

WORKPLACE CIVILITY: A COROLLARY TO PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES OF OIL AND GAS FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between workplace civility and employee performance of oil and gas Firms in Rivers State. This hypotheses testing study adopted the explanatory research design, using a cross sectional approach. The study population comprised 221 employees of 17 operational oil and gas firms in Rivers State. 17 functional and operational oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire whose validity and reliability were determined by experts in measurement and evaluation and the Cronbach Alpha test respectively. The Spearman Rank Order of Correlation served as test statistic. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.00 facilitated the test of hypotheses. The results of test of hypotheses showed that workplace civility has positive and statistically significant relationship with employee performance. Thus, the study concludes that workplace civility predicts employee performance and recommends that oil and gas firms in Rivers State that seek improved employee performance should implement a formal recognition programme that celebrates employees' efforts; institute process to facilitate active listening and provide regular constructive feedbacks to elicit positive reinforcement from employees.

Keywords: Active listening, complementary communication, contribution appreciation, employee performance, improved service delivery, task accomplishment, workplace civility

Introduction

Respectful and courteous behaviour toward colleagues is fundamental to workplace harmony and employee productivity (Clark & Walsh, 2016). Treating others with dignity, showing appreciation for their contributions, and refraining from rude, aggressive or disrespectful behaviour not only encourage teamwork, but also promote a culture of unity. The term used to represent this comely workplace behaviour is workplace civility. Di Fabio and Kenny (2018) states that workplace civility characterised by active listening, empathy and constructive communication foster positive relationships, increase job satisfaction and contributes to improved organizational outcomes. Schilpzand et al. (2016) adds that workplace civility promote mutual respect and positive social interactions.

Shifts in the nature of employment resulting from globalization, modern societies, and ethnic diversity has raised attention to workplace incivility (Sleem & Seada, 2017). Yet, Guo and Kumar (2020) asserts that millions of people are victims of workplace incivility each year; while Porath and Pearson (2012) observe that workplace incivility is prevalent in many firms across various industries.

The relevance of workplace civility is better appreciated in relation to the negative impacts of workplace incivility (Hanrahan & Leiter, 2014). Lack of care for others, rudeness, use of offensive words and not listening to others (Porath & Pearson, 2012) are some manifestations of workplace incivility. Workplace incivility may be low-intensity deviant behaviour with uncertain intent to harm or violation of workplace standards for mutual respect. In whatever form it appears, uncivil workplace behaviour violates corporate regulations and hampers employee safety and performance; as well as company reputation (Lim et al., 2018).

Workplace atmosphere plays important roles in employee performance. Chandrasekar (2001) argue that work environment have both positive and negative impact on employees'

performance. Better outcomes and increased productivity result from good work environment. Better physical environment of office boosts employees' health and improve their productivity. Literature suggests that dissatisfaction, cluttered workplaces and physical environment are key factors that leads to reduced employee productivity (Hasun & Makhbul, 2005). Employees that are physically and emotionally fit, work with vigour and post better performance outcomes. Moreover, a proper workplace environment reduces absenteeism and increases employee performance which leads to increased workplace productivity (Boles et al., 2004).

Employee performance is the degree to which employees execute their duties, accomplish tasks and deliver improved service (Shields, 2016, as cited in Okochi & Ateke, 2020). Cardy and Leonard (2004) conceive employee performance as outcomes, results and accomplishments of employees. Employee performance also relates to collective efforts and behaviours relevant to organizational goals, which are controlled by employees (Lepak et al., 2007). Employee performance is anchored on ability and motivation; and in their absence, optimal employee performance may be impaired (Cummings & Schwab, 1973, as cited in Okochi & Ateke, 2020). Richardson and Beckham (2015) note that organizational performance is dependent on employee performance; and that organisational performance goals may spur employee performance if they include opportunities of career growth and learning.

Prior studies that examined the impact of workplace civility on employee performance used ethical behaviour, professionalism, relational decency, contribution appreciation, active listening, empathy and complementary communication to represent workplace civility (Hanrahan & Leiter, 2014; Hasun & Makhbul, 2005; Boles et al., 2004). This suggests that workplace civility is a construct with several dimensions, each requiring more in-depth study to determine the nuanced contribution of each to employee performance or productivity. However, there is little research on the interaction between workplace civility employee performance in the oil and gas sector of Rivers State. This study sought to fill this gap by examining the relationship between workplace civility and employee performance in the oil and gas sector of Rivers State. The study used contribution appreciation active listening, empathy and complementary communication to represent workplace civility; while employee performance was measured in terms of task accomplishment and improved service delivery.

Contribution appreciation and employee performance

Contribution appreciation refers to recognising and rewarding the efforts and achievement of individuals or groups in the firm. It involves acknowledging and appreciating the positive impact of their ideas or output. Immediate positive recognition elicit repeat of a good behaviour (Schultz, 2015). Today's workforce is more articulate about their needs. They desires the best of everything from competitive salaries, comfortable lifestyles, job security, job enhancement options and work-life balance (Limaye & Sharma, 2012). Thus, firms must have clear strategies that support employee advancement, and ways of encouraging and engaging them. In this respect, some firms must institute practices and processes that influence employee perception.

Matlala (2011) and Cokins (2009) affirm that firms must adopt the right key performance indicators in order to align employees' behaviour, focal points and decisions to the course of decision-makers. Recognition and contribution appreciation are important tools managers utilize to drive employee satisfaction and organizational success. Mussie et al. (2013) and Allen and Helms (2002) revealed contribution appreciation encourage employees to reach

strategic goals. Also, Nurul et al (2014), Tham et al. (2008) and Westlund and Hannon (2008) asserts that contribution appreciation reduces employee turnover. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Ho₁: Contribution appreciation has no significant relationship with task accomplishment.

Ho₂: Contribution appreciation has no significant relationship with improved service delivery.

Active listening and employee performance

Active listening, that is, high-quality listening brings a cornucopia of positive outcomes, including superior job performance, better leadership, trust, intimacy, well-being and reduced burnout. However, listening and its potential outcomes have received relatively little attention in organizational behaviour studies. Moreover, while employers prize workers and candidates with good listening skills, listening is mostly missing in management education. Evidence concerning listening in the work context reveals three main gaps in the literature. Firstly, understanding of antecedents of good listening, including training, remains patchy.

Secondly, most listening research lack consideration of boundary conditions i.e., identifying forces and costs that prevents people from listening well. Thirdly, existing theories do not take sufficient account of the dyadic nature of listening (Worthington & Bodie 2018). In this study, listening is conceived in the context of conversations; and covers three causally related constructs: (a) unobservable behaviours of the listener (e.g., comprehension), which influence (b) observable behaviours of the listener (e.g., gaze, eye contact, interruptions), which in turn inform (c) perceptions and evaluations of the speaker (e.g., feeling listened to). Each construct can help shape the understanding of listening. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Ho₃: Active listening has no significant relationship with task accomplishment.

Ho₄: Active listening has no significant relationship with improved service delivery.

Empathy and employee performance

Empathy is ability to sense others' thoughts, feelings and experiences, and react to observed experiences appropriately. Empathy also means to sincerely and accurately feel and reflect the specific emotion(s) of another person. Empathy enhance individual's ability to value others' emotions. Empathy is important as a foundation for caring and compassion between and among people and contributes to positive relationships in all areas of life. It builds a sense of community and reduces the tendency to discriminate or exclude others. Empathy has cognitive and emotional dimensions (Decety & Jackson, 2004); and shows how individuals give individualized attention to others, deal with others in a caring fashion, have the best interest of others at heart (Mann & Barnett, 2012). Understandings and practicing empathy have therapeutic effectiveness (Clark, 2010; Nightingale et al., 2009). Hence, we hypothesize that:

Ho₅: Empathy has no significant relationship with task accomplishment.

Ho₆: Empathy has no significant relationship with improved service delivery.

Complimentary communication and employee performance

Complementary communication is fundamental to employee performance in today's information age with increased globalization and advanced information and communication technology. This factors have occasioned transformations in all areas of life. The transition from the industrial to information society and increase in specialization have affected individuals and societies as well as organizations (Koçel, 2013). Development of communication technology and networks and increase in globalization have made organizations more complex and increased the division of labour, which has caused all units and employees in the organizations to be more interdependent.

Organizational communication has become the heart of organizations, being crucial to effective management functioning, successful goal attainment and maintenance of organizational continuity. The importance of organizational communication has increased on a par with complex management structures, increased specialization, decentralization and rapid development of technology (Demir & Demir, 2009). Thus, we hypothesize that:

Ho₇: Complementary communication has no significant relationship with task accomplishment.

Ho₈: Complementary communication has no significant relationship with improved service delivery.

Materials and Methods

The population of this study consisted employees of all registered and operational oil/gas firms in Rivers State. Nigeria, while the accessible population for the study comprised two hundred and twenty one (221) employees of oil/gas Firms in Port Harcourt. The study used structured-close ended questionnaire to collect primary data. The validity of the instrument was determined by experts in measurement and evaluation; while it reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha test. Table 1 provides a summary of the result of test of reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of Variable

Study Variable	Dimensions/Measures	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace Civility	Contribution Appreciation	5	0.787
	Active Listening	5	0.765
	Empathy	5	0.876
	Complementary Communication	5	0.764
Employee Performance	Task Accomplishment	5	0.859
	Improved Service Delivery	5	0.821

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Two hundred and twenty one (221) copies of structured questionnaire were administered to employees while two hundred copies were retrieved, cleaned and qualified for use. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation statistic was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. All the statistical analyses were conducted with the help of SPSS version 23.0.

Results and Interpretation

Table 2: Correlation between contribution appreciation and measures of employee performance

			Contribution Appreciation	Task Accomplishment	Improved Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Contribution Appreciation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.808**	.803**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Task Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.808**	1.000	.839**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Improved Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.803**	.839**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 2 shows a rho coefficient of 0.808 on the relationship between contribution appreciation and task accomplishment. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying

that increase in task accomplishment results from contribution appreciation. From the result obtained, probability value is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), meaning that the correlation between contribution appreciation and task accomplishment is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that contribution appreciation has no significant relationship with task accomplishment is rejected.

Table 2 also shows a rho coefficient of 0.803 on the relationship between contribution appreciation and improved service delivery. This is rho value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that increase in contribution appreciation leads to improved service delivery by employees. Furthermore, probability value of the correlation between the variables is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This means that a statistically significant correlation exists between contribution appreciation and task accomplishment. Therefore, the null hypothesis that contribution appreciation has no significant relationship with improved service delivery is rejected.

Table 3: Correlation between active learning and measures of employee performance

			Active Listening	Task Accomplishment	Improved Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Active Listening	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.676**	.896**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Task Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.676**	1.000	.839**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Improved Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.896**	.839**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 3 shows a rho coefficient of 0.676 on the relationship between active listening and task accomplishment. This value implies a strong relationship between the variables. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates that a positive relationship exists between active listening and task accomplishment. That is, increase in active listening leads to increase in task accomplishment. From the result obtained, the probability value of the relationship between the variables is less than the significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), suggesting that active listening has statistically significant relationship with task accomplishment. Thus, the null hypothesis that active listening has not significant relationship with task accomplishment is rejected.

Table 3 also shows that the rho coefficient between active listening and improved service delivery is of 0.896. This very high correlation coefficient implies a very strong relationship between active listening and improved service delivery. Also, the positive sign of the correlation coefficient suggests that increase in active listening leads to higher levels of improved service delivery. More so, the result showed that the probability value of the correlation between active listening and improved service delivery is less than the significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), suggesting that active listening has statistically significant relationship with improved service delivery. Thus, the null hypothesis that active listening has no significant relationship with improved service delivery is rejected.

Table 4: Correlation between empathy and measures of employee performance

			Empathy	Task Accomplishment	Improved Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.735**	.686**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Task Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.735**	1.000	.839**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Improved Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.686**	.839**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 4 shows a rho coefficient of 0.735 on the relationship between empathy and task accomplishment. This high correlation coefficient implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between empathy and task accomplishment is positive. This means, that an increase in task accomplishment results from adoption of empathy. From the result obtained, the probability value of the relationship between the variables is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), showing that a statistically significant relationship exists between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis that empathy has no significant relationship with task accomplishment is rejected.

Table 4 also displays a rho coefficient of 0.686 on the relationship between empathy and improved service delivery. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The positive direction of the relationship indicates that increase in improved service delivery results from empathy. The probability value of correlation between the variables is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between empathy and improved delivery among employees of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Table 5: Correlations between complementary communication and measures of employee performance

			Complementary Communication	Task Accomplishment	Improved Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Complementary Communication	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.841**	.805**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Task Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.841**	1.000	.839**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	200	200	200
	Improved Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.805**	.839**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 5 shows a Spearman's rho coefficient of 0.735 on the relationship between complementary communication and task accomplishment. This high value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The positive sign of the rho coefficient indicates that the relationship between complementary communication and task accomplishment is positive. This means that increase in task accomplishment result from complementary communication. The probability value obtained from the correlation between

the variables is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that a statistically significant relationship exists between complementary communication and task accomplishment. Hence, the null hypothesis that complementary communication has no significant relationship with task accomplishment is rejected.

Table 5 also shows a Spearman's rho coefficient of 0.686 on the relationship between complementary communication and improved service delivery. This high correlation coefficient suggests that a strong relationship exists between complementary communication and improved service delivery. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a positive relationship between the variables. This means that increase in higher level of improved service delivery results from complementary communication. The probability value obtained from the correlation between the variables is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies the relationship between complementary communication and improved service delivery is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that complementary communication has no significant relationship with improved service delivery is rejected.

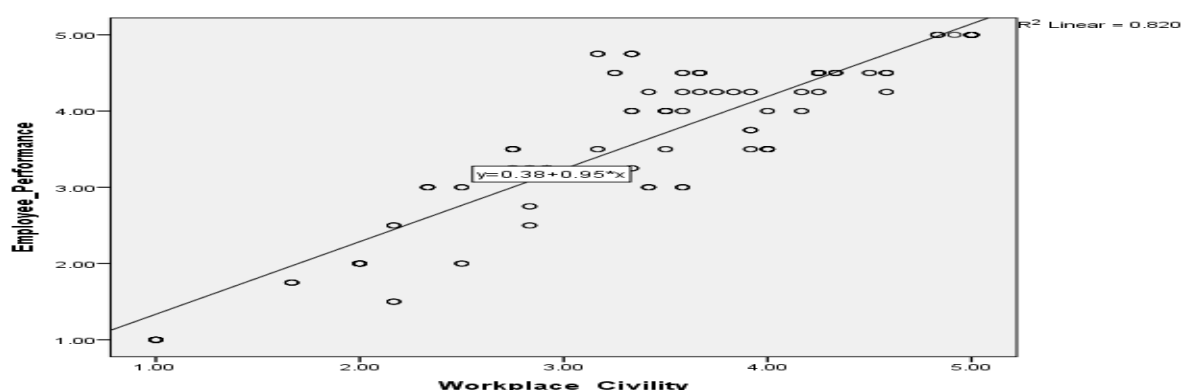


Fig. 1: Scatter plot for Workplace Civility and Employee Performance
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Scatter graph is one of the techniques used in deciding whether a bivariate relationship exist between interval scaled variables. In a bid to determine the existence and trend of this relationship. The scatter diagram in fig. 1 shows workplace civility (predictor variable) on the X axis, while employee performance (criterion variable) is on the Y axis. The apparent pattern of the cases in the scatter plot sloping upwards from left to right is an indication of linear positive relationship between workplace civility and employee performance.

Discussion of Findings

This study focused on the relationship between workplace civility (proxied by contribution appreciation, active listening, empathy and complementary communication) and employee performance (decomposed into task accomplishment and improved service delivery). The statistical analyses conducted in the study revealed a significant positive relationship between workplace civility (through its proxies) and measures of employee performance of oil/gas firms in Rivers State. These results shows that employees of oil and gas firms in Rivers State experience post higher levels of task completion and service delivery when civility is practiced in the workplace.

The findings align with the report of Porath and Pearson (2010) that civility in the workplace reduces stress, improves job satisfaction and enhances performance. The study also highlights that workplace civility enhances psychological safety, where employees feel secure in expressing their ideas, asking questions, or making suggestions without fear of ridicule or negative consequences. Psychological safety has been linked to innovation, creativity, and

overall better job performance (Edmondson, 1999). In the context of the oil and gas firms in Rivers State, the positive relationship between workplace civility and employee performance can be partly explained by this safety net, which allows employees to perform optimally without fear of negative interpersonal repercussions.

Our findings also support the ideas that workplace civility enhances employee engagement. When employees feel respected and valued by colleagues and superordinates, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and motivated to perform at their best. Schilpzand et al. (2016) found that civility in the workplace is directly linked to employee engagement, which in turn leads to improved task performance and job satisfaction. Our findings corroborate this position of Schilpzand et al. (2016) by demonstrating that employees of oil and gas firms in Rivers State are more likely to engage in their tasks, leading to higher levels of task accomplishment and improved service delivery when workplace civility is entrenched. Our findings also support previous reports that showed that workplace incivility negatively impacts employee performance by creating stress and reducing job satisfaction (Lim et al., 2008). Therefore, by cultivating a civil work environment, oil and gas firms in Rivers State can mitigate the adverse effects of incivility, resulting in improved employee performance and organizational efficiency.

Contribution appreciation emerged as a crucial factor in promoting employee performance. When employees feel that their contributions are valued and recognized by peers and superordinates, they are more motivated to perform at their best. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of acknowledgment in fostering a positive work environment and boosting productivity (Porath et al., 2015). Employees who receive regular recognition are more likely to be more dedicated to their tasks, leading to higher levels of task accomplishment.

Active listening play pivotal roles in enhancing employee performance. Active listening not only promote open communication but also foster a sense of inclusion, as employees feel that their opinions and ideas are genuinely valued. Our finding support the literature on effective communication in organizational settings, which suggests that when leaders and colleagues actively listen to one another, the overall performance of the team improves (Brown & Leigh, 2020). Active listening contributes to task accomplishment and improved service delivery by facilitating better understanding between and among work teams.

The study also found empathy to be a key driver of enhanced employee performance. Empathetic behaviour in the workplace fosters strong interpersonal relationships, which can lead to a more collaborative and supportive work environment. Empathy encourages emotional intelligence, which has been linked to improved team dynamics and overall performance (Goleman, 2000). Employees who feel understood and supported demonstrate higher levels of engagement and commitment to their tasks, which in turn leads to high-quality work delivery. Furthermore, complementary communication - the practice of using positive and supportive communication techniques - was shown to improve employee performance. This type of communication encourages collaboration and reduces conflict, ultimately leading to smoother operations and better service delivery. Previous research supports this finding, indicating that when employees engage in constructive and positive communication, they are better equipped to handle tasks efficiently and deliver high-quality services (Robinson et al., 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between workplace civility and employee performance of oil and gas firms in Rivers State. The results of the empirical analyses reveals that

workplace civility has positive and statistically significant relationship with employee performance of oil and gas firms in Rivers State. This revelation implies a respectful and supportive work environment, characterized by contribution appreciation, active listening, empathy and complimentary communication informs increased employee performance in the form of task accomplishment and improved service delivery.

By promoting civil workplace behaviour, organizations can reduce conflict, improve task completion, and enhance service delivery. Particularly, contribution appreciation, active listening, empathy and complimentary communication have been identified as key antecedents to performance of employees of oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Therefore, the study concludes that workplace civility predicts employee performance of oil and gas firms in Rivers State; and that performance of employees of oil and gas firms in Rivers State depends on workplace civility. Consequently, the study recommends that oil and gas firms in Rivers State that seek improved employee performance should:

- a) implement a formal recognition programmes that celebrate employees' efforts and achievements. This may include monthly awards, peer recognition systems, or public acknowledgments during team meetings, which can boost morale and motivation.
- b) conduct regular workshops on effective communication skills for staff members. These workshops should focus on techniques for active listening, such as providing undivided attention, summarizing feedback, and encouraging open dialogue.
- c) provide emotional intelligence training that could promote understanding of others' perspectives and emotional needs. This will create a more compassionate work environment that supports employee well-being and productivity.
- d) provide regular constructive feedback paired with positive reinforcement. This will fosters a culture of encouragement, where employees feel valued and motivated to improve their work output.

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