Situational Awareness and Absenteeism in the Hospitality Industry in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism of employees in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The cross-sectional survey design was employed. A structured questionnaire for situational awareness and absenteeism was used to generate primary data for the study. The respondents to the research instrument consist of 285 employees drawn from 25 three-star hotels out of 100 registered hotels with Bayelsa State Tourism Development and Hotel Licensing Agency in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State as at March 2024. The sample size of 285 employees was achieved using Taro Yamene's formula, and Bowley's Proportional Allocation Technique was adopted. Quantitative data was analysed with the aid of Spearman Ranked Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. The results were considered statistically significant, as the p-value was less than .01 level (p < .001). Findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism. Given the findings it was concluded that there is significant empirical relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism among employees in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state Nigeria. It was recommended that; management should provide regular situational awareness training programs aimed at improving employee's situational awareness. Such trainings can enhance their situational awareness capabilities by helping employees anticipate how their behaviours would affect others. An understanding of such situations will reduce absenteeism.

Key words: situational awareness, absenteeism, employee, organisation, behaviours

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employees' work behaviours are pivotal to achieving organisational goals and driving productivity (Anyanwu, 2020). Notably, it has become a retrogressive practice in organisations where employees are involved in absenteeism, fraud, verbal abuse, spending more time in other activities such as social media and less time doing tasks because they feel unfairly treated, marginalized, not recognized for what they are putting into the organisation, not well enumerated or not given enough incentives, these behaviours affect the organisation's productivity, and further affect the organisation's status and reputation (Nevins-Benneth, 2016). Conversely, the alignment of employees' values and job expectations to the organisation's practices enhances the employees feeling of belonging (Ruane, 2020).

Lack of opportunities, lack of time for task performance, lack of autonomy and the perception of heavy demand from tasks leading to work stress are identified in many studies as work conditions that lead to absenteeism (Maia et al., 2019; Brunner et al., 2019). Nanjundeswaraswamy (2016) adds salary and rewards, work facilities and security, and other work conditions that affect absenteeism. Absenteeism can result when a negative gap exists between the employees' values, job expectations and the actual job experience. Such employees tend to experience low morale, poor attendance, and low motivation, resulting in higher absenteeism than satisfied employees (Karimbil, 2019; Naderi & Shams, 2020). Excessive absenteeism involves a considerable loss to the enterprise because work schedules are upset and delayed, and management has to give overtime wages to meet the delivery dates. Ivancevich and Matteson (2004) believed that absenteeism is costly because it reduces output and is disruptive because it requires that schedules and programs be modified.

In a survey, Boye and Jones (1997) found that 29% of hospitality employees admitted to calling in sick when they were well. Being late, leaving early and calling in sick undoubtedly reduces the employees' working hours, which leads to lower productivity and poor job performance (Johns, 2001). Due to financial constraints, hotels often operate with minimum staff levels, and employees work long hours and receive poor remuneration. Ticharwa et al. (2019), as well as Maila et al. (2020), opined that when employees experience a heavy workload due to minimum staff levels, it is detrimental to both the physical and mental health of employees and contributes to higher absenteeism rates. Altintas and Turanligil (2018) concur that an excessive workload creates pressure for an employee who fails to keep up with work. Cohen (2013) acknowledged that people with situational awareness anticipate the needs of those around them by knowing what is happening, why such is happening, and what is likely to happen next. This ability enables them to act correctly when things go as planned and react aptly when they do not.

Nonetheless, people without this skill may not be able to fully understand vital situational challenges (Dag et al., 2022). Situational awareness can improve decision-making by applying the three-layer model of observation, understanding, and prediction (Xu et al., 2022). Its central role in operators' decision-making process, whether at the individual or group level, makes its assessment a key element in forecasting performance (Prebot et al., 2020). Thus, situational awareness is needed in every sphere of life, especially for domains such as emergency and disaster response, industrial process control, infrastructure monitoring, military, health and the hospitality industry (Munir et al., 2022). Situational awareness provides the basis for decision-making, and response measures, if articulated as a group or team, can limit harm or minimise damages across organisations (Laurina-Pant et al., 2023).

However, there is a dearth in empirical literature on the study of situational awareness and absenteeism in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state Nigeria, hence there is a need to examine the relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state, Nigeria with the aim of offering insights into strategies for enhancing situational awareness among employees and mitigating absenteeism.

1.1 Objective

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Situational Awareness and absenteeism in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Question

The following research question is raised in this study.

1. How does situational awareness relate with absenteeism in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

1.3 Hypothesis

Given the research question above, the following hypothesis was formulated.

Ho$_1$. There is no significant relationship between situational Awareness and absenteeism of hotel employees in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Situational Awareness

The increased complexity and dynamism in modern systems have led to the associated demands on cognitive abilities, leading to the concept of situational awareness (O'Brien & O'Hare, 2007). Situational awareness is rooted in aviation; the military modified a medical model of the concept to assess and alleviate health hazards and support timely decision-making (Cohen, 2013).

Research in situational awareness has been found to increase in several complex task domains such as anesthesiologists, air traffic controllers, aircraft pilots, military personnel, automobile drivers, nuclear power plant controllers, engineering, healthcare systems and network security (Gaba et al., 1995; Endsley & Rodgers, 1996; Endsley, 1993; Endsley & Bolstad, 1994; O'Hare, 1997; Federico, 1995; Randel et al., 1996; Gugerty, 1997; Hogg et al., 1995, Cohen, N, L., 2013; Akinci, 2014; Walshe et al.,2021 Xu et, al 2022).

Despite the increasing research on situational awareness over the last two decades, scholars still have opposing views on the definition, conceptualisation, and measurement of situational awareness (Dominguez, 1994; Gilson, 1995).

Conceivably, the most cited definition of situational awareness is that of Endsley (1995), who defined situational awareness as the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future. The definition emphasises perception, understanding, and projection of the future. Endsley (1995), in addition to the definition, gave a hierarchical model of situational awareness with three key components.

Smith and Hancock (1995) defined situational awareness as the invariant in the agent environment system that generates the temporary knowledge and behaviour required to accomplish the goals specified by a mediator of performance in the environment. The definition emphasises interaction between the person and the world. Situational awareness is the notion that an individual or group has a strong understanding of the current environment and may be able to project the future environment based on changing variables (Market et al., 1997).

Bennis and Thomas (2002) consider this skill to be background intelligence. This is connected with an individual's ability or capacity to understand or evaluate appropriate social situational circumstances. Individuals must be very robust in this ability, as it is required to gather relevant facts from the central and surrounding environments and appropriately make a suitable SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, and threat) analysis of the organisation. Individuals with this skill can articulate a problem properly (Endsley, 1995). When individuals in an organisation with this skill do not have satisfactory evidence on a delinquent issue or a likely business opening, they tend to participate in environmental scanning behaviour.

Kozasa et al. (2020) opined that situational awareness is the capacity to have an internalised picture of the state of any given condition in intricate and dynamic spheres and make decisions because time is of the essence, circumstances may change within seconds and minutes, and failure to make such decisions may lead to adverse outcomes. Walshe et al. (2021) reiterated the importance of situational awareness in the health sector, emphasising that the loss of situational awareness may be a vital contributory factor in the genesis of patient harm.

Over the years, situational awareness has progressed from revolutionary newcomer to the mainstream and evolved in real-world environments such as hospitality, health care, aviation

safety, security networks and engineering. Situational awareness represents the conscious dynamic reflection on the condition of a person. It allows for dynamic orientation to the condition and the possibility to ponder the past, present, and future and the likely features of the condition. Dynamic reflection consists of logical-conceptual, imaginative, conscious, and unconscious components that allow people to build mental frameworks of external activities (Bedney & Meister, 1999).

Ehret (2018) reiterated that individuals with high levels of situational awareness essentially have an intuitive feel for activities and outcomes within an environment and have a basic intuition about the many variables that make up the situation. It can also be said that managers with high situational awareness can articulate their organisation's problems or challenges appropriately.

2.2 Absenteeism

Cascio (2003) defined absenteeism as any failure of an employee to report for or remain at work as scheduled, regardless of reason, expressing a monetary implication. The term 'as scheduled' is very significant, for this automatically excludes vacations, holidays, jury duty and the like. It also eliminates the problem of determining whether the absenteeism is excusable. Medically verified illness is a good example (Onikoyi et al., 2015). From a business perspective, the employee is absent and is not available to perform their job, which means absenteeism will cost money. Tiwari (2014) defined absenteeism as the absence of workers from regular work without prior permission. Employees are considered absent when they are not at work when scheduled, and the frequency or duration of workdays measures this as missed (Davey et al., 2009).

Karimbil (2019) lists four basic types of absenteeism: authorised, unauthorised, wilful, and absenteeism caused by circumstances beyond the employee's control. Karimbil (2019) further explains that authorised absenteeism is when the employee is not at work with the permission of a superior. This type of absenteeism is planned and can be managed appropriately, unlike the three unplanned and challenging types. Unauthorised absenteeism is when the employee is not at work without the permission of a superior and without providing information to the employer (Karimbil, 2019). Wilful absenteeism is when an employee deliberately decides not to attend work (Karimbil, 2019). An increase of 1% in the absenteeism rate equates to a decrease in productivity of 0.66% in an organisation (Grinza & Rycx, 2020).

Researchers found a relationship between personal characteristics and absenteeism, gender, marital status, age, education, and tenure (Adepoju & Adamu, 2017; Ichino & Moretti, 2009). Pandey and Dhanopia (2020) state that married employees with children have increased family responsibilities that could result in both men and women missing work. Kocakulah et al. (2016) confirm that childcare problems are among the main reasons employees fail to report for work. Absenteeism has a direct relationship with job level; Absenteeism was reported to be higher among blue-collar employees who are low-income earners, have fewer responsibilities and have more repetitive jobs (Fourie & Keyser, 2018).

Another aspect related to job level is job scope. Utami and Harini (2019) state that poor job scope, often linked to boredom at work, contributes to higher absenteeism levels. As an emotion, boredom is prevalent in the workplace and has negative consequences for organisational productivity and the employee (Van Hooff & Van Hooft, 2014). This was also confirmed by the study done by (Reijseger et al., 2013), which highlighted that boredom is caused by working in an unchallenging, ''passive'' job. One of the negative consequences of boredom is reduced organisational belonging and participation; this impact becomes continuous destruction, low risk-taking and suppressed innovation by employees (Moradi et al., 2020).

The job process model further includes leadership styles as a segment of the job situation. Frooman et al. (2012) reported that leadership style influences supervisors' behaviour and that, in turn, affects employees' illegitimate absenteeism levels. Nielsen and Daniels (2016) confirm that there is a relationship between leadership and absenteeism. According to Htut and Lin (2019), employees who receive social support from their supervisors are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. However, Rahman and Bin Kabir (2020) stated that satisfaction with management is not the most critical factor in absenteeism. One possible explanation could be that people with solid career orientation place less emphasis on social relations. Leadership, supervision style and behaviour can affect the stress levels of employees. Mat Saruan et al. (2020) found that the following non-workplace stressors (e.g. conflicts with spouse, pressure from relatives, etc.) as well as workplace stressors (e.g. workload, lack of support, etc.) added to the stress employees experienced at work. Negative co-worker relationships can increase stress levels and negatively affect employee attendance behaviour (Lieke et al., 2016).

However, Yang et al. (2016) found that when employees perceive co-worker support, they experience lower employee stress levels. According to Mashaba and Maile (2019), poor working conditions are major contributors to absenteeism. Working conditions such as working hours, remuneration, health and safety in the hotel determine the employees' quality of work life (Elmatey, 2015).

2.3 Empirical Review

Kozasa et al. (2020) conducted a randomised controlled trial to assess the impact of the FoCo training program, designed to enhance situational awareness and mutual care among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that participants who underwent the training exhibited improved situational awareness, leading to a decrease in occupational injuries and illnesses. This suggests that fostering situational awareness can be a pivotal strategy in reducing absenteeism due to health-related issues in high-stress environments. The qualitative analysis further revealed that the training cultivated a culture of mutual care, which not only enhanced team cohesion but also contributed to a supportive work environment. Such an environment is conducive to employee well-being, potentially mitigating factors that lead to absenteeism. Therefore, implementing situational awareness training programs can be instrumental in promoting employee health and reducing absenteeism rates.

Tamunosiki-Amadi and Okolai (2019) examined the relationship between situational awareness and employee commitment in the health sector of Bayelsa State. The study found that higher levels of situational awareness among employees were associated with increased commitment to their organisations. This heightened commitment can lead to reduced absenteeism, as employees are more engaged and less likely to take unnecessary leave. The research highlights the importance of fostering situational awareness to enhance employee engagement and loyalty. By promoting awareness of workplace dynamics and encouraging proactive behaviour, organizations can strengthen employee commitment, which in turn can decrease absenteeism rates.

Valentijn et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between situational awareness, relational coordination, and integrated care delivery in Dutch hospitals. The study found that higher situational awareness among healthcare professionals was positively associated with better integrated care delivery. Improved care coordination can lead to enhanced patient outcomes and reduced workload stress, potentially decreasing absenteeism among healthcare staff. The findings suggest that fostering situational awareness within healthcare teams can enhance collaboration and efficiency. By improving team dynamics and reducing stressors associated with disjointed care, organisations can create a more supportive work environment, thereby reducing absenteeism rates.

Ehret (2018) studied situational awareness and transparency as core concepts of authentic leadership. The study's objective was to advance leadership theory with a specific focus on situational awareness and transparency as core concepts of authenticity. Data was collected from 1,006 global participants who met the inclusion criteria over four weeks utilising the quantitative methodology conducted via survey. The data gathering instrument was two sets of 12 vignettes for 24 vignettes. Data was analysed using a multi-factorial regression analysis. The results revealed that situational awareness and situational leadership are critical competencies for leaders to use transparency effectively. This result implies that situational awareness is critical for leaders' success

Huhta et al. (2022) conducted an eye-tracking study to examine how professional experience influences situational awareness among police officers. The study found that experienced officers demonstrated more efficient gaze patterns, focusing on critical areas more quickly than novices. This heightened situational awareness can lead to better decision-making and reduced stress, potentially lowering absenteeism due to job-related stress or errors. The research highlights the importance of experience and training in developing situational awareness. By investing in comprehensive training programs that enhance situational awareness, law enforcement agencies can improve officer performance and well-being, thereby reducing absenteeism rates.

Medina-Garrido et al. (2023) analysed the impact of work-family policies (WFP) on employee well-being and absenteeism. The study found that while the mere existence of WFPs did not directly reduce absenteeism, their accessibility significantly improved emotional well-being, which in turn decreased absenteeism rates. Accessible WFPs enhance situational awareness by acknowledging and addressing the work-life balance challenges employees face. The research underscores the importance of not only implementing supportive policies but also ensuring they are readily accessible to employees. By doing so, organisations can foster an environment where employees are more aware of available resources, leading to improved well-being and reduced absenteeism.

3.0   METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The respondents to the questionnaires were 285 employees of the hospitality industry from 988 employees drawn from accessible 25 three-star hotels registered with the Bayelsa State Tourism Development and Hotel Licensing Agency in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Data for the study were generated through the questions. Variables for the study were measured using scales that were adapted from literature. Taro Yamene's formula was adopted to determine the sample size and Bowley's Proportional Allocation Technique was adopted, the reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency across the scales used. Spearman Ranked Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool was used to analyse the quantitative data. The results were considered statistically significant, as the p-value was less than .01 level ($p < .001$). The results for the tests are presented in the subsequent sections.

4.0   RESULTS

The result for the test of the hypothesis is found in the table below.

Ho_1.   *There is no significant relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism of hotel employees in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state, Nigeria.*

Table 4.1   Correlation Outcome of Situational Awareness and Absenteeism

		Situational Awareness	Absenteeism
Situational Awareness	Pearson Cor.	1	-.887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
Absenteeism	Pearson Cor.	-.887**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	220

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.1 presents the correlation results of situational awareness and absenteeism. As indicated in the table, the correlation is r = -.887, indicating a very strong inverse relationship between the variables, which is significant at p = .000 < .01. This implies that there is a significant relationship between situational awareness and absenteeism of hotel employees in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The null hypothesis is thus rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 Discussions
The results shows that there exists a highly significant inverse correlation between situational awareness and absenteeism, with p values of .000 or less than .05. According to the findings of the study, there is a significant inverse association between situational awareness and absenteeism in the hospitality industry. In hotel environments, where service quality and team cohesion are vital, situational awareness, which refers to an individual's perception of the environment and comprehension of how situational elements affect results (Endsley, 2022), plays a critical role in shaping employee behaviours. This is because situational awareness is used to understand how outcomes are affected by situational factors.

According to Huhta et al., (2022), situational awareness enables workers to maintain heightened awareness of their surroundings, foresee future issues, and adapt their behaviours accordingly. Workers can better perceive the potential implications of harmful actions due to this increased awareness, which also improves their sense of duty to act in beneficial ways to the organisation and its stakeholders. According to Garcia and Levine (2023), people with high situational awareness are less likely to engage in behaviours that disturb the work environment and cause harm to the organisation.

According to theories of organisational behaviour, namely the concept of environmental-behaviour interaction, this inverse association is consistent with the proposed relationship. According to this paradigm, the degree to which individuals are aware of environmental signals substantially impacts their activities. Because they can better analyse how their activities impact the team and overall work performance, hotel employees with high situational awareness can better align their actions with organisational goals (Nguyen & Hoffman, 2023). This allows them to better match their actions with the organisation's goals.

There has been a significant decrease in absenteeism among workers with high situational awareness, one of the most noteworthy findings from recent studies. Employees who are more attuned to the business's operational needs are more likely to be there when expected of them in a hotel setting, which is characterised by staffing levels that are closely determined by the level of satisfaction experienced by guests. They are aware of the immediate impact that their absence has on service delivery and possess an understanding of the strain that their absence

creates on their colleagues (Brown & Foster, 2022). Due to this awareness, a sense of accountability is fostered, which in turn reduces absenteeism that is caused by insignificant or avoidable reasons.

In conclusion, the sizeable inverse link between situational awareness and absenteeism sheds light on the significant role that awareness plays in determining the conduct of employees working in the hospitality business. By cultivating situational awareness, hotel managers can drastically minimise negative behaviours such as absenteeism, thus increasing harmony in the work environment and improving the quality of service.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was made:

Management of hotels should provide regular situational awareness training programs aimed at improving employee's situational awareness, this could be in form of simulations, role plays, and decision-making exercises that reflect real workplace scenarios and encouraging a conducive work environment that promotes clear communication can significantly enhance situational awareness. Additionally management should encourage open dialogue, which helps employees better understand workplace dynamics and reduce disengagement leading to absenteeism.

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