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EFFECTS OF SELF EFFICACY, PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Local government employees play a crucial role in the provision of goods and services to the general public at grassroot level. In practice, however, they are often been criticized for providing inferior services due to deficiencies related to their employees' ability, motivation and opportunity in performing their assigned responsibilities. This paper, empirically study the effects of Self Efficacy, Public Service Motivation and Career Opportunity on the performance of local government employees. Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) theory was the main theoretical basis and the data for the study was obtained from a sample of 186 local government employees in Nigeria. Results of the study revealed that all the three independent variables (Self Efficacy, Public Service Motivation and Career Opportunity) exerted significant positive influence on the performance of local government employees. The study conclude that for local government to efficiently and effectively provides the required goods and services to the general public, enhancing their employees' Self Efficacy, Public Service Motivation and Career Opportunity is imperative.

Keywords: Employee performance, local government, self efficacy, public service motivation, career opportunity

1. Introduction

Although performance of employee in any organization be it public or private is very important, still when it comes to public sector organizations the issue of performance is always attributed to inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Esu & Inyang, 2009), poor/inadequate service delivery (Inyang & Akaegbu, 2014; Zakaria, 2011) and low service quality (Dogarawa, 2011). At the same time, public sector organizations (including local governments) are expected to provide better services or goods to their citizens with less resources. Despite these assertions, still better or high performance of public sector employees lead to greater citizen's trust in government (Yang & Holzer, 2006). Therefore, since the performance of public employees determines the government image and the efficiency and effectiveness of the present government. These had increases the pressure faced by many public sector organizations which requested them to adjust to the new and evolving demands (Austen & Zacny, 2015). Inview of these, the performance of several public

sector organizations world over (particularly at lower or grassroot level) is said to be under constant scrutiny by a number of stakeholders including the citizens, political leaders, service users and several government supervising agencies/inspectors (Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, & Walker, 2006).

In Nigeria, local government employees (workers both senior and junior officers) play a crucial role in the provision of goods and services to the general public at grassroot level. In practice, however, Local Government employees are often been criticized for providing inferior or even poor services (Uche, 2014; Zakaria, 2011) due to deficiencies related to the employees' ability to deliver service effectively and efficiently, the motivation to serve and the opportunity in performing their assigned responsibilities. Although, employees are nowadays viewed as one of the most important organizational assets, yet, attracting people with required ability and motivation coupled with provision of opportunities to perform is more beneficial in attaining superior organizational performances, particularly at the lower level of government. Thus, Walker and Andrews (2013) suggested that local government administrators/managers can attain higher levels of performance at local government level when they are able to promote their staff quality. However, staff with low self efficacy or low capabilities/abilities, low public service motivation (PSM) and inadequate career opportunities especially in the developing countries like Nigeria, are for years been detrimental problem that have highly impact on unintended consequences of widespread corruption, inefficient spending, low or even poor service delivery, among others (Uche, 2014).

Though studies on the relationship between self efficacy and performance, public service motivation (PSM) and performance and career opportunity and performance may be undertaken individually, to the best knowledge of the researcher no single study that combined and tested these three variables on employee performance. In view of these problems, the purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of self efficacy, public service motivation and career opportunity on the performance of employees using a sample of local government employees. Additionally, the study employed the ability, motivation and opportunity theory (AMO) in testing the model.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self efficacy and Employee Performance

Self efficacy simply refers to the employees' judgment(s) about his/her capabilities to organize and execute (perform) courses of action that are required to achieve designated levels of performance. Therefore, self efficacy as a concept do not only concerned with skills of employees alone in organization but also with the judgment(s) of what an employee can do with the skills he/she possessed (Bandura, 1986). From the perspective of Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) it is argued that employees with strong or high levels of self efficacy tend to be successful or high

performing employees. While, the less efficacious employees tend to either quit the job prematurely or poorly perform the assigned task (Bandura, 1977).

Moreover, Liao and Chuang (2007) supported the importance of Self efficacy variable in predicting employee performance. They further argued that the sense of 'can do' attitude of individual employee in organization is an important motivator that energizes high performance. Previous empirical studies (Liao & Chuang, 2007; Sultan & Tareen, 2014; Wang & Netemeyer, 2002), coupled with meta analysis of Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) had all provide evidences on the positive link of Self efficacy and performance of employee in organization. Upon these, the present study hypothesized that:

H1: Self Efficacy is positively and significantly related with Employee Performance

2.2 Public Service Motivation (PSM) and Employee Performance

Public Service Motivation (PSM) as a concept has originated from the work of scholars like (Buchanan, 1975; Mosher, 1982; Perry & Porter, 1982; Perry & Wise, 1990; Rainey, 1982). Perry and Wise (1990) defined PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations". This conceptualization suggested that, people have government-unique features that move or drive them to perform public services. On the other hand, Vandenabeele (2008), considered PSM as "the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate" The main motive of the PSM on employees is said to be grounded at doing good to others (people) in order to shape the wellbeing of the entire society (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). For the purpose of this study, PSM is used to represent the motivation component of AMO theory.

Since the seminal work of Perry and Wise (1990) it was argued that employees with greater PSM are more likely to perform better in public sector work than their counter part who have low or no PSM. Also, previous studies on the link between PSM and performance of public sector employees (Camilleri, 2007; Li, 2009; Naff & Crum, 1999) have empirically supported the positive link between PSM and performance. These results suggested that the higher the PSM, the higher will be the performance of employees. However, on the contrary, findings from the study of Bright (2007) revealed that PSM had no direct positive significant relationship with the performance of 205 randomly selected public sector employees but rather an indirect relation via person-organization fit. This suggested that the direct link between PSM and performance of employees is doubtful and required further investigations. Therefore, on the basis of these arguments, the present study hypothesized that:

H2: Public Service Motivation (PSM) is positively and significantly related with Employee Performance

2.3 Career Opportunity and Employee Performance

Presence of career opportunities that matched with employee(s) career interest and goal within the organization(s) encourages and motivated employees to exert high performance that allowed effective and efficient achievement of organizational goals. According to Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, and Bravo (2011) career opportunity as a concept entails the perception of employees on the degree to which their present organization provides opportunities that are compatible with their career goals and interest. Therefore, it is observed that in recent time most of the high performing organizations emphasizes more on the provisions of good career opportunities for their staff in order to attain optimum performance and achievement of organizational goals (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016).

On the theoretical perspective, the Career Motivation Theory (London, 1983), suggested that when employees perceived a high levels of career opportunities within their present organization they easily get motivated to exert high levels of performance. Likewise, if they (employees) perceived low or even absence of career opportunities within their present organization, therefore, employees may not necessarily be motivated to work hard for the attainment of organizational goals. Again, Tabiu and Nura (2020) asserted that majority of the talented and competent employees in organization(s) tend to be more satisfied and willing to give their best when they perceived favorable career opportunities in their present organization(s) and are more likely willing to remain and provide creative ideas towards the attainment of organizational objectives. Thus, the present study hypothesized that:

H3: *Career Opportunity is positively and significantly related with Employee Performance*

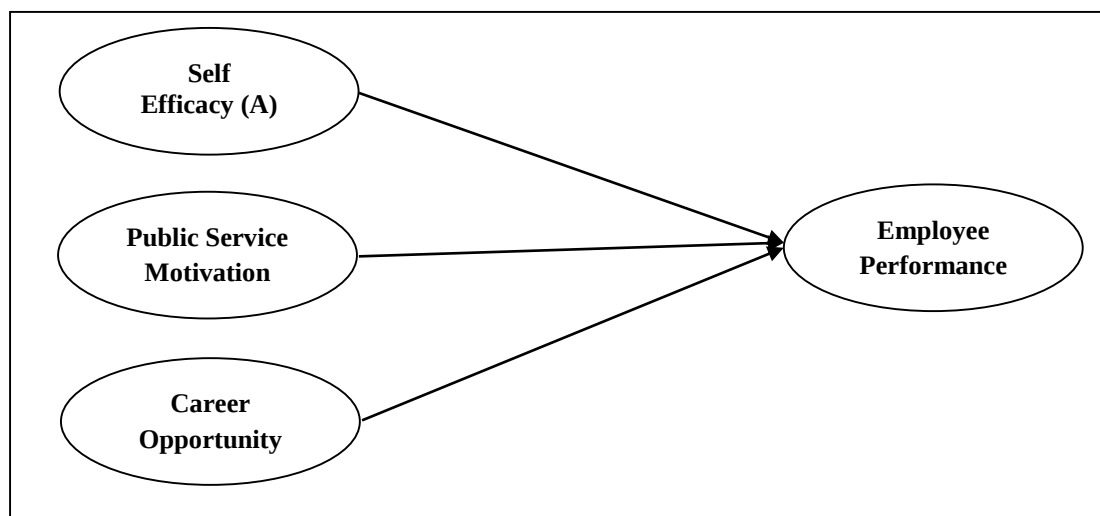


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Method

The study employed quantitative research approach using a survey in obtaining data. The data was collected through cross sectional (one shot) approach.

3.1 Participants and Procedure

The participants are one hundred and eighty six (186) public sector employees drawn from local governments in the northern part of Nigeria. The researcher in an attempt to reach out the participants sent a letter seeking for permission from the local governments involved before contacting the participant. All the respondents were contacted personally by the researcher during working hours. The participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and also informed that participation is open and voluntary to all staff. Because English is the official language in Nigeria, therefore, questionnaire was written in English language.

3.2 Variables Measurement

In line with the argument of scholars like Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Sebastian, and Wilczynski (2012), this study adopted the used of multiple items as against the single item in measuring both (dependent and independent) variables. Additionally, all the items were measured using five points scale that ranged from 1 to 5 (i.e. 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree)

3.2.1 Employee Performance: In measuring employee performance been the dependent variable, the study used the seven (7) items of employees in-role performance developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) was utilized. These items were used in several studies and recorded higher reliability values. The items measured the extent of which public sector employees perform assigned duties that are within his/her job descriptions.

3.2.2 Self Efficacy: For self efficacy, the construct was measured using eight (8) items new general self efficacy scale (NGSES) developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001). The items provided a short and valid scale.

3.2.3 Public Service Motivation: Public service motivation (PSM), which is a multi-dimensional construct, was measured by the Perry (1996) five (5) items drawn from the four major dimensions. These four dimensions are: Social Justice (SJ); Commitment to public interest (CPI); Compassion (CM); Self sacrifice (SS). Although, the construct of PSM is better represented by larger item and been a reflective construct, yet previous studies (Caillier, 2014; Coursey, Yang, & Pandey, 2012; Kim, 2005) had used these five short items and recorded good results. Therefore, the present study followed the same pattern used in previous studies.

3.2.4 Career Opportunity: was measured with three (3) items developed from the work of Kraimer *et al.* (2011). The items measured the perception of employees' career opportunities availabilities within their present organization.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to estimate the model and evaluate the results accurately, this study used Smart PLS 2.0 developed by Ringle, Wende, and Will (2005) to compute the path model. Also, guidelines of evaluating and reporting Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model PLS-SEM (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014) was followed. Whereby, measurement model was assessed then followed by the structural model.

In estimating the model and accurately evaluating the results, the study employed Smart PLS 2.0 (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). The study, also followed the standard guidelines of assessment and reporting of Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) as suggested by scholars (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2014), whereby, measurement model was first assessed then followed by the assessment of structural model.

4.1 The Measurement Model

As the model of this study (see Figure 1) consisted of only four reflective constructs, the study evaluated both the reliability and validity of all the major constructs. As for the indicators reliability, the study examined the outer loadings of all the constructs and only retained those with value between .40 to .70 as recommended by Hair Jr *et al.* (2014). Whereas, those items with lower loadings (i.e less than 0.40) were all deleted. Based on the criteria, three items from employee performance (EMP4, EMP5 and EMP6), one item from public service motivation (PSM5) and another item from self efficacy (SEF8) were deleted from the model. Therefore, out of the total of 23 items 18 were retained, while the remaining 5 were removed due to poor loadings. Moreover, the composite reliability values of all the four constructs are higher than the minimum .70 recommended minimum value (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Their value ranged between 0.798 - 0.886. Hence, suggesting high internal consistency and reliability of the constructs. Table 1 provides the detail summary of items loadings, composite reliability and AVE.

Table 1: Indicators loadings, composite reliability and AVE

Latent constructs	Indicator (Items)	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
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(AVE)				
Employee Performance	EMP1	0.806	0.842	
	EMP2	0.728		
	EMP3	0.775		
	EMP7	0.712		
Public Service Motivation	PSM1	0.618	0.810	0.519
	PSM2	0.739		
	PSM3	0.684		
	PSM4	0.826		
Career Opportunity	COP01	0.766	0.798	0.569
	COP02	0.803		
	COP03	0.691		
Self Efficacy	SEF1	0.678	0.886	0.527
	SEF2	0.727		
	SEF3	0.759		
	SEF4	0.685		
	SEF5	0.740		
	SEF6	0.739		
	SEF7	0.750		

Additionally, discriminant validity was tested in this study by comparing the correlations among the construct and the values of variance average extracted (AVE) as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The discriminant validity results as presented in Table 2 indicated that the squared roots values of all the latent constructs are greater than the correlations among the variables, thus indicating that the study variables have adequately attained the discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	EMP	SEF	PSM	COP
Employee Performance	0.756			
Self Efficacy	0.508	0.726		
Public Service Motivation	0.156	-0.045	0.721	
Career Opportunity	0.525	0.431	-0.030	0.755

Note: EMP=Employee Performance; SEF= Self Efficacy; PSM= Public Service Motivation; COP= Career Opportunity

4.2 Structural Model

Following the successful assessment of the reliabilities and validity of measurement model, the study also examines the structural model. In this regard, the significance of path coefficients, coefficient of determination (popularly called R^2), and the cross-validated redundancy (popularly called Q^2) were all examined.

Table3: Results of R^2 and Q^2

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Q^2
Employee Performance	0.407	0.227

For the coefficient of determination R^2 , result as shown in Table 3 above revealed that the three independent variables (self efficacy, public service motivation and career opportunity) put together explained 0. 407. This suggested that they explained about 41 percent variance in Employee Performance. Lastly, the result of models' predictive relevance Q^2 as presented in Table 3 reported a value of 0.227 indicating that the model really has predictive relevance since the value is higher than zero.

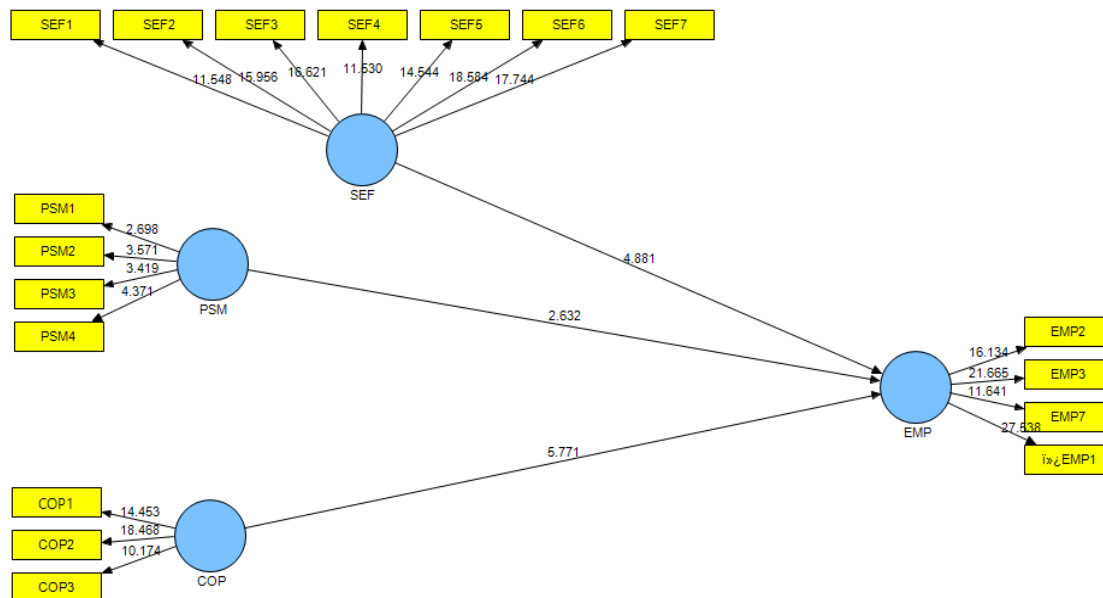


Figure 2: Results of the Structural Model

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing

Relationships	Beta	Std. Err	T. value	Decision
Self Efficacy -> Employee Performance	0.353	0.072	4.881	Supported
Public Service Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.183	0.070	2.632	Supported
Career Opportunity -> Employee Performance	0.378	0.066	5.771	Supported

The first hypothesis proposed that self efficacy is positively and significantly related with employee performance. Accordingly, the significance of path coefficient results as shown in Table 4 and Figure 2 revealed that the relationship between Self Efficacy and Employee Performance is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.353$; $SE = 0.072$; $t = 4.881$; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis one was substantiated. In this respect, the finding empirically confirmed the first hypothesis which is in line with previous studies (Sultan & Tareen, 2014; Wang & Netemeyer, 2002) and meta analysis (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Therefore, this result suggested that the stronger the employee' belief of his/her capability and competencies then the higher will be their work performance. Relatedly, the second hypothesis postulated that PSM is positively and significantly related with employee performance. Here, also, the result revealed that significant positive relationship between Public Service Motivation and Employee Performance ($\beta = 0.183$; $SE = 0.070$; $t = 2.632$; $p < 0.01$) was established. Thus, the result of this study also confirmed the second hypothesis and some previous empirical studies (Camilleri, 2007; Li, 2009; Naff & Crum, 1999). This finding indicated that PSM is an effective promoter of employee performance in local governments. Lastly, the third hypothesis which postulated positive and significant relationship between career opportunity and employee performance was also supported ($\beta = 0.378$; $SE = 0.066$; $t = 5.771$; $p < 0.01$). This result had also concurred with the argument of Career Motivation Theory (London, 1983), that employees perception of more career opportunities that matched their future goals within their present organization energizes them to exert high levels of performance. In general, this study has empirically proved that performance of employee can be improved by boosting their self efficacy (ability), PSM (motivation) and career opportunity (opportunity) as argued by AMO theory.

Table 5: Effect Size

Relationships	R ² Included	R ² Excluded	F ²	Effect Size
SEF-> Employee Performance	0.407	0.310	0.164	Medium
PSM->Employee Performance	0.407	0.373	0.057	Small
COP-> Employee Performance	0.407	0.292	0.194	Medium

Note: SEF= Self efficacy; PSM= Public Service Motivation; COP= Career Opportunity.

Results of the effect size as shown in Table 5 above suggested that self efficacy (SEF) and career opportunity (COP) exerted *Medium* effect on employee performance. On the other hand, public service motivation (PSM) exerted only *Small* effect on employee performance. Nevertheless, scholars like Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted (2003) are of the view that size effect is always important no matter how little it was exerted. Thus, as empirically substantiated, there is no doubt that all the three independent variable are important predictors of employees' performance.

4.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study has several theoretical and practical implications. On the theoretical perspectives, this study integrated self efficacy, PSM, career opportunity and performance research. While, previous studies on these variables (self efficacy, PSM, career opportunity) as predictors of performance were conducted separately the present study was able to integrate them under the ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) theory. Moreover, the study also provide empirical evidence on the importance on AMO theory in explaining that performance is a function of employees' ability, motivation and opportunity (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000). Again, the findings had statistically revealed career opportunity and self efficacy has more powerful effect then the effect exerted by PSM.

From the practical perspective, the findings of this study have also revealed several implications for managers/administrators particularly at local government levels. Since, practically the local government employees are often criticized for performing below average due to deficiencies related to their employees' ability, motivation and opportunity in performing their assigned responsibilities, the present study have empirically provide evidences that performance of local government can be improved by promoting their employees' abilities (self efficacy), motivation (PSM) and opportunities (career opportunities). Thus, continuous investment towards the development of employees' self efficacy, PSM and career opportunity is worthwhile. First, the findings revealed significant positive effect of self efficacy on employee performance. Therefore, Managers/administrators or supervisors can promote or strengthen employees self-efficacy through carefully selecting and hiring applicant(s) with strong self efficacy; providing them with

challenging assignments; provision of adequate professional development and coaching; supportive leadership style; and rewards for improvement (Lunenburg, 2011). Secondly, PSM was found to have significant positive relationship with employee performance. This suggested that local government managers/administrators can enhance their employees' performance by adapting selection criteria so as to select only candidates with strong PSM (whose sole motive is to serve the public). Although in the public sector organizations, as observed by Gould-Williams (2016) that it is normally assumed that the organizational goals and employees' personal goal are congruent (i.e serving the public). Therefore, public managers/administrators can also promote employees PSM through providing the employees with the required skills and abilities to achieve improved performance, and thereafter motivating them to use their skills to serve others (Warren and Chen 2013). Lastly, it was found that career opportunity exerted strong positive effect on employee performance. Consequently, managers/administrators at local government can enhance performance through career opportunity. This can be achieved by providing enabling environment for employees to perceive more career opportunities within their current organization. This can be achieved through some career opportunity measures like: perception or rather presence of adequate training/development opportunities, regular and merit based promotion opportunities (career growth), growth of remuneration, professional mentoring, enhanced responsibilities, job security and job rotation among others will serve as an important signal to the employees that their present organization is truly investing in them and that they are regarded as valuable organizational resources. In return, the employees will reciprocate with high performance that enables the achievement of organizational goals.

4.4 Limitations

Similar to other previous empirical studies, the present study also has some limitations that need to be mentioned. Since the study employed a cross-sectional not longitudinal approach in collecting data, therefore, the findings may be entirely different if the behaviors of the local government employees was observed over time or qualitative approach was applied. In this regards, this study recommend that future empirical studies may consider using longitudinal approach. In addition, the present study used only local government employees as sample. Therefore, combining the local, state (regional) and federal government employees for comparative analysis might yield different result.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to study the effects of self efficacy, public service motivation and career opportunity on the performance of local government employees. Inline with the argument of Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) theory, that performance of employee in organization is a function of their Ability to perform task, Motivation and Opportunity, this study empirically tested the direct relationships between self efficacy, public service motivation and career opportunity on the performance. In evaluating the hypothetical relationships, PLS- SEM was used.

The first hypothesis proposed that self efficacy is positively and significantly related with employee performance was empirically substantiated. Similarly, the second hypothesis that postulated that PSM is positively and significantly related with employee performance was also empirically supported. Lastly, the third hypothesis that postulated positive and significant relationship between career opportunity and employee performance was also statistically confirmed.

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