

# EFFECT OF DOWNSIZING ON EMOTIONS AND ATTITUDES of SURVIVING EMPLOYEES OF ENUGU ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY (EEDC) IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the effect of downsizing on the emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) in Southeast Nigeria. With the recent restructuring of the sector and emergence of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) with its attendant retrenchment, it becomes more constricting to analyse the challenges faced by the surviving employees. Data for the study were obtained from 301 respondents which were analysed using factor analysis, mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that all the variables met the theoretical threshold of 3.0 for accepting the effect of downsizing on surviving employees. However, the major factors extracted as predicting the effect of downsizing on the emotions and attitudes of surviving employees in Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) were: that the surviving employees' fear of future layoffs, job insecurity, depression and violation of psychological contract with the organization. The study recommends that: Human resource management should be considered closely by EEDC before adopting such strategies in the organization. Deliberate effort and attention should be given to the employees who are remaining in the organization after downsizing to avoid creating disruptions in the workplace, which may result in fear of future layoffs, job insecurity, depression, violation of psychological contract with the organization stress, frustration, anxiety and anger in survived employees'.*

**Key Words:** Downsizing, Restructuring, Retrenchment, Surviving Employees, EEDC.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Downsizing is one form of restructuring strategy in which a firm reduces the number of staff, its overall size and scope permanently with the ultimate goal of greater profitability (Oluoch, Nyagol & Oluoch, 2013). Downsizing can also be defined as a purposeful reduction in the size of an organization's workforce. Sometimes, it is alternatively termed as rightsizing, reorganization, restructuring, and rationalization downsizing in which mostly the reason is to strengthen competitiveness (Bujang & Sani, n.d; Cummings & Worley, 2002; Freeman & Cameron, 1993; Leung & Chang, 2002). Downsizing has also been described as "a planned set of organizational policies and practices aimed at workforce reduction with the goal of improving firm performance" (Friebel, Heinz & Zubanov, 2016; Datta, Guthrie, Basuil & Pandey, 2010). According to Sayed (2013), Organisational downsizing has recently become an increasingly important issue that needs to be addressed to ensure fair employment practices. Companies worldwide have used downsizing to improve employee competitiveness, profitability, organisational effectiveness, efficiency as well as to reduce the size of their workforce.

Organisational downsizing has considerable negative consequences not only for employees who leave the organisation, but also for those who remain (Kurebwa, 2011). This assertion is collaborated by Rehman and Naeem (2012), they posit that Since downsizing involves shrinking an organization's workforce; therefore, human resource management should be considered closely before adopting such strategies in organizations so as to reduce chances of disruptions in the workplace, which may result in stress, frustration, anxiety and anger in survived employees' (Kravitz, 1993; Burne, 1994). It was also argued that firms that attempted to downsize are unable to achieve better results in terms of return on investment, sales gains, or other objectively measurable value (Rehman & Naeem, 2012; Cascio, 1993). According to Farrell and Mavondo (2005) and Rehman and Naeem (2012), lay-off strategy has adverse impacts on the firm's performance. The survived employees face unfavourable effects and as they have doubts regarding new or altered work assignments, adaptation in career paths and team changes (Brockner, 1992) and resultantly reduced their job efforts, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Laid off employees are not the only population which is affected by the downsizing, in fact downsizing also alter drastically the work environment for the retained/survived workers (Rehman & Naeem, 2012; Brockner et al., 1985).

Extant literature is replete with a number of negative characteristics observed in survivors after downsizing. Bujang and Sani (n.d) cited that survivors experience 12 different types of negative feelings: job insecurity, unfairness, depression, anxiety or fatigue, reduced risk taking and motivation, distrust and betrayal, lack of reciprocal commitment, dissatisfaction with planning and communication, lack of strategic direction, lack of management

credibility, short-term profit orientation, and sense of permanent change (Noer, 1993). Lemma (2013) also enumerated a number of problems that survivors had to contend with as a result of downsizing strategy in organization. He noted that survivors may face the same unfavourable work related behaviour alteration on employee's commitment like: increased stress levels, lowered morale, violation of psychological contract with the organization, lower levels of job involvement and commitment, fear of future layoffs, lack of trust in the management, demotivated and unproductive workforce, other employees that experienced the same downsizing process elsewhere. Some other known consequences of downsizing on survivors are the impact it has on the social relationship of employee both at work and at home (Farewell 2007; Bujang and Sani, n.d).

A number of literatures reviewed by Cloete (2012) also highlights that survivors display a host of problems such as demotivation, cynicism, insecurity, demoralization and a significant decline in organizational commitment. Furthermore, the negative effects associated with the downsizing process is the decrease in productivity, increasing absenteeism and the affected survivors attitudes whereby their morale, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are decreased while job stress is increased (Baruch & Hind, 2000). During the downsizing process, employees may have the view that the organization hold them in low regard and ignore their interests. As a result, they may no longer consider that their employers will treat them equitably (Erickson & Roloff, 2007 Cloete, 2012).

Cloete (2012) observes that the most prevailing negative side to downsizing is that it hurts the survivors in the organization through what is called —survivor syndrome. Several studies have reached the conclusion that the proposed benefits of organizational downsizing are seldom achieved and that the negative side effects have severe consequences for the organization's vitality and competitive ability (Makawatsakul & Kleiner, 2004). Appelbaum, Lavinge-Schmidt, Peytechev and Shapiro (1999) maintain that a major factor attributed to organizations not achieving their corporate objectives after downsizing is that they do not adequately and effectively address the —people factor—throughout the process. According to Appelbaum, Delage, Labib and Gault (1997), there are three categories of people in the downsizing process: (i) those who will not lose their jobs, (ii) those who may lose their jobs and (iii) those who will lose their jobs. The first two categories are referred to as —survivors. It is imperative to be aware that survivors of downsizing often experience the effects of major change as deeply as those made redundant (Doherty, Bank & Vinnicombe, 1996 Cloete, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Organizations today perceptibly face a highly competitive and severe business environment as a result of globalization and teeth economic recession. According to Schiro & Baker (n.d), trends and emerging values like technological advances, environmental emergencies, and global economy are shaping the world. They affect corporate culture and the employees who support the culture. Environmental forces such as technology as well as political/regulatory, economic, and socio-cultural challenges, coupled with bad decision-making, a lack of resources and knowledge, and global competition, are all factors driving change. Consequently, for organizations to remain competitive and continue to stay in business, they have to restructure in order to reduce operational cost as well as to increase operational and financial performance of the company. According to Chaddha (2016), one way which is found the easiest and effective way of restructuring is Downsizing. This planned set of organizational policies and practices aimed at workforce reduction - downsizing- is intended to improve firm performance. Yet, available literature posits that this organizational effort to increase performance do have adverse effect on the surviving employees and consequently the organization. The focus of this study is the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC), a company that has come under serious criticism of the public in terms of performance and service delivery and has carried out a serious retrenchment exercise. It is therefore imperative to carry out a empirical survey to ascertain the effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) in Southeast Nigeria.

### **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The objective of the study is to examine the effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) in Southeast Nigeria.

### **3. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE:**

Agunda (2014) examined organizational restructuring and employee morale in Barclays Bank Kenya using descriptive statistics and content analysis as methods of data interpretation. The study established that organizational restructuring by downsizing affects the morale of employees. The study also observed that: trust between managers and employees are critical for effective work relationships, especially under conditions of high uncertainty or conflict; communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in organizations.

Sayed (2013) examined the impact of downsizing on the remaining employees in the organisation using t-test, factor analysis and regression analysis. Findings revealed that there exists significant intercorrelations amongst the key variables of the study that are influenced by the process of downsizing and transformation (communication, trust, employee commitment and loyalty, employee morale and career advancement opportunities). Findings further reveals

that there is a significant difference in the perception of survivors varying in biographical data (age, highest educational qualification, tenure, job category, race, gender) regarding the impact of the process of downsizing and transformation on the key variables of the study (communication, trust, employee commitment and loyalty, employee morale and career advancement opportunities) respectively.

Oluoch, Nyagol and Oluoch (2013) examined the effects of downsizing on surviving employees of dominion farms siaya county, Kenya. They investigate the impact of surviving employees' attitudes of affective and continuance, commitment, general and specific job satisfaction, perceived organizational support and the behaviour performance, effort, turnover intention and absenteeism using descriptive statistics. They found that downsizing survival was directly and indirectly associated with organizational commitment, survivors reported less commitment than unaffected employees. In addition downsizing survival was positively associated with job related stress and negatively associated with organizational support which translated into surviving employees' low level of commitment.

Nyaberi and Kiriago (2013) examined effects of retrenchment on the morale and job security of surviving employees of Telkom Kenya Limited using descriptive statistic, specifically the mean scores and standard deviations. They found that the retrenchment process in Telkom Kenya affected various aspects of surviving employee's morale and job security.

Duncan, Sakwa and Kiriago (2013) investigated the effects of retrenchment on the motivation and loyalty of surviving employees of Telkom Kenya Limited using descriptive statistic, specifically the mean scores and standard deviations. They found that the retrenchment process in Telkom Kenya affected various aspects of surviving employee's motivation and loyalty.

Cloete (2012) examined the impact of downsizing on surviving employees' organizational commitment in a retail organization using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, Multiple Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance. The results of the study indicate that employees display below average levels of commitment to the organization. More specifically, a direct, positive relationship was found between normative and affective commitment. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was found between affective and continuance commitment. Statistically significant relationships were found between the biographical characteristics namely, tenure, gender and age, and organizational commitment.

Kurebwa (2011) examined organisational downsizing and its impact on leavers and survivors: The case of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe using descriptive statistics. The study found that the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe neglected the downside of downsizing because it assumed that the survivors were simply going to be happy about keeping their jobs, while the leavers were going to accept the process and leave. Both survivors and leavers indicated that they were demoralised and distrustful of the whole process. For survivors, their greatest fear was their uncertainty over their future as they may be targets of the next round of downsizing. For leavers, the greatest fear was how and when they were going to get employment elsewhere.

Okoye (2010) examined the effects of retrenchment on the morale of workers: A study of Enugu State Civil Services using chi-square statistics. Findings revealed that retrenchment is perceived differently with a negative perception as an organizational change and as well workers always try to resist it due to the uncertainty it comes with, it ridicules permanence of serve and create job insecurity and also dampened the morale of workers.

Ndlovu and Parumasur (2005) investigated the perceived impact of downsizing and organisational transformation on survivors using t-test and factor analysis. Findings revealed that the majority of subjects felt that there were no open channels of communication in the organisation, a low level of trust in the company. Survivors in this study were fearful that there could be more job losses. Survivors are still committed to the organisational goals, even after the transformation process. The transformation process resulted in some adverse emotions which prevented survivors from getting on with their jobs.

Bujang and Sani (n.d) investigated the downsizing effects on survivors in Malaysia organizations using multivariate analysis. Findings revealed that almost all 50 relevant studies of the downsizing practices have direct and indirectly negative consequences on survivors emotionally and behaviourally.

Shiro and Baker (n.d) examined the downsizing and organizational change Survivors and victims' mental health Issues. The study found that downsizing or organizational change leads to health-related issues; downsizing process creates a great deal of stress in the workplace ; the survivors of downsizing exhibit anxiety as they try to come to terms with the loss of their colleagues. Employees grieve for colleagues who have left, and they experience uncertainty and anxiety about who will be the next person to lose his or her job. Finally, depression sets in, and a downward spiral begins. The study results suggested that downsizing and organizational change produced very few emotional, physical, or psychological issues among the respondents. However, about 20% of the victims and survivors did acknowledge that they experienced health-related issues.

In the final analysis, related studies on effect of downsizing on surviving employees have been investigated from different standpoints. Literatures reviewed revealed that most of the studies were carried out outside the shores

of Nigeria. However, as a missing gap in the literature, which this study intends to fill, due accentuation has not been paid to the effect of downsizing on surviving employees in the Nigeria.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY:

##### *Research Design*

This study used a descriptive research design. The researcher considered this design appropriate for the study because it permits the eliciting of public opinion using the questionnaire. The investigation was carried out using questionnaire to elicit data from employees of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC).

##### *Area of the Study*

This study was carried out in Southeast, specifically among employees of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC). Enugu Electricity Distribution Plc, or Enugu Disco, located in Nigeria’s South East zone, distributes and markets electricity in franchise area that includes Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The franchise area is further subdivided into 10 districts, namely, Aba, Abakaliki, Abakpa, Awka, Ogui, Onitsha, Orlu, Owerri, Nnewi, and Umuahia. The Aba and Onitsha districts are home to two of Nigeria’s major domestic commercial industrial centres. Within the zone, Enugu Disco owns and maintains electrical installations and the distribution network, manages meter installations and servicing, billing, co-ordinates consumer credit services, and collects revenue.

##### *Population of the Study*

The population of the study consists of all the employees of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC). Enugu Electricity Distribution Plc or Enugu Disco has staff strength of 2770 employees as November 2, 2016. This therefore formed the population of the study.

##### *Sample and Sampling Technique*

To determine the sample size for the purpose of questionnaire distribution, the Taro Tamani (1967) formula was used. The formular is stated thus:  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where: n= sample size  
 N = population size  
 e = Margin of error (5% or 0.05)  
 1 = Constant

Substituting in the above formula:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{2770}{1+2770(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{2770}{1+2770(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{2770}{7.925} \\ &= 349.52 \\ &= 350 \end{aligned}$$

For the purpose of allocation of sample stratum, the researcher adopted R. Kumaison's formula. Below is the R. Kumaisons formula for sample size distribution:

$$nh = \frac{nN_h}{N}$$

Where n = Total sample size  
 N<sub>h</sub> = The number of items in each stratum in the population  
 N = Population size  
 nh = The number of units allocated to each stratum  
 n = 350  
 N<sub>h</sub> = Franchise area

##### *Method of Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and factor analysis were used to analyze the data collected in respect of the research questions. The mean will be used to give answer to the research questions. Standard



deviation was used to establish the harmony in the mean ratings among the respondents. Any item that attract mean score that is greater than 3.0 was regarded as agreed while a mean score less than 3.0 were regarded as disagreed. Out of 350 questionnaires that were distributed, only 301 were dully completed and returned.

The rating is as follows:

Strongly Agree	(SA)	5 points
Agree	(A)	4 points
Undecided	(U)	3 points
Disagree	(D)	2 points
Strongly Disagree	(SD)	1 point

## 5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS:

### Factor Analysis

The variables of the objective were variously subjected to factor analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), with the aid of SPSS version 23. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin measure of sampling adequacy and the rotation method is the varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The PCA was initially used to process the data because the researcher sought to reduce large amount of data to uncover the underlying principal factors that explain the topic under investigation.

**Table 1: Factor analysis results with varimax rotation on effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC)**

Comp extracted		
Effect 1	Fear of future layoffs	0.964
Effect 2	Job insecurity	0.612
Effect 3	Unfairness	0.931
Effect 4	Depression	0.865
Effect 5	Anxiety or fatigue	0.819
Effect 6	Reduced risk taking and motivation	0.820
Effect 7	Lack of trust in the management	0.804
Effect 8	Lack of reciprocal commitment	0.812
Effect 9	Dissatisfaction with planning and communication	0.831
Effect 10	Lack of strategic direction	0.765
Effect 11	Lack of management credibility	0.619
Effect 12	Short-term profit orientation	0.720
Effect 13	Increased stress levels	0.904
Effect 14	Lowered morale	0.812
Effect 15	Violation of psychological contract with the organization	0.831
Effect 16	Lower levels of job involvement and commitment	0.965
Effect 17	Fear of future layoffs	0.719
Effect 18	Demotivated and unproductive workforce	0.720
Effect 19	Cynicism	0.804
Effect 20	Decrease in productivity	0.312
	Increasing absenteeism	
	<b>Cum % variance</b>	<b>82.6%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Note that items eigen values of variables less than 0.4 were excluded.

Table 1 above shows the eigen values with respect to items regarding effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC). Although one principal component emerged, the output shows that the appropriate label for the item is “Fear of future layoffs”. The import of this is that the main construct that influences emotions and attitudes of surviving employees with respect to downsizing is fear of future layoffs followed by Job insecurity and depression. Increasing absenteeism is less than the cut-off hence; it was therefore removed from the subsequent analysis.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC)**

s/n	Item	Mean	Med	Max	Min	Std. Dev	Prob
1	Job insecurity	3.66	3.00	5.00	1.00	0.214	0.00
2	Unfairness	3.25	3.01	5.00	1.00	0.626	0.05

3	Depression	3.64	3.12	5.00	1.00	0.318	0.00
4	Anxiety or fatigue	3.44	3.11	5.00	1.00	0.455	0.02
5	Reduced risk taking and motivation	3.48	3.23	5.00	1.00	0.572	0.03
6	Lack of trust in the management	3.44	3.01	5.00	1.00	0.455	0.02
7	Lack of reciprocal commitment	3.42	3.11	5.00	1.00	0.655	0.03
8	Dissatisfaction with planning and communication	3.42	3.12	5.00	1.00	0.652	0.03
9	Lack of strategic direction	3.33	3.00	5.00	1.00	0.714	0.03
10	Lack of management credibility	3.12	3.01	5.00	1.00	0.846	0.05
11	Short-term profit orientation	3.14	3.12	5.00	1.00	0.718	0.04
12	Increased stress levels	3.04	3.11	5.00	1.00	0.855	0.03
13	Lowered morale	3.60	3.23	5.00	1.00	0.272	0.00
14	Violation of psychological contract with the organization	3.61	3.01	5.00	1.00	0.259	0.00
15	Lower levels of job involvement and commitment	3.03	3.11	5.00	1.00	0.655	0.05
16	Fear of future layoffs	3.74	3.12	5.00	1.00	0.242	0.00
17	Demotivated and unproductive workforce	3.61	3.00	5.00	1.00	0.234	0.00
18	Cynicism	3.45	3.01	5.00	1.00	0.455	0.05
19	Decrease in productivity	3.11	3.12	5.00	1.00	0.759	0.04

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 2 shows the effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC). Their responses were processed using mean rating, median, minimum, maximum, standard deviation and the probability value of the variables. From the table, it was observed that all the variables meet the theoretical threshold of 3.0 for accepting effect on the employees. However, the major factors extracted as predicting the effect of downsizing on emotions and attitudes of surviving employees of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) was that the surviving employees' fear of future layoffs, job insecurity, depression and violation of psychological contract with the organization.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is observed from the study that organisational downsizing has considerable negative consequences on the emotions and attitudes of the surviving employees just as it does to employees that leave the organization. It is therefore imperative that:

- i. Human resource management should be considered closely by EEDC before adopting such strategy in the organization.
- ii. Deliberate effort and attention should be given to the employees who are remaining in the organization after downsizing to avoid creating disruptions in the workplace, which may result in fear of future layoffs, job insecurity, depression, violation of psychological contract with the organization, stress, frustration, anxiety and anger in survived employees.

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