Relationship between Self-Awareness and Task Performance in Selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the relationship between self-awareness and task performance among academic staff in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The main purpose of the study was to examine interaction between self-awareness and task performance among academic staff in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. One hypothesis was postulated to guide the study; survey research design was employed in this study. The sample for the study comprised 308 full-time academic staff of selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria, determined using Raosoft calculator. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adapted to obtain response from all the cadres of the academic staff. A structured and adapted questionnaire titled "Self-awareness and Employee Performance (SEP)" that was used for the study went through validity and reliability tests with Cronbach Alpha ranges between 0.728 and 0.954. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential (Multiple and Hierarchical Regression) statistics. The study revealed that self-awareness had significant relationship with task performance (r (296) = 0.833, p < 0.05). Based on the result of the study, it was therefore recommended that the management of private universities should train their academic staff to acquire the competencies associated with self-awareness because a thorough understanding of oneself is an important determinant self-efficacy for improving personal performance.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Employee performance, Self-awareness

1. Introduction

Increasing employee performance has been the goal every organisation is pursuing at every point in time. This has made different organisations, human resource managers and academics to regularly source for and adopt diverse strategies and varied actions to improve their performance. Academic staff of universities plays a very important role in terms of growth and development of nations' economy. They make positive contribution to the growth of a nation and generally seen as the basis by which the needed high level manpower or a country's development could be achieved. Their job demands are often hectic as a result of high students' enrollment which results to work overload. The issue of work overload proves to be a great detriment to their task performance therefore, self-awareness in this light is likely to offer a viable impetus to ameliorate this challenge. Self-awareness is one of the dimensions of emotional intelligence, it occupies the first level among dimensions of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness is seen as a driving force for improving the performance of academic staff of private university around the world. This dimension of emotional intelligence is an indispensable factor liable for determining success in life and psychological health and performance of employees in their working environment.

Self-awareness is described by Crisp and Turner (2014) as a psychological situation in which people know their traits, feelings, and behaviors. According to Kara (2020), self-awareness, gives individuals a better understanding of what they want or need; it increases individual chances of getting what they want or need; it improves individual decision making

process; it help someone to manage emotions and boost productivity and success. Furthermore, self-awareness bolsters self-esteem and strengthens relationships among workforce.

Globally, private university sector plays a catalytic role in a modern economy and has dynamic benefits crucial for economic transformation (Boni & Walker, 2016; McCowan, 2019; Owens, 2017). Oyewole (2022) observed that the performance of academic staff of private universities have contributed at least a total of £5.8 billion to the United Kingdom and supported 145,921 jobs directly and indirectly across all skill levels as a result of their students they produced/graduated. According to Digital Marketing Institute (2018), the research work of university staff in British universities contributes £95 billion to the country's economy, their efforts also assisted Australian universities to generate £25 billion, and their activities have equally propelled Canadian universities to generate £55 billion. In the United States, technological advancements developed in universities have contributed £591 billion to the national GDP between 1996 and 2018 alone. Despite the enormous potentials, most of the staffs of universities are bewildered with high students' enrollment which hindered their work performance within the range of task performance, making success a major challenge. This is a big challenge to their performance since academic staffs of universities are seen as driving forces for improving university performance and global rating (Urban, 2019).

In Africa, the issue of funding has always been a source of crisis in the African educational system (Obineli, 2013). The number of enrollment of university students by educational sector in Egypt 2019/2020 published by Saifaddin (2021) stated that during the schooling year of 2019/2020, the number of enrolled students in public universities in Egypt was over 2.4 million. In comparison, in the same academic year, roughly 479,000 students were enlisted in private higher institutes in Egypt. Moreover, close to 207,000 students were registered in private universities. The report also stated that in 2017, the gross tertiary enrollment ratio in Egypt amounted to 35.16%, showing an increment compared to 33.86% in 2016. Despite the increase in enrollment, the number academic staff has not increased, putting pressure on the academic staff. This invariably affects employees' emotion and task performance.

Education is a high priority in Tunisia as it has been for many years since independence. The number of professors in tertiary education in Tunisia 2014-2020 published by Statista Research Department (2022) claimed that in the school year 2019/2020, the number of professors in public tertiary education in Tunisia was about 22,000 but decreased by 249 compared to the previous year. And the students' enrollment is in the increase. Hence, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) anticipates that enrolment could exceed 300 million in OECD and non-OECD G20 countries by 2030. This informed Scott (2017)'s report that in Burundi, Congo and Rwanda have witnessed rapid growth of private tertiary institutions, covering over two-thirds of students.

Nigeria also share in the high students enrolment, according to Verrella (2021), Nigeria university students that enrolled in Nigeria in the 2018/2019 academic session was 1,798,958 for undergraduate and 242,323 for postgraduate making a total of 2,041,281 students, compared to 1.2million students' enrollment in 2012. While there has been a great decline in public funding, there has been an increased in private provision of tertiary education, growing autonomy of educational institutions, and a greater emphasis on research and innovation. This demand has increased the enrollment of students in tertiary education in the past two decades. Consequently, in many countries, the number of teaching staff is not commensurate with that of the students. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (2019), tertiary education teachers increased from 7.5 million in 2002 to 12.9 million in 2015, reflecting a growth of 72 per cent. Also, Aondofa (2022) stated that Nigeria has only 100,000 lecturers for her 2.1 million university students. This is lower than the global growth rate of student enrolment. And this has led to an increasing differentiation between teaching and research roles within the academic profession and downward trend in task performance among academic staff.

Furthermore, Nigeria University Commission (NUC) (2022) affirmed that Nigeria is growing with 198 universities with about 2.1million enrollments but has just over 50,000 academic staff in the universities. Despite Nigeria University Commission (NUC)'s recommendation of 12 students to 1 lecturer (ASUU, 2010); and NUC's standard as contained in its 1995-99 report, which recommended a student-to-lecturer ratio of 9:1 for agriculture and engineering-technology faculties, 6:1 in human and veterinary medicine faculties and 10:1 in science and pharmacy faculties, while law, social sciences and arts should be 20:1 (Abutu, 2021), this policy has not been met by the Nigeria university system. Due to higher student enrollment and shortage of academic staff, university academic employees are exposed to variety of complex task almost at the same time with teaching, which is their primary assignment. Some of

tasks they are exposed to include; being the examination officers, course advisers, directors, head of departments, deans, provost, project supervisors, at undergraduate and graduate levels, attending conferences, and publication of papers. Most often these additional tasks tend to enlarge the workload of lecturers and make the load excessive; thus leading to low performance.

In spite of the deluge of studies on emotional intelligence and employee performance in Nigeria (Gunu & Oladapo, 2014; & Podile & Rajesh, 2016); no study has critically investigated self-awareness and task performance in a study especially among University lecturers. Even with Nigeria University Commission (NUC)'s recommendation of 12 students to 1 lecturer (ASUU, 2010), this vision has not been met by the private Universities. There have been evidences of harsh task performance in the University workforce, high workload and longer working hours under stress which affect the performance level of University academia (Awang, Hanim, & Mohammed, 2010; & Fapohunda, 2015). Academic staffs are exposed to task overload that tend to affect them negatively. Some of these tasks are acting as examination officers, course advisers, directors, heads of department, deans, provost, project supervisors at undergraduate and post graduate levels (Amie-Ogan, & Fekarurhobo, 2021). The result is reflect in the accompanying stress with its attendant health problems which is creating great challenge for University lecturers thus, preventing them maintaining optimal task performance. Therefore, academic staff needs self-awareness to surmount these challenges. Jamroz (2019) observed that various problems of maladjustment at the workplace is due to the poorly developed emotional self-awareness, which when developed help people to respond to a variety of environmental situations. It is on the basis of this that this study examined how self-awareness could affect task performance among academic staff in selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-awareness and task performance among academic staff in selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The following hypothesis was postulated to guide this study:

H_1: Self-awareness has no significant relationship with task performance

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Awareness

Grayson (2013) defined self-awareness as the ability to recognize one's feelings, to differentiate between them, to know what one is feeling and why, and to know what caused the feelings. Goleman (1998) maintained that emotional self-awareness is a way of identifying a person emotions and how it could affect other people. Okpara and Agwu (2015) stated that the first step of becoming an emotionally intelligent is to become as self-aware as possible. Corroborating this, O'Connor, Hill, Kaya, and Martin (2019); Nelson and Low (2011); and Siegling, Saklofske, Petrides, (2015) stated that emotional intelligence begins at the individual level of analysis as a starting point for EI discovery. This implies that emotional self-awareness precedes all stages of emotional intelligence development. Singh (2010) noted that self-awareness is the basic foundation on which variables of emotionally intelligent behaviour germinates. Thus, Lew (2018) identified self-awareness as the most important dimension of emotional intelligence.

Sutton (2006) analysed an emotional intelligence competence framework which considers the self-awareness cluster as recognizing and understanding individual's emotions in the moment as well as tendencies to manipulate the emotions across time and situation. This includes individuals who are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful but honest with themselves and others around them.
Within the context of the above authors' definition and views, the researcher defines self-awareness as the ability to be conscious of one's emotion while relating with others in workplace.

2.2 Task Performance

Performance is a multi-dimensional concept which could either be task or contextual performance. Kappagoda (2018) distinguished between task and contextual performance, stating that task performance refers to an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute to the organization's technical core. While contextual performance refers to activities which do not contribute to the technical core but which support the organisational, social and psychological environment in which organisational goals are pursued. Contextual performance includes not only behaviours such as helping coworkers or being a reliable member of the organization, but also making suggestions about how to improve work procedures.

Task performance is core and crucial to the concept of employee performance and is in itself multidimensional in nature as it encapsulate most sub-constructs of job performance. Thus, when the term "employee performance" is mentioned, the task dimension of performance quickly comes to mind. Nini (2019) noted that activities relevant for task performance varies between jobs and is related to the individual's abilities and skills, and is more prescribed and constitutes in-role behaviour. Kalia and Bhardwaj (2019) defined task performance as the proficiency (i.e, competency) with which one performs central job tasks. There are other labels used for task performance; some of these are job-specific, task proficiency in Wisecarver, Carpenter, and Kilcullen (2007); technical proficiency (Abd Kadir, 2019; & Lee, Yun, and Kim (2017) or in-role performance (Jundt, Shoss, & Huang, 2015). Interestingly, Kalia and Bhardwaj (2019) labelled task performance as work quantity, work quality, and job knowledge.

Kappagoda (2018) posited that in trying to understand the organizational job performance domain, the elements of the behavioural competencies involved should be grouped into two main distinctions: contextual performance behaviours and task performance behaviours. Kappagoda (2018) and Abd Kadir (2019) contended that contextual performance behaviours differ from task performance behaviours in four major ways.

Kappagoda (2018) described a two-factor theory of job performance in which most jobs consist of task performance and contextual performance. They defined task performance as the behavior that is directly linked to completion of the job. Task related behaviors contribute to the technical core of the organization. Behavior in the domain of task performance is usually recognized as a formal requirement of an individuals' job. Job description often explicitly stipulates that the job holders must perform these activities. Kappagoda (2018) and Nini (2019) defined contextual performance as an individual's performance, which maintains and enhances an organization's social network and the psychological climate that supports technical tasks. Furthermore, they explained that contextual performance includes activities that may not represent formal work tasks, although they still make an important contribution to the effectiveness of an organization. This type of performance is often not written in a job description, but it is considered to be an important component of job performance. From the foregoing, task performance is an employee's skills that help an individual to perform his |her

duties efficiently to add the organizations technical core.

3. Empirical Review

3.1 Self-Awareness and Task Performance

Studies on self-awareness and task performance abound in literature. Kum and Kum (2018) carried out a research to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and job self-efficiency in research courses among Dharwad physical education teachers using and descriptive research design method. 200 physical education teachers were randomly selected from different Dharwad universities. Bar-on Emotional and Self- efficiency job questionnaires were used to evaluate the teachers' attitudes. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationships between the variables at 0.05 level significance. The findings in Kum and Kum (2018) study revealed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and research self-efficacy. In another article, Kappagoda (2018) investigated task performance and contextual performance looking at the meaning for personnel selection research. This article distinguishes between task and contextual activities, and taxonomy of contextual performance containing elements of organizational citizenship behavior and pro-social organizational behavior is offered. To test the statistical significance of the differences across the three separate regression analyses, we conducted planned comparisons within a repeated measures using MANCOVA. The result confirmed that correlations between personality and contextual criteria are higher than correlations between personality and overall performance.

In another article, Udo and Ukpong (2016) investigated the influence of self and social awareness on business education students' academic performance in federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The ex-post facto research design method was used for the study. A sample of 356 Business Education students from two intact years was selected for the study using stratified sampling technique. The validated instrument, Emotional Competency Inventory was used for data collection; an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. The findings showed that there was a significant influence of self-awareness and social awareness on Business Education students' academic performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Rashmi, (2017) investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance for the automobile industry in Bangalore. A descriptive and explanatory research design method was used in the study. The research was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 82 employees who were selected using systematic stratified sampling method. The Pearson correlation was used to analyse the data collected. The finding showed all the dimensions of EI have a significant impact on job performance. That is, emotional intelligence variables self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social skills, social awareness) are related to employee job performance variables (reliability, persistence and rules).

In a journal article titled self-awareness and organizational performance in the Nigerian banking sector using two hundred and ten bank managers in South-South area of Nigeria, Okpara and Agwu (2015) conducted a study using a survey research design method. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested using the spearman rank correlation coefficient with the aid of statistical package for social science tested at .05level of significance. Findings from Okpara and Agwu (2015) showed that self-awareness is positively related to net profit and return on investment, but no strong relationship was found between self-awareness and market share.

Yang and Wei (2017) investigated the impact of ethical leadership on employee's task performance and the moderating role of employee proactive personality. Social identity, social learning, and self-concordance theories were used to explain the way ethical leadership affects employee's task performance. The authors collected survey-based dyadic data from middle management team members and subordinates in Chinese companies. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. Yang and Wei (2017) study, findings showed that ethical leadership positively influences employee's task performance.

Research Conceptual Model

Ho_1

| Self-awareness (X) | → | Task Performance (Y) |

Source: Author's Research model, 2022

4. Research Methodology

The research design used for this study was survey research design. The target population that was used for this study comprised one thousand four hundred and sixty-four (1464) and this covers all the full-time academic staff from the rank of Lecturer II to Professorial cadre of the selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.
The sample size for the study was 308 full-time academic staff of the selected private university in Ogun State, Nigeria. The sampling technique that was adopted for this study was multi-stage sampling technique. Multi-stage sampling was used because it divides large population in stages to make the sampling process more practical and because it is the most appropriate for a large scale survey. The first stage was to select the Universities that were used as the base of this study. As at August 2021, there are twelve (12) private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was limited to six (6) private Universities which represent 50% for proportional distribution. The six private Universities were selected based on their position on 2021 ranking table of Nigeria University Commission (NUC). The second stage was to select the samples for the study. Out of these six (6) selected Universities, the study made use of simple random sampling technique to select 308 full-time academic staff making use of the proportionate sample size.

The study made used of a structured and adapted questionnaire titled "Self-awareness and Employees' Performance (SEP)" went through validity and reliability tests with Cronbach Alpha ranges between 0.728 and 0.954. The inferential statistics employed Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the hypothesis of the study using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. 0.

5. Results

$H_0 2$: Self-awareness has no significant relationship with task performance
Bivariate correlation using Pearson's product moment correlation (r) analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The results of the analysis are presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between Self-awareness on task performance of selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

Correlations			
		Self-Awareness	**Task Performance**
Self-Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.833[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	296	296
Task Performance	Pearson Correlation	.833[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	296
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 presents the result of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation test that was done to evaluate the relationship between self-awareness and task performance. According to the results, the correlation between self-awareness and task performance is 0.833 (r (296) = 0.833, p < 0.05). This implies that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and task performance of selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The result suggests that the higher the level of self-awareness of the full-time academic staff of selected Private University, the higher their task performance. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which states that self-awareness has no significant relationship with task performance is hereby rejected.

6. Discussion on the Findings

The results of Pearson product moment correlation analysis for the significant relationship between self-awareness and task performance showed the presence of significant relationship**.** This result implies that self-awareness has a significant relationship with task performance. Conceptually, self-awareness according to Grayson (2013), self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's feelings, to differentiate between them, to know what one is feeling and why, and to know what caused the feelings. Goleman (1998) maintains that emotional self-awareness is a way of identifying a person emotions and how it could affect other people. Okpara and Agwu (2015) stated that the first step of becoming an emotionally intelligent is to become as self-aware as possible. Corroborating this, O'Connor, Hill, Kaya, & Martin (2019); Goleman (1995); Nelson and Low (2011); & Siegling, Saklofske, Petrides, (2015) stated that emotional intelligence begins at the individual level of analysis as a starting point for EI discovery. This implies that emotional self-awareness precedes all stages of emotional intelligence development. Hence, Singh (2010) notes that self-awareness is the basic foundation on which variables of emotionally intelligent behaviour germinates.

Empirically, Kum and Kum (2018) found a positive significant relationship between self-awareness and research self-efficacy. Also, Kappagoda (2018) confirmed that correlations between self-awareness and research self-efficacy which was one of the main performances of academic staff of the university. In a related study, Udo and Ukpong (2016) discovered a favourable relationship between self-awareness and task performance on the Business Education students' academic performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

7. Conclusion

This study argues theoretically and demonstrates empirically that self-awareness related significantly to task performance of the academic staff of private universities. This study therefore concluded that self-awareness affects employees' task performance in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

8. Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Management of private universities should train their academic staff to acquire the competencies associated with self-awareness because a thorough understanding of oneself is an important determinant self-efficacy for improving task performance.
- Departmental and HR managers of academic staff should take applicant's emotional intelligence into consideration and measure EI in the screening and recruitment processes.
- Management of private universities should include some faculty training programmes that will assist academic staff in developing better self-awareness.

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