

HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF OFFICE MANAGERS IN YABA COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY, YABA, LAGOS

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Abstract

This research work focused on human relations skills and the job performance of office managers. The purpose of this study was to determine the human relation skills that are required of office managers for effective job performance and the effect of such skills on the performance of office managers in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba Lagos State. The methodology adopted was a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect data from the whole population of 132 office managers in the college who received the questionnaire but only 72 returned filled. The frequency distribution was used to present the descriptive statistics and the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis with the aid of a statistical package for social science (SPSS 26). The result shows that human relations skills were rated with a mean of 79.07% while job performance was rated a mean of 79.14% and that human relation skills have a weak, negative and non-significant effect on an office manager's performance in an organisation ($p > 0.05$). This study recommends that office managers should acquire human relations skills that will help them to improve their performance.

Keywords: Human relations skills, personal skills, interpersonal skills, and Job performance

Introduction

Job performance is the result of an employee's contribution to organizational success. It is the measurement of organisational success by assessing its employees' productivity and contributions (Al-Omari & Okasheh, 2017); the yardstick of measuring employees' contributions towards organizational growth and development (Rahaman, Gupta, Ali, Ali, & Taru, 2021; Inuwa, 2016) and it has always been a top priority for every organization. Job performance is an important component of industrial and organizational psychology, representing scalable activities, behaviours, and outcomes that employees engage in or contribute to organizational goals (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020).

Job performance is defined as the fulfilment of an employee's designated duties and the results generated on a certain job function or activity within a time frame (Inayat & Khan, 2021).

The job performance of office managers has a significant role to play in attaining organizational goals. The work of an office manager is deeply rooted in personal and interpersonal relationships. Virtually every work that an office manager does involves other people such as the boss, colleagues, and even members of the general public. An office manager is an administrative staff who oversees the affairs of the office and works closely with other people. An office manager is in charge of intra and inter-office relationships, streamlining administrative procedures, communication practices and office supervision (Loby, 2018).

An office manager's poor relationship with others (boss, colleagues and customers,) might make a business to fail. Their ability to effectively manage the relationship that exists in an organization determines the level of job performance. Job performance has always been a key factor in determining the success of any organization (Inuwa, 2016; Osibanjo, 2020). Organizational results and success are heavily reliant on office managers' performance. Office managers' job performance refers to how they execute their roles concerning personal and people relationships.

Office managers' job performance involves the ability to meet deadlines, take appropriate action, when necessary, respond to feedback, deal with sensitive issues, gives guidance in support of daily tasks and recognition of good performance and many other indices of job performance. The ability to effectively manage the workflow and the relationship that exists in organizations is a parameter for measuring office managers' job performance. No employee operates or performs assigned tasks alone; he/she needs the support of other employees while maintaining good work relationships with them. To achieve effective human relations for better job performance, office managers must respect the views of others and recognize their contributions.

Human relation skills are essential for creating and sustaining a pleasant work environment that enhances efficiency at work. Human relations are the employees' ability to interact with people within and outside the organization for mutual and lasting relationships (Dias, 2012). Human relation skills as those employability skills that help an individual secure and keep a job. Human relations employability skills focus on personal and interpersonal skills. Personal skills are soft skills that help an office manager interact with people.

Personal skills are defined as those skills individuals are born with, the natural talents, potentials or capabilities individuals develop through their experiences and deliberate practice (Bryce, 2022); an individual's inner skills and abilities (Mohmand, 2021). Personal skills are individuals' skills that are considered to be their strengths or weaknesses. Personal skills address an individual's ability to listen attentively, maintain an open mind, set clear goals, manage time effectively, resolve conflict, act without being directed, keep secrets and many more.

On the other hand, interpersonal skills are traits needed to interact and communicate with others. Interpersonal skills address how an individual interacts effectively with other employees within and outside the organization. Interpersonal skills are individuals' abilities that enable them to interact efficiently and effectively with others (Bryce, 2022; Mohmand, 2021; Sato, Nakamuro, & Owan, 2019). These are individual skills that facilitate interaction between or among employees within or outside the organization. Interpersonal skills include the ability to share information with others, build strong relationships, seek feedback, recognize the accomplishment of others, listen to the views of others, create an atmosphere of trust, network with professional associates, seek counsel

from others, and work well with others. Interpersonal skills are widely considered to be critical for workplace success. Both personal and interpersonal skills are essential in human relations.

The main goal of human relations skills development is to align workplace relationships with organizational expected goals to establish a favourable work atmosphere and minimize miscommunication while supporting individual and organizational performance (Hartati, 2020). Ineffective human relations skills negatively influence job performance in organizations. In line with the aforementioned, the study is aimed to examine the level of human relations skills and job performance of office managers and determine whether there is a significant relationship between human relations skills and job performance of office managers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Job Performance

Job performance is the worth and quantity of anticipated efforts put forth by employees to execute a specific task well (Wikipedia, 2022). Job performance is a measure that determines whether or not an employee is performing effectively at the workplace. It refers to the measure of job results and their predefined targets. Job performance is critical in every organization since pleased employees will work better to increase their organisation's performance and overall productivity in the long term (Saraih, Azmi, Sakdan, & Amlus, 2019; Rukmana, Sopiah, & Elfia-Nora, 2018). The employee must be observed and assessed at all times because employees' job performances are influenced by their abilities, leadership style, working conditions, incentive, training and development, personal and interpersonal skills and so on. Job performance encompasses employees' behaviour, talents, skills, proficiency and technical know-how (Inayat & Khan, 2021).

With employees' identified skills and competencies such as punctuality, meeting deadlines, giving clear guidance, and taking action promptly, employers assign duties and responsibilities to employees where they would effectively demonstrate their skills, potential, talent and competencies to achieve high performance and also meet the organisational goals. Job performance varies greatly since each employee has a varying amount of competence in doing their duties (Saraih, Azmi, Sakdan, & Amlus, 2019).

Concept of Human Relations Skills

Human relations skills is a term used to describe the interaction or relationships that exist between employees at the workplace or in a professional setting – a relationship between managers and the subordinates; the executive team and the managers to achieve the organisation's targeted goal (Marc Farland 2011; Ohaegbulam 2014; Keith Davies 2015; Phiri, Bano, & Raouf, 2019; Hardianto, Riadi, Mintarti, Hariyadi, Hutaaruk, & Ghozali, 2020; Hartati, 2020; Cetinkaya, Habibi, & Yavuz, 2021). Effective human relation is imperative for the survival of an organization because human resource coordinates, control, handle, and supervises other resources in an organization. To achieve an organization's goals, all stakeholders must work together. Human relations influence employees' daily life interactions and help to prevent misunderstandings between them.

Elements of personal and interpersonal human relations skills

The available literature shows that human relations skills, by and large, have a significant role in workplace healthy relationship and promotes good performance (Nna, 2011; Magaña-Medina, 2022; Manevska et. al., 2018; Jung & Shin, 2015; Muhammad, Toryila & Saanyol, 2018; Ayofe & Martha, 2022; Lewis, Olowo, & Okotoni, 2020; Ukaigwe & Jack 2020). Office managers should demonstrate effective interpersonal skills to perform at their best. The inability of office managers to demonstrate good interpersonal skills would not only affect their performance but the general well-being of the organization. Office managers should develop the skills to communicate, show empathy, resolve conflicts, seek counsel, and network with colleagues.

Communication: research findings show that human relations skills in the form of interpersonal communication are fundamental to job performance (Fatimayin, 2018; Kalogiannidis, 2020; Khan, Wajidi, & Alam, 2020; Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, & Ping, 2019; Titang, 2013; Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, & Ping, 2019; Kalogiannidis, 2020; Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, & Ping, 2019).). Employee trust is built and job performance is enhanced as long as people share information and build strong relationships. Effective communication strengthens interpersonal relationships and improves job performance (Fatimayin, 2018; Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, & Ping, 2019). An office manager's ability to communicate with others well helps build strong relationships, seek counsel from others, meet the needs of people, and listen carefully to the needs of others.

Empathy: this is a critical interpersonal skill designed to understand other workers' feelings, emotions or challenges. Empathy is a significant characteristic that fosters trust and faith (Clark, Robertson, & Young, 2019; Schwartzberg, 2022; Treen & Yu, 2022). It is the ability to perceive the world through the eyes of other people - the ability to tune into what someone else is thinking and feeling about a situation (Clark, Robertson, & Young, 2019; Singh, 2014). It enables office managers to consider the opinions of others, look at a situation from others' points of view, show compassion, find solutions to problems and strengthen relationships.

Conflict resolution: Conflict is unavoidable in organizations (Odeleye, 2020; Ndulue & Ekechukwu, 2016; Ajike, Akinlabi, Magaji, & Sonubi, 2015). How to resolve conflict when it arises is the priority of most organisations (Chibuokwu & Nwosu, 2016), and also leads to waste of resources and poor job performance (Utaka & Silas-Dibiko, 2020). To foster better work relationships, office managers must listen to the views of others to guarantee that everyone engaged in a disagreement feels heard and understood.

Empirical Review

Muhammad, Toryila and Saanyol (2018) investigated the influence of interpersonal relationships on job performance. The findings showed that there was a strong significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and the job performance of employees. This study's findings revealed that a healthy work environment where employees communicate effectively, show empathy and assist those who require the attention of others improves job performance.

Tantua and Akere (2022) studied the impact of employee workplace relation skills (measured by their empathy and anger management) on employee job performance (measured by their effectiveness and efficiency among hotel workers in Rivers State, Nigeria. They found that

workplace employee human relation skills (anger management and empathy) have a strong positive and significant relationship with their job performance in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design of about 72 office administrators in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba Lagos. A questionnaire in three sections delineated into section A – demographic characteristics, section B dealt with human relations skills of office managers and section C dealt with the employees’ job performance, was used to collect data to answer the research questions. The data collected were analysed using frequency distributions, correlation analysis and regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 26).

Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of office managers

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Female	71	94.7
	Male	2	2.7
	Non-response	2	2.7
Age	<= 30	4	5.3
	31 – 40	39	52.0
	41 – 50	30	40.0
	Non-response	2	2.7
Marital status	Single	10	13.3
	Married	63	84.0
	Non-response	2	2.7
Education Qualification	WASSCE	1	1.3
	NCE/ND	21	28.0
	HND/BS.C	51	68.0
	Non-response	2	2.7
Years in service	5 years & below	8	10.7
	6 - 10 years	30	40.0
	11 - 15 years	25	33.3
	16 years & above	9	12.0
	Non-response	3	4.0

Source: Authors’ Fieldwork (2023)

Table 1 shows that 94.7% of the office managers are female, 2.7% were male and 2.7% did not respond. Also, 52.0% of them were aged 31 – 40 years, 40% were aged 41 – 50 years, 5.3% were aged 30 years and below and 2.7% did not respond. In addition, 84.0% of the office managers were married, 13.3% were single and 2.7% did not respond. Furthermore, 68% of them had HND/BSc, 28.0% had NCE/ND, 1.3% had WASSCE and 2.7% did not respond. Lastly, 40.0% of the office managers had worked for 6 – 10 years, 33.3% had worked for 11 – 15 years, 12.0% had worked for 16 years and above, 10.7% had 5 years and below and 4.0% did not respond

Table 2: Human relation skills of office managers

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Personal skills				
I listen attentively	36 (48.0)	34 (45.3)	2 (2.7)	3 (4.0)
I communicate effectively	8 (10.8)	22 (29.7)	27 (36.5)	17 (23.0)
I maintain open-mind	24 (32.0)	45 (60.0)	2 (2.7)	4 (5.3)
My goals are clearly defined	30 (40.0)	45 (60.0)	-	-
I use my time effectively	37 (50.0)	37 (50.0)	-	-
I have the ability to resolve conflict	39 (52.0)	36 (48.0)	-	-
I put myself in other people's shoes	38 (50.7)	36 (48.0)	-	1 (1.3)
I act without waiting for directives	38 (51.4)	34 (45.9)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)
I keep to the agreed time	37 (49.3)	37 (49.3)	-	1 (1.3)
I keep peoples' secrets, secret	40 (53.3)	35 (46.7)	-	-
Interpersonal skills				
I seek feedback and clarification	35 (46.7)	40 (53.3)	-	-
I meet the needs of other people	26 (34.7)	49 (65.3)	-	-
I share information with others	32 (42.7)	43 (57.3)	-	-
I build stronger relationships	24 (32.0)	51 (68.0)	-	-
I recognise the accomplishment of others	33 (44.0)	42 (56.0)	-	-
I listen carefully to the views of others	32 (43.2)	42 (56.8)	-	-
I create an atmosphere of mutual trust	36 (48.0)	38 (50.7)	-	1 (1.3)
I network with professional associates	29 (38.7)	45 (60.8)	-	-
I seek counsel from co-workers	34 (45.3)	40 (53.3)	1 (1.3)	-
I work well with others	26 (34.7)	49 (65.3)	-	-

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2023)

Table 2 shows the personal domains of the human relation skills of office managers and reveals that 93.3% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they listen attentively, 40.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they communicate effectively, 92.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they maintain open-mind and all of them agreed or strongly agreed that their goals were clearly defined.

Also, it shows that 100% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they use their time effectively, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they can resolve conflict, and 98.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they put themselves into other people's shoes. Also, it shows that 97.2% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they act without waiting for directives, 98.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they keep to the agreed time, and 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they keep people's secrets.

The interpersonal domains of human relations skills of office managers reveal that 100.0% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they seek feedback and clarification, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they meet the needs of other people, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they share information with others and all of them agreed or strongly agreed that they build stronger relationships. Also, it shows that 100% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they recognise the accomplishment of others, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they listen carefully to the views

of others, and all the secretaries agreed or strongly agreed that they create an atmosphere of mutual trust. Also, it shows that 100.0% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they network with professional associates, 98.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they seek counsel from co-workers, and 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they work well with others.

Table 3: Employee Job Performance of Office Managers

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Arrive for work on time	39 (52.0)	36 (48.0)	-	-
Meet work deadlines	32 (42.7)	43 (57.3)	-	-
Propose solutions to problems	31 (41.3)	44 (58.7)	-	-
Take appropriate action on the problem as necessary	29 (38.7)	46 (61.3)	-	-
Use time effectively	30 (41.1)	43 (58.9)	-	-
Consult with supervisors and co-workers as necessary	29 (38.7)	46 (61.3)	-	-
Effectively collaborate with other department members as necessary	23 (30.7)	52 (69.3)	-	-
Deal effectively and professionally with employees in other areas	34 (45.3)	41 (54.7)	-	-
Respond appropriately to feedback on job performance	29 (38.7)	46 (61.3)	-	-
Deals appropriately with confidential information	32 (42.7)	43 (57.3)	-	-
Deals appropriately with sensitive issues	28 (37.3)	47 (62.7)	-	-
Give clear guidance in support of daily tasks	25 (33.3)	50 (66.7)	-	-
Maintain a positive relationship with all employees supervised	22 (29.7)	52 (70.3)	-	-
Demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues	19 (25.3)	56 (74.7)	-	-
Recognition for good performance	17 (22.7)	58 (77.3)	-	-

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2023)

Table 3 is on the job performance ratings of office managers and it shows that 100.0% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they arrive for work on time, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they meet work deadlines, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed they propose a solution to problems and all the office managers agreed or strongly agreed they take appropriate action on the problem as necessary.

Also, shows that 100.0% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they use time effectively, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they consult with supervisors and co-workers as necessary, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed they effectively collaborate with other department members as necessary and all the office managers agreed or strongly agreed they deal effectively and professionally with employees in other areas.

In addition, it shows that all of the office managers agreed or strongly agreed that they respond appropriately to feedback on job performance, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they deal appropriately with confidential information, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed they deal appropriately with sensitive information and all the office managers agreed or strongly agreed they give clear guidance in support of daily tasks.

Lastly, shows that all of the office managers agreed or strongly agreed that they maintain a positive relationship with all employees supervised, 100.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they demonstrate appropriate interaction with the staff, and all the office managers agreed or strongly agreed they have good recognition for good performance.

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between human relation skills and job performance of Office managers

Variables	Std.		r	p	Remark
	Mean	Deviation			
Job performance evaluation score (%)	79.14	7.64	-0.195	0.095	Not sig
Human relations skills score (%)	79.07	5.31			

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2023)

The mean job performance evaluation score (%) was 79.14% (sd = 7.64%) while their human relations skills score (%) was 79.07 (5.31%). The correlation coefficient between them is -0.195 which shows that there is a non-significant negative and weak linear relationship between office managers' human relations skills and their job performance ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the greater the human relations skills of office managers, the less they perform on their job.

Table 5: Regression model of employee human relation skills and their job performance

Model	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	102.386	13.696	7.476	.000
Human relations skills score	-.295	.173	-1.701	.093
$F_{1,72} = 2.893; p = 0.093; R^2 = 0.038$				

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2023)

The regression model is given as:

Office managers' Job Performance = 102.386 – 295*human relations skills

It shows that a percent increase in human relations skills will reduce employee job performance by .295% and the decrease is not significant ($p > 0.05$). The implication is that office managers' performance on their job will improve by reducing their human relations skills. The coefficient of determination obtained was 0.038 which shows that human relations skills account for only 3.8% of the total variability in their job performance leaving the remaining 96.2% to other factors.

Discussion

The study found that a non-significant negative and weak relationship exists between human relations skills and the job performance of office managers in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba Lagos. This contradicts with the reports of Tantua and Akere (2022) who submitted that a positive, strong and significant relationship between workplace human relations skills and the job performance of hotel workers in Rivers State Nigeria. The finding also disagrees with Samwel



(2018) who found a weak positive and significant relationship between human relations and employee performance and organisational performance. This finding also negates the findings of Shahmohammadi (2015) who reported a positive and significant relationship between human relations skills and productivity skills and the effectiveness of employees. It also negates the findings of Hartati (2020) in the study of public service where they reported a direct positive relationship between employee performance and human relations implemented by the head of the service.

The study also found that human relations skills decrease the job performance of office managers which is at variance with the findings of Tantua and Akere (2022) who reported that workplace human relations skills improve employees' job performance.

Conclusion

Given the findings of this study, it is concluded that human relations skills in terms of personal and non-personal skills hurt the job performance of office managers. This conclusion runs in the face of previous studies which were positive and significant. The implication is that while human relations skills and job performance are positively and significantly correlated in the private sector, the findings here could only relate to the civil service where outcome is not commensurate with input and where recruitment and placement are not purely on merit but follows other criteria like who you know and whether you are politically connected. In the light of this implication, we recommend that the civil service in Nigeria should endeavour to “put square pegs in square holes” to ensure and enhance productivity and service delivery to the populace. Also, the mentality of fixing people into offices they are not well suited for should be discouraged or completely eradicated. Lastly, continuous training and retraining of staff, and more importantly general reorientation of the workforce should be engaged in and implemented to make the civil service “bite” again. The private sector is not left out in the decadence experienced as a country where merit is relegated. Every sector of the society must ensure that meritocracy is the new norm.

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