

Exploring Internal Communication and Employee Relations Management for Effective Staff Performance in Nigeria Customs Service

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Abstract:

Exploring Internal Communication and Employee Relations Management for effective staff performance in the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) is essential for understanding how internal practices can influence productivity, morale, and overall organizational efficiency. The objectives of the study are to evaluate the effectiveness of the current internal communication channels employed by the Nigeria Customs Service, to examine how internal communication influences improved employee performance in the Nigeria Customs Service, and to investigate the employee relations strategies employed by the Nigeria Customs Service to motivate and enhance job performance among its staff. The study adopted the Systems Theory, while the postulation of positivist approach of research design informed the choice of survey method. The positivist paradigm of research design believes in the quantitative method of data generation. The population of this study consist of the entire Officers and Men of the Nigeria Customs Service, which is about 15, 000. A sample size of 342 respondents was considered for the study. Stratified sampling was used to select the respondents while questionnaire was employed as a research instrument. The findings suggest that top-to-down communication channels established by senior management play a crucial role in conveying clear direction and expectations to employees within the NCS. This finding underscores the significant role of internal communication in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviours towards their work responsibilities within the NCS. The study concludes that internal communication and employee relations management are fundamental to enhancing staff performance in the Nigeria Customs Service.

Keywords:

Employee Relations, Exploring, Internal Communication, Management, and Performance

I. Introduction

In an ever-evolving, dynamic, and complex world, the field of public relations has taken on a transformative role in shaping our society. As human civilization progresses, community connections become increasingly important, fostering enlightenment and awareness. Consequently, public relations strategies of every organization must encompass community relations as a crucial element. The sustenance and success of any organization hinge on the level of goodwill it cultivates and the ongoing support it garners. A company that does not align its policies with the needs and aspirations of its workforce risks facing significant backlash. Thus, the establishment and maintenance of environmentally responsible programs and initiatives that benefit not only the organization but also its employees and the broader community have become imperative (Nweke, 2001).

Previous studies conducted by Rim-Rukeh et al. (2008), have delved into community relations and its impact on the corporate image of organizations. These studies sought to understand the strategies employed by organizations to enhance their corporate image. Similarly, scholars like Plaskoff (2017) and Olaolu (2012) have explored the practice of community relations within specific organizations. Samuel (2014) emphasizes that there exists a consensus among public relations scholars regarding the importance of preparedness and effective handling of conflicts. Igben (2008) describes proactive public relations, highlighting the significance of taking preemptive actions. Aliyu and Mohammed (2008) further assert that public relations professionals widely endorse proactive conflict management as a strategic approach.

Furthermore, Walden and Westerman (2018) recognize one of the principal objectives of public relations: facilitating communication channels for the exchange of ideas concerning policies and programs. On a global scale, the discourse on internal communication has shifted its focus towards employee engagement through the cultivation of a communication culture that encourages two-way communication (Aondover et al., 2022; Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024). This approach aims to shape an organizational culture conducive to enhanced efficiency, accuracy, and the ultimate achievement of organizational objectives. As previously mentioned, this study seeks to amalgamate internal communication and the challenges associated with employee engagement, which often give rise to internal and external issues that impact the organization's ability to achieve its objectives (Aondover et al., 2023).

However, the context of internal communication practices within paramilitary agencies, such as the Nigeria Customs Service, diverges from conventional corporate organizational models (Aondover, 2018). This divergence is particularly pronounced given the agency's multifaceted role in revenue generation, the suppression of smuggling, trade facilitation, and other functions. Consequently, there exists a substantial gap in the literature regarding internal communication and employee relations management within the Nigeria Customs Service. Prior studies have inadequately addressed this fundamental issue, leading to a significant knowledge gap that necessitates the initiation of this study.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the current internal communication channels employed by the Nigeria Customs Service.
2. To examine how internal communication influences improved employee performance in the Nigeria Customs Service.
3. To investigate the employee relations strategies employed by the Nigeria Customs Service to motivate and enhance job performance among its staff.

II. Review of Literature

Omotoye et al., (2020) investigate the impact of remuneration and employee performance in Global Communication Limited, Lagos Nigeria. A total of 120 employees took part in the study, in which 69 (62.2%) were males while 51 (37.8%) were female. The descriptive research design was adopted. The questionnaire format was employed for data collection, which was made into several sections and 120 copies were distributed for data collection. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics were adopted for data analysis. Specifically, the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was utilized for data analysis. The result revealed that there is a significant relationship between remuneration scheme and employee performance in Global Communications Limited and also there is a

significant problem affecting the payment scheme and the performance of employees in Global Communications Limited.

Okuneye et al., (2014) explored the internal communication strategies adopted by organization which increase performance of the organization. Most organization, be they public or private, understand the importance of strategic communication with customers and/or stakeholders. Hence there are marketing and communication specialists to produce communication plans for external use. Data were collected from managers from different companies, thus the study confirmed a strong positive relation between internal communication strategy and organizational performance using multivariate correlation analysis. This research topic showed encouraging evidence of reliability and validity. The study found that effective business communication is emphasized to a reasonable extent in the surveyed Nigerian companies, it was also found that the extent of practices of effective business communication were related to the category of business (service and manufacturing) and its size.

Adetipe (2020) investigates how internal communication motivates employees in organizations. An online questionnaire was administered through a survey link to randomly selected 100 bank employees. The results show that the majority (86.02%) of respondents acknowledges there is a feedback relationship between managers and employers. Benefits that motivate more than half (65.59%) of respondents were both salaries and a healthy work environment, thus indicating that unlike what is shown in previous research, the Nigerian society regards job security as a necessity for employee motivation and job performance. The above findings are explained through the systems theory which assumes that an organization can be successful when there is awareness of its environment and full interaction within the organization. The study shows that the relationship between internal communication and employee motivation is gradually acknowledged in Nigeria.

Ibelegbu and Abanyam, (2022) ascertained the impact of employees' relations and training practices of Listed Deposit Money Bank (LDMBs) performance in Adamawa state, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed. The population of the study consisted of 120 employees of the entire 14 branches of LDMBs listed in Nigerian Stock Exchange for the year 2019. Prior to the study, a sample size that provided a high effect size was ascertained through the use of GPower 3.1 software based on effect size $d = 0.8$, power $(1 - \beta = .95)$. Hence, 112 employees were studied. A structured questionnaire, with 28 items was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was structured on a 5-point scale. A pilot study was carried out to predict powers and moderation effect of the variables by conducting a test using mean, independent t-test, and Analysis of Variance statistics. The real limit of the mean values was used to take decision on the entire items. Independent t-tests and analysis of variance were used for in-depth data analyses. It was concluded that employee relations, training and development practices have a positive impact on the performance of LDMBs in Adamawa State.

Arubayi et al. (2020) observed that employees' relationship management is a comprehensive approach that reflects a delicate balance in the development, recognition of human capital and interaction in the organization. Today, employee relationship management (ERM) has become important for gaining competitive advantage and improving performance. Hence the reward system is practice put in place to achieve favourable outcomes or consequences. The existence of these connections in the theoretical discussions led to the study of the connection between employee relationship management mechanisms and employee performance, with reward as a contributory factor in the organization. Data for the study were

obtained using questionnaire survey method. Two hundred and twenty-two (222) employees of organizations in the telecommunications segment were selected as the statistical sample and two hundred and ten (210) responded to the questionnaire questions. Outcomes of the data analyses revealed that reward moderates the relationship between ERM component and employee's performance in the telecommunications sector in Nigeria. The study contributes to the literature on ERM, particularly on the association between ERM, rewards and its contribution to employee performance in the telecommunications subdivision in Nigeria.

Mohammed et al., (2018) conducted a study on the moderating effects of top management support in the relationship between internal quality dimensions and organizational performance in Nigerian Federal Universities. The study employed a sample of internal audit staff at senior level from 40 federally owned universities in Nigeria where 400 samples were drawn for the analysis. Questionnaire instrument was used in generating the data having subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) aimed at establishing underlying dimensions. The data was collected and analysed using inferential statistics and the findings revealed that interaction of internal audit competence, internal audit independence, and internal audit size, with top management support significantly and positively influence organizational performance of Nigerian federal universities (Msughter et al., 2022). Therefore, the preceding empirical review of the existing studies provide ground for this current study in understanding public relations writing within the context of internal communication and employee fellowships for braver performance in Nigeria Customs Service.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted The Systems Theory, which was introduced in 1940s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. The theory is adopted in this study to understand internal communication and employee relations management for effective staff performance in Nigeria Customs Service (Idris & Msughter, 2022). The systems theory in the 1980s and 1990s observed more organizational research in communication, through Weick's 1979 model of organizing (Lai & Lin in Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). The tenets of the model is defined by these researchers as the process of patterning organizational communication, which has been argued that there exists a relationship between an organization's subsystems (one of the subsystems in this study is internal communication) and the organization (which consists of the employees), in which the model has generalized many innovative organizational analyses (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

The concept of the systems theory fully revolves round communication in an organization. Cornelissen (2004) observed that an organization can only succeed or survive if it is aware of its environment. The only way to establish awareness of the organization's environment is through effective corporate communications, which, according to the researcher, is a management function of the organization. It is the responsibility of the corporate communications managers to 'control conflict and negotiate between the demands of the environment and the need for the organization to survive and prosper' (Msughter & Idris, 2023). Communication is the process of delivering messages by someone to other people to tell, change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly orally or indirectly through the media. In this communication requires a reciprocal relationship between the delivery of messages and recipients namely communicators and communicants (Hasbullah, et al: 2018). Krippendorff (2008) observed that systems theory is holistic. This means that systems are composed of parts. These parts include sub-parts that own their own environments. In respect to communication, systems theory argues that the whole organization is composed of each level or system in the organization; for example, individuals, team, social groups, local government and the state. Each of these systems form an

organizational structure, achievable through the organizational communication processes involved in the systems theory (Msughter et al., 2023).

While existing models and theories focus on one-sided interactions, systems theory is based on full maximization of interaction (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a). In an organization, both managers and employees are able to communicate or interact fairly, using the systems theory (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b). Systems theory in communication is crucial for the survival and growth of the organization, and the process of binding the systems of ‘managers’ and ‘employees’ together through internal communication, promotes organizational growth and achievement of organizational goals. The adoption of systems theory in this study is as a result of the increasing realization of the complex and rapidly changing nature in the Nigeria Customs Service, for organizational effectiveness and the need to understand the overall internal communication process between the organization and its systems (Usman et al., 2022).

The systems theory is relevant to this study because it would aid in the assessment of how internal communication and employee fellowships for effective staff performance in Nigeria Customs Service is apt in public relations writings. In the course of this research, past studies extensively argued that internal communication and employees add maximum value to the achievement of organizational goals. (Mazzei, 2014) stressed that internal communication is critical to employee fellowship and performance while Lai & Lin, in Yar’Adua et al., (2023) contend that Systems Theory involves interconnectedness or interaction of individuals in an organization, in which the process of socializing or establishing a relationship would attain organizational goals.

III. Research Methods

This study employed the positivist approach of research design, which informed the choice of survey method. The positivist paradigm of research design believes in the quantitative method of data generation (Yar’Adua et al., 2021; Yar’Adua et al., 2023). The population of this study consists of the entire Officers and Men of the Nigeria Customs Service. According to the Human Resource Department of the Nigeria Customs Service, the entire population of the Nigeria Customs Service as of January 2023 is about 15, 000. A sample size of 342 respondents was considered for the study. Stratified sampling was used to select the respondents while questionnaire was employed as a research instrument. The data were presented using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

IV. Results and Discussion

Table 1. How effective is top-to-down communication from senior management of your Command/Formation in providing clear direction and expectations to employees?

	Frequency	Percent
Not Effective	8	2.3
Somewhat Effective	12	3.5
Moderately Effective	77	22.5
Very Effective	144	42.1
Highly Effective	101	29.5
Total	342	100.0

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 1 presents the effectiveness of top-to-down communication from senior management within the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) in providing clear direction and expectations to employees. The majority of respondents perceive top-to-down communication as very effective (42.1%) or highly effective (29.5%). A considerable proportion also considers it moderately effective (22.5%), while only a small percentage perceive it as somewhat effective (3.5%) or not effective (2.3%). These findings suggest that top-to-down communication channels established by senior management play a crucial role in conveying clear direction and expectations to employees within the NCS. Effective top-to-down communication ensures that employees are informed about organizational goals, strategies, and performance expectations, which is essential for fostering alignment and commitment among staff members (Adetipe, 2020). Furthermore, it enables employees to understand their roles and responsibilities, thus enhancing their sense of clarity and purpose in their work (Omotoye et al., 2020). The high percentage of respondents perceiving top-to-down communication as very or highly effective underscores its significance in facilitating employee relations and organizational effectiveness within the NCS.

Effective top-to-down communication is essential for maintaining organizational cohesion and alignment (Omotoye et al., 2020). By providing clear direction and expectations, senior management ensures that employees understand their roles and responsibilities, fostering a sense of purpose and commitment among staff members (Adetipe, 2020). Moreover, effective communication channels enable employees to stay informed about organizational goals and strategies, facilitating alignment with the overall mission and vision of the organization (Worlu et al., 2016). The perception of top-to-down communication as very or highly effective by a significant proportion of respondents indicates its critical role in promoting employee engagement and organizational effectiveness within the NCS. These findings underscore the importance of continued efforts to strengthen top-to-down communication channels and ensure that they remain responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of employees (Ibelegbu & Abanyam, 2022).

Furthermore, the perceived effectiveness of top-to-down communication can have implications for employee morale and job satisfaction within the NCS. Employees who receive clear direction and expectations from senior management are more likely to feel valued and engaged in their work, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Adetipe, 2020). Conversely, ineffective communication channels can lead to confusion, frustration, and disengagement among employees, ultimately impacting their morale and performance (Okuneye et al., 2014). Therefore, the positive perception of top-to-down communication by a majority of respondents suggests that it contributes to a positive organizational climate and enhances employee relations within the NCS.

Moreover, the effectiveness of top-to-down communication channels can influence organizational performance and productivity within the NCS. Clear direction and expectations enable employees to focus their efforts on tasks that align with organizational goals, leading to improved performance and outcomes (Worlu et al., 2016). Additionally, effective communication channels facilitate coordination and collaboration among employees, enhancing teamwork and efficiency (Madsen, 2018). As a result, organizations with strong top-to-down communication practices are better positioned to achieve their objectives and deliver quality services to stakeholders (Ibelegbu & Abanyam, 2022). The perception of top-to-down communication as very or highly effective by a significant proportion of respondents suggests that it contributes to organizational success and performance within the NCS.

In this context, the findings from Table 1 indicate that top-to-down communication channels from senior management play a vital role in providing clear direction and expectations to employees within the Nigeria Customs Service. The perceived effectiveness of these communication channels has implications for employee morale, job satisfaction, organizational performance, and productivity. Therefore, efforts to strengthen top-to-down communication practices should be prioritized to enhance employee relations and organizational effectiveness within the NCS.

Table 2. To what extent would you say that the level of communication within the organization influenced you to work better?

	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	.3
Rarely	2	.6
Occasionally	24	7.0
Frequently	183	53.5
Very Frequently	132	38.6
Total	342	100.0

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which the level of communication within the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) influences their work performance. The data reveal that the majority of respondents (91.5%) believe that the level of communication within the organization frequently (53.5%) or very frequently (38.6%) influences them to work better. This finding underscores the significant role of internal communication in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors towards their work responsibilities within the NCS. Effective communication within an organization fosters clarity, transparency, and alignment of goals, thereby motivating employees to perform at their best (Adetipe, 2020). The high proportion of respondents who perceive a positive influence of communication on their work performance highlights the importance of establishing robust communication channels and practices within the NCS to enhance employee engagement and productivity (Obiekwe et al., 2020).

Moreover, research suggests that organizations with a strong communication culture tend to experience higher levels of employee satisfaction, retention, and overall performance (Arubayi et al., 2020). By recognizing the link between communication and performance, the NCS can prioritize initiatives aimed at improving internal communication processes, such as training programs, feedback mechanisms, and technology platforms, to further enhance employee motivation and effectiveness (Ogbonna & Harris, 2020). Additionally, fostering a culture of open communication and information-sharing can contribute to a more collaborative and cohesive work environment, ultimately leading to improved organizational outcomes in terms of service delivery and operational efficiency.

Table 3. Are you satisfied with the employee relations strategies employed by the management in the command/formation?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Dissatisfied	11	3.2
Somewhat Dissatisfied	136	39.8
Neutral	51	14.9
Somewhat Satisfied	144	42.1
Total	342	100.0

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 3 illustrates the satisfaction levels of employees with the employee relations strategies employed by the management in the command/formation of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). The data indicate a varied range of satisfaction levels among respondents, with a substantial portion expressing either “somewhat satisfied” (42.1%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (39.8%) with the employee relations strategies. A smaller percentage of respondents reported being “very dissatisfied” (3.2%) or “neutral” (14.9%) regarding these strategies. Employee satisfaction with organizational strategies and practices, including employee relations initiatives, is crucial for fostering a positive work environment, enhancing morale, and improving job performance (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Dissatisfaction with employee relations strategies can lead to decreased motivation, engagement, and productivity among employees (Chiang & Birtch, 2010). Moreover, it can contribute to higher turnover rates and difficulties in attracting and retaining talent within the organization (Cascio, 2018). Therefore, the level of satisfaction with employee relations strategies employed by management in the NCS has significant implications for employee morale, retention, and organizational effectiveness. Addressing areas of dissatisfaction and enhancing employee relations initiatives can help improve overall employee satisfaction, leading to better job performance and organizational outcomes in the long run.

V. Conclusion

In any organization, particularly within government agencies like the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), effective internal communication and employee relations management are critical to improving staff performance and ensuring smooth operations. The Nigeria Customs Service, as the agency responsible for managing customs duties, enforcement of trade policies, and border control, plays a vital role in the country’s economy. To achieve its objectives, the NCS must rely on an efficient workforce. This can be achieved through strong internal communication strategies and effective employee relations management. The findings suggest that top-to-down communication channels established by senior management play a crucial role in conveying clear direction and expectations to employees within the NCS. Effective top-to-down communication ensures that employees are informed about organizational goals, strategies, and performance expectations, which is essential for fostering alignment and commitment among staff members. This finding underscores the significant role of internal communication in shaping employees’ attitudes and behaviors towards their work responsibilities within the NCS. Effective communication within an organization fosters clarity, transparency, and alignment of goals, thereby motivating employees to perform at their best. Employee satisfaction with organizational strategies and practices, including employee relations initiatives, is crucial for fostering a positive work environment, enhancing morale, and improving job performance.

In conclusion, internal communication and employee relations management are fundamental to enhancing staff performance in the Nigeria Customs Service. By fostering open communication, recognizing employees’ efforts, investing in their development, and ensuring a positive work environment, the NCS can achieve greater efficiency, employee satisfaction, and performance. It is crucial for the organization to continually evaluate and improve its internal communication channels and employee relations strategies to keep pace with evolving operational challenges and to maintain a motivated, high-performing workforce.

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