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SOCIAL -EMOTIONAL ORIENTED COMMUNICATION AND WORKERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PROCESSING FIRMS.

By

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Abstract

This study is on Social -emotional oriented communication and Workers' Productivity in processing firms namely Niger Mills Company Limited Calabar and United Cement Company Limited /Lafarge, both in Cross River State, Nigeria. Workers' productivity was measured by employee innovativeness and work time reduction. A sample size of 260 respondents derived through the use of Taro Yamane formular was proportioned between the two processing firms. The Human Relations Theory formed the theoretical base of the study. A 5-point likert like questionnaire was used in sourcing for information. Two hundred and thirty-eight (238) copies of the questionnaire were fully filled and retrieved. The two hypothesis formulated were tested with the simple linear regression statistic. The results of the analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between social- emotional communication and employee innovativeness as well as work time reduction. It was therefore recommended that management should encourage social- emotional communication so that through identifying the social needs of workers and maintaining their social networks workers will be committed to constantly innovate. It was also recommended that social emotional communication should be encouraged by managers and that this will strengthen the bond among workers for team work thereby helping goal integration and productivity maximization.

Key words: Social-emotional communication, worker productivity, worker innovativeness, work time reduction.

Introduction

Organisations are social systems made up of mutually depending and supporting components. Productivity in said organisations depend to a large extent on information sharing patterns and how effective communication is. Communication is known to be the bloodline for outcome conscious organisations as it determines the channels by which crucial information on organizational objectives is passed down to every member of the organization. For organisations to perform, communication must be effective and information adequately utilized by all categories of employees to surf through competition in the business environment.

Communication flows among workers may be lateral or vertical, strictly restricted to the organization or to outsiders. The text of the communication may be job related or may not concern the job. Farace et. al (1977), identified three types of communication namely task

related communication, innovation related communication and maintenance related (social-emotional communication).

Social-emotional communication aid an organization in maintaining human relationships. Socio emotional communication occur when employees freely exchange information about their family members with one another, when colleagues discuss social or political happenings. This could take place at lunchtime or at social events organized by the organization. It is the chain of understanding that binds the members of an organization from one level to another and among peers within the organization.

Employees are social beings and as social beings need to trust themselves and the organization to become committed or engaged workers. Effective communication engender trust as workers are made to understand what the organization is doing and why the organization is doing it. This is best achieved in a cordial climate therefore, today's organisations do not concentrate on bureaucratic and formal communication alone but are becoming more interested in the interpersonal interactions among workers, the social networks among workers as well as even the social networks workers belong to outside the organization. Many business deals have been brokered at social events and social interactions. Many potential industrial conflicts have also been resolved. This study therefore attempts to establish a relationship between social-emotional communication and workers' productivity, in selected processing firms in Calabar, Cross River State. Social-emotional oriented communication is the independent variable. While workers' productivity is the dependent variable and it is measured in terms of innovation and work time reduction in Niger Mills Company Limited Calabar and United Cement Company Limited /Lafarge, both in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Over the years the main challenges of firms in the Nigerian processing industry have been intense competition and severe rivalry. Despite the largeness of the market they are operating in, many a processing firm has folded up because of the inability to contend with the serious rivalry and competition in the industry. The serious competition was occasioned by the liberalization of industries, which then accelerated economic growth in the industry. Organizations are often on the lookout for information to improve their performance. Information is not readily available yet operational costs which require sufficient utilization of information and effective communication is on the increase. Poor or relative lack of effective communication results in weak connectivity and low sense of awareness and commitment among employees. As a result of the complexity of their organizational structure, processing firms lean mainly on the quality of interconnectivity among different units through healthy communication facilitated by modern technological applications for enhanced productivity.

However, the perceived poor flow and use of obsolete technology in communication have resulted in low output in most processing firms in Nigeria. Management in such firms have neither shown adequate concern for the use of modern advanced technology in communication nor sensitized workers on the need for unlimited flow of information free of barriers such as social-emotional factors, time utilization or individual expertise limitations. Again, some organisations continually utilize obsolete communication models such as one

way communication and communication with poor feedback which fail to reflect employee insights and contributions available through vertical and horizontal interaction with management as well as employee's satisfaction with management responsiveness to the feedback. Firms in the industry appear to neglect employee's perceived quantity of the firm's strategic information which will help to high light customers' needs and enhance employee' innovativeness.

In the presence of apparent shortfalls and gaps in organizational goal attainment through maximized productivity, it became compelling to select prominent processing firms in Cross River State to carry out a study aimed at addressing productivity impediments which derive from poor utilization of social-emotional communication. This study sought to assess the effect of social-emotional communication on workers' productivity in selected processing firms in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between social- emotional communication and worker productivity in selected processing firms in Calabar. Specific objectives the study is to:

Assess the relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and employee' innovativeness in processing firms.

Determine the relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and work time reduction in processing firms.

Research hypotheses

The null hypothesis that follows were statistically validated in this study to examine the relationship between Social emotional communication and worker productivity.

Ho1: Social-emotional oriented communication does not have a significant relationship with employee's innovativeness in processing firms.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and work time reduction in processing firms.

Theoretical framework

This study's theoretical base is the Human relations theory by Elton Mayo (1933).

Human relations theory succeeded the classical scientific management theory, it attempted to throw light on how man relates to work. It is the earliest theory that encouraged bilateral communication in the organization. It presented communication between an employee and the manager as a dialogue rather than one way communication from the manager to the employee. This theory takes communication as an instrument that can be employed by management to purchase cooperation from workers. The theory posit that workers should have a say and make input regarding their tasks (Wrench et. al 2015). Human relations theory in the organizational context recognizes workers as social beings who communicate among

themselves. This is particularly apparent when change is introduced for the improvement of worker productivity (Lewin, 1958).

The human relations theory brought a paradigm shift from the emphasis on output and work design to the interactions among members of the organization. The human-relations theory emphasized the needs of workers to participate in decision-making and the opportunity to send and receive messages. The theory asserts that it is important to identify the individual needs of organizational members and that this is achievable with effective organization-worker communication. The pertinence of this theory to this study is that, it can be used to explain the role of workers' social-emotional communication through interactions between management and employees, workers' interactions among themselves and their productivity. Worker productivity is decomposed into innovation and work time reduction.

Literature review

Concept of Communication

The workplace and the environment business operate are not static and this underscores the need for managers to strategize appropriately if organizational objectives are to be attained. Communication is a key instrument for operational and functional effectiveness. Communication has its root in the Latin word *communis* which is interpreted to share (Inyang, Oden & Esu, 2003). It's made up of captured thought patterns and words or phrases given meaning to. Communication has to do with creating, transmitting, interpreting and using information for the achievement of goals and objectives in the organization. It is a flow and interchange of information and ideas from one individual to another. Inyang (2007) adumbrates that communication is a process where a sender transmits a message through a medium to a receiver with both having the same understanding.

Communication occurs only when the parties involved have the same understanding. Communication is essential for information and opinion exchange, planning, decision making and implementation, marketing activities (Dwyer, 2005 & Blalock, 2005). Cessation of communication will lead to cessation of organizational activities and a recourse to individual uncoordinated activities. Good decision making requires appropriate information. According to Mwambembule (2013) communication is the sending of information and the receiving of messages from the sender by means of symbols. Mwambembule (2013) further opined that communication is instrumental in building relationships between management and employees, in building respect amongst workers, fostering working as a team and accomplishment of desired organizational goals.

Communication could be formal or informal. It could be in writing, verbal or non-verbal that is body language. Effective communication requires skills such as listening, understanding, talking, asking and convincing skills. Also, it requires emotional intelligence of the manager to decipher the emotions behind information so as to manage job stress, minimize conflicts and not destroy trust already built.

Workplace Social-emotional Communication

Farace, et al., (1977) classified workplace communication into task-related communication, innovation-related communication (new ideas), and maintenance-related communication (social topics that maintain human relationships). Social-emotional communication is

communication that is centered on subject matters that are not job or organization concerned but rather illustrate emotions and maintains social needs and relationships. This type of communication is responsible for building, integrating and developing tangible work relationships amongst workers internal and external to the organization. From person-to-person communication people create social networks and from these networks social support emanate (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2008). Social support engenders emotional support like affection, acceptance and respect and in addition information, knowledge, advice and tangible assistance in the form of goods and services. Stackman and Pinder (1999) in their study were of the view that workers need social support to be successful and have job satisfaction. Social emotional communication could be upward (from subordinate to superior), downward (from superior to subordinate) or lateral (among peers).

Workers' Productivity

Business Dictionary (2017) defined Workers' Productivity as the rate of output per worker (or a group of workers) per unit of time in comparison with established standard or expected rate of output. It focuses on the total output per inputs utilized. Productivity measures how efficiently production inputs, such as manpower and capital, are being utilized in an organization to produce a given level of output. It is measured as the ratio of output volume to input volume. At the organization level productivity can be measured as the ratio that shows how efficiently an organization can process a bundle of resources into output. Worker productivity measure the total output by worker given inputs in a given time period. As stated by Jim (2010) it is a major means of measuring business efficiency in organisations.

Productivity is a significant pointer of organizational sustainability with links to firm competitiveness. With globalization and the attendant rise in competition in industries, employee and organizational productivity is increasingly a known determinant of competitiveness and profitability domestically and internationally (Firouj, Sakineh & Nassim (2010). Soekiman, Pribadi and Soemard (2014), listed factors that influence productivity to include communication, job design, well executed plans, equipment, materials, supervision, health and safety of workers and working time. Good exploitation of these factors would lead to rise in productivity.

The concept of employees' innovativeness

Schumpeter (1934), a German economist made the first attempt to define innovation. He defined it as the driving force for product development. Therrien, et. al (2011), defined innovation thus: Creation of new products or qualitative improvements in existing products, use of a new industrial process, new market openings, development of new raw-material sources or other new inputs and new forms of industrial organizations. Furthermore, they adumbrated that it is a complex process that concerns new production functions and processes in which organisations endeavor to own and built on present special technological competence. Rubera and Kirca, (2012) posit that organizational level innovation is an organization's ability to receive and propensity to take on novel ideas that produce development and introduction of new products.

Globalization and giant technological steps have driven the push for workers innovation in several industries in order to remain relevant in a continuously increasing competition and

ever-changing customer needs and preferences. Employee innovativeness is therefore a key tool utilized by in corporate strategies to develop new markets, expand present market share and position the firm for sustainable competitive edge. Extant studies indicate that, innovation is a major player in firm success and high productivity (Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2011; Cho & Pucik, 2005; Standing & Kiniti, 2011; Bartel & Garud, 2009; Johannessen, 2008; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004). In this study, innovation is taken as an indicator of productivity.

Work time reduction

An effective communication system positions a firm for efficiency and high productivity, sequel to timely dissemination and usage of information. By implication adequately informed workers become competent and efficient in carrying out their task within time limits. Increasing productivity rakes in higher profits and makes it attractive for firms to raise working hours. Elongated working hours may in turn lead to exhaustion and lower worker productivity and predispose workers to safety hazards. Also, many studies have tied working time to health (Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014; Artazcoz, 2009). Circulatory health challenges and unhealthy lifestyles such as smoking and weight gains have been associated with long working hours.

On the converse, increased productivity makes higher worker compensation possible and workers could decrease working hours. Fresh workers may also record higher productivity. Again, lower working hours increases women working and thereby enhances organizational diversity. Effective social emotional communication encourages cordiality, trust and belongingness which all combine to yield engaged workers with better work life balance and high propensity to produce.

Empirical studies

Some relevant studies have been conducted on the effect of communication on workers' productivity.

Atambo and Momanyi (2016) studied the effects of internal communication on employee performance in Kenya Power and Lighting Company, South Nyanza Region, Kenya. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of upward, downward and lateral communication on the worker performance of the said company. The Human Relations and the Enactment theories underpinned the study. The research design was descriptive and Cross-sectional survey. A questionnaire was used in collecting data from a stratified random sample. The study showed that through downward communication Kenya Power and Lighting Company distributes information on time which aided performance. Secondly feedback on performance and employee grievances were channeled to management through upward communication. Thirdly the work showed that lateral communication drives interdepartmental interactions, building teams and job coordination. It was concluded that effective communication aids employees' performance. Having strong communication systems was therefore the recommendation.

Dwumah et. al (2015) researched on communication and productivity in Vodafone-Ghana, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study examined the relationship between

effective communication and employee productivity by examining how management and employees' relations was improved through organizational communication. A sample of 100 employees were randomly selected and administered a questionnaire. The results of analysed data showed cordiality in communication between management and workers. Strong communication between management and workers was then recommended.

Otoo (2015) studied the effect of communication on employee performance at Ghana revenue authority, Kumasi. The aim of the study was to identify the most useful channel of communication in the opinion of employees. The theories that framed the study were: Systems theory, and Human Relations theory. The study had a randomly selected sample of 200 employees and a questionnaire as the main tool of data collection. Regression analysis was used in testing the hypothesis. The results revealed that effective downward communication motivates commitment to work and improves performance.

Asamu (2014)'s study was on the impact of communication on workers' performance in selected organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Asamu's (2014) research examined the level of communication within the organization and its impact on employees' performance. Furthermore, it determined the extent of the effect of communication on the level of workers innovativeness. The descriptive survey method was adopted and 120 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the sample. The chi-square statistical tool was used in testing the hypothesis. The results revealed that effective communication relates with workers performance, productivity and innovation. The recommendation was that regular communication with workers will enhance employees' innovativeness and performance.

Wang (2011) researched on the "Role of communication in enhancing employees' innovativeness: Exploring the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and innovation in China". The study assessed horizontal and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication individually using four indicators namely: employee's perceived quantity of social interaction with peers/superiors within the department, quantity of social interaction with peers/superiors outside the department, quality of these interactions, and emotional coloring of the interactions. Theoretically the study was underpinned by the Human relations theory. Descriptive survey research design was employed and questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection in the study. The statistical tool for hypothesis test was regression aided SPSS. The study concluded that the better social-emotional oriented communication between superiors and employees, the better work oriented communication and by extension this encourages employees to want to stay at work and their contributions to the organization.

Sumeya (2016), conducted research on the effect of internal communication channels on employee performance in nonprofit organizations in Somalia. The aim was to assess the extent of the effect of downward, upward and peer to peer communication on employee performance.

Descriptive research design was adopted by the study. A stratified random sample of 136 respondents was selected in the organization Help Leads to Hope (HLP) in Somalia and a structured questionnaire used in data collection. Correlation statistics was used in testing the hypothesis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The results of analysis indicated that upward communication was weak and had no significant relationship with employee performance while both downward and peer to peer communication had significant relationship with employee performance. Recommendations were that frequent communication between management and employees, employees and management and peer to peer should be encouraged; trainings on communication should also be provided.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research method based on the value and potentials of the method to address the research problem. According to Abara (2016) with a sample establishes the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of specified research variables. Niger Mills Company Limited, Calabar, and United Cement Company Limited/Lafarge with headquarters in Calabar, both in Cross River State were studied. The total staff of Niger Mills Company Limited was 280 while that of United Cement Company/Lafarge was 463, giving a total population of seven hundred and forty-three (743) from all departments in the organisations.

Taro Yamane (1967) formular was used in determining the sample size as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n= sample size

N= population

1= constant

e= level of significance at 5 percent or 0.05

$$n = \frac{743}{1 + 743(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{743}{1 + 743(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{743}{1 + 1.8575}$$

$$n = \frac{743}{2.8575}$$

$$n = 260.017$$

$$n \cup = 260$$

The sample size was then proportionately apportioned between both companies thus:

$$\text{Niger Mills Company Limited: } \frac{280}{743} \times 260 = 98 \text{ employees.}$$

$$\text{United Cement Company Limited: } \frac{463}{743} \times 260 = 162 \text{ employees}$$

The sample was randomly selected using the balloting procedure thereby giving every member of the population an equal chance to be selected. A structured questionnaire was administered to get primary data from respondents. Section A sought bio-data information while Section B had close ended questions on social emotional communication and workers' productivity with a five-point likert-like scale. The responses and weights assigned to them were: strongly agree (SA-5); Agree (A-4); Neutral (N-3); Disagree (D-2); and strongly disagree (SD-1). The questionnaire was validated by experts and its reliability tested with the Cronbach Alpha technique with the aid of SPSS version 20. The alpha coefficients (α) ranged from 0.84 to 0.89 showing strong internal reliability as depicted in Table 1 that follows. The hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression.

Table 1
Cronbach Alpha Reliability co-efficient

Variables	Social emotional oriented communication	Work time reduction	Employees' innovativeness
α	0.86	0.89	0.86

Source: Researcher computation (2019).

In line with the objectives and hypotheses of the study the model is stated thus:

Model A

$$WPR=f(\text{SEOC}) \tag{1}$$

$$WPR=b_0+b_1\text{SEOC}+u \tag{2}$$

Model B

$$WPR=f(\text{INN}) \tag{1}$$

$$WPR=b_0+b_1 \text{INN}+u \tag{2}$$

In the above models, INN (innovation) and WTR (work time reduction) are variables used as proxies for worker productivity (dependent variable) of the processing firms. The independent variable is SEOC where SEOC is social emotional oriented communication.

a_0 which is a constant is the intercept term showing the value of the independent variable when all the independent variables are zero.

a_1 to a_n are the regression parameters to be estimated.

u is the stochastic error term which takes care of other possible factors not considered in the model that could influence variable.

Results

Altogether two hundred and sixty (260) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents, but two hundred and thirty-eight (238) were fully filled and retrieved resulting in 95.1 per cent response rate. The results of the analysis of data is as follows:

Ho1 Social-emotional oriented communication does not significantly relate with employee’s innovativeness in processing firms.

The results of the linear regression is captured in Table 2. The level of correlation between social-emotional oriented communication and innovativeness is depicted by R-value of .928 and adjusted R²-value of .860. This indicates that 86 percent of the variance in innovation can be explained by social-emotional oriented communication. Also the model’s significance of equation F(1,236)=1458.695, p<.005 indicates that, the overall prediction of innovativeness by social-emotional oriented communication is statistically significant and the regression model a good fit for the data. It can therefore be concluded that social-emotional oriented communication enhances employees’ innovativeness in the firms.

Table 2

Least square regression results for innovation (Social-emotional communication)

Variables	Beta	Standard errors	T	Sig
(Constant)	1.131	.075	14.983	.000
Social-emotional communication	.725	.019	38.193	.000
R	.928			
R ²	.861			
Adjusted R ²	.860			
F-value	1458.695			
Sig	.000			

a predictor: Social-emotional communication

b dependent variable: employees’ innovativeness

Source: Researcher computation 2019

Hypothesis two

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and work time reduction in processing firms.

Test statistics: linear regression

The results of the analysis is presented in Table 3. The R-value of .927 in table shows the level of correlation between social-emotional oriented communication and time reduction.

The adjusted R²-value of .859 shows that 85.9 percent of the variance in work time reduction is been explain by social-emotional oriented communication. The model significant of equation is shown thus: F(1,236)=1449.313, p<.005 indicating that, the overall prediction of the independent variable to the dependent variable is statistically significant, therefore, the regression model is a good fit for the data and provides, sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and work time reduction in processing firms. The equation of the line for using work-oriented communication to predict work time reduction is Y=.759+.914 which is statistically significant with t=38.070 and p<.005, where .759 is the slope for the social-emotional oriented communication and .914 is the y-intercept.

Table 3

Least square regression results for time reduction (social-emotional oriented communication)

Variables	Beta	Standard errors	T	Sig
(Constant)	.914	.078	11.767	.000
Social-emotional communication	.759	.020	38.070	.000
R	.927			
R ²	.860			
Adjusted R ²	.859			
F-valve	1449.313			
Sig	.000			

a predictor: Social emotional communication

b dependent variable: Time reduction

Source: Researcher computation 2019

Discussion of findings

The results of the analysis of hypothesis one revealed that social-emotional oriented communication significantly relate with employees' innovativeness in processing firms in Cross River State. This finding aligns with the study of Dwumah et. al (2015) study that came to the conclusion that social emotional communication enhances cordial relationship between management and employees and thus facilitate innovativeness and goal accomplishment. Furthermore, the study stated that strong communication between management and the employees builds good work relationship in which managers are open to ideas that boost their innovativeness (Otoo, 2015). By implication, social emotional oriented communication motivates employees to constantly initiate ideas for products regular branding to surpass customers' expectation. This is because social emotional communication plays significant roles in social needs and relationship maintenance. Robert (2000), in a study concluded that effective communication is an instrument for enhancing employees' performance as it is employee motivator through building good relations between top management and co-workers and by enhancing team work. It opined also that it enhances employees' performance, and corporate objective attainment.

The results of the analysis of data for the testing of hypothesis two on showed a significant relationship between social-emotional oriented communication and work time reduction in processing firms. The finding confirms the result of the study carried out by Krishnan and Wesley (2016) which concluded that employee communication is significantly related to employee engagement level and timely accomplishment of goal in the organizations. Nebo et al (2015)'s study revealed that, peer communication is encourages employee active participation and commitment to firms' daily activities and optimal utilization of resources, of which time is a resource. Wang (2011) found that, social-emotional-oriented communication of subordinates and superiors positively predicts affective commitment and thereby enhances work time utilization in organizations. By the implication, this means that social-emotional-oriented communication builds among employee's cordial relationship and strong team spirit that makes workers focus their efforts to maximizing output through integration of goal. Social-emotional-oriented communication builds, integrates and develops meaningful work relationships (social support) among workers in the workplace. Interpersonal communication leads to the creation of social networks, and from these networks social support which motivates and facilitates timeliness in goal attainment. Greenglass (1993) adumbrate that social support yields emotional support as well as information, knowledge, advice and physical help in the form of goods and services.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study, it is therefore concluded that social emotional oriented communication relates with employee's innovativeness in processing firms. Secondly, the conclusion is drawn that social-emotional oriented communication relate with work time reduction in processing firms.

In fulfilment of the objectives, we therefore recommend that

Management should promote social emotional communication so that workers' social needs can be identified and social networks maintained to motivate workers commitment to constantly initiate ideas that facilitate innovation.

To encourage work time reduction through effective time utilization, managers should ensure that there is room for social emotional oriented communication that will build a strong bond among the workers and team work. This will enable the organization through the workers integrate goals and focus on productivity maximization.

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