



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between interpersonal relations and administrative efficiency in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Given the pivotal role that effective administration plays in the success of educational institutions, understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relations among staff is crucial. The objective of the study is to interrogate if interpersonal relations can improve administrative efficiency and performance in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa in Nigeria. The study employed the Social Exchange Theory as a tool for analysis. Descriptive survey research design was used to gather comprehensive data from

academic and non-academic staff in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The population of the study comprises academic and non-academic staff from public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample from each institution. The number of the selected respondents was 400 which formed the basis of the sample size. Questionnaire was used as the research tool, while mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the data. The findings reveal positive interpersonal relations significantly enhance administrative efficiency, leading to improved institutional performance. The study concludes with recommendations for policy makers and practitioner aimed at fostering better interpersonal relationships within these institutions.

Keywords: Interpersonal relations, Institutional performance, public administration, administrative efficiency, Trust, Public Service and Social Exchange Theory

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relations are synonymous with teamwork which promotes an organization or an institution (Adeyemi, 2010). The idea of interpersonal relations cannot be overemphasized in any sector be it in the financial sector, tourism, health and educational sector. Education plays a crucial role in the progress of any country. It involves the cultivation of strong ethical values for the betterment of society. Governments recognize it as a key factor in driving national development, tailored to the needs of individuals and communities, while also aligning with the demands of the contemporary world and the effective management of resources (Onifade, 2009).

According to Nwafor (2023), administration is about completing tasks in order to achieve the stated goals. Therefore, the science of administration is the body of information that enables individuals to comprehend relationships, generate outcomes, and have an impact on events in any scenario in which they are arranged to collaborate for a shared goal. As a logical extension, Nwafor (1998) agreeably asserts that "An administrator is a person who manages an organization's operations to accomplish its main goals and objectives and who completes tasks promptly and effectively." Stated differently, the goal of a university administrator is to maximize output through the effective management of the university's resources. Based on this premise, an administrator's role includes managing the university's finances, staff, and policies; arranging and guaranteeing communication; planning and carrying out developmental programs; providing infrastructure and facilities for teaching and learning; and ensuring interaction and relationships with the university's internal and external environments. The aforementioned attributes need to be completed accurately, promptly, and effectively. The ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationships is essential for getting

along with people of different backgrounds and in a variety of contexts. As stated by Godknows and Timinepre (2023). Efficiency requires executing tasks correctly, resolving issues, conserving resources, cutting costs, and having competency when it comes to applying a body of knowledge and ability inside a certain system (Ukeje et al., 1992). The goal of efficiency, according to Babalola and Ayeni (2009), is to produce the most output possible given the quality of the input. Therefore, when intended advantages or goals are properly reached, in accordance with policies, within a reasonable amount of time, and minimize wastes in the tertiary educational system as a whole, an organization is said to be efficient.

Tertiary institutions serve as the backbone of higher education and are vital for the socio-economic development of any region. In Bayelsa State, the efficiency of public services within these institutions is critical for producing well-educated graduates who can contribute to the state's development. Administrative efficiency in these institutions is influenced by various factors, among which interpersonal relations among staff members stand out. Since organisations are network of connected people and as composition of relations at large portion of work performance is tied to the establishment and maintenances of interpersonal connections (Godknows & Babajide,2023). This study seeks to investigate the impact of these relationships on the administrative efficiency of public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Statement of the problem

Higher education is expected to play a vital role in national development by providing high-level and relevant training for individuals, fostering values essential for personal and societal well-being, enhancing intellectual capabilities to comprehend and appreciate local and global surroundings, imparting physical and intellectual skills to promote self-reliance and societal contribution, fostering scholarship and community service, strengthening national unity, and promoting national and international understanding and collaboration.

As such, tertiary institutions shape the future of individuals and society. Tertiary institutions are collaborative organizations to achieve common objectives through coordinated efforts within their external environment. They are often described as professional bureaucracies with decentralized academic structures. The administrative structure of a university encompasses various administrative units responsible for the institution's maintenance and supervision, separate from the academic faculty. Additionally, academic heads of departments also hold administrative roles, overseeing the day-to-day management of their units. According to Ibukun (2017), the primary goal of tertiary education in Nigeria is to provide the human resources necessary to drive the nation's socioeconomic development, positioning higher education as an essential driver of social change and economic progress.

The Public service in Nigeria and Bayelsa State has been faced with onerous task of administrative efficiency. As a critical agent, an engine of administration, the public tertiary institutions are known to be faced with several challenges from poor administrative technology, such as modern computer, efficient internet system for efficient administration and poor remuneration to effective training of manpower, in both senior and subordinate staff among others. Based on these flaws, successive University administrators in Bayelsa State and Nigeria have tried to handle these critical issues but have jettison interpersonal relations as vital area of administrative efficiency and concentrate only on improvement of salaries and provision of materials and few a training of personnel. As a fact, these methods are produced minimal results.

Despite significant investments in the tertiary education sector, many institutions in Bayelsa State continue to grapple with administrative inefficiencies. Previous research has highlighted issues such as bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate resource management, and low staff morale. However, there is a gap in understanding how interpersonal relations among staff affect administrative efficiency. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the nature of these relationships and their impact on institutional performance.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the current state of interpersonal relations among staff in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- ii. To evaluate the impact of interpersonal relations on administrative efficiency.

Research Questions

- i. Are there interpersonal relations practic among staff in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
- ii. Does interpersonal relations impacts on administrative efficiency in these institutions?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory, which posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. In the context of organizational behaviour, this theory helps to understand how positive interpersonal interactions can lead to enhanced cooperation and efficiency. The Leader - Member Exchange Theory (LMX), Dasereau, Green, and Haga (1975) and Manklelow, Jackson, and Swift proposed the Leader-Member Exchange idea. "Vertical Dyad linkage theory" is another name for the theory. The one-on-one or dyadic interactions that form between the

leader and each follower will be somewhat distinct, according to this hypothesis. The theory is predicated on the idea that leaders and their staff members form a social exchange relationship, and that the nature of this relationship is defined by the leader's exercise of formal authority and the average performance levels of the workforce. High quality exchange relationships, on the other hand, are characterized by increased degrees of interpersonal attraction (i.e., like), bidirectional influence, and mutual trust, support, and loyalty between the leader and his or her staff. As a result, workers in high-quality exchange relationships are driven to show their bosses greater levels of dedication, diligence, and devotion in exchange for favorable performance reviews, promotions, and other benefits.

In addition, the leader of any work group usually cultivates stronger bonds with a select number of subordinates (the "in-group"), while paying less attention to or showing less concern for the other subordinates (the "out-group"). The nature of the leader-member interaction can vary from low quality, where the subordinate view the leader negatively and do not respect or trust him, to high quality, where the subordinate view the leader positively and believe that he is encouraging and supportive. It has been discovered that these variations have an impact on the work outcomes of subordinates, including work output, dedication, loyalty, attendance, and job satisfaction (Kozlowski & Dohert, 1989; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Wayne & Ferris, 1990, Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002).

Conceptual Clarification

Interpersonal Relations in Organizations

Interpersonal relations relate to the interactions and relationships between persons in an organization. These interactions can greatly effect job satisfaction, motivation, and overall productivity. In educational institutions, excellent interpersonal connections among staff members are vital for providing a supportive work environment that increases administrative efficiency (Adeyemi, 2010).

Administrative Efficiency

Administrative efficiency in tertiary institutions refers to the effective and efficient use of resources to fulfill organizational objectives. It covers methods of decision-making, resource management, and policy and procedure implementation (Ekechukwu, 2012). Efficient administration ensures that educational institutions function properly and meet their educational objectives. In economic terms, efficiency can be described as the connection between input and output. An increase in units of output per unit of input improves an organisation's efficiency.

The Efficacy of Interpersonal Skills in Public service performance

It is nearly hard to think of interpersonal and communication skills without acknowledging the importance of rapport as a key element. Individual differences make up the essence of rapport, which is sometimes seen as an abstract notion lacking a precise, concise definition. Given its importance in interpersonal communication, rapport and its function in the police environment will be briefly covered. Three elements comprise rapport, according to Tickle-Degnan and Rosenthal (1990): coordination, optimism, and mutual attentiveness. Hendrick (1990) added feelings of warmth and friendliness (positivity), balance and harmony (coordination), and sentiments of shared interest and focus (attention) to this list of components. The level of interaction experienced by the interactants can be summed up as mutual attention. According to Wojciszke, Abele, and Baryla (2009), positivity represents the emotional side of the relationship and is indicative of respect or like shared by both parties. Coordination is the pattern of reciprocal reactions between the interactants, which can show synchronization, complementarity, or accommodation. While rapport talks tend to center around optimism, coordination also emerges as a significant factor. According to Holmberg (2009), rapport can be distinguished from other concepts like empathy and is an inherent interactional occurrence of reciprocal feelings.

The effect of Interpersonal Trust on work Group Performance

Trust is a critical component of successful relationships. Although the exact role of interpersonal trust in relationships is not fully understood, experts in psychology, sociology, management, economics, and political science generally agree on one point (Velamugan, 2016). Most of the research on trust views it as a factor that has a direct (and primary) impact on the functioning and processes of work groups. Increasing the level of trust in a group is expected to lead to improved group processes (e.g., enhanced collaboration) and higher performance. This optimistic view is shared by Golembiewski & McConkie (1988), Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995), and McGregor (1967), and is also discussed in group performance textbooks (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998; Robbins, 1998) and has inspired various interventions.

Other potential roles for trust have received little consideration in the literature because the previously mentioned method has dominated it. While academics may concur that effective groups typically exhibit interpersonal trust, trust does not always have a direct impact. Interpersonal trust, for instance, may indirectly affect group dynamics and output through moderating. In this capacity, trust would help to promote (moderate) the interaction between other factors and the output of the group. This workable substitute position would require a rethinking of how trust is approached in both practice and research. Through an empirical

investigation into whether trust has a direct (primary effect) or indirect (moderating effect) impact on performance, this study aims to further our understanding of how interpersonal trust influences work group performance. The study aims to make multiple contributions in this way. Firstly, the study carefully examines the prevailing notion through empirical research in order to examine the role of trust as a key influence. It also looks at the behavioral processes that mediate the relationship between trust and performance, an area of research that has not been previously studied in Nigeria, in an effort to determine the precise mechanism by which trust influences performance. Second, this seems to be among the first studies to test this theory experimentally when it comes to the moderating function of trust. If this role is supported by empirical evidence, it provides an alternative theoretical framework for investigating trust and a practical means of putting the idea to use. Last but not least, this study may be especially pertinent from a practical standpoint for comprehending how trust affects group dynamics and output in temporary work groups—a growingly important component of companies (e.g., Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996; Peters, 1992).

Interpersonal Trust and the Main Effect

The observation made by Kegan and Rubenstein (1973, 499) that "acceptance of this theory is often based on factors other than empirical testing and support" still seems appropriate even if trust is regularly mentioned as a factor determining work group effectiveness. As shown by Kegan and Rubenstein (1973), there is an increasing amount of empirical study, but the validity of the claim still primarily rests on implicit assumptions and conceptual literature. The following variables have been thoroughly researched: organizational citizenship behaviours (McAllister, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Robinson, 1996), effort (Williams & Karau, 1991), communication (Mellinger, 1959) and group performance (Friedlander, 1970; Klimoski & Karol, 1976). Does this research provide any evidence that we may draw the conclusion that trust has a major impact on group performance? An unfavorable response to this question can be attributed to three things. First, it is possible to classify the findings of the previously mentioned research as producing moderate and/or inconsistent empirical data. For instance, two studies (Hughes, Rosenbach, & Clover, 1983; Klimoski & Karol, 1976) that examined the impact of trust on group performance reported supporting a main effect, one study (Friedlander, 1970) found support for an indirect effect, and one study (Kimmel et al., 1980) found no effect. Research on the impact of trust on behaviorally dependent variables, such as communication, has yielded minimal and/or conflicting results. Second, because of the designs employed, the findings from a large portion of the studies mentioned above may be exaggerated. For instance, a large number of the research used cross-sectional data, which makes it more difficult to determine

which way causality runs. Much of the research relied on self-report surveys to gather data, which may have led to inflated correlations. Additionally, a related study observed only modest effects on group performance from improved interpersonal relationships among team members. Reviews of the literature on team-building and group performance (McGrath & Altman, 1966; Sundstrom et al., 1990; Tannenbaum et al., 1992; Woodman & Sherwood, 1980) suggest that better interpersonal relationships do not consistently result in higher team performance. In summary, we cannot yet draw the conclusion that trust has a major (direct) impact on group dynamics and performance because of the scanty support from earlier studies, the methodological flaws in this work, and research in related fields. Before we could reach such a conclusion, it is evident that this idea has to be the topic of additional, thorough empirical investigation. As suggested by the criticisms above, a thorough empirical investigation should (a) isolate how trust affects behavior and performance, (b) measure independent and dependent variables at various times, and (c) measure independent and dependent variables using various techniques and resources.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design and employed a questionnaire to examine the impact of interpersonal relations on administrative efficiency comprehensively. The questionnaire was self-developed to address the relationship that exist between interpersonal relations and administrative efficiency in public tertiary institutions. The questionnaire comprised two sections, A and B, and used a modified Likert four-point-type rating scale (SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; and SD = 1) to gather responses from the participants.

The study's population consists of both academic and non-academic staff members from public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Therefore, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample from each institution. Based on the number of selected respondents, the sample size was determined to be 400.

Table 1: Stratified number of respondents in each public tertiary institution in Bayelsa state

S/N	Public Tertiary Institutions	Selected Samples
1	Niger Delta University, Amasoma	100
2	Federal University, Otueke	100
3	African University, Toru-Orua	100
4	College of Education, Sagbama	50
5	Federal Poly-technique, Ekewe	50
Total		400

The study adopted mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions. The formula for Mean and Standard Deviation is shown below.

$$t = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2)}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

ANALYSIS

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the current state of interpersonal relations among staff in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	M	StD	Remark
1	The communication links among staffers are above average	80	262	40	10	3.05	0.64	Agreed
2	There are atoms of conflict between staffs	92	250	36	14	3.07	0.68	Agreed
3	There is positive inter relation amongst staff	69	236	61	56	3.09	0.62	Agreed
4	Leadership strides and teamwork is lacking	80	262	40	10	3.05	0.64	Agreed
5	Interpersonal relations among staff in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state are mutual	80	262	40	10	3.05	0.64	Agreed
Grand Mean						2.90	0.70	Agreed

The results on Table 2 above showed summary of descriptive statistics on the current state of interpersonal relations among staff in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State with grand mean 2.90, SD=0.70. The respondents strongly indicated that the communication links among staffers are above average (M=3.05, SD=0.64). This was followed by, there are atoms of conflict between staffs (M=3.07, SD=0.68). Next was there is positive inter relation amongst staff (M=3.09, SD=0.62). Also, leadership strides and teamwork is lacking (M=3.05, SD=0.64). The last was interpersonal relations among staff in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state are mutual (M=3.05, SD=0.64).

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the impact of interpersonal relations on administrative efficiency tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	M	StD	Remark
6	Institutions with better interpersonal relations have higher levels of efficiency	80	262	40	10	3.05	0.64	Agreed
7	There is timely decision-making process in tertiary institutions that have interpersonal relations	92	250	36	14	3.07	0.68	Agreed
8	There exists an effective resource management tertiary institution that have interpersonal relations	94	236	45	17	3.04	0.73	Agreed
9	There is higher staff morale tertiary institutions that have interpersonal relations	98	247	27	20	3.08	0.72	Agreed
10	Workers are reliable productive	96	249	22	25	3.06	0.74	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.05	0.75	Agreed

The result on Table 3 above showed the Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the impact of interpersonal relations on administrative efficiency tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state State with grand mean of 3.05, SD=0.75. The mean rating scores were: institutions with better interpersonal relations have higher levels of efficiency (M=3.05, SD=0.64). This was followed by there is timely decision-making process in tertiary institutions that have interpersonal relations (M=3.07, SD=0.68). Next was there exists an effective resource management tertiary institution that have interpersonal relations (M=3.04, SD=0.73). Also, there is higher staff morale tertiary institutions that have interpersonal relations (M=3.08, SD=0.72) among others.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

State of Interpersonal Relations: The survey results indicate that while there are generally positive interpersonal relations among staff, there are areas that require improvement, particularly in communication and conflict resolution.

Impact on Administrative Efficiency: The findings suggest a strong correlation between positive interpersonal relations and administrative efficiency. Institutions with better interpersonal relations reported higher levels of efficiency, characterized by timely decision-making, effective resource management, and higher staff morale.

This study underscores the importance of positive interpersonal relations in enhancing administrative efficiency in public tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. By fostering better relationships among staff, these institutions can achieve higher levels of performance and contribute more effectively to the region's socio-economic development

These findings are related with previous studies that have shown positive interpersonal relations can lead to improved job performance and satisfaction. For instance, research conducted by Adeyemi (2010) found that in Nigerian universities, effective communication and teamwork among staff members significantly enhanced administrative efficiency. Similarly, Ekechukwu (2012) highlighted the importance of trust and mutual respect in fostering a conducive work environment in tertiary institutions.

CONCLUSION

The pivotal significance of interpersonal relations in tertiary institutions remain unabated. Such interpersonal relations cannot foster without good leadership and administration. The Administrator of the tertiary institution makes a positive difference and impact on the entire system of input and output. The administrator is saddled with responsibilities such as setting direction by envisioning clear, shared, and understandable courses of action and goals. Efficient Management roles to facilitate organizational goals include planning, adequate welfare of personnel, articulating a vision, generating high performance, and ensuring communication flow, within a harsh environment, without adequate funding, corruption and other socio-economic worries. The paper had revealed that institutions with better interpersonal relations reported higher levels of efficiency, characterized by timely decision-making, effective resource management, and higher staff morale. In order to facilitate the transformation, it is essential to implement effective management strategies. These strategies should encompass intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, and exemplifying best practices and beliefs. Additionally, there is a need to restructure the university organization to ensure that it fosters a conducive environment for teaching and learning by providing appropriate conditions and incentives. This includes enhancing teaching and learning facilities and infrastructure. Administrators must take proactive steps to drive organizational change, align university goals, policies, and objectives, and establish collaborative processes. Furthermore, to improve interpersonal relationships and enhance the efficient management of tertiary institutions, administrators should focus on policy development, implementation of effective practices, and the implementation of comprehensive accountability measures to drive educational reforms among staff in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The public service in Bayelsa State should employ interpersonal relation as a vital and critical part of their administrative performance as a standard to support proficiency in administrative performance.
2. The public service in Bayelsa state and Nigeria should consider redirection of the public servants to adjust to shift from its existing hierarchical framework towards a more interpersonal framework.
3. Training Programs: Regular training on communication and conflict resolution for staff members.
4. Team-Building Activities: Initiatives to promote teamwork and collaboration among staff.
5. Management Support: Encouraging management to foster a supportive and inclusive work environment.

To ensure efficient fund management, it is crucial to establish a reliable accounting system that upholds accountability, honesty, and transparency. In addition to fund allocation, there is an urgent need for effective monitoring of the university's fund management, focusing on enhancing the current allocation system.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study has contributed to the body of knowledge currently available on one-on-one interactions and the hierarchical structure used in public bureaucracy. Examining interpersonal relationships will fill in a crucial need for administrative efficiency in public service competency. Once more, this investigation has made clear to us the necessity of interpersonal relationships in public service administration in opposition to managers' hierarchical system by differentiating it to ensure a successful outcome crucial to fulfilling the constantly evolving ideals in modern public administration in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. In summary, the interpersonal relationships that public administration relies on will affect its users' ability to make new connections and develop existing ones at different levels, which are essential for 21st-century administrative performance efficiency.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Although the focus of this study was interpersonal relationships and administrative effectiveness, additional research on these topics in the context of Bayelsa State public service, particularly the tertiary institution, might be done in the following areas:

1. A comparison of the interpersonal relationships between public servants in higher education and other states in Nigeria and even other African nations.

2. Interpersonal ties between private organizations in Nigeria and other African nations, which would aid in the generalization of research on performance efficiency and interpersonal relations.

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