

EVALUATING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of change management on employee performance with evidence from selected universities in Delta State using a cross-sectional survey research design. The research was anchored on the the target population consists of 2820 staff (Academic and Non-Academic) of selected tertiary institutions in Delta State. A sample size of 338 employees was selected using simple random sampling technique. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics and presented using graphs and tables. The STATA Software package (Version 13.0) was used to analyze the data collected for this study. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between change leadership, change communication and employees' performance. The study further revealed that employee involvement has a great impact on employees' performance. A strong organizational culture creates synergy and momentum that encourages teamwork and enhances employee performance. The study concluded that change leadership, and change communication, influence the performance of employees positively. The study recommended that organizations need to focus on their employees during a change process to improve employees, performance.

Keywords: *Employee Performance, Change Management, State University, Leadership, Communication.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to the world that nothing ever remains the same, (Bagga, Gera & Haque, 2022). Today's business world requires continuous improvement of business processes that affects employee's productivity and overall profit to the organization. To achieve this, organizations need to be open to and ready for change. Organizations have experienced enormous technological changes and innovations that are constantly transforming the entire work process. Every basic function performed in every organization seems to be altered daily because of the dynamic nature of business organizations, (Ekechi & Umar, 2020). The world today is a global village enhanced using technology. Organizations in remote places need to communicate with multinationals as well as the world at large to be abreast of the ever-changing business world. There is the need for organizations to adapt to systems that can effectively give the organizations a timely boost in terms of its employee's productivity as well as increased profitability.

The Problem

The low success rates of change programs are often attributed to resistance to change on the part of employees. More than 75% of change efforts fail (Kotter, 2014), so a focus on how employees think, feel and behave during these transformational periods offers useful insights to managers, in order to understand what has to be done differently in order to achieve expected results after the implementation of any change process. Although planned change is intended to make the organization more effective and efficient, resistance from members of the organization is expected as they foresee potential threats that can affect their future. This study seeks to address this by examining the human aspect of the change process and how effective change management strategies can affect employee performance. Employees react to change based on its personal impact on them. Perceived favorable impacts generally lead to support for the change and perceived unfavorable impacts may lead to change resistance.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between Change Leadership and Employee Performance.
2. To ascertain the relationship between Change Communication and Employee Performance.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between Change Leadership and Employee Performance.
- H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between Change Communication and Employee Performance.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Change Management

Change is an inevitable phenomenon in every organization whether at the strategic level or operational level. Without controversy, the essence of strategic change to organizations makes it a key driver at the leadership level in decision making. Most often than not, change is impulsive because it can be initiated by any little issue. Change can originate from nature, method and scope which affects every organization.

Organizations today have realized the essence of change management practices. The study of Daniel (2019) defined change management as a process that involves the unfreezing, moving and refreezing values, practices, and procedures within an organization. It is a systematic and organized application or approach (in organizational structure, leadership, civilization and technology) that determine employees' organizational changes from a particular state to a desired future state. As stated by Ndahiro, et al. (2015), change management is an approach which requires adaptation and interpretation by professionals to ensure most suitable fit between organizations' strategies and plans. Also, Okeke, et al. (2019) defined change management as a necessary process of defining and adopting corporate strategies, structure, technologies, and procedures to deal with changes in external conditions and business environment. Change management is a systematic process of dealing with perspective change of an individual and organizations. It is a systematic and organized application or approach that determine employees' organizational changes from a particular state to desired future state. Change management factors are organizational structure, leadership, culture, and technology.

To obtain the right business target, any change should have the right process to follow by way of acknowledging the technical and people side. The objective is to help the individuals impacted by the change to be successful by building support, addressing resistance, developing

the required knowledge and ability to implement the change, and ultimately making successful personal transitions resulting in the adoption and realization of change, (Ju-Chun, 2015).

Change Communication

Communication is one of the most important elements to a successful change effort as it sets a tone of transparency and openness. Communication strategy can be perceived as a mechanism to clarify the facts to various stakeholders of what is going to change, why, and what benefits they can expect to derive from the change (Khan, & Jabbar, 2013). Several scholars have emphasized the importance of communication in organizational change. The first goal of communication should be to inform the employees about their tasks and about the policy and other issues of the organization. One of the main purposes of change communication should be to inform the organizational members about the change, and how their work is altered because of the change. This informative function of communication will have an effect on readiness for change (Elijah, & Muathe, 2016). Communication also serves to create a community and reduce feelings of uncertainty and job insecurity that is typical in any change process, resulting in commitment with the organization and trust in the organization

Change Leadership

In understanding change management, we need to fully understand the meaning of management. Getting tasks/activities done effectively and efficiently by, with and through people is management. Drucker (2011) as cited in Schutte-Lyth et al. (2016) sees management as being able to use all resources, including human resources effectively, to realize strategic goals by implementing a systematic and creative plan. Managers should strive to be good leaders. Nzioka, 2012) state that order and consistency is achieved by good management, this is done by drawing up formal plans, designing rigid organizational structures and monitoring results against the plan. Leadership on the other hand is coping with change. A leader can influence a group of people to achieve the mission, vision, and strategic objectives of organization.

Concept of Employee Performance

Human resources are critical and difficult to manage. It is because human behavior is highly unpredictable. Different not only from individual to individual, but often on the part of same individual at alternate points in time. Despite biological and cultural similarities, human beings

not only differ in their appearance but also in their capabilities based on their background, training and experience, (Wanza, & Nkuraru, 2016). Human resources or a person at work is the most important component of the undertaking. Management cannot afford to ignore human resource at any cost. Management is the process of efficiently getting activities completed with and through other people. The management process includes planning. Organizing, leading and controlling activities those take place to accomplish objectives.

Change Leadership and Employee Performance

Employees are the most important assets in organizations and without them, the goals and objectives may not be attained (Aryee, Chen, & Budhwar, 2014). Leadership is one of the key driving forces for improving firm performance. Leaders, as the key decision-makers, determine the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products and services, and the delivery of value to organizational stakeholders. Torlak, (2015) is of the view in his paper that effective leadership involves motivation, management, inspiration, remuneration and analytical skills. When all these are present, he emphasizes that organizations record increased employee satisfaction that positively influences productivity and profitability. Other researchers also support the utility of change leadership behaviours as researchers have outlined a lack of visioning, lack of leadership support, lack of commitment to change for the right reasons, and lack of a guiding coalition as major barriers to successful change (Kotter, 1996; Ostroff, 2006; in Kinoti, 2014).

Change Communication and Employee Performance

In a meta-analysis carried out by Thomas, Tendai, Zororo, and Obert, (2019) on the impact of leadership change on employee performance, it was argued that change communication predicts effective change management. The study showed that ineffective communication concerning the change programme can result in feelings of anxiety, doubts, and fear in the minds of employees which can affect their commitment to the change programme (Chien, 2015). Poor communication during the change process can cause employees to become demoralized and less productive which will result in the change not achieving expected results. A change process highly depends on the aspect that the new vision put forward is well communicated and understood throughout the enterprise. Accepting a new vision may be a challenging intellectual and emotional task. Therefore, the vision must be simple, focused, and jargon-free. A clear definition of shared purpose must be fully understood by the employees

(Thomas, 2014). In addition, the impact must be understood as well as the contingency plans and options that are available to each employee

ADKAR Model for Change

The study was anchored on ADKAR Change Model ADKAR model by Hiatt (2006) as cited in Thomas, Tendai, Zororo, Obert (2019), has gained acceptance in the Change Management field. ADKAR is acronym for Awareness of the need to change, Desire to support and participate in the change, Knowledge of how to change, Ability to implement that change and Reinforcement to sustain the change (Chien, 2015). This model of change management focuses more on individuals as critical factors in the change process and how to enable the person to make a successful transition.

Since ADKAR describes the required elements of a successful change, it can be a powerful measuring yardstick to evaluate change management activities. For instance, after a major communication effort focused on sharing the need for the change and the individual and organizational reasons to support the change, you could conduct an assessment to evaluate the levels of awareness and desire in the people who received the communication. This type of assessment indicates how well employees are receiving change management activities. Periodically, ADKAR can be used to gauge how well employees are making use of their own personal transitions.

Empirical Review

Osei-Bonsu (2014) conducted a study to assess the extent of employee involvement in the change management processes, its impact on employee job satisfaction and attitude of employees after organizational change. A descriptive survey research design was employed to administer a self-designed questionnaire consisting of open and closed- ended items to one hundred and forty respondents using simple random sampling. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The main findings indicated that employees' involvement in the process was limited to the provision of adequate information. It was also revealed that generally, the change had a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction. Finally, employee attitudes after the change were found to be positive.

Similarly, Al-Jaradat, Nagresh, Al-Shegran and Jadellah (2013) conducted a study that aimed to identify the impact of change management on employee's performance, through a case study

of university libraries in Jordan. Three areas of change were addressed, the change in organizational structure, technology change and change in individuals. The researcher designed a questionnaire for the purpose of collecting the raw data, and used random sample in data collection, 220 questionnaires were distributed on the members of the sample. The study found that change in the organizational structure is not flexible, and therefore this organizational structure is not appropriate for the business requirements within the University Library, leading to overlapping powers and responsibilities. The study found a positive relationship between the areas of change (organizational structure, technology, individuals) and the performance of workers. The study recommended that in order to ensure the success of the change program, it is appropriate to focus on organizational structure, human relations and technology and there must be a balance between these aspects to improve the performance of employees and this in turn reflects the quality of productivity.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study applied a descriptive design involving quantitative method of data collection. A population of 2820 was used. Sample size of 338, using the Krejcie and Morgan Table of the sample size. The results obtained was correlated using Pearson Linear Correlation Coefficient (PLCC). The data collected was analyzed using STATA. It is a complete integrated statistical software package that provides everything needed for data analysis, data management and graphics. The multiple linear regression technique was employed in showing the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

4. RESULTS AND DECISIONS

Table 1: Regression Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	154.264705	5	30.8529409	Number of obs =	320	
Residual	82.5352953	314	.262851259	F(5, 314) =	117.38	
Total	236.8	319	.742319749	Prob > F =	0.0000	
				R-squared =	0.6515	
				Adj R-squared =	0.6459	
				Root MSE =	.51269	

emppef	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
chgled	.1360228	.0358169	3.80	0.000	.0655513	.2064943
chgcom	.215901	.0369569	5.84	0.000	.1431866	.2886155
empinv	.2093214	.0458505	4.57	0.000	.1191085	.2995344
emptrn	.1363075	.0617096	2.21	0.028	.0148909	.257724
orgcut	.3368998	.0619657	5.44	0.000	.2149793	.4588203
_cons	.0941985	.1707378	0.55	0.582	-.2417363	.4301333

Test of Hypotheses

Decision Rule

Ordinary least square (OLS) multiple regression analysis was employed as an analytical tool for testing the hypothesis formulated in chapter one. The alternate hypotheses advanced as tentative answers to the research questions of the present study were tested to see whether they are supported by the empirical data or not.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Change Leadership and Employee Performance

The regression result output in table 1 shows that change leadership has a significant and positive effects on employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state (Coef. 0.1360, p = 0.000), the p-values for change leadership are less than 0.05, hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between change leadership and employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Change Communication and Employee Performance

The regression result output in table 1 shows that change communication has significant and positive effects on employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state (Coef. 0.2159, $p = 0.000$), the p-value for change communication is less than 0.05, hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate, which state that there is a significant relationship between change communication and employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Change leadership and employee performance.

The first objective of the study was to establish the effects of change leadership on performance of employees of selected tertiary institutions in Delta State. From the findings, respondents agreed that organizational leaders create a sense of urgency to reinforce the need for change. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization is led by a committed and greatly motivated class of leaders. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the organizational leaders are competent and knowledgeable enough to drive change initiatives. Majority of the respondents agreed that the organizational leaders are creative and innovative in ensuring successful change introduction. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that the management team selects the right people to form the guiding and majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the management team promotes and develops the right people to promote change.

The test of hypotheses showed that change leadership has a significant and positive effect on employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state (Coef. 0.1360, $p = 0.000$), with the p-values for change leadership less than 0.05. This led to the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis, implying that the two variables move in same direction such that when change leadership is on the increase, there is improvement in performance of employees in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta state. Similarly, when a change of leadership diminishes, there is decrease in employee performance.

This finding is supported by Jaros, (2010) in his assertion that as leaders possess some management skills to direct change, when an organization is going through change, leadership

is important to constantly motivate staff and present training programs to improve skills of employees. Findings from Schutte-Lyth et al. (2016) study, also showed that leaders that show understanding of employees concerns during change, further serves as example, and thereby influence employees their output.

Change communication and employee performance.

The descriptive statistic considered were mean and standard deviation. The study established that to a great extent; the communication strategies used by the selected institutions was effective in ensuring speedy, clear conveyance of information, the organization exploits both formal and informal communications methods to ensure efficient conveyance of change information, the organization exploits a wide range of communication channels to ensure the information reaches stakeholders within reasonable timelines to act, and appreciates feedback from all stakeholders.

The result reveals that change communication has a significant and positive effects on employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta State (Coef. 0.2157, $p = 0.000$), the p-value change communication variable is less than 0.05, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate, which state that there is a significant relationship between change communication and employee performance in the selected tertiary institutions in Delta State. What this means is that when there is improvement in change communication, there is also growth in employee performance and vice versa.

The finding is in alignment with Kamugisha, (2013) position that providing more information about a task through communication and logical type of communication leads to increased performance and satisfaction in employees. Theoretical support is provided by Anamallah, and Hashim, (2018) explanation that effective communication in any business entity during change efforts has a great influence in employee performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The right leadership role and approach adopted in the organization change process can foster positive outcomes in employees output as well as eliminate their feelings of uneasiness. When employees properly understand why and how the intended change will affect them in a favorable way, they will give their absolute support through work input.

Recommendations

1. Leaders should ensure that they have clear goals and vision and develop strategies according to their goals at every phase of the change process.
2. Management should create a change management communication strategy that sets out communication objectives, develop key messages delivered through appropriate channels and provide feedback mechanism from employees.

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