

BUSINESS SKILLS POSSESSED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT GRADUATE WORKERS FOR EFFECTIVE WORK PERFORMANCE IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The need to ascertain that Office Technology and Management students in Nigerian institutions are adequately equipped with requisite skills for effective work performance necessitated this study. This study investigated supervisors' perception of level of business skills possessed by Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduate workers for effective work performance in Anambra State, Nigeria. One research question guided the study and three hypotheses were tested in the study. The study employed descriptive survey research design and 304 supervisors from public and private organizations were studied. Census survey sampling technique was used. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire containing 11 items was validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded reliability index of 0.78 indicating that the instrument was valid. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the spread of respondents' mean ratings. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations fairly possessed business skills. Type of organization, gender and work experience influenced the respondents' view. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the observed and widely reported poor performance of these employees is caused by their lack of business skills, which could be as a result of inadequacies in their training institutions. It was therefore recommended among others that OTM graduate workers should engage in self-development programmes to improve on their business skills deficiency.

Keywords: Supervisor, business skills, OTM graduates, work performance

Introduction

Work place is an environment that keeps workers fulfilled in the business world. An employee's work place is a determinant tool for business success. Helena and Thomas (2016) asserted that work places are like families in social settings where investors, company owners, executives, managers, supervisors, workmates, subordinates, clients and suppliers interact, share ideas, experiences and implement instructions and execute tasks individually and in teams. As a result, lack of skills in one employee can cause the company to lose business opportunities worth thousands or millions of Naira. Wilson, Ariffian and Abu in Helena and Thomas (2016) postulated that lack of hard skills is easier to manage as it can be addressed by on-the-job retraining, but lack of soft skills ends up becoming entrenched in one's personality and habits. It is difficult to remove bad habits and instill desired generic skills in a work environment. This is why most employers expect desired generic skills like business skills to be present in employees at recruitment stage (Kramar, 2011). According to Jackson and Hancock in Helena and Thomas (2016), the need to develop non-technical skills (generic skills) in graduate youths basically arose from industry's calls for job-ready graduates who have both the technical expertise and generic skills necessary to add immediate value in the workplace. By so doing, such graduates will save the company on scarce resources that are usually spent on staff development and training as the skills enable employees to use their

technical abilities as part of a team, understand conflict as a means for discussion instead of an angry confrontation, and respect differences as creative opportunities.

Business skills are traits that enable one understand the consumers, organizational behaviour and utilize the information to thrive in organization. Business skill according to Banger (2019) is the ability to carry out a business task effectively with determined performance and results within a given time, material, money, managing power or other kinds of resources. Business skills include time management, team-building, being analytical, negotiation, problem-solving, sales and marketing, financial management and conflict resolution skills. These skills vary between company type and industry and are primarily important for entrepreneurs, company owners and managers as they understand consumer and organizational behaviour and utilize the knowledge to promote a firm's success.

Business skills are an important component of workplace success. Business skills are skills that help people understand the consumer and organizational behavior and use this information to promote the success of the company (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). Whether you are a business owner or an employee, possessing certain business skills can positively impact the efficiency, performance and productivity of the company. These skills are primarily important for entrepreneurs, company owners and managers, however, more and more employers look for job candidates who possess a combination of both business and technical skills. Business skills include:

1. **Time management skills:** Managing your time well can help one improve in his career. Organizing each day helps you to complete work on time, stay engaged during important meetings and give you space to be creative and proactive in your tasks. Having strong time-management skills can ultimately lead to accomplishing key goals and advancing in your position (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). Osawe (2017) posited that good time management requires an important shift in focus from activities to results. Effective time management not only influences the productivity of employees but also helps to cope with stress, conflicts and pressure more efficiently. It helps to maintain a healthy work-life balance and keep employees motivated.
2. **Team-building skills:** Achieving a business goal often begins with the ability to select and manage an efficient team. Knowing how to choose the most appropriate team, assign tasks and motivate your workers can result in your employees performing at peak levels. The better the team management and team building, the more able the team will be to perform as a harmonious unit and work unitedly towards a common cause.
3. **Negotiation skills:** To take on board other people's feelings and express one's own requirements in an unemotional clear fashion to achieve a win-win outcome.
4. **Problem-solving skills:** The more one makes plans, the more one encounters problems in business. This means that one need to be able to make good decisions, sometimes, under pressure.
5. **Sales and marketing skills:** This skill enhances promotion of organization's products or services effectively. Providing good customer service and having a marketing strategy in place will help to generate sales.
6. **Financial management skills:** Business owners and those in management positions are often required to have financial management skills to effectively understand and manage the company's financial needs. Financial management skills include the ability to analyze the current market, understand investment benefits and risks, timely and effectively budget and identify anything that is negatively impacting the company's bottom line.
7. **Innovation skill:** This skill is a creative approach which helps employee to in understanding the high society in a better way and with that they may end up with such

outcome that might provide the rest of the society a new outlook (Pandey and Anand, 2020).

8. **Project management and planning:** Starting a business means you will have to manage a range of projects, such as setting up a website, arranging the fit-out of business premises and developing a range of policies and procedures. Knowing how to effectively manage the resources, including time, money and staff will help one to achieve your goals.

Business skills are a fundamental component of starting, running and managing a successful business. If you are a business owner, these skills equip you with the ability to meet the needs of both your consumers and employees. As a potential or current employee, business skills can set one apart from other workers and help one advance within one's career. Possession of business skills will enhance business environment through the following:

1. Maintain high product quality.
2. Build excellent customer relations and customer care standards.
3. Increase performance, productivity and profits through efficient planning, management and implementation of business aims and goals.
4. Form a sound financial base and maintain a prudent financial policy.
5. Maintain a positive and productive company culture.
6. Motivate employees to perform at their best.
7. Establish profitable sales

OTM graduate workers are employees who have acquired professional knowledge and skills and abilities in order to perform effectively in their fields of endeavour. They were formally known as secretaries. Adegboyega and Ufuoma (2020) opined that OTM graduate workers are a symbol of the company's prosperity and corporate image, meaning that they are public relations representative of the company, having the responsibility of managing his boss and the office. The authors further explained that OTM workers come in contact with members of the public who have come to see his/her boss. In other words, they act as intermediaries between the organization and the general public, promoting the image and selling the ideas of their organizations. Ngotngamwong citing Duncan (2018) asserted that OTM graduate workers are said to be indispensable, are troubleshooters, translators, help desk attendants, diplomats, human databases, travel consultants, amateur psychologists, and ambassadors to the inside and outside world.

The public perception of an organization comes through the manner of reception accorded by the OTM professionals when the company is visited (Newsman in Adegboyega and Ufuoma, 2020). The OTM workers not only deal with visitors but also with members of staff who are the internal publics. It is important to note that for the public to have a good image of an organization, the OTM professionals must perform his/her duties in managing communication process with people he/she has contact with, without stress (Adegboyega and Ufuoma). Since OTM professionals cannot operate in a vacuum, Center, Scott and Glen in Adegboyega and Ufuoma (2020) advised the OTM workers to understand the essence of good relationships in an organization because one will discover that at least half of the business life is taken up with people, and the more skilled one is at it, the more effective the person will be, and the more profitable the organization will be. Graduates of OTM occupy positions as secretaries, administrative professionals, office technologist, information managers and office administrators. Ezenwafor and Obi (2022) posit that OTM employees' responsibilities spread through all facets of a country's socio-economic and political life ranging from schools, hospitals, corporate settings, legal and medical offices as well as large and small-scale businesses. Amoor in Ezenwafor and Obi (2022) asserted that these functions of OTM graduates

in both private and public sectors of the economy have gone far beyond their traditional orthodox duties as professional secretaries and are currently charged with the responsibilities of manipulating and managing database, creating presentations and reports using suitable computer software and digital graphics. They also are expected to utilize soft skill like business skills to navigate through negotiation and securing opportunities for their organizations.

Public and private organizations are two types of business sector. Privately owned organization are business sectors managed and controlled by individuals or group of individuals with sole aim of making profits. On the other hand, public organizations are funded and controlled by government agencies, enterprises and other entities that deliver public programs, good and services. OTM graduate workers are been employed in these organization to solve complex problems and make wise decisions. These OTM do not work on their own, rather they operate under the guidian and direction of top executives known as supervisors. A supervisor is a higher officer or top executives in an organization, who has other workers as subordinates, motivates , controls the activities towards achieving organizational goals. Supervisors of OTM workers comprised of males and females and their ways of perception could be different. The experiences of these supervisors could influence the supervisors' decision.

Statement of Problem

Workplace is increasingly becoming dynamic unstable which a times affect organizational culture resulting to negative effect on the productivity of the organization. The instability can cause the organization to experience low productivity or even winding up. This calls for need to be stable in an unstable environment and making a difference. Rockwood (2021) asserted that becoming stellar employee requires an arsenal of skills that are harder to measure but critical to success such skills include among others time management skills, team building, negotiation skills, problem solving skills and innovation skills. Fortunately, observation and reports state that employees lack these skills and are unable to contribute wisely the effectiveness of their organizations. OTM graduate workers are found among these employees and the researcher intends to find out if the OTM graduate workers possess these business skills for effective work performance. Hence, the need for the study.

Purpose of the Study

The study intends to find out supervisors' perception of the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance in public and private organizations in Anambra State.

Research Question

What is supervisors' perception of the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance in public and private organizations in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

1. Respondents from public and private organizations in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance.
2. Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.
3. Work experience does not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This design is considered most appropriate for the study because it seeks the opinions of supervisors on personality skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective performance in public and private organizations in Anambra State. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 304 supervisors drawn across public and private organizations in Anambra State. The instrument used for data collection was a 5-point Likert type structured questionnaire titled, "Business Skills Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka, Anambra State: two from business education and one from measurement and evaluation. Their inputs were harmonized and taken into account. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha method of internal consistency and it yielded reliability coefficient of 0.76 indicating that the instrument is valid. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research question and determine the spread of respondents' mean ratings. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), otherwise the null hypotheses was accepted. The analyses were carried out using SPSS version 25.0.

Result

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings on their perception of the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance in public and private organizations in Anambra State. N=304

S/N	Business Skills	Mean	SD	Remarks
	Ability to:			
1	Understand the business of the organization	3.52	1.02	Much Possessed
2	Work in timely with the business organization	3.14	1.11	Fairly Possessed
3	Maintain suitable records of the organizational activities	3.20	1.02	Fairly Possessed
4	Market the ideas of the organization	2.96	1.00	Fairly Possessed
5	Show understanding of government business policies	2.97	1.07	Fairly Possessed
6	Effectively manage finance in the office	2.95	1.11	Fairly Possessed
7	Pursue attainment of organizational goals	3.30	0.96	Fairly Possessed
8	Effectively manage office equipment	3.35	1.02	Fairly Possessed
9	Organize office suitably to save operation time	3.23	1.02	Fairly Possessed
10	Motivate employees to perform at their best	3.41	1.07	Fairly Possessed
11	Quickly seek solutions to problems	3.03	1.00	Fairly Possessed
	Cluster Mean	3.19		Fairly Possessed

Table 1 shows that item 1 has mean rating of 3.52 indicating that the respondents perceived the skill to be much possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State. The remaining 10 items have mean ratings of between 2.50 to 3.49 showing that the skills are fairly possessed by the OTM graduate workers. The cluster mean of 3.19 shows that the respondents perceived business skills to be fairly possessed by the OTM graduate workers. The standard deviations for all the items are between 0.96 - 1.11 which shows that they are all within the same range. This implies that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Table 2: Summary of t-test for significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from public and private organizations in Anambra State on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance.

Type of Organization	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig	t-cal	P-value	DECISION
Public	165	3.36	0.87	302	0.05	4.03	0.00	Significant
Private	139	2.99	0.73					

Table 2 reveals the calculated t-value of 4.03 at 302 degree of freedom with a p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p\text{-value}=0.00 < \alpha\text{ level}=0.05$). This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors from public and private organizations in Anambra State on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance.

Table 3: Summary of t-test for significant difference of male and female respondents' mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig	t-cal	P-value	DECISION
Male	158	3.10	0.83	302	0.05	-1.97	0.50	Not Significant
Female	146	3.29	0.82					

Table 3 shows the calculated t-value of -1.97 and 302 degree of freedom with the p-value of 0.50 which is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance ($p\text{-value}=0.50 > \alpha\text{ level}=0.05$). This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female supervisors on the level of business skills possessed by their OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Table 4: Summary of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on work experience influences of respondents' mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-Value	DECISION
Between Groups	2.29	2	1.14	1.68	0.19	Not Significant
Within Groups	204.86	301	0.68			
Total	207.15	303				

Data in Table 4 shows 2 and 301 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance with a p-value of 0.19 which is greater than alpha level of 0.05 ($p\text{-value}=0.19 > \alpha\text{ level}=0.05$). This implies that work experience does not significantly influence supervisors' mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Level of Business Skills Possessed by OTM Graduate Workers

The findings of the study revealed that OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State fairly possessed business skills. The finding is in line with the findings of Atwongyeire (2019) stated that creativity influenced job performance at workplace among employees of Futurelink Technologies and Nansana Municipal Council. Lv, Chen and Ruan (2021) posited that employee creativity has become the driving force and core competitive capability of organizations in a complex and changing external environment. The authors further stressed that organizational innovativeness depends on employees' creativity. In support, Ikon, Onwuchekwa and Okolie-Osemene (2018) conducted a study on team-building and employee

performance in selected breweries in South East, Nigeria and it was revealed that there was significant positive relationship between harmonization and service delivery of employees in a team in selected breweries of South East, Nigeria. Further, the author asserted that team building is an important agendum in the current business climate as organizations are looking to team-based structures to stimulate further improvements of their performance.

Atwongyeire (2019), Lv, Chen and Ruan (2021) and Ikon, Onwuchekwa and Okolie-Osemene (2018) reported the effectiveness of creativity and team-building to performance in an organization, however, the findings of this study revealed that OTM graduate workers possessed business skills at an average level thereby affecting their effectiveness. It also showed that OTM graduates performed below what is expected of them.

The findings of the study revealed that supervisors from public and private organizations in Anambra State differed significantly in their mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance. The findings also revealed that male and female supervisors did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Furthermore, the findings showed that work experience did not significantly influence supervisors' mean ratings on the level of business skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that business skills were fairly possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the observed and widely reported poor performance of these employees is caused by their lack of business skills, which could be as a result of inadequacies in their training institutions.

Recommendation

It was therefore recommended among others that OTM graduate workers should engage in self-development programmes to improve on their business skills deficiency. Also, management of institutions should ensure that business skills are inculcated well in students in order to perform effectively in the world of work.

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