

Predictive Power of Social Expressivity and Emotional Expressivity on Job Engagement: A Case Study of Officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which social skills of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools predicts their job engagement. The social skills dimensions investigated in the present study were social expressivity and emotional expressivity. Two research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses were developed to guide the study. A sample of 217 training officers was drawn for the study using the census sampling technique. Data collection was done using two instruments titled Social and Emotional Expressivity Assessment Scale (SEEAS) and the Employee Engagement Scale (EES). Validity of the instruments was established through the expert panel approach whereby the instruments were given to test experts. Reliability of the instruments was established using the Cronbach Alpha method with the total scales of the SEEAS yielding a coefficient of 0.81, while the EES had a coefficient of 0.87. Simple regression was used to answer research questions. For testing the corresponding null hypotheses, ANOVA associated with simple regression was used. Result revealed that social skills of social expressivity and emotional expressivity were significant predictors of job engagement. Based on these results, it was recommended among other things that external consultants should organize workshops and seminars where trainers can improve on their social skills.

Keywords: Social Skills, Job Engagement, Social Expressivity, Emotional Expressivity

INTRODUCTION

As globalization penetrates every nook and cranny of the world, the boundaries between nations, societies and peoples become narrower than ever. At no time in human history has individuals, organizations and nations transacted business, diplomacy, education, etc. at the rate it currently exist. In recognition of the fact that national interest should be protected, while also engaging in international trade, investment and development, all countries global have established one form of border protection or immigration agency. In Nigeria, the agency saddled with the responsibility of protecting the national borders and movement of goods, services and people is the Nigerian immigration service.

As an organization, the Nigerian Immigration Service is structured in a manner that can ensure its optimal performance. Among others, the 2003 Immigration Act empowered the body to have a human resource directorate with the mandate of appointing, promoting and disciplining officers, improve staff welfare, conduct staff training and development as well as provide the necessary administrative and technical support for the smooth running of the service nationally. A general look at the specific functions of the human resource directorate will show that it is the lifeline of the service. This directorate is expected to appoint service officers as well as provide suitable working environment for them to perform optimally in whatever capacities they may be deployed. In line with it follows that after appointment of officers, the next most important task is to see that officers are trained to effectively execute their job. It was in line with this that the immigration training schools were established.

The Nigerian Immigration Training School is one of the formations of the Nigerian Immigration Service. Currently located in Rivers, Kano, Imo and Sokoto States, the schools are the preparatory and development ground of officers for the service. As a veritable part of the service, the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools provide learning experiences for both new recruits and experience officers. New recruits are required to undertake a two-month programme in any of the schools. This programme is expected to provide them with the skills and competences needed to excel in the service. For

experienced officers, the schools provide continuous professional development programmes for them to improve on their capacity to deliver on the core mandate of the job (Nigerian Immigration Service, 2019).

Officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools are considered important for the growth of the service, as well as for the nation. Their skills in dealing with new recruits as well as experienced ones is a reflection of how the officers are to interact with others when they are deployed to the field. Furthermore, officers of the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools are expected to mirror the ideals of the service in a manner that motivates those who pass through the school to be better engaged when they perform their role. It has become necessary to understand the job engagement of immigration educators at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools. The concept of job engagement has received considerable attention from scholars and researchers. One of the most commonly cited definition of engagement is that provided by Kahn (1990) who defined engagement as the tendency for organizational employees to harness themselves to their work roles while expressing themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance. Since the early 2000, there have been explosion of interest in the construct. Harter (2002) defined employee engagement as the individual's involvement and satisfaction, as well as enthusiasm for work activities. In Macey's (2009) own definition engagement is an individual's purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort and persistence directed towards organizational goal. According to Alfes (2010), employee engagement refers to the persistent thinking about the job and how to do it better, positive feeling about doing a good job and actively taking opportunities to discuss work-related improvements with others. This definition of job engagement recognizes that it is different from job commitment or satisfaction. While job commitment refers to employees' satisfaction with the job, engagement refers to the employee making flexible efforts towards realization of organizational goals (Reilly & Brown, 2008). According to Truss (2013), employee engagement is currently used in the literature than job satisfaction, motivation and commitment because engagement appears to have more descriptive force and face validity.

The importance of job engagement has received considerable attention from scholars. According to Armstrong (2014) engaged employees are less likely to absent themselves from work, facilitate organizational growth and reduces error rates. Similarly, Alfes (2010) asserted that engaged employees perform better, are more innovative than others, more likely to want to stay with their employers, enjoy greater levels of personal well-being and perceive their workload to be more sustainable than others. For these benefits, most organizations are investing considerable in understanding job engagement as well as factors that promote it. However, attention has often been directed at private sector employees, with emphasis of financial and monetary rewards.

This study seeks to take a different view of predictors of engagement by adopting a psychosocial perspective and focusing on two social skills. The concept of social skills is not to the study of organizational behavior and performance. According to Ferris, Perrewe and Douglas (2002), social skills facilitate positive social interactions and results in higher performance ratings, increased number of promotions and salary increase. In addition when compared with other long-researched predictors such as general mental ability and conscientiousness, social skills are unique due to its malleability (Sergin & Givertz, 2003).

As with most psychological constructs, Riggio in Orluwene and Ugwu (2018) developed a model of social skills. In Riggio's conceptualization, social skills are considered as a set of skills that are made up of verbal (social) and non-verbal (emotional) components of communication skills. Each component of Riggio's model of social skills presumes that three basic skills make up social skills. These three basic types of skills/abilities are expressive (encoding) skills, sensitivity (decoding) skills and control (regulatory) skills. This model further posits six fundamental components of effective communication in which three different basic abilities make up each of the two components social (verbal) and emotional (nonverbal) skills. Both the social and emotional components of communication include expressivity, sensitivity and control skills leading to social expressivity (SE), social sensitivity (SS), social control (SC), emotional expressivity (EE), emotional sensitivity (ES) and emotional control

(EC) (Riggio, 2003). For the purpose of this study, focus is on social and emotional expressivity.

Social expressivity is the ability to initiate and guide social discourse like public speaking. Furthermore, emotional expressivity is the ability of individuals to outwardly display their emotions irrespective of the direction and place. These components of social skills depend on wide range of innate and developed foundational processes (Riggio, 2006) which made it possible for some individuals to easily acquire good social skills while others do not.

The importance of social skills in the development of an engaged workforce cannot be overemphasized. According to Riggio (2006), social skills are important in organizations where the bulk of performance are often in the area of interactions with others. The job description of immigration officers clearly fits this design. Immigration officers are basically saddled with the responsibility of controlling and regulating the influx and exit of people through national borders. As such, individuals in the services are required to possess considerable social skills, which can enable them work effectively as citizens and immigrants respectively. However, these skills may not be attained if those mandated to train them do not display such skills. It is therefore against this background that the current study seeks to investigate the extent to which social skill dimension of social and emotional control are predictors of job engagement among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in Southern Nigeria.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which social skill dimensions of social and emotional expressivity predict job engagement among officers of the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in Southern Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives of this study were to:

1. Investigate the extent to which social expressivity predict the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

2. Ascertain the extent to which emotional expressivity predict the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered to guide the present study:

1. To what extent does social expressivity predict job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools?
2. To what extent does emotional expressivity predict job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools?

HYPOTHESIS

The following research questions were answered to guide the present study:

1. Social expressivity does not have any significant prediction on the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.
2. Emotional expressivity does not have any significant prediction on the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design: The research design adopted for this study is the correlational research design. The present study therefore meets the requirement of a correlational research as the study aptly investigated how social skills of social and emotional expressivity predict the job engagements of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in South-South Nigeria.

Population of the Study: The population for the current study is made up of 217 officers in two immigration training schools in Southern Nigeria. These are the Nigerian Immigration Training

Schools in Ahoada, Rivers State and Orlu, Imo State (Directorate of Personnel Administration, Nigeria Immigration Service, 2018).

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample for this study was made up of all 236 officers in the two selected immigration training schools in Southern Nigeria. The census sampling technique was used because the sample is relatively small and can be studied by the researcher within the time of the study.

Instruments for Data Collection: Two instruments were used for the collection of data. They are Social and Emotional Expressivity Assessment Scale (SEEAS) and Employee Engagement Scale (ESS). The SEEAS is a self-report scale developed by Riggio (1986) and adapted by the researcher. The researchers adapted the instrument in relation to the number of items as well as in modifying the instruments from their original phrase format to sentence format. The items' statement were responded on a 5-point likert-type scale of Exactly Like Me, Very Much Like Me, Like Me, A Little Like Me and Not At All Like Me. These scale points were weighted 5 points, 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. The two subscales elicited information on respondents' levels in social expressivity and emotional expressivity. The second instrument tagged Employee Engagement Scale (EES) was adapted from Shuck et al (2016). The instrument was a 15-item structured questionnaire with five items each assessing cognitive, emotional and behaviour engagement of employees.

Validity of the Instruments: To establish the face and content validity of the instruments, draft copies of the instruments were submitted to three experts each in Educational Psychology, as well as measurement and evaluation, along with the objectives and research questions of the study, to evaluate the instrument on item content, relevance, comprehensiveness, clarity, and literacy demand. Their suggestions, corrections and modifications were integrated into the final version before the instruments were administered.

Reliability of Instrument: The reliability of the instruments were ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha technique. First, draft copies of

the instruments were administered on 30 officers who were not sampled as part of the final sample used for the study. For the first instrument, the scores of the scale was based on the two different subscales hence the reliabilities coefficients obtained were 0.85 and 0.73, for SE and EC respectively, while the reliability coefficient for the overall instrument was scale is 0.81. For the second instrument EES, reliability coefficient obtained was 0.87. So considering the reliability coefficients obtained, it was evident that the instruments were adequately reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection: The administration of the instrument was done directly by the researchers and two officers in each of the training schools who served as research assistants. Copies of the instruments were retrieved on the spot immediately after the respondents complete it.

Method of Data Analysis: Research questions were answered using simple regressions while the corresponding null hypotheses were tested using ANOVA associated with linear regressions where applicable. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of tenability.

RESULT

Table 1: Simple regression analysis of prediction of officers’ job engagement from social expressivity

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error of Estimates	
	0.417	0.174	0.170	7.856	
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	2793.376	1	2793.376	45.251	0.000
Residual	13272.007	215	61.730		
Total	16065.382	216			

From the result presented in Table 1, it can be observed that when the scores of officers on social expressivity were used to predict their job engagement, an R-value of 0.417 was obtained with a corresponding R2 value of 0.174 and an adjusted R2 value of 0.170. From the result obtained, it is deduced that social expressivity skill of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had an

independent prediction of 17.0% on their job engagement. In addition, when this value was subjected to an ANOVA associated with simple regression, an F-value of 45.251 was gotten at 1 and 215 degrees of freedom, with a corresponding p-value of 0.0005. From the obtained p-value which was lesser than 0.05, the chosen level of significance, it can be seen that social expressivity skills has a significant prediction on the job engagement of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools. The null hypotheses was therefore rejected.

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of prediction of officers’ job engagement from emotional expressivity

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error of Estimates	
	0.175	0.031	0.026	8.511	
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	490.342	1	490.342	6.769	0.010
Residual	15575.040	215	72.442		
Total	16065.382	216			

From the result presented in Table 2, it can be observed that when officers’ score on emotional expressivity were used to predict their job engagement, an R-value of 0.175 was obtained with an associated R2 value of 0.031 and an adjusted R2 value of 0.026. From the result obtained, it is implied that the skill of emotional expressivity among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had an independent prediction of 2.6% of their reported job engagement. Furthermore, testing of the corresponding null hypotheses using ANOVA associated with linear regression yielded an F-value of 6.769 at 1 and 215 degrees of freedom, with a corresponding p-value of 0.010. Based on the resultant p-value which was lesser than 0.05, the chosen level of significance, it can be seen that emotional expressivity skill of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had a significant independent prediction on their job engagement. Thus the stated null hypotheses were rejected.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Social expressivity accounted for about 17% of the job engagement of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools. This was further found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance.
2. Emotional expressivity is a significant independent predictor that accounted for about 2.6% of the job engagement among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

DISCUSSION

From the result obtained as shown in Tables 1 and 2, it can be observed that when the social skills dimensions of social expressivity and emotional expressivity were used to independently predict the job engagement level of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools, each of these dimension yielded independent significant predictions. Generally, it is seen that the social components of the social skills dimension had greater independent prediction on job engagement than the emotional components. To this researcher, this result is expected and not surprising because the immigration service as a paramilitary organization places greater emphasis on the human relations than on emotional feelings. In the service, loyalty to superior officers and the rules and regulation of the service is given greater credence than emotional state of situation.

The finding of this result is in agreement with that obtained by Riggio and Carney (2003) who opined that social sensitivity is an important skills for any individual who work with others in a team setting. This skill helps them to understand the social information given by others before they express their own thoughts and feelings unto others. This result also agree with the findings of Mani (2011) who obtained that interpersonal relationships and social connection was among the major drivers of employee engagement among India employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools should be provided with adequate opportunities for them to improve on their social skills. This can be achieved through targeted interventions such as simulation trainings, workshop, seminars and external courses where they can acquire current knowledge in appropriate social skills.
2. As the result showed, social skills did not account for all the level of job engagement among the officers in the training schools. It is therefore incumbent of the administrators of the training schools and the management of the Nigerian Immigration Service to provide other factors that may improve on the job engagement of officers.

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