

**DIGITAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND OFFICE MANAGER CREATIVENESS OF
TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study determines the relationship between capacity building and office manager performance of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State. The explanatory cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of two hundred and sixty-two (262) office managers (branch, departmental and unit heads) drawn from 5 telecommunication firms operating in Rivers State. The study adopted census method of sampling which involves using the entire population of the study. Structure questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection after face validation. Cronbach alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument. Out of 262 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 253 were retrieved. Arithmetic mean was used for the univariate analysis while the test of hypotheses was done using Correlation Statistical tool such as Spearman Rank Order Correlation. The findings revealed that there is a very strong positive relationship between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State. 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: Capacity Building, Career Advancement, Office Manager Performance

INTRODUCTION

Scholars, researchers, policymakers and human resources specialists are concerned about the phenomena of career development programs. These human capital development stakeholders work to address problems with hiring, choosing, training and development, promoting, and other career-related difficulties. Additionally, companies, in particular, work to address concerns with career development programs and how they impact organizational development. Career development entails preparing individuals to assume different or higher responsibilities within the organization (Firman, 2021). Operationally, career development programmes refer to skills and courses development activities mapped out to enhance the knowledge of managers and employees and usher them into higher positions and responsibilities. According to McDaniels and Gysbers (2012), career advancement is the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to shape the career of any given individual over the life span.

Organizations benefit from career development programmes because they assist employees and supervisors gain better knowledge, experience and skills for their jobs. As a result, the idea of career development programs may be seen as a platform that helps employees and managers prepare for better future roles both inside and sometimes outside of organizations by helping them think beyond their current jobs. With the help of this procedure, firms can have the necessary, powerful people resources for expansion and continued relevance in the market. For organizations such as a telecommunication firms, it is obvious that the career development programmes of their office managers, such as digital capacity building, advanced professional programmes, and degree advancement programmes, will enhance the performance of the office managers.

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State.

Digital Capacity Building

Capacity building (also known as capacity development) is the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their ability to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner (Kumar & Bansal, 2017). The challenges brought about by new technologies in general requires that staff be equipped with new skills and competencies through training or retraining to be able to effectively operate and undertake projects in an electronic environment. (Wick, 2018) defines capacity building as the improvement of knowledge, skills, and institutions to make effective use of resources and opportunities. Widespread on the agendas of international development agencies, capacity building programmes range from institutional and societal to the individual level and include a variety of strategies, from fundraising to targeted training. Capacity building for Internet-related matters comprises both the strengthening of institutional capacities (in particular for technical deployment, policymaking, and implementation) and the development of individual competences (skills and abilities pertaining to the information society, including computer literacy, privacy safeguards, etc.).

Kerry (2016) defines digital capacity building as development in ICT proficiency (functional skills), information, data and media literacies (critical use), digital creation, problem solving and innovation (creative production), digital communication, collaboration and partnership (participation), digital learning and development (development), and digital identity and wellbeing (self-actualising). Digital capacity building refers to the computer and Internet-related skills and attitudes that individuals and organisations need if they are to thrive in today's world (Zoe, 2019). At an individual level digital capacity building is seen as those which equip someone to live, learn and work in a digital environment. In the level of an organisation we need to look beyond the capabilities of individuals and consider the extent to which the culture and infrastructure of an institution enables and motivates digital practices. What it means to be digitally capable will vary for each person. It will depend on the requirements of their role, their subject specialism, career choice, personal and other contextual factors.

Creativeness

In this study creativeness is also addressed as creativeness. Creativeness can be explained as production of new ideas; a creative employee is one who can come up with new suggestions/ideas for the services to be constructed, the flood of the communication and understanding it in the same way which would affect the work done by the employee during his working hour (Amabile, 2017). Creativeness is explained as a design in which the employee make such innovative construction in which the work related problems are resolved in rightful manner with step by step process, some explain it as the ability of the individuals how they can develop useful solution to meet the challenges and overcome the problem them self individually (Amabile, 2017; Young, 2016).

Creativeness has been defined differently by different researchers. Some defined it as personal characteristics and others as a process (Amabile, 2017). Researchers in the past have revealed that a creative response can be a product, idea or procedure that fulfills two conditions: (1) they must be novel or original, and (2) they should be potentially relevant for, or useful to an organization (Barron & Harrington, 2018). Literature has revealed that at first, researchers have focused on determining a set of personal characteristics that are associated with creative achievements (Davis, 2015; Martindale & Dailey, 2019). They addressed the role of personal attributes and cognitive styles as the key determinants of employee creativity rather than job specific contextual factors that also play an important role in determining employee creativity.

Unsworth (2016) has introduced a matrix of four creativity types that varies in two dimensions: (1) driver of engagement (external or internal) and (2) the problem type (open or closed). In external driver of engagement, an external situation demands an individual to engage in a creative behavior, however, in internal driver of engagement, an individual wishes to be creative. Open ideas are those that come from the individuals and closed ideas are those which are presented to individuals. The four types of creativity includes: responsive (responding to problems due to external drivers), expected (discovering problems due to external drivers), contributory (responding to problems due to internal drivers) and proactive (discovering problems due to internal drivers). Recent researches emphasize that it is not only the personal factors that enhance employee creativity but there are the contextual factors also that play significant role in determination of employee creativity (Tierney & Farmer, 2014; George & Zhou, 2018; Rodan & Galunic, 2017).

Contextual factors may include goals and expectations for creative activity, social influence on individual's creativity (presence of co-actors, creative role model and presence of competitiveness of someone else), relationship with supervisor, co-workers and customers and organizational settings (Lodham & Cummings, 2017). When considered within organizational contexts, researches have yielded some inconsistent findings. For example, two studies (Lodham & Cummings, 2017; Zhou & Oldham, 2015) showed that rating high on creative personality and having a supportive supervisor interacted positively to affect employee creativity. On the other hand, Madjar *et al.* (2016) found no such support. Employees scoring low on creative personality measures show higher level of creativity when creative coworkers were present and they had non-controlling supervisors (Zhou & George, 2017).

The role of creativeness for firm's performance and growth cannot be ignored in a competitive dynamic environment. Researchers have suggested that creativity is the essential part for organization's survival and competency (Zhou & George, 2017; Oldham & Cummings, 2017; Zhou, 2016). Therefore firms need creative employees to initiate organizational innovation. Employee creativity is recognized as the key factor for generating a competitive advantage (Shalley *et al.*, 2014). The role of employee creativity of the frontline employees is of particular importance in the service firms as they serve as the boundary workers and enjoy exclusive right to gather first hand market information. Further, frontline service employees face customers with quite diverse needs, implying that they need to be more innovative. A creative employee is one who has the ability to be aware of the organization and must be sensitive so that he can tackle the problem, he must have sharp mind so he is able to remember his task for long time, and he must be adaptive, it is because due to Globalization there is rapid change in the technology as well the culture so a creative employee would be one who is able to adapt to all the changes before time, in this way he would be termed as creative (Evans, 2015). It has been long observed that employee's creativity is mostly seen by the large organization and team. Creativity is mostly involved in the generation of change in product, due to working in team the employees are constantly engaged in learning new knowledge, skills which are the necessary requirements needed by the organization from the employee so they can achieve timely goals (Amabile, 2017).

Digital Capacity Building and Office Manager Performance

Digital capacity building contributes to organizational performance in terms of creativeness. Cloud computing lowers the cost of services for businesses and individuals because they no longer need to invest in expensive infrastructure and software to house and deploy the services locally (Azure, 2022; Salesforce, 2022). As an office manager in a telecommunication firm, having learnt very well how to effectively and efficiently communicate in a conference video call, use Google doc, Google drive, DropBox, Artificial Intelligence, etc., one should be able to think critically and creatively solve problems. It becomes imperative for leadership of telecommunication firms and other organizations to equip their office managers with all globally standard digital skills such as of Artificial Intelligence, conference skill, advanced spreadsheet and cloud computing, in order to place the organization to compete favourably in product and service delivery. An office manager such as marketing manager,

head of accounts, etc. without standard knowledge of Cloud computing and Artificial Intelligence will be left behind in this present day digitalized business world (Fatuma *et al.*, 2014). A digitally-inclined employee or office managers has the capability to present products and services of an organization to the appeal of omni-channel consumers. Appreciable conferencing skill will aid an office manager to place a video call across customers whenever need calls as a way of diversifying or rebranding products and services. As a way of product rebranding, digitally skilled office managers can have customers fill complaint, account, suggestion, etc. forms in the form of online questionnaires. Such truly would interest customers. Product rebranding permeates platforms for the reposition of a product in an appealing manner before its customers or consumers. Good spreadsheet and cloud computing skills will as well help employees/executives to collaborate with clients as well as have their information saved on the safest space in this present time. The use of apps such as Skype, Messenger, Whatsapp, Zoom Cloud Meetings, Google sheet, Google drive, DropBox, and other virtual communication tools in this present day businesses have made businesses a lot easier to do as products and services to suit customers appeal have become less cumbersome to innovate (Kumar & Bansal, 2017).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Roger, 1962)

Diffusion of Innovation Theory was propounded to explain how people accept new technologies and innovative skills set as cited in Amadi-George (2018). The theory assumes that:

- i) In a social system, there will always be a disparity in the level and time at which individuals within a given social system adopt new ideas, techniques, and technology.
- ii) Individuals and arms of institutions that adopt innovations early will naturally outperform late adopters and the laggards (Rogers cited in Amadi-George, 2018).

The implication of this theory is that as some Telecommunication Firms find the need to allow their office managers to develop their careers, especially in terms of digital capacity building, advanced professional programmes, and degree advancement programmes, there will obviously be a discrepancy on the mode of adoption – some will quickly adopt while others will be reluctant about it. In some cases, the reluctant ones want to first of all see how it benefits the early adopters before they make the decision whether to toll the same line or not. The fact is that management of Telecommunication Firms that fail to support their office managers in going about developing their careers in the aforementioned areas early enough are likely going to experience poor performance, especially in terms of low creativity, poor decision making, late work delivery, poor work quality, etc. (Odu, 2018) while those who embrace and adopt these enhancement techniques on time will experience performance. This means that there will be a significant gap in the performance of office managers of early and late adopters.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The exploratory cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The explanatory cross-sectional survey research design is interested in the test of hypotheses using primary data generated from respondents. The recent nature of digital knowledge entrepreneurship in this part of the world also informed the choice of this research design.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of two hundred and seventy-six (276) office managers (departmental and unit heads) drawn from 100 telecommunication companies operating in Rivers State (Sourced: Rivers State Yellow Pages).

Sample Size/Sampling Techniques

The entire population of two hundred and seventy-six (276) office managers drawn from 100 telecommunication companies in Rivers State was used for the study without sampling. Thus, the study adopted census method of sampling which involves using the entire population of the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

Instrument for data collection for the study was done through structured questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation were used for the univariate analysis while bivariate analysis was done using Spearman Rank Order Correlation. Partial Correlation was applied for the multivariate analysis.

Result**Digital Capacity Building and Office Manager Performance**

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State.

Table above shows r value of 0.861 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating digital capacity building and creativeness. 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 digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State was rejected. This implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between digital capacity building and creativeness of Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State.

Digital Capacity Building and Office Manager Creativeness

The test of hypotheses one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between digital capacity building and office manager performance of telecommunication firms in Rivers State, especially in terms of creativeness. These findings suggest that increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence tools, conference skill, advanced spreadsheet, and cloud computing is associated with increase in creativeness, product (service) innovation, early task completion, and satisfactory service delivery of office managers. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Ronald (2010) that video conferencing tools and cloud computing platforms facilitate operations and achievement of operational goals in business organizations. Similarly, Petan *et al.* (2014) also found that video tools usage was positively associated with improvements in the customer services of banks in Ghana. Video tools, Google sheets and cloud computing are augmented with additional interactive features, ensuring a non-linear method of transmitting information, as opposed to the linear storytelling structure of traditional video and Microsoft Office packages (e.g. Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, Word, etc.). Their adoption by office managers in telecommunication firms and other organizations can improve product (service) innovation, financial performance and satisfactory service delivery.

Contemporarily, telecommunication firms employ videoconferencing in communicating between two or more locations, as well as cloud computing to carry out the 21st century business (Rop & Bett, 2012). In telecommunication firms, an office manager's advanced video conferencing skill, AI skill, Google sheets skill, and cloud computing skill triggers a lot of innovative ideas in them on how to improve products and services via product diversification, deliver tasks more quickly than before, engage in creative ideas, product rebranding, and omni-channel consumers' satisfaction. The use of apps such as Skype, Messenger, Whatsapp, Zoom Cloud Meetings, Google sheet, Google drive, DropBox, and other virtual communication tools in this present day businesses have made businesses a lot easier to do as products and services to suit customers appeal have become less cumbersome to innovate (Kumar & Bansal, 2017).

Office managers save a lot of time and money as they delve into video conferencing, collaborate on Google Sheet, Google drive, Google doc, Google slides, DropBox and other virtual communication/cloud computing software application. Zoe (2019) asserted that how much an employee knows digitally in the business of this 21st century determines their relevance in the organization. And it is the desire of an employee to be relevant in an organization by contributing immensely to the financial growth of the organization. That spurs them to find alternative means of carrying out business activities that are capable of saving cost and time for the organization. Telecommunication firms can save a lot of money and time as they engage their employees and executives in virtual meetings of video conferencing, which adds to profitability and money kept to tackle cash reserve ratio. When office managers in telecommunication firms collaborate amongst themselves and also with customers via Google sheets, Google doc, Google slides, time and money get saved for the organization. These scenarios are true because money saved is as good as money made. The digital capability built by office managers in telecommunication firms also helps them reach out to a wider audience across the globe. Amongst these persons could be some who are willing to do business with their firms. By this, They have not only increased their performance, but also that of their organizations.

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. 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. the board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, 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. 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.
4. 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.

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