

Workers Network and Job Performance in Selected Government Ministries in Niger Delta of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study examined workers network and job performance in selected government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The study's difficulty was discussed in a thorough background analysis that was looked at together with other sources. Several relevant works, both conceptual and empirical, were reviewed for the investigation. The study's approach was based on social cohesiveness theory. According to Maxwell (1996), social cohesion is the building of the shared values and communities of the interpretation, reducing disparities and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. The study used a cross-sectional research design as its research strategy. The questionnaire that was utilised as the research tool to gather information from the respondents was used to put this into practise. Among the sample of 394 responders, the questionnaire was given out. Under the probability sampling strategy, the study used a straightforward random sample method. To test the inferential statistics that used hypotheses, descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of variance. The study discovered that informal groups and the network of employees in the Niger Delta positively promote employees' job performance and serve as a platform for organisational productivity. The study makes the following recommendations: informal group should be used positively to promote employees' performance in order to use their group network to enhance employee job performance; and communication channels should be used by organisations to build on employees' networks to promote workers performance.

KEYWORD: Workers, Network, Job Performance, Selected, Government, Ministries, Niger Delta, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration among all institution's stakeholders forms the basis for development within businesses in today's dynamic institutions, and it ensures that the management framework can build a foundation for improved performance. The importance of an employee network as a tool cannot be understated. This is a result of its inventiveness in encouraging teamwork and the achievement of organisational goals and objectives, which is one of management's tactics for raising workers' productivity and efficiency levels (Kukenberger, Mathieu, & Ruddy, 2015). The most difficult challenge the Nigerian government is currently facing is improving the performance of civil servants in government ministries toward national development. The public service is a reflection of the state of the country, and no country has ever been able to rise above it. Studies have demonstrated that without a well functioning public service to carry out governmental programmes, no country can achieve sustained development for the improvement of the standard of living of its citizens (Achimugu, Stephen & Aliyu, 2013).

By maintaining effective motivation and coordination of operations across the organisational hierarchy, employee engagement in decision-making determines whether the firm succeeds or fails. Managers must pay close attention to, comprehend, and value teams and organisational units inside the company in order to uphold standards and preserve efficiency. Being a member of a certain group is important, according to Harris and Sherblom (2018), especially when it comes to managing employee attitudes. Through their participation in an informal or official network of groups, employees maintain their influence within the company. The many characteristics of an employee's working capacities are determined by the non-official entities with which they are affiliated (Marsick, & Watkins, 2015). These go beyond motivation and skill development to include the idea of following company policies and workplace norms. Mueller (2015) reports that 92% of individuals surveyed in a study reported that joining various interest groups typically offers them a sense of belonging, which motivates them as they work with others in the same group.

The unofficial groups formed within the establishment have varying impact on organizational performance which could be positive or negative depending on how management is able to use it to significant advantage. This study therefore the influence of workers network on job performance in selected Government Ministries in Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. Elucidate how the informal group affects employees' performance on the job in government ministries in Nigeria's Niger Delta.
2. Assess the impact of a workers' network on job performance in Nigeria's Niger Delta federal agencies.

Hypotheses

1. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, there is no discernible difference between informal group activities and job performance.
2. Workers' networks and job performance at government ministries in Nigeria's Niger Delta do not differ much.

Literature Review

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Concept of Employee Network

One of the earliest empirical definitions of networking was offered by Gould and Penley (1984), who stated that networking is "the practise of developing a system or 'network' of contacts inside and/or outside the organisation, thereby providing relevant career information and support for the individual" (p. 246). However, this definition's utility was constrained because it defined networking as the creation of networks, which was a tautology. From a more interpersonal standpoint, networking behaviours were defined by Michael and Yukl (1993) as "behaviours aimed to develop informal interpersonal relationships with persons inside and outside the business. The exchange of affect (liking, friendship), information, advantages, and influence are generally involved in networking.

According to the authors, there are a variety of behaviours that can be utilised to create and sustain networks, such as phoning and visiting individuals, mingling before and after formal events, attending social gatherings, doing favours, mentoring, having casual talks, or spreading rumours. Forret and Dougherty's (2004) definitions of networking as a strategy for career progress originate from their work. They defined networking specifically as "people's efforts to create and maintain links with those who may be able to help them in their profession or career. Similar to this, Wolff and Moser (2009) stated that networking is defined as "behaviours that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the (potential) benefit of facilitating work-related activities of individual by voluntarily granting access to resources and maximising common advantages.

Job Performance

To better understand effectiveness on jobs, it is important to learn about links between job performance, people, and situation factors. Job performance is a very considerable factor influencing profitability of any organization (Bevan, 2012). Performance is important for organizations as employees' performance leads to business success. Also, performance is important for individuals, as achieving tasks can be a source of satisfaction (Muchhal, 2014). Job performance can be defined as behaviours or activities that are performed towards accomplishing the organization's objectives.

Performance is the result of work of a person or group in an organization at a particular time which reflects how well the person or group reach the qualification of a job in a mission of organization's goal achievement. Many factors could influence the employee's job performance including equipment, physical work environment, meaningful work, standard operating procedures, reward for good or bad systems, performance expectancy, feedback on performance, in addition to knowledge, skills and inter-ethnic engagement (Stup, 2003). The inter-ethnic engagement and its outcome have formed part of concerns to modern establishments in a global changing world that has brought people of different culture to work in same institutions

Informal Group Influence on Job Performance in Organisations

Cooperation within and across functional, geographical, and hierarchical boundaries is necessary for productivity and efficiency in today's workplaces. Employee network collaboration is now essential for innovation and for the success of both the individual and the business. This also applies to institutions like schools, not just businesses. Cross and Parker (2014) found that few managers genuinely grasp how their staff members collaborate to complete tasks. Institutional charts actually miss the frequently concealed social networks that genuinely influence or derail a person's success. Cross and Parker (2014) note that in

order to accomplish institutional mission and objectives, informal organisations inside the institute exist that may not be structured around a set of goals. According to Mullins (2010), unofficial groups are extremely potent social networks that are built as a result of and by their members' actions.

According to Greenberg (2010), when people have interests that are shared by others, informal groups can arise within an organisation. Due to the nature of the work and the surroundings, which require dedication from the employees in order to maintain standards, the idea of informal groups is crucial in the construction industry. The majority of leaders have not understood the value of informal groupings, and this necessitates that they look into the reasons why they exist. In order to better understand how informal groups affect employee performance, this study looked into the issues raised above.

Collaboration in employee networks has become essential to innovation and to both individual and company performance in modern organizations, where productivity and efficiency demand collaboration within and across functional, physical, and hierarchical boundaries. In their study, Orbach, Demko, Doyle, Waber, and Pentland (2015) examined the informal communication network structure within the US sales division of a multinational manufacturing organisation and discovered that the distribution of a person's communications among coworkers reflected the organization's post-bureaucratic structure. Similar to this, Alibhai's (2017) research examined how virtual platforms impact group performance among UN employees in Kenya. It was discovered that, among other advantages, the platforms improve networking, idea and professional experience exchange, and other processes. It is evident that, compared to other industries, the healthcare industry has tended to be overlooked when looking through the prism of informal networks among employees.

Abbas (2018) evaluated the impact of informal groups on the US company Philadelphia Pharmaceuticals' productivity. Both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are used to gather the data for the analysis, which focuses on 48 Philadelphia Pharmaceuticals employees. The findings indicate that most of them concur that informal groups improve communication among members, while others noted that they find it simple to air their complaints in an informal setting. The outcomes supported the idea that informal groups operate without rules and that a high degree of autonomy is typical in this type of environment.

Workers Network and Employees Performance in Organisations

The workforce in all industrialised nations has become increasingly diverse as a result of increased globalisation and competition. People from across the world who live in the same area are now closer to one another thanks to technological advancements and the emergence of a global economy. Griffin and Moorhead (2014) said that managing a diverse workforce necessitates identifying and overseeing the many attributes that exist among the workers in the company. As a result, organisations like corporations, educational institutions, and other institutions are looking into ways to better serve their customers in order to draw in and keep the best and most qualified staff (Gupta, 2013). Because of this, businesses are working to diversify their business models in order to obtain a competitive edge by being more inventive, creative, and adaptable.

When referring to the significant differences and similarities that exist among employees within an organisation, we use the term "workforce diversity" (Griffin & Moorhead, 2014). According to Nwinami (2014), this uniqueness includes a person's personality, age, gender, ethnicity/race, religion, marital status,

income, work experience, and all viewpoints that assume and uphold an organization's core values. Additionally, it refers to businesses that are becoming more diverse in their workforces in terms of things like age, ethnicity, expertise, etc (Robbins & Judge & Vobra, 2013). Since a company's human resources are one of its most valuable assets, most businesses place a premium on having a diverse workforce. Although it has become necessary for organisations to employ a diverse workforce, it has also become increasingly difficult for organisations with a growingly diverse workforce to reap the benefits of diversity while managing its potentially disruptive effects (Kreitz, 2008; Saxena, 2014; Efebeh, 2018).

As Mustapha (2009) and Ugwuzor (2011) noted, tribalism, regional identities, nepotism, and discrimination still seem to exist in Nigeria in both public and private organizations. In organizations, cases of racial bias and other forms of discrimination still occur during the hiring, promotion, and other employer-employee relationship procedures. Therefore, management faces two major challenges: managing a diverse workforce and ensuring that conflicts of interest in the implementation of policies and practises are kept to a minimum. Individuals continue to make decisions and display attitudes and behaviour that go against diversity principles, even though some organisations train their new hires on job-related issues after hiring. One explanation for this might be that diversity practises force workers into an environment where they must collaborate with coworkers who are different from them.

Forced inclusion of this kind can lead to workplace conflict, discrimination, and other diversity-related problems. Diversity in the workplace will always be a problem, according to Nwinami (2014), as long as people of different backgrounds work together in the same setting. Despite the fact that our individual differences can foster creativity and increase job satisfaction, they can also be the cause of conflict and frustration between groups. As a result, some business leaders do not fully comprehend how employees interact with one another both individually and collectively, or how employee and business performance can be impacted by employee behavior. Managers' inability to manage diversity issues and lack of understanding of diversity has an impact on performance.

Theoretical Framework

In this work, we employ the social cohesiveness theory. Maxwel (1996) asserts that social cohesion is the development of shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing differences and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community, organization or group. A community or society is said to be socially cohesive if its members share common values that enable them to identify common goals and purposes, as well as common set of moral rules and codes of behaviour through which to conduct their connections with one another (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). Group interactions within organisations also result in social cohesiveness, which is the product of the physiological and social processes that bind people into social systems.

When social cohesiveness is attained, people are able to work together daily across the organisation with tolerance for diversity and with everyone giving their best. It helps employees form links with one another and with the rest of the work team, reducing the divisions caused by cultural and other social differences. Employees achieve synergy when the divisions are less. Employees can only achieve this synergy, which is the teamwork's positive power, when they work individually and across cultural divides. Conflicting dispositions among employees and a serious lack of cohesion make it difficult for them to

function as a cohesive team. Cooperation becomes challenging and productivity suffers in firms where employees are unable to form effective work teams. The reason for this is because when there is a lack of group cohesion, coordination errors or poor group performance occur, which lowers staff performance and productivity.

The theory offered is helpful since it clarifies how it fosters teamwork among employees and helps cohesion within a cultural diver group. According to Maslow, when a worker's needs—both intrinsic and belonging—are met, they are more driven to work hard than when neither of those needs are met. People tend to feel safe and secure at work, which is why this is the case. When people see organisational achievement as the top priority, people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures can collaborate and succeed greatly. Workers network encourages innovation in the workplace by allowing workers to contribute their skills, knowledge from various fields, and cultural perspectives. Employee commitment to task completion and productivity is aided by the workplace's fascinating and creative environment.

Research Methods

The study is a quantitative research that employs the cross-sectional research design using the survey method. Three civil servants ministries (Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Finance) were randomly selected from three states in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Delta, Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom) for the study with a total population of 8597. 383 participants constituted the sample size of the study and this was obtained using Taro Yamane sample size derivation formula. The study employed the multi-stage sampling approach to divide the Niger Delta states into three clusters in accordance with the traditional division of Bendel, Rivers, and Cross Rivers. Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, and Delta states were randomly selected from each division. Finally, three ministries—the ministry of education, information, and finance—were produced in each of the chosen states, and respondents for the study were chosen via random sampling from these three ministries. The questionnaire served as the data collection tool. There were two sections; demographic information part and the section that contains issues drawn from the specific objectives of the study. Five-point Likert scale with 4 for strongly agreeing, 3 for agreeing, 2 for disagreeing, 1 for strongly disagreeing, and 0 for undecided was used. Face and content validity was used to ascertain the suitability of the instrument for data collection and a reliability score of 0.82 was obtained using Test Retest method. Analysis of variance was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study using 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The data that the researcher collected during his or her fieldwork is presented and analysed in this chapter. Despite the fact that 382 questionnaires were distributed, only 375 copies of those questionnaires were ultimately recovered. This demonstrates that, while 2% of the questionnaires were lost, 98% of them were found which is sufficient for analysis. Based on this figure, data analysis was conducted. The information given below includes both descriptive statistics and the hypotheses that were investigated.

4.1 Analysis of Socio-demographic Data

Table 4.1: Respondent Socio-Demographics

Options		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	196	52
	Female	179	48
	Total	375	100
Age	25-35 years	118	31
	36-45 years	188	50
	46 years and above	69	18
	Total	375	100
Religion	Christianity	259	69
	Islam	82	22
	African Traditional Religion	34	9
	Total	375	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The socio-demographic details of the survey participants are shown in Table 4.1. 52% of respondents are male, while 48% are female, according to the respondents' sex distribution. Age distribution of the respondents showed that 31% of them are between the ages of 25 and 35, 50% are between the ages of 36 and 45, and 18% are over the age of 46. Religious distribution of the respondents showed that the majority, 69%, are Christians, 22% are Muslims, and 9% practise traditional African religions.

Table 4.2: Informal groups that exist in the ministries

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Decision
1	Ethnic affiliation group	375	2.72	Positive
2	Mutual interest group	375	2.52	Positive
3	Palm wine club group	375	2.55	Positive
4	Admin staff group	375	3.0	Positive
5	Clerical staff group	375	2.64	Positive
6	Religious affiliation group	375	2.68	Positive
7	Members of the same confraternity group	375	2.66	Positive

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The informal groups in use by the ministries are displayed in Table 4.3. The respondents concurred that there are ethnic affiliation groups, mutual interest groups, palm wine club groups, administrative staff groups, clerical staff groups, religious affiliation groups, and groups of brothers who belong to the same fraternity in the ministries. Based on average scores above the benchmark mean of 2.50, which is 2.72, 2.52, 2.55, 2.55, 3.0, 2.64, 2.68, and 2.66.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in informal groups operation and workers job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria

Table 4.3: Analysis of variance on the difference in informal groups operation and workers job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	1698.150	3	.084	.872	.003	Significant
Within Groups	4922.608	370	.425			
Total	6620.758	373				

Results in table 4.3 show the analysis of variance on the difference in informal groups operation and workers job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. From table 4.8, the F-ratio calculated value of .872 is greater than the significant value of .003. This proof there is a significant difference in informal group operation and workers job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between workers network and job performance in Government ministries in the Niger Delta State

Table 4.4: Analysis of variance on the difference workers network and job performance in Government ministries in the Niger Delta State

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	.643	3	.252	.761	.004	Significant
Within Groups	224.720	370	.684			
Total	421.560	373				

Results in table 4.3 show the analysis of variance in workers network and job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. From table 4.4, the F-ratio calculated value of .761 is greater than the significant value of .004. This means there is a significant difference in workers network and job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Discussion

The result of the first analysis showed that informal groups in organisations have impact on the performance of workers. This implies that the activities of informal groups have implication on the policies and workers behavior towards work. This finding is in tandem with the work of Orbach, Demko, Doyle, Waber, and Pentland (2015) who stated that informal communication system contributes to co-workers bureaucratic arrangement and work performance. Also, the work of Alibhai's (2017) found that informal group help to promote networking via sharing of ideas and experience. Abbas (2018) research also confirms the above submission by scholars as it indicates that informal groups improve communication among members.

The second finding shows that there is a significant difference in workers network and job performance in government ministries in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Griffin and Moorhead (2014) said that managing a diverse workforce necessitates identifying and overseeing the many attributes that exist among the workers in the company. This means network from diverse workforce helps to obtain a competitive edge by being more inventive, creative, and adaptable. According to Nwinami (2014), uniqueness obtained from diverse workforce aid the organization in several ways. Nwinami also argued that diversity could also be the cause of conflict when people from different background try to collaborate to achieve common goals in organization. Kreitz, (2008) and Saxena (2014) on the other hand averred that networking in most instances do not benefit organizations when it comes from people from varying background. As Mustapha (2005) and Ugwuzor (2011) noted, tribalism, regional identities, nepotism, and discrimination still seem to exist in Nigeria in both public and private organizations. In organizations, cases of racial bias and other forms of discrimination still occur during the hiring, promotion, and other employer-employee relationship procedures. One explanation for this might be that diversity practises force workers into an environment where they must collaborate with coworkers who are different from them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study concludes that informal group in organization have significant impact on workers job performance in several ways. This may produce positive and negative impact depending on the social context of it operation and use.

Also, the study establishes that workers network is a tool for enhancing employees' performance. Thus, workers network be it at the formal or informal level have an impact on work performance and organizational outcome in the long run.

Recommendations

Organisations should take cognizance of informal structure of operation and design its policies in ways that informal groups are co-opted in and used positive to promote organizational policies and objectives. This way informal groups becomes veritable tools for communication of organizational policies and achieving set goals.

Organizations ought to use staff's network in order to encourage knowledge sharing and aid in employee job performance. Employees network should be converted to avenues for experience, information, and ideas sharing so that employees network relationship becomes profitable to the organization.

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