PHYSICAL WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT: A THEORITICAL EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the association of physical workplace environment and employee engagement through theoretical and empirical review of literature. The theoretical foundation of the paper is the theory of Job Embeddedness, which provides insight on how employees can be driven into job engagement using acceptable physical working environment. The review reveals that conducive physical workplace environment predicts employee engagement, especially because one's environment affects one's cognitive, emotional and physical well-being. The paper concludes that a conducive and properly designed user-friendly physical workplace environment is central to employee engagement and consequently organizational success. The study therefore formulates hypotheses that suggests a significant positive relationship between the operational dimensions of physical work environment and the measures of employees' engagement that will guide an empirical analysis of the identified association that holds that a well-designed physical workplace that is comfortable, flexible and aesthetic to the occupier will encourage mobility, concentration, sensory and physical connection to work roles and foster employee engagement.

Keywords: Physical Workplace Environment, Employee Engagement, Office Design, Environmental Conditions, Vigor, Dedication, Absorption

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of organizational success in today's business world lies not only in an organization's ability to promptly respond to the unpredictable and fast changing environment or the assemblage of a multi-skilled workforce, but also in having engaged employees who feel and

connect physically, cognitively and emotionally to work roles and the work environment. With the fast changing business environment, employee engagement has become increasingly vital to business enterprises that seek to retain valued employees and has consequently received heightened research attention. Accordingly, Mase & Tyokyaa (2014) studied resilience and organizational trust as correlates of work engagement among health workers in Makurdi Metroplis, Berry & Morris (2008) studied the impact of employee engagement factors on job satisfaction on turnover intent while Ugwu, Onyeishi and Rodriguez-Sanchez (2014) studied the role of psychological empowerment on organizational trust and employee engagement. Similarly, other studies have highlighted the importance and benefits of employee engagement to other organizational constructs such as customer satisfaction, workers' productivity, employee turnover and absenteeism (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), business growth, profitability and performance (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). These research outcomes indicate that organizations now place premium on the need to have employees who come to work energized, ready to generate new ideas, create new strategies and make meaningful progress every work-day. An engaged employee is believed to invest physical effort and demonstrate care, dedication, enthusiasm, discretionary effort and vigor, and is more likely to be cognitively and emotionally attached to work roles. These they exhibit because they feel proud to be part of the organization, perceive meaningfulness and are accountable to the goals of the organization. Therefore, it seems to be in the best interest of Organizations to seek ways of enhancing employee engagement in order to guarantee that employees' act in ways that are consistent with their objectives and goals. In view of this, Leblebici (2012), and Hammed and Amjad (2009) respectively noted that one of such conditions that enhance employee engagement is a well-designed, user friendly and quality workplace. The authors noted that employees' are at their best when they have personal control of their work roles, perceive that the workplace is safe and comfortable and appropriate to their well-being.

According to Chandrasekhar (2011), and Sundstrom, Town, Rice, Osborn and Brill (1994), the attention in the workplace environment is of rising concern because most employees spend at least fifty percent of their lives within indoor environments which influences their cognitive and emotional states, concentration, behavior, actions, and abilities and by extension performance. This is also of more concern because employees at work need to focus, cooperate with each other, socialize and learn throughout their time on the job. The environment, according to Ajala (2012), is man's immediate surrounding which he manipulates for his existence. Its wrongful manipulation, the scholar averred, triggers hazards capable of impeding on employees' performance and engagement at work. Since, physical workplace environment consists of tangible components that are related to the office occupiers, which determine their abilities to physically connect to their work roles (Haynes, 2008), the nature and quality of the physical

work environment is considered impactful on how employees interact, perform their roles as well as their mental, physical and emotional states (Sehgal, 2012, Oyetunji, 2014).

Studies have shown that a conducive physical workplace environment reduces absenteeism, determines retention, enhances job performance, (Chandrasekar, 2011; Hammed and Amjad, 2009), increases job satisfaction and productivity (Samson, Waiganjo and Koima, 2015), ensures employee engagement (Hammed and Amjad, 2009), and facilitates group cohesiveness (Public Health England Report, 2015). Similarly, studies have been conducted in Africa on the predictive role of the physical work environment. For instance, Samson, Waiganjo and Koima (2015) studied the effect of workplace environment on the performance of commercial Banks in Nakuru Town, Kenya, Ajala (2012) examined the influence of workplace environment on workers' welfare, performance and productivity in Nigeria, while Taiwo (2010) examined the influence of work environment on workers' productivity in Lagos, Nigeria. However, in spite of the overwhelming importance of the physical work environment and employees' engagement to work organizations respectively studies that address the association between these constructs appear fragmented. Does providing employees with a comfortable, appropriate, satisfactory physical work environment increase their sense of self worth, engagement and value in the organization? This is the underlying question that this theoretic paper on the predictive role of work environment on employees' work engagement seeks to examine. The paper aims at reviewing extant literature with the view to generating testable hypotheses that will lead to an empirical study.

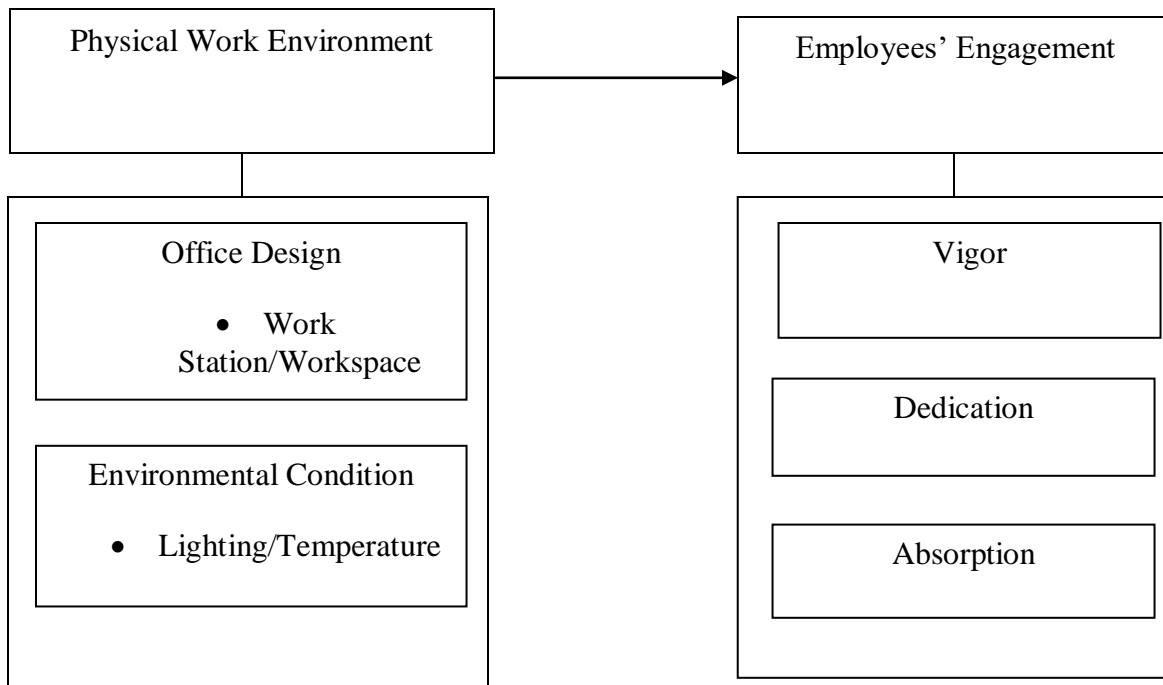This study is guided by the conceptual framework in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Physical Work Environment
and Employees' Engagement**

Source: Researchers' Conceptualization

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Job Embeddedness Theory

The baseline theory which guides this study is the Job Embeddedness Theory (JET). Scholars are in convergence that JET was introduced into management literature by Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez (2001) to explain why employees' stay on their jobs or remain with an organization or community (Nafei, 2015; Ringl, 2013; Zhang, Fried and Griffeth, 2012; Ng and Feldman, 2010). The explanation, put forward by the proponents of the theory, was vis-a-vis, its key components of Links, Fit and Sacrifice. The theory was introduced to incorporate non-job factors such as attachment to the family, social group and on-the job factors such as attachment to working groups, connection with colleagues, office facilities, goal congruence, etc to earlier employee retention models, in view of the limitations of the traditional retention models of organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, this theory holds that the extent to which people have links to other people within the organization or activities outside the organization, or are compatible or comfortable with other interests in the community, influence their decision to remain on their jobs or with the organization or community. It also proposes that the ease with which links or connections can be broken also impacts on employees' decision to remain or leave an organization (Mitchell et. al., 2001). Job Embeddedness highlights the idea that employees can become enmeshed on their jobs or connected to their immediate environment in a way that it becomes difficult to separate or disengage from work or the organization. This buttresses the salient point of Job Embeddedness which (Mitchell et. al., 2001) described as a 'web or net which an employee can become stuck' arising from a highly and closely connected knit or compatibility with the organization or community. This, implies that, under same conditions, employees with highly and closely connected ties to colleagues, office facilities etc. and or whose personal goals aligns with that of the organization would remain or be more engaged on their jobs while those with less or fewer loose ties are likely to be disconnected from their jobs.

Job Embeddedness has been demonstrated to influence work-related behaviors such as turnover, performance, absenteeism, citizenship behaviors and employee engagement (Ng & Feldman, 2010, Ringl, 2013). The theory addresses three core dimensions or components, each of which is conceptualized as both 'off and on-the-job factors which have been reported to create an atmosphere of retaining forces that influence an employee's decision to be embedded on the job or remain with an organization or community (Ahaiuzu and Asawo, 2016; Nafei, 2015; Ringl, 2013; Zhang, Fried and Griffeth, 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Mitchell et. al., 2001). These retaining forces are Links, Fit and Sacrifice (Mitchell et. al., 2001). Therefore, when organizations provide employees with a conducive physical work environment, employees would be fully engaged and have the interests of the organization at heart. The implications of Job Embeddeness Theory in this study are that, it supports employee engagement as an outcome of the Link (connection) and fit (compatibility) employees' have towards people within and outside the workplace and other components of the physical workplace environment. It provides the platform to explain why people remain with an organization/Community. For the purpose of this research, two out of these three components would be discussed as follows:

Links

According to Mitchell et al. (2001) links explains the extent to which employees are connected to other employees in the organization and the community. It is characterized by formal or informal connections or social relationships formed between or amongst employees such as subordinates, supervisors and other members of the organization in course of working in the organization (Mitchell et.al, 2001). Empirical research have demonstrated that the more an employee develops

a formal or informal social support network (links) within the organization, the more such an employee would exert energy, exhibit discretionary efforts on the job and lean toward the goals and objectives of the organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Ringl (2013) established that an increased links or connections in the organization predict and promotes work engagement. This means that the more an employee is connected or linked to members of the organization, the job or the community, the more the tendency for the employee to be engaged on the job or with the organization, thereby, the more difficult it would be for the employee to be disengaged on the job or sever ties with the organization.

Fit

Fit is the degree to which an employee's personal goals or objectives are in alliance with that of the organizations or other aspects of his/her life spaces, outside the work environment. Fit was described as an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort level with the organization and its environment (Ahaiuzu and Asawo, 2016; Nafei, 2015; Zhang, Fried and Griffeth, 2012; Young, 2012; Mitchell et al. 2001). A fit between an employee and the organization is believed to take place when an employee's career goals, personal values, knowledge, skills, abilities are compatible with the Organization, its culture, other aspects of the organization such as the physical workplace environment, Human Resource systems, employees' interest outside the workplace, such as recreation activities, family, vacation, the environment which includes the climate, weather conditions, political climate, geographic location, religious beliefs etc. The implication therefore, is that, when employees feel comfortable and compatible with the organization and its surrounding, they intrinsically align their personal values, career goals etc. to that of the organization. It is therefore, necessary for Human Resource Managers to ensure that employees' personal values, career aspirations and plans for the future fit and align with the organization and its environment so as to have more engaged employees who would lean towards the goals and objectives of the organization and by so doing reduce the number of disengaged employees, absenteeism, turnover rates and ill-behavior, and thus ensure higher performance, profits, efficiency, effectiveness and positive public perception.

Meaning and Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement is about passion, commitment, and the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed. Engagement is defined by scholars as high level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards the organization (Saks, 2006), emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Truss, Soane, Edwards, Wisdom, Croll and Burnett, 2006), discretionary effort exhibited by employees on their job (Frank, Finnegan and Taylor, 2004), positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values (Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004), positive fulfilling, work-

related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker, 2002), and harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles, expressed physically, cognitively and emotionally (Khan, 1990). We are inclined in this study to view employee engagement as a state of passionate disposition employees attach to their work roles and organization beyond the employment contractual agreement in an unrestricted effort to help the organization achieve its goals.

Literature reveals that employee engagement has different meaning and have been conceptualized, operationalized and measured in many different ways too (Kular, Gatenby, Ress, Soane and Truss, 2008; Truss et al., 2006). The implication therefore is that, there is no single universally agreed definition. Thus, the meaning or interpretation of employee engagement appear to have differed based on interest, value, personal circumstance or the personality of the scholar. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus among scholars that employee engagement is a work-related construct that is multifaceted, and concerns employee emotional and intellectual commitment, involvement, passion for work, discretionary effort that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption while at work (Perryman and Hayday, 2004; Scahufeli et al., 2002; Khan, 1990). Truss, Schantz, Soane, Alfes & Delbridge (2013) revealed that William Khan was the first to introduce the concept and that (Khan, 1990) posited that employees use varying degree of their selves, physically, emotionally and cognitively in the work roles they perform. The Scholar, revealed that employee engagement occurs when employees know what is expected of them, have what they need to do their work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfillment in their work, perceive that they are part of something significant with co-workers and have chances to improve and develop.

Scholars are of the view that employee engagement as a construct is built on the foundation of earlier concepts like Satisfaction, Job Involvement and Employee Commitment but that it is broader in scope, entails a two-way relationship between the employer and employee, has the potential to bring employers and employees closer to the benefit of both, affords employees the opportunity to experience a sense of oneness while at work, the space to express positive attitude and be themselves, control or impact upon their environment and make positive contribution to the goals of the organization (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006; Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalova-Roma and Bakker, 2002). Similarly, Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002), stated that employee engagement reflects extreme level of participation and zeal from the employee than its antecedents such as job satisfaction, job involvement and commitment, because these constructs lack the qualities commonly associated with engagement; such as absorption, physical and emotional states, and self expression. Research findings have indicated that employee engagement is closely linked with performance and that organizations with engaged employees have higher employee retention, productivity, profitability, growth and

customer satisfaction while those with disengaged employees suffer less commitment from employees, face increased absenteeism, turnover, increased human error rate etc (Hammeed and Amjad, 2009; Carnevale, 1992).

Measures of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has been operationalized by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002) who in their study, defined employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. They mentioned that engaged employees invest physical effort in their work, experience increased meaningfulness on their job and thus are more likely to be cognitively and emotionally attached to their work. The measures of employee engagement are therefore as follows:

Vigor

Macey & Schneider, (2008), Schaufeli et al., (2002) described vigor as employee work situations that are characterized by high levels of physical, mental energies and resilience exerted on the job. Vigor is the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence when faced with difficulties at work. It is a positive state of mind exhibited by employees which propels them to selflessly take on more work, exert extra energy when confronted by challenges or work pressure in other to get work done. Employee vigor reflects a strong drive demonstrated through the exertion of energy, time spent and concentration on the job or activities related to the organization. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) described vigor as the pace and focus which the employee brings into the job as a result of increased morale, motivation, sense of duty and connection to the goals of the organization. Employees who exhibit vigor at work are self driven, result focus, and determined to complete given tasks within the specified time frame.

Dedication

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) and Schaufeli et al., (2002), employee dedication reflects employees' sense of significance, passion, motivation and pride. Employees feel dedicated when they are inspired by challenges on the job. Dedication is about employees' persistence, consistency and continuity on the job aimed towards organizational goals. It is an expression of employees' commitment to work-related goals which spurs him/her on the job. Employees' who display high levels of dedication are believed to be highly involved on their job roles and are seen to exert positive feelings towards the job and the organization. It therefore, means that dedication is about employees being deeply devoted to their jobs as well as the goals and objectives of the organization.

Absorption

This is characterized by being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulty detaching oneself from it. It involves high levels of concentration, assimilation and embeddedness at work to the extent that one finds it difficult to separate from the work. Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Castellano (2015) noted that absorption is about how much an employee is engrossed in a role and the intensity of his/her focus. The question then is, what are the antecedent factors that result in the three measures of employee engagement, viz. vigor, dedication and absorption? One of such precursors examined in this study is the physical work environment.

The Meaning and Nature of Physical Work Environment (PWE)

Extant Literature indicates that physical work environment has received a lot of attention in organizational and management studies in recent times (Oyetunji, 2014). This is because, according to Chandrasekar (2011), Hammed and Amjad (2009), Sundstrom, Town, Rice, Osborn and Brill (1992), most employees spend fifty percent of their lives in the office which affects the way they think, comprehend, act, relate with colleagues and connect to their jobs. Sehgal (2012) noted that the attention for a better physical workplace environment is on the premise that comfortable people are more productive. This is because when employees' feel comfortable (which is a state of mind that is dependent on both the physical states and emotional sensations), they concentrate and connect better to their work roles. Thus a conducive physical workplace environment have functionality, that is, the ability to facilitate an action, which could influence employees' behavioral or psychological states at work.

Achieving employee engagement or organizational goals are dependent on how employees connect or align with the tangible components of the workplace amongst other factors. Sehgal, (2012) and Chandrasekar, (2011) identified five major components of physical work environment as furniture, noise, temperature, lighting and the spatial arrangement (workspace). The authors averred that, these set of components impact on employee positively or negatively which in turn predicts organizational outcomes in terms of productivity, engagement, performance and creativity. According to Oyetunji, (2014), Davenport (2005) posited that the physical workplace environment is the workspace or work stations where employees carry out their duties or roles. Haynes (2008) conceptualized the workplace environment as the extent to which employees perceive the immediate workplace surroundings as fulfilling their intrinsic, extrinsic and social needs and as a reason for remaining or leaving an organization.

Dimensions of Physical Workplace Environment (PWE)

Kohun (2002), drawing from the work of Samson, Waiganjo and Koima (2015) opined that the physical workplace environment contextualizes components of the tangible workplace environment that comprises of the office/spatial layout, design and functionality of the immediate surroundings. In an attempt to relate the benefits of having a conducive physical workplace environment to the business gains, some scholars, grouped the physical workplace environment into two major categories: the spatial arrangement of office layout/comfort and the suitability of the environmental conditions to work processes (Onyetunji, 2014; Chandrasekar, 2011; Hammad and Amjad, 2009; Sundstrom et al., 1994). Becker (2002) described the spatial arrangement (work space) as the way office machineries, equipment, furniture and furnishings are arranged, their size, shape and the spacing between the items. Thus the dimensions of the physical work environment include:

Office Design

Office design describes the arrangement of the workspace to enable work be performed in the most efficient way. It incorporates how the workspace and work tools used in the workplace can be designed for comfort, efficiency, safety to enhance workflow, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and engagement (Hammed and Amjad, 2009). It takes into account a broad range of issues such as creating a conducive workplace environment that impacts on employee behavior which in turn drives satisfaction, performance, productivity and engagement. It also explains how style of furnishings and other physical facilities serves a symbolic and aesthetic function. Joroff et al.,(n.d) cited in Chandrasekar, (2011) contends that the tangible components of the workplace is an integral part of work itself, in cognizance of the relationship between work, the workplace and the work tools. Consequently, to gain an understanding of the role office design, which includes the workspace, workstation and the environmental factors, play in a work setting is vital. For instance, an understanding that the workplace is built on the identification that space has diverse importance such as ease in mobility, accessibility, comfort, visibility, privacy, social interaction, etc. would aid employees perform at their utmost. In a typical workplace environment, employees' work individually or in teams, and they interact with each other and at the same time, require different workplace design such as the open-plan and the single closed/cellular office design to suit or complement the nature of their jobs. The workspace and workstations are designed for comfort, visual appeal and adjustability. Gensler (2006) in a study linking the physical workplace environment to performance, reported that office design revolves around the open-plan and closed/cellular designs, flexible and adjustable workstations and the relationship between these design types and the work processes. This means that workspaces and workstations should be designed according to the nature or demands of a job.

Oyetunji (2014), Sehgal (2012), and the Public Health England Report (2005) respectively noted that different organizations have different office designs and preference for work stations, workspace and other assisting facilities. Some organizations have preference for open-plan and closed/ cellular office designs to accommodate their business customers, clients, or the type of work they do. The open-plan office design as the name suggests is built without boundaries or enclosures. It has separate workstation and chair for each occupier, a central storage facility, and entry and exit pathways. Some scholars argue that the open-plan office designs give room for communication flow, teamwork, social integration, ease of accessibility and reconstruction due to organizational adjustments while others argue that the open-plan office design causes distractions due to noise (Chigot, 2005), interruptions, erodes individual privacy, triggers health challenges and as a result negatively impact on employees health and abilities (Sehgal, 2012; Chandrasekar, 2011).

The single closed/cellular workspace design is built for private use with enclosures and assisting facilities such as adjustable workstations, chairs and storage facilities with an entry and exit door personal to the occupier. Davenport (2005), according to Oyetunji (2014) reported that the closed/cellular office design affords employees some privacy, uninterrupted concentration, boosts employees' status and gives them a sense of value. Becker (2002) noted that poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting and excessive temperature or noise negatively affect employee performance and engagement at work. The contemporary physical workplace environment according to Stoessel (2001), is distinguished by technology, computers, hi-tech machines, ergonomic furniture, furnishings and temperature/heat electric regulators (Samson, Waiganjo and Koima, 2015).

Environmental Conditions

The environmental condition of a workplace refers to the thermal comfort within the immediate surroundings of a workplace. It is created through manipulation of the immediate environment to achieve the right combination of temperature (hot/cold), airflow, humidity and acceptable noise level. When these factors are in the right mix, physical comfort in the workplace is ensured. Workplace environmental conditions include the temperature, lighting, ventilation, acceptable noise level. These factors impact on employees' wellbeing and work processes. An appropriate lighting condition would bring about clear visibility, thereby reducing eye strain or its associated health disorders. Charles, Reardon and Magee (2005) mentioned that a suitable workplace temperature energizes an office occupier to work at his/her best. Every geographic location has its peculiar and seasonal weather conditions - temperate, tropical, arid etc. Therefore, the seasonal climatic conditions of a region or location are considered and accommodated when designing workplaces. Properly designed office buildings are fitted with environmental

conditioning systems to regulate and maintain an acceptable level of temperature, lighting and airflow. For, research findings further indicate that the nature of the workplace environmental conditions impact on employee health, comfort, performance, productivity and safety perceptions (Ettner and Grzywacs, 2001; Gyekye 2006). In line with the purpose of this study to highlight the predictive role of the physical work environment on employees' engagement the following section reviews literature in this regard.

Physical Work Environment & Employee Engagement

Evidences abound to the effect that a conducive physical workplace environment boosts employees' engagement to the job and the organization (Hammeed & Amjad, 2009; Carnevale, 1992). A number of studies have focused on how a variety of job aspects affect employee engagement (Shirom, Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Similalrly, satisfaction, productivity, performance, motivation, and the work environment have all been shown to play a major role in the arousal of employee engagement (Chandrasekhar, 2011; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Still, there is some evidence that a conducive physical work environment predicts employee engagement (Sehgal, 2012; Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2006; Hammed and Amjad, 2009), and this association accounts for the level of employee's performance, productivity and satisfaction and also have some bearing on employees' well-being, collaboration with colleagues, error rate level, innovativeness, absenteeism and turnover rate (Sehgal, 2012; Hammed and Amjad, 2009; Sundstrom et al., 1994). In the same vein, Cunnen (2006) opined that a positive workplace environment results in less employee turnover, fewer cases of fraud as well as better safety practices, and this makes it easier to attract and retain qualified employees and employees' comfort.

Corroborating this view, Taiwo (2010) and Chandrasekhar (2011) state that a favorable workplace environment guarantees the comfort of employees and facilitates the exertion of energy towards work roles which may translate to higher performance and engagement. Sehgal (2012) also reported that a quality workplace environment impacts on employees' level of commitment, involvement, motivation, engagement and subsequent performance. Further research findings reveal that a good office design is built for the comfort and safety of employees' or customers and that it facilitates absorption, team work between or amongst employees (Hammed and Amjad, 2009), social interaction, attracts customers and employees', enhances better results (Mike, 2010; Carnevale, 1992), boosts productivity, organizational performance (Naharuddin and Sadegi, 2013; Hammed and Amjad, 2009; Uzee, 1999, Leaman and Bordass, 1993) and reduces health and safety risks.

Accordingly, Chandrasekar (2011), and Brill, Margulis, Konar and Bosti (1984) identified the workspace, followed by the workstation (furniture and furnishings), environmental conditions and other workplace assisting facilities such as storage cabinets, and interior decorations as leading aspects of the physical workplace environment that influence employees' performance and engagement at work. Brill et al (1984) however cautioned that a poor workplace spatial arrangement and layout hinders employees mobility, means of effective work habits, and engagement on the job, while a poor workstation negatively impact on employee muscular-skeletal systems. They similarly argue that inappropriate or inadequate environmental conditions impact on employees' physical, psychological well-being and results to discomfort, fatigue and absenteeism. Based on the evidence form extant literature, as shown in the foregoing review, of an association between the physical work environment and employees' work engagement, the following hypotheses are thus derived:

H1:   There is a significant positive relationship between office design and employees' vigor.

H2:   There is a significant positive relationship between office design and employees' dedication.

H3:   There is a significant positive relationship between office design and employees' absorption.

H4:   There is a significant positive relationship between environmental conditions and employees' vigor.

H5:   There is a significant positive relationship between environmental conditions and employees' dedication.

H6:   There is a significant positive relationship between environmental conditions and employees' absorption.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper has distilled organizational studies literature on the impact of the physical work environment on employees' engagement and hypothesized that there is a significant positive relationship between the operationalized dimensions of physical work environment, viz office design and environmental conditions, and the measures of employees' engagement, viz vigor, dedication and absorption. Drawing from extant literature, this paper concludes that the nature of the physical work environment in which employees' work determines their well-being, level of engagement, pattern of interaction, and control over their work and consequently predicts the overall status of the organization, in terms of success or failure. In this regards, the workplace

should be designed to be comfortable, flexible and aesthetic to support employee engagement and well-being, while taking into account the needs and limitations of employees who occupy the facilities, more especially, as it relates to their health, safety and reduction of human error. In addition, a conducive physical workplace environment is necessary and important as it gives a pleasurable experience to employees, enables them actualize their abilities, controls their behavior and connects them physically, cognitively, emotionally to their work roles and ultimately builds up resistance to the thought of severing ties with the organization. Hence, the long-term cost benefits of a properly designed, user-friendly physical work environment are central to employee engagement and beneficial to the success of an organization.

Finally, going by the conceptual framework adopted in this paper and the hypotheses ensuing from the review of literature, the study proposes an empirical examination of the association of physical workplace environment and employee engagement, particularly in Nigerian work organizations. This will form the second part of this paper.

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