

Impact of Organizational Communication Processes on Employees' Performance: A Case of Selected Civil Service Ministries in Bayelsa State

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Date of publication (dd/mm/yyyy): 27/02/2018

Abstract – This paper investigated the effect of communication processes on employees' performance in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. A survey research design was employed. Data was generated from five civil service ministries in Bayelsa State through a survey questionnaire. Out of the 290 survey questionnaires administered, 283 were retrieved and found valid for final analysis. Multiple linear regressions analysis was used to examine the four research hypotheses after subjecting same data to demographic profiling, validity and reliability diagnosis, and preliminary tests aimed at ascertaining the suitability of parametric statistical techniques through the SPSS version 23.0 software. Findings indicate that messages sent, messages received, message medium, and feedback mechanism were significant predictors employees' performance with messages sent emerging as the most outstanding predictor. It was recommended that civil service ministries can enhance employees' performance by installing effective communication processes that ensures harmonization across the messages sent and received as well as the message medium and feedback mechanism.

Keywords – Communication, Employee, Organization, Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest assets of any organization is her employees. Therefore, the higher the commitment of employees, the higher their performance would positively affect the organization's interest. One factor that contributes to employees feeling they are of value to their organization is effective communication. A wide range of studies have linked organizational communication to several performance outcomes including employees' performance. For instance, [1] stated that clear communication and consistent feedback are the keys to success. Thus, employees will only act as expected if message received is clearly understood. Additionally, [2] argued that an open, honest two-way conversation will help managers get to the root of any performance problem, even if it's minor or temporary. Reference [3] show more elaborately posit that communication within an organization should be effective because it (i) is tie that binds managerial functions of planning, staffing, organizing, leading and controlling; (ii) helps to harness or tap on the immense talents available in today's diverse cultural world of organizations and (iii) is at the center of the manager's work activities. Overall organizational communication is vital and its processes are worth making known to key stakeholders of every organization.

Unfortunately, most organizations find it difficult to engage their key stakeholders in effective communication. Reference [4] asserts that effective communication is a challenge to management of most organizations. Reference [5] asserted that supervisors at all levels tend to worry about the employee performance process, but frequently overlook the fact that effective performance management has much more to do with building productive working relationships with one's subordinates than it has to do with other requirement processes. Most employees desire to know how good or bad they have performed and about their future in the organization. Additionally, although stakeholders spend so much time relating with one another in an organization [6], this network of relationships fostered mainly by communication has been severely marred by lack of effective communication in several enterprises. But in good times or bad in many organizations, there seems to be little real understanding of the relationships between managers, among employees, and interactions between the two.

The problem of lack of effective communication processes is even more likely to be prevalent in Nigerian civil service ministries because of its bureaucratic structure. Disseminating information that requires immediate action and expecting the desired action is a concern in civil service ministries of a state like Bayelsa where the geographical nature of the workspace is a major source of concern. Originally, the civil service has three main responsibilities which includes; policy formulation support for the government, creating conducive environment for the private sector, delivering leadership for public businesses. It seems that the ability of any state civil service to undertake the above responsibilities creditably depends on its communication processes to its goals and aspirations. The level of communication in the organization is therefore an important factor in determining the overall job performance of employees. The employees are also going to be affected positively or negatively by the communication processes. So, Bayelsa State civil service is expected to nurture and sustain its communication processes for better performance and goal attainment. Hence, leaders in different arms of the state civil service are expected to have an in-depth knowledge of its communication requirements and work towards creating a better employees' performance. The aim of this paper is to study how communication processes of some selected civil service ministries in Bayelsa State influence the performance of their employees.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Organizational Communication and the Employee

Reference [7] made a strong case for some principles which can be practiced and which can make organization communication successful. They include (1) using trusted channels to provide information timely with relevant content helps good understanding. In content, the context and rationales for relevant changes and new additions and subtractions are made. (2) Channels used depends on the type of message and urgency. It is the decision of the communicators to choose the type of channel that is ideal for their purpose. Some consider face-to-face communication as a very rich medium to use because of its advantages. It is quite appropriate to use for the resolution of conflicts or crises, communicate major changes and also celebrating accomplishments. The actions and reactions of the communicators are open to everyone. Leaders must be willing and give attention to all issues by listening carefully and providing solution and making improvements in the workplace. It is important to appreciate other communication media also to enhance the flow of information without undue pressures because the world is now driven with advanced technology. These new technologies help to improve relationships both internally and externally. The organization is also in better position to achieve its goals as expected. (3) Employees should be allowed to participate in the decisions that affect them. This will help their commitment level, build rapport and improves the general communication climate. Employees want to be recognized as people who are contributing their best for the organization. (4) Superiors are the one to drum support for effective within communication. This will ensure peaceful co-existence and progress made. They must be true to their words and actions. A credible and honest leadership will breed dedicated and trust worthy employees.

Organizational communication is a complicated process that is essential for an organization to succeed in a drastically changing global business environment [8]. Human beings are very complex and managing them effectively have been a serious concern to management discourse. In all situations, it is difficult to sincerely understand the communications that occur in the organization between managers, among employees, or both. Every problem in the organization is seen or considered as failure of the communication process [9]. Reference [7] in a work titled "employee communication: let's move from the knowing to doing" defines employee and organizational communication as interactive communication among and within organization members. Reference [10] assert that communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in organizations. Fundamentally, relationships grow out of communication, and the functioning and survival of organizations is based on effective relationships among individuals and groups. Communication helps individuals and groups coordinate activities to achieve goals, and it's vital in socialization, decision-making, problem solving and change-management processes. Communication helps to motivate, build trust, create shared identity and spur engagement;

provides a way for individuals to express emotions, share hopes etc. Communication is vital because it is the means by which people either collectively or individually understand their organizations purpose and objectives. There are two main goals of communication. To create understanding that could improve productivity or quality of service and to transmit management decisions and directives to employees. Communication is very essential for moving/sending, receiving and using information in the organization.

B. Employee Performance

Employees' performance in general, refers to behaviors that are relevant to organizational goals and that are under the control of individual employees [11]. This implies that behavior of the employee plays an important role in achieving goals through his performance. According to [12], employee performance is the activity of performance; of doing something fruitfully; by knowledge as famous from simply possessing it. Thus, the foregoing suggests that employee performance refers to employee work activities and how well those activities are carried out. A performance comprises an event in which normally one group of people the performer or performers act in a particular way for another group of people. Bayelsa State's duty is to establish a shared workforce and create understanding about what is to be achieved at an organization level. It is relevant to align the organizational objectives with the employee's agreed measures, skills, competency requirement, development plans and the delivery of results. Employee performance is not assessed only on an annual or quarterly basis but any time deemed fit to help employees identify and suggest areas for improvement. Reference [13] opine that a sustained organizational success will be achieved through a strategic and integrated approach to improving the performance and developing the capabilities of individuals and wider teams. Employee performance is a complex mix of skills, knowledge, ability, attitude, effort and results. A performance management objective is to increase employee performance and align individual and team efforts with organizational goals and objectives. Improving employee performance brings about good business sense and may also attract competitive advantages for an organization.

Reference [14] suggest that performance is a function of ability and motivation as depicted in the Formula of $Performance = f(Ability \times Motivation)$. The effects of ability and motivation on performance are not additive but multiplicative. People need both ability and motivation to perform well, and if ability is there and motivation is zero, there will be no effective performance [15]. Employees' performance is job related activities expected of workers and how well those activities are executed that would lead to organizational productivity. Many business personnel directors assess the employee performance of each staff member on an annual or quarterly basis to help them identify possible areas for improvement [16]. Employee performance defines whether people execute their job duties and responsibilities and how well they are done. It is only when employees are up to their duties and responsibilities that productivity of an organization can increase. State ministries such as the ones in Bayelsa State

assess their employee's performance on an annual basis to define certain areas that need improvement. Such is usually done through performance appraisal or evaluation. Issues such as quality and, or quantity of work done, level of supervision required, cooperation with other staff, initiative, creativity, respect for constituted authority, punctuality and so on are usually used in the assessment of employee performance [17]

Reference [18] observe that the crucial issues of the job performance will be numerous in the coming decades. A continuing emphasis on organizational effectiveness, productivity and increasing stakeholders' pressures for quality of service, will focus attention on the link between employees and corporate performance. Performance of the employee is the driving force behind an organization's growth and profitability. Reference [19] opines that when employees are low performers, they take longer time to complete jobs, which cost employers more money due to the time lost. When the employees are performing, they accomplish more in a given amount of time hence the organization will certainly be productive.

Many factors affect employee performance. According to [20], an effective employee is a combination of a good skill set and a productive environment. Reference [20] further argued that employees can perform at the optimal level if the tools that will enable them to successfully do their jobs are made available and communicated in very clear and understandable ways. Other issues such as managerial standards, motivation, commitment and employee evaluations are also essential. Management standards and policies must be in line with the employees' job description. The employees are to do the work they were originally employed to do based on their qualifications and experiences. In this area, some factors need to be considered. Reference [20] opine that proper motivation will elicit the expected results from employees, create opportunities for them to excel in their jobs, get them involved in some key area where their contribution is valued. Therefore, proper forms of motivation introduced to the workforce will increase their ability to perform. Indicators of employee performance abound. In this paper, we focus on productivity, timeliness, quality of production, quantity of production and responsiveness.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This paper is anchored on [21] Organizational Information Theory as cited in Reference [22]. Organizational Information Theory (OIT) by Weick's has been noted as a strong and reliable theoretical framework that explains organization's ability to make use of required information necessary for organizations success. Organization Information Theory draws from other theories to explain how organizations receive input from others. Reference [21] critically explains the need for human interaction as a critical point in information processing. Communication is therefore at the centre of the theory. The theory assumes that organizations, although with structures, are always transforming and changing through the

interaction of its members. That is only possible by the instrumentality of communication process.

This theory therefore, emphasis the process of communication as central and very important more than communication itself. It is the process that explains how members of the organization engage in collaborative efforts which translates into organizational success. Simply, Organizational Information Theory is primarily concerned with how organizations process information to make sense of it. It explains how individuals within organizations communicate vital information in order to guarantee success and efficiency in their environment. Within organizations, different systems regulate and control the organization as a whole, helping it to deal with information and consequently achieve its goals and function effectively. The emergency of new technologies has revolutionized the ways in which organizations manage information. This is a common example of a change in organization information processing, which results in constant change of the organization itself as well. Organizations are "works in progress". There are basically three assumptions upon which the OIT evolved. These are:

The present study on organizational communication processes and employees performance in Bayelsa State civil service draws heavily on OIT in that it deals with processes the civil service in Bayelsa State adopt in order to communicate effectively and be efficient in service delivering. Taking a cue from the assumptions of OIT, it is observed that Bayelsa State Civil Service fits into organization where this theory can be applied. The civil service operates with civil servants. Ideas, circulars, instructions, government policies and other necessary information need to be generated, encoded, transmitted, received, interpreted and used. Again, the OIT presupposes that the civil service is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Organizations members do what they feel are good whether there is a check or not. Sometimes they do it simply because others have done them and that necessarily because they are acceptable or most suitable in any circumstance. The accuracy of actions taken is therefore given second consideration in most cases. Civil servant chooses communication processes acceptable to them in any given relational situations and depending on the nature of information and the response sought for rather than seeking for the accuracy of the processes.

IV. EMPIRICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Empirical studies of the effect of communication on organizational performance abound within the Asian, European and the African contexts. In Europe for instance, [23] investigated the effect of organizational communication on employees' perception of justice in Turkey. Using a survey design approach, they show that there is a significant relationship between communication and interactive justice. The study concludes that, communication is one of the basic tools to perform management functions effectively and efficiently. In India, [24] demonstrated that clear and honest communication

helps to encourage and strengthen relationship and concludes that employee communication has a crucial role to play in the management effort to reorient employees' perplexity by changes, or inform and motivate those who adapt more readily. Reference [25] also concluded that managers, who want to have an appropriate communication, after selection of communicational channel, should have a comprehensive plan according to their environment and organization.

In Nigeria and other African countries, empirical studies abound also. Reference [26], conducted a research on the "Impact of business communication on organizational performance in Nigeria companies, Nigeria". The study used a descriptive quantitative survey research design. The research revealed that in the survey carried out communicating effectively in the business environment is greatly encouraged no matter the size and nature of business. The study concludes that business communication generally affects organizational performance to a reasonable extent in Nigerian companies. Reference [27] also conducted a research on "communication approach and firms' performance: appraisal of Nigeria Bottling Company (coca-cola)" in Nigeria. The researchers stayed with the workers in the plant watching their activities for fourteen days. The result revealed that there is significant relationship between communication approach and the performance of the company. In [28] study of First Bank of Nigeria, similar results emerged because communication was identified as the key to resolving issues and creating a desired relationship in the workplace for both the managers and subordinates.

In Kenya, [29] found that forms of communication influence the employee performance. Reference [30] demonstrated the importance of consistent communication amongst management within the freight industry in South Africa. Building on the weight of the above empirical studies that emerged from Asian, European and African countries, we hypothesize the following relationships:

- H₁: The relationship between messages sent by superior and the performance of employees in Bayelsa State civil service will be positive and significant.
- H₂: Messages received from the superior will have a positive significant effect on employees' performance in Bayelsa State civil service.
- H₃: The relationship between message medium used in sending messages and performance of employees in Bayelsa State civil service will be positive and significant.
- H₄: Feedback mechanism adopted will have a positive and significant effect on the performance of the employees of Bayelsa State civil service.

V. METHODOLOGY

This paper utilized a survey questionnaire to generate data from civil servants working in the Bayelsa State Civil Service. The survey contained scale items utilized to measure employees' performance, the independent variables, and some demographic questions that queried respondents on some demographic profile. In total, the scale

items were 21. The four independent variables (i.e. messages sent, messages received, messages medium, and messages feedback) were all measured with 4 scale items each while employees' performance was measured with 5 scale items. All the measurement items were structured in the 5-point Likert scale format with anchors of strongly agree and strongly disagree at both extremes.

A sample of 290 civil servants was generated from a total population of 1063 civil servants working in five Ministries in Bayelsa State through the Taro Yamane's formula. To ensure that the sample was proportionally drawn from the five ministries, Bowleys proportionate formula was used [31]. The formula led to a sample of 108, 85, 39, 29 and 30 respectively drawn from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Information/Orientation. Out of the 290 questionnaires administered in the above stated proportion through the help of trained research assistants, 283 were retrieved and found valid for final analysis. Multiple linear regressions analysis was used to examine the four research hypotheses after subjecting same data to demographic profiling, validity and reliability diagnosis, and preliminary tests aimed at ascertaining the suitability of parametric statistical techniques. All data analyses were completed with the SPSS version 23.0 software.

VI. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Sample Distribution

Table 1 that gender distribution was relatively even as 51.9% were male while 48.1% were female. Thus, as expected, there were more male civil servants than there were female civil servants. The table also indicates that civil servant within the age bracket of 28-37 dominated the sample with a representation paralleling 34.3%. Since a little over 20% of the civil servants are over forty-eight years, it can be argued that the civil service ministries in Bayelsa State are occupied by young, vibrant and productive workforce who are very unlikely to retire anytime soon. Regarding marital

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variable	Count	%	
Gender	Male	147	51.9
	Female	136	48.1
Age Bracket	18-27	54	19.1
	28-37	97	34.3
	38-47	73	25.8
	48+	59	20.8
Marital Status	Single	92	32.5
	Married	191	67.5
Educational Qualification	FSLC	50	17.7
	O'level	83	29.3
Level	B.Sc.	132	46.6
	Higher Degree	18	06.4
	GL 3 – GL 6	120	38.9
	GL 7 – GL10	139	52.7
	≥ GL 11	24	8.5

Status, married people dominated the sample with 67.5% while only 32.5% were still single. As regards the workers' educational qualification, nearly half were B.Sc holders. Finally, majority of the civil servants were also within the grade level of 7-10.

B. Validity and Reliability Assessment

The questionnaires were face-validated by experts in the management field. The reliability of the instrument was examined using Cronbach Alpha internal consistency measure. According to [32] alpha values greater than 0.7 indicate high internal consistency whereas [33] is of the view that 0.5–0.6 alpha values indicate adequate and lower limit of acceptability. Based on the above stated criterion we can conclude that measures of both the four independent variables and employees' performance are internally consistent. The results of the internal consistency test completed through SPSS indicate that messages sent, messages received, message medium, feedback mechanism, and employees' performance have alpha values of 0.844, 0.726, 0.824, 0.844, and 0.835 respectively. Thus, we can conclude that measures of the five latent constructs were internally consistent.

C. Testing for the suitability of parametric statistical techniques

Prior to the examination of the hypothesized paths, the retrieved data were examined to ascertain is suitability for parametric statistical techniques. The two parametric assumptions examined were the test of normality and multico-linearity. To examine how normally distributed the data relating to the research variables were, skewness and kurtosis tests were conducted. The results show that the positive values of skewness ranged from 0.028 to 0.162 while the only negative value was -0.116. The vales of kurtosis were all negative and ranged from -1.059 to -1.248. Based on the criteria set by [34], we conclude that the data is normally distributed. Additionally, multico-linearity was examined through the tolerance value and the variance inflation factor (VIF). According to [32], multico-linearity is absent if the tolerance value is substantially greater than 0.10 and the VIF is below 5. Based on the results obtained from the four predictor variables, the tolerance value ranged from 0.826 to 0.984 while the VIF ranged from 1.016 to 1.211. in line with guideline set by [32] therefore, multi colinearity is not present in the dataset because the range of the tolerance values were far greater than the 0.10 minimum threshold whilst the VIF range of values were well below the maximum limit of acceptability. Since the normality and multicollinearity assumptions were met, we conclude that the use of parametric statistical tests for the test of the hypothesized relationships are highly appropriate.

D. Test of the research hypotheses

As stated earlier in the research methodology section, the four hypothesized paths were tested with the multiple linear regression analytical techniques through the SPSS version 23.0 software. The outputs of the test are captured in Table 2. As indicated in Table 2, the link between messages sent and employees' performance was positive, significant ($\beta = 0.364$; $t = 5.524$, $p < 0.001$) and the strongest amongst all the hypothesized relationships. This clearly show that one unit increase in messages sent will result into 36% rise in

employees' performance. Followed by this was the results of the hypothesized relationship between messages received and employees' performance which was statistically significant and positive ($\beta = 0.350$; $t = 5.504$, $p < 0.001$). This is a clear indication that 35% increase employees' performance occurs if there is one unit increase in messages received. The relationship between message medium and employees' performance was

Table 2. Path Coefficient, *t*-Values and Significant Levels of the Four Hypotheses

Hypothesized path	Path coefficient (β)	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Results
Messages sent → employees' performance	0.364	5.524	0.000	Supported
Messages received → employees' performance	0.350	5.504	0.000	Supported
Message medium → employees' performance	0.321	4.886	0.000	Supported
Feedback mechanism → employees' performance	0.235	3.754	0.000	Supported

Notes: $R^2 = 0.37$; $F = 42.508$.

also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.321$; $t = 4.886$, $p < 0.001$) indicating that a unit increase in message medium will lead to a corresponding 32% rise in employees' performance. Finally, results show that the relationship between feedback mechanism and employees' performance was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.235$; $t = 3.754$, $p < 0.001$) even though it was the weakest as only 24% increase in employees' performance is traceable to feedback mechanism adopted. Overall, the pooled regression outputs were significant ($F_{(4, 278)} = 42.508$, $p < 0.001$) whilst the four predictor variables (i.e. messages sent, message received, message medium, and feedback mechanism) put together, explained 37% of the total variation in employees' performance. Based on the above results, there was enough evidence to claim that all the four hypotheses were supported.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with [35] who argued that effective workplace communication enables organizations to choose and tailor their policies and programs of activities to meet the needs of their subordinates, this paper demonstrated that communication is vital in the effectiveness of any activity in a workplace. The findings indicate that factors such as messages sent, messages received, message medium, and feedback mechanism are key in influencing the performance of employees especially those of civil servants

in Bayelsa State. The regression outputs show that messages sent is the most important factor that influences the employees' performance followed by messages received and message medium. Feedback mechanism emerged as the least factor that influences employees' performance.

This paper argues that the appropriateness of the encoding process used in the dissemination of information in the Bayelsa State civil service does affect the message received. The most important thing in the communication process is the extent intentions of the sender of any message is appreciated and acted upon without contradictions. To protect the content of any message, the medium of transmission requires adequate consideration. Feedback is the only mechanism that shows that the encoder and the decoder of the information are at the same pedestal. In all this, employees enhanced performance is a function of the appropriateness of the communication process.

Based on the findings of this research which led to the above conclusion, this paper makes four key recommendation. First, since it was demonstrated that messages sent are the most influential significant predictor of employees' performance, managers of organization should strive to ensure that subordinates are appropriately and timely informed about the activities within the organization. While doing this, they should have the receiver of message in mind while generating the idea and encoding the message because understanding is the key goal of every communication effort. Second, it is clear the messages are meant for the receiver, and it is messages received that would prompt action and performance. Thus, the message that would be received must be guided and guarded to avoid distortion. The sender should do everything humanly possible to encode and protect the message while the receiver should as well ensure that the message received is properly decoded. Third, the medium used in sending messages also play significant role in the content and protects the values of the message. Thus, managers should choose appropriate and suitable medium to transmit their messages as a single medium cannot be appropriate for every message. Finally, feedback mechanisms confirm the success of a message and completes the communication process. The sender should expect a feedback and the receiver should make it a point of duty to send a feedback to the sender. Both the encoder and the decoder should be committed to effectively complete the process in communication for effective employees' performance in every organization.

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