

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE WORK OUTCOMES OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between competence development and employee work outcomes of non-teaching staff in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study comprised of a total of 27,759 non-academic staff of the universities in the south-south. The sample size of three hundred and ninety-four was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between competence development and employee work outcomes of non-teaching staff in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, the results indicate that competence development positively enhances employee work outcomes of non-teaching staff in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Keywords: Competence development, employee work outcomes, employee engagement. employee satisfaction, employee intention to stay

INTRODUCTION

Employee outcomes reflect the extent to which employees have been valued and managed in the organization. Organizational efforts in the area of incentive schemes such as promotion, recognition, career development, and fringe benefits have been directed towards employee outcomes (employee commitment, employee satisfaction, employee engagement and organizational citizenship behaviour). These efforts may vary due to

different perceptions on how employees should be managed in the organization especially in the area of incentives. In the banking sector, just like in other sectors of the economy, employees are seen as critical factors in the growth and sustainability of firms.

Competence development is an important feature of the wider defined concept of competency management and it is defined as an important human resource tool that is often used within organisations to guide human resource practices such as selection, assessment, career management, employee development, and performance appraisal (Heinsman, de Hoogh, Koopman & van Muijen, 2006). Asiegbu, Awa, Akpotu, and Ogbonna (2011) also defined worker competence development to include all activities aimed at enlarging the competency levels of employees in order to facilitate the achievement of nominated organizational objectives. It involves the development of the knowledge and skills of employees so as to prepare them for newer or greater responsibilities and challenges (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2011). Through competency development, employees broaden their horizons and acquire newer technologies to enable them become more efficient and increase their creativity in problem-solving.

In the application of employee skills, knowledge competences on the job, human resources management should develop a template or framework that will guide the application of employee competences in the work organisation (Stoner *et al.*, 2013). The development of a template will guide management and employees to implement a step by step competence application in the areas of individual job description, departmental and organisational level work specifications. Framework development is the development of a conceptual model or template for the application of employee competence in the work organisation. The framework guides the application of employees' competence on the job and touches on the key areas the knowledge and skills of employees should be applied.

The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between competence development and employee work outcomes of non-academic staff in public Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study included to:

- i. Examine the relationship between competence development and engagement of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the relationship between competence development and satisfaction of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- iii. Examine the relationship between competence development and the intention to stay by non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework



Figure 1: Competence development and employee work outcomes

Source: Desk Research (2024)

The research questions that guided the study included:

- i. How does competence development relate with the engagement of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria?

- ii. How does competence development relate with the satisfaction of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria?
- iii. How does competence development relate with the intention to stay by non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

According to Barney (2011), Resource-Based View theory is the approach that best describes how organizations can gain competitive advantage and increase their performance. According to the RBV theory, organizational resources are the most important determinants of the competitiveness and performance of the organization. The theory suggests that organizations need to integrate their resources which are the key capabilities that they are assured of having for the sake of their internal operations and existence (Shivaraj & Vijayakumara, 2015).

In the view of Muhammad (2010), in an effort to bring into light the ways of integrating the organizational resources to win competitive advantage, the Resource-Based View theory is founded on two assumptions. First, the theory assumes that organizations in a given business environment are unrelated in the sense that their resources differ and the way that they integrate those resources is also different. Secondly, the theory assumes that due to the fact that immobility of some of the resources that make the strategies of the firms in a business environment differ, the heterogeneity of the firms may persist for a long period of time. The organization is a bundle of resources, which includes; physical, human and organizational resources and the way the resources are combined provide competitive advantage to the organization which is critical for its success or failure (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984 & Barney, 1991; cited in Madhani, 2010).

Conceptual Review

Competence Development

Competence development is closely linked to learning activities by offering programs (e.g. job rotation, training, mentoring) and opportunities (e.g. challenge task, career development) for employees (Schwochau et al., 1997). Previous studies have found that competence development is beneficial for the learning climate in organizations (Chaudhary et al., 2012). The organizations which consider their employees as valuable assets invest in learning activities and build long-term relationships for consistent improvement (Tsui et al., 1995). Therefore, competence development is assumed to be positively associated with employee learning. Competence development is used to enhance the productivity of individuals and convey a message to them that the firm is eager to invest in them. Such an investment may develop positive employees' attributions and a moral commitment of employees to pay back through their efforts (Tzafrir, 2005). Thus competence development is a major component of High Impact Human Resource Management (HIHRM) practices, as it is critical that employees have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to consider and discuss options to make accurate decisions related to their work (Konrad, 2006). A study by Shuck et al. (2014) has revealed that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement can be increased by the employees' participation in human resource development practices like learning opportunities, leadership development initiatives, and mentoring programs. These practices are regarded as one of the important factors to increase motivation, interest in learning and exploring new things, performance, productivity, innovative capability, and to gain a competitive edge (Eilström and Kock, 2008; Muñoz Castellanos and Salinero Muñoz, 2011). Studies have also identified that organizations fostering learning and competence development practices promote employee health and well-being (Karasek and Theorell, 1990).

Employee Work Outcomes

Employee outcomes are the immediate behaviours and work attitudes that result from the management policies and practices of any organization (Mulabe, 2013). Kassim and Mokhber, (2015) viewed employee outcomes as the behavioural exhibitions that employees display based on the nature of activities that are

going on in the organization. Employees do not bring these key work attitudes and behaviours on entry; rather, they acquire them in the workplace, from a process of the exchange relationship, via relevant HRM policies, programmes, processes, and practices (Lin & Chang, 2005; Luthans, 2008; Rodriguez & Ventura, 2013). The employee outcomes that have been selected for this study include job satisfaction, employee commitment, employee engagement and organizational citizenship behaviour.

Employee outcomes involve a commitment to supervisor, trust in management, cooperation, effort and involvement. We can therefore define employee outcomes as all attitudes of employee that may affect their job performances which may equally affect organizational performances. An employee that has high job satisfaction may be committed, has higher retention and lower turnover intentions, has higher productivity, less absenteeism and increased loyalty (Robins & Judge, 2007). Besides, a dissatisfied employee may not be committed, has high turnover intentions, low productivity, lack of loyalty and increased absenteeism (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Measures of Employee Work Outcomes

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become a widely used term in the practitioner literature (Saks, 2006). However, there is a lack of consensus among academics on how to conceptualize the concept (Kang, 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Literature suggests that engagement can be defined as both a process and an outcome. According to Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1993), public engagement is a complex process of debate, discussion, and interaction between the public and organizations. Khan first introduced the concept of engagement, defining job engagement as “the harnessing of organisational members’ selves to their work roles” (Khan, 1990). Unanimous with the most definition of employee engagement is passion, drive commitment and involvement of employees in providing consistent and sustained discretionary effort (Cook, 2008; Anitha, 2014 & Carbonara, 2012). These scholars concur that the consequence of good levels of employee engagement is improved customer satisfaction, positive results and organisational performance

(Mone & London, 2014; Boikanyo, 2012). Employee Engagement is the devotion, passion of employees and effective leadership skills with support from the top management to the employees. Human resource leaders set the drive and creed of their company and spread that positive morale to the employees in the company.

Engagement emphasizes listening, feedback, two-way, and dialogic communication. Besides, engagement as a process includes the element of participation and characterized by the practice of involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, policy-forming, and other activities of organizations (Rowe & Frewer, 2010).

Employee Satisfaction

According to Ali and Ahmed (2017), job satisfaction can be defined as how happy an employee is with his job. If the nature of work and reward (both monetary and non-monetary) are according to the employee's expectation, they intend to be satisfied with their job. If not then it will result in a dissatisfied employee that might lead to an increase in turnover, and that people productivity, creativity increases when they are happy with their job, because they tend to be more attentive and show more dedication towards their work. Their position is an improvement over previous definitions by (Ahmed, 2010). According to these authors job satisfaction is a key to improving both organizational and individual performance. Employees with high levels of job satisfaction are more motivated to achieve the firm's objectives (Feinstein and Vondrasek, 2001; & Ahmed, 2010). Job satisfaction refers to employees' attitude towards their jobs which are the result of their perceptions of the job or task that they do. It is an emotional or evaluative response that can be positive, neutral or negative.

Rashid, Wani and Kumar (2013) argued that job satisfaction and motivation are inseparable tangible principles when it comes to the success of any firm and its workers. Thus, if workers are encouraged in their job, they experience higher levels of job satisfaction and are inclined to use their skills to put more effort into their work. In another dimension, Saeed, Lodhi, Iqbal, Nayyab, Mussawar and Yaseen (2013),

say job satisfaction is considered to be the measure of employee satisfaction or contention with their work. These authors said this term is relatively new because not so long ago, jobs offered to a person were often only compatible with the person's profession. Furthermore, several factors tend to affect a person's level of satisfaction.

Employee Intention to Stay

Intention to stay is the desire of a worker to continue his employment with a firm. Adi, Ma'arof and Angsor (2020) stated that intention to stay was an estimated probability that an employee will continue to work in an organization. Besides, it also refers to the employee's conscious and deliberate wish to continue to work with the same organization (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). Intention to stay is defined as employees' willingness to maintain employment relationship with their current employer on long-term basis. This is an inverse concept of intention to quit. Agbator and Olori (2020) defined employees' intention to quit as an individual's estimated probability that they are permanently leaving their organization at some point in the near future. Intention to stay is defined as employees' intention to stay in the present employment relationship with their current employer on long-term basis (Johanim 2012; Muhammad and Umar 2012).

Competence Development and Employee Work Outcomes

On the impact of competence development on organizational outcomes, Ateke and Nwulu (2018) studied employee competence development practices and organizational resilience in Port Harcourt. The study focused on determining the relationship between employee competency development and organizational resilience (measures of adaptive capacity, keystone vulnerability, situation awareness which is also alertness and resilience ethos). The study adopted an explanatory research design and used a questionnaire to collect primary data from 94 executives of 22 deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. The Spearman's rank order correlation was used to test stated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS version 20.0. The study

observed that employee competency development associates significantly with organizational resilience as the variable posted strong, positive and statistically significant relationship with all the measures of organizational resilience covered in the study that is adaptive capacity, keystone vulnerability, situation awareness and resilience ethos. The above study measured resilience using an organizational unit (macro level) of analysis but the current study will adopt a micro level of measuring resilience.

From the foregoing discourse, the study hypothesized thus:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between competence development and the engagement of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between competence development and the satisfaction of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between competence development and the intention to stay by non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study comprised of a total of 27,759 non-academic staff of the universities in the south-south. The sample size of three hundred and ninety-four was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

Table 1: Interpreting Correlation Coefficients

Rho	Interpretation
$\pm .00 - .19$	Very weak correlation
$\pm .20 - .39$	Weak correlation
$\pm .40 - .59$	Moderate correlation
$\pm .60 - .79$	Strong correlation
$\pm .80 - .99$	Very Strong correlation
± 1	Perfect correlation

Source: Cooper and Schindler (2014)

Table 1 shows that the '+' sign of Rho points a direct and positive relationship, while '-' sign of Rho shows an indirect or inverse relationship. Thus, the Rho sign indicates the direction of relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. This section was therefore used to present the answers to our research questions and test the earlier postulated hypotheses. However, we commenced by first presenting a proof of existing relationships using a scatter graph. Generally, the decision rule for the acceptance or rejection of hypothetical statements is premised on the adoption of a 0.05 significance threshold due to its 95% test on all hypotheses.

Table 2: Correlations for Competence Development Practices and Work Outcomes Measures

			Competence Development Practices	Employee Engagement	Employee Satisfaction	Employee Intention to Stay
Spearman's rho	Competence Development Practices	Correlation	1.000	.816**	.701**	.837**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	Employee Engagement	N	330	330	330	330
		Correlation	.816**	1.000	.819**	.794**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	Employee Satisfaction	N	330	330	330	330
		Correlation	.701**	.819**	1.000	.809**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	Employee Intention to Stay	N	330	330	330	330
		Correlation	.837**	.794**	.809**	1.000
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	330	330	330	330

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

Source: SPSS Output

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between competence development practices and employee engagement of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.816 on the relationship between competence development practices and employee engagement. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee engagement was as a result of the adoption of competence development practices. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence development practices and employee engagement of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between competence development practices and employee satisfaction of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Similarly, Table 2 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.701 on the relationship between competence development practices and employee satisfaction. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee satisfaction was as a result of the adoption of competence development practices. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between competence development practices and employee satisfaction of non-academic staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence development practices and employee satisfaction of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between competence development practices and employee intention to stay of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Also, Table 2 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.837 on the relationship between competence development practices and employee intention to stay. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee intention to stay was as a result of the adoption of competence development practices. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence development practices and employee intention to stay of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the competence development practices and employee work outcomes of non-teaching staff in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. This finding corroborates Ateke and Nwulu (2018) who studied employee competence development practices and organizational resilience in Port Harcourt. The study focused on determining the relationship between employee competency development and organizational resilience (measures of adaptive capacity, keystone vulnerability, situation awareness which is also alertness and resilience ethos). The study found that employee competency development associates significantly with organizational resilience as the variable posted strong, positive and statistically significant relationship with all the measures of organizational resilience covered in the study that is adaptive capacity, keystone vulnerability, situation awareness and resilience ethos.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Competence development practices positively enhance employee work outcomes of non-teaching staff in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. This implies that when public universities in South-South Nigeria focus on developing the skills and abilities of their non-teaching staff, it leads to better work outcomes for these employees. Essentially, investing in training programs, professional development opportunities, and skill-building initiatives can result in more competent and capable staff members.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that public universities should allocate resources to provide regular training and development opportunities for non-teaching staff. This could include workshops, seminars, online courses, and on-the-job training to enhance their skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

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