SUPERVISORS' RATING OF PEOPLE SKILLS POSSESSED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (OTM) GRADUATE WORKERS FOR EFFECTIVE WORK PERFORMANCE IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
The need to ensure that Office Technology and Management (OTM) students in Nigerian institutions are adequately equipped with requisite skills for effective work performance necessitated this study. The study ascertained supervisors' rating of people skills possessed by graduates of the programme working in organizations in Anambra State. One research question guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Population of 304 supervisors from public and private organizations in Anambra State was studied. Census survey sampling technique was used. A structured 5-point rating scale questionnaire containing nine items which was validated by experts was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha method of internal consistency and it yielded reliability coefficient value of 0.75 indicating that the instrument is valid. The arithmetic mean was used to answer the research question while t-test and ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State fairly possessed people skills. Type of Organization, gender and work experience had significant influence in the supervisors' ratings. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the OTM graduates were not adequately equipped with requisite skills for effective work performance upon in the course of their training. It was, therefore, recommended among others thatOTM graduate workers in Anambra State should engage in self-development programmes to improve their people skills for effective work performance.
Keywords. Supervisor, people skills, OTM graduates, work performance.

Introduction

Today every organization considers human resources a fundamental component and views their quality as a major determining factor to the level of success the enterprise can achieve. Effective work performance of human resources in an organization is determined by the level of skills and competencies they acquired during training. There is a paradigm shift in the workspace skills required in the current era. It appears that employers desire employees who possess generic skills more than technical skills. Climatti (2016) averred that the current era of globalization and hyper market competition, has changed and workers are considered key elements not only in relation to their ability to perform specific tasks but their transversal competencies also called generic skills.

In the current global economic recession, a person requires flexibility, creativity and emotional mastery in order to take on different tasks and learn from experiences. This explains that generic skills are very important for Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates

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to perform intelligently and confidently, acquire new knowledge, interact and socialize, remain competitive and adapt according to demands of the workplace (Singh & Gera, 2015). Singh and Gera (2015) posited that there is no definite list of generic skills but they can be classified into six major areas including basic or fundamental skills, people skills, personality skills, thinking or conceptual skills, business related skills and community related skills. The focus of this study was people skills because they are considered very important in the work place where different individuals must cooperate in order to successfully achieve their objectives and those of the organization.

People skills are patterns of behaviour and behavioural interactions. According to McQuerry (2019), people skills refer to the ability of an individual to listen, communicate and to relate well with others on a personal or professional level. McQuerry explained that anyone who wants to succeed in any field of endeavour needs to be fluent in a particular set of skills especially people skills. As a broad term, people skills cover a set of three related abilities, namely; personal effectiveness, interaction skills, and intercession skills. People skills denote the ability of individuals to communicate effectively with people in a friendly way especially in business. According to Rifkin in Nijhuis (2012), people skills cover the ability of an individual to effectively communicate, understand, empathize and interact with others respectfully as well as develop productive working relationship to minimize conflict and maximize rapport. They include ability to build sincerity and trust, moderate behaviors (less impulsive) and enhance agreeableness. Furthermore, people skills include ability to empathize, trust, be honest, patient and flexible, have good judgment, support and motivate others. All these are necessary for a worker to relate well with others without conditions for a positive influence.

This is an area of exploration about how people behave and how they are perceived irrespective of their thinking and feelings. Smith (2013) observed that in business, humane connection among people helps to promote productivity. In the same vein, Wheatley in Alase and Akinbo (2022) asserted that a healthy relationship is requisite for effective functioning of organizations because it is through healthy relationship that profitable trajectory can be maintained within an organization. Alase and Akinbo (2022) opined that a healthy interpersonal relationship between and among the workforce in the organization has been judged to yield dividends to the organization which promotes its existence. Ethridge in Njoku, Ogbo and Okafor (2020) averred that positive interpersonal relationship with the staff is associated with shared vision and norms, openness of governance and trust in relationships which produce committed and contented staff members in organizations.

An employee with these top-notch skills will always win with a heart for effective performance in the organization. Smith (2013) summarized people skills as various attributes and competencies that allow one to play well along with others. Smith explained that an ounce of people sensitivity is worth a pound of cure when it comes to daily human interaction and mitigating conflicts. A work force that possesses adequate people skills will lead to reduction of bad behaviour and make positive behaviour contagious in the office. Smith explained that wise managers know that they need a team with strong people skills because whenever there is a choice between a savvy job candidate or an employee seeking promotion, the one with excellent people skills and less technical ability will usually be considered before those with excellent technical ability who lack people skills. Possession of people skills will enable OTM graduates workers relate well with their supervisors and other workers in their organizations to ensure effective work performance which will enhance social and economic development. Unfortunately, Lucas (2020) observed that the display of empathy which is an aspect of people skills in the workplace has stalled because leaders in organizations are not doing enough to

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display empathy as an essential workplace skill. The attributes that constitute people skills include ability to relate well with others, communicate effectively, being patience with others, trust worthy and knowing how and when to show empathy. People skills also include active listening, flexibility, good judgment, negotiation skills, great sense of humor, honesty, awareness of body language and being supportive and motivating others. All these people skills enable OTM graduate workers stay on the job.

Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme is one of the programmes offered in most polytechnics, universities and colleges of education in Nigeria. Baba and Akarahu in Ezenwafor and Gude (2020) asserted that OTM aims at producing competent graduates with appropriate skills, abilities and competencies (both mental and physical) as equipment for them to live and contribute to the development of the society. Graduates of OTM occupy positions as secretaries, administrative professionals, office technologist, information managers and office administrators. The use of secretarial services permeates 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 Amoor and Magaji (2015) asserted that functions of professional secretaries in both private and public sectors of the economy have gone far beyond their traditional orthodox duties as professional secretaries are currently charged with the responsibilities of manipulating and managing database, creating presentations and reports using suitable computer software and digital graphics.

Professional secretaries use computers to generate and process information, store, retrieve and disseminate information to staff as well as handle administrative responsibilities with little or no supervision. Secretaries are administrative office managers and image makers of the organization and since no business can afford to lose its image, the role of the secretary in the office cannot be over emphasized in her interferences with executives, colleagues and the outside world. These secretaries work under executives that supervises their affairs in the organization.

A supervisor according to Ezenwafor and Gude (2020) is a higher officer in an organization who has other workers as subordinates and he motivates, directs and controls their activities towards achieving the set goals and objectives of the organization. For the purpose of this study, supervisors are office personnel or administrative personnel who supervises and assess the subordinates delegated to him including the OTM graduate workers for effective guidance to achieve the organizations' goals and objectives. These OTM graduate workers and their supervisors can be found in both public and private organizations. Supervisors comprised of male and female and their ways of perception could be different. Olayinka and Warren (2019) reported that a significant difference exists between male and female school leadership while Garba (2019) asserted that gender bias may influence the responses of supervisors regarding their supervisees' work performance. On the other hand, years of experience could affect the supervisors rating of people skills of their OTM graduate workers. Adebayo in Osahon (2018) noted that the experience of an assessor is a significant factor that can influence their assessment. However, Osahon (2018) revealed that level of experience of employers do not have significant influence their assessment of the application of interpersonal skills by OTM graduate workers.

Problem of the Study

It has been widely observed that employees' attitude to work in public establishments in Anambra State and other states of Nigeria is generally poor. Some employees could have rude

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behaviour towards their supervisors, colleagues and clients. Some of these employees exhibit insolence behaviour and are mostly impatient, finding it difficult at times to listen and assist both visitors and their colleagues. Clients/customers witnessing rudeness amongst employees tend to generalize their feelings to all employees of such organizations and some may decide never to visit the organizations for any cause. Rudeness to supervisors, colleagues and clients has immediate and long-term detrimental effects on workers' engagement, commitment and performance and as well impacts negatively on workplace relationships, productivity and job satisfaction. Scholars have expressed unsatisfactory discovery of people skills deficiency among employees in different public and private organizations within and outside Nigeria. Schooley (2017) observed that tasks are increasingly more difficult because new employees enter today's workforce lacking relevant people skills to be viable workers.

Office technology and management graduate workers are found in different organizations as executive assistants or executives and regarded as the image of their organizations. The big question then is "Do these OTM graduate workers adequately possess people skills to be able to relate and influence their colleagues, supervisors and customers positively for effective work performance". The problem of this study, therefore, is that the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State is not clearly known and could be a contributory factor to the poor attitude observed among them which negatively affect their effectiveness in work performance. This requires empirical evidence to guide objective remedial actions by supervisors in OTM education to ensure that graduates of the programme possess people skills at a suitable level for effective work performance in their organizations, hence the study.

Research Question

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

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

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

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. 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 supervisors are male and female and their year of experience is categorized into 0-5years, 6-10years and above 10years. Census survey is the sampling technique was used since the whole population were studied. The instrument used for data collection was a 5-point Likert type structured questionnaire titled, "People Skills Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ)", containing nine people skills with options: very much

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possessed (VMP), much possessed (MP), fairly possessed (FP), little possessed (LP) and very little possessed (VLP).The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha method of internal consistency and it yielded reliability coefficient value of 0.75 indicating that the instrument is valid, in support Olayiwole in Oluwasina (2019) stated that an instrument is considered reliable when its reliability coefficient is close to one. The 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. 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.

Results

Table 1: Supervisors' mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers N=304

S/N	People Skills	Mean	SD	Remarks
	Ability to:			
1	Relate with supervisors	3.63	0.94	Much Possessed
2	Relate well with colleagues	3.62	0.99	Much Possessed
3	Maintain transparency in the office	3.41	1.03	Fairly Possessed
4	Negotiate effectively with clients	3.05	0.98	Fairly Possessed
5	Maintain a network of colleagues in other offices	3.12	0.89	Fairly Possessed
6	Assist individuals with their challenges	3.14	1.06	Fairly Possessed
7	Promote team work in the organization	3.22	1.01	Fairly Possessed
8	Treat visitors with courtesy	3.08	1.14	Fairly Possessed
9	Take responsibility for errors	2.92	0.97	Fairly Possessed
	Cluster Mean	**3.24**		**Fairly Possessed**

Table 1 reveals that two out of nine people skills have mean ratings are 3.62 and 3.63 indicating that skils are much possessed by their OTM graduate workers. The remaining seven items have mean rating from 2.92 to 3.41 indicating fairly possessed skills by their OTM graduate workers. The cluster mean 3.24 indicates that OTM graduate workers fairly possessed people skills. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which implies that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Table 2: The t-test on the ratings of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers based on supervisors organization types

Type of Organization	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig	t-cal	P-Value	Remarks
Public	165	3.48	0.79	300	0.05	5.91	0.00	Significant
Private	139	2.96	0.73					

Table 2 reveals that at df = 302, t = 5.91 and p = 0.00 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This implies that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors from organizations in Anambra State on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers for effective work performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

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Table 3: Summary of t-test of male and female supervisors' mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig	t-cal	P-Value	Remarks
Male	158	3.09	0.80	302	0.05	-3.42	0.00	Significant
Female	146	3.40	0.78					

Table3 shows t = -3.42 (df = 302) with a p = 0.00 which is less than alpha level of 0.05 (p-value=0.00<alpha level=0.05). The result indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female supervisors on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4: Summary of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on work experience influences of supervisors' mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-Value	Remarks
Between Groups	12.61	2	6.30	10.30	0.00	Significant
Within Groups	184.17	301	0.61			
Total	196.78	303				

Table 4 shows F = 10.30 (df = 2, 301) with a p = 0.00 which is less than alpha level of significance (p-value=0.00<alpha level=0.05). This means that work experience significantly influences supervisors' mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State for effective work performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State fairly possessed people skills. The finding agrees with that of Osahon (2018) which reported that interpersonal skills are moderately applied by OTM graduates in Edo and Delta State. Lucas (2020) reported the finding of Businessolver on workplace empathy study which revealed that the display of empathy in the workplace has stalled because leaders were not doing enough to display empathy skill. This means that the OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State are not performing their functions effectively due to their lack of requisite people skills which are major tools for effective work performance of workers. The fact that the finding agrees with Osahon (2018) showed that since after the study, much has not been done to enhance skills acquisition of students in the programme which defeats the aim of research. It is expected that Osahon's report should trigger objective actions by stakeholders in OTM education to address the lapses in the curriculum and its implementation to enhance students' skills acquisition.

The study revealed a significant difference between the mean ratings of supervisors in public organizations and their counterparts in private organizations in Anambra State on people skills possessed by their OTM graduate workers for effective work performance. This finding is at variance with that of Osahon (2018) which reported that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of employers in public and private organizations on application of interpersonal skills by OTM graduate workers in Edo and Delta States.

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Furthermore, the study found that male and female supervisors differed significantly in their mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by OTM graduate workers. This finding agrees with the report of Olayinka and Warren (2019) that a significant difference exists between male and female school leadership. This finding could be as a result of supervisors' personality traits as female supervisors could be practicing famine style of leadership which differs from masculine style of leadership to create the significant difference.

Finally, it was found that work experience significantly influenced supervisors' mean ratings on the level of people skills possessed by their OTM graduate workers. The finding is in variance with that of Osahon (2018) which revealed that level of experience of employers did not have significant influence on assessment of application of interpersonal skills by OTM graduates. This finding of the study confirms the expectation that the longer supervisors stay on a supervisory role, the more understanding they gain about their supervisees' personality and skills.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that people skills were fairly possessed by OTM graduate workers in public and private organizations in Anambra State. Based on this finding, it was concluded that either the current curriculum content of OTM programmes or its implementation may not be adequate to inculcate the people skills required by the graduates for effective work performance in the labour market of the current era.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. OTM graduate workers in Anambra State should engage in self- development programmes to improve their people skills for effective work performance.
2. Employers and supervisors of OTM graduate workers should motivate their employees to improve on the people skills by organizing workshops, seminars and short courses.
3. The curriculum planners should regularly review the OTM curriculum in order to incorporate and emphasize on the people skills needed by graduates.

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