

Age Falsification and Work Productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Age falsification is the misrepresentation of one's true. It is as a result of the fear to retire; prompted by the lack of preparation for retirement and the problem of non-payment and late payment of pension and gratuities which has constituted an old labour force. In view of this, this study investigated the impact of age falsification on work productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The study anchored on the rational choice theory because, it effectively explains the decision to falsify age by government workers. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Using a cluster sampling technique, the study organization was divided into Nnewi cluster and Awka cluster. The faculty of Social Sciences was selected to represent the entire Awka cluster while the faculty of Basic Sciences was selected to represent the Nnewi cluster using a balloting sampling technique. The balloting technique was also used in selecting three department; nursing science, physiology and medical laboratory science from the faculty of Basic sciences and three departments; mass communication, psychology and sociology & anthropology from the faculty of social sciences. Respondents were selected using a snowball sampling technique. Data was derived using questionnaire and secondary sources of data collection technique after which data was presented in table and analysed using simple percentages. The study revealed that, age falsification affects work productivity adversely as workers tend to be intellectually and physically incapable of executing organizational tasks thereby, placing a string on the organization's goal. It was therefore recommended that, the government pays workers their gratuities when and as when due and also, organize behaviour modification programmes like seminars that will modify the behaviour of government workers and discourage them from unethical practices like, age falsification.

Keywords: Age Falsification, Gratuities, Pension and Work Productivity.

Introduction

Age falsification is the deliberate misrepresentation of one's true age so as to place the person at a social or economic advantage. This could be done through oral statement, written or forged documents that are provided by the person, parents or guardian. Sokoh (2017) added that, age falsification can also be done by altering, doctoring or forging of vital records to misrepresent one's true age.

This misrepresentation can be in two ways. It could be a misrepresentation of one's age by reducing or increasing the age to meet the age cut-off mark for employment, professional sports etc. Though this may seem like a common trend in Nigeria, it has become more prominent in most government establishments especially as most government workers rely on the use of affidavit for age declaration. By using affidavit, these workers are able to reduce their age thereby, delaying their work retirement.

As these workers delay their retirement and grow very old in the system, they tend to be physically and intellectually old for the job they are meant to execute. Thereby, causing a decline in their work productivity and the overall work productivity of the organization.

Kemal, Suryadi & Rosyidi (2019) asserts that, work productivity is the quality of performance that can measure how well the organization's goals are achieved. It is a measure of performance, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness and has to do with the behaviour of employees towards work and its impact on the organizational goals.

In ensuring an increase in work productivity, there is need for workers to be effective and efficient in their job. Sedarmayanti (2017) explained that in achieving work effectiveness and efficiency, workers should be able to adopt the easiest, cheapest and shortest means of executing organizational tasks without compromising the organization's goals and objectives. He further outlined the indicators of work efficiency as; constructive actions, self-confidence, responsibility, having a love of work, having foresight, overcoming problems and impacting positively in the environment. This simple means that increased work productivity entails overcoming organizational challenges to confidently and responsibly execute organizational tasks for the benefit of the society.

Mathias and John (2003) asserted that work productivity is a measure of the quantity and quality of work done, considering the cost of the resources used. It is evaluated in terms of the time spent by an employee actively executing the job he or she was paid to do, in order to produce the desired outcomes expected from an employee's job description (Ferreira and Du Plessis, 2009). This evaluation includes: quantity of output, quality of output, timelines of output, presence at work and cooperativeness (Bernardin, 2007).

In reaction to this, Sharma and Sharma (2014) stated that work productivity improves economic growth, higher profitability and social progress. According to him, workers obtain better wages/ salaries, working conditions and larger employment opportunities through their productivity in an organization. Thus, while the organization tends to enjoy some dividends of high productivity, workers also enjoy certain benefits.

Cato and Gordon (2009) demonstrated that the alignment of the strategic vision to work productivity is a key contributor to the success of an organization. This alignment motivates and inspires workers to be more creative thereby, ultimately improving their performance and effectiveness in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives (Obdulio, 2014).

In view of this, work efficiency is a significant attribute of work productivity especially as it strives towards the achievement of organizational goal. Therefore, it is important to investigate the impact of age falsification on work productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Age falsification seems to be trending in most government establishments. This is because, most government workers tend to have developed phobia for retirement. These workers who may not have adequately prepared for their retirement obviously would not know what the future have in stock for them especially with the non-payment or delay in the payment of pension and gratuities in Nigeria.

In view of this, these workers manipulates their date of birth to reduce their year of birth and delay their retirement thereby, making them remain in service even when they are too old to execute the job they were employed to do. Thus, these workers tend to execute their job incoherently and slowly due to age at the expense of the organization's goal.

It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the impact of age falsification on work productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. In a bid to achieve this research objective, the study answered the following questions. They are;

1. What are the causes of age falsification in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. How has age falsification affected work productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

3. How can age falsification be discouraged to improve work productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Literature Review

An Overview of Age Falsification

Sokoh (2017) stated that age falsification involves taking away or adding one or two years to one's age in order to misrepresent his or her true age. Amuchaeze (2010) noted that age falsification entered the Nigerian civil service the moment the civil service became politicized. He stated that, the whole public service structure which ought to be non-partisan and neutral body with no permanent loyalties to any political group has had to take side in many instances as a result of the introduction of ethnic sentiment.

Olugbile (2007) added that with ethnic sentiment dominating the political calculus, it became expedient for politicians and the civil servants to form alliances in order to extract values from the system. In doing this, the politicians use their position to influence the appointment and promotion of certain individuals pivotal to their course even while such individuals have no prerequisite paper qualification. This scenario gave rise first to certificate forgery in the civil service and later, age falsification in order to prolong the service and stay in office of such individuals.

On his part, Ajagun (2009) noted that age falsification began when it was discovered that the civil service is inundated with poor filing and record keeping process. In his words, age falsification became notorious in the Nigerian civil service due to poor record keeping processes, making it difficult to trace the accurate data initially provided by most civil servants. The situation he noted was further aggravated when the swearing of affidavit was officially accepted as an authoritative means of giving legal and official back up to what he refers to as 'official lies'.

According to Adeleke (2012), age falsification among civil servants became intense as from 1981 when the salaries and wages of the civil servants were reviewed upwards by the Shagari administration in 1981. He noted that when most civil servants got prior information about the impending wage review, those closest to retirement took various steps including age falsification to ensure their stay in the service. Anise (2006) have argued that age falsification was most notorious during the military era where most senior civil servants became pivotal in influencing and giving policy direction to the naïve military rulers. He noted that apart from this, the military rulers at that particular time compel some senior civil servants to remain in the service for personal reasons. This was usually done through the swearing of affidavits in order to give such decision legal backings. This system further gave birth to the situation where routine bureaucratic services were slowly converted into an intricate network of favours provided only in exchange for some other kinds of favour given or expected which now characterized the Nigerian civil service and bureaucracies at large.

Aluko (2012) opined that age falsification has no definite date in the Nigerian civil service but, the syndrome became prominent as from 1999 when the democratic government took over from the military administration of General Abdulsalam Abubakar's, who initiated the first quantum salary increment in Nigeria's history from 500- 3,500/ for state civil servants and 500-7,500 for federal civil servants. The quantum increase in salary of civil servants since 1999 has inadvertently increased the incidence of age and record falsification among civil servants in Nigeria.

Orifowomo (2006), stated that the reason for age falsification is the non-payment or delay in the payment of pension and gratuity by the Federal and State governments which has drawn millions of retired Nigerian workers into abject poverty as they were often neglected and not properly catered for after retirement. Sokoh (2017) stated that, pension administration has been inundated with plethora of problems that has consequently heightened the fear of retirement and the zeal of civil servants to prolonging their stay in the service through age falsification. He further stated that, sometimes retirees go through tough times and rigorous processes before they are eventually paid their pensions, gratuity and other retirement benefits. In some cases, the money to pay these workers' benefits are not available and in

some cases, retirees are made to go through rigorous process of verification running to days and even month and perhaps die before collecting their entitlements.

He stated that other problems like gross abuse of pensioners and pension fund benefits which were politically motivated and the absent of effective social security to cater for the needs of civil servants after retirement are part of the factors that give rise to age falsification in the civil service. In addition to this, Akhiojemi (2009) argued that the apprehension of losing a regular source of income and the absent of alternative or palliative measures in form of social policy often make civil servants to want to prolong their years in the civil service through age falsification.

Ikotun (2011) asserts that most civil servants decide to stay in the service because the economic condition of the country offers them little alternative after retirement. According to him, even after struggling to receive the retirement entitlement, most retired civil servants could not invest their gratuities due to the cost of doing business in Nigeria. He further added that, an average civil servant is not adequately prepared for life after retirement due to the socio-economic situation in Nigeria.

Omotosho (2012) noted that age falsification has left the civil service with an ageing work force that is intellectually weak, slow to respond to demands and weak in the discharge of administrative function. Agbagbara (2009) further added that one other major effect of age falsification is inhibition of creativity and innovation. He noted that in a changing world economy, the role of creativity and innovation in the workplace cannot be overemphasized.

Therefore, despite the fact that age falsification seeks to benefit the perpetrator, the organization tends to suffer adverse implications due to the aged workforce in the organization. Nevertheless, the primary cause of age falsification is the fear of retirement coupled with the socio-economic situation in Nigeria and the inconsistencies in the payment of pension and gratuities of retired civil servants.

An Assessment of Work Productivity

Work productivity is an assessment of the efficiency of workers. This is directly evaluated by a company's profits (Sels et al., 2006), the output of an employee within a specific period of time and the amount of units of a product or service that an employee handles in a defined time frame (Piana, 2001). Sharma and Sharma (2014) stated that, employee productivity is based on the amount of time that an employee is physically present at work, besides the extent to which he/ she is "mentally present" or efficiently working during the job (Zayum, Aule and Teslim, 2018).

Purwani *et al.*, (2020) stated that work productivity is a very important organizational factor as it contributes tremendously to the achievement of organizational goals. Robbins and Coulter (2017) opined that, work productivity is a performance measure of both efficiency and effectiveness. It is directly related to organizational performance and the extent to which employees' behaviour affects organizational goals and objectives.

In affirmation, Schermerhorn (2010) asserted that work productivity is the quantity and quality of work performance in consideration of the resources used. Thus, it has to do with the quality and quantity of work done. According to Sedarmayanti (2009), it is produced from a combination of ability, motivation, work environment, and technology. Thus to measure work productivity can be measured from indicators of work efficiency, work quality, and work effectiveness. The tangible results done by a person in terms of quality and quantity means that the achievement is in terms of work effectiveness, work efficiency, and work quality.

Sedarmayanti (2017) synthesized that work productivity is the performance of employees who make a positive contribution to organizational goals. According to him, the indicators of work productivity are; a) added value to carry out the task b) work effectiveness c) work efficiency d) quality of work and e) achievement of organizational goals. Therefore, it is important to note that work productivity entails achieving organizational goals through effectiveness and efficiency with good work performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study anchored on the rational choice theory of Adam Smith. The theory postulates that, people calculate the costs and benefits of choices in making decisions. The perceived costs, risks, benefits of certain actions can be dependent on one's own personal preferences.

Base on this theory, the decision to falsify one's age is based on one's preference after evaluating its costs and benefits. Certainly, civil servants may have observed how retirees in Nigeria are being treated in terms of assessing their pension and gratuities. They may have also come to terms with the fact that their socio-economic condition will change for the worst upon retirement. Therefore, they tend to falsify their age so as to remain in service at the expense of the organization's interest. This theory was selected because, it effectively explains the decision to falsify age by government workers.

Research Methodology

Nnamdi Azikiwe University is a federal government university that has a campus in Nnewi and another in Awka; with its main campus at Awka. The university has a population of 2,810 staff according to National University Commission (NUC) and has a vision to solving social problems through teaching and research. However, like other government establishments, this vision may have been frustrated by age falsification. In view of this, this study focused on the impact of age falsification on work productivity in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The study examined the work efficiency in the university and the extent to which the university has been able to achieve its objectives.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design because, it is effective for a study like this that relies on opinions and the general happening of the environment. The study used 10% of the sample population to derive a sample size of 281. Using a cluster sampling technique, the study organization was divided into two clusters; Awka and Nnewi cluster.

Sampling & Technique

Using a balloting method the faculty of Social Sciences was selected to represent the entire Awka cluster while the faculty of Basic Sciences was selected to represent the Nnewi cluster. The balloting method was also employed in selecting three department; nursing science, physiology and medical laboratory science from the faculty of Basic sciences and three departments; mass communication, psychology and sociology & anthropology from the faculty of social sciences.

Respondents were selected using a snowball sampling technique so as to be able to get the right respondent for the study. Respondents comprised of male and female staff of the various departments. Data was collected using a research structured questionnaire and secondary sources of data collection technique like; journals, textbooks and internet materials. Data was also presented in tables and analysed using simple percentage.

Research Finding

S/N	Questions	Agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Age falsification means to misrepresent one's age to reduce the person's age	175 62.3%	106 37.7%	281 100%
2.	Age falsification is aimed at delaying retirement	183 65.1%	98 34.9%	281 100%
3.	Age falsification is done using affidavit	161 57.3%	120 42.7%	281 100%
4.	Age falsification makes most of the work force too old for the job	153 54.6%	128 45.6%	281 100%

5.	Old workers are intellectually not sound	149 53%	132 47%	281 100%
6.	Old workers are slow	157 55.9%	124 44.1%	281 100%
7.	Old workers are not physically strong for certain organizational task	177 63%	104 37%	281 100%
8.	Age falsification is triggered by fear of retirement	192 68.3%	89 31.7%	281 100%
9.	The fear for retirement is prompted by the non-payment/late payment of pension and gratuities	185 65.8%	96 34.2%	281 100%
10.	The fear for retirement is caused by the lack of preparation for retirement and the impoverished condition of retirees in Nigeria.	168 59.8%	113 40.2%	281 100%
11.	Age falsification sabotages organizational goal by causing inefficiency in the organization.	155 55.2%	126 44.8%	281 100%
12.	Age falsification hampers on the quality of work in an organization.	188 66.9%	93 33.1%	281 100%

Discussion of Research Findings

The research findings affirmed that age falsification means to misrepresent one's age and reduce the age by so doing. It was revealed that this is done by using affidavit with the aim of delaying retirement. However, while employees who reduced their age may achieve their aim, age falsification tends to make the work force old and perhaps too old for the task they were meant to execute. These old work force are usually not physically and mentally sound for the job as they are usually, too slow and weak for the job.

It was revealed that workers tend to falsify their age because they are scared of retiring especially with the late payment and non-payment of gratuities and pension. Perhaps, these workers may have taken into cognizance the terrible economic situation in the country and imagined that life after service will be very difficult.

However, age falsification affects the quality of work in the organization adversely and sabotages the goal of the organization. This is because, workers may not be able to carry out organizational tasks due to old age even when their document disproves that they are indeed old.

Conclusion

Age falsification is a misrepresentation of one's age but, in most government establishment, workers tend to falsify their age to reduce it and thus, delay their retirement using affidavit. While affidavit is without doubt a legal document, it seeks to legitimise the false age and give a legal backing to the age falsified. With it, most government workers have been able to manipulate their age even when documents like birth certificate upholds the true age.

Therefore, these workers who should have been retired remain in the system yet, fail to carry out the organizational tasks they were employed to execute. In cases where these tasks are carried out, they are partially and not properly done. This does not just foster the rate of unemployment in the country but also sabotages the goals of the organization especially as those who should drive these goals are too weak to drive the goal.

Age falsification is propelled by the fear of retirement especially with the lack of plans or adequate plans for retirement. Workers may have also, pictured the possibility of surviving in the absence of a stable income since pension cannot be relied on before falsifying their age. Thus, age falsification remains a personal gratification exercise that affects the organization adversely.

Recommendation

Based on the research finding, the study made the following recommendations. They are;

1. There is need for the government to ensure consistency in the payment of gratuities and pension of workers.
2. There is need for government workers to have attitudinal change that will help them desist from unethical practices like age falsification. This can be propelled by organising seminars for workers.
3. Workers who fail to effectively carryout their organization should be retired compulsorily irrespective of their documented age.
4. There is need for the government to revive the country's economy for the best and improve the standard of living of the populace so as to reduce the level of poverty and thus, reduce the rate of age falsification in government establishment.

Acknowledgments

None


Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received no funding to conduct this study.

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