

ROLE CLARIFICATION AND EMPLOYEE ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE IN AIRLINE OPERATORS IN RIVERS STATE**Dr. Florence O. Iroanwusi***florence.iroanwusi@iaue.edu.ng***Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria****ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between role clarification and employee adaptive performance in airline operators in Rivers State, with particular focus on learning and creative thinking. The study was motivated by persistent challenges of role ambiguity in Nigerian airline operations and its implications for service delivery and competitiveness. A correlational survey design was employed, with a population of 412 employees across four airline operators in Rivers State. A sample size of 202 was determined through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, validated by subject experts, and tested for reliability. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including Pearson Product Moment Correlation, were applied to analyze the data. Findings revealed significant positive relationships between role clarification and both learning and creative thinking. The study concluded that role clarification is a key driver of adaptive performance, enabling employees to acquire new knowledge and apply creativity in addressing work challenges. It recommended that airline operators institutionalize structured role clarification mechanisms and enhance open communication systems to strengthen employee adaptability and innovation.

Keywords: Role Clarification, Employee Adaptive Performance, Learning, Creative Thinking, Airline Operators, Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations operate in an environment characterized by turbulence, unpredictability, and an accelerating pace of technological advancement. The global economy has become tightly interconnected, and as a result, firms in virtually every sector are confronted with heightened uncertainty and constant changes in demand. Globalization has intensified competition among firms, compelling organizations to remain agile and responsive in order to retain their market positions (Heinze, 2020). This reality is particularly demanding for service-oriented industries where customer needs evolve rapidly and expectations often exceed traditional service standards. Within these turbulent conditions, employees are increasingly recognized as the most vital resource for organizational continuity and long-term success. The capacity of employees to adjust swiftly to new requirements, novel systems, and unforeseen challenges reflects the concept of adaptive performance. This form of performance goes beyond technical expertise, emphasizing the ability to think creatively, embrace change, and respond effectively to evolving circumstances. Scholars have consistently underscored the argument that adaptive performance is no longer a desirable trait but an essential component of organizational effectiveness in today's knowledge-driven economy (Kim, 2016). Adaptive performance, however, is not self-generating; it relies on structural and managerial enablers that foster clarity, consistency, and purposeful alignment of roles. Employees can only perform adaptively when expectations are transparent, objectives are well-communicated, and individuals understand how their contributions fit into broader organizational strategies. Role clarification thus emerges as a decisive factor in shaping employee adaptability, particularly in service-driven firms where customer satisfaction and loyalty depend directly on employee conduct (Luchman, 2020).

Research findings consistently indicate that ambiguous job descriptions or poorly articulated expectations are major causes of stress, anxiety, and tension in the workplace. Such ambiguity disrupts employee focus, diminishes creativity, and often discourages proactive behavior that contributes to organizational growth (Ojeyemi & Egbuta, 2024). Within organizational psychology, role ambiguity and role conflict are widely recognized as among the most detrimental barriers to employee effectiveness and organizational harmony. Conversely, when workers are provided with clear instructions, adequate knowledge of their responsibilities, and well-communicated performance criteria, they tend to display higher levels of commitment, creativity, and innovation. Employees who understand not only what they must do but also how their work contributes to wider organizational objectives are often more motivated and willing to go beyond minimum expectations (Akor, Ify, & Rao, 2024). In service-intensive industries, such as the airline sector, the influence of role clarification becomes even more critical. Every interaction between airline employees and customers contributes directly to the perception of service quality, safety, and reliability. In this context, role clarification equips employees with the guidance they need to adapt to unforeseen challenges such as flight delays, passenger complaints, or sudden operational disruptions. It further enables them to identify opportunities for creative solutions that enhance customer experience. By ensuring that employees understand both their limits and possibilities within the organizational framework, role clarification provides the fertile ground upon which adaptive performance can thrive.

The Nigerian airline industry provides a particularly compelling setting to examine the connection between role clarity and adaptive performance. Airlines in Rivers State and across the nation contend with significant challenges, ranging from limited infrastructure and regulatory inconsistencies to the volatility of customer expectations. These challenges create an environment in which employees must frequently improvise and adapt to shifting circumstances. Staff are often required to respond to unexpected operational issues, rescheduled flights, passenger dissatisfaction, and abrupt policy changes, all of which demand resilience and adaptability. However, empirical studies have shown that airline employees in Nigeria often suffer from inadequate role definitions and vague career development structures (Demerouti, 2007). This lack of clarity weakens their ability to respond creatively to emerging challenges, thereby constraining their adaptive capacity. Over time, the absence of clear role boundaries reduces confidence, inhibits learning, and hampers innovation, which are essential for service-driven competitiveness. The consequences are particularly severe in the airline sector where service quality and customer trust are inseparable from organizational performance. This challenge also threatens the survival of operators, as dissatisfied customers may shift loyalty to competitors that are perceived as more reliable. From both academic and managerial perspectives, there is an urgent call to examine how structured role clarification can enhance adaptive performance in this highly sensitive industry. Such an inquiry offers the possibility of identifying interventions that can strengthen not only employee capabilities but also the strategic resilience of Nigerian airlines.

The significance of this study rests on several interrelated grounds that are academic, managerial, and practical. First, the study provides an important scholarly contribution by addressing the gap in empirical evidence on the relationship between role clarification and adaptive performance in the Nigerian airline sector. Much of the literature on this subject has been derived from studies in developed economies, leaving limited insights into the realities of organizations in developing contexts such as Nigeria (Dorsey, 2020). This research therefore expands the theoretical discourse by situating the discussion within a developing economy that faces unique structural and institutional challenges. Second, the study holds direct implications for managers, as it highlights evidence-based practices that can be implemented to strengthen role clarity and encourage adaptive behaviors among employees. Managers can draw on these insights to design policies and training interventions that improve the ability of staff to respond effectively to the ever-changing demands of customers. Third, the study has relevance for policy makers and regulators who shape the operational

environment of the airline industry. By understanding the importance of role clarity, they can frame policies that promote transparency, accountability, and adaptability in service delivery. Fourth, the findings are equally important for employees who stand to benefit directly from clearer communication of expectations and responsibilities. When roles are explicitly defined, workers gain greater confidence, creativity, and motivation to demonstrate resilience in their tasks. In this way, the study not only advances knowledge but also provides actionable recommendations that enhance the performance and sustainability of the Nigerian airline sector.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian airline sector continues to grapple with persistent challenges that stem from unclear role expectations, inconsistent managerial communication, and inadequately defined job descriptions. These issues have significantly constrained the ability of employees to function effectively in highly dynamic and unpredictable service environments. In particular, role ambiguity creates confusion about task requirements, limits employee confidence, and restricts opportunities for continuous learning and professional growth. Workers who are uncertain about what is expected of them often develop a poor orientation toward learning and skill development, which in turn reduces their capacity to generate innovative solutions to operational challenges. This lack of clarity also fosters resistance to change, as employees may perceive new policies or procedural adjustments as threats rather than opportunities for growth. Such resistance undermines organizational flexibility, weakens employee morale, and reduces the ability of airlines to maintain consistent service standards. Furthermore, when employees fail to adapt effectively, customer experiences are directly affected, leading to declining satisfaction, eroding loyalty, and diminished competitive advantage for airline operators. These outcomes are particularly harmful in the aviation industry where customer perception of quality and reliability is central to business continuity. Scholars and practitioners have long recognized the pivotal role that role clarification plays in promoting adaptive performance, resilience, and creative problem-solving among employees. Yet, in the Nigerian context, there remains a glaring gap in empirical research that rigorously examines the link between role clarification and adaptive outcomes in airline operations. This paucity of evidence limits the capacity of managers, regulators, and employees to adopt best practices that could strengthen adaptability in a sector marked by constant turbulence. Addressing this gap through systematic inquiry therefore becomes crucial for advancing knowledge, improving managerial practices, and enhancing service delivery within the Nigerian airline industry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between role clarification and learning in airline operators in Rivers State.
2. To determine the relationship between role clarification and creative thinking in airline operators in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. How does role clarification influence learning in airline operators in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between role clarification and creative thinking in airline operators in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and learning in airline operators in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and creative thinking in airline operators in Rivers State.

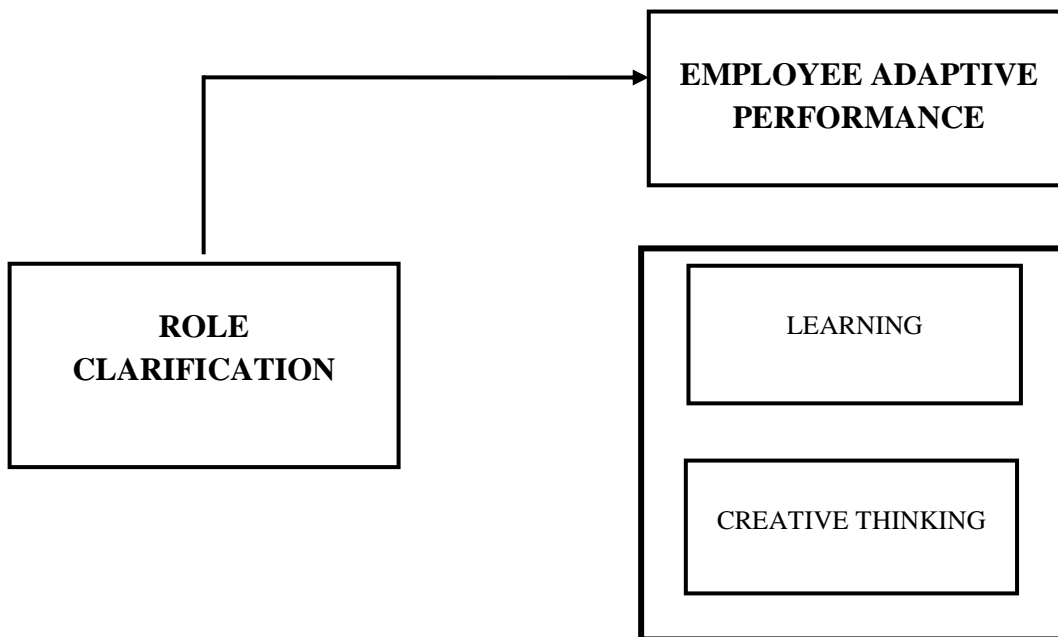


Figure 1: Conceptual framework Role Clarification and Employee Adaptive Performance of airline operators in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Role Theory

The Role Theory provides a strong conceptual foundation for examining the link between role clarification and employee adaptive performance. According to the seminal work of Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), organizational roles are understood as sets of behavioral expectations held by others concerning the proper conduct of an individual occupying a specific position. These expectations serve as a guiding framework for employees, shaping how they interpret their duties, interact with colleagues, and contribute to broader organizational objectives. The theory emphasizes that the clarity or ambiguity of these role expectations has a direct bearing on employee behavior and performance outcomes. When roles are ambiguous or inconsistently defined, employees often experience heightened levels of stress, confusion, and uncertainty in task execution, which can diminish both motivation and effectiveness. Such ambiguity is also associated with role conflict, where incompatible demands from multiple stakeholders create additional strain and reduce organizational harmony. Conversely, when roles are explicitly clarified and consistently communicated, employees are better able to align their individual contributions with organizational strategies, thereby improving coordination and performance. Clear roles also foster a sense of predictability that enhances employee confidence, allowing them to proactively respond to evolving situational demands. Within the Nigerian airline industry, where employees frequently encounter fluctuating schedules, sudden operational disruptions, and demanding customer interactions, the benefits of role clarity are especially evident. Role clarification reduces uncertainty by establishing boundaries of responsibility, enabling employees to innovate within clear parameters. It further empowers staff with the assurance that their actions are consistent with organizational expectations, which enhances their willingness to adapt and experiment with new approaches in dynamic service environments (Akor, Ify, & Rao, 2024). By grounding adaptive performance in structured expectations, Role Theory provides a compelling lens for understanding how employees can thrive in volatile sectors such as aviation.

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model offers a complementary explanation for understanding how role clarification influences adaptive performance. The model posits that every job environment is characterized by demands, which refer to aspects of the role requiring sustained effort such as workload, time pressure, and emotional strain, and resources, which are factors that help employees cope with demands and achieve work goals. A central assumption of the JD-R framework is that excessive job demands without sufficient resources tend to deplete employees, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced effectiveness (Huang, 2015). However, when employees have access to adequate resources, such as clear job descriptions, constructive feedback, and social support, they are better able to manage pressures and maintain high performance. Within this framework, role clarification emerges as a crucial job resource because it minimizes ambiguity, strengthens role identity, and facilitates alignment of individual actions with organizational priorities. Employees who are confident in their responsibilities can channel their energy toward problem-solving and creative adaptation rather than wasting effort on interpreting unclear instructions. Role clarity also provides psychological security, which enables employees to engage in adaptive learning, experiment with new methods, and recover quickly from unexpected challenges. In the context of airline operations, where unpredictability is often the norm, role clarification functions as a stabilizing resource that enhances motivation, engagement, and resilience. By reducing role-related stressors, it helps employees maintain focus and agility in service delivery even under intense operational pressure. Moreover, role clarity supports long-term organizational goals by encouraging employees to internalize standards of quality, thereby ensuring consistency in customer experiences. Within the Nigerian airline sector, the JD-R Model highlights how balancing job demands with role clarity as a resource can sustain operational efficiency, strengthen adaptive capacity, and reinforce service excellence (Shoss, 2015).

Conceptual Review

Role Clarification

Role clarification refers to the extent to which employees possess a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities, performance benchmarks, and the parameters of their job functions. It goes beyond mere job descriptions to include the communication of expectations, delineation of responsibilities, and specification of performance indicators that guide employee behavior in line with organizational objectives (Ojeyemi & Egbuta, 2024). Scholars emphasize that when these elements are communicated effectively, employees demonstrate stronger commitment, higher levels of satisfaction, and greater creativity in carrying out assigned duties. Clear roles serve as a foundation for accountability because they enable workers to measure their contributions against known standards and ensure that they are acting in alignment with the broader mission of the organization. Conversely, ambiguity in roles is strongly associated with confusion, delays in decision-making, and unnecessary duplication of effort, which collectively undermine organizational effectiveness. In situations where employees are unsure of what is required of them, morale is often diminished, and the resulting stress creates a hostile work environment. Organizations that fail to establish clarity in roles often face higher employee turnover, lower productivity, and weak organizational culture. In contrast, firms that prioritize role clarification cultivate environments where innovation and creative solutions are encouraged because employees know the scope of their authority and the outcomes expected from their contributions. The Nigerian airline industry provides a distinct illustration of this principle, as its service-oriented nature makes role precision vital to operational success. Employees in this sector face challenges that demand clarity, such as frequent passenger complaints, flight cancellations, and regulatory interventions, making role clarification indispensable for adaptive functioning.

Within the Nigerian airline sector, role clarification is particularly relevant due to the volatile and customer-intensive nature of its operations. Employees are often tasked with resolving complex

passenger-related issues, addressing operational disruptions, and adapting to constantly shifting service demands. Without a clear understanding of their duties, they struggle to deliver services that align with customer expectations, which subsequently reduces organizational competitiveness and reputation. Unclear roles create hesitation and indecisiveness, leading to inefficiency in addressing customer complaints or operational irregularities. This problem escalates when frontline employees are not confident about decision-making boundaries, which can lead to inconsistent service delivery. Clear roles, on the other hand, instill a sense of security, as employees are assured that their actions align with organizational goals. This assurance fosters a workplace culture that encourages responsiveness and creative problem-solving in uncertain environments. When workers know precisely how to act in different circumstances, they are better able to manage passenger expectations and uphold service standards during unexpected changes. Furthermore, clarity of role responsibilities enhances teamwork because each individual recognizes their contribution to the collective task. Luchman (2020) affirms that role clarity provides employees with the confidence to innovate, learn continuously, and adapt seamlessly to unforeseen disruptions. For the Nigerian airline sector, therefore, role clarification is not only a managerial necessity but also a strategic tool for sustaining customer loyalty and organizational resilience in a competitive market.

Employee Adaptive Performance

Employee adaptive performance refers to the deliberate and conscious modification of employees' behaviors and thought processes in response to dynamic and changing work environments. It extends beyond routine job performance to capture the ability of workers to respond flexibly to novel situations, technological advances, and regulatory changes that influence organizational processes (Jundt, Shoss, & Huang, 2015). Adaptive performance becomes particularly critical in industries where unpredictability is frequent and constant, such as the aviation industry, which is shaped by regulatory oversight, global events, and evolving customer demands. In such contexts, adaptive employees are able to learn quickly, think critically, and adjust their actions to meet operational and service-related challenges. Scholars argue that adaptive performance is essential for employees to remain competitive and valuable in the workplace because it ensures that organizations retain resilience and agility in turbulent environments (Kim, 2016). Furthermore, adaptive performance is associated with proactive problem-solving and the willingness to embrace technological innovations that improve service delivery. In aviation, where safety and service quality are paramount, adaptive employees represent a vital resource for maintaining high standards even when circumstances are unfavorable. They help minimize the negative effects of disruptions by identifying creative alternatives and ensuring continuity of operations. Adaptive performance is thus central to sustaining organizational competitiveness, as it bridges the gap between environmental uncertainty and customer expectations.

In the Nigerian airline industry, adaptive performance assumes an even greater level of importance given the frequent disruptions and operational complexities associated with the sector. Employees often face abrupt flight rescheduling, regulatory adjustments, and customer dissatisfaction, all of which require rapid and creative responses. Adaptive employees are capable of transforming such challenges into opportunities by implementing novel solutions that improve both efficiency and customer experience. In situations where organizational adaptability is lacking, service quality deteriorates, leading to dissatisfied passengers and declining levels of customer loyalty. Organizations that fail to foster adaptability among their workforce also risk becoming less competitive in a market where consumers have growing alternatives and heightened expectations. Donovan (2022) notes that adaptive performance in such settings is crucial for managing uncertainty, meeting diverse passenger needs, and sustaining organizational relevance. In practical terms, adaptive performance in airlines enhances employee resilience and equips staff with the mindset needed to handle pressure without compromising service delivery. It also contributes to knowledge sharing and organizational learning, as employees collectively develop new strategies

for navigating unpredictable situations. Therefore, for Nigerian airline operators, encouraging adaptive performance is not merely an operational concern but a strategic necessity for ensuring survival in a volatile market. By integrating adaptability into their human resource strategies, airlines can better manage customer expectations, strengthen operational efficiency, and preserve their market share in the face of stiff competition.

Measures of Employee Adaptive Performance

Learning

Learning, as a vital dimension of adaptive performance, refers to the capacity of employees to acquire new knowledge, unlearn obsolete practices, and adopt innovative methods of accomplishing tasks that align with organizational needs. It is not limited to formal training sessions but also includes continuous workplace learning, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and experiential insights gained from handling day-to-day challenges (Ackoff & Greenberg, 2008). In airline operations, employees encounter a rapidly changing environment that demands constant updating of skills, particularly with the introduction of technologies such as automated check-in systems, mobile boarding solutions, and advanced flight management tools. These innovations require staff to continuously learn and adapt so as to maintain service quality and operational safety (Johnson & Lee, 2023). When employees are encouraged to engage in learning, they become better equipped to handle disruptions such as last-minute schedule adjustments, security concerns, or passenger complaints. Scholars have also argued that role clarification strengthens the motivation to learn because it allows employees to connect new skills directly to organizational expectations and performance requirements (Resnick, 2020). Clear role definitions help employees see the value of learning in relation to their personal career development and the success of their organization. Furthermore, learning contributes to resilience by equipping staff with the cognitive and psychological resources needed to manage unexpected events effectively. Employees who cultivate a culture of continuous learning also demonstrate greater confidence in handling unforeseen situations and are less resistant to change. Within the Nigerian airline industry, learning remains a key determinant of adaptability, given the technological transitions, regulatory shifts, and customer demands that dominate the sector. By prioritizing continuous learning, organizations not only enhance efficiency but also cultivate a workforce that is proactive, resilient, and capable of sustaining service excellence under volatile conditions.

Creative Thinking

Creative thinking represents another critical measure of adaptive performance and is defined as the ability of employees to generate innovative solutions and apply existing knowledge in novel ways to solve emerging organizational problems. It is a cognitive process that requires flexibility, imagination, and the capacity to identify alternative approaches when traditional methods prove inadequate (Gregory, Jones, & Kang, 2013). In the aviation sector, creative thinking is indispensable for managing operational disruptions, such as unexpected flight delays, equipment malfunctions, or passenger dissatisfaction. It is equally vital for improving service delivery, enhancing safety protocols, and redesigning processes that align with industry best practices. Research underscores that role clarification plays an enabling role in fostering creativity, as employees are freed from the burden of grappling with ambiguous expectations and can instead devote their energies to innovative problem-solving (Maital, 2025). Employees with clear understanding of their responsibilities are more likely to take initiative, test new approaches, and critically evaluate existing systems for possible improvement. Creative thinking also enables airline staff to customize responses to passenger needs, thereby strengthening customer loyalty and overall satisfaction. In addition, organizations that encourage creativity create a supportive environment where employees are not penalized for experimenting with new ideas but are rewarded for constructive innovation. Within the Nigerian airline industry, where service delivery is closely tied to customer perception,

creative thinking helps employees devise strategies that minimize inconvenience and restore passenger confidence in times of disruption. Such creativity is also essential for building operational resilience, as employees learn to adapt procedures to local challenges while meeting global safety standards. By fostering creative thinking through role clarity, airlines can strengthen their adaptive capacity and position themselves as competitive and reliable service providers in a demanding marketplace.

Empirical Review

Existing empirical studies have consistently underscored the positive association between role clarity and adaptive outcomes in organizational settings. Fatma Abed (2016) found a strong correlation between clearly defined roles and job satisfaction, further revealing that satisfied employees exhibited greater levels of creativity and innovation in their workplaces. The study highlighted that clarity of expectations allowed employees to focus their energies on problem-solving rather than managing uncertainty. In a related investigation, Srikanth and Jomon (2013) demonstrated that feedback-seeking behavior moderated the adverse effects of role ambiguity, enabling employees to perform more effectively under challenging conditions. Their findings indicated that when employees are encouraged to seek and receive feedback, the detrimental consequences of unclear roles are mitigated. Within service-oriented industries, Rhoades (2001) emphasized that employees' role clarity shaped customers' perceptions of service quality by ensuring consistency in frontline service delivery. This aligns with the broader argument that customers judge organizational reliability largely through the actions of employees who interact directly with them. In the aviation context, Demerouti (2007) reported that employees with clearly defined roles displayed enhanced learning orientation, greater confidence, and higher responsiveness when faced with operational disruptions. These empirical findings collectively demonstrate that role clarity is central to fostering adaptability, creativity, and resilience in dynamic work environments. They further provide evidence that organizations which invest in role clarification strategies are more likely to experience improved performance outcomes and strengthened customer satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the bulk of these empirical contributions have been generated in developed nations, where organizational infrastructures, managerial practices, and access to resources are significantly different from those available in developing countries. Studies focusing specifically on African contexts, and the Nigerian airline sector in particular, remain limited in scope. Much of the research on workforce management in Nigeria has concentrated on broad talent management strategies, recruitment practices, or employee retention policies, while neglecting the critical role of role-specific clarity (Arad, 2022). This neglect creates a substantial gap in empirical knowledge concerning the direct influence of role clarification on adaptive performance outcomes. Specifically, there is little evidence on how clarifying responsibilities enhances key adaptive behaviors such as learning, creative thinking, and proactive problem-solving among Nigerian airline employees. This absence of contextual evidence restricts the ability of managers and policy makers to design targeted interventions that improve adaptive performance in the sector. Furthermore, it limits theoretical development by preventing scholars from understanding how role clarification functions in environments characterized by infrastructural constraints, regulatory inconsistencies, and heightened customer volatility. Addressing this empirical gap is therefore critical not only for enriching scholarship but also for guiding practical policies that can strengthen organizational resilience and service delivery in Nigeria's aviation industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationship between role clarification and employee adaptive performance in airline operators in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised the entire staff of selected airline operators within Rivers State, which included pilots, cabin crew, ground staff, and administrative personnel who are directly involved in

service delivery and operational processes. According to staff records obtained from the operators, the accessible population was 412 employees across four registered airlines currently operating within the state. A sample size of 202 employees was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample determination, and proportionate stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation of each category of staff. A structured questionnaire was the principal instrument for data collection, with sections designed to capture information on role clarification and employee adaptive performance, specifically in terms of learning and creative thinking. The instrument was validated by experts in human resource management and organizational psychology, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot test, yielding Cronbach Alpha coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis, with hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND PRESENTATION

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 1 below presents the descriptive statistics of the major study variables: role clarification, learning, and creative thinking.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Role Clarification	202	2.11	4.98	3.87	0.71
Learning	202	2.15	4.92	3.74	0.68
Creative Thinking	202	2.09	4.95	3.81	0.73

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Data, 2025

The results show that respondents had relatively high mean scores in role clarification ($M = 3.87$), learning ($M = 3.74$), and creative thinking ($M = 3.81$). This indicates that employees generally perceive their roles as clear, and this clarity appears linked with higher learning and creativity tendencies.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and learning in airline operators in Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Result for Role Clarification and Learning

Variables	N	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Role Clarification & Learning	202	0.612	0.000	Reject Ho1

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2025

The correlation result indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between role clarification and learning ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that higher levels of role clarification are associated with improved employee learning in airline operators.

Hypothesis Two:

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and creative thinking in airline operators in Rivers State.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Result for Role Clarification and Creative Thinking

Variables	N	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Role Clarification & Creative Thinking	202	0.587	0.000	Reject Ho2

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2025

The correlation result shows a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between role clarification and creative thinking ($r = 0.587$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that employees who perceive their roles as well defined are more likely to exhibit creative thinking in handling work challenges.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that role clarification significantly enhances employee adaptive performance in airline operators in Rivers State, specifically in terms of learning and creative thinking. The result for the first hypothesis indicates that when employees clearly understand their roles, they are more likely to engage in continuous learning, acquire new knowledge, and apply innovative methods in task execution. This aligns with the assertion of Hettiarachchi (2014) that role clarity contributes positively to job satisfaction, which in turn improves learning orientation.

The rejection of the second hypothesis further suggests that clear role definitions foster creative thinking among employees. This supports the submission of Maital (2025) that creativity flourishes when employees are free from confusion and uncertainty in job expectations. Within the Nigerian airline sector, where service delivery often demands immediate responses to unpredictable operational changes, creativity enabled by role clarity becomes indispensable for sustaining customer satisfaction and operational competitiveness.

In line with the JD-R Model (Huang, 2015), role clarification operates as a key resource that mitigates job stress and motivates employees to channel their energy toward adaptive and innovative behaviors. Similarly, the Role Theory perspective (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) is confirmed, as clarity of expectations provides a foundation for employees to align their performance with organizational goals. Overall, these findings imply that Nigerian airline operators can improve employee adaptability and strengthen their market position by institutionalizing practices that emphasize role transparency and communication.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between role clarification and employee adaptive performance in airline operators in Rivers State, with specific focus on learning and creative thinking. Findings revealed that role clarification has a strong and significant positive relationship with both learning and creative thinking. The implication is that when employees have clear understanding of their responsibilities, performance expectations, and organizational goals, they are more capable of acquiring new knowledge and applying creativity in addressing work challenges. The study thus concludes that role clarification is a critical driver of adaptive performance, which is essential for enhancing service delivery and competitiveness in the Nigerian airline industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Airline operators in Rivers State should institutionalize structured role clarification mechanisms such as detailed job descriptions, performance guides, and periodic role briefings to enhance employee learning and knowledge acquisition.
2. Management should foster open communication systems that continuously clarify role expectations and performance standards, thereby creating an enabling environment that stimulates creative thinking and innovation among employees.

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