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NWIKIABEH, L. B. M., & FRIDAY, L.

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NWIKIABEH, L. B. M.,¹ & FRIDAY, L.²

^{1,2}Business Administration and Management Department, Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori, Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the nexus between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being in the workplace in Nigeria. The interpersonal approaches examined were: psychological approach, sociological approach, human relations approach and co-operative social system approach. The employee well-being examined was the health well-being, subjective (happiness) well-being and relational (social) well-being. The study revealed that there is relationship between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being. It was concluded that adopting the interpersonal approaches will help to achieve employee well-being in the workplace. Based on the above, it was recommended that management and entrepreneurs should take the issues affecting the well-being of employees seriously since it affects the health, happiness, and quality of interactions amongst employees. And also poor well-being affects employee performance and productivity levels; therefore it should be avoided in the workplace.

Key Words: *Employee Well-being, Interpersonal Approach*

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace operates as both system and sub-system which encompasses several elements, some of these elements are physical and others are spiritual in nature like leadership (Asawo, 2009). The human elements of the workplace share both physical and spiritual nature and its well-being is paramount to the effectual accomplishment of her goals. According to Cooper & Cartwright (1994), health well-being has a significant impact on the financial health and profitability of the organisation. Its absence may result to workplace accident which affects the organisations in terms of cost of lost production and efficiency, lost time and cost of compensable disorder /lawsuit, health insurance cost and others (Neville, 1998; Dana & Griffin, 1999). As Tov (2012) puts it, employee mental well-being directly affects how employees think and feel about their job and organisation. Employee well-being predicts job attitude and performance. Tov (2012) further asserts that employee well-being has implications for both productivity and work relationships. In spite of the above, attaining optimal level of employee well-being seems difficult, hence this study.

Importantly, several scholars have correlated employee well-being with other variables such as different effort construct and effort-reward imbalance (Vegchel, Jonge, Meijer, & Hamers, 2001), job strain, effort-reward imbalance (Jonge, Bosman, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000), the 'what' 'why' and 'how' (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009), transformational leadership (Liu, Siu, & Shi, 2010) the HRM-organisational performance relationship (Voorde, Paauwe, & Veldhoven, 2012), innovativeness (Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007), happiness, health or relationship? Managerial practices (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007), and others. This shows that employee well-being is associated with a gamut of positive outcomes. But not much has been done relating interpersonal approaches to management thought to employee well-being. As a result, the researchers argue that

there is a relationship between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being. According to Baridam (2002), interpersonal approaches emphasized industrial humanism which is the recognition that the worker is a human being, self-motivated and with personal needs. This study reviews literature exploring the linkage between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being in the workplace.

Employee well-being were expected to be given priority attention by workplace management and entrepreneurs owing to its importance, this desired state is yet to be attained. That has resulted to low level productivity, poor job attitudes and abysmal performance in certain instances, lost of productive time, lawsuit, financial health challenges and reduced profitability level to mention but a few. Perhaps, these workplaces have not given desired attention to the issue of employee wellbeing. Based on these plaguing issues, this study is conducted to explore the relationship between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being in workplaces in Nigeria.

Importantly this paper is sequence accordingly, while this section introduces the very essence of the paper, the next reviews extant literature on interpersonal approaches and employee well-being establishing their relationships. Thereafter conclusion and recommendations made.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal Approaches

These lay emphasis on the psychological function of the organisation and determined the task of management as harmonizing the goals of the organisation with those of the individual workers (Baridam, 2002). This harmony is essential because if they are at variance, the goals of the workplace will suffer. That will also cause industrial disharmony. Therefore, workplace management and owners should ensure harmony is achieved to a great extent. According to Baridam (2002), there are basically four subdivisions of interpersonal

approaches namely; psychological approach, sociological approach, co-operation social system approach and human relations approach. These various subdivisions contribute in their various spheres to the understanding of the well-being of employees in the workplace.

Psychological Approach: This approach concentrates on the individual and the way he relates at the workplace with the environment. Premium is paid to how the industrial man could achieve maximum performance level without impairing his health. Therefore, workplace design of equipment, lightening arrangement, ventilation and other working conditions are expected to be fixed to suit employee (Baridam, 2002). This view is corroborated by Dessler (1985) that asserted, everyone is a unique individual and that everyone wants to be treated in a manner that correspond to who he thinks he is, and he thinks he deserves. This approach as time progresses looked at personality dynamics of the employee to understand and predicts his behaviour and motivation and the likely changes that will occur in different workplace situations.

Notable researchers that earlier contributed to this approach are Hugo Munsterberg, Lillian Gilbreth and Walter Dill Scot. Also contemporary behavioural theorist like Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1959) made significant contributions to this approach. Maslow (1959) came up with needs hierarchy, claiming that human needs are fixed in a pyramidal structure with the lower level needs satisfied before the next upper level is attended to. Those needs he mentioned were physiological needs (food, sex, shelter and food), safety needs (freedom from threat, protection against accident and protected surroundings), social needs (love, friendship, affiliation and acceptance), esteem needs (feelings of importance and prestige), and self-actualization needs (becoming who you want and is capable).

On the other hand, Herzberg (1959) as cited in Baridam (2002) came up with his two-factor construct namely (i) the hygiene factors placed on a

continuum from dissatisfaction to no dissatisfaction. The relevant factors to this category were pay, job security, company policies, status, working conditions, fringe benefits and interpersonal relations. He claimed that it absence caused higher proportion of dissatisfaction but it presence amount to no dissatisfaction. (ii) Motivation which its continuum starts from no job satisfaction to satisfaction is another factor. Here job content factors are considered which includes challenging job responsibilities, recognition for well accomplished job, opportunities for growth and advancement in workplace, increase responsibility, job itself, and feeling for achievement. These factors lead to satisfaction or no job satisfaction.

Human Relations Approach: This approach considers the well-being of the workers. In the view of Daft (2006), the human relations approach narrows its attention to the worker and emphasized on its better and stronger relationships, recognition and achievement that are stimulants to increasing productivity in the workplace. As stated by UKESSAY (2005) human relations approach shows a significant deviation from the automated and dehumanised approach which the scientific approach represents. It is note-worthy to assert, the human relations approach is concern about the individual and organisational change experienced via human interaction (Baldrige, 1972). Daft (2006) places emphasis on teamwork and motivation which is the heart of every productive organisation but disagreed with the concept of managers and workers do. This shows that workplaces need cooperation and collaborations to achieve its goals and objectives.

Earlier the works of Elton Mayo a Harvard University Professor was the take off point of this approach in the 1920s. Elton Mayo and his associates conducted series of experiments adopting varying working conditions. The Relay Assembly Test Room had it focus on a small group of six women. Their productivity was monitored at different work condition but discovered that productivity increased despite the changes. This

made the conclusion that the group size was a responsible factor possible to increase productivity. This phenomenon is what Daft (2006) refers to as Hawthorne effect which claimed that the increase in productivity was as a result of the group perceived of having unique attention from management.

Also the Bank Wiring Observation Room Study was another stage in the Hawthorne studies. This stage isolated male who assemble terminal banks for telephone exchanges for the study. The researchers who conducted study were concern of the effect of a group piecework incentive plan. But the study revealed that they developed more controlled productivity by defining what constituted a fair work for their members (Baridam, 2002). This warranted the conclusion that wage incentive plan was less significant as compared to acceptance and security in determining the output of an individual in the workplace. The interview programme which proposed that the work group determines production level of members was also carried out. This gave rise to the fact that human element in the workplace impacts on the level of productivity as compared to physical and technical spheres of the job.

Sociological Approach: This approach viewed the individual as a product of group behaviour. This means that the individual actions are shaped by the culture of the group. It also lay emphasis on seen the workplace as a social system with cliques, information statues, grape vines, rituals, and others. The understanding of this approach, help managers to attend to the well-being of the workers. In fact the understanding of their cultural relationship and their influence on the workers productivity in the organisation is the concern of managers (Baridam, 2002). It is important to recognise that once an individual becomes an employee, he assumes membership of a group. Such an employee is influenced by the people, the processes therein the group and relationships. Based on this, Dessler is of the opinion that the features of group interaction give rise to stable or

predictable quality (Dessler, 1976). Therefore, predicting employee behaviour based on interaction helps managers to attend to employee well-being in the workplace.

Furthermore, other scholars have studied the sociological approach. Stats & Blurke (2003), considered a sociological approach to self and identity. The study affirms the fact that self influences society through the actions of individuals thereby creating groups, organisations, networks, and institutions. The society on its part, influence self through shared language and meanings that enable a person to take role of the other, engages in social interaction and reflects upon oneself as an object. Based on this, they assert that the nature of self and what individuals do depends to a large extent on the society within which they live.

Co-operative Social System Approach: This approach recognises the understanding that sub-units of social system does not exist in isolation of each other, but influence and interact with each other to enable achievement of goals (Baridam, 2002). In the same vein, demands of the group, the structure, and other environmental variables moderated individual behaviour. The main concern of this approach was the recognition that there is physical and biological limitation of individual that necessitated them to co-operate. This is derived from the work of Chester Bernard who is seen as the father of the social system approach. Bernard developed a theory which recognises human limitations and is based on co-operation. This co-operation is the basis for collaboration among employees in departments and organisations in a bid to addressing employee well-being through networking efforts. This is because what affect employee in one workplace may likely affect them to a large extent in the other workplace if they operate in the same environment.

Employee Well-being at Workplace

This is regarded as part of an employee overall well-being that is determined by the work and is influenced by intervention at workplace. The international labour organisation (ILO) relates

workplace well-being to all aspect of working life from the quality of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work, and work organisation. Employee well-being is a key factor that determines long term effectiveness of an organisation. Elsewhere studies have link productivity level and general health to employee well-being in the workplace. Well-being is defined as the extent to which the level of positive affect the level of negative in an individual's life (Andrews & Whittey, 1979; Diener,1984; Mc Cubbin, Mc Cubbin, Zhang, & Kehl, 2013).

According to Grant *et al.*, (2007) employee wellbeing is composed of three dimensions namely: health well-being, happiness well-being and relational well-being, which is otherwise called social well-being. The health well-being described well-being in terms of bodily and mental health and functioning. Happiness well-being is viewed in terms of workers subjective experience. The relational well-being associated well-being to a result of perceived quality of workers interactions with other people and other communities (Grant *et al.*, 2007). The knowledge of the human relations guides the quality of interactions among the workers in the workplace. For organisations that do not allow their workers to unionised, their wellbeing is affected because the desired quality of interaction is hampered.

There are also several views as it regards the conceptualization of employee well-being. Danna & Griffin (1999) argued that the general conceptualization of well-being is vague. Warr (1987) provided a review and examination of well-being using health as a framework. He suggested that affective well-being is an aspect of mental health; the other components are competence, autonomy, aspiration, and integrated functioning. The affective well-being is seen as similar to the primary medical criterion of ill or not ill and found to be a multi-dimensional construct (Warr, 1987; Danna & Griffin, 1998). This is what Grant *et al* (2007) regarded as health well-being. The employee

well-being in this study is discussed in three ways: health well-being, subjective or happiness well-being and relational (social) well-being.

Health Well-being: This is described in terms of bodily and mental health and functioning (Grant *et al.*, 2007). Conrad (1988) as cited in Danna & Griffin (1999) stated that workers spent one-third of their waking hours at work and do not necessarily leave the job behind when they leave the work site. There is also a growing concern about workplace characteristics that affect the health of workers such as health and safety practices by organisation (Paterson, 1997), work design issues associated with ergonomics (Hoke, 1997), other environmental challenges like the case of the Soot in Port Harcourt and its environ in recent times. All these affect the health well-being of employees since they cannot abandon their job and leave the city because of the Soot. Organisations structured or designed not considering the employee well-being affects the health of the workers.

Subjective or Happiness Wellbeing: As earlier stated, this is described in terms of worker's subjective experience (Grant *et al.*, (2007). Diener (1980) as stated in Danna & Griffin (1999), subjective well-being is used to describe a person's overall experience in life and suggested that it essentially reflects a person self-described happiness. This explains that there is a dynamics surrounding the measurement of subjective wellbeing. The first was that well-being is defined in terms of external criteria as "ideal condition" that differs across culture. Secondly, subjective well-being is seen as life satisfaction. This is because researchers bid to evaluate what is regarded as a positive life assessment discovered that subjective form of happiness has a global assessment in terms of the quality of one individual's life as guided by the individuals own set of criteria. This is to assert that the individual determines what makes him happy. Thirdly, the meaning of happiness is used to show positive effect such as being energetic, excited and enthused over anger, disgust, guilt and

depression which are regarded as negative effect (Tellegen, 1982; Danna & Griffin, 1999).

Relational (Social) Well-being: This is regarded as a relational construct (Mc Cubbin, 2006). McGregor, Morell, Matsuoka, & Minerbi, (2003) study in Hawaii on rural indigenous communities clarified the construct as a relational construct encompassing all dimensions of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), inclusive of family unit, ancestors, the physical and natural environment, extended family, adopted family, community, society, culture and the world. These factors or variables are interdependent and relational (McCubbin, 2006). They regarded community as an important element of relational well-being. They believed that through community values and beliefs shared, economic development are nurtured, cultural and spiritual practices nurture a sense of security, predictability and sense of life. This to an extent determines the quality of interactions of workers with others and the community, (Grant *et al.*, 2007). In the same vein, Gericke (2016) studied relational well-being and levels of psycho-social well-being. The study was intended to unlock strength, improve the quality of human life and well-being, and promoting optimal functioning. The findings show a great deal similarity in the types of most important relationship for both group of high (flourishing) and low (languishing) levels of psycho-social well-being. It was concluded that relational well-being is an integrated, complex and interweaved phenomenon in which vertical and horizontal relationships are integrated on various levels - with differences in dynamics of high and low well-being groups.

Nexus between Interpersonal Approaches and Employee Well-being

According to Harsson & Jornfeldt (2017) health and well-being, focus on interpersonal relations and is critical. In order to promote human freedom, every relationship is expected to be built on respect for the inherent value of each person and willingness to support each person's strength and abilities, and interpersonal relations have to be built on mutual

respect for each other's knowledge and life experiences (Morgan & Yoder, 2012). This make it necessary, the consideration of the whole person be it the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs (Harsson & Jornfeldt, 2017). A study conducted by Lindgren & Barker-Ruchti (2017) who study some Sweden established how a sample of female Swedish national foot-ball coaches describe how they carefully manage interpersonal relationship with respect to well-being of their players as they face social and organisational pressure to win competition.

Angrave & Charlwood (2015) study the relationship between long working hours, over-employment, under-employment and the subjective well-being of workers which is otherwise called happiness well-being. The results of the findings suggest that long working hours do not directly affect subjective well-being, but in line with theories of person-environment fit, both over-employment and under-employment are associated with lower subjective well-being. They also assert that organisational policies that reduce the incidence of long working hours are likely to enhance aggregate well-being levels. If the well-being of employees is better it will reduce complaints and enhance performance which will contribute to repositioning the economy of an organisational and societal level.

In another study, Tomljenomic (2014) studies the effects of internal and external environment on health and well-being from cell to society. The study established that disease is not just a personal or family problem. It reflects on the working place and the economy. It shows in the number of sick leaves owing to depression experience at the workplace. Even if worker are not on sick leave, if their well-being is not attended to their working enthusiasm and productivity will certainly diminished. The study further argued that an unhealthy environment during the period of time such as exposure to chemical toxins, toxic food, toxic drinks, toxic relationships, toxic working atmosphere, and stress, people go through developed different symptoms and diseases affect the well-being. And that some

people will develop systemic disorders which still others are going to develop mental disorder (Tomljeric, 2014). This certainly affects the individual, workplace and the economy of a given nation.

The above view shows that when the workplace environment is not conducive for worker, it affects their health well-being. At such times the human relations quality is diminished. It also shows a relationship with the psychological approach to interpersonal relationship. This nexus is supported by Baridam (2002) view that stated workplace equipment design, lightening arrangement, ventilation and other working conditions are to be fixed without impairing the health of the workers. This indicates that the psychological approach to interpersonal relations also have relationship with employee well-being. The knowledge of the psychological approach helps those who structure the workplace to put the employees at the centre of such design since their well-being is paramount to the success of any workplace.

The psychological approach shows the uniqueness of the individual employees. The Sociological approach shows groupness. The co-operative social system approach recognizes co-operativeness which can mitigate the individual employee limitations. The human relations approach recognizes socialness which is liken to Abraham Maslow's social needs of an individual. Therefore, workplaces and nations that want repositioning must recognise the uniqueness of their employees, their abilities to join groups, their socialness and co-operative abilities in the face of challenges as to overcome such identified challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

A critical look at the nexus between the interpersonal approaches and employee well-being in the workplace indicated the existence of such relationship. The knowledge acquired by workplace managers from interpersonal approaches to management thoughts and philosophy help in structuring the workplace. It also helps in

equipment design, office and factory lightening system arrangement, the ventilation and other working conditions (Baridam, 2002). The psychological approach to interpersonal approaches as asserted by Dessler (1985) recognized the uniqueness of an individual in the workplace. Therefore, such should be considered in addressing the employee well-being in the workplace. The co-operative social system approach gives room for co-operation in relationship among employees in the workplace. The knowledge of human relations approach helps managers to address employee well-being issues in the areas of health, subjective and relational or social. Therefore, the various spheres of interpersonal approaches such as: psychological approach, sociological approach, human relations approach, and co-operation social system approach in their different ways influence employee well-being. This well-being either as health well-being, subjective (happiness) well-being and or relational (social) well-being is influenced by the interpersonal approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were recommended based on the review of related-literature in the study:

- Workplace equipment design, office and factory lightening system, ventilation, and other working conditions should be fixed in such a way that it will not impair the health of employees but recognize their uniqueness.
- Employee well-being should be prioritised as studies by scholars have revealed a link between employee well-being and productivity level and performance.
- Organisational policies that reduced incidence of long working hours should be encouraged since it enhances aggregate well-being level.
- Factors such as family unit, ancestors, physical and natural environment, extended family, adopted family, community, society, and the world should

be recognized since they are interdependent and relational. This is because it determines the quality of interaction that exists in the workplace.

- Managers should determine parameters to measure subjective values in the workplace to address issues related to subjective well-being.

- Workplace managers should take serious medical condition of their employee since diseases conditions lead to depression aggravating case of sick leave which affect performance and productivity level of employees.

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