

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND OFFICE MANAGER PERFORMANCE A MODERATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study determines the relationship between career development programmes and office manager performance of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State. The objective of the study was to determine the correlation between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State, determine the correlation between advanced professional programmes and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State; The study revealed that there is a very strong positive relationship between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State, there is a very strong positive relationship between advanced professional programmes and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State, there is a very strong positive relationship between degree advancement programmes and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State and the relationship between career development programmes and office manager performance is very strongly moderated by organizational culture. The study concludes the engagement of office managers in such programmes as digital capacity building, advancement professional programme, and degree advancement programme enhances their ability to discharge their duties with creativity and quickness of task completion. The study recommended among others that Office managers in telecommunication firms and other organizations should learn to leverage on artificial intelligence tools that will lighten their jobs, thereby enhancing their creativeness and early task completion.

Keywords: Career Development, Office Manager Performance, Organizational Culture

INTRODUCTION

A major issue that prompted this study is the growing concern about the dwindling performance of office managers across telecommunication firms, such as heads of departments and units. The researcher has observed that a good number of them seem to have lost touch with the present day creative ability in thinking through issues and solving problems for employees and customers. A lot of them also have become lackadaisical in setting and achieving targets and goals, making their job performance drop drastically. In consonance with this, Kumar and Bansal (2017) stated that a major problem that many directors and department heads encounters in public and private sectors is low performance, especially in terms of poor service delivery and innovativeness. As sensitive as the telecommunication sector, having office managers who cannot competently handle the day-to-day running of offices will be disappointing, hence resulting to underperformance. Notwithstanding, the student suggests that a venture into career development may be the panacea to this situation.

Many telecommunication firms are yet to realize the importance of career development for their staff, especially their office managers. Some have left their office managers to cater for anything related to career development. For some, they care but on a very minimal level, as they feel that developing their office managers will make them want to leave them for bigger firms. This selfish reasoning and unwillingness to invest in their office managers have cause their office managers to lose touch of invoke of digital technologies in Cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence, Data Security, etc. Advanced professional programmes and degree advancement programmes have become far fetch among many of these office managers, and this situation has robbed them competitive ability

with their counterparts in sister organizations and as well as other organizations. Many telecommunication firms in Nigeria are yet to incorporate functional career development programmes such as on-the-job training method, degree advancement programmes, off-the-job training method, digital capacity building, and attending conferences (Kakui & Gachunga, 2020). Participant observer's experience reveals that many of those in managerial cadre do not attend conferences, computer-aided organizational learning is quite low, top management often find it difficult to delegate certain functions to junior colleagues, and off-the-job training efforts is relatively low. This has left a wide gap between managerial capacity of office managers and the skills required for performing higher managerial functions in telecommunication firms, hence increasing poor performance. For more evidence, Shadrack *et al.* (2022) established the relationship between career development programs and employee performance in Local Governments in Kanungu District Local Government. The study revealed that a positive but statistically significant relationship between staff training and employee performance. Also, the study of Malobi (2022) examined the effect of career management on organizational performance of teaching hospitals in South East Nigeria and showed that career planning, training, reward, organizational commitment and motivation had significant positive effect on organizational performance. In addition, Ramil (2020) investigated the relationship of Bohol Island State University (BISU) employees' awareness and implementation levels of their Career Development Plan (CDP) on their job performance and satisfaction, and revealed that employment experience indicated significant results on job performance and satisfaction, implying that the longer their stay in BISU, the better their performance, and the more satisfied they become. Although, the various studies cited above point to the fact various career development programmes are positively correlated with employee and organizational performances in various sectors within and outside Nigeria. However, none of these studies was able to provide empirical evidence on how dimensions of career development programmes, such as digital capacity building, advanced professional programmes, and degree advancement programmes interact with measures of office manager performance of telecommunication firms within the context of Rivers State, Nigeria. This suggests that the link between career development programmes and office manager performance of telecommunication firms has not received adequate research attention within the context of Rivers State. This is the knowledge gap which this study seeks to fill. This gives credibility to this study.

Concept of Career Development Programmes

Career can be said to be a pattern of job experiences, which comprise the entire life span of a person and which is also generally seen with regard to a number of phases reflecting the evolution from one stage of life to the next (Weinert, 2011). In the same way, Collin (2014) further explains the term career as the interaction that arises from an individual with organizations and society. This so called interaction, as Savickas (2009) put forward, is no longer simply just a progression of jobs but now involve a story that working people put up about themselves. Fundamentally, career theorists and researchers explained that career advancement helps employees evaluate their skills so they can move to jobs that are more congruent with their personal goals and plans. In other words, employees are able to find where they "fit" into the organization (Weinert, 2011). Placing an employee in job levels below their skill levels causes nearly as much discontent as placing them in jobs where they cannot perform satisfactorily (Noe, 2016). Career development entails preparing individuals to assume different or higher responsibilities within the organization (Firman, 2021). It is usually seen as the pattern of work related experience that spans the course of a person's life. Development is usually associated with increasing the intellectual or emotional abilities needed to accomplish a better job. The aim of all career development programs is to match the needs and goals of employees with the career opportunities available in organisations today and in the future (Delbari *et al.*, 2021). Career development programmes are beneficial to organisations because it helps to improve the skills, knowledge and experience of employees towards their work. It benefits not only the individual employee, but also the organization. Providing career development opportunities restrict employees from leaving the organization and increases their loyalty (Kibui *et al.*, 2014). Most organizations may use career development programmes to assist their employees to

properly plan their careers because it is believed that, generally employees react positively to career development and advancement opportunities. Career advancement normally entails a clearly marked path of progression through the ranks of an organisation. It is based on merit without regard for race, gender, age or ethnicity. Deserving cases become eligible for advancement. When employees get to know that each one of them has an equal chance of succeeding, it becomes easy for them to put in their best. Smit *et al.* (2007) agree and note that the prospect of career advancement might in itself motivate employees to work hard.

Concept Office Manager Performance

Operationally defined in this study, an office manager is a middle level manager who is a head of a department or unit in an organization. An office manager is quite different from the conventional one where the secretary is presumed to be the office manager. Here, by the concept "office manager" we meant the middle level managers who intermediate between the top and first level management in an organization. Thus, in this regards, the office manager (middle management) is the intermediate management of a hierarchical organization that is subordinate to the executive management and responsible for at least two lower levels of junior staff (Peter, 2016). Unlike the line management, office manager (middle management) is considered to be a senior (or semi-executive) management position, with respective salary and a package of benefits (Dance, 2011). The office managers' job is to implement company strategy in the most efficient way. Their duties include creating an effective working environment, administrating the work process, making sure it is compliant with organization's requirements, leading people and reporting to the highest level of management (Zhang *et al.*, 2008). In every hierarchical organization, the office manager (middle management) acts as important link and interface between the top management and the operating core, but also as central contact point for supporting service departments (Roth, 2016). This unit, metaphorical speaking, is horizontally and vertically placed in the heart of an organization. The office manager's job is tied among others to interpret and later transmit the defined strategies into management decisions and corporate action is only one of the main tasks. office managers at this level of organization (middle management) comprises of managers who head specific departments (such as accounting, marketing, production) or business units, or who serve as project managers in flat organizations. The office managers are responsible for implementing the top management's policies and plans and typically have two management levels below them. Usually among the first to be slashed in the 'resizing' of a firm, office manager constitutes the thickest layer of managers in a traditional (tall pyramid shaped) organization, according to Das (2011). The office manager, otherwise known as the middle level managers, are in the unique position of being placed in such a way that they have access to the top management and they can command the loyalty of the regular member's employees. Hence, any organizational initiative has to necessarily take into account the importance of the Office Manager in the larger scheme of things. Among other things, the Office Manager's jobs are to: recognize the specific responsibilities and job functions often assigned to them; office managers are accountable to top management for their departments; they provide guidance to lower-level managers and employees under their designation, and inspire them to perform better. They make decisions that are functionally revolved around enabling teams of their jurisdiction; they keep to records of their departments, units and other outlets under their control. Within the context of administration in the telecommunication industry, we use the term office managers to capture administrative personnel such as departmental managers (production, marketing, human resource, accounting, procurement) and administrative assistants working in the offices of their designated principals. The job performance of office managers in the Telecommunication industry depend largely on their effectiveness and efficiency in management information especially in today's digitalized business environment. In lieu of the above, it is imperative to briefly examine the concept of office managers' job performance. Job performance of the Office Managers here refers to the ability of designate personnel to accomplish his or her tasks, duties and responsibilities, effectively and efficiently. The Cambridge Dictionary (2016), indicated that effectiveness is the ability to be successful and produce the intended results. While,

efficiency denotes the attainment of expected results with minimal utilization of organization's resources, for examples: minimal use of time in achieving the set targets. or affirmations to be made that an office manager is performing well, it is certain that he or she is effective and efficient in carrying out job schedules assigned for the period. Performance is the capability of producing a desired result. An office manager is deemed performing, if he or she has met an intended or expected outcome on a job or task assigned to him/her. From the definitions given above, an effective office manager can be described as an administrator who judiciously and professionally executes his jobs to the point that organizational goals or targets are met in the office or unit under them. Anthony (2016) identified the following as measures or indicators of manager's effectiveness: early completion of tasks; smooth administrative activities in the organization; good records keeping and easy retrieval of documents and files; timely dissemination of information in the organization; proper coordination and flow of administrative activities in the system; and problem solving. The information manager otherwise known as the middle level managers are in the unique position of being placed in such a way that they have access to the top management and they can command the loyalty of the regular member's employees. Hence, any organizational initiative has to necessarily take into account the importance of the office manager in the larger scheme of things.

Concept of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is defined as the set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations (Ravasi, 2016). Organizational culture affects the way employees and teams interact with each other in an organization, with clients, and with stakeholders. Schrod (2016) asserted that organizational culture influences how much employees identify with their organization. Also, organizational culture is a deeply embedded set of values and beliefs that determine to a great extent and how employees react to various situations. But if an organization's culture cannot promote merit and efficiency, it can prove to be a drag on business productivity. One aspect of culture that makes a unified definition elusive is that it is a truly multi-disciplinary construct. In 2013, leading anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (2013) reported that there were 164 different meanings for the term "culture" in the anthropology literature alone. And, focusing specifically on the term "organizational culture," scholars reported 54 different definitions (Verbeke *et al.*, 2011). With fields such as anthropology, economics, finance, organizational behavior, sociology, and strategy focusing on culture, the various perspectives inevitably use different lenses in defining what it means (Jennifer *et al.*, 2019). But without clear agreement about how organizational culture is defined and measures that emphasize construct validity, it will continue to be difficult to accumulate knowledge and advance our understanding of organizational culture. Organizational culture, particularly from the 1980s onwards as a major field of organisation theory and management studies and theories about people who have taken the small or large live a believes of social system, beliefs; exchange Methods, traditions norms that are common in all cultures that make up the social system (Ramezan & Raheleh, 2013). Strengths or weaknesses of each system depend on the extent and depth correlation phenomena are mentioned. Undoubtedly be much stronger culture of a society, a culture change is harder. To the organizations for practical purposes (strategic) injured in line with the beliefs and culture of the organisation is its employees, it will be difficult and the obstacles encountered in the implementation process will be (Ramezan & Raheleh, 2013). Jennifer *et al.* (2019) also stated that there are a number of empirical challenges that have stalled research on organizational culture. Some arise from the nature of the construct itself, while others are derived from weaknesses in popular approaches to assessing culture. An organisation is a group of people working together to achieve specific goals (Rezaeean, 1979). The system should take into account the culture of the organisation whose members have a common understanding of the phenomenon is relatively new. When an entity is organized, certain patterns of behavior will be acceptable to all agencies. Is the systematic process of mutual relations of people to achieve certain goals? This definition is composed of five elements: 1) the form is always the people. 2) This way people relate to one another and the relationship between them is established. 3) This relationship can be extended systems. 4) All people in the organisation with

specific goals and objectives, some of which affect the performance. Everyone expects that by working in organizations to achieve their personal goals. 5) This relationship also allows the organisation to achieve common goals and organizational members to achieve personal goals, achieve common objectives, the organisation will follow.

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (John L. Holland, 1950)

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice, also known as the Holland Codes or the RIASEC model, is a widely accepted framework for understanding and classifying individuals' vocational interests and career choices. This theory was developed by John L. Holland, a psychologist, in the 1950s and has been influential in the field of career development. Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice, proposed by John L. Holland, is a widely recognized and influential theory in the field of career development. The theory suggests that individuals possess unique personality types that align with specific work environments. Holland's theory is also known as the RIASEC model, named after the six personality types that he identified: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The assumptions of the theory that align with this study include:

- i. The theory assumes that individuals can be classified into one of six distinct personality types: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C). Each person exhibits varying degrees of these personality types, but there is usually a dominant type that best characterizes an individual's preferences.
- ii. Holland's theory assumes that an individual's personality is relatively stable over time. It means that a person's interests, values, and preferences tend to remain consistent, making their career choices aligned with their dominant personality type.
- iii. The central assumption of Holland's theory is that individuals seek a person-environment fit, aiming to match their dominant personality type with work environments that correspond to it. The closer the fit between an individual's personality and the vocational environment, the higher the job satisfaction and career success.
- iv. Holland's theory proposes that as individuals explore and make career choices based on their dominant personality type, they develop a vocational identity. This identity represents a sense of self in the vocational domain and becomes an essential part of an individual's self-concept.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown the value in the advancement of career programmes in the areas of professional programmes, digital capacity building, and degree advancement programmes. The study has shown how these programmes positively relate with the performance of office managers, especially in terms of creativeness, effective decision making, and early task completion. From the analyses and discussion of findings carried out, the study concludes the engagement of office managers in such programmes as digital capacity building, advancement professional programme, and degree advancement programme enhances their ability to discharge their duties with creativity and quickness of task completion. Therefore, Telecommunication firms and other organizations owe their office managers regular training, retraining, and development on digital capacity building, professional programmes, and degree advancement programmes, as these have the capacity to boost their performance across the board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Office managers in telecommunication firms and other organizations should learn to leverage on artificial intelligence tools that will lighten their jobs, thereby enhancing their creativeness and early task completion.

2. Office managers and others in telecommunication firms should undertake professional courses to advance their knowledge and expertise in their career, thereby improving their performance and that of their organizations.
3. All administrative offices should be equipped with functional state-of-the-art desktop/laptop computer systems and other digital office resource to enhance the digital capacity of office managers and others.
4. Management should adopt cloud computing services that will enhance the processing as well as secure access to special purpose data/information across the organizations to enhance information contents, information sharing speed, and collaboration.
5. Office managers in telecommunication firms and other organizations should undertake self-development efforts to improve their digital capability level that will help them deal with challenges of the digital age that comes with customer/staff interaction in their areas.
6. Office managers and others in telecommunication firms should go for degree advancement programmes, as this will expand their knowledge horizon and increase their job performance across the board. Managers in telecommunication firms and other organizations should seek out for overseas-sponsored courses, as these opportunities can be the game changer in their careers, hence building their creativity and speedy goal achievement.
7. Telecommunication firms should imbibe cultures that support the career development of their managers, thereby enhancing their creative ability, problem solving skill, and target achievement.

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