

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND QUALITY OF WORKLIFE OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This study examined organisational communication and quality of worklife of women in Nigeria tertiary institutions. The study employed the descriptive design of the survey type. The population of the study comprised all the academic and non-academic female staff of public Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Nine Hundred academic and non-academic female staff were selected using multistage sampling procedure. An adopted instrument tagged "Organisational Communication and Quality of Worklife of Women Survey" (OCQWLWS) was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that communication contributes to the quality of worklife of women. Tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria met the standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women. Based on the findings, it was recommended that participatory decision making that will involve women workers should be encouraged by the management of tertiary institutions. Open door policy that reduces formality in accessing the management staff should be practised in tertiary institutions. It is important for the management of tertiary institutions to keep themselves abreast of the periodical reviews of International Labour Organisation (ILO) and implement them to the letter in order to ensure high quality of worklife of women. Lines of communication and the objectives of the institution should be explicit and known to women staff. There should be mutual goal setting by the management and employees to motivate women delivery of duties.

Keywords: Organisational communication, Quality of worklife, Communication process, Communication skill, Communication pattern.

Introduction

Tertiary education is referred to as the third stage (third level) in the education pyramid. Universities are regarded as the apex of tertiary institutions over the ages. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012) further stated that the goals of tertiary education shall be to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training, to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society, to also develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand their local and external environments, to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, to promote and encourage schooling and community service, to equally forge and cement national unity and promote national and international interaction.

To achieve the objectives of tertiary education, human resources comprising academic and non-academic staff, who are the employees of tertiary institutions, cannot be taken for granted. Among these employees are women. Despite the patriarchal culture of Nigeria. Female lecturers in tertiary institutions like their male counterparts are faced with the major functions of teaching, research and community service. The female non-academic

staff also, like their male counterparts organise and manage the administration, support systems and activities that enable the effective running of the tertiary institutions. They work in various units and departments such as admissions, quality assurance, data management, examinations, or in specialist departments such as finance, careers or human resources. All these can be centrally based or within faculties, departments or other smaller units in the tertiary institutions (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2009). Women in higher institutions contribute their quota in the development of the students in becoming total persons. They prepare students to face the challenges of life. They instill discipline; knowledge and preparedness to enable them become mentally, emotionally and physically healthy.

Quality of worklife (QWL) is a relatively new concept in human resource management. The philosophy is aimed at improving productivity by providing workers with the opportunities required to put in their best at work, without jeopardising their personal self-improvement and responsibilities at home (Ogunsanya & Olorunfemi, 2012). It implies that quality of work life of women is contingent on the extent to which women feel valued, rewarded, motivated, consulted and empowered (Anon, 2003).

Quality of worklife is widely conceived as a key factor in the relationship among employees and organisations. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1998) argued that the high levels of effort exerted by employees with improved worklife would lead to higher levels of performance and effectiveness at both individual and organisational levels. An employee who has improved worklife in his organisation is likely to be productive, stable and always strive towards fulfilling the needs of the organisation as opposed to those who have unimproved worklife (Anon, 2003).

International Labour Organisation (1993) has its concern on welfare of women workers. It is aimed at objectively setting up guidelines for the employers on how to treat their staff, and women workers in particular. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Division for Sustainable Development (2004), in a study in Nairobi concluded that in order to achieve full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities, there must be programmes to promote the reduction of the heavy workload of women and girl children at home and outside.

The importance of organisational communication to quality of worklife was affirmed by Wyatt and Wah (2001) that achieving some level of personal growth may be quite related to the quality of communication in the organisation. Communication process refers to the interpersonal contacts, written and unwritten arising from the sender to the receiver. Pressure seems to arise as a result of ineffective communication. Messages that are not well encoded may not be understood by the women working in tertiary institutions.

Effective communication flow is considered to be crucial to the quality of worklife in an organisation. Communication process is very vital to administration processes such as decision making, planning, organising, coordinating and controlling (Ogundipe, 2002). The current problems with quality of worklife of women in an organisation may likely be partly traced to ineffective communication. If information flow is properly channelled, management becomes functional (Nwankwo, 1985).

Gilbert (2006) stated that as every company knows that employees are its greatest resources, it is more than a shame then, that many workers are either not encouraged or afraid to speak up or communicate ideas at the work place. This leads to employers losing valuable knowledge and experience, and their companies get weaker for that loss. Employers are important to the improvement-oriented voice process because they are the target of voice. If they send signals that they are open, interested and willing to act on women's voice, it is logical to expect that women's motivation to do so will be increased. Where women perceive

employers' behaviour to indicate that it is either unsafe or futile to speak up, they are less likely to do so.

Ajayi and Ayodele (2011) identified some principles as essential for effective communication and personnel management in educational institutions. According to them, there should be clear organisational structure where each staff knows his unit, immediate boss,ordinates and subordinates. The objectives of the school must be made known to members of staff. Roles and duties of staff must be clearly spelt out and documented for easy reference and communication, lines of communication must be explicit and known to staff. However, the chain of communication should not be unnecessarily long, expectations and performance standards should be known to members of staff from the initial stages or at the beginning of the session.

It appears from experience as if women working in tertiary institutions prefer verbal communication to written types. Often, written communication from top is taken as queries or regulations which may be breached on the pain of punishment. It also appears as if in ensuring quality of worklife of staff, successful organizations take into consideration the communication process, pattern and skill of different personalities. Communication among women in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria seems not so effective, hence the pressure of work seems unbearable for them. Observation shows that decisions concerning women are sometimes taken in tertiary institutions without involving them because of the patriarchal idea that women could only be seen but not heard. This could be considered as part of poor communication which seems to affect the quality of worklife of women working in tertiary institutions.

Experience has also shown that successful organisations support and provide facilities to help women balance the scales of responsibilities. Despite the efforts of some countries in providing facilities and enabling work environment that could ease the blending of these requirements of the working women, such as day care centres in work place, giving pregnant women twelve weeks of maternity leave, allowing nursing mothers to take a break of thirty minutes twice a day to breast feed their babies at the day care centre nearby and duly promoting women on maternity leave, it appears as if Nigeria, in spite of these various International Labour Organisation (1993) standard in ensuring the quality of worklife of women workers have not done much to improve the situation of women workers in tertiary institutions.

This seemingly unenhanced state of organisational communication among women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria could be likened to a double edged sword which could endanger their health and job. This calls for the need to examine

organisational communication and quality of worklife of women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The following questions are raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria experience favourable organisational communication?
2. To what extent do tertiary institutions in Nigeria meet the standard of International Labour Organization (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women?

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive design of the survey type. The population of the study comprised of all the 20,128 academic and non-academic female staff of public Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria (research findings). Nine Hundred academic and non-academic female staff were selected using multistage sampling procedure. The first stage involved simple random sampling technique by which three out of the six states in the Southwest, Nigeria (Ekiti State, Oyo State and Ogun State) were selected. The second stage involved the use of proportionate stratified random sampling to select one University, one Polytechnic and one College of Education from each of these three states. At the third stage, stratified sampling technique was used to select faculties/schools and departments in these institutions. Finally, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 450 academic and 450 non-academic female staff from the various institutions for the study. That is, 50

academic and 50 non-academic female staff from each of the nine tertiary institutions. An adopted instrument tagged "Organisational Communication and Quality of Worklife of Women Survey" (OCQWLWS) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to screening by experts in the area of Educational Management and Tests and Measurements in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti to ascertain the validity. Test re-test method of reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of $r = 0.86$ was obtained, which was considered high enough for reliability. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results

Question 1: To what extent do women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria experience favourable organisational communication?

In answering the question, responses of women staff on items relating to organisational communication experienced by women (items 1-12) in section B of "Organisational Communication and Quality of Worklife of Women Survey" (OCQWLWS) were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The average response on each of the dimensions of organisational communication (communication process, communication skills, communication pattern) were obtained. "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses were merged to form "Agree" while "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" responses were merged to form the "Disagree" column. Table 1 shows the result.

Table 1: Organisational Communication Experienced by Women in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Freq- uency	Percent age	Freq- uency	Percent age
1.	Well coded messages are properly understood for me to discharge my duties well	805	90.3	86	9.7
2.	Desirable communication channels link the management functions with organisational objectives	757	85.0	134	15.0
3.	Communication in the institution is effective among staff because the interpretation tallies with the intended meaning.	714	80.2	177	19.9
4.	Communication in the institution brings about required change in the staff's attitude.	679	76.2	212	23.8
5.	Verbal communication facilitates development of skills for innovativeness in the staff	765	85.9	126	14.1
6.	Written communication facilitates the development of values of the workers	728	81.7	163	18.3
7.	Departmental meetings are held regularly by unit heads to assist workers in their work performance	691	77.5	200	22.4
8.	There is mutual goal setting by the management and employees to motivate women delivery of duties.	620	69.6	271	30.4
9.	The management makes the objectives of the institution known to members of staff.	702	78.8	189	21.3
10.	Lines of communication are explicit and known to staff	718	80.6	173	19.4
11.	Staff meetings are open enough to allow different views and feelings in decision making.	688	77.3	203	22.8
12.	Open door policy that reduces formality in accessing the management staff of the institution is practiced in the institution.	505	56.6	386	43.3
Average		698	78.3	193	21.7

The result in Table 1 revealed that women workers experience favourable organisational

communication. The result showed that regarding the communication process, 805 (90.3%) of the total sample agreed that well coded messages are

properly understood for discharging their duties well while 86 (9.7%) disagreed. 757 (85%) reported that desirable communication channels link the management functions with organisational objectives while 134 (15%) disagreed. 714 (80.2%) indicated that communication in the institution is effective among staff because the interpretation tallies with the intended meaning while 177 (19.9%) disagreed. 679 (76.2%) agreed that communication in the institution brings about required change in the staff's attitude while 212 (23.8%) disagreed.

Regarding the communication skills exhibited by the institutions, 765 (85.9%) agreed that verbal communication facilitates development of skills for innovativeness in the staff while 126 (14.1%) disagreed. 728 (81.7%) agreed that written communication facilitates the development of values of the workers while 163 (18.3%) disagreed. Of the respondents, 691 (77.5%) agreed that departmental meetings are held regularly by unit heads to assist workers in their job performance while 200 (22.4%) disagreed. 620 (69.6%) reported that there is mutual goal setting by the management and employees to motivate workers' productivity while 271 (30.4%) disagreed.

The result further revealed that 702 (78.8%) of the respondents agreed that the management makes the objectives of the institution known to members of staff while 189 (21.3%) disagreed. 718 (80.6%) agreed that lines of communication are explicit and known to staff while 173 (19.4%) disagreed. 688 (77.3%) agreed that staff meetings are open enough to allow different views and feelings in decision

making while 203 (22.8%) disagreed. 505 (56.6%) agreed that open door policy that reduces formality in contacting the chief executive of the institution is practiced in the institution while 386 (43.3%) disagreed. On the average, 698 respondents representing 78.3% of the total sample experienced favourable organisational communication while 193 respondents representing

21.7% agreed that they had no experience of favourable organisational communication. Therefore, women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria experienced favourable organisational communication.

Question 2: To what extent do tertiary institutions in Nigeria meet the standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women in tertiary institutions?

In answering the question, responses of women staff on items relating to the compliance with the standard of International Labour Organisation in ensuring the quality of worklife of women in tertiary institutions (items 13-16) in section C of "Organisational Communication and Quality of Worklife of Women Survey" (OCQWLWS) were analysed using frequency counts and percentage responses. "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses were merged to form "Agree" while "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" responses were merged to form the "Disagree" column. Table 2 shows the result.

Table 2: The Rate of Compliance with the Standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Ensuring Quality of Worklife of Women

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
13.	There is a day-care centre for babies in my place of work	619	69.4	272	30.5
14.	My organisation gives pregnant women twelve weeks of maternity leave	762	85.5	129	14.5
15.	My organisation allows nursing mothers to take a break of thirty minutes twice a day for breast feeding their babies at the day-care centre nearby.	501	56.3	390	43.8
16	Pregnant women on maternity leave are duly promoted.	527	59.2	364	40.9
	Average	602	67.6	289	32.4

The results in Table 2 revealed how tertiary institutions in Nigeria meet the standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women. The result showed that 619 respondents (69.4%) of the total sample indicated the availability of day-care centre in their place of work while 272 (30.5%) disagreed. There is provision for twelve weeks maternity leave for women as 762 (85.5%) of the

respondents agreed and 129 (14.5%) disagreed. 501 representing 56.3% agreed that their organisations allow nursing mothers to take a break of thirty minutes twice a day for breast feeding their babies at the day-care centre nearby, while 390 (43.8%) disagreed. In addition, 527 respondents, representing 59.2% of the sample, agreed that pregnant women on maternity leave are duly promoted while 364 representing 40.9% disagreed.

Therefore, the compliance rate of tertiary institutions in Nigeria with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standard in ensuring the quality of worklife of women is high. On the average, 602 (67.6%) of the total women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are of the opinion that the tertiary institutions meet the standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women in tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria while 289 (32.4%) of the total women did not agree. This implies that tertiary institutions in Nigeria met the standard of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in ensuring the quality of worklife of women.

Discussion

It was discovered in the study that women in tertiary institutions experience favorable organisational communication. The organisational communication experienced by women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was open, explicit, regular, effective and channelled towards the attainment of organisational objectives. Wilson (2005) referred to organisational communication as all the ways, strategies and tools which persons within such organisation employ in their official, interpersonal, face-to-face or small group communication activities.

The result showed that the compliance rate of tertiary institutions in Nigeria with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standard in ensuring quality of worklife of women is high. However the finding still revealed that some of the women were of the opinion that their institutions do not allow nursing mothers to take a break of thirty minutes twice a day to breast feed their babies at day-care centre no matter how close it is to their working place and that pregnant women on maternity leave are not duly promoted. This finding agrees with The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Division for Sustainable Development (2004), in a study in Nairobi that concluded that in order to achieve full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities, there must be programmes to promote the reduction of the heavy workload of women and girl children at home and outside. The study also concluded that there should be establishment of more and affordable nurseries and kindergartens, social support systems and services, including day-care facilities and adequate parental leave should be put in place by the government, employers and other relevant organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that organisational communication contributes to the quality of worklife of women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

1. Participatory decision making that will involve women workers should be encouraged.
2. Open door policy that reduces formality in accessing the management staff should be practised in tertiary institutions
3. It is important for the management of tertiary institutions to keep themselves abreast of the periodical reviews of International Labour Organisation (ILO) and implement them to the letter in order to ensure high quality of worklife of women.
4. Lines of communication and the objectives of the institution should be explicit and known to women staff.
5. There should be mutual goal setting by the management and employees to motivate women delivery of duties.

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