

Influence of Specialty and Health Condition on Personnel Productivity in Polytechnic Libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijliss.15/vol10n31223>

Published August 18, 2024

Citation: Nwali V.C. (2024) Influence of Specialty and Health Condition on Personnel Productivity in Polytechnic Libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria, *International Journal of Library and Information Science Studies*, Vol.10, No.3, pp.12-23

Abstract: *This study investigated the influence of specialty and health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. In carrying out the study, two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The correlational survey research design was adopted for the study and a total of 284 respondents drawn from personnel of the 19 polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria were studied. The instrument used for collecting data was a self-structured questionnaire which was duly validated and the result justified its use. The findings showed that specialty and health condition influence personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. The study recommended that polytechnic libraries should transform the way they recruit by improving on the extent of consideration of area of specialization and health condition variables in recruitment exercises. This transformation should not only involve allowing recruitment practices to be guided by recruitment variables, it should as well involve leaving personnel recruitment in the hands of recruitment experts who can use customizable criteria such as Application Tracking Systems (ATS) to filter candidates and shortlist top choices based on specialization and health conditions. It means of identifying the most qualified candidate for the job. Specialization should be made a key determinant of who gets hired by polytechnic libraries. This, it is hoped will enhance the recruitment of top performers. Again, there should be significant improvement on the extent of consideration of good health condition as prerequisite for employment as well as the introduction and/or improvement of health programmes for workers in our libraries. Furthermore Employees already engaged by polytechnic libraries should be trained and retrained to enable them to acquire requisite qualifications, experience and skills that will enhance their productivity to broaden their chances of survival in our competitive information environment.*

Key Words: specialty, health, health condition, personnel, productivity and polytechnic libraries

INTRODUCTION

Specialty refers to an area of study, an area of a profession or a specific interest in which a person has become an expert. It is that area of a profession on which a person focuses. It simply refers to special skills that meet particular needs. There is a variety of work and environments one can encounter within the library profession such as academic libraries, special libraries, cataloguing and classification, library administration, reference services, research services and so on. The American Library Association (ALA) (2020) posits that whatever a person enjoys – Law, Medicine, Music, Psychology, Art, working with children, working with college students, whatever his interest, there is a place for him/her in the library profession. In other words, the author enumerates various library work environments such as academic, public, school, special and so on.

Health is the general condition of the body or mind, especially in terms of the presence or absence of illnesses, injuries or impairments. Health is thus defined as a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of an individual and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The World Health Organization (2021) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. WHO's definition implies that a healthy employee (employee whose health condition is good) may still have a disease or infirmity which does not prevent him/her from carrying out his/her physical, mental as well as social responsibilities. In other words, an unhealthy employee (employee whose health condition is bad) refers to an employee who is incapable of carrying out his/her physical, mental as well as social responsibilities as a result of disease or infirmity. Good health according to Oziri, Unegbu and Ndulaka (2023) means that people remained healthy, have free access to efficient health care, better nutrition, improved living conditions, useful health information and absence of avoidable premature deaths. Health information encompasses the continuum extending from the specific information needs of patients to a broader provision of health information for the day user (Wasike and Tenya, 2013). Similarly, Adeyoyin and Oyewusi (2015) describe health information as information on a continuum between health education and health promotion.

According to Oziri, Unegbu and Ndulaka (2023), health information is about having the requisite knowledge which enables one to make the right decisions concerning health issues. It relates to those pieces of information that will make the user have physical and emotional stability. It contains such information as sanitation rules and regulations (environmental cleanliness), family planning, disease control, drugs, immunization, location of good hospitals and clinics, laboratory. It also includes news about international bodies and agencies responsible for global health activities such as world Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Nwafor-Orizu and Onwudinyo (2015) sees health information from two perspectives. While Nwafor Orizu and Onwudinyo posit that health information is knowledge,

facts and news generated from various sources, necessary for good physical and mental condition of human beings, and that it is a determinant of the right to the highest attainable standard of health including access to such information as protected by the right to exchange and import information. For this study however, polytechnic library personnel are categorized into librarians, library officers, library assistants, library attendants, system analysts/programmers, secretaries, clerical officers, typists, book binders, security personnel/porters and cleaners/messengers. These unit categories fall into three broad categories notably professionals, paraprofessionals and non-professionals also known as support staff. Personnel actually form the most important asset that every library has because they create the products and services; they are the library. Therefore, hiring employees who are the best fit for their positions is a great way for a polytechnic library to increase productivity and remain relevant in the information industry. According to Kristof-Brown and Guay (2011) there should be compatibility between employees' characteristics and those of specific jobs. In the light of the foregoing, this study therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of specialty and health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. What is the influence between specialty on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the influence between health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Specialty in recruitment involves *placing round pegs in round holes*. Each role a library manager is hiring for will have some unique skills and characteristics that signify a strong performer and it is important to know what those unique skills and characteristics are. Even though there are claims that increased specialty among employees can make them less flexible since it tends to reduce their ability to perform other types of work within the organization that fall outside their particular specialty, there are strong assumptions that employees become proficient at their task when they work in their specific area of expertise. Adeyoyin , Agbeze-Unazi, Oyewunmi, Adegun and Ayodele (2015) studied the 'Effects of job specialization and departmentalization on job satisfaction among the staff of Nimbe Adedipe Library, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta' using a descriptive research design and a structured questionnaire to elicit information from forty-five (45) respondents. The findings of the study reveal that the benefits of specialty extend beyond individual workers to the organization. The authors submit that organizations that employ specialization enjoy increased productivity.

In another development, Adeyoyin, Ajiboye, Adegun and Tomomowo-Ayodele (2013) surveyed the strength and weaknesses of job specialization on overall job performance among 42 library staff of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. Their findings reveal that majority of the respondents agree that job specialization makes their work easier and faster, enhances their productivity making them satisfied with their present area of specialization. The authors further posit that information services related to special interest areas such as preparation of abstracts and indexes of current periodicals, organization of bibliographies, or analysis of background information and preparation of reports related to key issues are better performed by specialist librarians. According to the authors, the preservation of government publications, records, and important documents from the historical records of actions taken and decisions made by the government for example can best be handled by government document librarians. Two Dutch information scientists-Heye and Adolphus (2010) surveyed *the role of the information scientist and specialist librarian in the 21st Century* and found that the contributions of the specialist librarian are indispensable even in an age of disintermediation, when it is so easy for people to look things up themselves. According to them, the specialist librarian acts as an interface between those who use systems and those who construct them. Specialist librarians for example will often be involved by the information technology (IT) department in the development of software systems, to give an overview of how library patrons search and use information. Stebelman (2009) examined the advantages and disadvantages of using specialist librarians in reference collection development and established that the value of using specialists in building a library's general collection cannot be overemphasized. He however notes that specialization reduces employee flexibility in the library. Similarly, Fadiran (2002) carried out an objective survey of the merits and demerits of full subject specialization in academic libraries and some possible alternatives which are capable of attaining more effectively, similar goals as subject specialization system. He notes that a major advantage of using specialist librarians in libraries is that it ensures that a person who is knowledgeable in a subject handles most of the library operations relating to that subject. He handles book selection in the area in collaboration with the lecturers in the departments concerned. When the books arrive in the library he catalogues and classifies them. He is thus familiar with most of the materials that are available in the library on his subject. As a result, he is favourably placed to carry out satisfactory information service to his clientele. This is core productivity – rendering satisfactory information services to clients. Fadiran (2002) sums it up in the following words: *Libraries do not consist of books any more than the national income consists of the stock capital. It is the flow of services from the stock which counts, and in maximizing the value of the flow of services, the highly-skilled labour of the graduate librarian specializing in a particular subject can do more than anything else.*

The current prevailing idea among several human resource management (HRM) scholars is that there is a strong tie between employees health condition or status and their productivity (Pearce and Robinson, 2003). In other words, the relationship between health condition and productivity is not debatable. Mills, Kessler, Cooper, and Sullivan (2007) wrote in their article 'Impact of a

health promotion program on employee health risks and work productivity' that being part of an organization's health promotion programme increases productivity levels. The authors used the World Health Organization health and work performance questionnaire to collect data from their respondents. From the analysis of data collected, they conclude that those enrolled in the multi-component health programme reduced their health risks by 0.45, lowered their monthly absenteeism days by 0.36, and had a mean increase on the work performance scale of 0.79. These results suggest that implementing a health programme improve the health condition levels of employees and bring about noticeable positive differences in health risks and productivity. Supporting the contention that there is link between health condition and productivity, David, Kim, Farh and Zhou (2005) in Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2019) posit that good health result in greater job performance as it is significantly and positively linked to productivity. This occurs because recruiting candidates, who are healthy to efficiently meet task goals at a high-quality standard, lead directly to better performance.

Burton, McCalister, Chen, and Edington (2005) conducted a study in which they surveyed both people enrolled (n=854) and not enrolled in an organization's health programme (n=4543), and asked questions based on their productivity in the workplace. They found that employees who were not participating in their organization's health programme reported higher loss of productivity due to time management, physical difficulty of the work, limitations of output, and overall loss of productivity than comparable of the same race, age, gender, and work location who were enrolled in their organization's health programme. Allen, Hubbard and Sullivan (2005) published their survey report in the *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* in which they examined the effects of health on productivity. That study reports that health is one of eight factors that affect productivity. The others according to the authors include: work-life balance, personal life impact, stress, financial concerns, job characteristics, employee characteristics, and company characteristics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA (2019) examined the relationship between health condition and productivity using obesity as an example of employee health concern. They discovered that obese employees experience higher levels of absenteeism due to illness than normal weight employees, normal-weight men miss an average of 3.0 days each year due to illness or injury while overweight and obese men (BMI 25-35), miss approximately 2 more work days per year than normal-weight men, a 56% increase in missed days, normal-weight women miss an average of 3.4 days each year due to illness or injury while overweight women miss 3.9 days, a 15% increase in missed days; obese women (BMI greater than 30) miss 5.2 days, a 53% increase in missed days; and women with a BMI of 40 or higher miss 8.2 days, a 141% increase in missed days, almost one week more of missed work each year than normal-weight women. The Centers also found that having healthier employees reduces presenteeism which is the measurable extent to which health symptoms, conditions, and diseases adversely affect the work productivity of employees who choose to remain at work instead of taking leave. The study concludes that healthier employees are generally more productive.

Similarly, Evans (2020) looked at the nexus between health and work and found that the two are mutually tied. The author finds that good health leads to maximum productivity while poor health leads to minimum productivity. He further notes that the direct and indirect consequences of ill health include loss of productivity, absenteeism due to more sick days, presenteeism and loss of income, and posit that poor health has affected the economy of different nations across the globe. Boles, Pelletier and Lynch (2004) sought to provide evidence for the relationship between health risks and self-reported productivity, including health-related absence and impaired performance on the job. A cross-sectional analysis was implemented consisting of 2264 employees of a large employer. Participants responded to a health risk assessment and work productivity scale. Mean productivity loss was compared for individuals with different levels of risk factors using analysis of variance. Multivariate analyses, including logistic and linear regression, were used to determine the significance of health risks on productivity loss. Participants with more risk factors reported greater productivity loss ($P < 0.001$). The odds of any productivity loss were most significant for individuals with diabetes (absenteeism) and stress (presenteeism). The authors conclude that higher health risks are strongly associated with greater productivity loss, absenteeism and presenteeism. Kirsten (2010) examined the link between health and productivity at the workplace. The study discusses the relationship between health and productivity at the work-place by providing a global perspective of the current status of the fields of workplace health promotion and health management. It notes that the prevailing chronic disease trends coupled with economic pressures have proven a significant challenge for employers and employees alike thereby acknowledging that health condition is a good predictor of organizational productivity.

Hafner, Stolk, Saunders, Krapels, and Baruch (2015) presented a report which confirms that the relationship between health and productivity is rock solid. The report was drawn from data collected during the 2014 Britain's Healthiest Company (BHC) competition in order to understand what drives productivity at work in the participating organizations and, in particular, to examine the relation between the health and wellbeing of staff and their resultant productivity. To understand the relationship between health and wellbeing of staff and productivity, the authors examined the links between lost productivity in terms of presenteeism (being in suboptimal health at work) and absenteeism in association with a range of factors. These include: job and work environment (e.g. stress and health-promotion interventions in the workplace), personal (e.g. lifestyle risk-factors related to obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption) and health and physical risks (chronic conditions and mental health). They used regression modeling techniques to establish associations between these factors and productivity loss in the workplace and after comparing their results with wider literature they arrived at a conclusion that health condition has significant impact on productivity. However, there is no empirical work on specialty and health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted Correlational Survey Research Method. This method was preferred because the study involves a population that is diverse in nature. The researcher used a self-developed structured questionnaire for data collection. Uhegbu (2009) sees questionnaire as a list of pretest questions to which respondents are required to supply answers. The choice of the questionnaire is because the respondents are all literate and can easily fill the instrument. The questionnaire is titled “influence of specialty and health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries (IESHCPPPL)”. The total population of the study is five hundred and thirty-seven (537) drawn from the nineteen (19) polytechnic libraries studied in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. The sample size for this study is two hundred and eighty-four (284). The figure was obtained using the Godden (2004) formula for deriving appropriate sample size from a known population. Owing to unequal number of personnel in the various libraries, proportionate sampling method as propounded by Uzoagulu (1998) was used to distribute the sample size population of 284 among the personnel in polytechnic libraries South-East and South-South, Nigeria. Out of the two hundred and eighty four (284) copies of the questionnaire distributed, two hundred and thirty-four (234) representing 82.4% were returned and found valid for analysis. Out of the other fifty (50) representing 17.6%, thirty six (36) were not returned at all because the respondents could not be found on their seats again to submit the filled questionnaires. Some had gone on leave while others were simply absent from work. Worse still, fourteen (14) of them were simply apathetic; eleven (11) returned the copies of the questionnaire unfilled while three (3) lost the copies of the questionnaire given to them. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size population from the total population of each of the personnel in polytechnic libraries South-East and South-South, Nigeria. This allowed all the elements that made up the population equal opportunity to be selected.

Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the influence of specialty on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Influence of Specialty on Personnel Productivity in Polytechnic Libraries.

S/No	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	Job specialization leads to higher productivity in my library	36	89	91	18	234	2.61	S
2.	Specialization enhances mastery of tasks in my library	66	99	57	12	234	2.94	S
3.	Specialization results in increased proficiency in job performance.	41	86	79	28	234	2.60	S

4.	Specialized staff in my library are more productive than non-specialized staff	43	97	73	21	234	2.69	S
5.	In my library, both specialized and non-specialized staff are equally productive	3	77	12 8	26	234	2.24	NS

*Significant mean = **2.62**

Based on the significant mean value of 2.62, evidence on table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that there is positive influence on job specialization and personnel productivity because job specialization leads to higher productivity ($X=2.61$), enhances mastery of tasks ($X=2.94$), results in increased proficiency in task performance ($X=2.60$) and the work output of specialized staff was greater than that of the non-specialized staff ($X=2.69$). Granted that non-specialized staff members are also productive, their productivity in relation to job specialization was insignificant because their mean value of 2.24 was lower than the significant mean value of 2.5.

Research Question 1: What is the influence of health condition on personnel productivity in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Influence of Health Condition on Personnel Productivity in Polytechnic Libraries.

S/No	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	Good health condition results in high productivity in my library	109	97	28	-	234	3.35	S
2.	Good health condition leads to higher and better performance in my library	117	79	36	2	234	3.25	S
3.	In my library, good health condition reduces rates of absenteeism and sick leave	122	98	14	-	234	3.46	S
4.	Healthy workers in my library are more productive than the unhealthy workers	124	99	11	-	234	3.48	S
5.	Both healthy and unhealthy workers in my library are equally productive	-	18	85	131	234	1.52	NS

*Significant mean = **3.01**

With a significant mean of 3.01 as shown on Table 2, good health condition has positive relationship with the productivity of workers in polytechnic libraries because good health condition results in high productivity ($X=3.35$), leads to higher and better performance ($X=3.25$), reduces the rate of absenteeism and sick leave by workers ($X=3.46$), and the output of the healthy workers was greater than that of the unhealthy ones ($X=3.48$). Even though unhealthy workers still put up some performance at work, their performance in relation to good health condition ones was insignificant because their mean value of 1.52 was lower than the significant mean value of 2.5.

FINDINGS

On the influence of specialty or specialization on the productivity of personnel, the finding of this study as evident in the result of data analysis on table 1 shows that there is significant relationship between job specialization and personnel productivity. According to the findings, specialized personnel of polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria are more productive than non-specialized staff. Put differently, the finding shows that employees become more proficient at their task when they work in their specific area of expertise. The finding corresponds with the findings of Adeyoyin, Agbeze-Unazi, Oyewunmi, Adegun and Ayodele (2015) who studied the *Effects of job specialization and departmentalization on job satisfaction among the staff of Nimbe Adedipe Library, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta* and found that the benefits of specialty extend beyond individual workers to the organization; that organizations that employ specialization enjoy increased productivity. The finding also tallies with the outcome of a survey of the strength and weaknesses of job specialization on overall job performance among 42 library staff of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta by Adeyoyin, Ajiboye, Adegun and Tomomowo-Ayodele (2013). As in this study, their findings revealed that job specialization makes work easier and faster, enhances productivity and result in job satisfaction for employees working in their areas of specialization.

The finding is also in agreement with the outcome of researches by Heye and Adolphus (2010) and Stebelman (2009) who found that the contributions of the specialist librarian are indispensable even in an age of disintermediation, when it is so easy for people to look things up themselves. So, the finding of this study with those of previous studies has offered reassurance that the productivity of polytechnic libraries can be rekindled by ensuring that polytechnic library personnel are deployed to work in their specific areas of expertise. The position of this study is that libraries that employ specialists in the various areas of librarianship are bound to deliver better in satisfying the various information needs of their clients. As a result, polytechnic libraries that wish to thrive and remain relevant in the provision of current, timely and relevant library and information services to its users must allow specialization to be one of the determinants of who gets recruited.

The finding as shown on table 2 indicates that health condition influences productivity of personnel of polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria. The finding indicates that good health condition results in high productivity as healthy employees produced more than unhealthy employees. The finding is in line with the current prevailing idea among several human resource management (HRM) scholars that there is a strong tie between employees' health condition and their productivity. Allen, Hubbard and Sullivan (2005) examined the effects of health on productivity and found that health is one of eight factors that affect productivity. Mills, Kessler, Cooper, and Sullivan (2007) surveyed the 'Impact of a health promotion program on employee health risks and work productivity'. From the analysis of data collected, they came to a conclusion that good health condition lowers absenteeism and increases work performance.

The finding agrees with the finding of David, Kim, Farh and Zhou (2005) in Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2019) good health condition result in greater job performance as it is significantly and positively linked to productivity. The finding substantiates the finding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA (2019) that healthier employees are generally more productive. They examined the relationship between health condition and productivity using obesity as an example of employee health concern. They discovered that having healthier employees reduces absenteeism as well as presenteeism which is the measurable extent to which health symptoms, conditions, and diseases adversely affect the work productivity of employees who choose to remain at work instead of taking leave. Similarly, the finding corroborates the finding of Evans (2020) who looked at the nexus between health and work and found that the two are mutually tied. The author discovered that good health leads to maximum productivity while poor health leads to minimum productivity. MTI Events (2019) examined the connectedness between employee health and productivity and arrived at a finding which tallies with the finding of this study; that there is a causal relationship between employee health and productivity and that organizations with healthier employees saw a significant gain in productivity among workers. This study posits that healthy workers are better performers and that libraries that recruit healthy workers will have competitive advantage over others in terms of productivity. Therefore, polytechnic libraries should recruit candidates who are healthy to efficiently meet task goals at a high-quality standard because it leads directly to better performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aside from speculations, this study has empirically revealed that educational specialization and health condition have significant roles to play in the productivity of personnel of polytechnic libraries. .As a result, this study recommends the following:

- Polytechnic libraries should transform the way they recruit by improving on the extent of consideration of area of specialization and health condition variables in recruitment exercises. This transformation should not only involve allowing recruitment practices to be guided by recruitment variables, it should as well involve leaving personnel recruitment in the hands of recruitment experts who can use customizable criteria such as Application Tracking Systems (ATS) to filter candidates and shortlist top choices based on specialization and health conditions. t means of identifying the most qualified candidate for the job. Specialization should be made a key determinant of who gets hired by polytechnic libraries. This, it is hoped will enhance the recruitment of top performers.
- There should be significant improvement on the extent of consideration of good health condition as prerequisite for employment as well as the introduction and/or improvement of health programmes for workers in our libraries.
- Employees already engaged by polytechnic libraries should be trained and retrained to enable them to acquire requisite qualifications, experience and skills that will enhance their productivity to broaden their chances of survival in our competitive information environment.

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