

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES JOB PERFORMANCE IN STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the impact of information management competencies and office managers' job performance in State owned universities in Rivers State. The objective of the study was to determine the impact on between the dimensions of information management competencies and measures of office manager's job performance. The paper revealed among others that office managers' information management competencies with proxies as records management competencies, communication competencies and information technology competencies have negative, low and very low positive relationship with their job performance proxies as tasks and contextual performance in State owned universities in Rivers State. It was concluded that office managers' information management competencies with proxies as records management competencies, communication competencies and information technology competencies have significant positive, no, moderate and weak/low relationships with their job performance with proxies as tasks and contextual performance in State owned universities in Rivers State. In clear terms, however, records management competencies and communication competencies do not bring about task performance and contextual performance.

Keywords: Information Competency, Performance, Office Manager, Organization

INTRODUCTION

Universities in Rivers State on daily basis during active sessions generate large quantity and quality information from different stakeholders through their activities such as students' admissions, employments, conferences, seminars, examinations, accreditations, and meetings. Most of these information passes through the desk of departmental secretaries for the purpose of classification, documentation, storage, dissemination, and sometimes disposal. However, as an insider in the education sector, the researcher observed that there are many cases of misplacement and even loss of vital information in most universities in Rivers State. The researcher also observed the slow speed with which needed information relating to students' admission, examination records and staff are sorted out from the manual storage systems used in most universities in Rivers State. This is because departments, faculties and the entire universities' community information are mostly kept in large volume in stores for at least five years before they can be disposed of. It is worth noting that despite procurements and integration of information technology devices, access to wired and wireless networks and the availability of database maintained by the universities Management Information System (MIS) departments, much information are still duplicated in numbers within and across departments through secretaries for heads of departments causing wasteful spending both to original owners and the institutions as custodi in this era of information technology (IT). There is also problem of allocating large office space to keep students' files manually every year when students are admitted by secretaries. The problem associated to this manually information management process can be appreciated by those who bear the brunt such as lecturers, students, managements and other relevant stakeholders when the need arises to access vital information capable of facilitating accurate and timely decision making. Hence, the question that comes to mind with these problems: Is whether office managers (secretaries) in State owned universities in Rivers State possess the required information management competencies needed for the performance of their job responsibilities relating to effective information management? It is based on the problems stated above and to answer them

question that the present study was conceived to examine the relationship between information management competencies of office managers and their job performance in State owned universities in Rivers State.

Information management competencies

Every organization requires personnel with the appropriate competency for work. Although there are a lot of views about what competency is, the central idea is that competency has to do with the generic knowledge, skill or attitude that a person use to drive effective behaviour capable of producing desirable outcomes based on intended performance standards (Bytheway, 2011). Vichita and Jintawee (2007) opined that competency centres on the knowledge, skills, abilities, traits and behaviors that allow individuals to perform a task within a specific function or job. John (2008) opined that competency is the ability to apply knowledge and skills in performing activities within an occupation; or function as expected in an employment. Mejia et al. (2010) described competency as human characteristics that drive the successful performance of tasks. Diah and Hari (2015) opined that competency is the abilities of individuals which is associated to superior performance in job roles. These abilities include knowledge, skill, and attitude or a combination of the three strategically applied to each unit of work.

According to Siriwaiprapan (2000), competency is better described as the total knowledge, skills and attitude an individual utilizes to achieve success in any given task. Kolibacova (2014) expanded the definition by making it to encompass all the abilities, skills, knowledge and behaviour employees use to perform tasks in a particular working environment. ARMA International (2017) opined that competencies has to do with knowledge, skills, characteristics and traits that contribute to an employee's outstanding performance and are usually stated in measurable terms. Lotich (2019) defined competency as the possession of required skills, knowledge, qualification or capacity needed to effectively and efficiently execute a given task. Solomon (2019) asserted that competency centres on skill, knowledge and ability that enable one to perform a task well, it has to also do with the use of appropriate cognitive skills and personal attitude in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar or unexpected professional or career circumstance to drive productivity.

Ait-Haddouchane et al. (2017) also defined competency as the diverse internal resources of an employee which include knowledge, technical skills, and social/interpersonal skills, as well as one's networks that help to add value to the known in the process of solving problems in complex situation. Konigova et al. (2012) noted that competencies as capacity refers to abilities to perform certain activity, to have certain general and specific characteristics and skills, to be qualified in the given area which can be generally translated to a set of specific knowledge, abilities, skills, traits, motives, attitudes and values essential for the personal development and successful participation of each person in an organization.

Office managers' job performance

It is important to understand who an office manager is in order to appreciate the need for this personnel job performance. The definition of office manager varies from organization to organization's job descriptions. This is based on the fact that while some organizations basically see office managers as those assigned to perform administrative role relating to resources within the office, some see them as the information and office keepers of the organization such as secretaries, while others see them as high level managers that coordinate the activities of all units within an organization. Supporting this, the online business dictionary (2016) defined office manager as an employee of a business or organization whose duties typically include allocating physical resources such as office space and supplies, scheduling internal events, overseeing operational staff such as accountants, technicians and administrative personnel, and other details necessary to run an office in any industry or field. The market business news (2019) defined an

office manager as a person who is responsible for the administrative activities of a company or organization.

Office managers in public organization mostly are seen as administrative assistant and secretaries while in many smaller private organizations, the secretary acts as the office manager and are responsible for a diver set of administrative tasks. Azi (2015) noted that office managers are sometimes referred to as secretary and administrative assistant in some organizations. Kahirol et al. (2017) noted that secretary in most organization serves as executive officers or office manager. Seet (2019) noted that different organizations have contrasting ideas of what an office manager is, hence the role of an office manager may be confusing except defined within the context of operation. Alison (2020) noted that although many confused office manager to mean secretary or administrative assistant, in reality, they actually operate at the highest level of companies with the responsibility of leading and working with other heads of departments in order to build a healthy work environment.

It is worth noting that the meaning an organization gives to the term office manager determines the job responsibilities assigned as seen in the earlier reviewed literature. According to Azi (2015), the job responsibilities of office manager vary from organization to organization, industry to industry and employer to employer. The author noted that however some common jobs performed by office managers are: receiving visitors, scheduling and organizing meetings, dealing with correspondence, receiving, preserving and disseminating relevant office information and carrying out other office tasks. Dosunmu, Olugbenga and Adeyanju (2017) noted that if office manager connotes secretary, job responsibilities can be grouped into four (4) namely: communicate effectively within and outside the organization; that is, ability to write good memos/reports/letter; and being able to express oneself fluently in English Language to clients. Secondly, they are responsible for information retrieval, processing, storage and dissemination – either manually or electronically. Thirdly, they serve as the brain and memory of the office. Lastly, they supply management staff with information both from outside and within their organizations. Robert and Henry (2011) opined that secretary as an employee of organization is employed to coordinates office activities and performs secretarial assignments for professional or management staff, therefore in situation where the superior employees served are more than one, become the bridge linking various units.

According to Okolocha and Baba (2017), job responsibilities of secretary in institutions of higher learning cut across: handling correspondences, students' records, staff records, academic and non-academic related information. Seet (2019) opined that the responsibility of office manager as a higher level employee that provide support to organization operations through maintaining the office systems and supervising others are: generating meeting notes, picking up calls, responding to general questions regarding front-end business operations, handling external people who come into the office, receiving and preparing invoices relating to contracts, making rent payments, organizing an office's administrative structure, supervising who's coming and going at the office, and supervision of other employees. Target Jobs (2019) described the responsibilities of office managers to include but not limited to organizing meetings and managing databases; organizing organization's events or conferences; ordering stationery and furniture, dealing with correspondences, complaints and queries. Alison (2020) noted that as higher level personnel that builds healthy working environment, the office manager is responsible for managing and supervising the entire working space in order to ensure that all offices or complex of offices run smoothly.

Information protection competencies and office manager's job performance

Information in the process of its management passes through many stages capable of exposing it to different authorized and unauthorized persons if not protected. Therefore, to ensure its protection, information protection is considered essential element of effective information management. Information protection competency is an important competency required of office

information managers due to the fact that their job responsibilities require them to provide information to users within and from outside the organization (Osborne, 2019). Cline et al. (2010) noted that simultaneous provision of information to users within and from outside an organization requires effective measures that guarantee protection of information and its system from inappropriate access, use and disclosure. Caballero (nd) noted that every organization's information security manager needs to have a clear understanding of areas that need to be protected and collaborate with all units from which such information are generated to ensure their protection. The author also noted that in ensuring the holistic security of organization's information whether public or private, certain body of knowledge and skills such as: data security, access controls, network security, application security, wireless security, operation security and physical environment security are required of office manager. According to ARMA International (2017), information protection competencies needed by office information managers are knowledge and skills necessary to proactively prevent and manage the potential for damage, loss, or unauthorized access to office information. Wilkins (2019) opined that information protection competencies needed by office personnel should include knowledge and skills for office automation processes, metadata management, social media governance, and information management standards. According to Guo et al. (2011), most information managers using ITs to drive information management lack information protection knowledge and skills because they don't consider information security as part of their job.

Studies on information protection and performance vary from organization to organization. Jo et al. (2011) found that the success organization rest upon their employees' information protection (IP) capabilities. Gillon, et al. (2011) reported subjecting organization and their clients to lost where information are breach due to lack of information security. Koskosas et al. (2011) discovered that the information protection practices of employees enable organizations to achieve their goals. Wallace et al. (2011) reported employee's information management depends on the ability to protect unauthorized access and usage.

Working Conditions

The job performance of every employee is not only determined by his or her personal characteristics but it is also influenced by the conditions in which the employee is expected to perform the task. Hence, in studying the relationship between managers' information management competencies, it is significant to study the working conditions which can interfere with the office manager's information management job performance. According to Kahya (2007), working conditions can be described as the work environmental conditions and hazards experienced by employees. USLegal (2020) noted that working conditions have to do with the environment in which employee works and all the existing circumstances affecting the employee in the workplace such as job hours, physical nature of the environment, legal rights and responsibilities. The Online Business Dictionary (2020) defined working conditions as the conditions in which personnel works and these include but not limited to amenities, physical environment, stress, noise levels, degree of safety or danger. Spacey (2018) defined working conditions as the demands of employees, environment of work, and terms of a job that influence employees' job satisfaction. The author stated the types of working conditions to include hygiene factors, health & safety, remuneration, profit sharing, employee's benefits, responsibility and accountability, workload, work schedule, occupational stress, commuting & travels, autonomy, controls, job security, employment terms and organizational culture.

According to Elger (nd), conditions for optimal job performance and improvement in performance are: engaging the performer in an optimal emotional state (motivation), immersing the performer and enriching environment (working condition), and engaging the performer in reflective activities (assessment for improvement). Kolibacova (2014) noted that the effective performance of work in any working environment depends on the ease with which the work flows among the various stakeholders that need to make input(s) capable of actualizing tasks. Pfano and Beharry (2016)

noted that performance is enhanced by many factors which include but not limited to the working conditions such as rewards, recognition, remuneration, office technologies and the physical atmosphere of work.

Many researchers have examined the effect of working condition to the performance of employees at different levels. Kahya (2007) found that there was substantial relationship between employee performance and working environment conditions. The author noted that poor workplace conditions (physical efforts, environmental conditions and hazards) result in decreasing employee performance measured by indices such as following organization's rules, cooperating with coworkers, concentrating on tasks, creativity at work and absenteeism. Bushiri (2014) found that organization's working conditions have an impact on employees' performance. The author noted that organization with flexible working environment, better supervisor's interpersonal relationship with subordinates, presence of job aids (working kits, tools and technologies), performance feedback and improve work incentives motivate employees to perform their jobs better. Bean (2020) found out that working conditions such as workplace light, air, noise, health, culture, movement, quality of furniture and incentives have a very strong correlation with employees' performance. The author also note that organizations with good environmental conditions at their workplace, have flexible working practices and provide workers with aids to work, motivate employees to be more productive, creative and open.

Theory of Job Performance by Campbell et al. (1993)

Campbell, McCloy, Oppler and Sager's (1993) theory of performance stated that job performance is concerned with actions or behaviors under the control of the individual, that contribute to the organization's goals, and that can be measured according to the individual's level of proficiency in different job related areas. Campbell *et al*/outlined eight job performance factors: job-specific task proficiency, on-job task proficiency, written and oral communication, efforts exerted, maintaining personal discipline, contributing to peer and team work, supervision and management or administration of functions. The theorist gave a concise explanation of each of the eight dimensions of performance as follows:

Job-specific task proficiency is defined as how well an individual employee performs tasks that make up the core or technical aspect of a job which distinguish it from other jobs. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) explained job-specific task proficiency as "the proficiency with which job incumbents perform activities that are formally recognized as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services (p. 73)".

Non-job-specific task proficiency is concern with how well the employee is able to perform the tasks that are not specific to a particular the job, but is expected of most or all jobs in the organization. Effort exerted is concerned with the consistency or perseverance and intensity of an employee's commitment to complete job tasks, whereas maintenance of personal discipline refers to doing away with negative behaviors (such as rule infractions, absenteeism, and alcohol abuse) at work which may affect performance. Management or administration differs from supervision in that the former includes performance behaviors directed at managing the organization that are distinct from supervisory or leadership roles. Written and oral communications has to do with how well the employee can communicate in written or oral form independent of the correctness of the subject matter to others. According to Campbell and colleagues, these eight dimensions are sufficient to describe the latent structure of performance at a general level. Campbell et al. (1990), however, point out that the salience or importance of these eight dimensions differs across occupational groups.

The above reviewed theory is important to the present study because it provides the researcher with the basis for determining office manager's job performance. As the theory suggests, job

performance can be viewed and measured from eight dimensions, however, a critical examination of the various dimensions shows that the job-specific tasks proficiency would provide the good fit for comparison of office manager's information management competencies and their job performance. This is because office manager's information management competencies are more related to the performance of information management responsibilities. Consequently, in this study office manager's job performance would be evaluated by measuring the sum of the expected values of all behaviors related to information management tasks proficiency in the areas of organizing meetings; managing database; dealing with online/offline correspondences, complaints and queries; preparing online and offline mails, electronic presentations, and reporting to executive officers online and offline over some standard period of time

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that office managers' information management competencies with proxies as records management competencies, communication competencies and information technology competencies have negative, low and very low positive relationship with their job performance with proxies as tasks and contextual performance in State owned universities in Rivers State. It can be concluded also that information protection competencies as proxy of information management competency has very low positive relationship with office managers' job performance State with proxies such as tasks and contextual performance in State owned universities in Rivers State.

It can also be concluded that except for the relationship between information protection competencies and contextual performance, there is no significant relationship between all proxies of information management competencies of office managers and their job performance in State owned universities in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions made, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation: Secretaries of State owned universities in Rivers State should adapt to the use of various technologies capable of driving their job performance by utilizing the information technology competencies they possessed effectively.

1. Rivers State government should provide more funding to State owned universities in order to ensure the provision of office environment that supports optimum job performance.
2. Rivers State government in collaboration with the institutional management should ensure that only job seekers who have demonstrated high level of information management competencies especially records management competencies, information technology and information protection are given the opportunity for employment as secretaries within the State owned universities.
3. Office information management educators should advocate and ensure the implementation of curriculum content that can enhance future graduates' information management competencies for office job performance.
4. Researchers in the area of information management should continue to investigate every aspects of office managers information management competencies and how it affects their job performance in order to make continuous recommendations capable of making this cadre of personnel globally competitive.

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