

Full Length Research Paper

Cognitive Styles and work motivation as precursors of job performance of library personnel in private Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

Libraries are established in the university system to provide high quality information services in support of teaching and research for academic staff members as well as acquisition of knowledge of the students. Library personnel occupy a central position in the university system. The job performance of library officers has a bearing on the way they carry out their professional duties. Biographical factors, cognitive styles, job motivation and staff training can explain the job performance of workers. The main purpose of this study was to assess the role of cognitive styles and work motivation as precursors of job performance of Library personnel in private universities in South-West Nigeria. The methodology adopted by this research was the exploratory method. Exploratory researches are used to acquire a deeper understanding of an existing phenomenon. As a flexible and dynamic method, the method seeks to find new insights by asking questions from experts. It also utilizes the wealth of the literature to further explore the subject. In addition, exploratory research requires an initial research in order to clarify and define the nature of the problem. It is therefore recommended that, since the work environment is significantly related to job performance of academic staff, proprietors of these institutions should encourage the support of parents, philanthropists, and corporate institutions in improving the private universities library environment in terms of physical facilities, information services, authority-staff relationship, and staff development in order to enhance better job performance of the library personnel.

Keywords: Cognitive styles, work motivation, private universities, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The management of people at work is an integral part of the management process. To understand the critical importance of people in the organization is to recognize that the human element and the organization are synonymous. A well-managed organization usually sees an average worker as the root source of quality and productivity gains. Such organizations do not look to capital investment, but to employees, as the fundamental source of improvement. An organisation is effective to the degree to which it achieves its goals. An effective organization will make sure that there is a spirit of cooperation and sense of commitment and performance within the sphere of its influence. In order to make employees satisfied and committed to their jobs in academic and research libraries, there is need for strong and effective motivation at the various levels, departments and sections of the library (Tella et al., 2007; Olusegun, 2012).

The central objective of university libraries is to provide information to support the teaching, learning and research activities of the parent institution. To achieve this objective, the library needs to adopt healthy management practices. A major challenge for work and organizational psychology and management is to understand and predict how people behave in organizational settings. To this end, many researchers have examined the impact of individual and situational factors on organizations and people in work settings (Berlinger, 1988; Miron, Erez, and Naveh, 2004). One individual characteristic studied intensively in this context are cognitive styles, which are – in line with the results of a recent Delphi study among international experts in the style field – defined as “individual differences in processing that are integrally linked to a person’s cognitive style. They are a person’s preferred way of processing; they are partly fixed, relatively stable and

possibly innate preferences" (Bhagat, 1982). Although cognitive styles are considered to be crucial determinants of organizational behavior that manifest themselves in individual workplace actions and organizational systems and processes (Sadler-Smith and Badger, 1998), level of interest in the field has waxed and waned over the years because of (1) the unclear conceptualization of the concept in relation to personality, cognition, and other concepts from the field of individual differences psychology, (2) the large number of style dimensions, and (3) the variable quality of some early empirical style research (Decenzo and Robbins, 1998).

Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) argued that cognitive styles may be used in organizations to inform and improve the quality of decision making in relation to personnel selection and placement, task and learning performance, internal communication, career guidance and counseling, fit with the organization climate, task design, team composition, conflict management, team building, management style, and training and development. Styles continue to provide a much needed interface between research on cognition and personality (Riding and Rayner, 1998; Sternberg and Grigorenko, 1997) and show a great deal of promise for the future in helping us understand some of the variation in job performance that cannot be accounted for by individual differences in abilities.

Beyth-Maron et al (2006) defines motivation as the combined effect from three choice behaviours-choices to expend effort, choice of level of effort to expend, and choice to persist in the expenditure of that level of effort. It reflects the direction. As such, work experience, physical work conditions, lack of control over work content and processes, unrealistic demands and lack of understanding by the management are the underlying conditions. These resulted in alteration of working conditions and processes and strong control from the management, all of which contributes to the performance of the employees. Within the workplace, motivation will serve as the driving force in building and establishing relationships, persistence in accomplishment. There is the necessity then to explore cognitive styles and motivation and how they impact on job performance of library personnel of private universities in South Western Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to find out:

1. If there is any significant correlations among cognitive styles, work motivation and job performance of library personnel in private universities in South West, Nigeria; and
2. If cognitive styles and work motivation are precursors of job performance of library personnel in private universities in South West, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What is the degree of relationship between cognitive styles and job performance of the library personnel in private universities in South West Nigeria?
2. What is the degree of relationship between work motivation and job performance of the library personnel in these universities in South West Nigeria?
3. Are work motivation and cognitive styles precursors of job performance of the library personnel in these universities in South West Nigeria?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The research design that was adopted for this study is ex-post facto type. Kerlinger (1979) opined that ex-post facto research is a systematic empirical research in which the researcher does not have direct control on independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulated.

Population of the study

The population targeted in this study included library personnel (N=175), which comprised both professional and para-professional personnel, spanning across different private universities in South-West of Nigeria. These private universities are: Babcock University, Covenant University, Leads City University, Achievers University, Afe Babalola University, Bowen University, Redeemers University, Ajayi Crowther University, Bell University, Crescent University, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Crawford University, Fountain University and Caleb University.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

All the personnel were solicited to partake in the study. The sampling method for this study is total enumeration technique. Thus, One hundred and seventy five (175) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate. According to Sekaran (2000), a response rate of thirty percent (30%) is regarded as acceptable for most research purposes. This good response rate can be attributed to the participants being informed well in advance of the purpose and objectives of the research, by-informing the Head of Departments/Units of these private university libraries in administering the questionnaires. The

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and multiple correlation matrix showing the relationship between Job performance, Cognitive styles, and Job motivation

Variables	Number	S.D	Mean	Job performance	Cognitive styles	Work motivation
Job performance	175	17.3852	99.9600	1	0.415**	0.424**
Cognitive styles	175	03.7576	24.9714	0.415**	1	0.020
Work motivation	175	13.8972	61.8457	0.424**	0.020	1

From Table 1, it has been revealed that cognitive styles had a positive relationship with job performance ($r = 0.415$, $pc0.05$). Also, job motivation had a positive relationship with job performance ($r = 0.424$, $pc 0.05$).

population comprised males and females library professional and para-professional personnel.

Research Instrument (s)

Five research instruments were used for this study but integrated into a single questionnaire named/titled:

1. Job performance scale.
2. Cognitive styles scale.
3. Work motivation scale

Section A: Job Performance Scale

The research instrument used for this work consists of 30 questions on job performance scale and is rated on a five point Likert scale, namely: Excellent, V. Good, Good, Fair and Poor, which is in section B. The typical examples of the items in the scale include: Ability to make effective use of time, facilities, materials, equipment, employee skills, and other resources; setting effective goals, planning ahead and establishing priorities is very crucial to his, her job in the organization; as an employee, he/she exhibit a good level of interpersonal scale and has a good working relationship with most of his/her peers in the organization; the resources formats are: poor = 1, fair = 2, good = 3, very good = 4, and excellent = 5.

Section B: Cognitive Styles Scale

This instrument was self adopted. The cognitive styles instrument contains expression on the human impression on the job with the options of Yes or No answer. Some of the items in the questionnaire includes: fascination, routine, satisfying, boring, challenging, gives a sense of accomplishment among other questions.

Section C: Work motivation

This instrument was adopted from Smith et al, 2001; it measures work motivation of workers in an organization.

This instrument contained twenty-one (21) items with a response to meet: 1 – important; 2 - not important; 3 – moderately important; 4 - highly important; 5 – absolutely important. Some of the items in the scale include: company, financial reward, and frequent rise in pay, flexible incentives, and a sense of job security among others.

Data analysis

All the administered copies of the questionnaire were collected, coded and analysed, using a combination of Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The software used for the analysis was the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation were put to use in analysis of research questions.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis are presented below.

Research question 1: What is the degree of relationship between cognitive styles and job performance of the library personnel in Private Universities in South West Nigeria?

Research question 2: What is the degree of relationship between work motivation and job performance of the library personnel in Private Universities in South West Nigeria?

Research question 3: Are work motivation and cognitive styles among the precursor of job performance of the library personnel in Private Universities in South West Nigeria? (Table1).

Research question 3: Are work motivation and cognitive styles among the precursors of job performance of the library personnel in Private Universities in South West Nigeria?

The results in table 2 above shows the relative contribution of cognitive styles, job motivation and staff training (independent variables) on the job performance (dependent variable). Cognitive styles, ($\beta = -.441$, $P \leq .05$), was found to have significantly contributed to the job

Table 2. Relative contributions of cognitive styles, job motivation, and opportunities for staff development and staff training to the job performance of personnel in Private Universities

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	160.434	10.137		15.826	.000
Cognitive styles	-2.041	.316	-.441	-6.450	.000
Job Motivation	.242	.121	.193	1.999	.047
Opportunities and Training	-.484	.160	-.294	-3.028	.003

performance of personnel in private universities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Job performance is one of the burning issues in management and organization of private universities in South-West of Nigeria. This is an attitude which shows the level of being happy or unhappy with the workplace, work and organisation. Satisfied workers have positive perceptions and attitudes towards their institution. Research shows that happy employees are productive while unhappy ones are not. Therefore, success of the institution depends on the performance of their workforce.

Job performance can also be viewed as the degree of an employee's affective orientation toward the work role occupied in the institutions. Therefore, job performance is a very important attribute that is frequently measured by all types of organisations. This research has unearthed a set of factors or variables, which are responsible for the overall performance of employees in any private University in South west Nigeria, for example, pay, work, training, promotion, work environment, and coworkers.

Pay is the first and very primary factor of performance for almost every type of employee in private institution, small, medium and large institution. The use of financial inducements has featured prominently on the agendas of human resource. The pay refers to "the amount of financial remuneration that is received and the degree to which this is viewed as equitable vis-à-vis that of others in the organisation.

Employees tend to prefer jobs that give them opportunities to use their skills and abilities and offer a variety of tasks, freedom, and feedback on how well they are doing. Jobs that have too little challenge create boredom, but too much challenge create frustration and a feeling of failure. Under conditions of moderate challenge most people experience pleasure and performance. Work plays a central role in people lives. According to an employee's context it should be attractive and contribute to job performance of employees.

Research shows that limited opportunities for promotion are common in private sector organisations thereby discouraging the qualified employees from remaining in the job. Fair promotion policies and

practices provide opportunities for personal growth, more responsibilities and increased social status. Fair promotion is the recognition of an employee which increases performance and enhances organisational commitment.

The results of this study is different from some of the studies carried out in more developed countries which tend to rank interesting work as the highest motivating factor (Koh and Neo, 2005). Maslow's theory, which lists physiological and safety needs as the basic needs to be met before others is, to some extent, upheld by this study. However, contrary to Maslow's theory, the range of other motivational factors in the private universities in south-west Nigeria is mixed. Therefore, Maslow's conclusions that lower level motivational factors must be met before ascending to the next level were not confirmed by this study.

The implications of this study's findings for the management of the private universities in south-west Nigeria are numerous. If the management wants to address the issue of employee motivation, the main focus should be on addressing the security and safety issues. Staff must be re-assured that their jobs are secured if they perform well and the fear of losing one's job must be addressed. This is likely to boost the morale of staff and motivate them to better performance. Although the management of the private universities may not be able to directly address the second factor salary by unilaterally increasing pay outside the public service prescription, it is important that management is aware of the issue and find others ways of compensating staff, where possible.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study were also compared with Herzberg's theory (1959 and 1987) as well as the findings of Muhammad and Baba (2006). Herzberg's conclusion that employees should be more concerned with intrinsic factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and challenges do not hold in the private universities in south-west Nigeria. Rather, the study shows that staffs are more concerned about extrinsic factors such as job security, salary and work conditions. Therefore, more efforts should be focused on

improving extrinsic factors in order to get staff better motivated. Regardless of which theory is applied, the policy that should be put in place should take cognizance of the fact that employee salary, job security and interesting work appear to be important links to higher motivation. Therefore, as observed by Lindner (1998), options such as job enlargement (number of tasks), job enrichment (variety of work), promotions, internal and external stipends, monetary and non-monetary rewards should be considered in developing a policy on employee motivation.

Libraries are established in the university system to provide high quality information services in support of teaching and research for academic staff members as well as acquisition of knowledge of the students. Librarians occupy a central position in the university system. The job performance of librarians/library officer has a bearing on the way they carry out their professional duties. Job performance can explain the organisational behavior of workers. The present study confirms this, and explores the effect of demographic variables as well.

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