

THE IMPACT OF JOB AUTONOMY AND COMMUNICATION PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

Improving individual employee and organizational performance has been the main concern of many organizations for decades and several factors have also been studied as predictors of employee performance. However, the bulk of studies are mainly conducted in the private sector organizations with few attentions accorded to the public sector organizations, even though at present the difference between the two sectors is not much especially with introduction of privatization and New Public Management in the public sector. Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory and the application of Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM), this study examined the mediating role of public service motivation on the relationship between job autonomy, communication practices and employee task and contextual performance. The participants were 288 senior staff of local governments in north-western part of Nigeria. The findings suggested that both job autonomy and communication practices predicted employee task and contextual performance. It was also found that public service motivation is an important mechanism (mediator) in the relationship.

Keywords: *Public service motivation, performance, HRM practices, Job Autonomy, Communication*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations whether public, private or nongovernmental organizations must operate with or through human resource in order to survive and grow (Boxall *et al.*, 2011; M. T. Tessema *et al.*, 2015). The public sector organizations in both developed and developing countries are assess based on the performance of their employees. This is because the activities of government are highly personnel intensive (Ingraham & Kneedler, 2000). All the same, for decades, the employee of public sector organizations have been criticized for their inability to perform their assign responsibilities in the most efficient and effective ways and manners. To address this, public sector organizations has been looking for a better ways to improve their employee performance and to overcome the endemic lack of motivation (Vigoda-Gadot & Cohen, 2004). Upon these, several scholars like M. T. Tessema *et al.* (2015) and T. M. Tessema and Soeters (2006) considered HRM as an essential ingredient towards improving the quantity and quality of goods and services provided by government through public sector organizations. Presence of good and effective HRM in an organization generate many advantages, like high commitment, more loyalty and the

need for employees to engaged in extra efforts apart from their assigned task for the achievement of organizational objectives. Nevertheless, studies that linked HRM practices with employee performance within the context of public sector organizations received little attention and therefore required huge deliberation (Safdar, 2011).

The influence of HRM practices on employee (individual) and organizational performance has been subject of discussions in the fields of HRM, performance, industrial and organizational psychology (Boxall *et al.*, 2011; Nishii *et al.*, 2008). Although large volumes of empirical studies linked several HRM practices with employee performance (Akhter *et al.*, 2013; Bowra *et al.*, 2012; Nadarajah *et al.*, 2012), Nevertheless, recently scholars like Alfes, Truss, *et al.* (2013) and Alfes, Shantz, *et al.* (2013), argued that further empirical research is highly needed to explain how (the mechanism through which) and why HRM practices do positively impact upon employee behaviors in organization. Studies on HRM practices revealed that there are more than 26 different practices used by organizations to influence workers behaviors (Boselie *et al.*, 2005). This study observed that among all the HRM practices only few studies examined the contributions of job autonomy and communication practices (Mostafa *et al.*, 2015). To fill this gap, the current study extends the extent literature by examining public service motivation as an important missing link through which job autonomy and communication as HRM practices can influence employee task and contextual performance. Public service motivation (PSM) is regarded as an important mechanism in explaining high performance in organization especially in the public sector because it contributes significantly in making the employees to perform highly beyond the call of duty (Perry & Wise, 1990). PSM simply refers to a mixture of individual motives that drives people to participate in positive behaviors that benefit society in general (Taylor, 2007). Accordingly, PSM literature indicted that individuals with strong PSM have an internal drive that energizes them to work harder and do well towards attaining organizational goals (Vandenabeele, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Employee performance was initially assumed to consist of only task performance which scholars usually defined as the performance (actions and behaviours) of employees as contain in their formal job descriptions (Motowidlo, 2003). Although task performance is critical in determining performance of individual employee couple with organizational productivity, still task performance alone does not adequately explain the ways in which employees contributed the success of organization (Caillier, 2014). In this regard, scholars (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997) expanded the domain of performance at individual (job) to include contextual performance. Contextual performance as the second dimension of employee/job performance entails the action/behaviors of employees within the organization that contributes to the organizational effectiveness via their influence on social, psychological and context of work (Motowidlo, 2003). While, the task performance considered the core task in organization, the contextual performance relates to extra role in organization.

Job Autonomy and Employee Performance

Originated from the work of Hackman and Oldham (1975), job autonomy is conceptualized as the extent to which a given job provides employee with freedom, discretion and independence to make decisions, schedule work and choose method of performing assigned task. This simply implied that, employee(s) that enjoyed job autonomy tend to have more discretion in determining how to better their performance (Huang, 2015). Thus, job autonomy as HRM practice enable employee to have more confidence and sense of responsibility towards enhancing their performance. Moreover, job autonomy empowered employees and allowed them to exhibit

different skills, talents and experiences in performing task related jobs. It also enabled them to go extra-miles and engaged in non-task related jobs (contextual performance). Empirical research suggests that the higher the employee perceived job autonomy the better will be their performance (Cho & Yoon, 2009; Gellatly & Irving, 2001; Huang, 2015). In a meta-analysis conducted by Humphrey *et al.* (2007), it was shown that job autonomy had a significant positive influence on employee work performance and motivation. Moreover, a study from Gellatly and Irving (2001) revealed positive relationship between job autonomy and contextual performance. Consequently, Cho and Yoon (2009) supported that job autonomy provides employee with the necessary discretion that lead to higher individual performance. Therefore, the study hypothesized that:

H1a: Job autonomy will positively relate with task performance.

H1b: Job autonomy will positively relate with contextual performance.

Communication and Employee performance

Communication as HRM practice plays an important role in effective running of any business activity, be it private or public. As organizations have to communicate both within and outside in order to carry out their activities. Researchers believe that for organizations to meet their goals, the need for effective communication (information sharing practice) became imperative (Essays, 2013). Communication practice is regarded as a ribbon that binds both the management and subordinates together, and a very necessary practice for the excellent performance and success of any organization (Harris & Nelson, 2008).

In organization, employees that enjoyed an open system of communication with their superior officers are more likely to build effective work relationships with those officers and enhance their performance (Tsai *et al.*, 2009). Relatedly, Mostafa *et al.* (2015) supported that an effective communication practice in organization can reinforce the importance of employees' roles and provides good direction and open feedback as the employees strive to achieve organizational goals and objectives. In addition, Neves and Eisenberger (2012) revealed that organizational communication practice positively affect employee performance mainly because it allowed the employees to understand that their organization cares and valued their well-being. Therefore, effective communication that provide employees with regular performance feedback, openness and accuracy, and adequate information regarding the organizational procedures and policies are significantly related with employees' task and contextual performance (Kacmar *et al.*, 2003; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H2a: Communication will positively relate with task performance

H2b: Communication will positively relate with contextual performance

Public Service Motivation (PSM) and Employee Performance (Task and Contextual)

Public service motivation is regarded as a new form of motivation different from the conventional motivation (Perry & Wise, 1990). Public service motivation refers the employees' motives and actions, grounded in public institutions, which are intended to benefit others and shape their well-being (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). In line with this, Vandenabeele (2007) considered PSM as a form of motivation that people have in order to perform meaningful public service that contributes to the society in general. An important assumption in the PSM research is that, employees (especially those in public institutions) with greater PSM are more likely to perform better in their jobs (Perry & Wise, 1990). It is argued that employees with high level of PSM are easily motivated to perform more effectively since their jobs provide them with more opportunities to express and attain their values of compassion, civic duty, self sacrifice, and policy making (Naff & Crum, 1999).

A number of studies have supported the positive link between PSM and performance arguing that people with higher PSM also exhibits higher levels of employee performance (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004). Similarly, Li (2009) revealed that PSM is a strong predictor of task and contextual performance as employee that reported higher level of PSM also reported high level of task and contextual performance. In a related manner, Cun (2012) argued that PSM is an important indicator of contextual performance in organization. He further revealed that strong PSM improve contextual performance. Moreover, the recent study of van Loon *et al.* (2015) established that PSM significantly influence both task and contextual performance in the Netherland public sector organizations.

In their study, Giauque *et al.* (2009) indicated that various factors like institutional, cultural and organizational factors affect the level of PSM of employees in organization. But only a hand full of studies explored the like between HRM practices and PSM (Giauque & Anderfuhren-Biget, 2010; Giauque *et al.*, 2009; Schott & Pronk, 2014). In this regard, Giauque and Anderfuhren-Biget (2010) opined that HRM practice like communication must be considered in explaining PSM and other work related outcomes (task and contextual performance). They further argued that although some organizational practices like administrative constrains (red tapes) have a negative influence on PSM, on the contrary Moynihan and Pandey (2007) supported that when organizations allows employees to experiences full autonomy and do away with red tapism certainly the employees will display high level of PSM. Relatedly, several studies (Brewer & Walker, 2010; DeHart-Davis & Pandey, 2005; Scott & Pandey, 2005) had proved that red tape (an opposite of autonomy) is a hindrance to PSM. Based on these we can assume that job autonomy will positively influence PSM.

Theoretically, the mediation effect of PSM on the relationship between compensation and job autonomy can be explained from the perspectives of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The social exchange theory (SET) is regarded as the most influential theory in understanding workplace behavior like performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). SET emphases on the interactions between two or more individuals that generate obligations (Emerson, 1972). SET suggested that in organizational set up perception of good gesture required a reciprocal from the receiving party (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This suggested that when organization provides good compensation to the employees and also allows them the freedom and discretion in discharging their duties, then the employee will in return reciprocate with positive performance (Saks, 2006). In this regard, perception of adequate compensation and job autonomy will trigger employee to reciprocate with high task performance (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003; Muse *et al.*, 2008) and also contextual performance (Anand *et al.*, 2010).

A part from the theoretical explanation, previous studies (Ritz & Fernandez, 2011; Wright *et al.*, 2012)) have also documented the significant mediation influence of PSM. Additionally, the study of Mostafa (2014) revealed that PSM significantly mediate the relationship between HRM Practices and three employee attitude and behaviors (job commitment, job satisfaction and intent to quit). On the aforementioned basis, the study proposes the following four hypotheses:

- H3a: Public service motivation will mediate relationship between job autonomy and task performance*
H3b: Public service motivation will mediate relationship between job autonomy and contextual performance
H3c: Public service motivation will mediate relationship between compensation and task performance
H3d: Public service motivation will mediate relationship between compensation and contextual performance

METHODS

Respondents and Procedures

The respondents are senior staff drawn from 27 local government areas of Jigawa state in North western part of Nigeria. The participants were personally visited in their local government areas during working hours with help of officials from personnel department and were asked to complete the questionnaire that comprises three major (independent, mediating, and dependent) variables. The respondents were also informed about the confidentiality and purpose of the study. A period of two weeks was given for the completion of the questionnaires. 531 questionnaires were personally distributed by the researchers but only 288 usable questionnaires were returned given a response rate of 54%.

Measures

We measured *compensation* practice with 6-item scale adapted from the work Amin *et al.* (2014). Example of the item used for measuring compensation is 'My salary is comparable to other public and private organizations'. *Job autonomy* practice was measured using a 9-item developed by Breaugh (1999). Example of the item used for measuring job autonomy is 'I am free to choose the methods to use in carrying out my work'. In measuring PSM, 14-item scale developed by Kim (2009) was employed in measuring PSM. The scale is multidimensional with four independent components. The first component is the attraction to policy making which has 3 items. For example, 'I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to. The second is commitment to public interest with also 3-items. Example of item used is 'I consider public service my civic duty'. The third component is compassion with 4-items. Item used include 'I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged'. The fourth dimension which is termed as self-sacrifice also has 4-items. A sample of item used in measuring self-sacrifice is 'I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society'. Here also all the scale of the responses ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. *Task performance* was measured with 11-items adapted from the work of Tsui *et al.* (1997). An example of the item used for measuring task performance is 'My standards of work quality are higher than average standard for this job'. *Contextual performance* was measured with 16-items developed by Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994). Items used include 'I voluntarily do more than the job requires to help others or contributes to organizational effectiveness'. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert-Scale ranged from 1 =strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

RESULTS

In presenting the results, firstly descriptive statistics was presented them followed by measurement and structural models.

Descriptive Statistics

Under the descriptive statistics, the results as shown below in Table 1 suggested that male respondents representing 92% outnumbered the female who are 8%. The age of respondents revealed that about 35% are between 26 years to 35 years followed by 29% who are within the age bracket of 19 – 25 years. The least are respondent within the age bracket of 46-55 years.

Table 1: Respondents Profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	265	92.0
Female	23	8.0
Age		
19 – 25 Years	84	29.2
26 – 35 Years	102	35.4
36 – 45 Years	49	17.0
46 – 55 Years	02	0.7
56 – Above Years	51	17.7
Highest Academic Qualification		
Certificate	21	7.3
Diploma/NCE	114	39.6
Degree/HND	129	44.8
Master	22	7.6
PhD	2	.7
Number of Years with Present Organization		
Less than 1 year	10	3.5
1 – 3 years	36	12.5
4 – 7 years	61	21.2
More than 7 years	181	62.8
Present Position		
GL 07 – 08	76	26.4
GL 09 – 10	81	28.1
GL 12 – 13	87	30.2
GL 14 – 15	44	15.3

Note: GL = Grade Level; NCE = National Certificate in Education; HND = Higher National Diploma; PhD = Doctor of Philosophy.

Assessment of the Measurement Model

In the assessment of measurement model when using partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS SEM), the two most important criteria are the reliability and validity of the model. In this regard, smart PLS 2.0 (Ringle *et al.*, 2005) was employed in examining the measurement model validity (i.e convergent validity and discriminant validity) and the reliability (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2009).

Results of Measurement Model (Reflective)

The measurement model of all the four reflective constructs was assessed in order to ascertain the reliability and validity prior to the evaluation of structural model (Henseler *et al.*, 2012). Table 2 provides the result of constructs reliability.

Based on the above measurement model results, the reliability of all the four reflective constructs was determined by using composite reliability assessment. Scholar like Joe F Hair *et al.* (2011) and Henseler *et al.* (2012) recommended that construct reliability is attain when the value of internal consistency reliability is above 0.70. In this regard, results of composite reliability on Table 2 suggested that the four reflective constructs had a reliability values higher than the minimum required threshold of 0.70. The values ranged from 0.772 to 0.862.

Table 2: Results of Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Job Autonomy	AUT05	0.684	0.811	0.518
	AUT06	0.713		
	AUT07	0.699		
	AUT08	0.780		
Communication	COM01	0.681	0.862	0.510
	COM02	0.764		
	COM03	0.698		
	COM04	0.759		
	COM05	0.716		
	COM06	0.661		
Task Performance	TSK02	0.663	0.801	0.502
	TSK04	0.682		
	TSK05	0.764		
	TSK06	0.720		
Contextual Performance	CTX01	0.753	0.772	0.530
	CTX03	0.737		
	CTX12	0.692		

Note: CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted

In ascertaining convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) value was used. As recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Joe F Hair *et al.* (2011) that the minimum acceptable AVE value must be 0.50 and above, the AVE results on Table 2 revealed that all the four reflective constructs have attained the minimum threshold. Additionally, Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was employed in determining discriminant validity. The Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion recommended that discriminant validity is attained only when the AVE of study construct(s) is statistically significant and also recorded a value higher than its squared correlations with other latent variables. This study adopted the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion in ascertaining the discriminant validity of the model (see, Table 3).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

Latent constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Job autonomy	0.720				
2. Communication	0.431	0.714			
3. Contextual performance	0.432	0.406	0.728		
4. Public Service Motivation (PSM)	0.417	0.448	0.492	Formative	
5. Task Performance	0.543	0.465	0.469	0.527	0.708

The above results on Table 3 suggested that the squared root values of four reflective constructs (bolded) are higher than the correlations among the variables, thus indicating discriminant validity is attained.

Test of Collinearity and Significance of Formative Model

The formative model test is different from the reflective model (Hair Jr et al., 2014). In order to test the PSM been the only formative construct with four dimensions that includes: (1) Attractive

to policy making; (2) commitment to public interest; (3) compassion; and (4) self-sacrifice, the two most important criteria of testing the collinearity among the formative components (dimensions) and significance of formative model was used (Hair Jr et al., 2014). Table 4 provides the results of collinearity and significance of formative model (PSM). With regards to collinearity, J. F. Hair et al. (2014)

Table 4: Results of indicators significance and collinearity statistics

Formative Construct	Formative Indicators	Outer Weights (Loadings)	T statistics	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Public Service Motivation (PSM)	APM	-0.027(0.4613)	0.232	.767	1.304
	CPI	0.386 (0.7964)	4.130***	.798	1.253
	CPS	0.485 (0.7719)	5.420***	.779	1.283
	SSS	0.477 (0.7757)	4.901***	.777	1.287

Note: APM= Attraction to policy making; CPI= Commitment to the public interest; CPS= Compassion; SSS= Self-sacrifice.

As shown above in Table 4, all the four lower-order-construct (LOC) that formed public service motivation had recorded a variance inflated factor (VIF) values less than five (< 5) and the tolerance values were all greater than .20, thus suggesting no collinearity issues among the four indicators (Joe F Hair et al., 2011). Moreover, the outer weights and outer loadings of three indicators including sacrifice (SSS), compassion (CPS), and commitment to public interest (CPI) out of the four indicators are all significant and are therefore retained.

Assessment of Structural Model (Direct and Indirect Relationships)

Following the successful evaluation of the measurement model, then structural model was also assessed. The structural model evaluates hypothesized relationships. Several criteria were followed in evaluating the structural model in this study. They include: assessing the coefficient of determination (popularly regarded as R²); path coefficient significance; cross validated redundancy (popularly called Q²) and effect size (F²). Firstly, with regards to the path coefficient significance, both direct relationship (despite the introduction of mediating variable) between the major constructs and indirect were assessed.

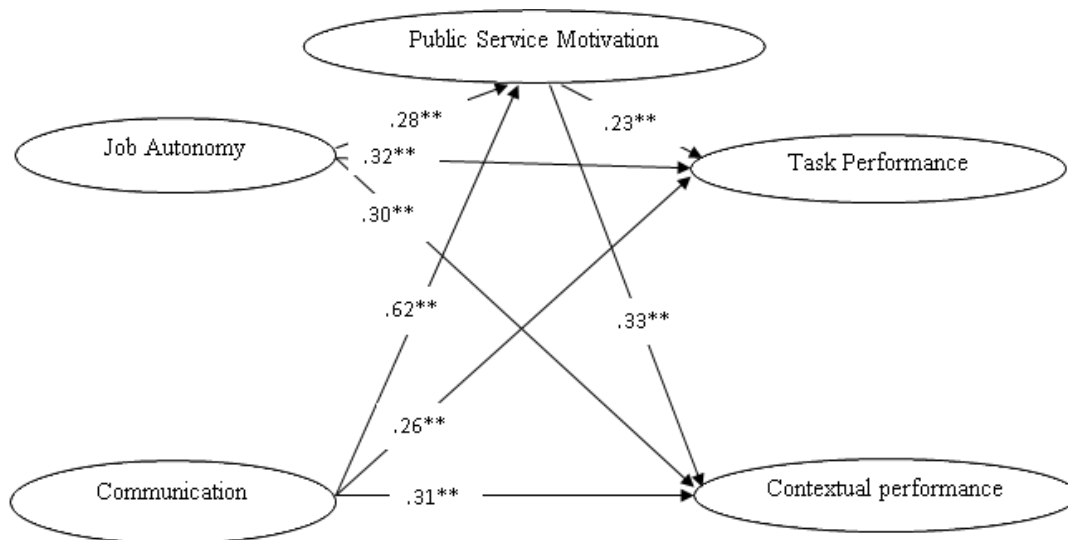


Figure 1: Bootstrapping results showing the direct and indirect relationships

Table 5 and Figure 1 provide the results of the structural model showing the relationships. The results of direct relationships between job autonomy, communication practices and the targeted

constructs, task performance and contextual performance (despite the presence of mediating variable). The direct effect of job autonomy on task performance indicates a significant ($p < 0.01$) value of 0.324. Similarly, the effect of job autonomy on contextual performance revealed a significant ($p < 0.01$) value of 0.302. Therefore, hypotheses *H1a* and *H1b* are all empirically substantiated. In relation to communication practice, the finding revealed that communication has direct positive effect on both task performance ($\beta=0.263$, $p < 0.01$) and contextual performance ($\beta=0.312$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Thus, hypotheses *H2a* and *H2b* are also empirically substantiated.

Table 5: Result of direct relationships

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	Std. Error	T value	Decision
Job Autonomy -> Task Performance	0.324	0.08	4.050***	Supported
Job Autonomy -> Contextual Performance	0.302	0.072	4.194***	Supported
Communication -> Task Performance	0.263	0.079	3.329***	Supported
Communication -> Contextual Performance	0.312	0.093	3.354***	Supported

Mediating Relationships

With regards to the mediation effect, still as shown in Figure 1 and Table 6 it was found that PSM mediated the relationship between job autonomy and task performance ($\beta=0.084$, $p < 0.01$). In similar development, relationship between job autonomy and contextual performance was mediated by PSM ($\beta=0.089$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, hypotheses *H3a* and *H3b* are empirically supported.

Table 6: Mediation hypotheses results

Relationships	Path a	Path b	a*b	Std. Error	T value	Decision
AUT -> PSM->TSK PERF	0.275	0.304	0.084	0.028	2.994***	Supported
AUT -> PSM->CTX PERF	0.275	0.325	0.089	0.028	3.227***	Supported
COM -> PSM->TSK PERF	0.330	0.304	0.100	0.030	3.301***	Supported
COM -> PSM->CTX PERF	0.330	0.325	0.107	0.033	3.282***	Supported

Note: AUT = Job Autonomy; COM = communication; PSM = Public Service Motivation; TSK PERF= Task performance; CTX PERF= Contextual performance

As for communication practice, results on Table 6 revealed that PSM mediates between communication practice and task performance ($\beta=0.100$, $p < 0.01$). Likewise, the relationship between communication and contextual performance via PSM ($\beta=0.107$, $p < 0.01$) is significant. Therefore, hypotheses *H4a* and *H4b* are supported. In addition, the two exogenous variables of job autonomy and communication practices plus PSM put together explained an R^2 value of 0.428 in task performance and a value of 0.324 in contextual performance. Therefore, based on the central criterion of model's (i.e. structural) assessment (Henseler et al., 2012), the full model explained about 38 percent variance in task performance and also about 32 percent variance in contextual performance. While, job autonomy and communication practices explained only a value of 0.262 (which is about 26 percent) variance in PSM. For the predictive relevance (Q^2), the constructs cross validated redundancy results indicate a Q^2 of 0.204 and 0.171 for task and contextual performance, while PSM recorded a Q^2 0.139. Thus, suggesting that the full model has a predictive relevance (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

For the effect size, Table 7 provides the detail result of the model relative effect of individual exogenous latent construct on the endogenous variable(s) via the changes in the R^2 values.

According to Cohen, (1988) the f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 are to be classified as weak, moderate and strong.

Table 7 Effect Size

Relationships	R ²	R ²	f^2	Effect Size
	Included	Excluded		
Job Autonomy -> Task Performance	0.378	0.304	0.119	Small
Job Autonomy -> Contextual Performance	0.322	0.285	0.055	Small
Communication -> Task Performance	0.378	0.352	0.042	Small
Communication -> Contextual Performance	0.322	0.300	0.032	Small
Job Autonomy -> Public Service Motivation	0.235	0.200	0.045	Small
Communication -> Public Service Motivation	0.235	0.159	0.099	Small
Public Service Motivation -> Task Performance	0.378	0.305	0.117	Small
Public Service Motivation > Contextual Performance	0.322	0.225	0.143	Small

The results of the effect size in Table 7 above suggested that Job Autonomy (0.119), communication (0.042) and PSM (0.117) exhibited only small effect size on task performance. Similarly, job autonomy (0.055), communication (0.032) and PSM (0.142) also exhibited only small effect size on contextual performance. Moreover, job autonomy (0.045), communication (0.099) exerted small effect size on PSM. Although all the exogenous latent constructs of this model exerted only small effect size on the endogenous variables, Chin *et al.* (2003) supported that small effect size is important. They argued that small effect size in research does not necessarily suggest unimportant effect. As to them even a smallest effect size can be meaningful. Therefore, it is important to take small effect size into consideration as they affect the variables on their own ways.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study is to understand the direct and indirect influence of job autonomy and communication practices on employee performance through the mediation of PSM. Overall, all our findings are consistent with the four direct relationship hypotheses and four indirect hypotheses despite the presence of mediating variable. Specifically, the results of direct relationship substantiated that employee perceptions of job autonomy and communication practices are positively associated with both task and contextual performance. Furthermore, in relation to the indirect relationship, PSM partially mediates all the four hypothesized relationships. These findings are consistent with the argument of social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, when an organization signal to the employees their desire to participate in social exchange relationships through investing in good HRM practices (like job autonomy and communication), in return the employees respond by engaging in more task performance and extra role behaviors. Based on that, our findings suggested perception of job autonomy (freedom and discretion in doing the task) and effective communication practices in organizations by the employees may not only give assurance to the employees that they are important, but also served as a signal that their contributions to the organizations are valued. This will reinforce them to realize the importance of their job and geared them toward high task and more extra role performance in discharging services offered to the general public.

In relation to the mediation effect of PSM, the results revealed that PSM is an important mechanism in the relationship between job autonomy and communication practices with employee performance. This implied that organizational job autonomy and communication practices are important predictors of PSM, which in turns moved employees towards higher task and contextual performance. Therefore, these findings are consistent with prior public sector studies (Giauque *et al.*, 2013; Mostafa *et al.*, 2015) were HRM practices exerted influence on PSM.

While, the influence of PSM on performance is also consistent with prior findings (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Cun, 2012; Li, 2009), that supported the link between PSM and performance.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study extended the influence of social exchange theory from western culture to the African context in general and the Nigeria in particular. The study also contributes to the HRM, PSM and performance literature by integrating them in one study and empirically establishing both the direct and indirect influence of job autonomy and communication practices on task and contextual performance of employee. With regards to practice, the study has important implication for managers/administrators particularly within the public sector organizations. Managers/administrators need to be aware that allowing the employees to enjoy effective communication and the provision of adequate job autonomy enabled the employees to perceive they are being recognized and valued. This will automatically be geared them to exert high level of task and contextual performance. Managers/administrators can also improve public sector employees' PSM and performance via effective communication and job autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine the influence of two important but yet neglected HRM practices (job autonomy and communication) through the mediation of public service motivation within the context of public sector organizations. Using PLS SEM as the main statistical instrument and the application of social exchange theory, the study provides support for the direct and indirect influence of job autonomy and communication practices on employees' task and contextual performance within the context of Nigerian public service. Thus, the study supported all the hypothesized relationships. Based on these findings, the study therefore concluded that when public sector employees enjoyed unrestricted job autonomy couple with effective communication practice within the organizations, they tend to exert higher task performance and even go extra mile to demonstrate more contextual performance. Therefore, failure to provide public sector employees (particularly at local government levels) with adequate autonomy and effective communication system may be one of the reasons why government was not successful in promoting employees task and contextual performance at grassroot levels despite several reform measures. The findings further revealed the important influence of PSM as the mechanism through which job autonomy and communication practices influences employees' task and contextual performance. However, it has to be noted that despite the significant influence of both the two neglected HRM practices (job autonomy and communication) and PSM in predicting employees' task and contextual performance, the findings revealed that the effect size of these variables on the performance of employees is relatively small. Therefore, it will be more important to look at these two HRM practices as organizational antecedent of PSM that conjointly influence public sector employees' task and contextual performance. Consequently, the findings revealed direct and indirect effect of job autonomy and communication practices through PSM.

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