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OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS PREVALENCE AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' JOB PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Occupational hazards occurrence is one of the major determinants of agricultural workers job performance which could lead to intentions to quit, absenteeism, low commitment and productivity in the workplace. The study assessed and test the association of the occupational hazards prevalence and agricultural workers' job performance of agricultural organisations in Oyo State, Nigeria. The data collected was primary and cross-sectional. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 128 participants in the study area. The results revealed that the mean age of the agricultural workers was 36 years while their average monthly income was ₦ 82,175.22 and years of work experience was 10.47 years. The prevailing occupational hazards include falls, slips and trips on muddy surfaces ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54), back pain/general body pain while repeatedly bending over to work ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44) and working in an environment full of sharp objects ($\bar{x}$ = 3.43). Occupational hazards are often prevalent ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15). The agricultural workers are high job performers ($\bar{x}$ = 4.22). Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed that at $p < 0.05$, occupational hazards prevalence ($r = -0.47$) significantly associates with agricultural workers' job performance in the study area. Based on the results of the study, it was recommended that agricultural organisations should train and re-train their agricultural workers periodically on occupational safety and health at work. This will reduce the occupational hazards stumbled upon by the agricultural workers thereby increasing their job performance.

Keywords: agricultural organisations, agricultural workers, occupational hazards, job performance, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

The increase in farming today makes agriculture competitive, thereby, making employers focus mainly on their productivity without much attention to the production power (workers). Agricultural workers satisfaction should be the priority of every agro-industries because their effectiveness goes a long way in actualizing the goals and objectives of the organisation (Adebayo, 2019). Unfortunately, most organisations failed to realise the potency of agricultural workers thereby, producing below expectation (Adebayo et al., 2020). Agricultural workers perform gazillions of demanding exercises which includes brooding birds, feeding, vaccinating, washing, conveying seeds, transplanting saplings, gathering or cutting yields, conveying crops, clearing and winnowing. Therefore, farming activities exposed workers to hazardous assortment which subsequently leads to paces of injuries and ailments.

Ngambeki & Ikpi (1982) and Arcury et al., (2010) claimed that hazards are causing those who are actively involved in agricultural production not to make maximum use of all the inputs at their disposal, decreasing productivity and negatively impacting farm income rates. Injured agricultural workers are of no use especially to private organisations, their appointments are terminated. Agricultural workers who intend to keep his/her job become meticulous in carrying out the task to avoid injuries and displacement thereby reducing job commitment and performance. This signified that occupational hazards are factors that influence organisational performance. Instances of occupational hazards have been on the expansion in Nigeria lately and limited sizeable interest appears to be paid to it. Organisations continually used sophisticated machines and gadgets without adequate training on the usage of the equipment thereby agricultural workers get injured and machines are damaged.

The International Labour Organisation (2000), depict hazards as a condition with the functionality of inflicting a mishap, prompting injury, harm or even both. Occupational hazards can be classified as physical, biological, psychological, chemical and mechanical hazards (Lucas and Gilles, 2003). Agricultural workers are often prone to such hazards as lung disease, nose induced listening to loss, pores and skin disorder, just as specific tumours identified with substance use or extended sun exposure. In any occasion of occupational hazards, there is a chance of causing a mishap which may legitimately or by implication lead to declined efficiency. Hazards among agricultural workers are disturbing, and these incorporate physical, chemical, biological and stress–identified with the task when carrying out their obligations

(Egbe, 2004).

When the work environment is hazardous or unsafe to discharge responsibilities, the essentiality of agricultural workers in achieving organisational goals and objectives becomes threatened regardless of their attitude, knowledge, skills, experience and competence. Egbetokun et. al., (2012) opined that a link existed between occupational hazards and agricultural workers performance as the ill-health emerging from farm hazards has inverse effects on performance and thus profitability i.e. the wellbeing status of agro-worker decides the yield of his/her supply and thus its productivity. It is a fit worker that can be productive and it is only a safe worker that can be comfortable at work to discharge his/her responsibilities. With less enthusiasm for staff training and consistent interests in higher revenues, the incidence of accidents at work has increased (Ofoegbu, et. al., 2013). Albeit, poor management of occupational hazards may lead to loss of trained skilled manpower, the hazardous work environment is related to low pay, lower overall job performance, lower organisational commitments, and higher degrees of job distractions.

The poor working condition, such as long hours, low remunerations, ergonomic strains, chemical exposures, job insecurity and wide range of physical and mental risks have made agricultural workers vulnerable to occupational hazards which prompt illness, harm and loss of life. Illumination, temperature, noise, and atmospheric conditions were other influencing factors of agricultural workers health and performance in the work environment (Asigele, 2012; Jagero et al., 2012), with recent studies emphasizing impaired working tools and the absence of health insurance scheme as significant factors (Yusuff et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2011; Bhandari & Adhikari, 2014).

It is an unfair circumstance that one may additionally go through or revel in physical harm during performing job tasks. The occurrence rate of disability is high among those who are actively involved in agricultural production and those lengthy-term ailments are progressively regular amongst the agro-allied industry because of the risk hazards on the path of discharging their duties (Liladrie, 2010). Therefore, agro-business factories opt for early retirements because of incapacitations as a result of occupational hazards at a place of work (Focus, 2011). Okoye, et al., (2012) found that most agricultural workers in Nigeria were unconscious of the hazardous nature of their workplace and the outcomes of working in such places without embracing applicable safety measures.

Regarding the aforementioned issues, the objectives of the study examined were to:

1. ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of the agricultural workers in the study area.
2. assess the prevailing occupational hazards in the study area, and
3. assess the level of agricultural workers job performance in the study area.

The resulting hypothesis was expressed and verified in the alternative form.

H01: There was no significant relationship between occupational hazards prevalence and agricultural workers' job performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Oyo state. Oyo state was created in 1976, with its capital at Ibadan which is the largest city in Africa. It is located on coordinates 8o00'N, 4o00'E and bounded to the North by Kwara State, in the east by Osun State, in the South by Ogun State and in the West partly Ogun State and the Republic of Benin. It has thirty-three (33) local government areas. Geographically, Oyo state covers an area of 28,454 Km2 with a climate featuring an averagely high temperature, average humidity and generally, two rainfall maximal regimes during the rainfall period of March to October. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Oyo State. The State's agricultural potential is high with vast untapped, stable land running to 2.7 million hectares.

Cross-sectional primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents used for the study. A set of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaire was administered. Only one hundred and twenty-eight (128) questionnaire, which was 85% of the sample frame was retrieved and found usable for the study.

The study used standard questions adopted from earlier studies. The occupational hazards prevalence was measured using a 9-item questionnaire. Agricultural workers' job performance was measured by adapting an 11-item scale of Adisa (2013). The respondents expressed their degree of agreement on a 5-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. These scores were used to collate the mean score. Furthermore, descriptive statistics (frequency, means, standard deviation and percentages) and inferential (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) were used to analyse the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 indicates that 71.9% of the respondents were below the age of 40 years while 28.1% of the respondents fall above the age of 40 years. The mean age of the agricultural workers was 36 years. This result showed that the respondents are within the economically active age group and this age bracket is regarded as the active period of human life since a high sense of maturity and sensitivity are required for such agricultural production activities. The result is in line with Ibeun (2002) who described that more than half of agricultural workers in South–West Nigeria are below 40 years. Sexual characteristics of the respondents revealed that the majority (64.8%) of the agricultural workers were male while 34.4% were female. The sexual inequality may be due to the hectic nature of agricultural activities which makes the female at a disadvantage of getting much involved in the job. However, 32.8% of the respondents were not married, while 67.2% were married. This is expected because of the influence of tradition that encourages matured people to get married in this part of the world (Fapojuwo, 2010). Thus, may be bad for the organisations as work-family conflict such as cases of lateness, excuses of children attention, maternity, among other issues which are common with married people will be in the increase. Notably, 48.4% of the respondents were HND/B.Sc holders, 29.7% possess an M.Sc, degree while 10.9%, 8.7% and 1.6% of the respondents were OND/NCE, SSCE and PhD holders respectively. It can be deduced that the majority of the respondents had attained different levels of academic qualification, well equipped to carry out their roles effectively since they were academically qualified and fit to give relevant information for the study. A majority (82.0%) of the respondents earned less than ₦ 100,000 while 18.0% of the respondents earned above ₦100,000. The mean average monthly income of the agricultural workers was ₦ 82,175.22. This implied that the majority of the respondents earn a low income. Furthermore, 87.5% of the respondents had less than 15 years of work experience while 12.5% had above 15 years of work experience. The mean years of work experience of the agricultural workers were 10.47 years. This implied the agricultural workers in the study area may have different forms of work experience over time.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
Age (Years)				
≤ 40	92	71.9	36.07	5.47
> 40	36	28.1		
Sex				
Male	83	64.8		
Female	45	35.2		

Marital Status				
Not Married	42	32.8		
Married	86	67.2		
Level of Education				
Secondary Education	11	8.6		
OND/NCE	14	10.9		
HND/B.Sc	63	49.2		
M.Sc	38	29.7		
PhD	2	1.6		
Monthly Income (₦)				
≤ 100,000	105	82.0	82,175.22	39,087.62
> 100,000	23	18.0		
Years of Work Experience				
≤ 15	112	87.5	10.47	6.11
>15	16	12.5		

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 depicts the agricultural workers perceived level of occupational hazards prevalence in their various organisations. The prevailing occupational hazards include falls, slips and trips on muddy surfaces ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54), back pain/general body pain while repeatedly bending over to work ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44) and working in an environment full of sharp objects ($\bar{x}$ = 3.43) were the common hazards encountered by the majority of the respondents. The high rate of falls, slips and trips on muddy surfaces is a clear indication of the high rate of water not properly channeled in the study area. A muddy environment is seriously hazardous to agricultural workers most especially during the raining season. Also, during agricultural activities, most of these agricultural workers awkwardly bend over for hours, resulting in back/general body pain, which were also indicated by the majority of the respondents.

Other farm hazards include insufficient rest breaks ($\bar{x}$ = 3.42), high noise levels from machinery leads to occupational induced hearing loss, hearing impairment or hypertension ($\bar{x}$ = 3.40), unlabeled chemicals resulting in exposure to hazardous chemicals in farming ($\bar{x}$ = 3.40) while splattering when pouring chemicals from larger container to smaller container ($\bar{x}$ = 3.39), exposure to heat stress ($\bar{x}$ = 3.35), chronic cough due to dust ($\bar{x}$ = 3.09) were not so prevalent in the study area. This study is supported by a similar study carried out by Ng'ang'a et al. (2013), that established that there are aspects of the work environment that have the potential of causing immediate and sometimes violent harm to a worker including poorly maintained

equipment, unsafe pieces of machinery, and exposure to hazardous chemicals among others. Potential injuries include falls, slips and trips, body pain, loss of hearing, eyesight or body like cuts, burns, bruises, broken bones and electric shock.

Table 2: Occupational hazards prevalence

Occupational hazards	Mean	SD
Falls, slips & trips caused by working on muddy surfaces	4.43	0.26
Back pain/general body pain while repeatedly bending over to work	4.30	0.29
Sharp objects cause injuries to farmers	4.29	0.36
Insufficient rest/breaks	4.28	0.31
Hearing loss, hearing impairment or hypertension due to a high level of noise from machinery	4.25	0.18
Unlabeled chemicals result in exposure to hazardous chemicals in farming	4.25	0.21
Splattering when pouring chemicals from larger container to smaller container may affect the eyes	4.24	0.22
Exposure to heat stress often result in heat exhaustion and heat stroke	4.19	0.35
Chronic cough due to dust	3.86	1.34
Grand Mean	**4.15**	**0.48**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 3 showed the agricultural workers level of job performance It was observed from the results that agricultural workers were capable of handling their assignments without much supervision ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35), perform well to mobilize collective intelligence for effective teamwork ($\bar{x}$ = 4.33), derive a lot of satisfaction nurturing others in the organisation ($\bar{x}$ = 4.32), actively participate in group discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 4.31) and extend sympathy and empathy to co-workers when they are in trouble ($\bar{x}$ = 4.31). This implied that respondents are high job performers and thus, organisations do benefit most from highly performed agricultural workers.

Table 3: Agricultural workers level of job performance

Job performance	Mean	SD
I am capable of handling my assignments without much supervision	4.35	0.77
I use to perform well to mobilize collective intelligence for effective teamwork	4.33	0.64
I derive a lot of satisfaction nurturing others in my organisation	4.32	0.71
I extend my sympathy and empathy to my co-workers when they are in trouble	4.31	0.85
I actively participate in group discussions and work meetings	4.31	0.57
I use to complete my assignment on time	4.31	0.72

I worked towards the result of my work	4.31	0.70
I use to maintain a high standard of work	4.30	0.77
I am very passionate about my work	4.30	0.66
I could manage change in my job very well whenever the situation demands	4.28	0.61
It took me longer to complete my work tasks than intended	3.33	1.44
Grand Mean	**4.22**	**0.77**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On the other hand, the study further sought out to establish a significant association with occupational hazards prevalence vis-à-vis the agricultural workers' job performance. As presented in Table 4, occupational hazards prevalence and agricultural workers' job performance are negatively and significantly related. It was established that there was a negative and significant ($p < 0.05$) association between occupational hazards prevalence ($r = -0.47$) and agricultural workers' job performance. This indicated that the more agricultural workers' experienced hazards at work, the lower their job performance and vice versa. This result substantiates with Ofuegbu et al., (2013) and Olasanmi, (2016) that occupational hazards prevalence has a negative influence on agricultural workers' job performance. Oxenburge (2011), gave an apt explanation that high level of falls, slips and trips, noise from the heavy machine, bending the backs repeatedly, shoulder and back pains, and daily exposures of the chemical has adverse consequences on agricultural workers' job performance.

Table 4: Association between occupational hazards prevalence and agricultural workers' job performance

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Agricultural workers' job performance	-0.47	0.002	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2020

CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural organisations are known for wide ranges of hazardous activities compared to other industries, and as such requires special attention towards occupational health and safety to improve workers' performance. Concerning the outcome of the study, it was therefore concluded that agricultural workers of agricultural organisations are high job performers. Unfortunately, they encounter hazards such as falls, slips and trips which are caused by working on muddy surfaces,

get injured through sharp objects frequently, do not have enough breaks to rest, have a hearing impairment, hypertension and body pains time after time. Correspondingly, a significant negative association existed between occupational hazards prevalence and agricultural workers' job performance.

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore recommended that the agricultural organisations should train and re-train their agricultural workers periodically on occupational safety and health at work while emphasising the importance of using protective gears on the job and ensuring the periodic inspections and use of safety equipment and machinery in compliance to occupational safety rules and guidelines. This will, in turn, reduce the occupational hazards encountered by the agricultural workers and as a result, higher job performance is achieved.

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