

Career Challenges and Employee Productivity

**Oremodu, Solomon
Akinsanya**

*Caleb University, Imota-Lagos,
Nigeria*

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Corresponding Author:

Oremodu, Solomon Akinsanya

Abstract

Employee performance has been established by extant literature as a determinant of organizational growth and survival. In spite of this, many global sources have been reporting a continual decline of employee performance. This has been attributed to certain aspects of career challenges and work behaviour besieging employees in many health sectors globally. In Nigeria, especially in Lagos State, the performance of health care workers is confronted with reducing employee productivity, all of which could be related to increasing career challenges. This study examined the effect of career challenges on employee productivity in selected teaching and private hospitals in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The study population was 3,656 employees of the selected teaching and private hospitals in Lagos State. A sample size of 449 respondents consisting of doctors, consultants, dentists, nurses and hospital records keepers was determined using the Cochran formula. Stratified and random sampling techniques were adopted to select the respondents. A validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.71 to 0.92. The response rate was 78%. Descriptive and inferential (multiple regression) statistics were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that career challenges and work behavior had a significant effect on health sector employee productivity ($Adj.R^2 = 0.158$, $F(5, 343) = 14.100$, $P < 0.05$). The study concluded that tackling career challenges improves employees' productivity in the selected teaching and private hospitals. The study recommended that relevant stakeholders of selected teaching and private hospitals should create policies to enhance their performance.

Background to the Study

Carter, Neeshat, Badham, and Parker (2018); as well as Pradham and Jena (2017), asserted the importance of employee performance and stressed the need for a greater reliance on human assets as the most vital tool for improving organisation performance. As vital as the role of an employee is in an organisation, Asikhia (2015) noted that employee core competence can deteriorate to core rigidity. Perhaps, in confirmation of Asikhia (2015) observations, various global bodies such as the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics (2022); International Labour Organisation ILO (2022) and scholars such as Mertens, Schollaert, and Anseel (2021) observed a downward trend in employee performances due to series of challenges and issues which service organisation are compelled to meet. These issues include increasing operational cost and rapid changes in customer's tastes and needs and the inability of several employees to meet these obligations is affecting corporate products and services patronages. This led to poor job satisfaction and rapid deterioration of employee morale which in turn resulted to manifestation of counter – productive behaviours and downward trends in their job performance globally. The observable fact of declining employee performance is global. Abdullahi, Manean and Nurul (2019) asserted that in the United States of America, a lot of organisations are faced with issues of workers' inability to cope with rapid development of tasks automation due to application of new technologies.

Asikhia (2015) as well as Barsulai, Makopondo, and Fwaya (2019) confirmed the prevalence of some counter-productive work behaviours and noted that the inability of many organisations' stakeholders to arrest them had made many employee' core competences slide to core rigidity. This in turn impeded employee's job performances in productivity, service delivery, task efficacy and role efficiency. This is particularly true of the Nigerian medical sector. Oremodu (2023) findings indicated observed that the Nigerian medical sector's employee performance was constrained by certain aspects of career challenges which included health sector employees such as nurses, laboratory scientists and nursing assistants are reacting to these challenges through manifestation of counter-productive work behaviours such as thefts of hospital materials, constant late coming, negligence of duties and high errors of judgement (ICIR, 2022).

The effect of these career challenges issues had culminated in the extremely high rate of attrition of highly skilled and experienced medical specialists which remains the most significant factor in training newly qualified doctors (ICIR 2022). Expectedly, these problems are inhibiting the service delivery, productivity and task efficacy performances of both private and public hospitals in Nigeria. This could be seen from the insignificant 2.94% contribution of the health sector to the National Gross Domestic Product (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019-22).

Worthy of note is that a number of studies such as Hussan and Park (2015) Mona, Chimbari, and Hungoro (2019), Sinha and Achnan (2017), Teo and Low (2016), Yanghen and Seniwolibba (2014) have dealt with career challenges constructs but not about how they affected the performances of health employees in selected teaching and private hospitals

in Lagos State. This implies a gap on this body of knowledge and its relevance to health employees. Hence, this study set out to investigate the extent to what extent certain aspects of career challenges medical employee's productivity in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State. The study believed that an in-depth knowledge of these challenges encountered by employees in Lagos State health sector would help to identify problems that are inhibiting their efficient performance.

The study believed that the knowledge acquired would provide health occupational practitioners with specific solutions to create policies that would improve on these work challenges. The study also believed that the performances of Lagos State teaching and private health sector employees would improve if these challenges are tackled. Consequently, based on the prevailing issues of employees' performance already highlighted in the background this study examines the effect of career challenges on employee productivity within the perspectives of private and public health sectors employees in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The performance of a nation's health sector services is explained by its ability to maximize efficient service delivery irrespective of the challenges that may be besieging it. A continual improvement of this performance is expected through an upward swing of its contribution towards the nation's Gross Domestic Products. Unfortunately, this appears not to be in Nigeria's health sector as could be seen by the continuous slides of its contributions to the national Gross Domestic Products. Available records from ICIR (2022), and Insight Health Consulting Ltd (2022) confirmed that over the years, the sector had been manifesting deteriorating performances in several aspects of its performance. This could be buttressed with records from Insight Health Consulting Ltd (2022) and National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2020-22), which revealed declining contributions of the Nigeria's (with Lagos State inclusive) health sector to the National Gross Domestic Productivity (GDP). According to NBS (2017-2021) reports, in 2017, the health sector's contribution to GDP was 3.76%, in 2018, health sector GDP contribution was 3.89% in 2019, the contribution dropped to 3.33% in 2020, it dropped again to 3.08% and in 2021, the sector's contribution was 2.94%; while in 2022, the sector's contribution was 4.88%. This contrasted sharply with India 18% GDP contribution in 2020.

The effect of all these problems on the Nigerian' health sector was manifested with World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) reports which indicated that Nigeria (especially Lagos State) is a major domain for diseases such as tuberculosis, lassa fever and malaria. World Health Organisation Global Report on tuberculosis (2021) reported that in 2021, Lagos State recorded as much as 11% of the global cases of tubercoulosis. Furthermore, World Malaria Report (2021) stated that in 2021, Nigeria had the highest number of global malaria disease cases (27%). From the sources reported above, it can be concluded that career challenges affect the role efficiency of health sector's employees in Lagos State.

Olanibe (2018) studies were corroborated by World Health Organisation (2020) reports which stated that in Nigeria, (with Lagos State taking the lion's share) only 33% of babies born annually are delivered by skilled health personnel, and according to the report 145 women die daily in Nigeria due to complications from child birth (compared to China's average daily maternal mortality death of 12 per day, and the United States of America's daily maternal mortality rate of 2 women per day); thus, Nigeria has one of the highest child bearing women mortality rates in the world. From the analysis reported above the study concluded that career challenges affect the task efficacy of health sector performance in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

H₀: Career challenges sub-variables have no significant effect on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesis using productivity as the dependent variable, and career challenges sub-variables as the independent variables. Data for career challenges sub-variables were created by adding all the responses of all items for career challenges, career transitioning challenge, career advancement challenge, job hazard challenge, and adaptive learning challenges while that of productivity was generated by adding scores of responses of all items for the variable. Data from three hundred and forty-nine (349) respondents were analysed. The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of multiple regression analysis for effects of Career Challenges sub variables on Productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State (n = 349)

Model	B	Sig.	T	F (5,343)	ANOVA (p-value)	R ²	Adjusted R ²
(Constant)	10.704	.000	7.397	14.100	.000	0.170	0.158
Career Advancement Challenges	.253	.000	3.963				
Career Transition Challenges	.098	.178	1.350				
Adaptive Learning Challenge	.178	.014	2.481				
Job Hazard Challenges	-.092	.037	-2.092				
Predictors: (Constant), Job Hazard Challenges, Career Advancement Challenges, Career Challenges, Career Transition Challenges, Adaptive Learning Challenge							
Dependent Variable: Productivity							

Source: Field Survey Results (2023)

Table 1 reveals the result of the multiple regression analysis which examined the effect of career challenges sub-variables (job hazard challenges, career advancement challenges, career challenges, career transition challenges, adaptive learning challenge) on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State. The results showed that adaptive learning challenge ($\beta = 0.178, t = 2.481, p = .014$) had effect on productivity, job hazard challenges had effect on productivity ($\beta = -.092, t = -2.092, p = .037$) of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State. From the results, career advancement challenges ($\beta = .253, t = 3.963, p = .000$) have effect on productivity. However, career transition challenges ($\beta = 0.098, t = 1.350, p = 0.178$) have an insignificant effect on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State.

The results of the analysis revealed that only three of the sub-variables of the career challenges (career advancement challenges, adaptive learning challenges, job hazard challenges) had significant effect on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State. This implied that of all the career challenges sub-variables in the regression model, career advancement challenges and career transition challenges are statistically significant thereby had a unique predictive effect on productivity of health sector employees. Therefore, career advancement challenges and career transition challenges are fundamental career challenges that influenced productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State.

The value Adjusted R^2 is 0.158 indicated that 15.8% of the variance in productivity of health sector employees is explained by the independent variables job hazard challenges, career advancement challenges, career transition challenges, adaptive learning challenges while the remaining 83% could be attributed to other factors not included in this model. Also, the F-statistics ($df = 5, 343$) is 14.100 at $p = 0.000$ (significant) indicated that the overall model was significant in predicting the effect of career challenges on productivity. This meant that career challenges sub-variables (job hazard challenges, career advancement challenges, career challenges, career transition challenges, adaptive learning challenge) accounted for a significant amount of variance in the productivity of health sector employees. The established multiple regression model (prescriptive model) is expressed as thus:

$$PR = 10.704 + 0.253CAC + 0.098CTC + 0.178ALC + -0.092JHC \dots\dots\dots eqn 1$$

Where:

- CAC = Career Advancement Challenges
- CTC = Career Transition Challenges
- ALC = Adaptive Learning Challenge
- JHC = Job Hazard Challenges

With regards to the variables that are statistically significant on Table 1 the hypothesized equation (predictive model) becomes:

$$PR = 10.704 + 0.253CAC + 0.098CTC = 11.055 \dots \dots \dots \text{eqn1}$$

Where:

PR=Productivity

CAC = Career Advancement Challenges

CTC = Career Transition Challenges

$$PR = 10.704 + 0.253CAC = 10.957$$

$$PR = 10.704 + 0.098CTC = 10.794$$

The predictive model displayed that taking all the factors into account, that is, career advancement challenges and career transition challenges representing the independent variables, then productivity of health sector employees will be 11.055. The findings of the multiple regression analysis indicated taking all the other independent variable at zero, a unit change in career advancement challenges will result to 10.957 (10.957%) increase in productivity of health sector employees and the same unit change in career transitioning challenges increased the productivity of health sector employees by 10.794. (10.794%). This inferred that career advancement challenges have a great influence on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State followed by career transition challenges. This result also explained that if the inhibiting factors against employees' productivity are removed or worked upon, there would be an increase in their productivity and subsequent improved performance of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State.

Likewise, the result also showed that health employees are able to advance in their career and were able to transit their acquired skills into new employment challenges by removing productivity inhibiting factors such as poor remunerations, heavy work-loads, prolonged night shifts and constant sleep interruptions, there will be an increase in their productivity. The result showed an overall statistical significance with $p < 0.05$. The result suggested that management of selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State should reduce career advancement challenges and career transition challenges in order to increase productivity of health sector employees. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{0d}) which expressed that there is no significant effect of career challenges sub-variables on productivity of health sector employees in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The results of multiple regression analysis for the effect of career challenges sub-variables established that career challenges have a significant effect on productivity aspect of health sector employee's performance in selected private and teaching hospitals in Lagos State. Conceptually, Callanan, Perriand Tomkowicz (2017) explained career challenges as sequence of problems workers face in their work roles throughout their work life. Career

challenges are inhibiting factors militating against employee performance, hence it should be tackled by various stakeholders in the health sector to improve productivity performance. Several approaches towards effect of reducing career challenges on productivity aspects of employee performance had been proffered by earlier researchers on the construct.

Okeke (2019) proffered that a proper adjustment of employee's skills would boost their productivity, Obiukwu and Alaneme (2017) suggested elimination of hazardous work climates to improve employee productivity, while Maduka and Okafor (2014) suggested improved remunerations to improve employee productivity. Empirically, this study findings agreed with the past research findings. Ezeamana (2019) found that certain aspects of occupational and career challenges influence productivity of workforce. Njururi (2016), as well as Muraili, Basit, and Zubair (2017) study also found that job hazards challenges eliminate employee productivity. The study findings also debunked significantly Uphadiyar and Singh (2016) study that reported that employee's poor productivity was mainly due to proactive confrontations of employees with management policies. This study proved that at least in the medical sector, career challenges sub variables used in this study significantly affect employee performance.

Theoretically, findings of this study added credibility to the theoretical assumptions of Social Cognitive theory. This theory assumed that employee's desire to accomplish a given task is based on the belief that pursuing the task is worth his or her commitment. Social cognitive theory therefore held that an individual employees' productivity is not only related to how much he or she can apply skills, but the extent of his or her belief in the job assignment he is about to undertake. The theory equipped employees not to see challenges as obstacles but stepping-stones to demonstrate capability; and urged employers to boost employee's productive performance by taking into cognitive of employees, expectations, experiences on their behaviours that underpinned this research. Hence, the interactions between career challenges and productivity aspects of employee performance are explained within the framework of resource-based view perspectives. Therefore, given the support found in conceptual, empirical, and theoretical submissions in previous studies, the study results posit that career challenges have significant effect on productivity of employee performance of selected teaching and private hospitals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

On the study model on the tested hypothesis, it is obvious that career advancement challenge and adaptive learning challenge have a significant effect on the productivity of health sector employees. The results suggested that if inhabiting factors such as poor work environments, constant stress due to frequent sleep interruptions militating against health sector employees' productivity are removed, their performances would significantly improve. Productivity aspect of employee performance helps organization or sector survival and improves their earnings. The researcher discovered that of the major reasons why the Lagos State upper- and middle-class patients patronize foreign hospitals

is due to their perceived poor state of government teaching hospital's environments, especially in terms of canteens, toilet facilities, hospital wards and power supplies. Based on this, the researcher suggested that stakeholders in the Lagos State health sector should create policies that would create improved work environments in government hospitals. Adequate provisions should also be made for availability of basic facilities such as oxygen fitted ambulances and working generators for provision of constant power supplies. The Lagos State government should encourage possible privatization of some sections of Lagos State University Teaching Hospital practices such as the laboratory, pharmaceutical and nephrology sections. Funds derived from these privatizations' exercises should be used to upgrade the available facilities.

The Lagos State government should also use part of the funds realized from the already suggested financial pool to send Lagos State University early career doctors for foreign seminars and medical trainings, and also use part of the fund to procure modern equipment's and other necessary facilities needed by doctors to transit skills acquired into practice. The funds can also be made available for subscription of on line foreign medical journals, foreign medical text books, newly developed drugs, and laboratory equipment's. If done, the emotional torture a lot of health sector employees under go, watching patients die because of lack of basic equipment's would be ameliorated. The provision of facilities would enhance the health sector employee's service delivery.

Contribution to Knowledge

Conceptual

Still on conceptual contributions the study gave its own concepts of its variables as follows: Career Challenges as obstacles militating against effective performance of an employee.

- i. Employee Performance as a satisfactory performance of assigned job role or tasks to an employee in line with organisational objectives.
- ii. Adaptive Learning Challenge as a situation in which knowledge is being imparted to an employee, yet the employee is not learning anything new especially in practical oriented courses.
- iii. Career Transitioning Challenge as a situation when employee could not apply acquired skills into job assignments due to inhibiting factors such as lack of adequate facilities.
- iv. Career Advancement Challenge as inhibiting factors against an employee's updating of skills required for improved performance.
- v. Job Hazard Challenge as dangers an employee is exposed to in the course of performing job task.
- vi. Productivity as a useful input of employee skills towards organisation operational objectives.

Empirical: Aside from the fact that the study created its own definitions for the following variables; the study through its demographic analysis of respondents made some interesting findings. The study revealed 276 female respondents and 173 male

respondents. That shows a predominant female domination in the provision of health care services in selected hospital in Lagos state. this could be doing to reducing interest of the males in studying courses like medicine, and nursing, and its low returns of finance and time invested due to poor remunerations. Marital status: single 149, married 234, separated 1, widowed 1,

Educational qualification Bsc (Lab-Scientists) 17, Bnsc 18, MBBS 180, B pharm 6, Msc7, Ph.D --, Consultants 34, Proffesor 3, Pharmacists 5, Nurses 68, Lab-Science 52, Nursing assistants/medical records 27, psychiatrists 4, Anaesthttiologists 2, Neuro surgeons 1, Radiologists 2, Surgeons 2, Dental Surgeons 5, Endocrinologist 1, Gyneachologists 7, Family health specialists 2, Neuphrologists 5, Optamologists 2, ENT 2, Oral Maxilosurgeons 3, Orthopeadic surgeons 1, Haemathologist 1, Peadiatricians 2.

Another interesting dimension of the study in terms of demographic contributions is the predominance of younger doctors between the ages 21 to 40, totaling 251, about 56%, whereas those aged between 56 years were only 44, less than 10%. The study therefore revealed an acute shortage of specialists in the various hospitals, the possible reason, due to high rate of attrition of highly specialised medical doctors' decision to countries such as the United States of America, Great Britain and Saudi Arabia. The study also revealed a total absence of rare aspect of medical specialists such as herpetologists and immunologist. This confirmed NMA record of 2021,2022, that revealed near total absence of these specialists. The absence of these specialists revealed reasons for continuous slides of the Nigeria medical sector to GDP as earlier explained by the study. The study empirically revealed that career challenge significantly affected employee performance in the following order. The study empirically revealed that Career challenges variables had a significant effect on productivity aspect of employee performance to the degree of 15.8%

Theory: Theoretically, this study provided empirical contributions to the following theories resource-based view theory, social exchange theory, social cognitive theory, attribution theory and role theory. The study findings confirmed Resource Based View theory propositions on the value of employee's resources and the extent of their importance. The study findings also confirmed Ning (2012), assertion of employee's performance as the key factor to the growth of a sector.

Still on theoretical contributions, study findings proved Blau (2002) inference on Social Cognitive Theory that proper fulfilment of any employment effect was determined by financial rewards. Study findings further proved Blau (2002) inference that the inputs of employee's role efficiency as well as task efficacy depended on compensation outcome expectations. Furthermore, study findings added credence to Role Theory contributions on human behaviour that rightly precluded that there are factors or reasons employees behavioural attitude. In conclusion, study confirmed Attribution Theory's assertion that insisted that human actions are based on motives.

Limitations of the Study

This study exhibited a lot of limitations which could serve as basis for further studies. Firstly, because the study utilized usage of quantitative research methodology mainly through a cross sectional survey research and modified Likert structured questionnaire with scale of choice options of very high, high, fairly high, fairly low, low and very low questionnaire as its main source of obtaining primary data; it also led to the problem of bias, and poor comprehension from the respondents when filling the questionnaire arose. To tackle this challenge the researcher ensured (with the assistance of the supervisor) that the questionnaire was drafted in simple English, and where necessary, the researcher endeavoured to offer required necessary clarifications to the respondents.

Furthermore, the choices of the questionnaire did not include spaces that would give the respondents explanations for their choice of answers which may provide further clues. To tackle this, the researcher offered verbal clarifications to the respondents. The usage of questionnaire is also associated with possibility of bias from some of the respondents; the researcher mitigated this through documentary validation of some of the claims highlighted by the respondents. The researcher mitigated this by ensuring that the questionnaire was relevant to the identified problems that necessitated this research. Furthermore, the choices offered by the close ended questions did not include spaces that would give the respondents opportunity to explain their choice of answers which may provide further clues. To tackle this, the researcher offered verbal clarifications to the respondents.

Suggestions for Further Studies

In view of the limitations already identified, the researcher hereby suggests as follows: Firstly, the study with the application of the variables used could be carried out on other hazardous vital service sectors such as the police and the armed forces in Nigeria. The researcher also suggests further studies on the same sector that can investigate effects of some extraneous variables like emerging issues such as insecurity and removal of fuel subsidy on the health sectors.

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