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Staff Attrition and Performance of Selected Manufacturing Firms in Southeast Nigeria

Okoli Ifeanyi E. Nuel¹
Adani Nnenne Ifechi²
Nwosu Kanayo Chike³
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Anambra State, Nigeria^{12,3}

Abstract

This empirical and survey based research has been undertaken in Southeast Nigeria, with the objective of identifying the influence of staff attrition on performance of manufacturing firms. The population of the study consists of one hundred and seventy seven (177) manufacturing firms. Complete enumeration was adopted and so there was no need for sampling as all the selected manufacturing firms was used. The study used primary data which was collected using one research instrument namely, questionnaires. The secondary data have been collected from books, journals, dissertation and conference proceedings. Cronbach alpha was administrated to test the stability of the scale. Pearson's product moment correlation techniques and simple linear regression were used to analyze and test the hypotheses. The result of the test hypotheses revealed that staff educational level and working conditions have a significant positive influence on firm's performance on selected manufacturing firms in southeast Nigeria. The study concluded that staff attrition affect firm's performance adversely in the manufacturing sector. Hence the most damaging consequences of attrition in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria include; recruitment cost, training cost, impact on the on-going productions or services and most importantly, loss of productivity in the firm. The study recommended that management should improve the working conditions of the staff and also ensure that the right people are in the right jobs, introduce 360-degree performance feedback so that individual staff is evaluated based on performance and not based on educational qualification alone.

Keywords: Staff attrition, Firm performance, Working conditions, Educational level

*Corresponding author: Okoli Ifeanyi E. Nuel; Email: ie.okoli@unizik.edu.ng DOI: https://doi.org/10.37227/JIBM-2022-03-5361

Introduction

Employees leaving the organization on management request as well as those leaving independently can cause disruption in work, team dynamics and performance. Both types of attrition generate costs for the organization. If an organization invests heavily in training and developing its staff, that money is lost when an employee leaves (Mello, 2011). In addition, extreme attrition of workers can damage an organizational performance as a whole and is often a symptom of other difficulties. Every company strives to have the highest productivity, the lowest yield and the highest profit. Managing turnover successfully is a

must to achieve the above goals. Abassi & Hollman (2000) emphasized that managers must recognize that employees are key contributors to the effective achievement of the organization. Moreover, highly motivated and performing workers are the important factors for organizational productivity. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an in-depth understanding of employee attrition from the perspective of causes, outcome and strategies to minimize attrition. Employees in organizations are responsible for making a difference in the services provided. They can provide good or bad service and this is hence the competitive advantage which will always affect all the stakeholders in the organization (Ugbam, Onwumere & Ibe, 2012). In order to get a good job and high productivity, the satisfaction of employees within their ranks and the company they work for is very important (Opara, 2013).

Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich & Weller (2014) states that employee performance in relation to organizational goals is a central concern of management. Therefore, management has different strategies that will improve employee performance and different criteria for measuring employee performance. Ongori (2007) argues that the well-being of employees in an organization is very important because organizational survival at a highly competitive environment depends on the quality of its employees. Employee well-being can be shaped by their academic qualifications, skills gained from past experience or creative and innovative thinking. However, having good employees may not guarantee productivity but the commitment of such employees for their work is also important. An active employee does his or her job well and exceeds management expectations. To promote the engagement of its employees, organizations need to hire high performing workers. This will have an impact on performance. Performance is the process by which a company acquires its targeted production through personnel, capacity planning, machinery, equipment and machinery. Employee attrition can be explained as a gradual decrease in the number of employees through retirement, resignation or death (Oke, Ajagbe, Ogbari & Adeyeye, 2016). When it comes to attrition rates the usual rate varies from industry to industry in terms of its standards and these rates can also vary between skilled and unskilled positions.

The reason for employee attrition may change from the external environmental variables such as the economy that influences the business which affects the work process to organizational structure such as company type, department, size of firm, pay, supervisory level, location, selection process, work environment, work task, benefits, promotions; and individual work variables like demographic variables, integrative variables like job satisfaction, wages and salary, promotion and working conditions including non-working variables like family related variables. Regardless of these factors, the decision to leave or remain in the organization has to be occasionally examined in order to understand the exact reasons that motivated the employees to take such a step. Ugbam, et al., (2012) found that about 50 percent of the workforce retires within five years, and the best and brightest employees are usually the first to go out. This has led to concerns about why so many employees leave their jobs within a few years of joining the organization. As a result, employee attrition results in loss that can have a devastating long-term impact on organizations especially if the outgoing talent leaves a gap in the ability to perform capability and human resource functioning which includes not only the loss of productivity but also the loss of a collective bargaining agreement in the public interest. Considering the negative effect of attrition rate for any industry, companies are formulating innovative business models to effectively retain its talent. It is on this background that this study investigates the influence of staff attrition on performance of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Staff Attrition

The success or failure of an organization is largely dependent on the caliber of the people working therein. Without positive and creative contributions from people, organizations cannot progress and prosper. Thus, staff attrition is defined as a normal flow of people out of an organization through retirement, career or job change, relocation, illness and so on (Armstrong, 2006). Attrition may be defined as gradual reduction in membership or personnel as through retirement, resignation or death. It involves the number of employees leaving the organization which includes both voluntary and involuntary separation (Goswami & Jha, 2012). Kanteh & Gibba (2019) explicately affirmed that the process of attrition starts from the time an employee starts the job and ends soon after he/she leaves, retires, or dies. The different forms of employees' attrition include resignation, dismissal, redundancy, death, and compulsory retirement. Each of this may be voluntary or involuntary, desirable or undesirable. Cascio & Boudreau (2019) introduced two popular ways of classifying employee attritions: voluntary attrition versus involuntary and functional attrition versus dysfunctional attrition. Staff attrition may be voluntary on the part of the employee (for example, resignation) or involuntary (for example, requested resignation, permanent layoff, retirement, death). Voluntary reasons for leaving such as another job that offers more responsibility, returning to school full time, or improved salary and benefits are more controllable than involuntary reasons, such as employee death, chronic illness, or spouse transfer. Staff attrition is functional to the extent that the employee's departure produces increased value for the organization. It is dysfunctional to the extent that the employee's departure produces reduced value for the organization (Mahesh, 2017).

Shukla & Sinha (2013) state that the reasons for employee attrition differ from one firm to the other and from one individual to another as their expectations from the organization remains unfulfilled. Ongori (2007) classified sources of employee attrition into two broad categories which include job related factors containing job stress, lack of commitment, job dissatisfaction, personal agency and economic reason. The second group contains organizational factors which are organizational instability, organizational communication, pay and pay related variables, poor hiring practices, managerial style, lack of recognition and toxic workplace environment. Staff attrition has a lasting impact on the firm's performance. When an employee quits, the need for replacement arises, the organization incurs some tangible costs. The impact ranges from costs of replacement to culture management issue with the new recruit (Goswami & Jha, 2012). In a situation, wherein new employees are easily recruited and trained at a minimal cost, attrition might not be seen as problematic or damaging to the firm (ACAS, 2010). However, where the recruitment of competent skills is scarce, recruitment and training are relatively high or the filling-in of the vacant positions takes longer than necessary, attrition becomes damaging or problematic to the performance of the organization. It becomes costly especially when competent staff is snatched away by a rival firm or a competitor. Whether it becomes a problem or not, staff attrition to a large extent depends on the type of labour market available. Goswami & Jha (2012) affirmed that high attrition indicates the failure on the company's ability to set effective human resource priorities. Clients and businesses get affected and the company's internal strengths and weaknesses get highlighted. High attrition also leads to a chronic or systemic cycle. Attrition brings decreased productivity; people leave causing others to work harder and this resulting to more attrition.

Influence of Educational level and Working conditions on Employee Performance

Current times see the manufacturing industry occupy the main stage in employment. Many employers insist on having certain minimum qualifications before considering one for a particular job. High rates of recent unemployment in many countries see graduates accepting jobs that they are either under-qualified or overqualified for (Silva, 2009). Easterlin (2007) opines that the skills gained through education are a mark of performance level that an employee can exhibit. However, different specialized departments are needed to meet the work needs in the manufacturing industry. Griffin & Moorhead (2011) argued there is a twofold implication to this especially when performance is concerned. First, non-professionals may make a number of errors that may indicate that their work is considered to be of poor performance due to a lack of basic idea of what they are doing; their productivity level may also be lower by virtue of this. Second, the level of motivation may be lower especially for those who are forced to work in departments where they are less willing to work but are forced to do so (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011). This can lead to low motivation and poor performance.

On the same view, the number of staff attrition intentions was amongst those with high qualifications calculated according to the amount achieved. Mabeya (2019) acknowledges that best qualified teachers with exceptional skills who are valued in the job market are leaving the profession, perhaps because of another attractive opportunity available to them. At the other end of the scale, there is often a higher attrition of unqualified teachers on unofficial contracts and of those placed in the least attractive places. In general, higher attrition rates for teachers with higher academic qualifications are thought to reflect a greater opportunity for the open labour market. Similar patterns are reported in sub-Saharan Africa (OECD, 2014). Hence, staff with higher levels academic training has the highest rates of attrition. Additionally, there are myths in Lesotho and Malawi about the higher attrition rates for teachers with degree qualifications than those with diploma certificates (UNESCO, 2010b). Mdeme (2014) believes that data in Tanzania show that public school teachers have a four-time dropout rate (voluntary resignation) as well as a diploma level qualification.

In working condition, some factors are beyond the control of the worker and fall within the workplace fraternity. Such factors include the work environment, policies on transfer, policies on discipline, teacher planning and transfer, the roles assigned to each staff, staff management and supervision among many others. The effect of the working condition on the staff day-to-day professional activities will be able to provide accurate, clear, and predictable goals for performance. Some scholars observed that some working conditions would have a positive effect on the workers' commitment, whereas others have a negative effect (Chang, et al. 2010). A study by Kayuni & Tambulasi (2007) established that for the past 10 to 20 years working conditions emerged as the major source of job dissatisfaction and attrition in public secondary schools in Malawi. A conducive work environment includes staff support, mentoring, administrative effort to create a positive workplace culture that allows staff to engage in collegial collaborations focused on instruction and working conditions that provide staff with resources.

Attrition comes from the intense stress that many workers face on a daily basis. Attrition leads to burnout, which pushes many new workers out of the profession as well as staff retention in organizations with higher stability compared to organizations with more flexible management. Adequate resources build confidence and competent in workers. Working environment determines leadership styles and high political resemblance is an aspect of occupational attrition among staff. On teacher's attrition, Okungu (2012) found that when teachers worked for long hours without proper overtime payment and the

inconsistent in the administration styles of principal leads to poor working conditions, which results to the influence of teacher attrition. Increased stress and workloads made it difficult for employees to cope with the task and thus opt for a career change in search of a better and less demanding job.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is presented in Figure 1 below that shows how related staff attrition variables are to firm performance.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework between Staff Attrition and Firm Performance



Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Frederick Herzberg dual-factor theory. According to this theory, people's job satisfaction is dependent on two kinds of factors: Motivators/satisfiers and Hygiene factors (Batool, Shahnawaz & Habib, 2022)). Motivators/satisfiers lead to satisfaction and increased performance. They are about achievement, performance, recognition, work status, responsibility, advancement and opportunities for growth. Hygiene-factors, on the other hand, including policies and rules of the organization, supervision, relationship with the boss, relationship with peers, work condition, physical workplace, and salary. The presence of these factors is not an indication that employees will be motivated; in any case, their absence would de-motivate employees and result to attrition.

The Two-factor Theory is useful for this study because hygiene factors and motivators are factors that could influence employees' attrition in any sector of an economy in general and manufacturing sector in particular (Kabiri & Behrawan, 2020). It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that hygiene factors are attended to and motivators are implemented to increase job satisfaction and performance.

Empirical Review

Maigari, et al., (2021) explore the influence of career satisfaction on teachers' attrition and retention in public secondary schools of Dass Local Government Area of Bauchi state. A survey design was adopted for the study; the study population constitutes 356 teachers in public secondary schools in Dass Local Government. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting 186 teachers as sample respondents in this study. Multiple regressions were used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study showed an influence of 26.226 as against P-value =.000) between career satisfaction and teachers and attrition and retention. Findings showed that career satisfaction positively influences teachers' attrition and retention in public secondary schools in Dass Local Government of Bauchi State. The study recommended that the school management and the government improve the working conditions of teachers by providing adequate teaching/learning resources.

Kaur & Padmanabhan (2019) studied employee attrition rate at selected manufacturing industry in India. The study employed a descriptive research design. Fifty employees of the selected manufacturing firms were used as sample size. Structured

questionnaire and personal interview were adopted as instrument for data collection, while percentage analysis was used for data presentation and analysis. The study found that poor salary, lack of growth opportunity, inadequate welfare facilities, partial work recognition, poor employee relation, organization culture, organization policies and unfair grievance handling are the major reasons for employee attrition. The study recommended that ethical work culture, cordial employee relation and implementation of organizational policies are the most attractive area of making employee to stay back in organization.

Kanteh & Gibba (2019) investigated the factors that influence employees' attrition in public and private sector institutions in The Gambia from year 2007 to 2017. The institutions targeted were mainly located in the Kanifing Local Government Area (LGA) which consists of only urban settlements. The survey population was 120 employees from 7 institutions. The sample size was 87 employees of whom 83 were involved which means 95.4% of the targeted employees. The researchers use the descriptive survey design, random and convenience sampling techniques. The data was collected using structured questionnaires. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, simple cross-tabulations, tables and figures, and percentages. The study has revealed eight main reasons for attrition in the public and private institutions in The Gambia from 2007 to 2017. Among these, the most important are the lack of career growth and advancement and inadequate remuneration packages. The study shows the level of dissatisfaction among employees in these institutions. The study recommended that management should improve remuneration and compensation packages, and employees' welfare schemes. There is a need to improve working conditions geared to attracting new employees and retaining them.

Lavanya (2017) examines employee attrition which is inevitable but manageable with software employees. A Structured questionnaire was administered with a sample of 100 respondents. Simple random sampling methodology was adopted for data analysis. Data Analysis was employed for computing the efficiency scores for attrition using SPSS version 20. Statistical techniques such as factor analysis, correlation analysis, t test, chi-square, one way ANOVA and multiple regression was employed. Correlation analysis was significant, and multiple regression was used to test the impact of the employee attrition. The findings demonstrated that there is no significance difference in the dimension of the factors as a predictor in explaining employee's attrition. Chi-square test revealed that there is significant association in employee job seeking with that of rate of attrition.

Dobhal & Nigam (2018) examine the impact of Human Resource (H.R.) practices on the Employee Attrition in Defence PSUs in India. Basically, hiring practices and performance appraisal & training practices are the two major aspects of the H.R. Practices that have been researched upon in this paper. The research concentrated on the relationship between designation level and the hiring practices as well as performance appraisal & training practices. The researcher also investigated the correlations among hiring practices, performance appraisal & training practices, satisfaction level of the executives and reasons of attrition.

Madumere-Obike, et al., (2019) examined the management of teacher attrition rate for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Analytical survey design was adopted. Population of the study consisted of two hundred and forty-seven (247) public secondary schools with 247 male and female principals and 7,713 teachers in Rivers State. The sample size consisted of 1,104 respondents (both Principals and Teachers) of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State representing 14% of the study population. A self-constructed instrument questionnaire tagged "Managing Teacher Attrition Rate for Quality Education Delivery Questionnaire" (MTARQEDQ) was used for

data collection. The instrument was validated and its reliability co-efficient was established at 0.83. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the causes of teacher attrition rate for quality educational delivery in Rivers State public senior secondary schools. Also, there was a significant difference between the mean score of principals and teachers on the challenges posed by teacher attrition rate. Significant difference also exists in between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the ways effective management of teacher attrition rate can enhance quality teaching. The study concluded that better services and good welfare packages for teachers can reduce teacher attrition rate. Paying attention to teachers by giving them equal regards with other professions will increase teachers' retention.

Research Methodology

The study employed survey research design. The survey research design is a design used to investigate the effect of staff attrition on performance of selected manufacturing firms in Southeast Nigeria. Survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The population of the study consists of one hundred and seventy—seven (177) manufacturing firms. Complete enumeration was adopted and so there was no need for sampling as all the selected manufacturing firms was used. The study used primary data which was collected using one research instrument namely, questionnaires. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of research assistant by carefully reading out the instructions to them, to ensure that the entire study area is fully covered, completed instrument was collected immediately after completion by the respondents.

The questions were divided into two categories that consist of staff attrition variables (Educational level and working conditions) and organizational performance. To determine the validity of the items in the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted to the respondents from each category of the subjects. Cronbach alpha was administrated to test the stability of the scale.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach alpha	No. of Items	N
Educational Level	0.791	4	177
Working Conditions	0.825	5	177
Organizational Performance	0.760	5	177

As shown in Table 1, the items of staff attrition variables (educational level and working conditions) have a Cronbach's alpha level of 0.791 and 0.825 respectively; and the items of organizational performance scale has a Cronbach's alpha level of 0.760, which indicates that the survey contains reliable items. Hence, according to Nunnally (1978) if the Cronbach Alpha value goes beyond 0.7, it represents satisfactory internal consistency. Since the overall reliability of questionnaire is above 0.70, the questionnaires were administered and collected personally by the researcher to ensure better response rate. In this study, correlation and multiple regression analysis were employed for data analysis.

Analysis and Results

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Educational Level	4	2.16	.923
Working Conditions	5	278	.959
Firm Performance	5	3.22	.828

The descriptive statistics showed that the mean (average) of the variables are educational level (2.16), working conditions (2.78) and firm performance (3.22). Furthermore, the standard deviation values of the variables educational level, working conditions and firm performance, .923, .959 and .828 respectively indicated that the variables are dispersed from each other; an indication that most likely some variables performed superior than others. Hypothesis One:

Ho1: Staff educational level does not significantly affect firm's performance of selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Regression Analysis of the Variables

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.662	.628	.612	.52052

a. Predictor: (Constant), Educational levelb. Dependent variable: Firm performance

Table 4: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	767	3.292		-1.474	.001
Educational	1.53	.034	.662	8.147	.000
level					

a. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

The regression analysis conducted to ascertain the effect of staff educational level on firm's performance. Table 3 & 4 shows that staff educational level has a strong positive effect on firm's performance (R- coefficient = .662). The R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 66.2% of the variation in firm's performance can be explained by staff educational level. With the simple regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about .52052. The extent to which staff educational level affect firm's performance with .662 value indicates a positive coefficient between staff educational level and firm's performance which is statistically significant (with t = 8.147) and p = 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted accordingly. Hypothesis Two:

Ho2: Working condition does not significantly affect firm's performance of selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Regression Analysis of the Variables

Table 5: Model Summary

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Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.782°	.725	.703	.60453	

- a. Predictor: (Constant), Working conditionb. Dependent variable: Firm performance
 - Table 6: Coefficients a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.467	1.032		2.536	.001
Working	.583	.134	.782	7.618	.000
condition					

a. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

The result of the linear regression in table 5 and 6 shows that staff working condition has a strong positive effect on performance (R- coefficient = .782). The R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 78.2% of the variation in firm performance can be explained by working condition. With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about .60453. The extent to which working condition affect firm's performance with .782 value indicates a positive coefficient between working condition and firm performance which is statistically significant (with t = 7.618) and p = 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted accordingly. However, the study identified certain reasons for staff attrition in the manufacturing sector but among them are educational level and poor working condition. Therefore, the study revealed that staff educational level has a significant positive effect on firm's performance on selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. This result demonstrates that staff educational level is important to the organisation as managers and owners of manufacturing firms need to value the contributions of their staff and find a way to make them committed on the jobs. This finding is consistent with the findings of studies conducted by Madumere-Obike, et al., (2019), Dobhal & Nigam (2018), Mabeya (2019), Easterlin (2007) which opined that the skills gained through education are a mark of performance level that an employee can exhibit; and that the best educated workers with exceptional skills who are valued in the job market boost firm's performance. Also, the study found that staff working condition significantly affects firm's performance of selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. This finding lends support to Kayuni & Tambulasi (2007), Maigari, et al., (2021), Kanteh & Gibba (2019) study that poor staff working conditions has been the major source of job dissatisfaction and attrition in organizations. Thus, a poor workplace environment devoid of mentoring, administrative effort that creates a positive workplace culture, and collegial collaborations results in a decline in firm's performance.

Research Gap and Future Direction

The research has illustrated important issues pertinent to the phenomenon on staff attritions and performance of organizations. Most of the studies have focused on different sectors other than manufacturing sector. Besides, there is no adequate literature on staff attrition in Nigerian manufacturing sector. The available pieces of literature only focused on attrition within the health sector or educational sector attrition. The study is therefore taken to investigate the nature of staff attrition in selected manufacturing firms in Southeast Nigeria.

From the researchers' point of view, this study could be used as a benchmark for a more comprehensive study on attrition in the future.

Conclusion

In view of the findings, this study concluded that staff attrition affect firm's performance adversely in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. The most damaging consequences of attrition in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria include; recruitment cost, training cost, impact on the on-going productions or services and most importantly, loss of productivity in the firm. This study recommended that management must ensure that the right people are in the right jobs, introduce 360-degree performance feedback so that individual staff is evaluated based on performance and not based on educational qualification alone. It is pertinent that an employee is engaged based on his or her job experience, skills and competence. The management should also improve staff working conditions. This requires promoting staff benefits, incentives and welfare schemes, good working environment. This can increase the level of motivation and commitment of the staff to their work, which can actually increase productivity.

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