



On-Site Work Location Models and Task Performance of Oil and Gas Firms in Rivers State

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Abstract

This study empirically examines the extent to which on site work relates with task performance in oil and gas industry. The accessible population of this study was 656 administrative staff from five (5) selected oil and gas firms in Rivers State. The study population was chosen due to easy accessibility to information and for an unbiased conclusion in order to achieve the aim of the study. The sample size for this study was 248 which was obtained using the Taro Yamane's formula. The primary data was collected with the aid of structured questionnaires which were administered to respondents via online survey. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient statistical analysis was employed in analysing the hypotheses in order to determine the correlation between the variables with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Our findings revealed a significant correlation between on site work and task performance. The study recommended that management of oil and gas firms should embark on proper planning and execution to incorporate the several work location models so as to encourage flexibility and adaptability in order to survive the environmental changes associated with the business world.

***Keywords:** Onsite work, task performance, oil and gas, work location, performance, planning*

Introduction

With the sudden change in events during the heat of the pandemic, the issue of job performance became very important since it is an essential factor in the success of any oil and gas firm as poor performance in firms can lead to failure and possible extinction of said firm. Law, Hills and Hau (2017) stated that, employee job performance is a key factor needed for sustainable development in any contemporary organization. Poor employee job performance in oil and gas firms can lead to intense psychological distress for managers and employees, poor competitive position with competing firms in the industry, reduction in individual and team morale, lower productivity, poor quality of work, increased turnover, poor information dissemination, employee demotivation, poor job satisfaction, anxiety and depression, increased risk of litigation, inefficiency/ resource wastage, etc. All these implications can further result in customer dissatisfaction and loss of customer loyalty, which leads to poor patronage which in turn would lead to zero profitability, stunted growth of firm and eventual death (Hlengane&Bayat, 2013; Heibutzki, 2017). Vosloban (2012) affirmed that employee performance influences organizational performance.

Over the past decades, the oil and gas industry has witnessed a phenomenal boom but in the last year (2020), the industry suffered a decline due to a two-pronged crisis; the crash in oil price and the COVID-19 pandemic which forced some firms to suspend operations and others to shut-down completely as preparations for such environmental changes were not made afore hand to ease adaptation(Ajayi *et al.*, 2021).However, in the quest for survival, most firms have re-strategised, putting the well-being of employees into consideration as well as the growth and survival of the firm by adopting new models to work in order to improve workers performance and keep them safe as well.The pandemic disrupted every organization and altered the landscape permanently, changing the way we work, learn and play. Thus, organizations were forced to rethink how they work and had to implement new models away from the traditional on-site model, as recommended by researchers, including hybrid and remote work locations.

Theoretical Framework

Don Egler's Theory of Performance

The Theory of Performance (ToP) has been developed by the University of Idaho and extensively written on by Don Egler. The rationale behind developing this theory is that humans are capable of extraordinary accomplishments in their fields no matter how challenging the task might be.ToP was developed by relating some fundamental concepts.

The theorist was of the opinion that to better understand performance one must first understand what it means to perform- to take a complex series of actions that integrate skills and knowledge to produce valuable results, and who a performer is- an individual or a group of people who engage in a collaborative effort e.g. academic department, research team, sports team, etc.

Egler stated that performance advances through levels and that each level of performance characterizes the effectiveness or quality of a performance. As the adage goes “performance is a journey not a destination” and the current level of performance is the location of the performer in the journey. For instance, as a manager advances his level of performances, he is able to organize people and resources more effectively and to get higher quality results in a shorter time. As an academic department improves its level of performance, the members of the department are able to produce more effective student learning, more effective research and a more effective culture.

Performing at a higher level produces results that can be classified into the following categories:

Quality increases—results or products are more effective in meeting or exceeding the expectations of stakeholders i.e. higher levels of performance of employees in Nigeria’s oil and gas industry will lead to an increase in the quality of petroleum products exported

Cost decreases—amount of effort or financial resources to produce a result goes down; amount of waste goes down. Increased performance in the oil and gas industry helps reduce government expenditure on imported technology and manpower for production and the amount of resources wasted.

Capability increases—high performance levels gives employees in the industry the ability to tackle more challenging performances or projects increases.

Capacity increases—ability to generate more throughput increases i.e. the industry is able to deliver more products and services within a specific period of time.

Knowledge increases—depth and breadth of knowledge increases

Skills increase—abilities to set goals, persist, maintain a positive outlook, etc. increase in breadth of application and in effectiveness.

Identity and motivation increases—individuals develop more sense of who they are as professionals; organizations develop their essence.

Improving Performance

Conditions for optimal performance and improvements in performance can be synthesized in three axioms:

Axiom 1- engage the performer in an optimal emotional state (*performer’s mindset*).

Axiom 2- immerse the performer in an enriching environment.

Axiom 3- engage the performer in *reflective practice*.

Though some factors are fixed and cannot be influenced, other factors can be influenced by the performer or by others. The factors that can be varied fall into three categories:

Performer’s Mindset- this includes actions that engage positive emotions. E.g. setting challenging goals, allowing failure as a natural part of attaining high performance and providing conditions that give the performer a feeling of safety.

Immersion- immersing in a physical, social and intellectual environment can elevate performance and stimulate personal and professional development. Elements include social interactions, disciplinary knowledge, active learning, emotions (both positive and negative) and spiritual alignment. This can be achieved by creating quality learning environments.

Reflective Practice- this involves actions that help pay attention to and learn from past experiences. E.g. observing current level of performance, noting accomplishments, analyzing strengths and areas for improvements, analyzing and developing identity and improving levels of knowledge.

With the knowledge of this theory, we are able to understand that a performer can either be an individual or a group, performance is presented in levels and there is always room for improvement.

On-site Work Location Model

According to Cambridge Dictionary, On-site means- available or occurring in the place where people work, rather than somewhere else. On-site work location is a workplace or location determined by a firm in which work should be carried out. Kozolowski and Bell, 2003; Salas, Cooke and Rosen (2008) stated that on-site work, no matter the field, project or organizational context, has a significant influence on safety, quality and performance. On-site work location encourages higher collaboration, which some employees prefer to the isolation that accompanies remote work location. For highly social, team-players, the office setting is most preferable. The lines of communication are instantaneous and this helps for quick resolution of issues with short-term deadline and there is easy access to company equipment and software.

Deloitte research (2020) describes on-site work location model as one with limited employee choices over time and location of work. It states that work is performed at the firm’s premises and during pre-determined times decided by the firm. The study showed that employees in the on-site work location model are most comfortable working together. They thrive with social and physical connections. Organizations that adopt this model choose to maintain stability of time, mode and location of work. The main focus of the workforce is execution of tasks relevant to the various functional units and strict adherence to traditional hierarchy. The research argued that employees do their best work when on-site as work is executed through fluid networks of teams that focus on achieving customer satisfaction, working together in the same time zone with organisation’s tools at their disposal.

West Australian Ministerial Corporation (2012) stated that an organization adopting the on-site work location model requires on-site management which involves site assessment and layout, site mobilization and on-site administration and control, that on-site staff structure is determined by size, type and complexity of a project and each on-site position involves duties and responsibilities that are to be performed efficiently to achieve organizational goals. To maintain effective communication lines on-site, regular meetings are conducted to gather relevant information, plan for progress and disseminate collated information to relevant units.

Working on-site has been the standard for most firms for as long as work has existed though; advancement in telecommunication and the emergence of the internet have led to a gradual and steady change in the workplace with majority of the workforce vying for remote or hybrid work.

Every work location model comes with its pros and cons. The pros of onsite work location model include:

Teamwork and Collaboration: According to Maxwell (2002) "teamwork makes the dream work". On-site work brings about a strong bond between colleagues which results in team formation, the communication lines and feedback loops are clearer. Collaboration between employees assists in task completion and achievement of common goals.

Motivation and productivity: Being in a professional environment can be motivating and boost productivity in the long-run which brings about more profit for the firm with fewer distractions from the family or outside world (Store, 2015).

Improved corporate culture: Face-to-face interactions between colleagues can improve correlations which in turn reinforces positive corporate culture.

Direct Control: When working on-site, direct control is immediate and this makes easier to solve problems that may arise in the course of operations.

Confidentiality: Onsite work encourages privacy as face to face meetings do not require of digital tools that can easily be tapped and private information stolen.

No digital disruption: With onsite work employee are able to focus on work without being distracted by social contents.(Fleid, 2020).

And the Cons include:

Distractions from co-workers: Employees thrive in social gatherings and can easily be distracted by colleagues

Limited talent pool due to geographical factors: Distance can deprive an organization of talented employees.

Costly office locations and expenses: On-site work puts the organization under pressure to acquire an offices space large enough to accommodate employees(TechServe Alliance, 2021).

Task Performance

This is an important dimension of employee job performance. It is defined as competency with which an employee performs job specific tasks (Campbell, 1990). It is also called technical proficiency (Lance, Teachout & Donnelly, 1992) or in-role performance (Maxham, Netemeyer & Lichtenstein, 2008). Borman and Motonildo (1993) defined task performance as "the effectiveness with which job incumbent (employees) perform activities that contribute to the organization's core". This is achieved either directly by implementing parts of the technical process or indirectly by providing materials and services required for the process. The definition of task performance puts emphasis on the instrumentality performance for goals of the organization (Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019). According to Griffin, Neal and Neale (2001) difficulty in task performance moderate the correlation between contextual performance and effectiveness. Kappagoda (2018) opined that task related behaviours contribute to the core technology of a firm. The expected behavior that task performance covers is often seen as a formal requirement and the job description is usually spelt out explicitly for employees.

The indicators of task performance vary with respect to profession. For example Campbell (1990) described the generic indicators of task performance as work quantity, work quality and job knowledge. However, Arvey and Mussio (1973) described task performance of clerical workers using *accurate work*, *concern for time and detail* and *planning*. Jiambalvo (1979) described it as *understanding*, *planning* and *revising work* for public accountants. Engelbrecht and Fischer (1995) described for managers using *action orientation* (getting things done), *task structuring* (planning) and *probing, synthesis and judgment* (problem solving). It was also divided for management by Tett, Guterman, Bleier and Murphy (2000) as *Traditional function* (decision making, planning) and *occupational acumen and concerns* (job knowledge, concern for quality and quantity).

Research Design

The research design adopted was cross-sectional survey research design because it is an empirical study research design used to investigate a cause and effect correlation between the independent variable (work location models) and the dependent variable (employee job performance), the research was carried out with the aid a structured questionnaire.

Population of the Study

Population of a study is a set of homogenous elements within a universe that is chosen for a study. The accessible population of this study is 656 administrative staff from five (5) selected oil and gas firms in Rivers State. The accessible population was chosen due to easy accessibility to information and for an unbiased conclusion in order to achieve the aim of the study. The firms and number of employees are given below.

Table 1 Population distribution of research instruments for oil and gas firms

| S/No. | Names of Firms | Number of Admin Staff |
|-------|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) | 70 |
| 2 | Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) | 145 |
| 3 | Halliburton Energy Services Nigeria Limited | 220 |
| 4 | Norfin-offshore Limited | 5 |
| 5 | Shell Petroleum Development Company | 216 |
| | Total | 656 |

Source: Human Resource Department of each firm

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample represents a proportional size of a population that can be handled. The simple random sampling technique, a probabilistic sampling technique will be used in this study. The intention is to get a sample that is convenient to use, accurately represents the population under study because it gives every member of the population an equal chance at being chosen to participate in the survey and it eliminates researcher's bias in choosing samples. The Taro Yamane's formula was used for determining the sample size of the study:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where,

n= sample size or population not known

N= population size known

e= error limit given the population (5%)

With the total population being 656 at 95% confidence and error limit of 0.05

The sample size for this study is 248 which were obtained using the Taro Yamane's formula. However, the Bowley (1964) formula will be used in allocating the questionnaires to each firm. The formula is given as:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

nh = The number of questioning distributed to each firm

n = The total sample size

Nh = Number of employees in each firm

N = Population

Nature/Sources of Data

The data used for this study were gotten from primary and secondary sources and the nature of the data is quantitative. The primary data was collected with the aid of structured questionnaires which were administered to respondents via online survey and the secondary data was collected from existing literatures from journals, textbooks, the internet; which provided materials for review of literature and company records; from whence population size was derived.

Methods of Data Collection

The data was collected using electronic survey so as to reach all employees despite the work model they employ i.e. on-site, hybrid and remote. The e-forms were forwarded to employees of the chosen oil and gas firms were requested to forward to as many of their colleagues as possible. The link was also posted on the organisations' Whatsapp groups by a research assistant from each organisation requesting that employees participate in the survey.

Validity/Reliability of Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures that which it ought to measure (Baridam, 2001). Gay (1996) opined that validity is the most important characteristic of a standard test as it measures the accuracy of an instrument. He stated that validity is indispensable and no other test can compensate for inadequacy in validity. The validity test for the research instrument will be conducted thus; it will be presented to the supervisor for vetting and validation, professionals in the field will also be consulted and appropriate corrections will be made.

Reliability is a measure to confirm the extent to which an instrument is consistent. It is the mother of science as science maintains consistency. An instrument is considered reliable when it produces the same result every time it is administered. For reliability test, Cronbach alpha test will be used with a benchmark value of 0.7 along with test and re-test because a pilot survey will be conducted before the main survey.

Data Analysis Techniques

The demographic data will be analysed using descriptive analysis. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient statistical analysis will be employed in analysing the hypotheses in order to determine the correlation between the variables with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the moderating variable will be analysed using partial correlation. The formula for Spearman rank order correlation coefficient is given as;

$$R_{h0} = \frac{\sum d^2}{n(n^2-1)}$$

where,

R_{h0} = Spearman Rank Order Correlation

$\sum d^2$ = Sum of squared difference in the ranking of the two variables

n = Number of subjects being ranked

Analyses and Findings

H₀. There is no significant correlation between on-site work and employee task performance of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Correlations

| | | On_site_work | Task_performance |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Spearman's rho | On_site_work | 1.000 | .451* |
| | Correlation Coefficient | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .017 |
| | N | 248 | 248 |
| | Task_performance | .451* | 1.000 |
| | Correlation Coefficient | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .017 | |
| | N | 248 | 248 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2021.

Our test of hypothesis reveals a significant relationship between on-site work and task performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.451 and a p-value of 0.017. With this, we reject the stated null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

Conclusion

This implies that workers on-site would always have a first-hand information of the objectives to be met and this would create an ease in coordination and motivation of employees. The effect of onsite work on employee task performance varies with respect to individual employees, some employees perform highly on-site, while others perform poorly (Loganathan, Forsythe & Kalidindi, 2018). According to Loganathan *et al.* (2018), some on-site work practices may influence worker's task performances, they include; work preparation and execution practices, group formation and stability (skills and experiences), avoiding duplication (of non-value adding tasks), employee social cohesion and internal and external leadership; researchers such as Hinze (1981) and Salas, Cooke and Rosen (2008), suggest that increased autonomy may enhance employee task performance as it gives them a sense of pride and ownership when they are able to manage their tasks themselves.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

- The management of oil and gas firms should embark on proper planning and execution to incorporate the several work location models so as to encourage flexibility and adaptability in order to survive the environmental changes associated with the business world.
- Employees should be given the opportunity to participate in decision making to choose models as employee insight and involvement will boost work-life balance and morale as well as commitment to the adopted model, leading to improved job performance.

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