

Public Service Motivation and Employees' Performance in a Nigerian Public Higher Institution

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Abstract

With constant strike actions and salaries considered to be insufficient to live a meaningful life, the general conclusion is that employees in the Nigerian public sectors are becoming unsatisfied and by implication unhappy. The dimensions of Public Service Motivation (PSM) proposed by Perry & Wise (1990) are considered a possible catalyst to manage the situation. This study seeks to examine the possible link between Public Service Motivation (PSM) mechanisms and employees' performance using a Nigerian public Higher Institution (the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti) as a case study. A sample size of 460 was drawn from the academic and non-academic Staff of the Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The study used questionnaire as the research instrument and analysed the data with statistical tool of SPSS version 22.0 to extract means and standard deviation of the variables. Out of the 460 administered questionnaires, 426 were retrieved while 34 were not returned. Out of the retrieved 426 questionnaires, 408 were valid while 18 were invalid. The respond rate of the respondents to the study questionnaires was 88.69% representing an excellent grade. The mean score 2.41, 1.61, and 1.78 were accepted as a positive relationship in hypotheses testing since they are less than the set bench marked of 2.5. Consequently results of the study revealed that PSM – dimensions will have significant effect on employees' performance if genuinely deployed. Therefore, to salvage citizens dwindling interest in the public service, and to get the best out of the present crop of employees, PSM dimensions is proposed to be inculcated into the motivation policy of the public service guide/policy.

Keywords: Public, Public Service, Public Service Motivation, Employees' Performance, Higher Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Performance improvement strategies and how to effectively motivate employees to perform optimally in order to achieve national goals has always remained a general problem in Organisations and Public Sectors (Caillier 2014; Ritz et al., 2016). This is because the nexus of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and job performance have been established to be extremely intimate (Krischer, 2009, Bataineh *et al* 2022). Therefore, organizations leaders

are always on their toes to adapt viable solution to any situation that might threaten optimal performance of their employees. Despite all the reforms in Nigeria public service and the inclusive extrinsic incentive, very little has been achieved in motivating the workers in Public Service (Arowolo, 2012, Ake, 2015,). Impliedly motivating worker through extrinsic incentives alone might not yield the needed result in improving performance in public service. Consequently, a new strategy or mean of motivating public sector's employees to greater performance is needed.

Perry and Wise (1990) showcase a new concept called Public Service Motivation (PSM) in tackling challenges related to effective performance in public service. There is a fundamental assumption that employees with greater Public Service Motivation (PSM) are likely to perform better in public sector jobs because PSM is importantly relevant and prevalent in Public sector. The implication of this is that employees who have lower public service motivation are not likely to perform well on government base jobs. This is because people live out their PSM majorly through job, pro-social and altruistic behaviour and public sector agencies have social grounded mission which is already a leveled ground for workers to satisfy their altruistic needs on their job, (Lee 2011; Brewer, 2003; Houston, 2006; Caillier 2014) which helps to further support the assumption that PSM is positively related to organizational performance in public sector (Kim, 2005).

A lot of scholars have written on the importance of PSM for public sector's effectiveness (Perry & Wise 1990; Brewer & Selden 2000; Petrovsky & Ritz 2014; Christensen, Paalberg & Perry 2017, Perry 1996) and the most needed asset especially in a country like Nigeria of today are selfless human resources who would deliver qualitative services to the public as described by the scholars especially in the educational sector which is the bedrock of nations' growth and development. Without doubt creating a strong and compassionate based civil society that would help to protect public interest is our greatest need in Nigeria. Consequently, PSM seems a likely solution to reduce or eliminate Public Sector's inefficiency and ineffective performance.

However, these scholars work on PSM hitherto emanated from the western countries and are majorly based on the developed nations of the world. To this recent time, literature and study on the concept of PSM is very scanty in Nigeria especially in educational sector like polytechnic. Equally, from the theoretical perspectives, most theories on PSM emanated from the western countries, it is therefore imperative to establish the workability of the theory of PSM within the Nigeria context. Therefore, this study contributes to knowledge and literature on PSM in Nigeria as it is aimed at determining the availability of PSM mechanisms as an essential ingredient in improving public service performance in the education sector with a particular reference to Federal Polytechnic, Ado- Ekiti, Ekiti-State Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

The targeted population for this study comprises of the cross-section of the staff of the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti (FPA). The study mainly focused on the academic and non-academic staff of the institution.

Table 1 showing population strength and % in FPA

S/N	Type of Staff	Population	% of Population
1	Academic Staff	599	40.94
2	Non-Academic Staff	864	59.06
	Total	1463	100

Source: Folayan (2021) Field Study

To determine the accurate sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula was used to construct a table that suggests adequate and optimal population sample size. The table was formulated with the consideration of Population size, a specific error margin, and acceptable level of confidence. A sample size of 460 respondents was drawn from the population. Out of the 460 questionnaires administered, 426 were retrieved which contribute to 92.6% response rate, while 408 were valid and usable which is also 88.69% response rate.

Results and Discussion

Table 2: Analysis of Result and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variables	Mean (x)	Relationship	Decision Rule
H1	Attraction to Policy Making	2.41	$\bar{X} < 2.5$	Accepted
H2	Social justice, civic duty and commitment to public interest	1.61	$\bar{X} < 2.5$	Accepted
H3	Compassion	2.91	$\bar{X} > 2.5$	Rejected
H4	Self-sacrifice	1.78	$\bar{X} < 2.5$	Accepted

The results showed that all the four dimensions are positively related to PSM. However, from the analysis, three items were structured to test one of the mechanisms or dimension of PSM called “attraction to policy making” in FPA. It was observed from the analysis result that 242 out of the 408 respondents agreed with the inversely structured question while 106 out of the 408 respondents disagreed. The mean scores of the three items are 2.35, 2.49, and 2.38, respectively and the grand mean score of the three was 2.41. This mean score was still within the set bench mark score of not more than 2.5 in this study but comparing the response figures the result was tending more toward inverse relationship. Therefore, given this analysis it could be concluded that the level of attraction to policy making of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti Staff is low. This result was in consonance with the study of Lotte, Eskel&Lene (2012) which was conducted in Denmark on 85 schools with 3230 respondents. The findings revealed a PSM mechanism, attraction to policy, was positively related to performance. Also on attraction to policy making, the result agreed with Petrovsky et al (2014) studied on *public service motivation and performance: a critical perspective* conducted in Sweden where 14835 respondents were analysed using Perry PSM measurement scales. The findings revealed that PSM attraction to policy making dimension positively correlated in the aggregate but statistical not related. The fact that the first dimension of PSM, attraction to policy making, was low in FPA was a bad signal to the dictates of PSM principles in the institution. Availability of PSM inclined leader in a setting was of great help to the workers who were PSM prone (Caillier 2014). It is important to state that whereas a non-PSM conforming leader can formulate policies that are productive, such often run counter to the ambition of the PSM driven individual workers, thereby frustrating their effort.

In the current study, six items were used to test relationship between commitment to public interest, civic duty and social justice. The result showed a strong, significant and positive relationship between commitment to duty and performance with the mean score of 1.61. The results were in consonance with the studies of Zhu and Yan (2006) as well as that of Jan-Hinrik et al (2018) who discovered that PSM and affective commitment significantly affect organizational performance and that committed public officers would defend the interest of the public and report unethical behaviour to the management. Committed employees were prone to be loyal and patriotic to the organizational cause (Houston, 2006); they stand in to defend the organization and would stay with the organization in difficult times; they would not backstab or divulge the blue print of their workplace (Brewer and Selden, 1998). In other words, they are assets to the organization and their performance speaks volumes of their attitude. Based on the foregoing, one can extrapolate that organizations that lack committed staff is standing on the ice and would crumble without notice because the virtue of commitment is a necessity for organizational workforce.

The items testing employees’ compassion were inversely structured to spot out the unruly and “I don’t care” attitude of the workers. However, given the respondent response, all the items were disagreed with, with high mean value of 2.91 showing rejection of the items.

Consequently, the third hypothesis (H3) that public service motivation and compassion are not correlated: that is, the proposition/hypothesis that ‘been compassionate has no significant effect on employees’ performance was rejected while the alternative hypothesis that: ‘been compassionate on duty has significant effect on performance’ was accepted. This finding correlated with the finding of Lotte et al (2012) on how PSM affect performance in school. They discovered that PSM and performance are positively related in the dimension of compassion. Expending one’s effort out of concern is tantamount to doing all it takes to make things work well as if the service provider would feel the pains or weight his inefficiency might cause the service receivers (Kim & Vandenabeele 2010; Francious 2000). As a result of this notion, a compassionate worker would commit his or her best efforts to the work which would affect performance positively.

Self- sacrifice relationship to performance, based on the result, was discovered to be positive with mean value of 1.78 showing a significant relationship. This finding also agreed with the study of Lotte et al (2012) who found PSM and self-sacrifice to be related and positively significant to employees’ performance. Self-sacrifice makes individual workers to consider performance of meaningful service more important than prestige, financial rewards and high position (Witmer 1991). This PSM dimension instigates workers to consider others first before self not minding the personal contribution in terms of time, effort, material and finance in as much as it will benefit others and foster welfares (Rainey & Steinbauer 1999, Kjeldson 2012). The willingness of workers to contribute immensely and sacrificially to the wellbeing of an organization has huge and positive effect on effective performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the study objective, the findings confirmed that a positive relationship exists between PSM mechanisms (attraction to policy, commitment to public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice) and employees’ performance. Although this study achieved its objectives as well as made extant contribution to literature on PSM, there are some limitations identified and suggested for further studies in order to increase the body of knowledge.

The study revealed that attraction to Policy is related to PSM but the mean value showed an insignificant relationship. This means that attraction to policy making is low in FPA. The reasons for this attitude were not known because it was not within the coverage of this study.

More so, this study only used mean value and standard deviation as the statistical measuring instruments in order to arrive at the decision. Other statistical tools like co-efficient, ANOVA and others could be used by researchers in future research.

Finally, this study was carried out within a Nigerian higher institution specifically, at Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti. Study can therefore be extended to other tertiary institutions like university, college of health science, college of education and other sector in the PS to further validate the empirical outcome of this study.

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Authors' Contributions

- Adeyemi Johnson Ademowo initiated the study, drafted the topic, abstract and the preliminary findings and gather literatures.
- Folayan Funmilayo puts the writings together and worked on analysis of extant literature.
- Aanu Alabi wrote the concluding part and the references.

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