

Communication Skills and Task Performance of Administrative Staff in Public Polytechnics, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This abstract provided a concise overview of a study conducted to assess Communication Skills and Task Performance of Administrative Staff in Public Polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria. The work aimed to explore the intersection of these critical factors in the context of educational institutions. Communication Skills are assessed through an examination of verbal and written communication abilities, interpersonal skills, and the use of modern communication technologies. Two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A total population of 219 staff and administrators in the polytechnics in Edo States were used for the study. A structured and validated questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and reliability co-efficient for the construct is 0.911. Mean and Linear Regression were used to answer the research question and determine the homogeneity of respondents' responses. The hypotheses were tested using P-Values at 0.05 level of significance. The hypotheses showed that Communication skill are significant with Task Performance among administrative staff. High levels of effective communication positively influence task performance. The study also explored potential areas for improvement, such as targeted training programmes to communication strategies. This research contributed to the understanding of the factors influencing the performance of administrative staff in educational institutions, providing insights that can inform policies and interventions to optimize the functioning of Public Polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Administrative Staff, Communication Skills, Public Polytechnics, Task Performance, Nigeria

Word Count: 245

Introduction

The task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics has been a topic of interest in the field of education and management. Public polytechnics are educational institutions that offer technical and vocational education and training programs to prepare students for the workforce. Administrative staff play a critical role in the success of these institutions. These institutions provide a critical link between education and industry by producing highly skilled and competent graduates who can meet the demands of the labor market. They are responsible for managing and coordinating various aspects of the polytechnics, including admissions, student records, financial management, and facilities maintenance. The quality of their task performance can impact the efficiency and effectiveness of the polytechnic. Task performance simply refers to the extent to which an individual performs their job duties effectively and efficiently (Sandall & Mourao, 2023). High-quality work performance in these settings requires highly knowledgeable and technically skilled employees. These employees must also be in optimal physical and mental states in order to obtain and maintain high levels of alertness, vigilance and situational awareness, and thus able to fulfill their tasks effectively.

Concept of Task Performance

Task performance can be defined as the effectiveness with which an employee performs 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. Authors divided job performance into two categories: task and contextual performance (Fernandes, 2022). Task performance denotes an organization's central technical process to successfully produce services and goods. Thus, task

performance involves the quantity and quality of the output of employees. Task performance depends on how effective the activities that employees carry out are and their connection to the organization's objectives. When dealing with task performance, the central consideration is whether workers perform according to the organization's expectations depending on what needs to be achieved. Every activity that employees do needs to be related to the organization's goals. To meet the individual and organizational goals, all stakeholders, including managers, subordinates, colleagues, vendors, and customers, must communicate effectively. Effective communication allows them to talk and plan regarding the role played by each individual towards the attainment of common goals (Muhammad & Toryila, 2018). When the organization's goals are met, stakeholders and individuals associated with that organization also tend to benefit. Therefore, for organizations to prosper through maximum productivity, they will need to ensure that employees are performing at their best.

Performance may denote achievement, accomplishment, the outcome of an action, behavior, the task done or the use of a method, instrument or abstract concept (Askun, ÇiZel & Ajanovic, 2021). In the literature, the definitions vary depending on the usage and context of study. For example, task performance can mean the main work tasks (that is, basic or technical) that play a central role and should be performed according to the competence of the worker.

There are three measures adapted for task performance which include, Commitment, Clarity and challenging goals. Regarding commitment to work, individuals must be dedicated to their task and put in the effort required to achieve their goals. This means that

goals must be seen as important and meaningful to the individual, and they must be ready to make sacrifices and overcome obstacles in order to achieve them. For clarity, setting specific goals provides a clear target for individuals to work towards. Goals should be clearly defined and measurable not ambiguous or vague so that progress can be tracked. Setting challenging goals can motivate individuals to work harder and strive for better performance. However, goals should also be achievable, as setting goals that are too difficult can lead to frustration and a lack of motivation. The three measures for task performance explained above have been widely researched and has been found to be effective in many settings, including education, sports, and the workplace. It is often used by managers to motivate employees and increase performance, and by individuals to achieve personal and organizational goals.

The performance of administrative staff is critical to the overall success of the institution, and any impediment to their commitment to work can have a significant impact on their productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness in carrying out their tasks. Factors such as motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, leadership style, and training and development opportunities can all influence the commitment of administrative staff to work. If any of these factors are lacking or inadequate, it can lead to a decrease in the staff's motivation and engagement levels, resulting in reduced productivity and performance. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to administrative staff's commitment to work and identify any challenges or obstacles that may hinder their performance. Addressing these challenges and providing a conducive work environment, proper motivation and job satisfaction, training and development opportunities, and effective leadership can enhance the commitment of administrative staff to work, improve

their performance, and ultimately contribute to the success of the public polytechnic. However, the factor that may influence Task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State is Communication skills.

Concept of Communication Skills

Communication plays a very important role in creating mutual understanding or change perceptions and behaviors. It also, determines how effectively administrative staff perform their task efficiently and effectively. When it comes to improving communication, as it relates to task performance, it is important to make sure that communication to attend promptly to stakeholders is apt, that expectations are properly set up front, and that any changes or deviations are communicated as soon as possible. All communications should reflect an understanding of the customer's needs and expectations and consider the service provider's ability to perform according to those expectation. (Güleç & Leylek, 2018). As long as administrative staff members of public polytechnics are able to properly understand the needs of the students', perform according to those expectations and communicate effectively, it is likely to find that the stakeholders' perception of the performance is aligned with the expectations and that stakeholders are therefore satisfied with the performance of the administrative staff. Effective communication skill is an essential skill for administrative staff in public polytechnics. It enables them to interact with students, faculty, and other stakeholders effectively. Communication also plays a vital role in enhancing the productivity and performance of administrative staff. The ability to communicate well has a significant impact on the success of administrative staff in completing their tasks and responsibilities.

Measures for communication skills were adopted from Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). These includes, written and oral communication. Written communication refers to any form of communication that is written, such as email, text messaging, or social media. Written communication can be more formal or informal than oral communication, depending on the context. When individuals use written communication, they may adapt their communication styles to accommodate the recipient's communication style. For instance, if an individual is communicating with someone who is more formal, they may use more formal language in their written communication to accommodate the other person's communication style. Oral communication refers to any form of communication that is spoken, such as face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, or video conferencing. In oral communication, individuals can use nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, to adjust their communication styles to accommodate the recipient's communication style. For instance, if an individual is communicating with someone who is soft-spoken, they may adjust their own volume and tone to match the other person's communication style.

Task performance is a demonstration of competencies determined by whether employees act in a way that is expected of them on their jobs. Administrative staff in public polytechnics are responsible for managing a wide range of tasks communicating with students, staff, and ensuring that tasks are completed in a timely and accurate manner. However, there is a concern regarding the task performance of administrative staff members at public polytechnics, specifically in relation to their willingness to work, achievement of specific goals, and ability to meet challenging goals. Despite the availability of resources and training programs, the level of performance among the

administrative staff is not meeting the expected standards. This issue can potentially affect the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the institution's operations, as well as its reputation among stakeholders (Askun, ÇiZel & Ajanovic, 2021).

However, task performance of administrative staff can be enhanced through adequate communication skill, which will result in overall performance of the institutions under study. Although, extant literature reviewed indicated that quite a number of studies have been carried out on features that influences task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics, (Ajani, 2021, Li, Chen & Wu, 2019, Ngugi & Ombui 2018). However, study focusing on communication skills and task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnic in Edo State has received less attention, thereby suggesting a gap worthy of investigation. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of communication skills on task performance in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of communication skills on task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics Edo State, Nigeria while the objectives are to:

- i. identify the level of task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria.
- ii. identify various communication skills displayed by administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria
- iii. examine the influence of communication skills on task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in the study.

- a. What is the level of task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria?
- b. What are the various communication skills displayed by administrative staff in public polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There will be no significant influence of communication skills on task performance of administrative staff in public polytechnics Edo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The methods employed in this study include: The research design which empirically investigated the influence of communication skills on task performance of administrative staff in Public Polytechnics, Edo State, Nigeria, using a cross-sectional survey research approach. This study approach guarantees the collection of data from several subjects all at once. Because respondents fill out similarly worded self-reported questionnaires, the researcher's bias is lessened and the amount of high-quality information obtained is genuine and dependable, making this design acceptable for this study. The population of this study, covers 245 administrative staff in the Public Polytechnics in Edo State. These include: Auchi polytechnic, Auchi with 190 Administrative staff and Edo State polytechnic, Usen with 55 Administrative staff. The computation of sample size and sampling technique adopted, is a total of 245 sample size which are made up of administrative staff of the

selected Public Polytechnics in Edo State which represent the total population. Total enumeration was employed for this study due to the minimal number of the population. The description of research instrument used is the questionnaire which was utilized to collect information from the respondents since it makes it simple to analyze the structured questions and answers to meet the goal of the study. Data was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire in accordance with the body of literature already in existence, primary data was gathered to fulfill the study's goals. This instrument is suitable for a cross-sectional survey design primarily because it facilitates the gathering of information about respondents' opinions and perceptions of current concerns at a particular period. Data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistic (Williams & Anderson, 1991), (Adeniran & Olakunle, 2022). The use of the descriptive statistics was appropriate because it helps to describe and summarize data in terms of frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and percentage of response about variables under study, thereby answering the research questions. To test the hypothesis formulated, inferential analysis was used to analyze the null hypothesis using regression analysis, and the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected for the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 24.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The study examined the topic, the influence of communication skills on task performance using Regression analysis. The first study question's conclusion indicates that the administrative staff's task performance level in Edo State, Nigeria's public polytechnics is moderately high. The overwhelming majority of responders indicated that task performance was on the rise. Notwithstanding, several obstacles were detected, and these

obstacles stem from diverse sources. Because of their many jobs and expanded responsibilities, administrative staff frequently has a heavy burden. Excessive workloads can cause stress, exhaustion, and trouble effectively managing duties. Time constraints and strict deadlines can make it difficult to plan and complete tasks effectively. Secondly, task performance was increasing, according to the vast majority of respondents. Still, a number of barriers were found, and these barriers originate from many sources. Administrative staff usually has a lot on their plate due to their numerous tasks and increased duties. Overwhelming workloads can lead to stress, tiredness, and difficulties handling responsibilities well. Effective task planning and completion can be challenging when faced with time limits and stringent deadlines. From the Regression result, it was found that the responses (task performance and communication skill) have a significant influence on task performance, since the p-value (0.002 and 0.000) < 0.05 (α = level of significance) and a positive influence and a positive slope/coefficient of the dependent variable (Task performance). The positive influence implies that a unit increase in communication skill output will result to an increment in Task performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on Communication Skills and Task Performance of Administrative Staff in Public Polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria, has provided valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of these critical components within the educational landscape. The findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the current state of administrative competencies and lay the foundation for informed decision-making and strategic interventions.

Communication Skills emerged as a crucial determinant of effective administrative functions. The research highlights the need for workshops and initiatives aimed at improving verbal and written communication, interpersonal skills, and the use of modern communication technologies. Fostering a culture of effective communication is paramount for cohesive teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, and overall organizational success. In essence, the study not only contributes to the academic discourse on administrative competencies but also provides practical implications for policymakers, administrators, and educators. The journey toward enhanced Communication Skills and Task Performance is a collective effort that holds the potential to elevate the standards of administrative functions in public polytechnics, fostering an environment conducive to academic excellence and institutional advancement.

Recommendations

1. Establish regular performance feedback mechanisms to assess and provide constructive feedback on Task Performance. This can include periodic evaluations, performance reviews, and feedback sessions to help administrative staff understand their strengths and areas for improvement in executing their tasks.
2. Conduct workshops and seminars aimed at improving Communication Skills among administrative staff. These initiatives should address both verbal and written communication, interpersonal skills, and the use of modern communication technologies. Emphasis should be placed on fostering clear, effective, and collaborative communication within the administrative team.

3. Encourage administrative staff to participate in professional development opportunities that specifically enhance Communication Skills. This can include attending relevant conferences, workshops, and online courses to stay abreast of best practices and emerging trends in information management and communication.

4. Integrate soft skills training into the professional development curriculum, focusing on interpersonal skills, teamwork, and conflict resolution. These skills are integral to effective communication and can positively impact overall Task Performance.

These recommendations aim to create a supportive and conducive environment for administrative staff in Public Polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria, ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to excel in their roles and contribute to the overall success of the institutions.

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