

Original Research Article

Meaningful Work and Organizational Outcomes in Higher Educational Institutions in Rivers State: A Study in Workplace Spirituality

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Abstract: The study examined the relationship between meaningful and organizational outcomes in higher educational institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study ascertained the relationship between meaningful work and productivity in tertiary institutions in Rivers state. More so, the study examined relationship between meaningful work and innovation in tertiary institutions in Rivers state. The study adopts quasi-experimental design and a cross-sectional survey. The target population of the study comprise 3411 staff in 10 higher educational institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria, including: University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Madonna University, National Open University of Nigeria, Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Ken Saro Wiwa Polytechnic, Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Easter Polytechnic and Federal College of Education. However, out of the total population, 358 subjects were determined using Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected through structured questionnaire, while the reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach alpha coefficient. Data were analyze using Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). However, the results of the analysis conducted revealed that there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and research productivity in higher educational institutions in Rivers state; while, in the test for the second hypothesis, it was revealed that there exist significant but very weak positive relationship between meaningful work and innovation in higher educational institutions in Rivers State. Hence, from the findings, the study recommends among others that Higher educational institutions in Rivers state, should give greater degree of autonomy and challenging tasks to employees, in addition, job with purpose, joy, energy aimed at contributing to the society at large, in order to elicit the creative and innovative behaviours and capabilities of their academic staff.

Keywords: Spirituality, meaningful work, workplace spirituality, organizational outcomes, productivity, innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The overall outcomes of organization's operations to a great extent depends on its employees. Although, organizations possess and utilize several resources - materials, man machines, money, time, technology in their operations, however, the contributions of man to the day-to-day operation of organizations, determine the outcomes to be either successful or otherwise. This is because, humans plan, organize, direct, and control every other resource found at the workplace for the purpose of ensuring their optimal use as well as the achievement of desired outcomes. Substantiating, Dessler (2015) views human resource as a very valuable capital that possesses knowledge, skills as well as expertise for work in the organization. Observably, the cognitive, physical abilities, feelings as well as the soul inherent in humans, become important determinants of realizing firm's outcomes. However, organizational outcome is seen as the results of organizations' internal and external operations, and according to Jiang, Lepak, Hu and Baer (2012), is widely acknowledge as a multidimensional construct.

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Dyer and Reeves (1995) from a strategic human resources management perspective, categorized organizational outcome to include: human resources outcomes (employee skills and abilities, employee attitudes and behaviors, and turnover), operational outcomes (productivity, product quality, quality of service, and innovation) as well as financial outcomes (sales growth, return on invested capital, and return on assets). Maltz, Shenhar and Merinoin Obuba (2022) views organization outcomes using financial, market, process, people, and future dimensions; and also incorporate Balance Score Card (BSC), and opines that, it is one of the most popular new framework. Similarly, Al-Hawary (2020) views firm's outcome using performance as its indicator. However, throughout the period of the industrial revolution up to modern day business operations, the emphasis on organizational outcomes has often been on achieving higher organizational productivity.

Productivity is seen as the efficiency and effectiveness of completing a task or producing goods and services. Also, it is referred to as the rate of output per unit of labor, capital or equipment (input). Despite the focus on productivity, however, the rapid changing business environment of the twenty-first century, characterized by greater globalization and technological advancements, requires not only productivity as well as efficiency but also needs constant innovation to succeed and survive competition. Dess and Picken (2000), in Crossan and Apaydin (2010) generally view innovation as a critical source of gaining competitive edge in a rapid changing environment. In other words, innovation becomes a key determinant of business survival and success in the rapidly changing hypercompetitive, and unpredictable environment characterizing the twenty-first century.

Schumpeter in Bekkenutte (2016) views innovation as new products, new production methods, new markets, new sources of supply and new forms of organization. It is a means of responding to changes in a firms' internal or external environment or as a preemptive action taken to influence the environment. Although, in the past, emphasis on innovation, centers around technology, product and service, however, recent discourse on the domains of innovation incorporate other forms like social innovation, organizational innovation, grassroots innovation as well as user innovation. Among these, organizational innovation according to Dhondt and Totterdill (2014) has gained much prominence and is being recognized as the main driver of economic growth. Organizational innovation viewed as the creation or adoption of an idea or behavior new to the organization, is crucial for firm's competitiveness, as it facilitates and enables technological innovation, as well as a prerequisite for knowledge development in the organization.

As observed, recent trends toward organizational downsizing, consolidation, reengineering, restructuring, and dehumanizing technology have negatively impacted employees' morale and loyalty (Burke, Graham, & Smith; Bowman & West, in Tevichapong, 2012). These results in feeling of insecurity as well as poor organizational outcomes (Louarn, & Tremblay; Shah, in Tevichapong, 2012). Although, organizations have been seeking for ways to improve their outcomes, however, at recent, spirituality have been one of the ways through which firms rely upon in enhancing their outcomes. Accordingly, spirituality of an individual's mindset encourages or motivate creativity and innovativeness within a person and directly influences organizational productivity (Afsar & Rehman, 2015).

Notably, spirituality movement is the new paradigm in organizational science, management theory and practice that limits the effects of the numerous socio-economic changes emanating from globalization and shifts in demographics of the workforce such as layoff; downsizing, mergers, increased employee stress and burnout, decline in job satisfaction, environmental pollution, energy crisis, technological advancements, unethical corporate behaviour, workplace violence, and so on. Karakas (2010), opines that workplace spirituality creates a positive impact on organizational outcomes, as it improves employee well-being and quality of life, provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work, as well as provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. Workplace spirituality is the search for meaning or higher purpose, social connectedness, inner life, and transcendence or a higher-level calling at work (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014; Miller & Ewest, 2013). Observably, workplace spirituality and its outcome had long been the concern for most organizations as well as sectors, however, one of the field of human endeavor in which workplace spirituality is consider of utmost importance, is the academic (educational) sector.

Higher education institutions to a great extent make enormous contribution to the advancement of societies as well as economies around the world, as research and innovation, as well as other most world's significant discoveries and technological advancement all, emanates from colleges and universities around the world. Although, higher education institutions (University of Bologna and University of Oxford) had for centuries existed, however, over the past decades, there is a dramatic change in the operations of tertiary institutions due to the increase rates of enrolment, arrays of courses provided as well as research dynamics and technology. These changes come with enormous responsibilities resting on the shoulders of its human resource (lecturers), as they must teach, learn, research as well as render community service to large number of people. The workloads executed by academic staff in universities most often become sources of negative outcomes, as they contend with stress related issues, burnout, longer working hours and other psychological issues that effects their performances as well as overall outcomes of academic institutions. These issues are mostly experienced by

most academic staff in developing and underdeveloped countries where demand for higher education is highly required for social and economic transformation and development.

Like other countries around the world, tertiary institutions in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular, are expected to intensely pursue desirable organizational outcomes in terms of teaching, research and development, community services as well as knowledge generation and dissemination. These expectations, as opined by Asiyai (2013) are closely related to quality education. Quality delivery is a prerequisite for effective productivity and innovation in education industry, as they are seen as instruments for effecting national development. However, tertiary institutions in Nigeria (particularly universities, colleges and polytechnics in Rivers state) are reported to have shown poor performance outcomes in terms of research productivity. Reports from Times Higher Education (2023) on world university ranking reveals that three Nigerian universities (University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and Covenant University) out of over 160 universities, 128 polytechnics and 177 colleges of education operating in Nigeria, are on the top one thousand universities around the world. This, as compared to nine universities from South Africa and eleven universities in Egypt making the top one thousand ranking respectively. This is an indication that Nigerian higher educational institutions produce only 44 percent of the scholarly output of South Africa and 32 percent of Egypt. Arguably, research productivity is crucial to scholars, researchers' and learned members especially in the universities and central to the teaching capability of faculty or staff. This is because the academic mandate of a lecturer is to teach, conduct research and participate in community service.

Similarly, research conducted in Nigerian higher institutions are mostly aimed at publishing for promotion as well as advancement in academic career of employees, with little or no efforts aimed at providing innovative solutions required in solving current and emerging development challenges facing the country or in stimulating innovation, and the evolution of a robust National system of innovation that will result in patents and new products and services. According to Suleiman (2019), the "publish or perish phenomenon" still reigns supreme in the Nigerian academia to the detriment of the innovative outcomes such as patents, policy impact and products and services. Studies indicate that Nigerian universities and research institutes develop commercializable inventions from time to time (Oyewale, in Oyewale, Adelowo & Ekperiware, 2018), in spite of these, patent granted seems to be very low. For instance, Nigeria, between 2010 and 2015 have applied for up to two hundred and fifty-two (252) patents, out of these, only ninety-two (92) were granted by World Intellectual Property Organization (Oyewale, Adelowo & Ekperiware, 2018). This is a reflection of poor institutional outcomes in terms of innovation in higher institutions. Low organizational outcomes in terms of productivity and innovation in tertiary institutions, leads to social-economic and technological underdevelopment of societies and nations.

Notably, several studies have been conducted in examining organizational outcomes in Nigerian higher institutions, for instance, Ezinine and Ughamadu (2021) found that controlled organizational climate is a significant predictor of lecturers' job outcomes in colleges of education in South East States. Davies and Nwafor (2021) in their study found that provision of study leaves, attending both local and international conference, organizing of internal conference and seminar for staff academic updates, organization of workshop and symposia were able to develop academic staff effectively in Rivers state university. Nkpurukwe, Azuma, Giwa & Wali (2022) reveals that staff performance (productivity) outcomes in Nigerian tertiary institutions is determined through investment in knowledge-based infrastructures. Although, these works all lay emphasis on academic staff, as predictors of tertiary institutions performance outcomes in Nigeria, however, beyond knowledge, skills, workshops, conferences, seminars and so on, organizational outcomes in higher institutions could probably require meaningful work that pushes employees to persevere with challenges that are inherent in creative work, associated with knowledge workers.

Meaningful work is considered a significant aspect of spirituality at the workplace and Wolf (2010) describes meaningfulness as what is lacking in the lives of individuals, what humans yearn for and what people seek to find. Accordingly, individuals are bound to find meaning in their lives when they view their lives as purposeful, significant and understandable (Steger, Oishi & Kashdan, 2009). However, Hamilton and Jackson (1998), states that academic institutions that want to succeed must do their best in searching for spiritual presence as well as fulfill employees' spiritual needs. Against this background, this study tends to examine meaningful work and organizational outcomes in higher education institutions in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality is among organizational behavior variables that have attracted many perspectives and definitions. The term workplace spirituality is conceptualized interchangeably with different constructs - individual spirituality, organizational spirituality, spiritual climate, workplace spirituality person-organization fit, and 'spirit at work. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) view workplace spirituality as the acknowledgement that employees have an inner life that enriches and is enriched by meaningful work in the context of community. It is a kind of a psychological climate in which employees see themselves as having an internal life that is cared for by meaningful work and placed in the context of a community. In other words, spirituality at work recognizes that individuals who come to the workplace have more than

their bodies and minds; they carry unique individual talents and souls. This definition is categorized into three components - inner life, meaningful work, and community. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz in Nwanzu (2021) views workplace spirituality as a structure of organizational values often noticeable in firms' culture that advanced employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of interconnectedness to others in a manner that gives feelings of wholeness and blissfulness.

Notably, pioneering empirical work in measuring workplace spirituality was carried out by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). They see spirituality at work in this definition as having three components: the inner life, meaningful work, and sense of connection and community. From their works, Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) view meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of value as the three dimensions of workplace spirituality. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) categorized workplace spirituality with regards to cognitive attribute like interpersonal dimensions, spiritual presence, and mystical components. However, Tevichapong (2012) integrates Kinjerski and Skrypnek's dimensions together with others and put forward meaningful work, sense of community, spiritual connection, and mystical experience as the components of workplace spirituality. As observed, inner life, meaningful work, connectedness and transcendence are dimensions mostly utilized in the definition of workplace spirituality (Ashmos & Duchon, in Tevichapong, 2012).

Meaningful work

Man's quest for meaning or purpose in work has been in existence long ago, though, the notion of spirituality at the workplace is new. Long ago, the search for meaningfulness in work has been seen as an important aspect of the Human relations movement which began at Hawthorn experiments at Western Electrical Company. Nonetheless, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) views meaning as a purpose or significance, and the intentions a person hold. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) view the concept of meaningful work as a feeling of what is significant, invigorating, and enjoyable about work. The concept of meaningfulness highlights two facets, namely (1) meaning of work (meaningful work) (Carvalho, in Geldenhuys, Łaba & Venter, 2014) and (2) psychological meaningfulness (Olivier & Rothmann, in Geldenhuys *et al.*, 2014).

Meaning at work is seen as a connection between work and larger social good of community as well as sense of work being helpful to society (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). It is based on the assumption that humans have their own deepest motivation, truth, and desire to carry out activities that bring meaning to their lives as well as other people's lives. Extending, spirituality in the context of meaning work, sees work not only as fun and challenging, but also about things such as finding meaning and deepest goals, living someone's dreams, fulfilling someone's life's needs by finding meaningful work, and contributing to others. Social psychology lends support to the idea that people go beyond material rewards associated with work and seek meaning in it (Etzioni, 1995). Rego and Cunha (2007) views meaningful work in relation to personal significance of work or connection of work to what is viewed as important in life, relation between work and what is valued in life, experience of joy in work, enthusiasm to report to work, sense of completeness embodied in work, achieving one's full potential as well as sense of personal fulfillment. Work which actually has meaning and contributes to the advancement of people and society are the primary motivator of most employees (Michealson, 2009). Hence, there is the search in individuals for meaning and a sense of purpose in their work lives in order to enrich their inner self. Meaningfulness arises when people feel that there is an authentic connection between their work and a higher purpose in life that goes beyond the self. This indicates the subjective experience of the existential significance or purpose of life.

Pratt and Ashforth in Hisam, (2021) identified three basic dimensions of meaningfulness - meaningfulness in, meaningfulness at work, and transcendence: Meaningfulness in work occurs when the individual feels "worthwhile, useful and valuable", Meaningfulness at work tries to answer the question of 'where do I belong?' and is the measure of how much people view their work as strengthening their affiliation and connection with the workplace (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). While, transcendence reflects the feeling that one is doing something for a greater good (Lips-Wiersma, in Hisam, 2021). It indicates the relationship between individual identity and the aspirations to do something for the benefit of others. In other words, it asked question, thus, what difference do I make? According to Kahn (1990), meaningfulness at work can be practiced by giving a greater degree of autonomy and challenging tasks to employees. The employee should also be the right fit for the job and social interactions with coworkers and customers should be appreciated.

Meaningful work, is recognizing the employees as spiritual beings whose souls can be either nurtured or damaged by the work they do. However, searching for meaningful work is not all about engaging in a challenging job, but rather doing a job with a purpose, joy, energy and which is a contribution to the society at large. Buttressing, Milliman *et al.*, (2003) have conceptualized the dimension of meaningful work as consisting of the following elements: experience of joy, energization of spirit, the connection of work to what is viewed as necessary in life, enthusiasm in work, contribution of work to social good, and personal meaning found in work. Sense of completeness, sense of joy, sense of efficacy, sense of value, the idea of transcendence expressed through self-actualization (Milliman *et al.*, 2003; Sheep, 2004; Rego & Cunha, 2007) all represents the sub-construct dimension of meaning in work.

Organizational Outcomes

An outcome is simply referred to as the result or the consequence of a certain activity or behavior. In other words, it is the end result of a certain operation or action. Organizational outcome is the end result of a firm or an organization's effort or operations such as profitability, productivity, product quality, sales growth and so on. The construct of organizational outcome is categorized using various measures. Tariq, Alshurideh, Akour and Al-Hawary (2022) views organizational outcomes in relation to organizational ambidexterity; Alshurideh, Alomari, Kurdi, Alzoubi, Hamouche, and Al-Hawary (2022) views organizational outcome in relation to its overall health. The construct of organizational outcome is categorized using various measures.

Studies in strategic human resources management views organizational outcomes as multidimensional construct. Dyer and Reeves's (1995) in their work on strategic human resource management categorize organizational outcomes into three primary groups. These include: human resources outcomes, operational outcomes, and financial outcomes. Human resources outcomes refer to those most directly related to HRM in an organization, such as employee skills and abilities, employee attitudes and behaviors, and turnovers. Operational outcomes are those related to the goals of an organizational operation, including productivity, product quality, quality of service, and innovation. Financial outcomes reflect the fulfillment of the economic goals of organizations. Typical financial outcomes include sales growth, return on invested capital, and return on assets. Based on previous research, this study theorized organizational outcomes as a whole construct measured in terms of productivity and innovation.

Productivity

Productivity is seen as a ratio to measure how well an organization (or individual, industry, country) converts input resources (labour, materials, machines, time and so on) into goods and services. Substantiating, Atkinson (2013) views productivity as an economic output per unit of input as the unit of input can be labour hours (labour productivity) or all production factors including labour, machines and energy (total factor of productivity). Feige, Wallbaum, Janser and Windlinger (2013) defined productivity as the ratio of output to input depending on the context and content of the output measure (products, services, market shares, value) and input measure (cash, labour, energy, materials, and work environment). According to Allen and Helms (2006), productivity is characterized as the rate at which an employer, organization, or country produces goods/services and the amount produced corresponding to the amount of time, effort, and money required to generate them.

Hellriegel *et al.*, cited in Anya, Umoh, and Worlu, (2017) view productivity as efficiency in the employment of factors of production such as land, labor and capital to produce higher output. It can also be seen as the amount of time that a group of employees spends on certain activities such as production, or idle time spent waiting for materials or replacing equipment. Productivity can be seen as the consistent ability to produce results over prolonged period of time and in a variety of assignments. Organizational productivity can be improved through effective time management (Adebisi, 2013). According to Robbins cited in Zeb-Obipi (2015), productivity is a performance measure that include the efficiency and effectiveness of a firm's resources. Ferreira and Du Plessis (2009) affirms that productivity should be evaluated in terms of the duration of time employee actively spent in carrying out his job-specific, to produce desired results as expected from his job description. Zeb-Obipi (2015) measured productivity in terms of resource utilization and product with six indicators – time minimization, cost minimization, waste minimization, product line, output level and product quality.

Productivity is considered to be of utmost importance to organizations as it results in higher incomes and profit outcomes; higher earnings; increased supplies of both consumer and capital goods at lower costs and lower prices; ultimate shorter hours of work and improvements in working and living conditions; strengthens the general economic foundation of workers (Nwachukwu, 1988). Thus, the continued existence of all organization lies on its productivity. As observed, the need for higher productivity has made many organizations to constantly find ways of enhancing their productivity capabilities (human resource, money, time, physical, technology). This Simon cited in Anosa (2021) notes that the issue of productivity has been instrumental to most repositioning exercises that go on from time to time in many organizations.

Innovation

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Valminen (2019) view innovation as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations. Although, this views on innovation is widely use, however, it lacks what is "significant improvement". Francis (2014) view innovation as the full exploitation of the latent value of ideas (new to the unit of adoption) that strengthen an organization's competitive position and/or benefit other stakeholders.

Scholars argue that innovation is paramount in a modern environment characterized by hyper-competition (D'Aveni, 1994). Although, several organizations actively get involve in innovation, however, Etzkowitz (2013) opined that among the various contributors to innovation, universities play crucial role in innovation systems. Due to the important

role of universities or higher education in the innovation system, there is an urgent need to bring issues related to innovations in higher education to the centre of innovation studies. Studies on innovations in higher education can evolve into a more coherent research field by integrating both innovation studies and higher education research on innovation related issues. Notably, innovation in tertiary institution is categorized in terms of “sustaining innovation” or “disrupting innovation” (Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

While sustaining innovation, makes something bigger or better, contrarily, disruptive innovation, disrupts the bigger-and-better cycle by bringing to market a product or service that is not as good as the best traditional offerings but is more affordable and easy to use. Though traditional universities contribute to perform the critical, unique functions of discovering and preserving knowledge and of educating students in face-to-face communities of scholars, they also face disruptive innovations that call for re-examination. Notwithstanding, if they cannot find innovative, less costly ways of performing their uniquely valuable functions, they are doomed to decline, higher global and national rankings (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, (2018) highlights two types of innovation in the higher education context. 1) Product innovation: defined as accepting, developing and implementing new products such as research projects, courses, new teaching resources and materials, and curricula Development 2) process innovation: defined as developing and using new technology, good financial management and the continuous improvement of skills. Innovation is very important for universities in order to transform their internal functions to respond to environmental pressures. While the economic role of university is placed at the centre of innovations in higher education, it must be noted that the missions of universities are not confined to serving economic development, but are also about transforming the economic structure and bringing new values to society (Cai, 2014a).

Meaningful work and organizational productivity

Biswakarma (2018), in a study on the impact of workplace spiritual on employees' productivity in Nepalese hospitality organizations, found a significant positive but weak relationship between meaningful work and productivity. In a study in Iran which examined the effects of organizational spirituality on the productivity of employees, reveals that meaningful job influenced employees' performance (Khamse *et al.*, in Pourmola, Bagheri, Alinezhad & Nejad, 2015). The meaning attached to work, as well as experiences of psychological meaningfulness, lead to positive work outcomes. Karatepe *et al.*, in Zeglat and Janbeik (2019) also argue that meaningful work engages employees toward work and motivation, which in turn leads to positive organizational outcomes. According to Ghadi *et al.*, in Zeglat and Janbeik (2019) employees become more productive and committed to their work once they have a perfect understanding of their role in achieving specific goals in the workplace. Ridwan, Modding, Ramlaw and Hamid (2022), examined the Influence of Resilience, Workplace Spirituality, and Organizational Climate on Lecturer Performance Through Engagement at the College of Economics in Makassar. It was revealed that meaningful work does not affect the performance of lecturers. Bassi, Bacher, Negri and Delle Fave (2013) in their study failed to find a relationship between meaningful work and environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others in an attempt at examining meaningful work and Work-related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) found no association between meaningful work and extrinsic motivation. In spite of the fact that meaningful work is linked with feelings of accomplishment, growth, happiness, and blessings; Bassi *et al.*, (2013) did not find meaningful work to be associated with self-acceptance or purpose in life, and Steger, Dik and Duffy (2012) did not find meaningful work to be associated with individuals' search for meaning, thus requires for more research to be conducted in this area.

H₀₁ There is no significant influence between meaningful work and organizational productivity in Higher Educational Institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria

Meaningful work and innovation

Few studies investigate the relationship between meaningful work and innovation, although this was done in the context of other variables. For instance, Pradhan and Jena (2019) found that meaningful work partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behaviour. Cai, Lysova, Khapova, and Bossink, (2018) found that meaningful work conditionally mediated the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behaviour. A study of public-school teachers in Nigeria found that meaningful work mediated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and teachers' innovative work behaviour (Bawuro, Shamsuddin, Wahab & Usman, 2019). Amabile and Pratt (2016) have theorised that meaningful work plays an important role in influencing innovation behaviour, and they introduced meaningful work as one of four major new constructs in the widely-cited dynamic componential model of creativity and innovation in organisations. However, the hypothesis below is stated in the null form, thus:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between meaningful work and innovation in higher educational institutions in Rivers state.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quasi-experimental design as well as cross-sectional survey. Cross-sectional survey aids the elicitation of primary data on particular problems and gives the researcher first-hand information on the subject studied. The target population of the study involves 3411 staff of higher institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria, including: University

of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Madonna University, National Open University of Nigeria, Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Ken Saro Wiwa Polytechnic, Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Easter Polytechnic and Federal College of Education (Igwenago, 2020). While Taro Yamane formula was used to determined 358 subjects. In selecting the respondents convenient and snowball sampling procedures were adopted. Questionnaire structured in Likert’s five-point scale was used for data collection. For test of reliability of the scale, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. Data were analyze using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the aid of the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used in testing the hypotheses.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables Meaningful Life

Statistics		M1	M2	M3	M4
N	Valid	323	323	323	323
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.96	3.79	3.66	4.23
Std. Deviation		.948	.752	.970	.781
Sum		1278	1223	1181	1365

Source: SPSS Data result, 2023

Table 1 describe the distribution for the data on meaningful work. The distributions for the variables are revealed to be moderate, high and significant, given the central tendencies for the indicators – Thus, M1: *I experience joy in my work*, has a high and significant mean (mean = 3.96, SD=.948) suggesting that majority of respondents agree to the statement; M2: *I am enthused to report to work most days*, has a high but yet significant mean (mean = 3.79, SD=0.752) affirming that majority of the respondents consider the statement as being a true position of their views; M3: *I see a connection between work and social good*, has a high and significant mean (mean = 3.66, SD=.970) which indicates that most of the respondents consider the statement to be correct; Lastly, M4: *My work gives me opportunity to fulfil my potential*, is equally associated with a high and significant mean (mean = 4.23, SD= .781) indicating that majority of the respondents believe the statement aligns with their own views.

Table 2: Productivity

Statistics		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
N	Valid	323	323	323	323	323
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.99	3.96	2.17	2.76	4.14
Std. Deviation		1.256	.990	1.178	1.146	.728
Sum		967	1280	700	891	1337

Source: SPSS Data result, 2023

Tables 2, describe the distribution for the data on productivity. This is the first measure of organizational outcomes. The distributions for the variables are revealed to be moderate and significant, given the central tendencies for the indicators – P1: *My institution adjusts lecturing loads for research work*, has a moderate and significant mean (mean = 2.99, SD=1.1256) suggesting that respondents agree to the statement; P2: *Professional recognition motivates lecturers to carry out research work*, has a substantial mean (mean = 3.96, SD=.990) affirming that majority of the respondents consider the statement as being a true position of their views; P3: *Research funds are available for lecturers*, has a low but significant mean (mean = 2.17, SD=1.178) which indicates that few of the respondents consider the statement to be factual; P4: *Workshops to developed research skills are held regularly*, has a significant mean (mean = 2.76, SD =1.146) affirming that few of the respondents consider the statement as being a true position of their views.

Table 3: Innovation

Statistics		INNOV1	INNOV2	INNOV3	INNOV4
N	Valid	323	323	323	323
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.70	3.16	3.35	3.73
Std. Deviation		1.253	1.160	1.304	.990
Sum		1196	1021	1082	1205

Source: SPSS Data result, 2023

Table 3, illustrate the distribution for innovation. This is the second measure for organizational outcomes. The result from the analysis on the indicators presents them as having high but yet significant mean values. INO1: *My institution encourages staff to adopt new ideas*, has a significant mean (mean = 3.70, SD=1.253) indicating that in generality, respondents agree to the statement as being correct; INO2: *My institution always initiate new working method, techniques as well as tools*, has a significant mean (mean =3.16, SD=1.160) suggesting that majority of the respondents affirm the statement as being true; INO3: *My institution converts new ideas into practical solution*, has a substantial and significant mean (mean = 3.35, SD=1.1304) implying that majority of the respondents agree to the position of the statement; INO4: *My institution search for supporters and collaborators to realize new ideas*; has a substantial and evident mean (mean = 3.73, SD=.990) suggesting that majority of the respondents are in agreement with the statement.

Hypothesis 1

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between engaging work and productivity in education institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4

Correlations			
		Meaningful Work	Productivity
Meaningful Work	Pearson Correlation	1	-.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.235
	N	323	323
Productivity	Pearson Correlation	-.066	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.235	
	N	323	323

Source: SPSS Data result, 2023

Table 4 reveals that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation is -.066 which reflect a moderate negative linear relationship between meaningful work and productivity. The Correlation test is statistically insignificant with a p-value of .235. Negative relationship means that meaningful work increases productive decreases.

Following this finding, the study concludes that there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and productivity. Therefore, null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between meaningful work and innovation in higher education institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5

Correlations			
		Meaningful Work	Innovation
Meaningful Work	Pearson Correlation	1	.119*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.033
	N	323	323
Innovation	Pearson Correlation	.119*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	
	N	323	323

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Data result, 2023

Table 5 reveals that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation is 0.119 which reflect a very weak positive linear relationship between meaningful work and innovation. The Correlation test is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.033. Positive relationship means that as meaningful work increases innovation increases.

Following this finding, the study concludes that there is a relationship between meaningful work and innovation. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the hypothesis which stated there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and productivity in higher educational institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria, the result indicates a negative and not statistically significant relationship between meaningful work and productivity in Higher educational institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. The

outcome of the data analyze did supports the hypothesis. This contradict the results of Biswakarma (2018), in a study on the impact of workplace spiritual on employees' productivity in Napalese hospitality organizations, who found a significant positive but weak relationship between meaningful work and productivity. Similarly, Khamse *et al.*, in Pourmola, Bagheri, Alinezhad and Nejad (2019) in a study in examining the effects of organizational spirituality on the productivity of employees in Iran, reveals that meaningful job influenced employees' performance. When employees experience meaningfulness in their work, they have the feelings of part of something larger than themselves. They feel motivated by the task set before them and becomes more inspired to do their best possible work. The expression of spirituality at work involves the assumptions that each employee has their own inner motivation and truths as well as desire to be involved in activities that gives greater meaning to their lives and the lives of others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), thus, there is consistent questioning within employees of the work they do, the essence and meaning of the work they do in order to search for sense of purpose and meaning.

However, the findings of this study reveals no statistically significant relationship between meaningful work and productivity. This aligns with the works Bassi, Bacher, Negri, & Delle Fave (2013) who failed to find a relationship between meaningful work and environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others in an attempt at examining meaningful work and Work-related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) found no association between meaningful work and extrinsic motivation. In spite of the fact that meaningful work is linked with feelings of accomplishment, growth, happiness, and blessings; as Bassi *et al.*, (2013) did not find meaningful work to be associated with self-acceptance or purpose in life, and Steger, Dik and Duffy (2012) did not find meaningful work to be associated with individuals' search for meaning, thus requires for more research to be conducted in this area. Although, meaningful work is often correlated with positivity, scholars suggest that positive experience can arise through negative situations of tension or conflict, such as when confronting poignant, controversial, or challenging situations that cause the individual to reappraise what is important to them (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017; Bailey & Madden, 2016).

Accordingly, tensions are unavoidable in the search for meaning, and that these tensions are manifest most often in efforts to integrate the opposing dimensions of doing/being and self/other (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). These revealed the complex, ambivalent, and demanding processes that may be related to meaningfulness and highlight a gap in the understanding of the experience of meaningful work. Nonetheless, the findings of this study indicates no statistically significant relationship between meaningful work and productivity. This result may be a reflection of the peculiar work environment in the educational sector, where the rate of research productivity is quite challenging and highly demanding for appraisal purposes, thus, may results in staff reappraising what is important to them. This may not be the case with other sectors, which needs to be explored in further studies.

Furthermore, the outcome of the data analysis did not support the hypothesis which stated there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and innovation in higher educational institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria. The result indicates that there is a weak and significant relationship between meaningful work and innovation in Rivers State, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with the work Pradhan and Jena (2019) who revealed that meaningful work is positively related to innovation behaviour. Organisations who are interested in improving innovation are advised to pay serious attention to the concept of meaningful work. Ideally, individuals derive meaning in their work when they enhance themselves and the community around them.

Amabile and Pratt (2016) have theorised that meaningful work plays an important role in influencing innovation behaviour, and they introduced meaningful work as one of four major new constructs in the widely-cited dynamic componential model of creativity and innovation in organisations. Lepisto and Pratt (2017) argued that meaningfulness can be a source of persistence in creative work and can encourage employees to remain with a creative task in the face of setbacks and challenges. Organisations with a spiritual climate characterised by self-transcendence and a sense of community motivate employees to engage in work that helps them identify with larger social and natural environments. Employees who work in such organisations according to Gupta and Singh (2013), find greater meaning in their work and are likely to be more creative. They share a sense of pride and optimism since they understand the importance of the work they perform.

Engaged employees are more than just motivated at work (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009); they are more likely to engage in activities that convert ideas into innovative output (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). Such individuals are more likely to be physically, cognitively, and emotionally connected with their work roles (Kahn, 1990), and often experience positive emotions (like, joy, calmness and enthusiasm) that broaden their thought-action repertoire and motivate them to work constantly on their ideas to convert them into products. Also, a study of public-school teachers in Nigeria found that meaningful work mediated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and teachers' innovative work behaviour (Bawuro, Shamsuddin, Wahab, & Usman, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Having empirically examined the relationship between meaningful work and organizational outcomes, the study deduced that, (1) meaningful work have no statistically significant and positive relationship with research productivity in higher educational institutions in Rivers state, Nigeria; (2) there is a statistically significant but very weak positive relationship between meaningful work and innovation in higher educational institutions in Rivers state. Although, the study did not establish relationship between meaningful work and research productivity, however, the researchers suggest further studies to be conducted between the variables in academic institutions in other geographical region or state. This is because meaningful work is linked with feelings of accomplishment, growth and happiness which lecturers may seek to attain in the academic work environment and can generates a wholesome feeling of satisfaction, direction, and purpose, capable of creating in them an inspiration and enthusiasm for quality research output. Furthermore, the study recommends that Higher educational institutions should give a greater degree of autonomy and challenging tasks to employees, in addition, job with purpose, joy, energy aimed at contributing to the society at large, in order to elicit the creative and innovative behaviours and capabilities of their academic staff.

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