

**ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND OFFICE MANAGER GROWTH IN PUBLIC
TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This work examined Advanced Professional Training and Office Manager Growth in Public Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State Nigeria. The instrument used in administration and collection of data was the questionnaire titled "Advanced Professional Training and office manager growth" which was validated by the research supervisor. The researcher adopted explanatory cross-sectional survey research design being a research framework that involves the test of hypotheses using primary or secondary data obtained from the field by use of questionnaire, interview, observation or any other appropriate social science data collection tool. The population of this study consist seven (7) public tertiary institutions in Rivers Nigeria, with ninety-eight (98) office managers serving as the respondents on behalf of the institutions. The purposive sampling technique was used which grants the researcher the freedom to assume or choose a sample size that the researcher will be able to access. To determine the criterion mean, the four-point Likert scale was added up and the total divided by four (4). The data research questions were analyzed using the descriptive research, mean procedures for research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The following findings were made: There is a positive significant relationship between advanced professional training and office manager growth. From the findings obtained from empirical literature and results from our tested hypotheses, we conclude that advanced professional training significantly influence office manager growth of public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Management of the above selected institutions should take advanced professional training to be part of their practice because, this training can help office managers develop the skills needed to effectively manage and carry out their duties.

Keywords: Advanced Professional Training, Office Manager Growth, Innovation, Service Delivery

INTRODUCTION

Growth is one of the natural characteristics of every living organism. The term growth from biological point of view is said to be an increase in body size and weight, usually accompanied by development changes in form of abilities. It is also said to be an increase in body magnitude, structure, muscular size, strength and intellectual Growth is not only an increase in mass but also includes increase in skills, memory, and reproduction (Shuchi, 2022). This phenomenon called growth, development, progression or advancing from one point, level or stage of live to the other, is no doubt the desire of every liven being. Nobody wants to remain stagnant in nature, in every human, there is this intrinsic desire to grow and develop in our environments and every aspect of life.

Self-development is defined as activities that develops a person's capabilities, build human capital and potential for growth, facilitate employability, and enhances quality of life and the realization of career dreams and aspirations. It is a lifelong activity for anyone who desires to grow in a chosen and in the organization. It refers to the methods, programs, tools, techniques available to enhance individual's efficiency and growth his/her profession as well as in the organization. Developing oneself could involve engaging in formal and informal activities for acquisition of relevant skills in a chosen profession.

Similarly, the world of work is not left out of this natural phenomenon and process (called growth). The world of work and business environment has become more competitive as a result of

globalization, office automation and incorporation of technology into administrative functions. Business owners and organizations have come to reality of the need to expound in size, value creation and quality of manpower. Managers in organizations are continuously facing new challenges that demands new skills, thoughts and ideas to cope with the fast-paced changes. Acquiring the needed skills to manage the modern office and work with modern technologies and equipment calls for a strategic plan. These external and internal powers force managers to search for new methods aimed at not only retaining the quality of goods and services as well as growing in the work place. There must be a deliberate and conscious effort by the office manager to grow. It is in recognition of this fact of Abraham Maslow in Martinez (2023), posits that one can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth, but that growth must be chosen.

Hypotheses:

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between advanced professional training and quality task delivery of public tertiary institution in Rivers State

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between Advanced Professional Training and Innovativeness in Public Tertiary institutions in Rivers State Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between Advanced Professional Training and Efficient Record Management in Public Tertiary institutions in Rivers State Nigeria.

Advanced Professional Training

In this study, advanced professional training is seen as one of the dimension that facilitated office manager's growth in his profession and workplace. It is seen as one of the ways through which an office manager can grow in his career or place of work. Notwithstanding, it must be clearly stated that there are various ways through which advanced professional training can be gotten. In this study, we shall focus and discuss some of the identified ways which includes: Higher Educational Qualification, Professional Membership, Lectures and conferences.

i. Higher Educational Qualification

The competitiveness in the 21st century business environment and the need for individuals and organizations to be at their best in their service delivery has created a great concern in the minds of both to employers and the employees. With the growing technological aspects and new avenues and opportunities available in the market, organizations do insist on the hiring and promoting right candidates to do the tasks. As such, educational qualifications and certification are usually prioritized when it has to do with attaining some positions in the workplace in the workplace. Not only this, there are other benefits acquiring Higher Educational qualification such as High Salary, Expansion of professional Network, Sense of Growth Mentally and High possibility of Job in the market, Promotions in the company, and Acquiring transferable skills also acquiring higher educational qualification gives Employees a sense of confidence in work place (Razeen, 2022).

In growing into certain positions in the workplace, there are usually some factors which accelerate growth and promotion. Certain levels or positions in the workplace require certain certification/educational qualifications related to that role. It is in the light of the above that Sandrine (2021) asserts that the first Criteria to decide employee eligibility for promotion of employees into certain positions are of course the education and qualification of the employee. The management usually considers if the person has the education qualification or required certification to handle the new duty efficiently. This shows the imperativeness and the need for managers/employees to strategically dedicate their time and effort to develop new skills as well as acquiring higher educational qualification in their chosen profession.

ii. Professional Membership

Professional Membership simply means that an individual or a professional is affiliated or is a part of a professional discipline, body or organization. It is the status given to a member who has joined a professional body. A professional body is also referred to as a professional institute; it is defined

as an organization that holds individual members who are personnel associated with a specific profession, interest or occupation. According to the Welder Institute (2023), Professional bodies possess specific knowledge, skills and experience of academic principles related to its members' professions or occupations which, in turn, can help support the professional development and advancement of its members. Also, Professional memberships aim at supporting individuals professionally and aid them in growing and progressing within their career/profession.

From the foregoing, it is clear that being a member of professional body of one's career is one of the ways through which an office manager (or an employee as the case may be) can grow in his career as well as in the place of work. This is because of its numerous benefits and the importance which cannot be overemphasized. In talking about these benefits and the importance of professional bodies and membership, Amy (2023) opines that belonging to a professional association is important because it grants one the opportunity to attend events, seminars, conferences organized by the body. It also gives the members access to meet others in your field. Professional bodies also certify that their members have the appropriate knowledge to perform their duties, as members often attend seminars and training programs to acquire more knowledge. Additionally, membership certification and qualifications might differentiate one from other candidates, thereby keeping the member at advantage over others during promotion in the place of work.

iii. **Conferences, Workshops and Seminars:**

In development, and training, Conferences, Workshops and Seminars have been identified as amongst the valuable methods through which an employee can receive advanced professional training and development in the career. This is because Conferences, Workshops and Seminars offer opportunities for managers or potential managers to acquire knowledge or develop their conceptual and analytical abilities (Kembabazi, 2022).

Conferences, Workshops and Seminars are training methods and tools used to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees. They are essential for the growth and development of the employees as well as the organization. They also cover a wide range of topics such as leadership, communication, technical skills, and other areas relevant to the job. Conferences, workshops and seminars are methods of employee development which involves the presentation of information by an expert in a specific field (Max, 2016). Conferences workshops and seminars provide wealth of information on a broad array of topics and professional issues which enhances quality service delivery of the office manager.

Office Manager Growth

Professionally, growth is defined by Herrity (2023), as the application of new experiences and skills to positively impact your current position and career pursuits. By expanding your skills and thinking ahead, you are preparing yourself to handle more responsibilities. In talking about the growth of office manager, Ben (2022) states that an office manager could be promoted or grow to be given more responsibility for managing projects, or provide cover for senior management duties. With experience and more qualifications and training, an office manager can become an Executive Assistants or executive officer.

The important role of office manager to the success of the organization cannot be overemphasized. This is akin to the fact that no organization cannot function effectively without an office manager. According to Oxford Languages Dictionary an office manager is a person who is responsible for organizing the day-to-day administrative duties of an organization. He is responsible for overseeing the general day-to-day of an office. In defining the responsibility of an office manager, Kerwin (2023) opines that office managers' duties and responsibilities vary depending on the business they work for, but essentially, they have similar tasks. Typically, this means they are responsible for general admin tasks, organizing departments, liaising with (Ben, 2022).

Theoretical Review

This study will be anchored on Human Capital Theory proposed by Schultz in 1961 and developed by Becker in 1994. The Human Capital Theory suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising workers' future income by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1994).

The human capital model suggests that an individual's decision to invest in training is based upon an examination of the net present value of the costs and benefits of such an investment. Individuals are assumed to invest in training during an initial period and receive returns to the investment in subsequent periods. This theory went further to say that investing in human capital via education, training, and one's outputs depend partly on the rate of return on the human capital one owns. According to Jin (2001), while it is true that formal education has expanded rapidly in many countries, a large portion of human capital accumulation in the forms of on-the-job training and other modes for working adults actually take place both inside and outside the workplace.

Notwithstanding, the biggest challenge to human capital theory as pointed out by Livingstone (1997) in Gunu, et al (2023) is underemployment of credentialed knowledge. Talking about a large number of people, who have invested many years of their lives in acquiring advanced formal educational qualifications; being unable to obtain commensurate jobs. Such situation is prevalent in most of the underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. Another short coming of human capital theory is that in countries like Nigeria, more emphasis is given to paper qualification rather than employee's personal skills and talents.

The justification for adopting this theory as the theoretical underpinning of this study is because of its relationship with the predictor variable of this study (Self-Development Strategies).

Another reason is because of the theories position that an individual's decision to invest in training is based upon an examination of the net present value and benefits of such an investment which is growth. Individuals, who invest in training during an initial period, will definitely receive returns to the investment in subsequent periods. Also, the human capital theory went further to posit that investing in human capital via education, training, and one's outputs depend partly on the rate of return on the human capital one owns. Most importantly that human capital accumulation in the forms of on-the-job training and other modes for working adults actually take place both inside and outside the workplace.

Research Design

This study adopted explanatory cross-sectional survey research design.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consist eight (8) public tertiary institutions in Rivers Nigeria. The tertiary institutions, rather than their staff served as the population of this study. This is because the criterion variable "Office Manager Growth" manifests at the organizational level. Details of the list of the population of the study (i.e. public tertiary institutions in Rivers State) are presented in table 3.1 below:

Table 1 List of Public Tertiary Institution in Rivers State, Nigeria

S/N	LIST OF INSTITUTION	LOCATION
1.	Rivers State University	NkpoluOroworoko Port Harcourt
2.	University of Port Harcourt	ChobaPort Harcourt.
3	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	RumuolumeniPort Harcourt
4	Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic	Rumuola Port Harcourt
5	Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic	Bori Rivers State
6	Rivers State School of Health of Technology	Rumueme Port Harcourt
7	Federal Government College Technical	Omoku Rivers State.
8	Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas	Bonny Rivers State

Instrumentation and Measurement

This study made use of primary data. The collection of primary data was done using a questionnaire designed by the researcher. The instrument (questionnaire) is titled "Office Self-Development Strategies and Officer Manager Growth (SDSOMG). A 4-point rating scale was used with the following response options: Strongly Agree (SA) 4; Agree (A) 3; Strongly Disagree (SD) 2; and Disagree (D) 1.

Method of Data Analysis

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used for univariate analysis, Spearman rank order correlation was applied for the bivariate analysis while, Partial correlation is be used for the multivariate analysis. The test of hypotheses was done at 95% confidence level. If our statistical analysis shows that the significance level is below the cut-off value we have set (which is 0.05), the null hypothesis is to be rejected while alternate hypothesis is to be accepted when the significant value is below 0.05. Alternatively, if the significance level is above the cut-off value, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

In testing the hypotheses one to ten, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our null hypotheses. All the coefficient (r) values that indicated levels of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS were accepted and thus our alternate hypotheses were accepted and when no significance is indicated in the coefficient (r) value we rejected the null hypotheses. We set out a confidence interval at 0.05 level of significance to test the statistical significance of the study.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between advanced professional training and quality task delivery of public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Table 1Advanced Professional Training and Quality Service Delivery

			Advanced Professional Training	Quality Service Delivery	
Spearman's rho	Advanced Professional Training	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.911**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	
	Quality Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.911**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	
			N	78	78

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

Source: Research Desk, 2023.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is relationship between advanced professional training and quality service delivery. The *correlation coefficient 0.911* confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is a strong positive correlation between the variables. The correlation represents is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between advanced professional training and quality service delivery in public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between advanced professional training and innovativeness of public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Table 2 Advanced Professional Training and Innovativeness

			Advanced Professional Training	Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Advanced Professional Training	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.924**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.924**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

Source: Research Desk, 2023.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is relationship between advanced professional training and innovativeness. The *correlation coefficient 0.924* confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is a strong positive correlation between the variables. The correlation represents is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between advanced professional training and innovativeness in public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between advanced professional training and effective record management of public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Table 3 Advanced Professional Training and Effective Record Management

			Advanced Professional Training	Efficient Record Management
Spearman's rho	Advanced Professional Training	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.881**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Efficient Record Management	Correlation Coefficient	.881**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

Source: Research Desk, 2023.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is relationship between advanced professional training and effective record management. The *correlation coefficient 0.881* confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is a strong positive correlation between the variables. The correlation represents is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between advanced professional training and effective record management in public tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the relationship between advanced professional training and office manager growth in public tertiary institutions in Rivers state. The investigation of the relationship between advanced professional training and office manager growth followed three specific hypotheses that were tested. These hypotheses (H₀₁, H₀₂, and H₀₃) were all rejected based on the emerging p-

values of less than 0.01. The results revealed a strong positive relationship between advanced professional training and office manager growth. The results obtained in the study are as follows:
H₀₁: Advanced professional training has a very strong relationship with quality service delivery, with ($\rho=0.911$; $p=0.000<0.05$), thus the null hypothesis was rejected.
H₀₂: Advanced Professional Training has a very strong Relationship with innovativeness with ($\rho=0.924$; $p=0.000<0.05$), thus the null hypothesis was rejected.
H₀₃: Advanced Professional Training and Efficient has very strong relationship with efficient Record Management, based on ($\rho=0.881$; $p=0.000<0.05$), thus the null hypothesis was rejected.
Hence, the finding reveals a strong positive relationship between office manager growth and advanced professional training as a veritable contributor to the achievement of office manager growth. Advanced professional training equips office managers with specialized skills and in-depth knowledge in their field. This can include training in areas such as leadership, communication, project management, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. These enhanced skills and knowledge enable office managers to perform their roles more effectively and efficiently, leading to personal growth and development especially in the public tertiary institution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the specific objective, the following conclusions have been made. The study investigated and measured the relationship between advanced professional skill and office manager growth of public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was rejected, implying that advanced professional training succeeds when employees and employers communicate and work together towards the ambitious yet extremely goal of ensuring office managers growth. The researcher concludes that advanced professional training affects office manager growth of public tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, conclusions and the implications of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

- i. Management of the above selected institutions should take advanced professional training to be part of their practice because, this training can help office managers develop the skills needed to effectively manage and carry out their duties. Also it helps office managers to learn how to identify and implement new ideas and Problem solving Skills, leading to Timely Promotion and Peak career Attainment.
- ii. Public tertiary institution should invest in training office managers in courses on digital literacy and the use of specific digital tools, such as Mobile Cloud Computing software, Advanced Spreadsheet collaboration tools for effective record security, information delivery. Also, there should be training on the use of workforce productivity software for efficient workflow and operations.

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