



## A Review of Organisational Change on Employee Performance in Public Sector Organisations in Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine the impact of organisational change on employee performance in public sector organisations in Nigeria. A review research approach was used in this study. The method was based on secondary data and was tested using the content analysis approach. After reviewing relevant and related literature on the studied topic, it was noted that organisational change practices facilitate employee performance. Also, when implementing change, it should be based on the mission an organisation is built on. This study recommended that public sector organisations in Nigeria should implement changes to be consistent with the changing environment, be persuasive in addressing employee resistance to change, and leadership should be based on expertise.

**Keywords** *Attitudes towards change, Communication change, Employee performance, Leadership change, Organisational change, Public sector organisations, Strategic change, Structural change*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most important goals of organisations is to improve employee performance. This performance is used to assess the growth of the organisation. Therefore, understanding employee performance is crucial for public sector organisations. Employee performance is viewed as what people actually do and what they take that contribute to organisational goals (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). It can best be understood by how an organisation uses human resources to achieve its goals and objectives. It remains a key focus and priority for managers, chief executive officers and the government. Public sector organisations in Nigeria have initiated efforts, policies and programmes to promote employee performance, but workers in the sector are underperforming. According to Keith (2014), poor employee performance is often attributed to insufficient training and skills, poor management support, and a poor communication system within the organisation. Moreover, organisations experience unreliable and poor human resources while the administration is poorly managed. Employees face weak motivational mechanisms that go the extra mile, hindering their efforts. All of this combined leads to inefficiency, delays in order processing, and consistent errors that lead to poor employee performance. Therefore, it is crucial for organisations to know the performance rate of their employees in order to know what changes can be introduced.

Public sector organisations in Nigeria consist of government-owned, controlled and managed ministries, agencies, departments and commissions. This sector is plagued by poor working conditions, which have affected employee motivation and performance (Owota & Elliot, 2022). The unfavourable track record has caused the productivity of public organisations to decline over the years. It has also become a norm at all levels of government in Nigeria to inherit weaknesses in working conditions, causing a physical and emotional strain on workers and the sector at large. According to Okwudili and Ogbu (2017), the inability of federal, state and local governments to pay compensation to their employees is one of the major problems facing the

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Nigerian civil service. The government has a habit of spreading rumours and offering scant excuses when it comes to compensation that affects employee motivation and the progress of the organisation. This can be seen in the recent strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2022 of more than eight (8) months due to, among other things, poor academic staff pay and underfunding of universities. Timely and good remuneration determines how employees and new job seekers are attracted to the organisation. Nkechi (2013) added that employees in Nigerian public organisations are unproductive due to poor human resource planning. Employees are not deployed appropriately to effectively achieve business goals. In addition, public sector organisations in Nigeria are characterised by poor management strategies.

The reasons behind this study are; it is generally believed that no country can exist and progress without formal and functional public sector organisations, and Nigeria is not exempted from this. Similarly, the practice of organisational change in public organisations by the Nigerian government is limited compared to its counterparts around the world. It has also been noted that most studies on organisational change and employee performance in Nigeria have been conducted in private organisations (Daniel, 2019; Okafor, Kalu & Ozioma, 2017; Okoli, 2022; Aduku, Alabi & Orugun, 2021), thus not looking at the public sector. Therefore, the impact of organisational changes on the staff of public organisations in Nigeria is unknown. Hence, this study would be among the first of its kind to evaluate the performance of public sector employees in Nigeria by taking into consideration different change practices; change communication, structural change, strategic change, attitudes towards change and leadership change, and make recommendations. These practices/variables of change were generated from the research problem statement to test their effect on employee performance. This study was conducted through a systematic literature review. However, fifty (50) recently peer-reviewed articles published worldwide in reputable journals, books, and research information were analysed and synthesised. The findings, if implemented, will help address employee underperformance issues and improve productivity in Nigeria's public sector organisations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Employee Performance**

Only through performance can organisations know their rate of growth and progress. The performance of any organisation largely depends on the performance of its employees. In general, an employee is said to perform well when the tasks assigned to him are performed efficiently and effectively to achieve an organisation's stated goals. As defined by Rizqina, Adam, and Chan (2017), employee performance is an issue that determines the level of completion of tasks at any given time. Rizqina et al. added that performance could be interpreted as how well an employee performs a task assigned and desired by a leader; thus, the effort can be described as an energetic force expended to achieve measurable and optimal results. Christopher and Bulah (2016) view employees who achieve the results, objectives and standards expected of an organisation as employee performance. According to Chien (2015), a successful organisation needs employees who are willing to go beyond their normal range of tasks and who contribute to the performance that exceeds the goal's expectations. Additionally, employee performance is important in performing flexible performance to be critical to organisational effectiveness in an increasingly competitive environment (Aryee, Chen, & Budhwar, 2004).

Measuring the results of an employee's service is known as performance measurement. It includes measuring progress made through achievement. To Behn (2003), a performance measurement is an act of collecting, analysing and/or reporting information about the performance of an individual, group, organisation, system or components. Some organisations view their performance in terms of effectiveness in achieving their mission, purpose, or goals or efficiency in

resource allocation (Katherine & Udoka, 2017). While others are in the areas of quality, customer satisfaction, timeliness and achievement of objectives (Njanja et al., 2013). Chaubey (2016) considers employee performance measures as employee attendance at work, quality and quantity of output, timeliness of output, engagement, collaboration, and corporate citizenship behaviour of the organisation. In this study, the key employee performance outcomes are; service, public opinion/satisfaction and distributional development of the economy (Nebo, Nwankwo & Okonkwo, 2015). However, employees are among the most important assets of organisations, which can positively or negatively influence performance. As such, organisations were challenged to advocate for changes that positively influence employee performance.

### **Organisational Change**

Change is inevitable in an organisation. It calls for the renewal of a company's strategies and processes (Lichtenthaler, 2016). Change is seen as a cohesive idea and cuts across all organisations, regardless of size, age and industry. Therefore, change is a natural and inevitable aspect of organisational life. Change refers to a system of continuous transformation that takes place in one or more organisational domains, such as organisational technology, structure and human resources (Sofat, Kiran & Kaushik, 2015). George and Jones (2011) define organisational change as the adoption of innovative ideas or behaviours by an organisation in response to external and internal pressures. External pressure could result from improvements in technology and pressure from stakeholders outside the organisation, such as government or industry competitors.

Internal pressure for change can come from individuals such as shareholders, management or employees. Karanja (2015) considers organisational change as an action or a series of actions that produce a change in direction or a process that affects the functioning of an organisation. Organisational change involves; mission changes, strategic changes, operational changes (including structural changes), technological changes, changes in staff attitudes and behaviours, countering the resistances of various employees of the organisation and aligning them with the strategic directions of the organisation (Khosa et al., 2015). Many factors may necessitate organisational changes, including changing market competitors or new customer requirements. Gareth (2017) identifies four (4) reasons for organisational change, namely dealing with the unexpected, managing diversity, gaining competitive advantage and fostering efficiency, speed and innovation.

An organisation that does not change cannot survive in today's business environment. Change requires managers and the organisation as a whole to address beliefs and mindsets and develop the practices and behaviours that help employees adapt to change because employees will inevitably resist change. It's about engaging employees in change and keeping them engaged in the face of uncertainty, anxiety, and distractions (Dinwoodie et al., 2015). Therefore, for organisations to remain competitive in a changing environment, they must adapt and reorient themselves to the changing environment. However, it will be difficult for the management of the organisation to know exactly when changes are needed in the organisation without knowing the performance of the employees. Poor employee performance is mainly the reason why the management of an organisation starts the process of change strategies, and when the organisation faces this situation, the management will start looking for better change strategies to improve the situation of the organisation. From the issues mentioned and the context of the study, the poor performance of employees in public sector organisations in Nigeria was critically analysed through the following organisational change practices.

### **Change Communication**

Communication as an element of change involves the transmission of intended meaning from one subject or group to another using commonly understood semiotic symbols and conventions, as

well as the exchange or transmission of information or news (Miller, 2014). According to Shonubi and Akintaro (2016), communication is the sharing and exchange of information, feelings, and ideas between the sender and the receiver. Asamu (2014) defined communication as a means by which the task and resources needed to accomplish a task, roles and duties, and expected results are communicated to subordinates, which facilitates work and improve performance. Organisational communication can be horizontal; connecting related operations, work units and departments; downstream communication; transmission of information from higher levels to lower levels, or upward communication, which serves as the management system of the organisation (Nebo et al., 2015). In this situation, it is important to note that communication may be delivered in written; letters, memos, bulletins, etc.; oral communication; verbal conversations between individuals in an organisation, face-to-face interaction or non-verbal communication; using facial expressions, body movements and personal appearance to convey information.

### **Structural Change**

Structural change is a mechanism that connects and coordinates individuals within the framework of their roles, authority and power (Wanyama & Rotich, 2018). It defines how work activities in an organisation should be formally divided, grouped and coordinated. It includes the hierarchical arrangement of an organisation's lines of authority, communication, rights and duties. Harper (2015) defined structural change as changes in the structure of the organisation that may be the result of internal or external factors and typically affect the way the business is run. These changes include things like organisational hierarchy, the chain of command, management systems, work structure and administrative procedures. In an organisation, there are some circumstances which usually give rise to structural change. These include mergers and acquisitions, duplication of work, changes in the market place and changes in processes or policies. Structural change in an organisation can be seen as a framework for getting things done. Among the widespread structure described by literature are mechanistic and organic. The mechanistic organisational structure is characterised by highly formalised, standardised and centralised functions. As a result, individuals in mechanistic organisations have a clear understanding of their job responsibilities and are expected to follow specific guidelines established by policies, practices, and procedures. On the other hand, organic organisations are flatter, more flexible, and more adaptable to environmental conditions so that individual behaviour is guided by shared values and goals. Therefore, organisations must design their structures in accordance with organisational strategies and internal and external conditions of the working environment.

### **Strategic Change**

Strategic change is defined as shifts in product and market decisions in response to dramatic environmental changes (Wang & Wang, 2017). It is a way to change the goals and vision of the organisation to achieve greater success. According to Dominguez, Galán-González, and Barroso (2015), strategic change is a dynamic process that occurs within an organisation in response to managers' interpretation of multiple external and internal events, all of which have a variety of decision-making capabilities and influences on an organisation. Examples of strategic changes include changes to the products or services an organisation offers, the customer segments or target markets it is trying to reach, its position in the global economy, and whom it will work with for manufacturers, distributors, and other logistics needs. An organisation participates in strategic change when it restructures its business or marketing plan to achieve an important objective, e.g. changes in company policy, target market, mission or organisational structure. When an organisational strategy is changed, it can change the way it operates, from its organisational structure to the day-to-day operations of its employees (Neba, 2016).

### **Attitudes Towards Change**

According to Liao et al. (2012), work attitudes are a set of behaviour and judgements about work, and these behaviours and thoughts are redirected in the form of work effort and organisational commitment. Therefore, based on this definition, the attitude towards work can be seen as the actions and omissions of the employee towards his work. All employees have attitudes about their work environment, their role, their purpose, their organisation, their tasks, their colleagues, their leadership, and the processes in which work is organised. As cited in Amit, 2018; Rebeka and Indradevi, 2015; Singh and Gupta, 2016, one of the things to consider in organisational change is the attitude of employees towards change. In the workplace, employee attitude reflects how an employee feels about their job, work environment, resources, policies, and procedures (Mohan & Sudarsan, 2020). In Arifin (2020), employee attitudes towards change are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Accordingly, intrinsic factors include work-related values, self-efficacy, threat assessment, perception of stress, work-related attitudes, skills development, employee confidence, fear of the consequences of change, and career advancement. On the other hand, extrinsic factors include perceived social support, perceived organisational support, leadership style (transformational and transactional), leader membership exchange, manager involvement, commitment to change, organisational support perceived, the quality of information, and organisational fairness.

### **Leadership Change**

According to Akbar (2017), leadership can be defined as the process of social influence that consciously directs others to structure and influence the activities of a group or organisation to achieve one or more goals. As such, to qualify as a leader, one must be able to guide others through their actions and be a role model that people can follow to achieve their goals (Khosa et al., 2015). A leader must have the ability to influence, direct or motivate the behaviour of other people or groups to achieve desired goals. Every leader uses a particular leadership style that an organisation is known for. Leadership style is actually a set of behaviours and patterns exhibited by a leader in managing employee affairs and the organisation at large. According to Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016), leadership styles include Transformational leadership: Motivates employees to achieve specific goals. Transactional Leadership: Focuses more on achieving goals through a reward system. Whereas Win (2016) divided it into Autocratic leadership, which means the decisions and policies are made without consultation. Democratic Leadership: Motivating and consulting employees in the decision-making process. Amegayibor (2021); Charismatic Leadership: Fosters creativity and innovation and continually inspires followers to accomplish their mission; Paternalistic leadership: Has parental qualities such as kindness, benevolence and authoritarianism and is more interested in subordinates.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative research approach based only on textbooks, journals, and published materials applicable to the work. However, the data was gathered and examined using the content analysis approach due to the heavy reliance on the secondary data source. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to design and work in research setting and be innovative (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). It allows a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon. Miles et al. added that a qualitative research approach helps organisations understand the impact of events and their impact on behaviour. To identify current trends in this field, the authors focus on recent books, useful information, and peer-reviewed articles published in prestigious journals less than 20 years ago. We reviewed over sixty (60) books, research information, and peer-reviewed articles from various sources and used only fifty (50) in this study. These have been further

synthesised according to the Public Sector Organisations of Nigeria.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study focuses on the impact of organisational change on employee performance in public sector organisations in Nigerian. The variables used to determine their impact on employee performance are communication change, structure change, strategy change, attitude change and leadership change. It has been established that good communication influences employee performance as it gives them a sense of job satisfaction (Agustriyana, Saudi & Sinaga, 2021). The employees would be able to perform the assigned task without any misunderstanding. To Asamu (2014), effective communications enable mutual understanding between management and employees, which helps in building a true relationship between the two parts of the organisation. Asamu added that organisations that regularly communicate their policies, goals and objectives to their employees are likely to improve job performance. Additionally, appropriate communication channels promote workplace interactions and lead employees to achieve organisational goals. Nebo et al. (2015) have emphasised that an effective communication process is a powerful tool required by management systems to improve employee performance. As such, it must be implemented for both government and private establishments for an effective and successful workforce. For communication to be effective in an organisation, both the sender and receiver must be able to understand and interpret the information received or sent. Njenga and Gachunga (2016) noted that for an organisation to successfully implement change, communication is one of the key elements as it conveys transparency and openness. According to the World Bank (2009), cited in Njenga and Gachunga (2016), good communication conveys the vision, goals and motivations for change; disseminates information about organisational change and the nature, timing and importance of change to stakeholders; provides social support by addressing concerns, allaying fears and encouraging support systems among employees; and provides feedback to employees on their performance during change initiatives and providing feedback to implementers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the change initiative. Organisations should therefore develop strategic communication to adapt to the changing environment. This means that organisation need to change the way it communicates with their employees, stakeholders and customers to reflect the changing environment. Therefore, it is important to convey the message of change in a way that is good for reaching the target group.

As pointed out by Okafor et al. (2017), organisational structure increases the efficiency and innovation capacity of firms. It promotes the efficient use of resources, which in turn increases the performance of people in the organisation. Therefore, organisations should keep an eye on their current structure to see whether or not it matches the goals they have set for themselves and modify/adjust it if necessary. Similarly, Jumanne and Njoroge (2018) argue that to improve the effectiveness of employee performance in public organisations, the roles and responsibilities of each employee should be clearly defined and consider merging similar roles and departments to avoid confusion. This is because improved management systems, work structures and administrative procedures facilitate successful business growth. However, it is of utmost importance to note that organisational structure is a planned system of work tasks and reporting relationships that control, coordinate and motivate employees to cooperate and work together to achieve organisational goals (Richard, 2012) quoted in Okafor et al. (2017).

Strategic change occurs when an organisation seeks to restructure its external operations and, to some extent, its internal operations to achieve greater success. To this end, organisations must ensure that strategic changes are properly implemented in order to experience employee job satisfaction (Wanyama & Rotich, 2018). Thugi and Gathenya (2018) added that strategic change significantly affects employee performance; as such, organisations should teach and support the

development of effective strategic change. Changing the organisation's strategy helps communicate its vision, intentions and mission to customers and business partners. According to Degnegaard (2010), managers responsible for strategic change should consider: (i) employee culture and behaviours since changing something people have long been accustomed to is not easy; (ii) strategic change requires careful consideration of the compatibility of the context between the change and the organisation; a mismatch can lead to many problems; (iii) remember that change is about changing people. However, the organisation will change by changing how managers and employees view the way the company operates.

The attitude of the employees is very important during the changes undertaken by the organisations because they are the ones who implement the new policies of the organisation (Fugate, Prussia & Kinicki, 2012). In the work of Singh and Gupta (2016), they found that employees with a positive attitude toward change are confident employees, while employees with a negative attitude toward change hinder organisational development. For this reason, understanding employee attitudes and removing the negative taught during change planning is key to successfully implementing change and fostering good employee attitudes in the workplace. George and Jayan, 2013 added that organisations become more resourceful and effective when employees have positive attitudes toward the organisation. Hidayah and Nurqamarani (2018) argue that employee motivation at work can be improved by shaping their attitudes towards organisational change. They become satisfied and willing to work with enthusiasm.

Leaders are key decision-makers and controllers of human resources to achieve organisational goals. They determine the acquisition, development and deployment of enterprise resources, the conversion of those resources into valuable products and services, and the creation of value for the organisation's stakeholders (Khadid & Rotich, 2017). As Khadid and Rotich observed, leadership change can help organisations more effectively achieve current goals by linking performance to valuable rewards and ensuring that employees have the resources they need to do their jobs. As Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) argue, employee performance outcome largely depends on the leadership style chosen, as it directly affects employee behaviour. What is most important is the leadership style that aligns with the goals and objectives on which an organisation is built and the changing environment. Therefore, management should focus on leadership development programmes. The management should consider using a different leadership style in a given situation to motivate employees to reduce work errors and improve the quality of their work (Amegayibor, 2021). Hence, employee productivity depends on the leadership style of the leader.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Structural change is a change in command, authority/power, work structure and management within an organisation to improve performance, while strategic change is a change in the products and services an organisation provides to the external environment to improve its status globally. All this is possible with a good communication system. However, even when change is communicated, there are employees who resist change with a negative attitude. This required relying on various forms of incentives to encourage good employee attitudes. Generally, all of these can be accomplished by qualified leaders who can do the work assigned to them. In conclusion, change practices such as change communication, structural change, strategic change, attitudes towards change, and leadership change have been found to influence employee performance. As such public sector organisations in Nigeria should adopt these change practices to influence employee performance and improve organisations' performance. In light of these results, the study suggests:

The vision and goals of public sector organisations in Nigeria can be achieved when

communication gaps between management, employees, stakeholders and the public are bridged. This motivates and empowers everyone involved and fosters a sense of belonging. Also, for effective and efficient use of resources and better performance of employees, structural change practices should be promoted and implemented by public sector organisations in Nigeria.

Public sector organisations must ensure the successful implementation of strategic changes to meet the needs of public and general services of the population. To stop negative employee attitudes and resistance to change, public sector organisations need to involve employees in the change process, convince them of their views on change and provide leadership for a well-planned work transition. Moreover, the management of public sector organisations in Nigeria must rely on various forms of leadership styles that promote and facilitate good working conditions.

### **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study is based on secondary data only, without taking into account the opinions of employees in the workplace. For this reason, the results of the study cannot be generalised. Therefore, for generalisability, further research should be conducted empirically using the reported experience of change in any ministry, agency, or department controlled and managed by the government. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate other challenges facing public sector organisations in Nigeria which this study did not cover, and strengthen change practices to address them. This increases the validity and generalisability of research findings on the impact of organisational change on employee performance.

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