

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN HOTELS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between communication skills and employee performance in Hotels in Rivers State. The study adopted the explanatory cross-sectional survey research design. Using a combination of Taro Yamene formula and Bowley's Population Appropriation formula, a sample size of 306 respondents was drawn from a population of 1308 full time staff of 43 (3-5 Star Hotels) Hotels in Rivers State. After validation by the supervisors and other experts and having determined the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha, questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Out of the total of 306 copies of the questionnaire distributed, a total of 250 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used to carry out the univariate while the bivariate analysis was done using Spearman Rank Order. There is a significant positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance in Hotels in Rivers State. The study concluded that communication skills boost the job performance of employees in Hotels in Rivers State. The study recommended amongst other things that the management of Hotels should invest more in digital upskilling programmes and technological upgrade in order to enable their staff fit in for improved performance.

Keywords: Communication Skill. Employee Performance, Timeliness Accomplishment

INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a significant drop in performance of employees all across hotels in Rivers State. This appalling situation in the Hotels in this region of the country has dealt drastically with the business such that customers have been lost after first dealing, even at front desk officers' tables. These organizations have run into clerical confusion by reason of ineptitude showcased by front desk officers. The glaring poor interpersonal relationship amongst staff have impacted negatively on their customer service such that late delivery of deals, missed deals and poor quality services have become customers' experiences. This is no good news for these organizations in Rivers State as employee performance has reduced significantly in task accomplishment, innovativeness and timeliness.

Research effort has also shown that a lot has not been achieved on the performance of employees in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria in spite of the numerous attempts to improve the situation. This is in tandem with the position of Okolocha and Baba (2017) in their study on the assessment of skills possessed by secretaries for effective electronic records management in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria, that secretaries in the North-Central polytechnics and other higher institutions in most part of Nigeria are still lagging behind in terms of effective computer usage for record keeping, retrieval, and dissemination, being that only very few of them do not have well-equipped computer desks. Though the work was done in polytechnics, but can still be very relevant here, since the employees here are referring to clerical and administrative officers. A number of them have refused to accept the fact that they need electronic data/information system skills much more than the paper one. To them, paper-based records management is still in vogue, and have committed a whole lot of their effort to improving on what is already obsolete. As a result, majority of them have displayed diverse levels of ineptitude in their job positions. Noticeably, only few of these organizations here in Rivers State have been able to provide very efficient computer systems and

enabling environment for their employees to work effectively. These efforts have yielded frustrating results, possibly due to the fact that the main mechanism(s) that could have improved employee performance have not been dealt with and still unknown. Therefore, it is still mysterious and begs for thorough effort to ensure that Hotels in Rivers State provide adequate and effective computer systems, and also train their employees (especially front desk and administrative officers) for maximum performance.

Another critical circumstance here is that research on the relationship between information system skills and employee performance is still begging for research attention. Evidently, Olayanju and Asogwa (2010) examined competency-improvement needs of secretaries in higher institutions in ICT for effective office work performance. The paper revealed that there are competency needs which the secretaries have acquired in ICT that should improve in order to be effective and functional in the offices especially those in higher institutions. Kahirol *et al.* (2017) examined the Use of Information and Communication Technological infrastructure (ICT) and its Effects on Office Technological infrastructure and Management Practitioner's Performance in Malaysia, and found that ICT competency is a major factor that contributes to the performance of the secretary in the organization. Okiki (2013) studied the impact of user education and information handling skills on information resources use among undergraduate students at the University of Lagos. The result revealed that different responses were given on their mode of skill acquisition ranging from program organized by librarian, trail and error, friends etc.; and the information resources used vary from individual respondents. Also, Las *et al.* (2017) carried an assessment of ICT competencies of public school teachers: basis for community extension program, and the study showed that most of the teachers have a basic knowledge on ICT and needs improvement. Additionally, David (2018) carried out a study on the assessment of staff ICT literacy competence in Nigerian federal university libraries. A major finding of the study revealed that over 60% of the respondents were competent in sending emails, use of search engines, the use of Microsoft application software such as Ms Word and Ms Power Point.

From the empirical studies cited above, it revealed that similar studies to this current one have been carried out in and out of the country. However, none has been focused on the relationship between information system skills and employee performance, dimensionalizing on communication skills, computer skills and record management skills, and measuring on task accomplishment, innovativeness and timeliness in Rivers State. By and large, research on information system skills and employee performance is seriously begging for research effort. Much effort is therefore required to increase the research on information system skills and employee performance. This work therefore seeks to cement this knowledge gap as explained.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and task accomplishment in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and innovativeness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and timeliness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Communication Skills

When we communicate, we transmit (as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior) information (thoughts and emotions) so that it is satisfactorily received and understood. Human beings do not exchange data we understand information. Communication researchers refer to the process as sharing meaning and prefer to define communication as the management of messages for the purpose of creating meaning. In other words, the goal of communication is shared meaning and the primary function of communication research is to generate new knowledge about how best to

maximize the achievement of goals. A goal is nothing more than something you want to achieve. Communication goals are linked to another person's thoughts and feelings. There are at least three general types of communication goals (Nordquist, 2019):

- i. Self-Presentation Goals (who we are and how we want to be perceived),
- ii. Relational Goals (how we develop, maintain, and terminate relationships), and
- iii. Instrumental Goals (how we manipulate others, gain compliance, manage interpersonal conflict, use and recognize interpersonal influence strategies (anchoring and contrast effects, reciprocity, commitment, liking, social proof, authority, and scarcity), etc.).

Communication is, therefore, strategic in as much as it is goal-driven. The primary goal of small group communication is to share meaning which leads to effective decision-making and problem-solving. But how does one determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of any given interaction? And even more important, how do we know if communication is competent? Skill means that an individual has the ability to do something well. You are capable of performing a task or job effectively. Skill can include the knowledge and competency needed to solve a quadratic equation. Or, it can comprise the much larger and more diverse clusters of competencies needed to lead a multinational corporation (Winston, 2020). The concept of skill is creeping into our lives, pervading our thinking about developing people of all ages – from new babes to weathered professionals. We find it in modern human resources departments in our workplace, and in innovating schools experimenting with competence-based education.

Communication skill is a complex construct that has been widely debated in the communication field. McCroskey (2014) initiated this debate when he discussed competence in terms of skills, performance, and effectiveness. These arguments then inspired Brian Spitzberg to develop a precise definition, which suggests that communication skill comprises three interdependent constructs: knowledge, competence, and motivation. In other words, communication skill refers to an individual's knowledge, skill, and motivation to accomplish a particular goal (Allen, 2017). These are interdependent constructs, meaning that all three are needed to achieve communication skill. For example, an individual may possess the knowledge needed to accomplish a goal, but lack the skill or ability to do so. Likewise, an individual may be motivated to achieve a particular goal, but may as well lack the necessary skill to do so.

The term communication skill refers to both the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it effectively (Nordquist, 2019). The concept of communicative skill grew out of resistance to the concept of linguistic competence introduced by Noam Chomsky. Most scholars now consider linguistic competence to be a part of communicative competence. Communication skill refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 2014). Going further, Rickheit and Hans (2018) defined communication skill as the ability to interact well with others. He explains, the term well' refers to accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness. A much more complete operationalization is provided by Young *et al.* (2014) when he suggested that communication competence is best understood as a situational ability to set realistic and appropriate goals and to maximize their achievement by using knowledge of self, other, context, and communication theory to generate adaptive communication performances.

Concept of Employee Performance

Performance is defined by Armstrong (2016) as a means of getting better results from the whole organization or teams or individuals within it by understanding and managing performance within an agreed frame work of planned goals, standards and competence requirements. Santos and Brito (2012) view performance as the accumulated end results of all the organization's work processes and activities. It is about how effectively an organization transforms inputs into outputs and comprises the actual output or results as measured against its intended outputs. Liptons (2013) proposes that performance is the ability of a firm to prevail. There is hardly a consensus about its definition, and this limits advances in research and understanding of the concept of performance

(Santos & Brito, 2012). As the debate on what employee and organizational performance rages on, the approach on how to measure it has attracted even more scholarly attention (Liptons, 2013). In an organization, institution, firm, etc., employee performance is a very important area in the workplace. It can help them increase and utilize the capacity of the workforce they have. It translates into good innovativeness, high level of performance, high level of productivity and interaction in which affects every area of the organization. To achieve this, organizations need to make policies that will encourage employee performance. An employee's job performance depends on or is a consequence of some combination of ability, effort, and opportunity. But the measurements can be done in terms of outcomes or results produced (Griffin, *et al.*, 2018). As mentioned in Huang et al (2014), performance refers to the characteristics of an individual's success in their work. It usually involves the calculation of the individual output level for example, sales or production, or to assess the level of success compared with the expectations of the organization. Jena and Pradhan (2014) stated that performance is something that is done or the products or services produced or provided by a person or group of people. Then, all the results were evaluated by the company or supervisor. This is a feedback by the company or supervisor towards employees about their job performance. It is different with Lawler and Worley (2016), as they stated that performance is a result or consequence of an activity for a period of time. Job performance is a record of the results obtained from the function of a specific job or activity during specific time period.

Socio-Technical Theory

The socio-technical theory is attributable to [Eric Trist](#), Ken Bamforth and [Fred Emery](#), during the World War II era between 1939-1945, based on their work with workers in English coal mines at the [Tavistock Institute](#) in [London](#). The theory is made up of two main constructs joined together socio and technical. Socio has to do with people and society while 'technical' has to do with machines and technological infrastructure. Socio-technical refers to the interrelatedness of social and technical aspects of an [organization](#).

This theory holds that business organizations are made up of human beings working together in social groups using equipment, tools, methodologies and knowledge to achieve desirable changes in the system and to bring about the achievement of corporate goals as well as outperforming competitors (Walker et al., 2016). This theory holds that changes in organizations and the capacity of organizations to compete favourably in the market are influenced by demands from the external environment which impacts information systems changes in an organization. The socio-technical theory describes how societal changes provoke or necessitates changes in the techniques, procedures, infrastructure and technologies used in organizations (Norris & Moon, 2005). Organizations more than ever before are facing serious competition from sister establishment especially in the developed countries and as a way of coping and outperforming their competitors, individual organizations has to decide if they are still to keep records on paper-based, premise-based or virtual base so as to necessitate job performance.

The socio-technical theory is founded on two cardinal assumptions:

- i) The interaction of social and technical factors create the conditions for successful (or unsuccessful) system performance (Walker et al., 2016). These interactions are comprised partly of linear cause and effect relationships, the relationships that are normally 'designed', and partly from 'non-linear', complex, even unpredictable relationships, which are those that are often unexpected.
- ii) The second major principle of socio-technical theory is that optimization of either socio, or far more commonly the technical, tends to increase not only the quantity of unpredictable, 'un-designed', non-linear relationships, but those relationships that are actually injurious to the system's performance (Walker et al., 2016). This second aspect of the theory implies that both the human and technological resources of an organization must be optimized concurrently for achievement of anticipated results.

The justification of the socio-technical theory as an additional theory for this study is based on the fact that the theory talks about how the interaction of social and technical factors (in this case, employees and information system skills) create the conditions for successful or unsuccessful system performance. It therefore becomes pertinent to adopt a theory such as this since the work is aimed at getting empirical evidence on how information system skills interact with employee performance.

Research Design

The cross-sectional explanatory survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of one thousand, three hundred and eight (1308) full time staff of forty-three (43) Hotels (3-5 Star Hotels) in Rivers State. Information regarding the study population were obtained from Nigeria Hotels Association, Rivers State Chapter Office. The sample size of the study consisted of three hundred and six (306) full-time staff from 43 Hotels (3-5 Star Hotels) in Rivers State. This sample size was obtained using Taro Yamene Formula. The structured questionnaire was titled Communication Skills and Employee Performance

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis while the bivariate analysis was done using Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of SPSS Version 23.0. The Spearman Rank Order (Rho) Correlation was considered to be the most appropriate for the study as it has the capacity to measure the degree of relationship between the two set of ranked observations. The reason for its choice is also owing to the fact that, it indicates if a relationship exists or not and the magnitude of the relationship. It shows a degree of effectiveness in predicating one ranked variable based on another ranked variable.

Communication Skills and Employee Performance

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- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and innovativeness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and timeliness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Correlations between Communication Skills and Employee Performance

			Communication Skills	Task Accomplishment	Innovativeness	Timeliness
Spearman's rho	Communication Skills	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.557**	0.693**	0.470**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	250	250	250	250
	Task Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	0.557**	1.000	0.557**	0.557**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	250	250	250	250
	Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	0.693**	0.693**	1.000	0.693**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	250	250	250	250

	N	250	250	250	250
Timeliness	Correlation Coefficient	0.470**	0.470**	0.470**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	250	250	250	250

** . Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

Column two of table above shows r value of 0.557 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating communication skills and task accomplishment. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which states that there is no significant relationship between communication skills and task accomplishment in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) is accepted. This implies that there is a moderate positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance in terms of task accomplishment in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Column three of table above shows r value of 0.693 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating communication skills and Innovativeness. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) which states that there is no significant relationship between communication skills and innovativeness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a2}) is accepted. This implies that there is a high positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance in terms of Innovativeness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Column four of table above shows r value of 0.470 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating communication skills and timeliness. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that there is no significant relationship between communication skills and timeliness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a3}) is accepted. This implies that there is a moderate positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance in terms of timeliness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

These results show that communication skills have moderate positive relationship on employee performance in terms of tasks accomplishment and timeliness. It also revealed that there is a high relationship between communication skills and Innovativeness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Communication Skills and Employee Performance

The test of hypotheses one to three revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance in terms of task accomplishment, Innovativeness and timeliness in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that the ability for employees to communicate seamlessly with superiors and subordinates in speech and writing brings about a significant positive improvement on employee performance in terms of task accomplishment (target achievement and interpersonal facilitation), Innovativeness (service reliability and service quality) and timeliness (timely delivery and prompt customer attention).

In line with the finding above, Allen (2017) posit that communication is the glue that binds people together in an organization. Thus, employee communication is the dissemination of information which is related to the daily performance of an employer's job and also important if the worker is expected to be an effective member of staff. Polack (2009) argued that the behaviour of individuals in organizations is best understood from a communication point of view. It has been observed in this study that communication enhances employee performance through writing, active listening and contextually. This is because a person cannot be good at communication if, amongst other things, are not skillful at written communication. Writing is one of the four fundamental skills of

language alongside listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing skill assumes the highest order on a scale of hierarchy and develops only after the former three have been learned or acquired. This is the most pertinent reason why it is globally termed as the secondary skill. Proficiency in writing is essential for every employee for their own advantage and that of the organization. Hardaway (2017) pointed out that writing is the most complex and more vital skill demanding for a specific treatment during the teaching and learning process. As writing plays a pivotal role in academic activities, there should be concrete knowledge about the general concept of writing, the approaches, methods and techniques of teaching writing, types of writing, roles of teacher, canons of evaluation, etc. (Young et al., 2014). But, only a few documents available in the global market seem to incorporate all these components comprehensively together. Writing skill bears a significant role in each and every domain of human interest as well as improving employee job performance in terms of task accomplishment (target achievement and interpersonal facilitation), Innovativeness (service reliability and service quality) and timeliness (timely delivery and prompt customer attention).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion of findings, the study concluded that information system skills enhance employee performance in Hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. Employees in Hotels can have their job highly enhanced by building on their information system skills through communication skills, computer skills and record management skills. Elaborately, the work also concluded that information system skills in terms of task accomplishment, Innovativeness and timeliness bring about improvement on employee performance in Hotels in Rivers State. The study also concluded that employee who neglect to improve on their information system skills are likely to serious level of inefficiency and ineffectiveness when it comes to task accomplishment, Innovativeness and timeliness amongst others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following were recommended:

1. Employees in the Hotels should know of the importance of building their communication skills, computer skills and records management skills in order to meet up with the present-day digital office requirements.
2. Employees who are competent in information system, organizations such as hotels, parks, hospitals, etc. stand to benefit seriously in terms of employee performance, as well as the entire organizational performance.
3. Management should upgrade on their communication skills, computer skills and record management skills of their employees in order to function optimally ever-growing Hotels

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