further added that industry counselling offers the following to the organization: decrease costs related to turnover, burnouts, absenteeism, accident-related disability, improvement in employee performance & also increase in productivity. Counsellor can play the role of a business partner to manage behavioural problems brought about by organizational changes. The occupational organization approach to work conditions is gradually paving ways for more job demands from employees. This is because nature of employment is changing as a result of the present "transformations of the work environment caused by global competition, faster innovations, and lighting from production economies to service, knowledge oriented economies and the rapid advancement of information technologies (Sekiguchi, Li, & Hosomi, 2014). Similarly, the consistent organization work overload, time pressure, and emotional demands have been observed to have a positive relationship with employees' burnout (Alarcon, 2011). Erdogan and Bauer (2005) also affirmed that organizations increasingly expect employees' to act on information and react to circumstances by demonstrating proactive behaviours. The job demands in the present day require professional counsellors to craft their job, be properly engaged on their skill, and be committed to the organization, but maybe with a little emphasis on their satisfaction. The design and nature of counselling profession can significantly shape how they experience meaningfulness of their work (Berg Dutton & Wozesmewski, 2013).

By implication, the demand is more peculiar to industries of manufacturing of goods. According to Grant (2007) employee/industry counselling has emerged as the latest holistic tool to attract and retain the best employees and increase the quality of the workforce. Grant further stressed that in today's fast-paced corporate world; there is virtually no organization free of stress or stress-free employees. Adding that employees can be stressed, depressed, suffering from too much anxiety arising out of workplace related issues like managing deadlines, meeting targets, lack of time to fulfill personal and family commitments, or bereaved

and disturbed due to some personal problems. Thus, organizations realizing the importance of having a stress-free yet motivated and capable workforce led many companies to initiated integrated counselling services in their organizations and making it a part of their culture (Chukwu & Igbinedion, 2014).

Therefore, organizations need to offer employee/industry counselling services to its employees' in order to increase the workforce of the workplace. Chukwu and Igbinedion (2014) defined industry counselling as the provision of brief psychological therapy for employees of an organization, which are paid for by the employer. Industry counselling according to Grant and Ashford (2008) is an 'external' service, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), typically comprises face-to-face counselling and also a telephone helpline, legal advice and critical-incident debriefing. The authors added further that workplace counselling offers employees a facility that is confidential, easily accessed (initial appointment normally within 2 weeks), provides a properly qualified and supervised practitioner, does not raise the threat of a diagnosis of psychiatric disorder, and promises to alleviate distress within a reasonably short period of time (most services allow a limited number sessions in any one year). It also offers the employer a service that is valued by employees, has the potential for savings by reducing sickness absence, takes pressure off managers through the availability of a constructive means of dealing with 'difficult' staff or situations, and contributes to its reputation as a caring employer. Grant Ashford noted further that industry counselling is often viewed by employers as an insurance policy against the threat of compensation claims made by employees exposed to work-related stress.

Importantly, in ensuring work productivity, industries also employs Organizational and occupational psychiatry (OOP) which is the subspecialty of psychiatry that focuses on work, its relevance in the lives of employees' and work organizations is immeasurable. This is because, OOP represents the extension of psychiatric knowledge and skill to the day-to-day functioning of employees' in the workplace and their organizations, with the goal of helping both functions better. To this end, psychiatrists or industry counselling have a significant role to play in both treatment of workers and consultation to organizations since the beginning of industry till date. These roles have included service as in-house medical directors to major corporations, retained consultants and providers of effective counselling services. It also helps to bridge the gap employer and employee lack of trust. According to authors, industry counselling is a guiding process, consoling, advising and sharing and helping to resolve employee problems whenever the need arises in an industry. Technically, Psychological Counselling, is also a form of counselling used by the experts to analyze the work related performance and behaviour of the employees to help them cope with work stress, resolve conflicts and tribulations and re-enforce the desired results. Though, counselling of staff/employees is becoming an essential function of the managers. Sometimes, the organization can either take the help of experienced employees or expert, professional counsellor to take up the counselling activities. Increasing complexities in the lives of the employees need to address when the employee shows signs of declining performance, being stressed in office-hours, bad decision-making etc. In such situations, counselling is one of the best ways to deal with them.

Furthermore, benefits of counselling include: helping the employee to understand and help him/herself, understand the situations and look at them with a new perspective and positive outlook, helping in better decision making, alternate solutions to problems and coping with the situation and the stress. The following aspects of counselling are needed to build a successful program: Employee Counselling needs to be tackled carefully, both on the part of the organization and the counsellor. The counselling can turn into a sensitive series of events for the employee and the organization; therefore, the counsellor should be either a professional or an experienced, mature employee; the counsellor should be flexible in his approach and a patient listener. The counsellor should have the warmth required to win the trust of the employee so that he can share thoughts and problems without any inhibitions; active and effective listening is one of the most important aspects of the employee counselling; time should not be a constraint in the process and the counsellor should be able to identify the problem and offer concrete advice. Operationally, employee/industry counselling can be explained as providing help and support to the employees to face and sail through the difficult times in life (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009). Thus, industry counselling became important because at many points of time in life or career employees come across some problems either in their work or personal life when it starts influencing and affecting their performance and, increasing the stress levels of their inner-life.

However, it has been observed that workers performs below expectation in Nigeria and Enugu state in particular, adding to the fact that both government and private owned industries in the country/state has lesser or no vacancy for counselling or offer required counselling trainings to her managers or experienced workers in order to guide others as needed (Chukwu & Igbinedion, 2014). According to Eggerth (2008), the strength of industry productivity is in the hands of the professional pillars that coordinate day-day affairs of the firm. Parker and Ohly (2008) stated that engagement of professional counsellors is essential in any industry in order to ensure optimal performance of the employee, since no organization will exist without enormous task which the employee might found difficult at any point on time. Tims and Bakker (2010) were of the opinion that job crafting sometimes observed among employees represents actions workers take to alter the physical boundaries of a job (type or number of activities), the cognitive task boundaries of a job (how one sees the job), and the rational boundaries of a job (whom one interacts with at work). Thus, job crafting does not just occur in the workplace and usually without the knowledge of supervisors, but the aim is for positive impact and improvement in the job (Lyons, 2008).

More so, workers in public especially those in private in developing country like Nigeria, and Enugu state in particular, is surrounded with various on-the-job irregularities ranging from limited or no remuneration among workers for efficient delivery, as workplace is been seen with multiple job tasks, imbalance work-family affairs, political instability, ill-equipped or no workshop facilities, to the gap between what is obtainable in the industry and the occupational system. The counsellor thus needs to craft his/her job to attain the goal of the industry to ensure the production of demand driven manpower for the world of work. Bakker, Tims, and Derks (2012) therefore stated that work engagement should be predicted when employees craft their jobs. Work engagement is a motivation concept that deals with the voluntary allocation of an individual's resources directed at the range of tasks required by a

particular vocational role (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). In the view of Maslach and Leiter (1997) engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, which are considered the opposites of the three burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy. Maslach and Leiter see engagement as measured opposite to burnout, but Schaufeli, Salanova, Roma, and Bakker's (2002) study showed that engagement and burnout are not the same and should be measured differently and separately. This is because work engagement is usually measured in three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Therefore, work engagement has a close association with job performance and organizational commitment (Silman, 2014). Although, Little and Little (2006) stressed that organizational commitment is not the same as work engagement of employee. According to Dixit and Bhati (2012) commitment takes place when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. It is also the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the employee become increasingly integrated or congruent. Organizational commitment according to Tanriverdi (2008) can be the degree to which an employee adopts organization values and goals and identifies them in fulfilling their job responsibilities. It is how loyal the employee feels to the organization (Mohamed & Eleswed, 2013). To measure organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen (1997) identified three simultaneous dimensions which include affective commitment (commitment to the organization by an emotional tie), normative commitment (commitment to the organization based on perceived obligation), and continuance commitment (commitment based on perceived cost of leaving the organization).

Although, some scholars were of the opinion that increasing job performance of employees even with the presence of counsellors demands that the employer should satisfy the needs of her employees. This is because job satisfaction is an attitude that has been defined as a behaviour (Weiss, 2002). It is the positive or negative judgment of an employee about his/her job or working conditions (Vasiliki & Efthymos, 2013). Job satisfaction is how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs (Astrauskaite, Vaitkevicius, & Perminas, 2010). This is to say that if an employee shows positive feelings about the job, the employee may show increased job crafting, work engagement, and commitment. It is necessary that the job satisfaction of the workers be determined via their job crafting, work engagement, and commitment so that the work condition will significantly improved. Moreover, the working environment where employees find themselves, goes a long way in determining employees work performance.

Thus, the quest for job commitment and satisfaction should be prioritized by employers, since that counselling cover all the aspects related to the employee performance like the targets, employee's responsibilities, problems faced, employee aspirations, inter-personal relationships at the workplace, and personal and family wellbeing. Many a times, employees carry the baggage of personal problems to their workplaces, which in turn affects their performance adversely. Therefore, the counsellor needs to strike a comfort level with the employees and, counselling sessions involving their families can help to resolve their problems and getting them back to work- all fresh and enthusiastic. In assessment of employees' work performance, there is gender difference. Bravo (2000) defined gender as the range of characteristics pertaining to, and

differentiating between masculinity and femininity. In consonance with the above assertion, Cassel (2002) maintained that gender is the social fact of being male or female or having the recognizable traits of one's sex. Similarly, according to Okeke (2004) gender is a broad analytical concept which draws out women role and responsibilities in relation to those of men. The author also referred gender as a socially and culturally constructed characteristics and roles which are ascribed to male and female. The characteristics and behaviours that are generally associated with being a male are referred to as masculine and those associated with being a female are referred to as feminine. The author noted that employees' performance can be significantly influenced by their gender variable. The influence of gender on work performance of employees has also been an issue of concern to most scholars. This is because; 'gender' appears to have some powerful effect on how male and female work. Although several research results vary in their findings with regard to gender. Some found that males are more abstract in reasoning, more assertive, and so on, whereas, females were found to have more anxiety and worry, but are more dedicated to duties (Bielinskia & Davison, 2003).

METHODS

The study adopted Ex-post-facto design. To carry out the study, one research question was formulated and tested. The population of the study comprised 200 respondents in Enugu State. The sample for the study comprised 80 men and women in the State. In this study, multi-stage sampling procedure was used. The instrument for data collection is a researchers-developed questionnaire. The instrument contains five items and addressed issues on experience of employee differences among gender. A four point rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the weight of the response modes as: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4,3 2, and 1 points assigned to each of the responses respectively. The instrument was subjected to face validation by two experts. The study reliability was determined 15 employees. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the clusters of the instrument and it yielded reliability co-efficient value of 0.90. The data for the study were collected by the authors. Direct delivery and retrieved method was used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. 80 copies of the questionnaire were administered and returned representing 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

RESULT

Mean Rating of male and female with regard to gender differences that exist in the influence of counselling on the performance of industry workers.

Gender		MALE (N=36)			FEMALE (N=44)		
S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
1	Employee counselling should be promoted among workers	3.52	.72	SA	3.53	.57	SA

2	Employee counselling reduces stress among industry employees	3.32	.75	A	3.07	.79	A
3	I like employee counselling because its gives workers clearer about their position in the industry	3.08	.86	A	3.17	.88	A
4	My manager has little or no knowledge of employee counselling	3.26	.82	A	2.91	.91	A
5	My manager do not encourage workshop for her employees	2.77	1.00	A	2.54	1.07	A
Cluster Mean		3.19	0.83	A	3.04	0.84	A

The result on table 1 showed the mean scores of male industry workers to be 3.52, 3.32, 3.08, 3.26 and 2.77 and standard deviation of .72, .75, .86, .82 and 1.00 while mean scores of female are 3.53, 3.07, 3.17, 2.91 and 2.54 and standard deviation of .57, .79, .88, .91, and 1.07 with the cluster mean scores and standard deviation of 3.19 and 0.83 for male and 3.04 and 0.84 for female respectively which are greater than 2.50 set criterion level for accepting an item. The result showed that there is gender differences that exist in the influence of counselling on the performance of industry workers.

DISCUSSION

What is the gender difference in the influence of counselling on the performance of industry workers?

The result showed that there is gender differences that exist in the influence of counselling on the performance of industry workers; both male and female strongly agreed that counselling influences people differently based on gender. The finding gives credit to that of Aryana (2010) who reported that there is significant difference in performance of boys and girls. Davey, Obst and Sheehan (2010) also reported that gender is a significant predictor of risk alcohol consumption patterns and job performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the study concludes that there is gender difference that exists in the influence of counselling on the performance of industry workers in Enugu State Nigeria.

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