

Job Autonomy and Employee Performance: A Study of Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The significance of job autonomy on employee performance at central hospital Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria, was investigated in this study. The study used a research survey design to collect data from 150 participants using purposive and basic random sampling methods. 129 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved out of the 150 that were distributed, yielding an 86.0% response rate. Of the 129 respondents in all, 72 were women and 57 were men. The study results demonstrated that job autonomy had an effect on employee performance at central hospital Agbor, Delta State. The study concluded that plethora of evidence supports the positive correlation between worker autonomy and employee performance. When allowing employees to exercise job autonomy, central hospital's management must take certain factors into account. These factors include the employees' skills and abilities, organisational culture, degree of cultural diversity within the organisation, and autonomy limits. Central hospital Agbor should encouraging staff members to get involved in decision-making and empowering them to make decisions within their immediate domain of responsibility after providing them with a general understanding of the policies that govern their operations and utilising job autonomy as a crucial component to improve the effectiveness of staff and the hospital.

Keywords: job autonomy; employee performance; self-determination theory; needs satisfaction; motivation

Introduction

In the field of human resource management, the idea of job autonomy has grown in significance. The degree of freedom an employee has to choose how work is done, including what procedures to use to complete the task, is referred to as job autonomy. The Greek word "autonomos"; "auto" which mean "self" and "nomos", which means "rule", are the origin of the English word "autonomy", which denotes self-rule. Someone that relies on its own rules and regulations to carry out actions and duties is said to practice "self-rule". In the past, Greek city states exercised autonomy in choosing their own leaders and managing the affairs of their citizens (Agich, 1994). Job autonomy is considered during the job designing procedure in HR administration in both the public and private organisations. Moreover, both profit and non-profit organisations, the idea of job autonomy is divisive since it is viewed negatively in certain cultures and as beneficial in others cultures (Jeet & Sayeeduzzafar, 2014).

Any public service's ability to effectively and economically address the needs of its citizens is what gives it credibility. In order to safeguard society and all of its members as well as to advance general social welfare, public organisations frequently have wider and deeper missions (Lameck, 2017). According to Mboi (2014), the growing global population has led to a rise in the need for public sector services and products, which has put pressure on public sector organisations to perform better. Adequate job autonomy practises make it easy to achieve organisational and employee performance. According to Shobe (2018), job autonomy refers to a set of procedures or methods that involve the hierarchical entrusting of duties, giving workers more decision-making authorization to fulfil their main duties. According to earlier studies, employees can be very independent, passionate, and free to engage in these kinds of activities at work, which enhances their capacity and drive to develop further and get ready (Saragih, 2011; Zhou et al., 2019).

Saragih (2011) makes the case that job autonomy improves employee and organisation performance by boosting satisfaction, boosting self-efficacy, and reducing stress at work. Sisodia and Das (2013) contend that increased job autonomy leads to a higher level of commitment and performance. It is important to note that the top management actively contributes to the organisational environment's integration of job autonomy. Fernet et al. (2015) argued that reflection on oneself, empowerment, and independent motivation are all connected to successful leadership and effective management. Studies reveal that there are disparities in the attitudes and comprehension of executives regarding the notion of job autonomy. While some view job autonomy as a chance for employees to advance, others see it as a melting pot that will ultimately affect organisational outcomes (Lu et al., 2017). According to Strauss et al. (2020), workers who have a high degree of job autonomy report feeling happy at work. When it comes to gauging job autonomy among

Nigerian hospital employees, there is, however, a dearth of research. Thus, this study investigates how job autonomy affects employee's performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Job autonomy

The degree to which a job affords employees freedom of choice, independence, and self-reliance in carrying out their duties is known as job autonomy. It is the degree of power granted to employees to decide the manner in which they intend to carry out their duties (Ozkoc, 2016). Individuals with autonomy are able to control their emotions and actions in order to pursue objectives that align with their own core beliefs, which may also be influenced by their professional expertise, enthusiasm, and knowledge. For people to enjoy their work, job autonomy is a crucial psychological requirement (Metin, 2019). Similarly, Khoshnaw and Alavi (2020) describe employee autonomy as the extent to which the work affords an employee significant autonomy, independence, and choice in planning the work and choosing the methods to be employed in completing it.

Examples of job autonomy that can be found in hospitals like Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria, include work approach, timetable for work, the flow of work, workplace procedures, office space, work evaluation, adjustable hours of operation, quantity of work, targets, priorities, and work guidelines. Scholars generally concur on the definition of job autonomy (De-Jonge, 1995; Sisodia & Das, 2013). High-quality supervisor-employee interactions, which are marked by respect, mutual trust, obligation, and support, are particularly linked to autonomous regulation and need satisfaction with regard to managers (those who have close interactions with employees) (Graves & Luciano, 2013). Furthermore, feelings of fulfilment and self-regulation are more likely to be fostered by managers who: (a) actively give employees choice and minimise oversight; (b) provide workers resources and training in addition to difficult duties, targets, and criticism; and (c) have frequent conversations with their workers, urge collaboration, and demonstrate their employees' feelings at work (Gagné et al., 2015).

Despite these results, the percentage of workers who report experiencing abusive supervision defined as publicly dissing and demeaning staff members, demeaning them through unfavourable assessments, frightening, and/or excluding subordinates is thought to be between 10% and 16% (Tepper, 2000). Abusing bosses are less likely to support their staff members' basic psychological needs being met when they engage in such behaviours (Lian et al., 2012). For example, employees who experience belittling may become less confident in their skills and accomplishments and may feel less competent. Employee autonomy may be compromised if they comply with a supervisor's wishes in order to prevent abusive behaviour, as a result of threats and unfavourable assessments (Graves & Luciano, 2013). Lastly, since it conveys to a worker that they are not valued team members, excluding behaviours may lessen relatedness satisfaction with work (Ferris et al., 2008).

Work practices that promote autonomous regulation and need satisfaction

Hackman and Oldham (1975) affirm that organisations can promote autonomous regulation by addressing five key job characteristics: task identity, task variety, job autonomy, task significance, and feedback. First and foremost, a job should give workers the chance to work on a range of tasks that call for various abilities and skills (task variety). Second, by accomplishing all tasks necessary to complete their job from beginning to end, employees should be able to witness the fruits of their labour (task identity). In a similar vein, a job should grant its employees the freedom and autonomy to carry out their duties as they determine suitable (job autonomy) as well as the ability to accomplish tasks that are important and meaningful to the organisation (task significance). Lastly, supervisors and/or coworkers should provide employees with candid, frank feedback regarding their performance (feedback). This feedback can be provided in a way that meets needs both positively and negatively. It is referred to as change-oriented responses (Carpentier & Mageau, 2013). Subsequently manager does this by adopting a perspective-taking approach, offering options for solutions along with advice, based on clearly defined expectations, and speaking in an empathetic way without making personal remarks.

In the words of Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2014), job crafting enables workers to actively initiate changes to their job based on their values and interests, while also meeting their basic psychological needs. Lastly, a variety of HRM procedures are also significant correlates of workers' needs being met. Marescaux et al. (2012) stated that workers who have access to mentorship, training, and possibilities for career advancement at work are more likely to meet their basic psychological needs. As a result, autonomy can be categorised at the task, day, and job levels and is associated with higher levels of work engagement, especially at work levels (Osibanjo et al., 2018). There may be varying degrees of task autonomy at the workplace; certain tasks have tight guidelines and little leeway in how they are completed, while others offer more latitude. People are "perceived to be of greater significance and encourage others to bring their entire selves into work" when given autonomy in their work (Kahn, 1990); this enables the employees to give their work their all. Possessing job autonomy allows one to experiment with novel and practical work approaches, which can yield more favourable results. It also fosters the vitality element of work engagement, which will improve job performance.

Dimensions and challenges of job autonomy

The fundamental building blocks of every construct and variable used in scientific research are dimensions. It is recommended that reviewers as well as authors determine dimensions in order to ensure that their research is on the right trajectory (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Like any other construct, job autonomy has unique components that draw the

attention of various authors. Below is a discussion of the major and minor components. Two primary dimensions of job autonomy are defined by Hackman and Oldham (1976) as work schedule and work procedures. In contrast, Sadler-Smith et al. (2003) supplement those dimensions with work criteria. This illustrates the employee's freedom to select the standards by which to judge her own performance. Khoshnaw and Alavi (2020) propose several dimensions of job autonomy, including methods of working, scheduling, work criteria, procedures, goals, workplace, work evaluation, flexible working hours, pace of work, kind of work, and quantity of work. Burchardt et al. (2017) included self-reflection (the action taken is in accordance with one's personal values and interest) and an extensive spectrum of choices that are excellent and Theurer et al. (2018) introduced decision-making as a further element of job autonomy.

The development of cutting-edge technology made it necessary for businesses of all sizes to give their staff members more autonomy (Alavi et al., 2016). In turn, this led to significant difficulties in various settings, regions, and organisational cultures. According to Daft (2010), centralization, formalisation, order of authority, and specialisation are examples of structural dimensions that restrict the practical application of autonomy. Sinding and Waldstrom (2014) draw attention to the fact that effectiveness and efficiency stifle organisational autonomy. Culture is a collection of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that varies greatly among societies and greatly influences people, their families, communities, and government. Wu et al. (2015) stress that culture has an impact on job autonomy; those who are successful because of their personal principles are happy about it. As a result, it might be accepted in western culture while encountering resistance in societies that lack individualism and are hierarchical. Certain nations, organisations, and businesses severely hinder employee autonomy due to traditional management approaches and cultural norms. They result in demotivated workers, decreased output, and a loss of trust and devotion.

Employee performance

In the context of human resource management, employee performance is defined as the outcomes, results, and progress of employees towards departmental and organisational goals. Performance that requires improvement can be either excellent or poor. Employee performance, according to Malkanthi and Ali (2016), is the completion of tasks with accurate and economical outcomes. According to other studies, productivity serves as a primary gauge of worker performance in managerial science, which focuses on the quantity of components produced by employees within a specified time frame (Inuwa & Idris, 2017). According to Kuranchie-Mensah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2016), employee performance refers to the tasks that are expected of a worker and the quality with which those tasks are carried out. Employee performance comprises the goals that employees are expected to meet at the workplace, including established benchmarks, skill and ability prerequisites, development strategies, and outcomes delivery (Abiante, 2018).

The opinions of Hirlak et al. (2018) differ from those of the scholars previously mentioned. Employee performance is defined as the outcome of a worker's efficiency and efficacy in completing particular tasks. According to job descriptions, other studies defined employee performance as the calibre and volume of work completed by employees. Thus, the entirety of a worker's capacity and productivity in achieving the anticipated value and completing daily tasks in accordance with the organization's established protocol and schedule can be characterised as employee performance. Because it aids in identifying the business organization's shortcomings, strengths, and possible managerial gaps, employee performance is crucial to its successful operation (Onuegbu et al., 2022). According to Leonard (2019), when workers are carrying out their responsibilities well, the organisation as a whole experiences an increase in morale. Other staff members who weren't initially driven to work well tend to benefit from this boost as well. When workers are psychologically and physically stable enough to work and have a desire to work, particularly within an atmosphere of security and safety, their performance at work is more substantial (Onuegbu, 2020). According to Armstrong (2006), people are the primary source of competitive advantage. This is because, in contrast to other forms of competitive advantage that stem from improving factors like layout or procedure, the employee factor is very hard to replicate, which makes it extremely important to organisations.

Job autonomy and employee performance

Research has acknowledged that job autonomy is a complex concept with many facets. These facets are thought to be useful instruments for assessing job flexibility in connection to employee performance (Oludeyi & Aborisade, 2018; Ade-Adeniji et al., 2021; Byabashaija et al., 2022). According to Malinowska et al. (2018), job autonomy, which is defined as the ability to set one's own hours, make choices, and hold workers accountable for their actions, can often increase employee's performance. In the work of Malinowska et al. (2018), employee performance was influenced by job autonomy. Zhou et al. (2019) examine when and how a representative's self-improvement is aided by job autonomy. The results showed that job autonomy predicted the representative's personal growth, and that the worker's innate creativity entirely mediated this relationship. The relationship between work independence and distinctive motivation was strongly influenced by group accessibility, which also influenced the therapeutic effect of built-in drive. Saragih (2015) examined the relationship between self-viability as an intervening variable and the outcomes of the work (work execution, work fulfilment, and occupation stress) in relation to job autonomy. The auxiliary relationship showed that job autonomy is not significantly correlated with work pressure, but rather with the fulfilment and execution of work. It also showed that the relationship between job autonomy, work fulfilment, and work execution was more mediated by self-adequacy. Similarly, this investigation discovered that work stress and job autonomy were not mediated by self-adequacy. While there was no significant correlation found between the career autonomy and work performance, the results of this analysis suggested that work performance and occupation fulfilment were inherently linked.

A meta-logical analysis of a holistic framework that links work performance and job autonomy was conducted by Muecke and Iseke (2019). Their findings demonstrate that job autonomy improved job performance, mostly by lowering

stress levels and raising work motivation. Three categories of job autonomy were examined by the authors. They also noted that hypothetical elements vary depending on the type of autonomy. Dynamic autonomy was the factor that strengthened work motivation the most, whereas planning autonomy had the opposite effect. The effects of strain-reduction were stronger for technique and dynamic autonomy compared to for booking autonomy. Furthermore, preliminary evidence demonstrates that centre self-assessments mediated the effects of job autonomy measures on motivation at work and psychological strain.

Mworia et al. (2021) investigated how job autonomy affected workers' performance in the Isiolo, Kenya, county government. This study used a mixed-methods approach with an exploratory design. The Isiolo County Government employees were the study's target population. With the aid of SPSS, statistical methods such as descriptive and chi-square analysis of variance were used. According to the study, Isiolo County Government employees had a high degree of job autonomy. The study came to the conclusion that employee performance in the Isiolo county government is influenced by job autonomy. Byabashaija et al. (2022) examined how employee performance in Uganda's capital city authority of Kampala was impacted by job autonomy. In terms of autonomy, the study found that workers have a clear and positive grasping of the purpose, vision, and fundamental beliefs of their work. Additionally, they commit to their work while carrying out their responsibilities and decisions. Additionally, the study showed a statistically significant relationship between job autonomy and worker performance in Uganda's KCCA. This suggested that employee performance in Uganda's KCCA is indeed impacted by job autonomy.

Nonetheless, Leach et al. (2005) found that job autonomy has a positive impact on employee performance when there is a high level of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA); in contrast, job autonomy has a small impact on performance when KSA is low. According to Langfred & Rockmann (2016), job autonomy has drawbacks since it causes executives to wonder about worker choices, characteristics, and gender parity with regard to the number of workers in their organisations. The aforementioned scholars demonstrate an adverse connection between job autonomy and performance among workers; however, they do not emphasise the impact of organisational culture on this relationship. Therefore, HR directors in the healthcare sector should increase employee control over their work assignments in order to promote job autonomy.

Theoretical framework

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) served as the basis for this study and the theory of human motivation known as SDT was created by psychologists Richard Ryan and Edward Deci. According to Krause et al. (2019), SDT offers a comprehensive framework for researching human motivation and personality. It connects human motivation, personality, and optimal performance. It suggests the existence of two main sources of motivation, natural and external and that they both have tremendous influence over employees' identities and behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 2008). As a convincing theory, it focuses on what drives employees' behaviour and gets them moving, as well as how they manage their behaviour in various settings. As a result of the social environments in which they develop and employed, humans may become assertive and pulled in or, conversely, passive and detached from workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Jung (2016), SDT illustrates the basic impact of social environments on employees' basic psychological needs, such as feelings of self-bearing, performance, and success, by either supporting or distressing them. SDT deftly illustrates the ways in which the methods and forms of mentors, leaders, protectors, and medical professionals, among others, can either strengthen or weaken employees' dedication and performance including the beneficial outcomes that ensue.

Deci and Ryan (2000) identified four motivational types that fall on a continuum from independent to centralised regulation, which SDT distinguishes between. Given that a captivating endeavour is undertaken for its own benefit, for the pleasure and enthusiasm it generates, it may lead to self-regulation. However, outside forces might be involved to encourage employees to complete a task that they find unpleasant at work. The degree to which these outside factors have been assimilated (or internalised) into a person's sense of self is what establishes where that person falls on the motivation continuum. Therefore, an employee's regulation becomes stronger as more of an external factor is internalised within the self. A doctor who is primarily driven by the conviction that their work matters to society, for example, has internalised the significance of the activity's result into his sense of self, which results in a relatively autonomous motivation. Therefore, the foundation of SDT is job autonomy. According to the theory, employees must think that they are actually in charge of their own fate and that they exercise some degree of control over it. Employees' especially need to believe that they are in control of their behaviour (Krause et al., 2019); one of the fundamental elements in creating an effective representative devotion to improve employee performance is independence. This theory aims to pinpoint the aspects of work-life quality that have an impact on employee efficiency. Giving workers more freedom in terms of how their work is planned and/or carried out could help them meet their desire for autonomy. Lastly, job tasks that directly affect other people's work are probably going to promote the satisfaction of interpersonal relationships. Additionally, giving workers the freedom to design the demands for their jobs or their own resources, for instance, may present a chance to meet their fundamental emotional requirements (Le-Blanc et al., 2017).

There are four distinct motivational styles that employees can display in relation to their work. Given that autonomous regulation produces a variety of advantageous individual and organisational outcomes in contrast to controlled regulation, the comparable existence of the various motivational styles is significant. According to the self-determination theory, employees are motivated in different ways for their job duties. Given that autonomous regulation, as opposed to controlled regulation, produces a variety of positive outcomes, including job satisfaction and performance, it is crucial to take into account the various motivations behind employees' work efforts (Gagné & Deci,

2005; Ojeleye & Jada, 2022). However, a significant number of executives remain unsure of how motivation works or how to satisfy their employees' emotional requirements in order to promote the ideal motivation. As a result, the management Central Hospital Agbor is urged to support autonomous regulation by first determining the level of motivation among its staff and by organising the workplace's three components: job design, relationships, and compensation in a way that best meets employees' psychological requirements or needs. To achieve the goal of the study, the following hypotheses were investigated in light of the previously identified components of job autonomy:

H1: There is significant difference between male and female respondents opinion on the dimensions of job autonomy practiced in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State.

H2: The independent variables of job autonomy (work schedule, work procedures, work criteria, flexible working hours, work evaluation and decision-making) are not significant in explaining the variance in employee performance in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State.

Materials and Methods

The population for this study included individuals in the following categories: political leaders, cultural front-runners, citizens, civil servants, subordinates, departmental supervisors, and directors of the Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. The research survey design was utilised in this study. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in the study to gather data from 150 respondents using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. Out of the 150 copies of questionnaire distributed, we were able to retrieved 129 copies of the questionnaire, resulting in an 86.0% response rate. Out of the total 129 respondents, 72 were female and 57 were male. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using a pre-test survey. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the staff members of Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, in order to pre-test the study tool. The data collected from the retrieved questionnaires was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test of reliability and the Smart Learning Style Criterion in order to determine the internal uniformity of the survey questions and the trustworthiness of the study questionnaire.

Table 1: Reliability Results

Construct	No. of Items	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extract
Work schedule	5	.863	.745	.609
Work procedures	5	.800	.755	.607
Work criteria	5	.804	.757	.609
Flexible working hours	5	.811	.760	.613
Work evaluation	5	.801	.753	.602
Decision-making	5	.805	.758	.623
Employee performance	7	.827	.779	.649

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The coefficients of the two constructs for Cronbach's alpha range from 0.745 to 0.779 and composite reliability from 0.800 to 0.827, respectively, as shown in Table 1. It is implied that all of the constructs are reliable because the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite results have values greater than the cutoff of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017; Karoro, 2017). The reliability results are corroborated by the Average Variance Extract (AVE) discriminant validity figures, which are likewise beyond the 0.50 level (Hair et al., 2017). In order to guarantee the validity of the instruments for cross-examination, face validity was used in this study and exposed the instruments to autonomous examiners. Before the questionnaire was applied, experts in the field from the Department of Public Administration were consulted extensively. Consequently, this study's constructs showed excellent internal reliability and uniformity. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23.0, was utilised to examine quantitative data in order to test the study's hypotheses. The independent T-test and multiple regression analysis were applied.

Area of study

This study was carryout in Agbor, precisely Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria and it is a home to many attractions and recreational activities. Ika South, a 436 km² area with 162,594 people living there as of the 2006 census, is an affiliate of the broader Igbo-speaking Anioma neighbourhood in Delta State. The Central Hospital Agbor is a public hospital located at Boji-Boji in Agbor, Delta State. It has been open for business since April 1, 1949, and is always open. The Nigerian Ministry of Health has authorised Central Hospital Agbor to function as a secondary health care centre under facility code 10/08/1/2/1/0001 for two decades. The Central Hospital Agbor provides the following services: Psychiatry/Behavioral Medicine, Family Medicine, Ophthalmology, General Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Radiology, Immunisation, HIV/AIDS Services, Tuberculosis, Non-Communicable Diseases, Family Planning, Communicable Diseases, Hepatitis, Accidents and Emergencies, Nutrition, Health Education and Community Mobilisation, Pulmonology, Neonatology, No, Obstetrics, Gynaecology.

Results and Discussion

As stated in Table 2, the distribution of respondents' categories according to age, gender, and authority level is depicted by the demographic features.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics Results

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	72	55.8
	Male	57	44.2
Age	Total	129	100
	<30 years	21	16.3
	31 - 40 years	40	31.0
	41 - 50 years	33	25.6
	Above 50 years	35	27.1
Level	Total	129	100
	Subordinates	53	41.1
	Supervisors	30	23.3
	Senior Officers	22	17.0
	Directors	24	18.6
	Total	129	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The results in Table 2 show that 57 (44.2%) were male and 72 (55.8%) female respondents respectively. Furthermore, the age distribution of the respondents indicates that most of them were in the 31-40 age range, with 40 (31.0%) falling into this group. subsequently those over 50, who accounted for 35 (27.1%), those between 41 and 50, who accounted for 33 (25.6%), and those under 30, who accounted for 21 (16.3%), was the last in queue. Given that the majority of respondents were over 30 years of age, this suggests that those who responded were not only from highly responsible offices but also sufficiently mature to express their thoughts on job autonomy and how it affects worker performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. 53 respondents, or 41.1% of the sample, were subordinates. Supervisors came in second at 23.3%, directors came in third at 24 (18.6%), and senior officers came last at 22 (17.0%). This establishes the representativeness and accuracy of data derived from those surveyed.

Testing of hypotheses

Finding out if the male and female respondents have distinct views about the components of job autonomy practiced in the Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State was essential. The outcome was shown in Table 3.

H1: There is significant difference between male and female respondents opinion on the dimension of job autonomy practiced in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State.

Table 3: Opinion of Male and Female Respondents on the Dimension of Job Autonomy Practiced in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State

No	Variables	Group	N	Me an	S D	Cat.T	Crit.T
1	Work schedule	Male	57	5.780	.307	1.506	1.900
		Female	72	5.592	.359		
2	Work procedures	Male	57	5.337	.384	1.584	1.953
		Female	72	5.186	.432		
3	Work criteria	Male	57	4.677	.445	1.493	1.944
		Female	72	4.449	.490		
4	Flexible working hours	Male	57	4.268	.500	1.690	1.909
		Female	72	4.084	.531		
5	Work evaluation	Male	57	3.902	.546	1.577	1.951
		Female	72	3.623	.560		
6	Decision-making	Male	57	3.461	.572	1.632	1.924
		Female	72	3.395	.589		

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

All calculated "t" values (1.506, 1.584, 1.493, 1.690, 1.577, and 1.632) are less than the critical "t" value (1.900), in line with the results shown in Table 3. This suggests that there is no difference in respondents' perceptions of the job autonomy categories at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, based on gender. Thus, the first hypothesis was refuted, and it was reaffirmed that there is no significant distinction between the views of respondents who are male and female with respect to the components of job autonomy that was implemented in the Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State.

H2: The independent variables of job autonomy (work schedule, work procedures, work criteria, Flexible working hours, work evaluation and decision-making) are not significant in explaining the variance in employee performance in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients	Standardised Coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	Beta		
Constant	-.635		-2.144	.038
Work schedule	.327	.202	3.208	.016
Work procedures	.452	.223	3.232	.023
Work criteria	.242	.200	3.385	.012
Flexible working hours	.513	.249	3.970	.000
Work evaluation	.331	.209	3.341	.003
Decision-making	.426	.216	3.706	.001
R	.793			
R ²	.645			
Adjusted R ²	.620			
F	75.025*			

*Significant at 0.005 level

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

The Pearson's correlation coefficient of R= 0.793 in The causal connection between the employee performance and the six job autonomy dimensions was significant, as the table 4 above demonstrates. The aspect of job autonomy that is practiced, which accounts for 64.5% of the variance, can explain the variance in the factor that is dependent on employee performance. This is indicated by the R Square value of 0.645. But other factors not included in the model explained 35.5% of the unexplained variance in this study. Put simply, this study has taken into account significant variables that are crucial in predicting employee performance in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. Furthermore, table 4 shows that the alpha value 0.05 is greater than the p-value (Sig. 0.000). Indicating the significance of the F-statistic, which equals 75.025? It is possible to conclude that this model accurately describes the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. Therefore, the variance in employee performance is significantly explained by the independent variables (work schedule, work procedures, work criteria, Flexible working hours, work evaluation and decision-making). Given that the p-value is less than 0.05; hypothesis two was disproved, and it was reiterated that independent variables (dimensions of job autonomy) were significant in explaining the difference in the employee performance in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. Furthermore, since their p-values (Sig.) are lower than the 0.05 alpha values, the six independent variables in this study are significant predictors of the dependent variables, employee performance. Therefore, using the information from the column headed "B" in the above table, a multiple regression is developed. Below is the regression equation:

Employee performance = - 0.635 + 0.327 work schedule + 0.452 work procedures + 0.242 work criteria + 0.513 flexible working hours + 0.331 work evaluation + 0.426 decision-making.

When compared to other predictor variables, Flexible working hours has the highest Beta coefficient (0.249), as shown in the above table. This means that flexible working hour is the predictor variable that most significantly influences the variation of the dependent variable (employee performance) in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. However, work criteria have the least significance, while flexible working hours and work procedures have more reasonable levels of significance.

Discussions

Among other things, the study's findings showed a statistically significant relationship between job autonomy and employee performance in Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. This indicated that job autonomy has a significant effect on employee performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. This result was consistent with a study by Arnold & Freidman (2022) on supervision and employee perception in England, which discovered that when administrators are granted more autonomy, they may start to work diligently and without the need for constant reminders to complete tasks in the workplace. However, these results contradict a well-known study on self-regulation carried out in Zambia by Ryan and Deci (2020), who discovered that some people are inherently selfish and lazy because that is just how humans are. As a result, some tasks in organisations may go unfinished for these ambiguous reasons, even though a person may be granted more autonomy within an organisation.

Additionally, the results of the study demonstrated that employee performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, was statistically and significantly impacted by the dimensions of job autonomy. The results of this investigation are in line with those of earlier studies by Onuegbu et al. (2022), Khoshnaw & Alavi (2020), Mworio et al. (2021), Byabashaija et al. (2022), and Saragih (2015), which discovered that job autonomy was an important gauge of performance among staff members. The Central Hospital, Agbor can support meeting the needs of its staff in terms of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Allowing workers to use and develop a range of skills in the workplace (e.g., by increasing responsibilities and/or offering training opportunities) and giving them ownership over tasks and projects from conception to completion may be beneficial for the Hospital in fostering feelings of competence. Additionally, giving workers more freedom in how their work is planned and carried out could help them meet their autonomy needs. Moreover, job tasks that directly affect other people's work are probably going to promote the satisfaction of relatedness needs. Furthermore, a number of traits associated with effective leadership are also likely to

promote employee need satisfaction. Directors and supervisors that can embody their genuine selves at work are said to have an authentic leadership style. Leaders who foster these behaviours increase the likelihood of employees achieving a sense of fulfilment because authenticity is defined as being sincere with others, being sincere regarding one's capabilities and shortcomings, and acting in a way that demonstrates one's core beliefs (Leroy et al., 2015). Furthermore, autonomous regulation is supported by highly qualified, empowering directors and managers (who share authority with employees) who exhibit traits like emphasising the value of work, allowing participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in staff members' abilities, and eliminating bureaucratic roadblocks to performance.

Conclusions

The impact of job autonomy on employee performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, was investigated in this study. As a result of these initiatives, several aspects of job autonomy and their impact on employee performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, were critically examined. The study found, among other things, that job autonomy is crucial for employee performance at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State. Additionally, the study demonstrated that, at Central Hospital Agbor, Delta State, flexible working hour was the most predictive variable that has a significant impact on employee performance. More specifically, higher levels of job autonomy improve worker performance. Employee performance is improved when they are allowed to select the work approaches they will use because it promotes better employee performance. Increasing an employee's level of autonomy at work motivates both the staff and department heads of the organisations. As a result, management should constantly try to assign some of their responsibilities to subordinates and grant them the power to decide within their respective spheres of influence. This has the potential to be a very powerful source of inspiration and improve employee efficiency. Therefore, autonomous regulation has many more advantageous effects on employees and the organisation than controlled regulation. In conclusion, a wealth of evidence indicates a positive correlation between the job autonomy and worker performance. When allowing employees to exercise job autonomy, Central Hospital's management must take certain factors into account. These factors include the employees' skills and abilities, organisational culture, degree of cultural variation within the organisation, and autonomy thresholds. The Nigerian work setting which occasionally suffers from trust and ethical problems is another issue. However, the hospital management may think about empowering staff members to make decisions within their direct areas of responsibility as long as they are aware of the overarching policies that govern their operations. The following suggestions are given in light of the findings and conclusion of the study: In order to improve worker performance, Agbor Central Hospital management should allow staff members' greater latitude to take initiative and complete tasks quickly and effectively. It is important to encourage staff members to take part in organisational decision-making. This will significantly assist Central Hospital management in utilising job autonomy as a crucial component to improve both the general efficiency of the hospital and its workforce. In the public sector, executive directors should step up efforts to improve autonomy in the workplace by giving workers more say over the tasks they are expected to complete for their organisations.

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