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Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Inequity and Job Performance Among Bank Employees in Southwestern State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Certain individual factors appear to be important in ensuring higher level of performance among bank employees in Nigeria. This study investigated emotional intelligence and perceived inequity as influencing factors to perceived job performance among bank employees in Ibadan. Ex-post facto design was used in the study. Two hundred and thirty four (136 males & 98 females) bank employees completed questionnaires; which were distributed using accidental sampling technique. Results showed that emotional intelligence significantly influenced perceived job performance. Perceived inequity significantly influenced perceived job performance. No gender difference was observed in perceived job performance among bank employees. It is concluded that Human Resources Development practitioners should give consideration to emotional intelligence and perceived inequity as vital individual factors that may have some psychological implications in ensuring high performance among bank employees.

Keywords: Bank employees, Emotional intelligence, Job performance, Perceived inequity, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Management of banks in Nigeria appears to be facing the challenges of keeping employees motivated; and ensuring good communication as well as helping them to avoid conflict. This is particularly important as the sector is going through a time of change in the use of sophisticated Information and Communication Technology. It is true to say that working in a bank in Nigeria today can be both challenging and stressful. Yes, success of a bank often relies on people performing multiple roles and going the extra mile to achieve organizational goals. Bank employees therefore, need to be motivated for them to perform maximally. However, certain factors; such emotional intelligence and perceived inequity on the part of the bank employees may be required for them to perform very well on their jobs.

Increasing job performance is among the most theoretically and practically important problems in organizational research (Staw, 1984). In banks like some other organisations, job performance determines whether an employee will be promoted, rewarded with pay raises, given additional responsibilities, or fired from the job. Therefore, most employers observe and track job performance. This is done by keeping track of data on topics such as the number of sales the employee closes, the number of clients the employee visits, the number of defects found in the employee's output, or the number of customer complaints or compliments received about the person's work and the likes. For an employee to ensure all these, a higher level of emotional intelligence is required.

Emotional intelligence appears to be very relevant among bank employees when it comes to ensuring higher level of performance on their jobs. For instance, it has been affirmed that in ensuring maximum growth in the banking sector, banks must be able to leverage on emotional intelligence in improving or sustaining desired customer patronage (Manisha, 2012; Pahuja & Sahi, 2012). Danquah (2014) also affirmed that the adoption of practices of emotional intelligence by banks can be carried out with confidence, success and ease when research has established ample evidence about the impact of emotional intelligence on business performance. Emotion and cognition of an individual can be integrated to influence performance on a variety of tasks (Gray, 2004). Also, Austin (2004) examined the relationships between trait emotional intelligence (EI) and tasks involving the recognition of facial expressions of emotion and reported that general emotion-processing ability contributes to performance on these tasks. Similarly, Quoidbach and Hansenne (2009) investigated the relationships between EI, performance, and cohesiveness in 23 nursing teams and found that, EI provided an interesting new way of enhancing nursing teams' cohesion and patient/client outcomes.

In this context, emotional intelligence may be defined as the ability of bank employees to recognise, understand and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others in an organisation as well as customers. When a bank employee is high in emotional intelligence he or she can recognise and understand his or her own emotional state and the emotional states of other co-workers and customers; and in turns then uses this knowledge to relate better, manage better and achieve greater success. Goleman (2001) introduces some studies that have been done on brain and behaviour which showed that there are some other factors to make individuals with high intelligence less successful than those with average intelligence. These factors include another aspect of intelligence that Goleman calls emotional intelligence.

Apart from being emotionally intelligence, perception of inequity is another factor that needs to be considered in ensuring higher levels of job performance among bank employees. Perception of equity stems from the theory of Adam.

Adams' equity theory (Adams, 1965) is a model of motivation that explains how people strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges. This theory proposes that perceived inequity is a motivational force. The conditions that are necessary to produce equity or inequity use an employee's perceptions of inputs and outcomes as their basis. The ratio of inputs to outcomes becomes a process of social comparison in which each employee compares his or her inputs and outcomes to those of another employee (Weller, 1995). Adams (1965) describes this other person as the 'comparison other.' Scholars have long recognized that job performance depends heavily on how employees perceive their jobs (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Turner & Lawrence, 1965). Building on this core insight, extensive theory research has focused on increasing job performance by changing employees' job perceptions. Equity is said to exist when individuals perceive that the ratio of efforts to rewards is the same for them as it is for others to whom they compare themselves. On one hand, equity is achieved when the ratio of employee outcomes over inputs is equal to other employee outcomes over inputs (Adams, 1965). On the other hand, inequity exists when individuals perceive that the ratio of efforts to rewards is different (usually negatively so) for them than it is for others to whom they compare themselves.

There are two types of inequity—under-reward and over-reward. Under-reward occurs when a person believes that she is either puts in more efforts than another, yet receives the same reward, or puts in the same effort as another for a lesser reward. For instance, if a bank employee works longer hours than her coworker, yet they receive the same salary, the employee would perceive inequity in the form of under-reward. Conversely, with over-reward, a person will feel that his efforts to rewards ratio is higher than another person's, such that he is getting more for putting in the same effort, or getting the same reward even with less effort. While research suggests that under-reward motivates individuals to resolve the inequity, research also indicates that the same is not true for over-reward. Individuals who are over-rewarded often engage in cognitive dissonance, convincing themselves that their efforts and rewards are equal to another's.

Perceived inequity among bank employees may have a significant influence on their job performance. In other words, when bank employees feel that they are being fairly treated by the management, that their management is supportive and rewards high performance, and when they trust the people they work with, they tend to perform better. Why? It seems that when they believe they are treated well, they want to reciprocate. Therefore, they treat the bank well by performing their job more effectively.

Discrimination in gender of an employee may be seen as a situation whereby one is faced with a choice between equally qualified women and men, employers prefer to hire men. On the one hand, if gender discrimination affects hiring decisions, one would expect that a higher hurdle is set for women than for men (Olson and Becker 1983; Jones and Makepeace 1996; Winter-Ebmer and Zweimuller 1997); thus women who are able to clear that hurdle would, on average, do a better job than their male counterparts. On the other hand, if affirmative action is an important factor in hiring decisions, then employers may set a lower hurdle for women in order to promote gender balance (Glazer 1975; Epstein 1992; Coate and Loury 1993); if affirmative-action-based hiring is prevalent, women would, on average, perform worse than men. In another perspective, women have been reported to perform better than men. For instance, Green, Jegadeesh and Tang (2009) examined gender difference in job performance among brokerage firm equity analysts; and found significant gender-based differences in performance on various dimensions. Specifically, the study found that women are significantly more likely than men to be designated as All-Stars, which indicates that they outperform men in some other aspects of job performance.

Confirming gender difference in job performance in the banking industry in Nigeria, Iyiola (2011) evaluated gender cultural indices as to determine their impacts on employee's performance in the banking industry; and found that gender cultures hinder performance of employees; and that banks prefer to employ young ladies to married women. Gender cultures were reported to have negative impact on performance among bank employees in Nigeria (Iyiola, 2011).

Many banks in Nigeria today have limited understanding of the impact of emotional intelligence and perceived inequity on the job performance of their employees most especially with respect to the under-utilisation of time, energy and resources. This limited understanding can be attributed to inadequacy of research on the subject matter. However, the most troubling concern for this work is the recognition of the fact that while significant efforts have been devoted to various factors influencing job performance, not much empirical research has been conducted on emotional intelligence and perceived inequity as they influence job performance among bank employees. The main purpose of this study was to examine if emotional intelligence and perceived inequity will have direct influence on levels of job performance among bank employees in Nigeria.

2. Statement of Hypothesis:

The following statements are the hypothesis this study seek to confirm:

i. Bank employees with high emotional intelligence will significantly score higher in job performance than those with low emotional intelligence.

ii. Bank employees who perceived favourable inequity will significantly score higher in job performance than those who perceived unfavourable inequity.

iii. Male bank employees will significantly score higher in job performance than female bank employees.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for this work owing to the fact that the researcher had no direct control over the manipulation of the variables of study. The independent variables in this study are emotional intelligence and perceived inequity while the dependent variable is job performance.

3.2 Setting

The study was carried out among the staff of 10 Nigerian banks within Ibadan metropolis. The banks used in the study included Access Bank, Eco Bank, Skye Bank, Zenith Bank, Unity Bank, First Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank, Diamond Bank, WEMA Bank and Fidelity Bank. The banks were selected using accidental non-probabilistic sampling technique; suggesting those banks that fell within the reach of the researchers.

3.3 Participants

A total of 234 staff of the banks mentioned above across the following departments; operations, marketing and customer service unit participated in the study. The researchers distributed 300 questionnaires; with 30 to each bank; and they were able to retrieve 251. Out of the 251 questionnaires retrieved, 234 that were properly completed were used for data analyses. The participants' ages ranged from 25 years to 45 years with an average mean of 27.92 years and standard deviation of 6.51 years. The number of years of work experience ranged from 1 year to 15 years with average years of 3.91 and standard deviation of 2.53 years. The distribution of the demographics of the bank employees who participated in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographical distribution of respondents

Variable	N	%
Sex		
Male	136	58.1
Female	98	41.9
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	173	73.9
Igbo	30	12.8
Hausa	31	13.2
Marital Status		
Single	116	49.6
Married	107	45.7
Divorced	6	2.6
Separated	5	2.1
Educational Level		
Ordinary Diploma/NCE	47	20.1
Higher National Diploma	91	38.9
Bachelor Degree	32	13.7
Postgraduate/Professional	64	27.4

3.4 Sampling Technique

The research adopted the use of accidental sampling technique to select the participants in the study. With the help of the unit head, this was done by ensuring that participants who were on duty in each of the banks who showed interest were given the questionnaires to complete.

3.5 Measures

In the study, a self-report structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic variables such as sex, age, religion, marital status, level of education and number of years in service in the bank. The second section of the questionnaire measured a five-item Perceived Inequity which the researchers drew the content from Adam's equity theory. Examples of items in the Perceived Inequity scale include '*I feel cheated about the chances I have had to work at good job*', '*It makes me discouraged that other people have much better jobs that I do*' etc. Participants responded on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (a lot). The study reported alpha coefficient of 0.54.The third section measured Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS). The EIS was developed in 1998 by Schutte, Marlout, Hall, Harggerty, Cooper, Golden and Donheim (1998). The scale assesses emotional intelligence based on self-report responses on 33 items tapping the appraisal and expression of emotion in self and others, regulations of emotion in self and others, and utilization of emotions in solving problems. The response choices were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Higher scores of the participants are indicative of higher emotional intelligence. In other words, the high scores indicate employees' higher ability to recognize and manage emotions. The EIS has an internal consistency reliability with Cronbach Alpha (r = 0.87 to 0.90) and acceptable test-retest reliability (r = 0.78) (Schutte, *et al,* 1998). This study reported higher coefficient of 0.89. The fourth section consisted of 10 items that measured perceived job performance developed by the researchers for this study. Examples of items in the scale include "*My quality of work could be described as satisfactory when compared to my co-workers*", "*I have a broad knowledge and complete mastery of the job*". The response choices were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The study reported alpha coefficient of 0.896.

3.6 Procedure

The managements of the banks through branch managers were informed to obtain adequate permission and ensure cooperation of bank employees prior to the administration of the questionnaires. Research purpose was made known to the branch managers and permission was granted. Distribution of questionnaires was done through heads of various units of each of the banks selected for the study. Participation in completing the questionnaires was voluntary. The participants completed the questionnaires at less busy hours or closing time. Though, some of the participants suggested taking the questionnaires home and bringing them the following day; their suggestion was accepted. Administration and collection of questionnaires took eight weeks. The researcher distributed 300 questionnaires and retrieved 253. However, 234 questionnaires found to have been properly filled were analyzed in this study. Those found improperly filled or half completed were discarded.

4. Results

Hypothesis 1:

The hypothesis that bank employees with high emotional intelligence would significantly score higher in job performance than those with low emotional intelligence was tested with t-test for independent groups. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. T-test table showing influence of emotional intelligence on perceived job performance

Intelligence	Emotional	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Job	performance						
Low		125	15.28	2.41	232	-2.45	<.05
High		109	16.26	3.63			

From Table 2, the result showed that emotional intelligence had significant influence on perceived job performance among bank employees ($t = -2.45$; $df = 232$; $p < .05$). This result can be observed in the means where bank employees with higher emotional intelligence (mean = 16.26) scored higher in job performance than those with low emotional intelligence (mean = 15.28). Therefore, the stated hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2:

The hypothesis stated that bank employees with favourable perceived inequity would significantly score higher in job performance than those who perceived unfavourable inequity was tested with t-test for independent groups. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. T-test table showing influence of perceived inequity on perceived job performance

Perceived	Inequity	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Job	performance						
Low		133	16.62	3.44	232	5.38	<.05
High		101	14.56	1.98			

From Table 3, the result showed that perceived inequity had significant influence on the perceived job performance among bank employees ($t = 5.38$; $df = 232$; $p < .05$). This result can be observed in the means where bank employees with perceived low inequity (mean = 16.62) scored higher in job performance than those with perceived high inequity (mean = 14.56). Therefore, the stated hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3:

The hypothesis that male bank employees would significantly score higher in job performance than female bank employees was tested with t-test for independent groups. The result is presented in Table 4

Table 4. T-test table showing sex difference in perceived job performance

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Job performance						
Male	136	15.70	2.94	232	-0.21	>.05
Female	98	15.79	3.26			

From Table 4, the result showed that sex of bank employee had no significant influence on the perceived job performance (t=-0.21; df = 232; p >.05). This result can be observed in the means where male bank employees (mean = 15.70) were not significantly different in job performance than female bank employees (mean = 15.79). Therefore, the stated hypothesis was rejected.

5. Discussion

The study examined the influence of emotional intelligence and perceived inequity on job performance among bank employees in Nigeria. The finding showed that emotional intelligence and perceived inequity have direct influences on perceived job performance among bank employees. Specially, the finding showed that bank employees who were high in emotional intelligence performed better on the job than those who were low in emotional intelligence. Relevant studies had revealed that emotional intelligence is very important and necessary in the field of human resources development and can make significant contributions in determining job performance and on-the-job behaviour of the employees.

To support the present finding, Laski and Cartwright (2002) showed that individual with high emotional intelligence display strong self-awareness and interpersonal skills. It also showed that they are empathic, adaptable and able to cope with pressure and generally experience less stress and better health and morale. It was also evidence that emotional intelligence (EI) is a better predictor of management success than Intelligence Quotient (IQ); which also determines the high performance in the job. Confirming the links between emotional intelligence and job performance in the banking sector, Manisha (2012), Pahuja and Sahi, 2012) established that in ensuring maximum growth, banks must be able to leverage on emotional intelligence in improving or sustaining desired customer patronage. Like the conclusions of earlier researchers in foreign countries, Afolabi (2004) agreed that emotional intelligence is not a single trait or ability rather, it is a composite of distinct emotion reasoning ability and that perceiving high emotional intelligence will lead to better understanding, recognizing, and interpreting the meaning of various emotional states of others as well as their relationship with them. Hence this study is in consistence with the previous works on emotional intelligence and job performance among employees. In other words, bank employees who are high in emotional intelligence are more likely to perform better by improving the way they communicate, build relationships and create a positive working environment that will lead to overall organizational performance.

In same study, the finding showed that bank employees who perceived low inequity significantly performed better on the job than those who perceived high inequity. The finding showed that perceived inequity significantly influenced job performance among bank employees. In other words, bank employees who perceived unfairness of their work outcomes relative to others; whether within the same bank or in other similar banks are less likely to perform better on their jobs. Bank employees who believe that the rewards received for their work contributions compare unfavorably to the rewards other people appear to have received for their work would be motivated to act in ways that remove the discomfort and restore a sense of felt equity in the situation.

This finding is in line with the findings of Lin Grensing-Pophal (2011) that if employees feel that they are contributing more than their colleagues, but perceived that their colleagues are receiving greater rewards, there will be a perception of unfairness or inequity and thereby leading to negative work behaviours at work, thus reducing the performance at work. What this suggests is that, employee's mental abilities could partly influence job performance in any many occupations with banking job inclusive. In relating this finding with the equity theory, it is found that the result of this study is consistent. The theory explained how people strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges. Feelings of inequity in any organizations will eventually lead to negative work attitude and thereby lead to low job performance of such employees. The same study however found no gender difference in job performance among bank employees. Most previous studies have not shown sex as a determinant of job performance. In line with this trend, Campbell (1990) earlier suggested determinants of job performance base on the three things; declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and skill, and motivation. Campbell explained that whether you are a female or male, the three determinants mentioned above will determine how well you will perform on the job. Conclusively, the variable male or female does not determine who can perform better in Nigerian banks if all thing being equal.

6. Conclusion

This study has been able to establish that emotional intelligence and perceived inequity are important factors that have direct influences on levels of job performance among bank employees in Nigeria. It is therefore concluded that bank employees who are more emotionally intelligent are likely to perform better on their jobs than those who are less emotionally intelligent. Also, it is concluded that bank employees' perceptions is important as those who perceived low inequity are more likely to perform well on their jobs than those who perceived high inequity. However, there was no gender difference in job performance among bank employees; meaning that whether a bank employee is a male or female does not matter when it comes to working in Nigerian banks. It is concluded that both men and women working in banks in Nigeria are of similar expectations in discharging their duties.

7. Recommendations

The issue addressed in this study showed how emotional intelligence and perceived inequity directly influence job performance among bank employees. Based on the findings derived from the study, the following recommendations are made for practical implementation by management of banks:

- Management of banks should endeavor to provide a working situation void of constraints which could limit employee from exhibiting potentials or affect on-the-job performance of the employees.

- Psychological test should be made a requisite for recruiting, selection and placement of bank employees to ascertain their level of emotional intelligence.
- Management of banks should give high priority to the issue of work behaviour of employees.
- Management of banks; in their bid to continue to succeed and perform excellently, should try to invest more in adventures that will enhance employees work outcomes.

8. Limitations of Study

The study was faced with some limitations that need to be considered in further similar studies. The study could not be said to have done enough exploration but at least did little enough. It has not really scratched deep the issues of job performance. Additionally, gathering of uncontaminated data regarding the job performance is also problematic (i.e. talking about ethical issues). It was perceived that employees in the sample might have underreported their detrimental behaviours at work- a limitation observed in most study of this nature, and over reported the harsh treatment received from the organization. Although, the researchers cannot rule out the underreporting and possible measurement error, but it is believed that they are unlikely to be a sufficient magnitude to compromise the validity of this findings. Needless is to say the constraints of time and resources and uncooperative attitude of the respondents. All of these contributed to the limitations of this study. However, these limitations could not have rendered this study's findings irrelevant or invalid. Another limitation in the study is the difficulty in having time to complete questionnaires while on duties. Many of the bank employees had to take some of the questionnaires home to fill and got them submitted later.

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