OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES AMONG STAFF IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS: SPONTANEOUS OR PLANNED

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Abstract
This paper sought out to investigate the views of employees in the university to ascertain if Outdoor recreation activities in Nigerian universities are spontaneous or strategically planned towards building effective human resource management. Survey research design was used and with random Sampling, 395 university staff (academic and non-academic) staff from selected universities was sampled. Data collection was through distribution of questionnaire and results were analyzed. The contingency table using the 2 X 2 matrix, the Yates correction method and the chi-square (χ²) statistical tool was used to test the validity of the proposition raised in this paper. Findings from the study showed that, 73.7% were of the notion that strategy on outdoor activities are more spontaneous .It was recommended that advance planning for staff outing and recreational activities that includes selecting participants, venue, inclusive dates and line-up of activities were essential for the success of the event.

Keywords: Outdoor activities, motivation, strategy

Introduction
Many organizations, regardless of their size, recognize the importance of their Human resource but optimum productivity is however tied to an organization that functions as a team - brimming with energy and engagement outside formal meetings as well enhanced employee relations. Successful organizations use offsite outings as a human resource development function that combines team building and recreational activities to enhance and strengthen bonds among employees and to build cohesiveness among a diverse group, ranks and the hierarchy in an organization. (Atti, 2012) notes that the significant role played by outdoor recreation cannot be undermined as it polishes the relationship not only between employees but also between management and their subordinates as this in the long run improves the learning environment for the individuals as well.
Also employee development bothers on the steps taken within an institution to encourage each employee’s professional and personal growth i.e. employees within organizations that offers employee development feel valued by their employers producing higher amount of quality work (McIntosh, 2009). Thus even when training and development is carried out in the organization, there is still need for employees to have outdoor activities, not only for its importance for healthy living but for employees to mingle and associate freely between senior management and subordinates and invariably promoting industrial Harmony. This is a fundamental objective of the human resource development and pertinent for employee relations in an organization. Industrial/organizational harmony refers to a friendly and cooperative agreement on working relationships between employers and employees for their mutual benefit. According to Puttapalli and Vuram (2012), industrial/organizational harmony is concerned with the relationship between management and employees with respect to the terms and conditions of employment and the work place. In effect, it is a situation where employees and management cooperate willingly in pursuit of the organization’s aims and objectives.

Human resources researchers in employee relations argue that distance existing between employees may be connected to the fact that outdoor activities are not being organized to better the interpersonal relationship amongst employees. Although there are vertical and horizontal lines of communication in an organization, it is necessary to bridge these gaps between top management and lower level employee through off site recreational activities that will boost employee relations in the organization.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Typical Nigerian higher institution is encompassed with loads of academic activities and permutations. It is further compounded with the fact that lecturers have a virtual work space to operate which employees away from each other keeps either doing their personal research or are giving lectures.

Many past studies on harmony and human resource development and optimum employee performance focus mainly on material rewards and summarily Total rewards as the main motivational factors for employees. Only but a few have bothered to look beyond rewards as factors that enable employee development (Udeajah, 2001).

On the other hand higher institutions (University) in Nigeria have invested heavily in infrastructural and intellectual development. But there is insufficient literature to ascertain if the development is strategically planned or spontaneous to aid industrial harmony through outdoor recreational activities. This can be a drawback as it affects effective communication and optimum employee performance and employee relations.

Therefore, this paper seeks to address the gap relating to the insufficient literature on strategic approach to outdoor recreation activities and industrial harmony among employees in Nigerian Universities.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this paper was to ascertain if Outdoor recreation activities in Nigerian universities are spontaneous or strategically planned towards building effective human resource management.

**Research questions**

Based on the Objective of the study, the following research questions were answered:
Is the approach to Outdoor recreation activities in Nigerian universities spontaneous or strategically planned towards building effective human resource management?

**Hypothesis of the study**

H₀: Outdoor recreation activities are more of spontaneous than planned in Nigerian universities.

**Literature Review**

**Conceptual Framework**

Strategy is a long term plan for achievement of organization goal and gaining an edge over other competitors in the market. In order to develop truly interactive and supportive staff members, employees need opportunities to work together (outside normal business activities) in new and creative ways. The American Council on Exercise asserts that creating some leisure time in the course of the day allows employees to recharge themselves psychologically and emotionally and this can lead to improved job performance. If there are strategic plans in place for Human resource to increase involvement in outdoor recreational activities and wellness programmes by companies, it would promote employees’ physical and improve good working relationships and industrial harmony among employees in the organization.

Researchers in the field of business strategy (Heizer and Render, 2011, Mintzberg 1978) often refer to two approaches to the development of strategies; the planned (deliberate) and the Emergent (spontaneous) approaches. The planned or deliberate approach is bourne out of the opinion that strategies develop from the conscious plans and actions which are directed towards the achievement of some predetermined goals. While the spontaneous or emergent approach believes that strategy are realized from unconscious actions which are performed out of trials and intuitions (Mintzberg, 1978).

Outdoor recreation activities are those activities that are undertaken outside the confines of buildings (i.e., in the outdoors); do not involve organized competition or formal rules (these are referred to as sports activities); can be undertaken without the existence of any built facility or infrastructure; may require large areas of land, water and/or air; and may require outdoor areas of predominantly unmodified natural landscape. Facilities, site modification or infrastructure may be provided to manage the impact generated by the activities, however, most outdoor recreation activities can be undertaken without them. Undoubtedly, outdoor activities are a fun activity but also offer several management benefits too. Research shows that outdoor activities help in the development of leadership qualities as well as help to foster team spirit in humans as it exposes us to both aspects of life i.e. success and failure, winning and losing with a positive spirit (Manali, 2012). Outdoor activities for employees are a good combination of recreation and exercise as they help to improve our physical and psychological health; physical because it involves exercise and psychological because playing is something that is enjoyed, it’s something that relaxes our mind and something so advantageous is worth investing time in (Manali, 2012).

There is a tendency for employees who perform the same tasks with the same people day in and day out to soon lose their ability to communicate with each other in a productive manner (Dowling, 2006). That is why a fundamental objective of human resource management is to contribute towards the achievement of high level of employee and organization performance (Armstrong, 2005). Hutchinson, Kinnie, Purcell and Boxall (2003) are of the opinion that social interaction between people and teams are increasingly being seen as a source of
strength in enhancing performance. This is an obvious observation in those firms which can combine people and processes together.

According to Taylor (2008), the demand for man made additional resources for recreation is greater now than before. Though there are many mushrooming of entertainment and sports clubs, many organizations have strategically planned and invested large sums of money to provide such facilities within the workplace.

The Educational sector is characterized by long working hours; often associated with research and development. In addition, many of the lecturers have problems maintaining a work-life balance and Honorariums are not paid as at when due. These factors individually or in combination lead to ill-health, low morale, conflicts and high levels of stress in the work force. In an effort to help employees cope with such issues, organizations have invested in workplace recreation. In developed countries, there is evidence that workplace recreation has a positive effect on employee performance (World Health Organization, 2003). According to WHO report in 2003, workplace physical activity programmes in USA have helped reduce short-term sick leave (by 32%), health care costs (by 20-55%) and increased productivity (by 52%). However, scanty empirical data is available of the situation in developing world (WHO, 2003). Reduction of such kinds of avoidable costs is potentially important, especially in the developing countries such as Nigeria as it would lead to higher employee performance.

Review of Empirical Studies

Some research has been done in the field of employee development and recreational activities and some findings have been made. Mokaya and Kipyegon (2014) sought to establish the effect of workplace recreation on employee engagement, asserted that beyond salary, psychological and social fulfillment can determine which employees are motivated to stay, perform, and contribute to organization success. Also Mokaya and Gitari (2012) sought to determine the effect of workplace recreation on employee performance at Kenya Utalii College. The study covered aspects of job satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity. The study concluded that recreation is a significant factor in employee performance as it increases the level of commitment, enhances bonding and improves employee wellbeing with a consequent positive effect on job satisfaction, service provision, customer satisfaction and productivity. In conclusion the study recommended that the College and indeed other organizations should offer recreation facilities and activities that are of interest to employees bearing in mind their different tastes, gender and age among other considerations in order to enhance employee performance thereby making the outdoor recreation for staff strategically planned.

Theoretical framework

For a better understanding of the importance of outdoor activities on employee development and industrial harmony, the Herzberg’s Hierarchy of needs was employed. Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation suggests that there are two sets of factors which either lead to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The presence of motivating factors always ensures job satisfaction and happiness among the employees. They are: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth and the work itself. These motivating factors are relating to the work content factors. According to Herzberg, in order to motivate employees, the managers must ensure to provide the hygiene factors and then follow the motivating factors. Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene
theory proposes. That these intrinsic factors are related to job satisfaction and motivation, whereas extrinsic factors are associated with job dissatisfaction. In conclusion, although there are benefits of outdoor recreation activities in the short term and long term for employees, the context in which this work was researched, was to find out if these activities are strategically planned for by the universities to promote harmony amongst human resources or it is created out of more emergent needs of lecturers to just relax.

Research Methods

The population of the study was academic and non-academic staff at Universities in south-south Nigeria. According to the Higher Education Statistics 2013 put forward by the federal ministry of education the total number academic and non academic staff in tertiary institutions in this region is 30,452. This number served as the population of this study. The sample size according to Okeke (1995) was determined by using Taro Yamane’s formula, thus the sample size for this study was 395 staff. The simple random sampling was used in this research to ensure equal opportunity of everybody being represented.

The hypothesis was tested with the chi-square (χ²) and the Yates correlation method was employed to reduce the errors that may occur whilst using the chi-square for a 2 X 2 contingency table. The analysis helped make a prediction about the dependent variable (employee performance) based on its covariance with the independent variables (organizational recreation) as supported by Kothari (2008). This method was employed because the purpose of this study was to draw informed conclusions from individual employees who all possess different characteristics and needs on the basis of trying to generalize our findings.

Data Analysis

The profile of the participants is represented in Table 1. The sample is dominantly male (64.1%) and married (88.6%). (53.9%) of subjects work are Academic staff. Most of subjects (35.4%) are between 36 and 45 years old.

Table 1. Demographic variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (year)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 45</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data, 2015.

Table 2: The responses on “if the approach to Outdoor recreation activities in Nigerian universities were spontaneous or strategically planned towards building effective human resource management?”
Approach to Outdoor Recreational activities | Academic staff responses | Non-Academic Responses | Percentage (%)
---|---|---|---
More of spontaneous | 177 | 114 | 73.7%
More of Planned | 36 | 68 | 26.3%
TOTAL | 213 | 182 | 100%

Source: Survey Data, 2015.

**Test Instrument:** Chi-square ($X^2$) using the Yales correction method.

From formula, $X^2 = \sum \frac{(OF - EF)^2}{EF}$

Where; OF = Observed frequency
EF = Expected frequency
EF = Total row X Total column

Sample size

Therefore, EF:

Cell 1: $(291 \times 213) \div 395 = 156.9$
Cell 2: $(104 \times 213) \div 395 = 56.1$
Cell 3: $(213 \times 182) \div 395 = 98.1$
Cell 4: $(182 \times 182) \div 395 = 83.9$

**Table 3: Presentation of the Expected Frequency (EF)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to Outdoor Recreational activities</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Non-academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More of spontaneous</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>156.9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
<td>98.1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to Outdoor Recreational activities</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56.1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>83.9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data, 2015.

Instead of calculating for $(OF – EF)$, in Yales correction method, 0.5 is subtracted from the absolute value of $(OF – EF)$ for every item so as to make the answer less approximate.

**Table 4: Calculation of Yales Correction Method**

| OF | EF | $(OF-EF)$ | $(|OF-EF|-0.5)$ | $(|OF-EF|-0.5)^2$ | $(|OF-EF|-0.5)^2$ | $\text{EF}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 177 | 156.9 | 20.1 | 19.6 | 384.2 | 2.45 |
73.7% were of the notion that strategy on outdoor activities are more of spontaneous because the activities in the universities as relating to recreation among staff are realized from unconscious actions which is in line with the opinion of Mintzberg (1978) on the spontaneous approach to strategy to motivate employees towards employee development and industrial harmony. The 27.3% of the respondents were of the opinion that the outdoor activities are more of planned because a staff club was created for outdoor activities which is in line with the deliberate or planned approach to business strategy. (Mintzberg, 1978).

Although a venue (staff) club was provided by the institutions from the findings it is obvious that there is no planned activity for outdoor recreation to promote effective working relationship among employees.

Conclusions

Evidence from the literature review and finding of the study indicate from all literature, evidence and responses during the course of this research study, the importance of outdoor activities for employees in Nigerian universities cannot be undermined. After a critical and comprehensive analysis of the data in this study, it was recommended that outdoor activities should be organized at least annually for employees as this will not only help build an effective interpersonal relationship amongst the employees and employers but as it is in Germany, ease the constant strike actions as a result of better conditions of office.

Through outdoor activities, employees will find themselves in a conducive and informal environment to air their thoughts and feelings, their happiness and sadness, weakness and strengths etc. thereby paving the way for better and improved structures in the coming year. Outdoor activities will not only lead to employee development and industrial harmony in the Nigerian university system but also aid improvement in the educational standards, as a positive co-existence between employers and employees will have positive effect on the students in the Nigerian universities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;
I. A venue with plenty of outdoor space for games and contests is ideal for team building. Depending on the duration of the company activity, organizers can plan a day or weekend of relaxation combined with fun activities.

II. Advance planning for staff outing and recreational activities that includes selecting participants, venue, inclusive dates and line-up of activities is essential for the success of the event.

III. Organizations must strive to incorporate regular offsite events that focus on personnel, not only in good times but also during economic reversals like the situation in Nigeria presently. Corporate staff events combined with recreational activities throughout the year can contribute to a well-motivated workforce. Other events that are best handled offsite include staff training, holiday or Christmas parties, strategic planning, and staff recognition days.

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