

NAVIGATING KNOWLEDGE DYNAMICS: THE ROLE OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN ENHANCING ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: The study determined the role of tacit knowledge sharing in administrative staff performance in higher institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis tested at 0.05 significant level guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a population of 544 (206 male and 298 female) administrative staff in four public tertiary institutions in Anambra state studied without sampling. Two (2) instruments namely; Role of Tacit Knowledge Sharing on Performance of Administrative Staff (RTKS-PAS) and Employee Performance Survey (EPS) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by two experts in the field of Business Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation. Trail testing was used to establish the reliability of the instrument, and data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha, which yielded coefficients of .89 for IOCKSP-PAS, and .91 obtained for EPS. Five hundred and twenty-eight (528) duly completed copies of the instrument were retrieved and used for data analysis. Mean, and standard deviation was used to answer the the research question and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings, while a t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Findings revealed that administrative staff strongly agree that tacit knowledge sharing influences their performance in higher institutions in Anambra State. Gender did not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings on the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on the performance of administrative staff. The researchers concluded that building a working environment that promotes tacit knowledge sharing can improve the performance of administrative staff to a very high level. It was therefore recommended, among others, that the management of higher institutions in Anambra state and Nigeria in general should build a strong working relationship that promotes trust among administrative staff. This trust will encourage the administrative staff to feel free to share their knowledge with other colleagues to achieve the institutions' set goals.

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Introduction

The world is presently heading towards a knowledge-based economy. Knowledge is increasingly being recognized as the main driver of the economy. It has developed into a product that gives organizations, whether for profit or not, small or large, private or public, a competitive edge. The emergence of the knowledge economy has produced a work environment characterized by unpredictability, volatility, and change, which offers higher institutions both benefits and challenges. Higher institutions' administrative staff are, therefore, under huge pressure to manage their knowledge so as to enable it to be shared from within the institution (Dwiyanti, 2017). It is due to the fact that knowledge is now regarded as an asset cap that gives many untold benefits that make a difference between successful and less successful higher institutions. In agreement, Evwierhurhoma and Oga (2020) stated that due to organizations needing to effectively implement knowledge sharing processes, many employees are performing below expectations. Knowledge refers to the skills people use to solve problems, and contains all theoretical knowledge as well as behavioural guideline. It is derived from facts and information connected to people. Individuals produce knowledge, which is an illustration of what they anticipate happening in cause-and-effect interactions (Dwiyanti, 2017). Knowledge Sharing is challenging but feasible even though many higher institutions understand the need of sharing knowledge, there are still several obstacles preventing them from

doing so. Efficiently sharing of knowledge as noted by Kipkosgei et al. (2020) among employees can be costly, however, it can assist higher institutions administrative staff and management in making better judgments on a regular basis on preserving their intellectual property.

Knowledge sharing can be defined as the process of exchanging individual and organizational knowledge. It is the process by which an organization has access to both its' own and other organizations' knowledge (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020). Knowledge sharing is the transfer of knowledge from one organization to another, from one person to another, or from one group of employees to another in order to improve decision-making (Evwierhurhoma & Oga, 2020). That is, in the workplace, employees can communicate both tacit and explicit knowledge.

Tactic knowledge is the knowledge based mostly on practical experience and reflection (Ononye, 2020). It refers to practical expertise or insight based on firsthand experience, which is frequently not publicly acknowledged (Dwiyanti, 2015). Tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in personal experience, and intuition. It could often underpin effective performance, innovation and problem-solving. It could hold significant importance to higher institutions in Nigeria by enabling administrative staff to navigate complex dynamics and implement solutions to challenges. Aljuwaiber (2016) noted that tacit knowledge significantly affects competitiveness. In the same vein, Salis and Williams' (2018)

hypothesis predicts that it will improve performance of employees. Performance refers to the action of carrying out or achieving a task or function (Ghalem et al., 2017). It is more than just what employees accomplish; it is also about how they do it. Performance is remains an excellent indicator of every institution's performance.

The major problem facing higher institutions in Nigeria (Anambra state in particular) is how well to enhance employees' performance (Evwierhurhoma & Oga, 2020). As a result, the issue of performance is a top priority for academic researchers. Although, employees' performance is crucial to higher institutions, the low quality of educational delivery plaguing Nigerian public higher institutions has raised many concerns among the public. Abdullah et al. (2017) expressed sadness that the inability of higher institutions in Nigeria to share knowledge and build an environment that fosters it is the root cause of poor performance among administrative staff. Some staff in higher institutions in Anambra state often conceal or become hesitant to share their knowledge with colleagues due to a belief system that once their knowledge is shared with others, they can be easily laid off as they will no longer be important. Oyenuga et al. (2019) noted that despite the perceived enabling environment created by higher institutions' top management teams in Nigeria (Anambra state inclusive) to promote knowledge sharing, some employees tend to hoard knowledge.

Higher institutions are places of higher learning where knowledge is disseminated to those who seek it out and where studies in various areas of human endeavour are conducted. They include; universities, polytechnics, colleges of technology, colleges of education, and other institutions that may be related to them (Shanka & Adebola, 2021). These institutions support national development by producing graduates with intellectual abilities to contribute to national development (FRN), 2014). In order to accomplish their objectives, higher institutions rely on employees as most tangible assets. Shanka and Adebola claimed that productivity in higher institutions depends on their knowledge-sharing practices. However, the general lackadaisical attitude of most administrative staff in Nigerian higher institutions especially in Anambra State in carrying out their jobs has drawn criticism from educational stakeholders. Indigo (2023) and Adejare et al. (2021) observed that inefficiency has nearly become a household term used to describe some higher institutions, not just in Anambra State but throughout Nigeria.

Administrative staff of higher institutions is the support system on which the success of the academicians and students relies. They are employees of higher institutions who perform non-teaching functions (Anioke, 2021), and are responsible for doing clerical chores, managing and distributing information within the office, and maintaining files. Administrative staff include; managers, non-academic staff, student welfare workers, secretaries, caretakers and

cleaners. Gender of administrative staff could be a significant factor in their opinions on the influence of tacit knowledge-sharing on their performance. Male administrative staff may be more willing to share knowledge than their female counterparts. Also, female administrative staff may have more responsibilities/duties at home to perform, which could affect their time for office discussions and group collaborations that can enhance tacit knowledge-sharing. In agreement, Mukti and George (2018) reported that gender was a significant factor in knowledge-sharing practices in favour of male employees. The role of job performance in the achievement of higher institutions' objectives necessitated this study to determine the role of tacit knowledge sharing in administrative staff performance in higher institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Higher institutions are set up in Nigeria, among other reasons, to help individuals reach their full potential intellectually and to support the country's development by providing top-notch workforce training. Educational stakeholders are worried about the poor quality with which personnel in Nigeria's higher institutions perform their jobs. Employees in Anambra State public tertiary institution display a lax attitude while performing their job duties, which has drawn criticism from the state's citizens. Anambra State's higher institutions have occasionally been described as inefficient—a term that has nearly become common. The poor performance and low productivity of higher

institutions administrative staff in Anambra result in a loss of the substantial resources that the government spent on these institutions. Experts and researchers have suggested a number of variables or factors, such as the physical workspace, organizational commitment, leadership style, welfare programmes, and job satisfaction, as ways to address this unwanted scenario that may impact employees' poor performance in higher institutions. In addition, knowledge sharing practices such as tacit knowledge sharing could have an impact on employees' performance in higher institutions in Anambra State.

There is however a gap in understanding how tacit knowledge sharing contributes to enhancing the performance of administrative staff within this specific context. While tacit knowledge is recognized as valuable in organizational settings, its role in facilitating administrative staff performance in higher institutions remains under-explored. Few studies in this field showed that there are still differences in perspectives among researchers. Closing this gap in knowledge is crucial for developing interventions to leverage tacit knowledge sharing as a means to enhance administrative staff performance and ultimately improve the overall efficiency of higher institutions in Anambra State. This study therefore, explicitly determined to find out the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on the performance of administrative staff in higher institutions in Anambra State.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study;

1. What is the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on performance of the administrative staff in higher institutions in Anambra State?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female administrative staff on the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on their performance in higher institutions in Anambra State.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 544 (298 females and 206 male) administrative staff in all public higher institutions in Anambra State (Source: Academic Planning Units of the various public tertiary institutions in Anambra State as at 4th December, 2023). There was no sampling since the population was manageable. Two instruments namely; Influence of Tacit Knowledge Sharing on the Performance of Administrative Staff (RTKS-PAS) and Employee Performance Survey (EPS) were used for data collection. The ITKS-PAS had two sections: A and B. Section A contained one item on demographic information of the respondents, such as gender while section B contained 10 items covering the research question. The EPS contain 15 items in section C. The RTKS-PAS and EPS were structured on a four-point rating scale

of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD). Face and content validity of the instrument were determined using opinions of three experts in Business Education, and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was established using trial-testing and data obtained analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient which yielded coefficient values of .89 for RTKS-PAS while the coefficient value of .91 was obtained for EPS. The researcher, with the help of three research assistants, administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Out of the 544 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 528(97%) copies were correctly filled, returned and used for data analysis. Statistical mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and establish the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings. An Independent t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a .05 level of significance. The decision was that where the p-value is less than .05 ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis was rejected. Otherwise, the null hypothesis is accepted. Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0.

Result

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Tacit Knowledge on Performance of Administrative Staff

Table 1

S/N	Items statements	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Expressing my thoughts to help communicate my position on a particular issue formally in my institution leads to a better decision making.	3.60	.41	Strongly Agree
2	Having a office colleagues who are co-operative in giving information or advice leads to creation of better solutions to work challenges	3.65	.44	Strongly Agree
3	interaction with people in my institution to create a shared or common understanding of a problem help employees to take initiative as appropriate to accomplish tasks	3.53	.50	Strongly Agree
4	Writing summary note of what was discussed in an office meeting leads to setting of right priorities	3.32	.47	Agree
5	Cataloging knowledge for easy retrieval to support the employees improves job performance	3.43	.50	Agree
6	Organizing informal meetings to share work experiences among colleagues improves the quality of jobs done	3.55	.48	Strongly Agree
7	Providing mentorship programme to new employees enable them to master their job functions	3.78	.51	Strongly Agree
8	Learning by example from more experienced workers increases employees' productivity	3.43	.55	Agree
9	Hiring experts to train employees improves their job performance	3.35	.48	Agree
10	Having database with information on office work procedures makes employees to take more challenging office tasks	3.60	.50	Strongly Agree
Cluster Mean		3.52		Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows that the respondents strongly agree that tacit knowledge sharing influences the performance of administrative staff in higher institutions in Anambra State with a cluster mean score of 3.52, which fell within the strongly agree category. The item-by-item analysis indicates that six items have mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.78, showing that respondents strongly agree that tacit knowledge sharing

influences the performance of administrative staff. The remaining four items have mean scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.43, indicating that the respondents agree that tacit knowledge sharing influences the performance of administrative staff. Standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings opinions.

Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis of Significant Differences in the Mean Ratings of Administrative Staff on the Influence of Tacit Knowledge Sharing on their Performance Based on Gender

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-value	P-value	Decision
Male	218	3.50	.56	526	1.92	1.16	Not Significant
Female	310	3.54	.54				

Table 2 shows that the t - value is 1.92 with 526 degree of freedom and a p-value of 1.16, which is greater than the .05 level of significance. Since the p-value is greater than the significance value ($p\text{-value} = 1.16 > .05$), the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. It means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff on the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on the performance of administrative staff in higher institutions in Anambra State based on gender.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study showed that administrative staff strongly agree that tacit knowledge sharing influences their performance in higher institutions in Anambra State. The findings specifically indicated that the administrative staff rated most of the items as strongly agree and agree could be due to the fact that administrative staff roles in higher institutions often involve multifaceted tasks and challenges. Tacit knowledge, which includes implicit understanding, intuition, and practical know-how, can be invaluable in navigating these complexities effectively. Administrative staff recognized that sharing such knowledge enhances their ability to perform their duties efficiently and proficiently. It also allows the

administrative staff to build relationships with other colleagues, which is an ingredient for increased performance. Furthermore, it could be that administrative staff covered in the study area possess tacit knowledge and impart them to colleagues to improve their performance. The finding of the study corroborates the finding of Prabhakaran (2022), which revealed that tacit knowledge sharing influenced employees' innovation and improve job performance. It supports the earlier finding of Ewrierhurhoma and Oga (2020), which showed that employees experienced low performance as a result of a lack of tacit knowledge-sharing practices. Furthermore, Bamikole (2014) noted that the majority of employees of tertiary institutions perform below their capacities as a result of poor tacit knowledge-sharing practices by tertiary institutions' management. Supporting Bamikole findings, Odu (2015) reported that employees' tacit knowledge-sharing influences how well they perform at work.

Findings of the hypothesis showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff on the influence of tacit knowledge sharing on their job performance in higher institutions in Anambra State based on gender. The findings of the study agree with the

earlier findings of Mogotsi et al. (2011), which revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and the gender of employees. In agreement, Ojha (2015) found out that gender did not significantly influence tacit knowledge sharing when it came to the relationship with performance.

Conclusion

Nigerian higher institutions were founded with the intention of producing graduates who possess the necessary non-technical and technical abilities to support the country's technological and economic advancement. The administration of higher institutions must make sure that all administrative staff support the institutions' objectives in order to accomplish this purpose. Therefore, in order to guarantee that administrative staff accomplish the goals established by the institutions through knowledge sharing, management must recognize and address variables that may have an impact on their performance. Findings of the study showed that administrative staff strongly agree that tacit knowledge sharing influences their performance in higher institutions in Anambra State. Based on the finding, the researchers concluded that tacit knowledge sharing plays a significant role in enhancing the performance of administrative staff within higher institutions in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria should build a strong working

relationship that promotes trust among administrative staff. This trust will encourage the administrative staff to feel free to share their knowledge with other colleagues to achieve the institutional set goals.

2. Administrators of higher institutions in Anambra State should develop formalized mechanisms and platforms to facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge among administrative staff. This could include regular knowledge-sharing sessions, team meeting, mentorship programmes, online platform where experiences and insight can be shared, and collaborative projects aimed at leveraging the expertise and experiences of administrative staff members.

3. Administrators of higher institutions should implement incentives and recognition programmes to acknowledge and reward administrative staff members who actively participate in knowledge-sharing activities. This could include performance bonuses, commendations, or opportunities for career advancement based on contributions to knowledge sharing and organizational performance.

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