
SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND RETENTION OF EMPLOYEES OF NIGERIA'S SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated the link between supportive work environment and employee retention. The study focused on employees of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN) Headquarter Abuja. The study employed descriptive research design and used structured questionnaire to collect data from 203 employee in SMEDAN Headquarter. All 203 questionnaire were filled and returned. Four null hypotheses were formulated and tested using linear regression analysis, and at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that supervisory support, perceived climate and personal development opportunities have significant positive effects on employee retention which led to the rejection of the first, third and fourth null hypotheses. However, result showed that perceived organisational support has a positive non-significant effect on employee retention leading to the acceptance of the second null hypothesis. Base on these findings, the study recommends that SMEDAN management should among other things create a climate of work that guarantees security and wellbeing of employees since it has a direct impact on employee retention.

Keywords: Employee retention, perceived organisational support, perceived climate, supervisory support, supportive work environment

INTRODUCTION

Drastic changes in worker demographics and work environment dynamics have altered how firms interact with employees, and has made employee retention a frontline issue. This is because all organisations are set up to achieve specific goals, and the achievement of these goal rest on employees. This amplifies the argument that human resource is the most crucial resource firms can possess (Ldama & Bazza, 2015). Ateke and Akani (2018) argue that employees have become the ultimate source of competitiveness for firms, as globalization and other environmental shifts weaken traditional sources of competitiveness.

The ability to retain a positive and motivated employee is important to a company's success. High rate of employee turnover increases costs and has negative impact on firm's overall performance. Consequently, in many enterprises, management pay close attention to employee retention which has become a barometer for enterprise's ability to institute effective retention measures and keep its employees, particularly its top performers. (Anvari et al., 2014; Ozolina-Ozola, 2014). Employee retention is to a large extent, a function of work environment. Scholars identify supervisory support (Kurtosis et al., 2015; Zafar, 2015), perceived organisational support (Alias et al., 2019; Ateke & Akani, 2018), perceived climate and personal development opportunity (Berberoglu, 2018), empowerment (Okochi & Ateke, 2021) among others, as major components of work environment that leads to employee retention and commitment.

However, findings in this respect have not been conclusive as some of the results are at variance (Beberoglu, 2018; Zafar, 2015; Alias et al., 2019; Kurtosis et al., 2015; Kwenin, 2013). Thus, the question about the effect of work environment on employee retention has not been successfully and conclusively answered. This provides a premise for further research on the effect of work environment on employee retention. Similarly, the current area of study has not benefited much from previous research efforts aimed at ascertaining the effect of work environment on employee retention. There is therefore a need for this study to address this paucity.

To do this successfully, the research sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

- 1) To investigate the effect of perceived organisational support on employee retention.
- 2) To assess the effect of personal development opportunity on employee retention.
- 3) To examine the effect of perceived climate on employee retention.
- 4) To evaluate the effect of supervisory support on employee retention.

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested to facilitate the achievement of the objectives:

- Ho₁: Perceived organisational support has no significant effect on employee retention.
Ho₂: Personal development opportunity has no significant effect on employee retention.
Ho₃: Perceived climate has no significant effect on employee retention.
Ho₄: Supervisory support has no significant effect on employee retention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Supportive Work Environment

Work environment encompasses physical setting, work characteristics, broader structure options, and aspects of additional organisational settings, implying that work environment is a combination of the interrelationships that exist between employees and employers, as well as the working context of employees, which includes the technical, social, and political aspects (Awoken, 2019). According to Kwenin (2013), employees' decision to stay or leave a job is dependent on the totality of work environment.

Previous studies identified a number of supportive work environment dimensions that have impacts on employee retention (Suifan et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2018; Gevrek et al., 2017). These dimensions include perceived organisational support, personal development opportunity, perceived climate and supervisory support.

Perceived organisational support is employees' perception of the support they get from the organisation in their pursuit of "a better life; "employees' believe that aid will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out their jobs effectively and to deal with stressful situations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, as cited in Ateke & Akani, 2018). It is a behavior that a firm can choose to prioritize (Islam et al., 2018). However, employees give their support to organisations that have good support culture. The more organisational support people perceived, the more they feel valued and valuable to the organisation, as well

as having a positive experience and time working there (Arnold & Dupre, 2012). They feel obligated to support management in accomplishing the organization's objective and vision (Suifan et al., 2018).

Personal development involves the developing the knowledge and skills required to prepare for newer or greater responsibilities and challenges. Employee performance and retention improves as they get more knowledge. Organisations have realized the need for competent employee in lieu of the efficiencies competent employees confer on firm. Thus, investing in competency development programmes to improve employees' skills have become a norm among firms (Huselid, 1995). Employees are offered opportunities for training and development to make them feel valued by their employers, which enhances loyalty (Dockel, 2003) and commitment (Ateke & Akani, 2018; Newman et al., 2011) to the organisation.

Perceived climate is one of the most essential parts of the corporate environment. Perceived climate has a direct impact on employee behavior. Organisational climate, which can be described as organisational team spirit can also be defined as a shared view and value within an organisation and it is one of the most essential features in an organisation that impact how people behave (Robbins & Judge, 2013; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Employee well-being is influenced by the organisational climate, which has a direct impact on the quality and quantity of work done in an enterprise (Mullins, 2010).

Supervisory Support is essential in order to physically express and display a nice work environment in a corporation (Suifan et al., 2018). Employees' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' gratitude for their efforts and concern for their well-being may be influenced by supervisory support (Eisenberger et al., 2002). When employees receive this form of assistance, they feel rewarded for assisting the supervisor in accomplishing the supervisor's goals and objectives, which indirectly indicates organisational support (Tuzun & Kalemci, 2012). Therefore, supervisory support is crucial in fostering a congenial work environment, which can have positive effect on employee retention (Newman et al., 2011, Gevrek et al., 2017).

Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to a company's efforts to keep its most productive and desirable personnel in order to achieve its goals. In any company, staff retention is crucial since high turnover costs contribute to failure to reach corporate goals. Retention is important since it helps to keep talented personnel from being poached, as well as minimizing turnover, recruiting, and training costs (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). According to research, favorable work environments cause certain individuals to stay with a company for longer periods of time (Ghosh et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2018; Khalid & Nawab, 2018; Perryer et al., 2010; George, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

This study is founded on hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943) and organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Hierarchy of needs theory suggests that humans strive to be self-actualizing, and he saw human potential as a vastly undervalued and confusing domain (Stephens, 2000). Maslow (1943), categorized five classes of goals as essential needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. People, particularly employees, are motivated by a desire to acquire or maintain numerous conditions that support these basic pleasures, as well as some more cerebral goals.

This theory provides that the creation of good work environment meets physiological needs of workers; wages and salaries, fringe benefits and retirement benefits showing empathy meet safety needs of employees; encouraging social interaction, fostering team spirit and workers engagement satisfy employee's affiliation needs; while use of praise and awards, training, and encouragement of creativity help in meeting esteem and self-actualization needs of employees (Ramlall, 2004). Therefore, managers design programs to satisfy unmet requirements in order to excite employees (Ramlall, 2004).

Organisational support theory on the other hand, suggests that employees get a basic impression of how much the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). The theory explains that perceived organisational support depends strongly on attributions of employees regarding the intention of their organization's decision to treat them favourably or unfavourably.

In response, perceived organizational support starts a the process of social exchange where employees they are under obligation to assist the organisation in its quest to achieve its objectives and also have the expectation that such efforts from them will be well rewarded by the organisation. Perceived organizational support meets socio-emotional needs, leading to more organizational commitment (Kurtosis et al., 2015).

Empirical Review

Sun's (2019) examine perceived organizational support and the circumstances that surround it. According to the findings, perceived organizational support is a one-sided interaction that focuses on organization's commitment to its people. Human resource management practices, employee characteristics, leadership, and management communication influence working conditions and employee perceptions of organisational support, which are linked to lower absenteeism, higher job satisfaction, happiness, organisational citizenship behavior, and organisational performance.

In another study, Umamaheswari and Krishnan (2016) examined the role of work environment on workforce retention. Finding revealed that commitment is a critical driver of employee retention and work environment, with supervisor support and training and development being the most important antecedents for organisational commitment extension. Also, Berberoglu (2018) examined impact of organisational climate on organisational commitment and perceived organisational performance. Findings revealed that organisational climate has significant impact on organisational commitment and perceived organisational performance.

Relatedly, Agbozo et al. (2017) examined effect of work environment on job satisfaction in Ghana's banking sector using primary data and found that workplace atmosphere has a substantial impact on employee satisfaction. Other scholars who have investigated the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention report positive result (See Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Ateke & Akani, 2018; Arya & Sainy, 2017; Kundu & Lata, 2017; Kwenin, 2013). However, Alias et al. (2019) came up with a contradictory results as their findings revealed that the relationship between the variables is not significant.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design and used questionnaires to generate primary data. The population of the study is staff of SMEDAN Headquarters in Abuja. The SMEDAN Record Book (2022) states that there are 411 staff in the organisation. A sample size of 203 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the elements of the sample to whom the research questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. The respondent's personal information was contained in Section A, while Section B contained items drawn from relevant theories, reviewed literature and tailored towards providing scientific basis for the rejection or acceptance of the hypotheses upon being tested using relevant statistical tool.

The dependent variable (employee retention) was measured using 4 items, while the four components of supportive work environment (supervisory support, perceived organizational support, perceived organizational climate, and personal development opportunities) were measured with 4 items each. Instrument validity and reliability were carefully done using appropriate methods. Similarly,

multicollinearity test was conducted to determine the strength of correlation between the dependent and independent variables. Table 1 shows the result obtained:

Table 1: Diagnostic Test Results

Variable	Variance Inflation Factor(VIF)	Tolerance Level
Supervisory support	1.102	0.907
Perceived organisational support	1.095	0.913
Perceived organisational climate	1.110	0.901
Personal Development Opportunity	1.014	0.986
Durbin-Watson = 1.898		

Source: Extraction from SPSS 23 Result (2022)

The results of the multicollinearity and autocorrelation tests are shown in the Table 1. The result reveals that each variable's tolerance level is less than 1, and their respective VIF is less than 10. As a result, it demonstrates that multicollinearity is not a concern. There is also no serious threat of serial correlation among the variables as the Durbin Watson statistics of 1.898, is slightly less than the standard value of 2.

The data analysis techniques used were descriptive statistics and regression analysis aided by SPSS. The regression model created by Cohen (2008) was adapted which is as follows:

$$Y_0 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e \quad (i)$$

Where

Y_0 = Dependent Variable, β_0 = Intercept, β = coefficient of independent variables

X_1 - X_2 = Independent Variable

e = error term

By substituting the variables of the current study, the model becomes:

$$ER = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SS + \beta_2 PS + \beta_3 PC + \beta_4 PO + e \quad (ii)$$

ER = Employee Retention, SS = Supervisory Support, PS = Perceived Organisational Support

PC = Perceived Climate, PO = Personal Development Opportunity

RESULTS

Table 2: Administration and collection of Questionnaires

Number administered	Number of retrieved	Percentage (%)
203	203	100

Source: Author's Computation (2022)

Table 2 shows that a total of 203 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and 203 questionnaires were retrieved, representing 100 percent of the total number of questionnaires administered. The data analysis was based on the questionnaires filled out by the respondents.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondent

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 20	0	0
21-30	38	18
31-40	52	26
41-50	81	40
Above 50	32	16
Total	203	100

Source: Author's Computation (2022)

Table 3 displays the age group distribution of respondents in the research area. The results show that 0% of respondents are under the age of 20, 18% of respondents are between the ages of 21 and 30, 18% of respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, those within the age range of 41-50 is 26% representing 52 respondents, 40% fall within the age range of 51-60 representing 81 respondents, and respondents above 60 years is 16% representing 32 respondents.

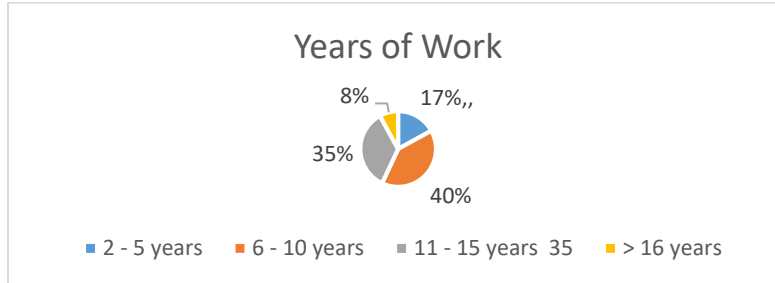


Fig. 1: Distribution of respondent of years of work in the organisation
Source: Author’s Computation (2022)

Fig. 1 shows the years of work in the organisation of the respondent in the study area. The result shows that 17% (34) of the respondents have worked for 2-5 years in the organisation, 40% (82) of the respondent have worked for 6-10 years in the organisation, 35% (70) of the respondents have worked in the organisation for 11-15 years and 8% (30) of the respondents have worked in the organisation for at least 16 years.

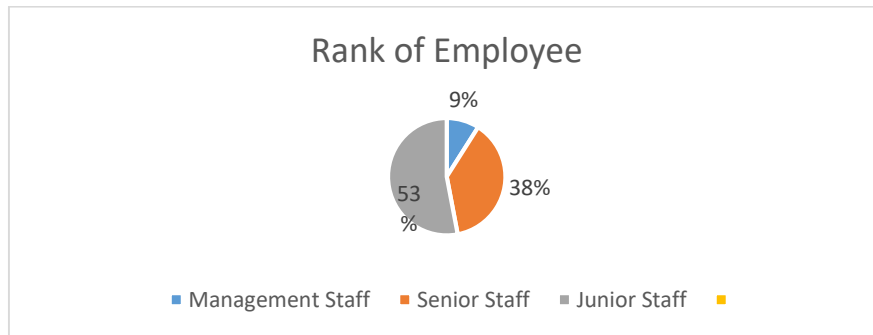


Fig. 2: Rank of respondent in the organisation
Source: Field Survey (2022)

Fig. 2 shows the rank distribution of respondents in the study area used. The result shows that 9% representing 31 respondent are management staff in the organisation, 38% representing 77 respondent are senior staff in the organisation and 53% representing 108 of respondent are junior staff.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Result

Model	Coefficient	Sig
(Constant)	3.435	0.000
Supervisory Support	0.014	0.048
Perceived Organisational Support	0.140	0.058
Perceived Organisational Climate	0.048	0.052
Personal Development Opportunities	0.016	0.008
$R^2 = 0.626;$ $F = 1.340;$ $Sig = 0.026$		

Source: Author’s Extraction from SPSS version 23 Output (2022)

Table 4 shows the four dimensions of the independent variables in the model explain about 62.6% of total change in the dependent variable. The model fit is also shown to be good by the F- statistics value of 1.340 which is significant at 0.026. Table 4 also shows that the coefficient of supervisory support is 0.014 and significant at p-value change in employee retention. This result is significant since the p-value of 0.048 is less than 0.05. Therefore study rejects the null hypothesis.

Similarly, Table 4 shows that the coefficient of perceived organizational support is shown to be 0.140 and significant at p-value 0.058. This shows that a unit change in perceived organisational support will bring about a 0.140 unit change in employee retention. The result is not significant since the p-value of 0.058 is higher than 0.05. Therefore the study retains the null hypothesis.

In addition, Table 4 shows the coefficient of perceived climate to be 0.048 and significant at p-value 0.052 this show that a unit change in the perceived climate will bring about a 0.048 unit change in employee retention. The result is significant since the p-value of 0.052 is approximately equal to 0.05. Therefore the study rejects the null hypothesis.

Further, Table 4 shows that the coefficient of personal development opportunity is 0.016 which is significant at the p-value 0.008 this shows that a unit change in the Personal development opportunity will bring about a 0.016 unit change in employee retention. The result is significant since the p-value of 0.008 is less than 0.05 Therefore study rejects the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to use primary data to investigate the impact of a supportive work environment on employee retention using SMEDAN Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. According to the results, Supervisory support has a positive and significant impact on employee retention. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was chosen instead. The findings of another researcher, Zafar (2015), who studied the effects of supervisory assistance on staff retention, back up the conclusion. Employee retention has a significant positive relationship with supervisory support, according to the findings.

Furthermore, the results show that there is no significant relationship between perceived organisational support and staff retention. The results demonstrate that a unit change in perceived organisational support would lead to 0.140 unit change in staff retention. However, the effect is shown to be insignificant which is why the null hypothesis was retained. The findings of Alias et al. (2019), who studied the effect of a supportive work environment on employee retention provides a support for the findings of the study; though, it is at variance with the result of Kurtesis *et al.* (2015).

The result also reveals that perceived climate has a positive significant effect on employee retention this is because the coefficient of perceived climate is positive (0.048), which shows that a unit change in the perceived climate brought about a unit change in employee retention. With a p-value of 0.052 is approximately equal to 0.05, the study rejects the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This finding is related to the findings of Berberoglu (2018) who conducted a research on the impact of organisational climate on organisational commitment and perceived organisational performance.

Similarly, the result for the fourth hypothesis on the effect of personal development opportunity on employee retention establishes a positive (0.016) effect with a p-value of 0.008 which is also significant since it is smaller than the 0.05 critical value. The study rejects the null hypothesis meaning that, there is a significant effect between personal development opportunities with a unit change in the personal development opportunity bringing about a 0.016 unit change in employee retention. Kwenin (2013), who

performed research on the relationship between work environment, career development possibilities, and employee retention, came to the same conclusion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To investigate the influence of supportive work environment on employee retention, four hypotheses were formulated and tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The results show supervisory support, perceived climate and personal development opportunities have significant positive effect on employee performance while perceived organizational support has an insignificant positive effect on employee retention.

According to the study's findings, there is a statistically significant positive effect between supervisory supports, perceived climate, personal development opportunity and employee retention in SMEDAN headquarter Abuja while there is no significant effect of perceived organisational support in SMEDAN headquarter Abuja. It can be concluded that supportive work environment has a significant positive effect on employee retention at SMEDAN, Abuja.

Based on the findings and conclusion as indicated above, the study recommends that SMEDAN Headquarter Abuja should encourage supervisors to give necessary supports to employees under them to create a meaningful and healthy work environment; and that SMEDAN Headquarter Abuja should give necessary supports to employees of the organisation to encourage them to stay for sometimes in the organization.

The study also recommends that SMEDAN Headquarter Abuja should try to create a climate of work that guarantees the security of work and wellbeing of employees since it has a direct impact on employee retention; and that SMEDAN should provide employees with personal development opportunities as much as they can so as to improve employee retention.

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