Occupational Health and Safety Management and Employee Resilience in Private Universities

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Abstract

Some organizations especially those in the private sectors and in developing countries like Nigeria aim at maintaining or increasing their productivity and profitability at the expense of their employee's occupational health and safety. When the occupational health and safety of the employees are maligned by an organization, the organization runs a high risk of low employee resilience and poor success. The paper adopted the survey research design through quantitative research approach. Primary data was elicited through the administration of questionnaires in randomly selected Private Universities in Lagos State. 473 copies of questionnaires were administered to employees in selected private universities. The study revealed that majority of the employees of the selected private universities suffered from poor health and safety management practices in their organizations resulting from psychological stress, work overload and hostile work environment hazards which have a negative effect on their resilience. The revealed that the predictor variable of occupational health and safety management adopted by the employees is a predictor of employee resilience with (β =.149; t=3.267; p<0.05). The study concludes that employee resilience is an important element that forward looking organizations cannot afford to ignore. The study recommends that occupational health and safety management should be given prompt attention by organizations as once it is eroded as a culture in their employees, their resilience will be negatively impacted and this is not good for the organizations success.

Keywords*: Occupational Health and Safety, Employee Resilience, Organizational Success, Work Overload, Hostile Work Environment

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1.   Introduction

Some organizations especially those in the private sectors and in developing countries like Nigeria still aim at maintaining or increasing productivity and profitability at the expense of their employee's occupational health and safety thereby reducing their employee resilience. International Labor Organization (ILO, 2012) reported that every day, 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents of work-related diseases - more than 2.3 million deaths per year, 317 million accidents occur on the job annually; many of these resulting in extended absences from work. Situations like this negatively impacts and organizations productivity and the economic burden of poor occupational health and safety management practices is estimated at 4 percent of global Gross Domestic Product each year (Iheanacho & Ebitu, 2016). Situations like these is highly prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria where employers and employees neglect the prominence and significance of occupational health and safety as it affects the employees in the work place. This results in the employees working under extreme and unpleasant working conditions which ultimately have effects on their resilience.

Occupational health and safety management is concerned with protecting employees and other people affected by an organization's activities, products and services against hazards. Occupational health and safety management also entails the control of hazards in the work place to achieve an acceptable level of exposure to risk (Aluko, Adebayo, Adebisi, Ewegbemi, Abidoye, & Popoola, 2016).). Occupational health and safety is an important issue because of high rates of associated morbidity and mortality of exposed workers. An estimated 100,000 people die from preventable occupational related illnesses, while about 400,000 new cases of occupational diseases are diagnosed every year (Bell, Collins, Tiesman, Ridenour, Konda, Wolf & Evanoff, 2013). This affects employees' resilience in various occupations as a result of their exposure to different types and varying degrees of occupational hazards in the workplace.

Employee resilience has been defined as the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the employees emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Nigerian employers attitude towards employees occupational health and safety management is poor thereby constituting a problem and very few are willing to take positive actions that would ameliorate these problems. Despite the fact that every employer is duty bound to protect their employees and keep them informed about health and safety practices, the prevailing occupational health and safety management practices of many private organizations have been identified to be debilitating (WHO, 2004).These conditions negatively impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the industrial workers (WHO, 2004).

An organization is made up of people, and it is these people (employees) whose productiveness the

organization relies on for its success and ultimate survival (Schaufeli, Ouweneel, & Le Blanc, 2013). Employees play a central role in the success of any organizational responses to their environment through their attitudes and behaviors, including openness or resistance to change (Griffith & West, 2013). Therefore, if the occupational health and safety of the employees are misaligned by an organization, the organization runs a high risk of low employee resilience and poor success. It is on this premise that this study seeks to investigate the effect of occupational health and safety on employee resilience in Nigerian private universities.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Occupational Health and Safety Management
The World Health Organization (WHO, 1948) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well -being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. A further analysis of this definition would show that health would include the ability of an individual to with lives challenges, adapt to changes especially social and emotional challenges as they occur through life. It therefore means that health in this context includes the ability of employees to be resilient and adapt to the workplace challenges, to bounce back and achieve the organizational objectives. The occupational health and safety practices of the organization would to a great extent affect the health and well- being of the employees.

The World health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) has a common definition of occupational health. This definition was developed in 1950 and was reviewed in 1995. This shared definition of Occupational Health by the two international organization has as it's main on three different Objectives:
   I.   The maintenance of and promotion of workers' health and working capacity
   II.   The improvement of working environment and work to become conducive to safety and health
   III. Development of work organizations ad working culture in a direction which supports health and safety and in doing so also promote positive social climate and smooth operation and may enhance productivity of the undertakings (Joint ILO/WHO Committee, 1995)

Following from this, it means that Occupational Health and Safety practices deals with all aspects of health and safety in the workplace and that its primary focus is on prevention of hazards. It includes enabling the individual employees to undertake their occupation and profession, in a way that causes least harm to their health, to promote health and safety at work which is concerned with preventing harm from incidental hazards arising from the workplace.

Muchemedzi and Charamba (2006) characterized occupational safety and health as that field of knowledge that is concerned with wellbeing of all those involved in connection with job setting and its environment. This means that the health and safety of all employees in the organization are closely linked to the company's productivity in all work places, (Sheth, Trivedi, Shah, Sathwara & Thakkar, 2016) and this again depends on the resilience of the employees. The effect of occupational health and safety of employees depends on the types of hazards faced. These include physical hazards such as radiation, noise, chemical hazards such as asbestos, disinfectants, ergonomic hazards such as raising of bulky equipment, poor work postures, irregular work situations such night work, shifts/rotations, irregular work days and finally workplace violence such as harassment.

Yusuf, Eliyana and Sari (2012), found that OSH have a significant effect on job satisfaction, and that job satisfaction also had a significant effect on employee performance and consequently OSH has significant effect on performance. From the findings of this study it can therefore be said that when OSH practices increases that employee performance and employee resilience would in increase too.

2.2 Employee Resilience
Resilience is a capacity that reflects in behavior, deals with change and relates to overcoming some unwelcome and unsolicited situation (Paul & Garg, 2012). Since turbulence and instability are prevalent in the business world due to the rising competitive landscape especially in private organizations, resilience is a strength that individual managers should   develop to withstand the turbulence that is prevalent in the business environment. Literature provides strong evidence that when individuals experience difficult situations, negative events or stressors at the workplace it can lead to poor employee outcomes and may result in burnout and poor health (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001,). Furthermore, Maslach and Leither (2016) have categorized burnout as a major occupational hazard for many professionals rendering services especially in education services of which the private universities are a major part. They postulates that the work culture in such human services sector as education and health amongst others is that it demands for high level of selflessness on the part of the employees; often putting other people's needs first before theirs, working long hours and disposition of doing whatever it takes to help their student or their client and to give all that is required even above and beyond the call of duty to help them achieve their set objective.

In the private universities in Nigeria, the state of affairs in the work place is that budget is usually low and there are lots of restrictions and limitations that are placed on employees of the institutions and yet very high

standard of performance is expected. Consequently there is need to ensure adequate Occupational Safety and health practices to secure the employee and build his/her resilience in the work environment.

Reppold, Mayor, Almeida and Hutz(2012) sees the term resilience to describe an individual's ability to overcome, challenges, adverse conditions or situations that sometimes involved risk to his/her personal well being, development and mental. This point of review agrees with the view of Pinheiro, Matos, Pstana, Oliveira and Costa (2015) who holds that Employee resilience as a resource capacity may help employees bounce back from difficulty and challenging work centered situations. It helps them continue to focus on the need to achieve organizational objectives despite the challenging situations they face.

Oladipo and Idemudia (2015) have observed the emerging global trend in which individuals are exposed to various challenging and life threatening situations, loss of jobs and unemployment, terrorist's attacks, increased poverty, natural disasters and many other hazards that do occur in the society and especially in the workplace. They observed that it is the degree of each individual's resilience that determine the level of his/her survival and ability to bounce back to focus on the set objective. Craig(2019) have also opined that the modern workplaces are characterized by high level competition, group and interpersonal rivalry, faster organizational changes, target deadlines and sometimes leading to employees cutbacks. In this state of affairs, the ability of an individual to cope depends to a large extent on the level /degree of his/her resilience. Wagnildand and Young(1993, 2009) had identified five essential characteristics that constituted resilience: (a) meaningfulness of life or the realization that each person's life has a purpose to live for; (b) perseverance or the act of persistence despite adversity or discouragement; (c) self-reliance or belief in oneself with a clear understanding of own capabilities and limitations; (d) equanimity or balanced perspective of life and experiences which might be viewed as sitting loose and taking what comes, thus moderating extreme responses to adversity; and (e) existential aloneness or the realization that each person is unique and that while some experiences can be shared, others must be faced alone. It is therefore in the perspective of this study that employees require high level of emotional intelligence to develop their resilience in the work place to cope with the challenges that occur.

Employee resilience is widely identified as being dependent on how information is managed and used (Achour & Price, 2010). Resilience to acute shocks, rather than everyday challenges, is enhanced by adequate planning (Beermann, 2011). The availability of resources is considered a key enabler of employee resilience (Felland, Lesser, Staiti, Katz, & Lichiello, 2003). When material resources are used strategically, employees can overcome disruption. Financial resources are also considered necessary to mobilize other needed resources during crisis. Although there have been studies on employee resilience and performance, there has not been much on the relationship of OSH with Employee Resilience

3.0 Methodology

The design adopted for this study is the quantitative research design using the descriptive survey design. Data were collected through the primary source of data collection (Questionnaire). The research instrument was validated and reliability was carried out using the Cronbach alpha analysis. The sample size comprises of four hundred and seventy three employees (473) of private universities in South-West Nigeria as determined by the Taro Yamane formula. Data was analyzed by inferential statistics (regression analysis) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 1 List of Universities in Lagos State

SN	Universities in Lagos State	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Population
1.	Caleb University, Imota	2008	Private	149
2	Cetep City University, Yaba	2005	Private	158
3	Pan Atlantic University, Lekki	2002	Private	168

4.0   Data Presentation, Analysis and Findings

Restatement of Hypothesis

H_o: Occupational Health and Safety management have no significant effects on employee resilience in Nigerian private universities.

 Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.149[a]	.022	.020	4.54069

a.   Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Health and Safety Management

From table 2, this study revealed that Occupational Health and Safety management correlated with employee resilience at r=0.149. The R-Square, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable, indicated that 2.2% of the variance in occupational health and safety management can be predicted from the variables studied in the private universities.

Table 3 ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	220.014	1	220.014	10.671	.001[b]
	Residual	9711.001	471	20.618		
	Total	9931.015	472			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Resilience

b. Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Health And Safety Management

From table 3, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (220.014) divided by the Mean Square Residual (20.618), yielding F= 10.671. In the hypothesis, the independent variables were found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable. Therefore, there is an effect of occupational health and safety management on employee resilience at $F_{(1,471)}$ = 10.671. Table 3 shows that the test of occupational health and safety management on employee resilience is significant at 0.001 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Table 4 Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	47.904	1.350		35.494	.000
	occupational health and safety mgt	.197	.060	.149	3.267	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Resilience

If the b-coefficient is significant, determined by applying the t-test to the ratio of the coefficient to its standard error, then the beta-coefficient is significant. However, in this study Table 4 revealed that the predictor variable of occupational health and safety management adopted by the employees is a predictor of employee resilience with (β =.149; t=3.267; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The following are findings that can be deduced from the study; majority of the employees of the selected private universities posited that poor Health and Safety management practices in their organizations has a negative effect on their resilience. The respondents revealed that they suffer majorly from psychological and hostile work environment hazards. The respondents also revealed that work overload was a major occupational hazard they encounter which affects their Health, Safety and resilience.

The study concludes that occupational Health and Safety management practices of an organization affects their employees' resilience. The implication of this means that if the organizations like the private universities studied practices poor occupational health and safety management, their employees will have negative adjustment under challenging conditions such that the employees emerges from those conditions less strengthened and less resourceful. But in a condition where there the employees operate under a good occupational health and safety management system, there is maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions by the employees such that they emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful which aids their organizational success.

The study recommends that occupational health and safety management should be given prompt attention by organizations as once it is eroded as a culture in their employees, their resilience will be negatively impacted and this is not good for the organizations success.

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