

Employees' Empowerment Strategies and Contextual Performance of Rivers State Civil Service, 2012 – 2022

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Abstract: *This study examined influence of employees' empowerment strategies on contextual performance in Rivers State Civil Service from 2012 to 2022. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was drawn from the entire staff of Rivers State Civil Service with a figure of 40,667 that constitutes both the junior and senior staff members. This study covered the 26 Ministries and the Office of the Head of Civil Service in Rivers State. The sample size of 396 civil servants in Rivers State determined using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between empowerment strategies and contextual performance Rivers State Civil Service from 2012 to 2022. Therefore, the study concludes that empowerment strategies positively enhance performance in the Civil Service organization in Rivers State, Nigeria. This asserts that if employees feel supported by their organization, whether through managerial support, resources, or other means, they are likely to perform better in their roles. Thus, the study recommends that*

Keywords: *Employees' Empowerment Strategies, Contextual Performance, Rivers State Civil Service*

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of public sector organizations, employee empowerment has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing both individual and organizational performance. Empowerment strategies are designed to give employees the autonomy, authority, and resources needed to make decisions and take initiatives that improve job outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995). These strategies are particularly important in public institutions, such as the civil service, where rigid hierarchies and bureaucratic structures often limit employee discretion and innovation (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). Empowering employees can help overcome these limitations by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability, ultimately enhancing contextual performance—a set of behaviors that support the broader organizational environment, including collaboration, initiative, and adaptability (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

Contextual performance, as opposed to task performance, involves activities that are not part of an employee's core job responsibilities but are essential for organizational effectiveness. These behaviors include helping colleagues, demonstrating initiative, and contributing to a positive workplace atmosphere (Podsakoff et al., 2000). For public sector organizations like the Rivers State Civil Service, which are often characterized by formalized job roles and procedures, fostering contextual performance is crucial for achieving greater flexibility, adaptability, and overall effectiveness in service delivery (Obadan, 2013).

Employee empowerment is not merely about granting more freedom to employees; it also involves structured initiatives such as participatory decision-making, resource accessibility, and professional development opportunities (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). These strategies enhance employees' psychological empowerment, increasing their motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to organizational goals (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In particular, empowered employees are more likely to engage in contextual performance behaviors that benefit the organization beyond their formal job descriptions (Organ, 1997). The purpose of the study therefore was to examine the relationship between descriptive human resource analytics and timeliness of work in Multinational Oil and Gas Companies in Nigeria.

This study was guided by the following research objectives which are to:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Organizational Support Theory (OST)

Organisational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Shore and Shore, 1995) considers the advancement, nature, and outcomes of Perceived Organisational Support (POS) (Eisenberger, *et al.*, 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Shore and Shore, 1995). According to organisational support theory, POS satisfies socio-emotional needs and is used by employees to infer their organisation's willingness to reward increased efforts made for the organisation's benefit. According to the theory, workers demonstrate in accordance with the standard of correspondence, exchanging their exertion and commitment to their organisation for POS and the guarantee of future benefits from the organisation. An extensive body of evidence indicates that employees who have a significant amount of POS view their jobs more positively (e.g., increased job satisfaction, a more positive state of mind, less pressure) and are more invested in their organisation (e.g., increased emotional organisational commitment, increased performance, lessened turnover). The theory of organisational support predicts that the employee-organisation relationship will be strengthened as a result of the exchange of positive results between employees and their employers.

It is believed that employees' proclivity to attribute humanlike qualities to the organisation promotes the advancement of organisational support theory (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Levinson (1965) observed that actions taken by agents of an organisation are frequently

interpreted as indications of the organisation's intent rather than being attributed solely to the agents' close to home thought processes, as was the case in the past. According to Levinson, this embodiment of the organisation is aided by the organisation's legal, moral, and financial responsibility for the activities of its agents; organisational approaches, standards, and culture that provide continuity and endorse part practices; and the power that the organisation's agents exercise over individual employees. In accordance with the organisation's explanation, employees interpret their positive or troublesome treatment as an indication that the organisation supports or denigrates their work performance. Social trade theorists contend that assets received from others are more highly valued when they are dependent on the benefactor's choice rather than on external circumstances beyond his or her control. This intentional guide is requested as a sign that the contributor genuinely values and regards the beneficiary and is grateful for his or her assistance (Eisenberger, Cotterell, & Marvel, 1987; Gouldner, 1960). As a result, organisational rewards and favourable job conditions, such as pay, advancements, job enhancement, and influence over organisational strategies, contribute more to POS if the employees believe that they are the result of the organisation's deliberate activities rather than external constraints, such as association agreements or administrative wellbeing and security controls, such as those in place (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997).

Organisational Support Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between empowerment strategies and performance outcomes. By examining employees' perceptions of support within the organisation, researchers can gain insights into the mechanisms through which empowerment strategies influence performance and identify strategies for enhancing organisational support to drive positive performance outcomes.

Employee Contextual Performance

Employee contextual performance is a crucial aspect of organisational success, as it refers to behaviors that go beyond the formal job requirements, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the workplace. This is known as the citizenship behavior and exhibited by an employee's willingness to go an extra mile to ensure the organisation is operating effectively even though it will not directly affect their productivity (Menezes, 2012). This was measured in terms of creativity, contribution and participation in allocated work assignments.

Employee contextual performance refers to the voluntary and discretionary actions that employees take to support the organisation and promote its effective functioning (Werner, 2000). It is often referred to as "citizenship behavior" and includes activities such as helping colleagues with their work, attending meetings outside of regular working hours, and engaging in activities that go beyond the formal job requirements. Employee contextual performance has been shown to have a positive impact on organisational outcomes such as productivity, efficiency, and customer satisfaction (Werner, 2000). Furthermore, research has found that employees who engage in contextual performance are more likely to receive promotions and higher salaries (Werner, 2000). However, it is important to note that the

motivation behind employee contextual performance is not solely based on extrinsic rewards, but also on intrinsic factors such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Werner, 2000). Therefore, organisations should strive to create a positive work environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and encourages employees to engage in contextual performance.

Contextual performance is a set of behaviors that contribute to the smooth functioning of an organisation, but are not specifically part of an employee's job description. Factors influencing contextual performance include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and personal characteristics of the employee. Job satisfaction is an important factor that influences contextual performance because employees who are satisfied with their job are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organisation as a whole (Miller and Werner). Organisational commitment is another factor that influences contextual performance. Employees who are committed to their organisation are more likely to engage in behaviors that support the organisation's goals, even if those behaviors are not specifically part of their job description. Personal characteristics such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability also influence contextual performance (Miller and Werner). Conscientious employees are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organisation, while agreeable employees are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit their colleagues. Emotional stability is important because it enables employees to handle stressful situations without becoming overwhelmed, which can help them to maintain their performance levels even in difficult circumstances. In conclusion, contextual performance is influenced by a variety of factors, including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and personal characteristics of the employee.

Contextual performance refers to the behaviors that go beyond the formal job requirements and contribute to the social and organisational effectiveness of the workplace. These behaviors include helping colleagues, showing initiative, and being a positive influence on the work environment. Measuring contextual performance allows organisations to identify which employees are contributing more to the overall success of the organisation and which areas need improvement. According to Goodman and Svyantek (1999), contextual performance is related to job satisfaction and overall job performance. Employees who engage in these behaviors not only contribute to the success of the organisation but also feel more satisfied with their job. This can lead to increased productivity and decreased turnover rates. Therefore, measuring employee contextual performance is crucial for organisations to identify and reward employees who are contributing to the overall success of the organisation, while also promoting a positive work environment.

Empirical Review

Employee empowerment has emerged as a pivotal strategy in enhancing organizational performance and employee satisfaction. Empirical research conducted within Nigeria offers significant insights into the impact and effectiveness of empowerment strategies in diverse organizational contexts. One of the key findings from Oladapo and Ogundele (2016) reveals that employee empowerment is strongly linked to increased job satisfaction and performance within the Nigerian banking sector. Their study, involving a survey of banking employees in Lagos State, demonstrates that employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment report greater job satisfaction and improved performance. This result aligns with the broader understanding that empowerment fosters intrinsic motivation by giving employees greater autonomy and control over their work, thereby enhancing their overall job satisfaction. In addition to job satisfaction, employee empowerment significantly influences organizational commitment. Nwachukwu and Ibe (2018) investigated this relationship within Nigerian SMEs and found that empowerment positively affects employees' commitment to their organizations. Their mixed-methods approach, which combined surveys with in-depth interviews, highlights that empowered employees are more emotionally attached to their organizations and exhibit a stronger commitment. This finding underscores the role of empowerment in fostering loyalty and reducing turnover, crucial factors for organizational stability and growth.

Kyei-Frimpong, Kodwo Amoako, Akwetey-Siaw, Owusu Boakye, Nyarko Adu, Suleman, & Abdul Bawa (2024) examined employee empowerment and organizational commitment among employees of star-rated hotels in Ghana: does perceived supervisor support matter? A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 274 frontline workers from 4-star and 5-star hotels at two different waves within a 7-month interval. The data received were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V. 23.0) and SmartPLS (V.4.0), respectively. As hypothesized in the study, employee empowerment was significantly related to organizational commitment. Furthermore, the results revealed that perceived supervisor support moderated the nexus between employee empowerment and affective and continuance commitment but did not moderate the nexus between employee empowerment and normative commitment.

Ntwiga, Muchara and Kiriri (2021) conducted a study on the influence of employee empowerment on competitive advantage in hospitals within Nairobi, Kenya. The study examined the influence of implementation of employee empowerment on competitive advantage in hospitals within Nairobi. A descriptive correlational research design that applied positivism philosophy. Data was collected from both private and public hospitals within Nairobi targeting patients who were admitted in these hospitals for more than three days during the study period and senior employees of the respective hospitals. There were 308 participants, 154 hospital employees and 154 patients from 31 hospitals within Nairobi.

After institutional and individual consent was obtained, participants filled a self-administered questionnaire. The collected data was coded into SPSS Version 23 software and the analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings illustrated that employee empowerment significantly predicted competitive advantage. High responsiveness and good attitude, being reliable, empathy and assuring the patients of their state best enhance patients' and employee satisfaction. This brings out the importance of realigning the staff inputs towards improving patient experiences, as well as considering employees' performance as individual instead of considering them as teams.

AlKahtani, Iqbal, Sohail, Sheraz, Jahan, Anwar and Haider (2021) examined the impact of employee empowerment on organizational commitment through job satisfaction in four- and five-stars hotel industry. The non-probability random sampling technique and time lag was used to collect data from 307 employees working at four- and five-Stars Hotels in two cities Rawalpindi, Islamabad of Pakistan. Smart Partial least squares-structural equation modeling (Smart PLS SEM v.3.2.8) was used to test the hypotheses. The result indicates that employee empowerment has a significant and positive impact on organizational commitment. Also, job satisfaction is considered as a potential mediator between employee empowerment and organizational commitment. Furthermore, to support the results current study used the social exchange theory. Finally, some theoretical and practical contributions to employee empowerment and organizational commitment literature, and research limitations and future directions are presented.

Furthermore, the impact of employee empowerment on innovation has been substantiated by research conducted by Adesola and Olabode (2020). Their study within Nigerian manufacturing firms indicates that empowerment enhances employees' capacity for innovation by creating an environment that supports creativity and risk-taking. Empowered employees are more proactive in suggesting new ideas and improving processes, which contributes to the organization's competitive edge and growth. This evidence highlights the importance of empowerment in driving organizational innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing business environment.

However, implementing effective empowerment strategies is not without challenges. Akinbode and Taiwo (2021) explored the obstacles faced by Nigerian organizations in this regard. Their qualitative research identified several barriers, including resistance to change, inadequate training, and resource constraints. These challenges must be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of empowerment initiatives and to fully leverage their benefits. Overcoming these barriers is essential for organizations to create an empowering environment that enhances employee performance and satisfaction (Akinbode & Taiwo, 2021). Moreover, the impact of employee empowerment on turnover intentions has been examined by Olufemi and Afolabi (2019). Their study in Nigerian public sector organizations demonstrates that higher levels of empowerment are associated with lower turnover intentions. Empowered employees are less likely to leave their organizations, which is crucial

for retaining talent and maintaining organizational stability. This finding emphasizes the strategic importance of empowerment in reducing turnover and fostering long-term employee retention (Olufemi & Afolabi, 2019).

Based on the foregoing, the study thus hypothesized that:

Ho₁: Employee’s empowerment strategies do not significantly influence contextual performance of Rivers State Civil Service.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was drawn from the entire staff of Rivers State Civil Service with a figure of 40,667 that constitutes both the junior and senior staff members. This study covered the 26 Ministries and the Office of the Head of Civil Service in Rivers State. The sample size of 396 civil servants in Rivers State determined using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Hypotheses Testing

Decision Rule: If the probability value (p-value) is less than the alpha value (0.05) the null hypothesis will be rejected otherwise we accept.

Ho₁: Employee’s empowerment strategies do not significantly influence contextual performance of Rivers State Civil Service.

Table 1: Coefficients^a Employee’s Empowerment Strategies and Contextual Performance

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .232 | .072 | | 3.217 | .001 |
| | Employee Empowerment Strategies | .963 | .019 | .944 | 51.244 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Contextual Performance

Table 1 shows employee’s empowerment strategies and contextual performance have a calculated t-value of 51.244 and a corresponding sig. value/probability value (PV) of 0.000. From the decision rule, since t-calculated = 51.244 > t-tabulated. However, with a unit change or improvement in employee’s empowerment strategies, it leads to 0.963 units increase in contextual performance in Rivers State Civil Service. The p-value for the model and analysis

was reported as less than the alpha benchmark of 0.05, implying that the analysis is statistically significant. On that basis, the null hypothesis two that was formulated was rejected. The study thus conclude that employee's empowerment strategies significantly influence contextual performance of Rivers State Civil Service.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed a strong positive significant relationship between empowerment strategies and contextual performance within the Rivers State Civil Service from 2012 to 2022. This implies that as empowerment strategies are enhanced, employees' contextual performance—behaviors that contribute to the organizational environment, such as cooperation, initiative, and interpersonal facilitation—also increases. Contextual performance is critical as it affects the broader organizational climate and can enhance overall productivity and service delivery (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

Employee empowerment is a crucial element in modern organizational behavior. It involves giving employees the autonomy, resources, and support to make decisions and take actions that positively affect their performance. Empowerment strategies typically include increasing access to information, offering relevant training, delegating authority, and providing incentives to encourage participation in decision-making (Spreitzer, 1995). In this study, the adoption of these strategies in the Rivers State Civil Service had a substantial impact on employees' willingness to engage in tasks beyond their formal roles, contributing to enhanced contextual performance. For instance, psychological empowerment, which includes meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, has been shown to foster greater job involvement and satisfaction (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This study aligns with such findings, indicating that civil servants who felt empowered were more likely to demonstrate proactive behavior and go beyond their job descriptions to support the organization's objectives.

The findings of this study can be linked to established empowerment theories, particularly Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Model (Spreitzer, 1995) and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Spreitzer's model focuses on the cognitive aspects of empowerment, where employees' perception of their influence in the workplace drives engagement and performance. In the Rivers State Civil Service, empowerment strategies that increase employees' perception of their ability to impact outcomes led to enhanced contextual performance, supporting Spreitzer's claims. Similarly, SDT posits that the fulfillment of employees' basic psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—results in intrinsic motivation and higher performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The empowerment strategies employed in the civil service appear to have fulfilled these needs, particularly in terms of autonomy and competence, thus encouraging employees to engage in discretionary behavior that enhances organizational functioning.

The positive relationship between empowerment strategies and contextual performance has direct practical implications for the management of the Rivers State Civil Service. The study suggests that civil service organizations should continue to invest in empowerment initiatives as a means of enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. For instance, providing more opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making processes, offering targeted professional development, and ensuring that employees have the resources and authority to take initiative are likely to yield positive outcomes. Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of fostering an organizational culture that supports empowerment. Such a culture not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens the organization's capacity to adapt to changes, innovate, and meet public service demands (Lawler, 2003). The empowerment of civil servants encourages a proactive, engaged workforce that contributes positively to both task-related and contextual aspects of performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that employee empowerment strategies positively enhance contextual performance in the Civil Service in Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that when civil servants are given the authority, resources, and autonomy to make decisions and take initiatives, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that go beyond their formal job roles. These behaviors include cooperation, helping colleagues, showing initiative, and contributing to a positive work environment, all of which enhance the overall performance of the organization.

Based on the forgoing, the study therefore recommends that civil service management in Rivers State should prioritize the implementation of employee empowerment strategies to enhance contextual performance. This can be achieved by actively involving employees in decision-making processes, providing them with the necessary resources and autonomy to execute tasks, and offering regular training that boosts their confidence and competencies.

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