

WORK-LIFE AND CAREGIVERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The productivity of caregivers is the reason for children development and learning in school, the dearth of motivation of caregivers is suicidal to the overall performance of the caregiver in the school. Observation reveals that despite the efforts of government in ensuring that caregivers are motivated, it seems there is still more to do on the part of education stakeholders in ensuring that caregivers become productive in Rivers State. This study therefore investigated Work-life and caregivers' productivity in public preschool in Rivers State. The correlational Research design was adopted. Two purposes were posed, two research questions were raised and answered and two hypotheses were tested in the study. 6,572 subjects (6000 caregivers and 572 head-teachers) found in 572 Public Preschool in Rivers State constitute the population for the study out of which 708 subjects (649 caregivers and 59 head-teacher) representing approximately 10.78% of the entire population was sampled for the study using Stratified Sampling Technique. Study employed the correlational research design. The research instruments used for data collection are the researcher-developed checklist and a questionnaire. Reliability index of 0.73 was determined through a test-retest method which was used to adjudge the instruments reliable. The instrument was administered to Caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State. Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State, there is a significant relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

KEYWORDS: *Work-Life, Productivity, Caregivers.*

INTRODUCTION

School productivity invariably refers to the results that a school system is achieving for a given level of inputs. Sometimes, the general belief is that productivity can be increased by increasing the labour supply, increasing the hour worked and the wages. Greater

productivity however, does not come from spending more time working harder, but from working harder and smarter. The bottom line therefore, is that productivity is concerned mainly with the maximization of output. That being the case, productivity is defined in terms of the goal satisfaction which is measured by the relationship between services rendered to clients (children) and the broad objectives of education. Why Herath and Rosli, (2013) think that productivity may mean different things to different people depending on the perspective from which one approaches it, the focus of productivity in education is centered mainly on the output of the caregivers in terms of their ability to increase the learning achievement of preschool children through an effective classroom interaction and management. To ensure caregivers do their assigned job, there is need to have a strong supervisory team to check on all that they do.

The effectiveness of caregivers refers to the input of caregivers on the job they do. Caregivers' job productivity manifests in many ways. Such ways are; use of appropriate method in teaching; this is where the caregiver chooses a more appropriate way of achieving the objectives slated for the lesson. Use of appropriate instructional materials; the caregiver uses instructional materials that will assist him/her achieve the lesson objectives and help the child to assimilate what has been taught taking cognizance of the age of children, mental ability, instructional objectives to be achieved and method of instruction amongst others as prerequisites for selecting instructional materials for teaching. When the caregiver does this, it shows that the caregivers know the job and do the job.

Another component of caregivers' job productivity is improvisation of instructional materials; this is where the caregiver uses local materials to procure instructional to achieve the same objective when the appropriate is not available. It shows creativity and productive nature of the caregiver. Record keeping is one of the ways to show performance in school. This is because proper record keeping is essential and it is used for several purposes in the school. A caregiver who keeps records has helped the school secure her data base which will be used for administrative purposes and counseling. Other areas of assessing the productivity of caregivers in the preschool centres include: Adequate lesson preparation, good mastery of subject matter, proper presentation of lesson, and proper assessment of learners. The input of a caregiver in the work place could be marred or fostered by quite a number of factors. In the work place, caregivers' job productivity is influenced by all they could see around them both human and materials. Hence, the work-life offered a caregiver could foster the productivity at work or assist in its decline.

Work-life is the condition of service offered to a worker upon appointment as a staff of an organization. This work condition can either improve the work-life of the staff or reduce staff's productivity. Anand (2018) posited that work-life is a term that encompasses all circumstances that affect labour in the place of work. This includes but not limited to job hours, physical aspects, legal right and responsibilities of the organization and work load. In the early years' environment, the caregivers had enormous work to do in developing the child who totally depends on them for help at their developing stage. Saka, and Haruna (2013) argue that clean environment, staffroom, friendly policies, balances between work and leisure are the basic condition for teachers' effectiveness.

It is no doubt that absenteeism, and poor retention others are signs of a demotivated caregiver. However, these negative outcomes do not occur in a vacuum; as many factors could contribute to it including poor teachers' motivation. The productivity of the caregiver is hinged on the extent

to which the professional development, remuneration, and workload amongst others, are made available for the physical and mental health of caregivers. Non-existence of the afore-mentioned factors in the work place increase caregivers' stress which could further inform, low productivity (De-Grip & Pleijers, 2019).

Caregivers' professional development includes all forms of training given to caregivers in preschools to improve their skills, knowledge, and competence on the job they profess. In addition, their technical-know-how is being enhanced by this process. These professional development includes seminars, conferences, workshops, mentoring and other forms of training that will help caregivers' career. In an attempt to group professional development, Obasi (2003) and Ohiri (2003) grouped this training method into two kinds: on the job training which is conducted by supervisors or senior employer who is responsible for instructing the employees and pre-service training. Caregivers also engage in further professional training and development courses especially as it relates to current trends in Early Childhood Education. In the words of Ekebem (2017), professional development fascinates the job performance and the entire effectiveness of caregivers on their job. Regular exposure to courses and mentorship by older and experienced colleagues helps in no small measure in enhancing caregivers' productivity. Staff development will make any caregiver in the public sector to continue in the teaching profession because the caregiver is properly treated. This act makes caregivers to stay on their job and impart positively with high level of productivity. In this way, the job is not boring to caregivers as they are exposed and disposed to myriads of delivery patterns both in instructional methods and materials which is quite productive. As this process continues and being reviewed time after time caregivers become motivated to put in more efforts in developing the child in their custody. No teacher will quit such opportunity. Hence, the issue of leaping from one job to another will not surface with the presence of this kind of satisfaction obtained through professional development offered caregivers. For continual positive job performance, caregivers are encouraged to attend seminars in order to boost their professional status and practice efficiently.

Work load is another factor that contributes to the productivity of caregivers. This is the amount of work a caregiver is made to carry out with a given period of time. Since caregivers deal with preschool children, workload is the maximum number of children a caregiver is made to attend to as they work. The quest of inculcating the requisite value in children leaves caregivers with enormous workload. As posited by Perlito et. al. (2021) workload breaks down the productivity of teachers in the classroom. The assertion of Perlito could be dragged further by saying that the enormous class activities which the caregiver handled if not shared or reduced could bring about low performance and attainment of set goals in the preschool centres. In many public preschool centres today, caregivers take care of children by themselves alone. A class of fifteen children should have a caregiver as enshrined in the National Policy on Education but what is observed is the reverse of it. Caregivers struggle with too many children together with the enormous workload. They end up being stressed or even collapsing. This negative practice is mostly observed in most public schools across the nation. Too much workload drives away caregivers from doing their job productively (Arvidsson et. al. 2019). The ones that manage to stay turn ill every now and then due to stress emanating from workload. Workload actually becomes a burden to caregivers when the number of pupils and lessons to meet up with becomes enormous. The overwhelming effect of these activities can emanate to stress and further health hazards to the caregiver. Proffering solution to caregivers' workload in the preschool, Idde (2013) opined that

recruiting more caregivers will reduce the work load on surviving teachers. As discussed above, the productivity of caregivers in schools does not just emerge. It is a result of certain factors which must be deliberately planned and implemented for the school objectives to be achieved. Against this background, the study seeks to examine the relationship between work-life and caregivers' productivity in public preschool in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The indices that show the effectiveness of a task is the product derived from that task. Productivity is highly expected in all sphere of human endeavor. As the input that is observed as a result of diligence on the part of caregivers, productivity heralds the quality of a staff in an establishment. Caregivers in the Early Childhood Education Centres are saddled with the responsibility of developing preschoolers are expected to be productive. The effect of caregivers' efficiency is observed in the life and growth of the preschoolers. To meet up with this high demand from the society and the school, the caregivers must show high level of productivity. Be it as it may, caregivers' productivity has been a thing of concern to many in the society especially to those with the academics. The quest for increased productivity makes government to organize training for caregivers. However, it has been notice overtime that caregivers struggle to carry out duties in the preschool centres and this could have resulted to the attendant low productivity on their part. However, this menace could be tied to many factors; chief amongst them is work-life. Work-life which manifests in professional training and workload is viable enough to foster job productivity of caregivers, while its absence can bring about low productivity. Based on this problem, the researcher seeks to investigate if work-life enhances the productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.
2. Investigate the relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed and answered in this study:

1. What is the relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated and tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.
2. Significant relationship does not exist between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

Methodology

6,572 subjects (6000 caregivers and 572 head-teachers) found in 572 Public Preschool in Rivers State constitutes the population for the study out of which 708 subjects (649 caregivers and 59 head-teacher) representing approximately 10.78% of the entire population was sampled for the study using Stratified Sampling Technique. Study employed the correlational research design. The research instruments used for data collection are the researcher-developed checklist and a questionnaire. The checklist is titled: Caregivers Productivity Checklist (CPC). It has 10 items which was measured on Four Point Scale of Strongly Agree (SA)⁴, Agree (A)³, Disagree (D)², Strongly Disagree (SD)¹, while the questionnaire is titled “Work-life and Caregivers’ Productivity Questionnaire (WCPQ). Reliability index of 0.73 was determined through a test-retest method which was used to adjudge the instruments reliable. The instrument was administered to Caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State. Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result Presentation

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the Relationship between Professional Development and Productivity of Caregivers in Public Preschool Centres in Rivers State?

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY OF CAREGIVERS IN PUBLIC PRESCHOOL CENTRES

S/N	ITEM	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
1.	Conference attendance improve caregivers knowledge on the job	2.77	.974	Agree
2.	Conference attendance helped me gather information on lesson delivery	2.67	1.027	Agree
3.	Pre-school centres organizes workshops for caregivers	2.52	.897	Agree
4.	I improve on my instructional strategies after attending conference	2.89	.838	Agree
5.	Seminars on current trends in teaching helps caregivers to teach	2.61	.942	Agree
Grand Mean (\bar{X})		2.69		Agree

*Criterion Mean 2.50

Table 1 presents the summary of descriptive statistics on the relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool centres in Rivers State with a Grand Mean of 2.69. The data analyzed shows that the five items on the table were accepted between the mean of 2.89 and 2.52.

Research Question 2: What is the Relationship between Work load and Productivity of Caregivers in Public Preschool Centres in Rivers State?

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK LOAD AND PRODUCTIVITY OF CAREGIVERS IN PUBLIC PRESCHOOL CENTRES

S/N	ITEM	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
6.	Moderate work is given to caregivers	2.57	.916	Agree
7.	I am not overloaded with other responsibilities outside teaching	2.32	.997	Disagree
8.	I am assisted by an assistant employed in my class	2.43	.797	Disagree
9.	I close the school when stipulated	2.99	.839	Agree
10.	I teach only few domains of skill development in children each day	2.81	.987	Agree
Grand Mean (\bar{X})		2.70		Agree

***Criterion Mean 2.50**

Table 2 presents the summary of descriptive statistics on the relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool centres in Rivers State with a Grand Mean of 2.70. The data analyzed shows that four items between the mean of 2.99 and 2.57 were accepted. While items with the mean of 2.42 to 2.43 were rejected.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no Significant Relationship between Professional Development and Productivity of Caregivers in Public Preschool Centres in Rivers State.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION (PPMC) ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY OF CAREGIVERS IN PUBLIC PRESCHOOL CENTRES

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Professional Development		13.46	1.897			
Productivity of Caregivers	708			.940	.000	Rejected
		13.32	1.818			

***Significant p<0.05**

The result in Table 3. Reveals the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool centres in Rivers State. The result demonstrates a positive and strong relationship between the two variables with a correlation coefficient value of (r=.940). A further interpretation indicates that there is a significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool centres in Rivers State as [(p=.000) (p<0.05)]. The null hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State was rejected and the inverse hypothesis upheld. Hence, there is significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no Significant Relationship between Work load and Productivity of Caregivers in Public Preschool in Rivers State.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION (PPMC) ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK LOAD AND PRODUCTIVITY OF CAREGIVERS IN PUBLIC PRESCHOOL

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Work Load		13.52	1.763			
Productivity of Caregivers	708	13.32	1.818	.738	.000	Rejected

***Significant $p < 0.05$**

The result in Table 4 reveals the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State. The result demonstrates a positive and high relationship between the two variables with a correlation coefficient value of ($r = .738$). A further interpretation indicates that there is a significant relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State as [$p = .000$] ($p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis five which states that there is no significant relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State was rejected and the inverse hypothesis upheld. Hence, there is significant relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data analyzed, the following were the findings of the study:

1. There is significant and positive relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.
2. There is significant and positive relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State.

Discussion

The result on table 1 reveals that there is significant relationship between professional development and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with an earlier finding of Ekebem (2017) who saw that Cooperating head teachers as mentors, aid the development of other young caregivers in the system. The issue of professional development is key to the productivity of members of staff in any work environment. The performance of caregivers alike is influenced by the extent to which they are exposed to new trends in their area of expertise. Anand (2018) agreed with this study by saying that mentoring which is a professional development technique for caregivers enables the less experienced or newly employed practicing caregivers to get acquainted and adapted to the work environment and job specifications.

Result in table 2 showed a strong and significant relationship between work load and productivity of caregivers in public preschool in Rivers State. This finding agrees with that of

Perlito et. al. (2021) who found that workload breaks down the productivity of teachers in the classroom. It could be deduced from the above assertion that the enormous class activities which the caregiver handled if not shared or reduced could bring about low performance and attainment of set goals in the preschool. The workload of caregivers includes all the activities the caregiver engages in which includes but not limited to marking of pupil's notes, writing of lesson plan, sourcing and procurement of instructional materials amongst other things. These line of activities by the caregiver could actually become weighty when the number of pupils and lessons to meet up with becomes enormous for only that caregiver to handle. Consequently, the performance of caregivers could be improved and effective when the work load is such that is minimal. The attainment of a balance work activities will make the caregiver carry out those activities seamlessly without breaking down or having fatigue.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the relationship between work-life and caregivers' productivity in public preschool centres in Rivers State. The job productivity of caregivers is salient for the objectives and the development of preschoolers to be attained. The productivity of caregivers is not attained in a vacuum, but through the various condition offered the caregivers which is termed work life. Work life for caregivers manifest in professional development, work social environment, remuneration, regular promotion, work load and working materials. It is the of caregivers' employees to provide a possible work life to enable positive outcomes from caregivers. The findings of the study revealed that work life relate significantly to the caregivers' productivity. This implies that work life significantly influences caregivers' job performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Educational stakeholders such as SUBEB amongst others should improve on caregivers' professional development to aid their job productivity at the preschool centres.
2. Head teachers should re-arrange the work activities and work load in the preschool centres for caregivers to have less work and balance.

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