

Academic Staff Perception of the Organizational Climate in Universities in Edo State, Nigeria

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KEYWORDS Academic staff; organization; climate; universities; perception

ABSTRACT The study investigated academic staff perception of organizational climate in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The sample for the study was made up of 1025 participants drawn from three universities in Edo State. From the data, it was found that academic staff in universities in Edo State perceived the organizational climate of their institutions as favourable; that there is a significant difference among academic staff in their perception and that academic staff do not differ in their perception of organizational climate in their institutions based on sex, age and status.

INTRODUCTION

In any organized set up, specific functions are assigned to each member in order to realize the basic goals and objectives of such an organization. Among other factors that facilitate the smooth realization of such organizational goals, is a conducive climate. It can ensure the realization of the needs and interests of the individuals who make-up the organization.

Organizational climate encompasses all those behaviours that permit cordial interpersonal relationships among staff of an organization or institution. It permits cooperative human activities in which members of staff both academic and non-academic, interact for the purpose of realizing set goals and objectives. Hence, the perception of academic staff in universities may depend on some external and internal factors.

Some of the external factors include location, size, student population, educational policies and socio-economic changes, while some of the internal factors include interactive behaviour between the School Head and the staff, amongst the staff themselves and between staff and students. In this regard, the school can be regarded as a social system in which the School Head, staff and students interact to accomplish common goals.

In an organization like the university, the climate as perceived by those who work in it determines to a large extent their level of contribution and the degree of attainment of its set goals and objectives. This opinion is predicated on the understanding that whatever is the output of an individual in an organization depends on those factors that encourage him/her to put in

his/her best. Therefore, positive interactive behaviour, reinforced by effective leadership, motivation and communication could further accelerate the accomplishment of goals.

Studies by Hoy and Tarter (1992) have shown that administrative organizational climate is an important factor that influences perception and performance of staff. They further stated that a healthy organizational climate is crucial for a good school. Consequently, the way the School Head shapes such climate and its resultant effect on the entire organization and its goals have become issues of concern. The leadership style of the School Head, therefore, invariably affects his administrative pattern, which consequently influences the staff in the way they perceive the organization.

As stated earlier, motivation contributes to the perception of staff. It is a vital component of the operative functions of performance. Woolfolk (2001) defined motivation as an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behaviour. Ochitwa (2002) collaborating this opinion pointed out that organizational climate can arouse employees' natural motivations. He stated further that some climates could lead to frustration of staff, while others can energize the work environment. Those organizations with conducive work environment usually have a warm and friendlier climate than organizations with unconducive environment. This presupposes that staff who are satisfied with their job are more productive. Hence Cherniss (2001), stated that a teacher who is properly motivated is considerate, dependable, committed to work, induces trust and caring disposition in the organization.

Another component of organizational climate

is the subordinate level of participation in the organization's decision-making process. Hannah's (1967) study clearly stated that the role of a worker in decision-making in an organization depends on the size of such organization and the management system adopted. A participative management system for example, would create a great deal of interaction between the School Head and his/her subordinates. In a study conducted by Hand, Richards and Slocum (1973), they found that employees who perceived the organization as participative had greater increases in their performance than employees who perceived it as autocratic.

Organizational climate has several critical dimensions. Most important of these dimensions in an educational setting are intimacy, morale, consideration, and thrust. Intimacy and morale are traits displayed by staff while consideration and thrust are traits exhibited by the School Head. Based on the interplay of these dimensions, organizational climate can be classified into open and closed climate typologies. The openness or closeness of any university depends on whether the dimensions of organizational climate are positively or negatively demonstrated by the School Head and the subordinates.

Certain objective criteria constitute the foci of both the organizational climate types and dimensions. They are namely: positive work motivation, enhanced performance, increased productivity and job satisfaction. What this means is that if the organizational climate of any institution is open and the dimensions are positively demonstrated, there is bound to be positive motivation, enhanced performance, increased productivity and job satisfaction. On the contrary, if the organizational climate is closed and the dimensions are negatively demonstrated, there is bound to be negative motivation, poor performance, low productivity and job dissatisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

Education is important for national development. This is because skilled manpower is very vital to the process of national planning and implementation. For any educational plan to succeed, the teacher is required to be there to see to the full implementation of the programme. This is so because no educational system can rise above its teachers (Ukeje, 1986). Also, if

education is to survive and continue to play a vital role in the promotion of cognitive, affective and practical competence in individuals and ensure the preservation of our cultural values, it is important that the teachers who are responsible for helping the students acquire the knowledge, skills and practical orientations essential for self as well as for national development, be effectively motivated. In spite of their importance, they are not accorded the recognition they deserve. Hence Katz and Kahn (1996) say that the climate in an organization reflects the type of people who compose the organization, the work processes, means of communication and the exercise of authority within the individual organization. Further, they recognize that it is easy to detect differences in the climate of organizations but it is difficult to name the dimensions of these differences.

The investigation became necessary in view of the fact that the problem of lack of motivation and the negative effect it has on the perception of academic staff of organizational climate in universities in Edo State seems to be growing. The relatively high attrition rate of academic staff from universities to other countries or to the private sector are indicators of low motivation (Onwuechekwa, 1996).

The lack of sponsorship or the long duration of time that lapses before it gets to the turn of a lecturer in the case of universities, to attend a conference or seminar may be another problem that could affect academic staff perception of their organizational climate.

There are also allegations of ill preparedness among some academic staff for scholarly work and lack of commitment to work. The result is that these universities that ought to be centres of academic and social activities have remained dull and uninteresting (Atafo, 1986). Among the academic staff, there is also low level of mutual interaction leading to disharmony, suspicion and distrust, which have led to the formation of different camps and in fighting. Members of academic staff have also accused School Heads of aloofness while School Heads have complained of the uncooperative attitude of academic staff (Osia, 1993). There is also, the problem of inadequate working materials, which include reference journals, books, stationeries and office accommodation. Under such administrative and social climate, staff are bound to have feelings of self-pity, insecurity, uncertainty, frustration,

withdrawal and low morale. The resultant effect of the above mentioned problems in universities are so grave that there exists the need to articulate the consequences. That is why it has become very pertinent that studies should be carried out on academic staff perception of organizational climate in universities with a view to recommending strategies to be adopted to create a conducive climate. Thus, the purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. How do academic staff in universities in Edo State, Nigeria perceive their institutions' organizational climate?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of organizational climate among academic staff of universities in Edo State?
3. Is there any difference between the perception of male and female academic staff of organizational climate in universities in Edo State?
4. Is there any difference between the perception of old and young academic staff of organizational climate in universities in Edo State?
5. Is there any difference between the perception of senior and junior academic staff on organizational climate in universities in Edo State?

Significance/Delimitation

The findings of this study would serve as a basis for fostering improved working relationships between Heads of universities and academic staff, amongst academic staff and between academic staff and students. It would also help Heads of universities to regulate their relationship towards their subordinates by providing job security, adequate working materials, training prospects and promotion opportunities.

Although the study covers all academic staff of the four universities in Edo State, it was however, delimited to three because the fourth university was used for the pilot study. Of the various subsets of organizational climate, only four, - intimacy, morale, consideration and thrust were selected for the study. The study also focused on academic staff perception of organizational climate based on sex, age and status.

METHOD OF STUDY

The study was a descriptive survey, which

involved the collection of information in a structured questionnaire. The population of this study comprised all academic staff in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The sample of the study was one thousand and twenty-five. This was attained through the purposive sampling technique. To achieve this, academic staff lists of the sampled universities (University of Benin, Benin City, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma and Igbinedion University, Okada) were obtained from the Personnel Unit. Although questionnaires were dropped according to the number of staff on the list, concerted efforts were made to retrieve at least 50% of the academic staff of the sampled universities. The rationale for setting the sample size at 50% is predicated upon the fact that the population is relatively small.

Data for this study were obtained through the Academic Staff of Universities Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (ASUOCDQ). The researcher designed it after an exhaustive review of related literature and other scales that have been used in similar situations. The questionnaire was made up of two sections: section A sought personal information about the respondents such as Name of Institution, Sex, Age and Status. While section B had 24 items grouped into different sub-scales, namely, intimacy, morale, consideration and thrust. The first two sub-scales measured staff and students' behaviour while the other two sub-scales measured the School Head's behaviour. Each sub-scale contained six questions, which were designed to elicit responses. All the items in section B had a five point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument was content validated by three professors in the area of Educational Administration. The judgement of these experts were sought to ensure that the items in the questionnaire measured what they were expected to measure, and that the questions raised were clear and understandable.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Split-half method. Responses were collected from a randomly selected sample of twenty academic staff of Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. These respondents were chosen because they would not constitute part of the sample to be used for the final study. The essence was to ensure that the respondents did not have privileged information about the instrument, which could

cause biased response. The reliability yielded a Split-half co-efficient of 0.88.

The data were analysed by Two-Way ANOVA. Fisher's LSD was run on ANOVA where it was significant. To establish whether academic staff perceived the organizational climate of their institutions as favourable, the respondent mean scores for the four dimensions on the ASUOCDQ were computed and compared with the arbitrarily set minimum point for favourable perception (which is given as 15.01). This minimum point for favourable perception was arrived at, bearing in mind the fact that on a five-point Likert scale with six items raised to measure a specific dimension of organizational climate, the baseline for favourable perception would be any value beyond 15.01.

RESULTS

1. How do academic staff in universities in Edo State, Nigeria perceive their institutions' organizational climate?

This was tested by comparing respondents' mean score on each of the four dimensions of organizational climate with the minimum point for favourable perception, which was arbitrarily

set at 15.01. The result is presented in table 1.

Based on the present survey, academic staff of universities in Edo State considered all the four dimensions of organizational climate investigated in this study as favourable.

2. Is there any difference in the perception of organizational climate among academic staff in universities in Edo State?

The result of the Two-way ANOVA of academic staff perception of organizational climate indicated that a significant difference exist among academic staff [$F(2, 4091) = 48.46, P < 0.05$] of universities in Edo State in their perception of organizational climate [$F(3, 4091) = 12.545, P < 0.05$]. The interaction of academic staff of universities and their perception of organizational climate [$F(3, 4091) = 15.667, P <$

Table 1: Respondents' mean score of academic staff perception of organizational climate

<i>Dimension of Organizational climate</i>	<i>Mean (M)</i>	<i>Minimum Point for favourable Perception</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Intimacy	17.9	15.01	Favourable
Morale	17.0		Favourable
Consideration	18.1		Favourable
Thrust	17.5		Favourable

Table 2: Analysis of Fisher's LSD of academic staff perception of organizational climate

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>(I) University</i>	<i>(J) University</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
INTEMACY	Igbinedion	AAU	6.4168*	.7098	.000
		UNIBEN	4.4718*	.6725	.000
	AAU	Igbinedion	-6.4168*	.1098	.000
		UNIBEN	-1.9540*	.3075	-
MORALE	UNIBEN	Igbinedion	-4.4718*	.6725	.000
		AAU	1.9450*	.3075	-
	Igbinedion	AAU	1.9698	.6792	.094
		UNIBEN	.6063	.6435	.777
CONSIDERATION	AAU	Igbinedion	-1.9698	.6792	.094
		UNIBEN	-1.3635*	.2942	.000
	UNIBEN	Igbinedion	-6.063	.6435	.777
		AAU	1.3635*	.2942	.000
THRUST	Igbinedion	AAU	1.7042*	.8676	.022
		UNIBEN	2.5085*	.8220	.000
	AAU	Igbinedion	-1.7042*	.8676	.022
		UNIBEN	.8043	.3758	.271
	UNIBEN	Igbinedion	-2.5085*	.8220	.000
		AAU	-.8043	.3758	.271
	Igbinedion	AAU	3.0728*	.7522	.000
		UNIBEN	2.2880*	.7126	.001
	AAU	Igbinedion	-3.0728*	.7522	.000
		UNIBEN	-7.848	.3258	.027
	UNIBEN	Igbinedion	-2.2880*	.7126	.001
		AAU	.7848	.3258	.027

Based on observed means.

*.The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

0.05)] was also significant. But the result failed to indicate the direction of the difference.

Fisher's LSD was further applied to indicate the direction of superiority of academic staff in their perception of organizational climate. The result of Fisher's LSD is presented in table 2.

From the Fisher's LSD test, it can be concluded that academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada ($M = 22.66$) had a more favourable intimate climate than academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma ($M = 16.24$), and academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City ($M = 18.19$). Academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City was also found to have a better intimate climate than academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Generally, academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada had a more favourable perception of intimacy, followed by academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City and academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

In terms of morale, difference between academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada ($M = 17.87$) and academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City ($M = 17.26$) was not significant but between academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma ($M = 15.91$), it was significant. Generally, academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada had a more favourable perception when compared with academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma and academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City.

In the area of consideration, the difference between academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada ($M = 20.34$) and academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma ($M = 18.17$) was significant. Also difference between academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada and academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City ($M = 17.81$) was significant. Between academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma and academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City, it was not significant. Generally, academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City had the least perception of consideration as a dimension of organizational climate.

In terms of thrust, academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada ($M = 19.92$) perceive the climate between the academic staff and the School Head as more conducive when compared with academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City ($M = 17.63$) and academic staff of Ambrose

Alli University, Ekpoma ($M = 16.85$). A difference also existed between academic staff of University of Benin, Benin City and academic staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

3. Is there any difference between the perception of male and female academic staff on organizational climate in universities in Edo State?

The result of the two-way ANOVA indicated that male and female academic staff of universities in Edo state, do not differ in their perception of organizational climate [$F(1, 4092) = 1.530, P > 0.05$]. However, a difference existed in the interaction between organizational climate and sex of academic staff [$F(3, 4092) = 4.656, P < 0.05$].

4. Is there any difference between the perception of old and young academic staff on organizational climate in universities in Edo State?

The result of the two-way ANOVA indicated that no difference exist between young and older academic staff in their perception of organizational climate [$F(1, 4092) = 0.002, P > 0.05$]. Also, no difference existed in the interaction between organizational climate and age of academic staff [$F(3, 4092) = 0.552, P > 0.05$].

5. Is there any difference between the perception of senior and junior academic staff on organizational climate in universities in Edo State?

The result of the two-way ANOVA indicated that there is no difference between junior and senior academic staff in their perception of organizational climate [$F(1, 4092) = 1.20, P > 0.05$]. However, there is a difference in terms of interaction between academic staff and organizational climate [$F(3, 4092) = 3.269, P < 0.05$].

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that academic staff of universities in Edo State considered all the four dimensions of organizational climate investigated in this study as favourable. It was evident from this result that academic staff of universities in Edo State value creativity, innovation, flexible, supportive and nurturing organizational climate. Their values and aspirations in general are highly reflected in their perception. This meant that School Heads and their academic staff were running their institutions along democratic and humane lines.

Another implication of the result was that despite the seemingly observable behaviour of disenchantment in academic staff, there was

nevertheless harmony between them and their School Heads and that staff cherished the merits of maintaining an open and stable climate in their institutions. Hence consideration had the highest mean score among the subsets followed by intimacy, thrust and morale. The result showed that under a considerate leader academic staff evidenced greater commitment to their institutions. In other words leaders who manifest consideration are seen as supportive. This result further demonstrates that there is close interaction and interpersonal relationship between academic staff and School Heads, among academic staff and between academic staff and students.

Another implication of this favourable disposition by academic staff of universities to all the dimensions of organizational climate clearly indicated that inter-group conflict within the system is at a minimum level. It showed also that there is a sense of collegiality, open communication, professional growth and relative stability in universities in Edo State.

This finding is consistent with that of Hoy and Tarter (1992) who in their study reported that a healthy organizational climate influences the staff in the way they perceive the organization.

The result of question two showed that despite the varied institutional status and the difference in their perception, academic staff of the three universities still perceived all the dimensions of organizational climate as favourable.

The result also showed that academic staff of Igbinedion University, Okada enjoyed a better climate in all the dimensions. This is not too surprising considering the fact that Igbinedion University, Okada is privately owned. Secondly, the academic staff may be working in a conducive atmosphere with good conditions of service and adequate motivation.

The next well-disposed university is the University of Benin, Benin City. This university is owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The implication of the result may be as a result of the congenial atmosphere existing between the School Head and academic staff and the good conditions of service they enjoy brought about by good funding.

Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma had the least average perception in all the dimensions. This university is owned by the Edo State Government of Nigeria. Ambrose Alli University,

Ekpoma, being last is not too surprising, when viewed from the perspective that the university has been yearning for funds especially as staff are owed backlog of salaries.

The overall implication of the result showed that all the academic staff in universities in Edo State though differed in their perception had a humanistic orientation. This finding is consistent with those of Hannah (1967), Hand, Richards and Slocum (1973) who found that employees who perceived the organization as participative had greater increases in their performance and that a participative management system would create a great deal of interaction between the School Head and his/her subordinates.

The finding of question three showed that both male and female academic staff of universities did not differ in their perception of the organizational climate in universities in Edo State. This portrays that they are working in environments that are stimulating, high in morale, caring and cooperative, with supportive co-workers and management that allow individuals to exercise responsibility and listen to ideas.

The result of question four showed that academic staff of universities in Edo State perceived the organizational climate of their institutions as favourable despite the difference in age. This implied that both groups are given adequate opportunities to carry out scholarly works, encouraged to participate in team-building activities and any other such activities that would enhance growth.

The finding of question five indicated that despite the status of academic staff of universities, they all have the same perception of the organizational climate of their institutions. This implied that both groups appreciate the degree of autonomy and respect they have in the discharge of their jobs.

The findings of questions three, four and five are consistent with that of Cherniss (2001) who vividly reported that when a teacher is properly motivated, such a teacher is considerate, dependable, committed to work, induces trust and caring disposition in the organization.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study is the population factor. Only academic staff in universities in Edo State, Nigeria was used leaving out students and non-academic staff.

This poses a threat to generalizability of the study in relation to universities in Edo State, Nigeria – the study may not be generalized for the entire academic community. It is not certain that similar results would be obtained when a study is conducted using all the subgroups (academic, senior non-academic and junior non-academic) within these universities.

Another limitation is dearth of current literature in the area of academic staff perception of organizational climate in Nigerian universities as the available ones are outdated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Since academic staff of universities perceived the organizational climate in their institutions to be open, stable and healthy, School Heads should endeavour to continue to adopt the participative system of administration which guarantees open organizational climate.
2. To facilitate the adoption of the participative system of administration, School Heads should be exposed more to research findings on the working of organizational conditions of schools. This would be made possible by setting up a Research unit in each faculty or college with the responsibility of collating such research findings for School Heads.
3. School Heads and all Principal Officers should be made to undergo basic management training before being deployed to their respective positions in their universities. This is to equip them with the basic tools that are required for both human and material resource management. The essence of this is to reduce areas of friction between academic staff and management.
4. Seminars, symposia and workshops should be organized periodically for serving Principal Officers in universities in areas of human relations, leadership, motivation, communication and other relevant areas of management. This would help them keep abreast with current management techniques.
5. Conditions of service should be improved by the owners of universities to encourage academic staff both male and female, old and young, experienced and inexperienced exert a considerable effort in their job towards achieving a better outcome. Such conditions of service should include better remuneration, staff training and development, job security, adequate welfare services like good transport system, provision of medical care, housing and provision of recreational facilities.
6. School Heads should continue to pay attention to the climate dimension of intimacy which is very strong among staff. To encourage this, symposia, workshops and seminars should be organized at least twice in a month in the different faculties where staff could meet to interact and exchange ideas with one another.
7. The Federal Government, State Government and other Proprietors of universities should make more fund available to the universities for the purchase of materials that would make the job more challenging and satisfactory. Also, university authorities should develop diversified sources of funding so as to remove the total dependence on governments and private individuals for funding. This would enable them provide necessary facilities and materials to staff.
8. Informal avenues like end-of-year parties which could bring the School Head, academic staff and students together should be created and sustained for the effective promotion of cordial relationships and interactions.
9. In addition to promoting good human relations and interactions, another factor of organizational climate – communication, should also be promoted with equal zest. A smooth network of communication should be thoroughly built into the administration of universities so as to remove all areas of tension and bottlenecks. This is because information withheld or unclear communication can stimulate conflict.
10. Academic staff should be sent on in-service training for them to update their knowledge and skills for effective teaching. This would further enhance their roles as academics which include: scholarship of discovery (research), including the writing of textbooks; scholarship of service, including the practical application of knowledge and scholarship of teaching.

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