

**PERFORMANCE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS'
WORKERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CROSS RIVER STATE,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated the performance of employees of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with respect to rural development in Cross River State. The factors that enhance job performance and attitudes of workers as well as the constraints to their job performance were also studied. Information derived from a sample of 45 respondents; representing 15 of the 60 registered NGOs in the study area showed that majority of the respondents (77.7%) were within the age bracket of 31 – 50 years with about two-thirds of the sample being males. The educational level was relatively high as only 4.4% had First School Leaving Certificate. Only 4.4% said their income was very adequate. However, the job performance score was high as only 2.2 percent of the respondents had low score. The respondents were almost equally divided in their opinions about some constraints that affected their job performance such as unsatisfactory condition of service, low and irregular wages, and non-availability of appropriate materials and tools to carry out work. However, other constraints either affected only a few respondents or did not affect them at all. The attitude of majority of the respondents towards their job was found to be on the average and above average (positive). A chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between level of education and attitude and the job performance of respondents ($p < 0.05$). It is expected that if the various constraints that affect NGO workers' performance are specifically addressed, job performance will increase. It is also expected that an improvement in attitude will result in a remarkable improvement in job performance.

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INTRODUCTION

The rural areas have been recognised as a key sector in Nigeria and their rapid development and modernisation have gained the attention of policy makers and government officials. Rural areas form an important sector of the economy because a large majority of the people live therein; therefore, the general future of the country depends on it. Indeed, the rural sector constitutes the social and economic environment of the total population such that if it is not developed and set moving, many of the objectives of development programmes will be frustrated. The key to successful development in all countries according to Earl (1975), Mulgunji (1990) and Coldevin (2001) is the promotion of viable rural economy.

According to Williams (1978), about 80% of the people live directly or indirectly on the resources of the land. He observed that despite the growing importance of other sectors like oil and manufacturing, agriculture still accounts for a substantial percentage of the Gross National Product (GNP), employs the largest labour force, and is also the principal source of food and raw materials for the whole country.

Mulgunji (1990) revealed that the problem of rural development cannot be viewed as a narrow technical problem of increasing output, but that of the development of appropriate organisations and institutions to mobilise and induce members of the rural society to greater productivity, to help them overcome the constraints in the way of utilising available resources, and to enable them to distribute the results of their efforts equitably among themselves. Consequently, past governments have put in efforts to develop the rural areas. Despite these efforts, the condition of the rural people is still below the acceptable level. It is however, consoling that the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), through their private initiatives, have supplemented government's efforts towards ameliorating the poor conditions of the rural people.

NGOs are conceived by Mulgunji (1990) and Nyanoro (1992) as any grouping of people, constituted with unique aim of promoting development for a target population so that it masters its turning condition on the economic, political and socio-cultural levels. NGOs are characterised by extreme diversity, however, they share common feature as people coming together to address felt needs in a participatory manner (Edwards – Jones, 2001).

NGOs are important agents of change and development in the country especially at the grassroots. NGOs have significantly increased their commitment, both human and financial, to the cause of development, seeking actively to reach a greater number of people and to improve their quality of life (Mulgunji, 1990). In the views of Nwagha-Ngeri (1995) and Mougeot (2005), NGOs are better equipped for rural needs by virtue of their simplicity, the proximity to the grassroots, their ability to identify felt needs of the people and their efficient and cost effective mode of operation. NGOs, according to David (1982), owe their existence to the work outputs of their employees within the context of administrative and policy structures provided. To achieve their set goals, there must be material and human resources (workforce) on deck and working effectively and efficiently too.

Considering the importance of NGOs in complementing government's efforts in rural development, the need to assist rural people to achieve development and the importance of the human resource in harnessing the organisational objectives, there is therefore the need for an empirical insight into the performance of NGO workers in Nigeria, specifically, Cross River State vis-à-vis their socio-economic characteristics, factors that promote job performance, constraints to job performance and the workers' attitudes towards their job. The study was therefore conducted with the following specific objectives.

1. To identify the constraints to job performance among the selected NGO workers in Cross River State.
2. To determine the attitudes of the NGO workers towards their jobs; and
3. To identify the factors that enhance performance among NGO workers.

Hypothesis of the study

1. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between respondents' personal characteristics (age, gender, marital status, income, level of education) and their job performance in rural development.
2. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between respondents' attitudes and their job performance.

Methodology

This research was carried out in Cross River State. From the population of about 60 registered NGOs that are involved in rural development in Cross River State, 15 were randomly selected. From each of the selected NGOS, three field workers were randomly selected. This resulted in a total sample size of 45

respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents.

Results and Discussions

Personal characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (77.7%) fell within the age range of 30 and 50 years. Very few were below 30 years (13.3%) and above 50 years (8.9%). This means that majority of the NGO workers were of middle age. Most of the respondents (71.1%) were males, while 28.9% were females. About 38.8% were single, either because they were yet to marry or had lost their spouses. However, 57.8% of the respondents were married. Only 4.4% of the respondents were divorced.

The respondents were predominantly literate. Majority of them (33.3%) had Higher Diploma or Degree. Equal number of respondents (26.7%) had Secondary School Certificate and had acquired the National Diploma or National Certificate of Education (NCE). Only 4.4% had Primary School Certificate while 6.7% had Post-graduate Degrees.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age	< 30	6	13.30
	31 - < 40	15	33.30
	41 - < 50	20	44.40
	51 and above	4	8.90
Gender	Male	32	71.10
	Female	13	28.90
Marital Status	Single	7	37.80
	Married	26	57.80
	Divorced	2	4.40
Education	Primary school	2	4.40
	Secondary school	12	26.70
	ND/NCE	12	26.70

	HND/BSc	15	33.30
	Post-graduate (PGC, MSc, Ph.D)	3	6.70
	Others	1	2.20
Income	Very Adequate	2	4.40
	Adequate	16	35.60
	Fairly adequate	12	26.70
	Inadequate	11	24.40
	Fairly inadequate	1	2.20
	Very inadequate	3	6.70

Field survey, 2007

The study revealed that 35.6% of the workers considered the income they earn adequate while 26.7% of them considered their income to be fairly adequate. The rest (24.4%) considered their income to be inadequate. In the extreme cases, only 4.4% considered their income to be very adequate while 6.7% considered it to be very inadequate.

Uche (1984) noted that the nonchalant attitude to work of Nigerian workers is independent of geographical location, rural-urban residence, religious affiliation, sex or age. It is therefore a case of interest in the work itself.

Job performance

Table 2 shows the job performance score of the respondents. This was measured by performance score index derived from a set of questions with scores ranging from one for minimum to five for maximum. Only 2% of the respondents had low job performance. Majority of the respondents (55.6%) had average performance while 42.2% had high performance. These results are indicative of an acceptable level of job performance by the NGO workers in Cross River State. This may not be unrelated to their attitude to rural development as revealed by their attitude scores (Table 4). To enhance job performance of workers, Birchall (1978), Beti *et al* (2004) and Bessette (2004) believed that organisations must create those conditions necessary for jobholders to be motivated to achieve the task required to satisfy organisational work.

Table 2: Job performance Score of Respondents

Performance category	Range	Frequency	Percent
Low	< 40	1	2.2
Average	46 – 70	25	55.6
High	> 70	19	42.2

Field survey, 2007

Constraints to job performance

Table 3 presents attitudinal scores on constraints to job performance, as perceived by respondents involved in the study. An almost equal number of respondents (31.1%) stated that unsatisfactory conditions of service and job insecurity were constraints to work performance. On the other hand, 46.7% of the respondents agreed, while an equal number disagreed that low and irregular wages constituted a constraint to their job performance. Straus and Sayles (1960) established that the central issue to a person's work life is the pay. Many other authors today support this position.

Table 3: Constraints to job performance

S/No	Constraints	Strongly Agreed		Agree		Undecided		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Unsatisfactory conditions of service	5	11.1	14	31.1	2	4.4	15	33.3	9	20.0
2	Bad social relationship among workers	-	-	6	13.3	1	2.2	26	57.8	12	26.7
3	Low and irregular wages	-	-	21	46.7	3	6.7	21	46.7	-	-
4	Promotions not based on merit	-	-	13	28.9	-	-	18	40.0	14	31.0
5	Job security	7	15.6	14	31.1	1	2.2	22	48.9	1	2.2
6	Non-availability of appropriate tools and materials to carry out work	4	8.9	17	37.8	2	4.4	18	40.0	4	8.9
7	Lack of employee's control over how to perform his job	-	-	6	13.3	4	8.9	27	60.0	8	17.8
8	Monotonous and boring work	1	2.2	10	22.2	-	-	31	68.9	3	6.7
9	Limited access to training and skill acquisition	-	-	12	26.7	1	2.2	31	68.9	1	2.2
10	Lack of organisational performance standard and objectives	-	-	12	26.7	1	2.2	31	68.9	1	2.2
11	Lack of interest in working with rural people	-	-	5	11.1	2	4.4	30	66.7	8	17.8
12	Too many hazards on the field	3	6.7	6	13.3	5	11.1	25	55.6	8	13.3

Field survey, 2007

However, while low and irregular pay affected some NGO workers' performance, the contrary was the case with others. Money, fringe benefits and good working conditions, in the views of Haiwania and Higert (1977), are extremely important in the boosting of employees' performance but are only a starting point, since positive employee motivation today seems to be more related to the higher level needs of people.

Nearly 29% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the following factors were constraints to job performance: (a) lack of employee's control over how to perform his job (13.3); (b) Monotonous and boring work (24.4%); (c) Limited access to training and skill acquisition (26.7%); (d) Lack of organisational performance standard and objectives (26.7%). This negates the finding of Feeney (1981) which indicated that lack of good organisational performance standard was a major constraint to job performance. Other factors were, Lack of interest in working with rural people (11.1%); and (f) too many hazards in the field (20.0%).

Feeney (1981) and Coldevin (2001) contended that the way to increase productivity may be as simple as a performance improvement system that keeps employees informed of what needs to be done and rewards them for doing it.

Table 4: Attitude score of respondents

Performance category	Range	Frequency	Percent
Low	< 35	3	6.7
Average	36 – 55	33	83.3
High	> 55	9	20.0

Field survey 2006

Attitude of respondents to work

Attitude of respondents to work were also investigated in the study. The attitude score was categorised into low, average and high (Table 4). Majority of the respondents (83.3%) had average attitude towards the job. Only 6.7% were poorly disposed in attitude toward the job, while 20% had high attitude towards the job. The above results reveal that only very few respondents had low attitude score. This shows that most people working with NGOs do so out of interest in the job and therefore still have a high attitude irrespective of identified constraints as indicated in Table 3.

Most people working with NGOs in the views of Nwagha-Ngeri (1995) do so because of the indignation they feel about the living conditions of the

population, hunger and rural “achievements” and illiteracy of peasants, lack of health care, abandonment of environment to destructive forces, epidemics, over-population and malnutrition and also unemployment. The NGOs are therefore an expression of voluntary commitment to the development of their country from the grassroots.

Test of hypotheses

Null hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between respondents’ personal characteristics (age, gender, marital status, income, level of education) and their job performance in rural development.

Null hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between respondents’ attitudes and their job performance.

Table 5: Chi-square (χ^2) values showing relationship between respondents’ personal characteristics, attitude and job performance.

Variables	χ^2 values	df	P
Age	7.575	8	0.333
Gender	16.201	4	0.253
Marital status	8.442	4	0.134
Income	12.220*	4	0.008
Level of education	18.016*	8	0.027
Attitude	11.672*	4	0.03

*P<0.05

The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between age, gender, marital status and work performance of eh respondents (Table 5). However, educational status, income and attitude showed a significant relationship with job performance of (p<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

These results are in line with the findings of Ekpere (1973), which revealed that personal characteristics such as age, marital status, gender, etc. of workers are not sufficient to account for differences in their job performance level. This is however, contrary to the findings of Chu (1988), which revealed that in Taiwan,

gender and educational attainment showed significant relationships with job performance among workers.

Changes and differences in income and educational level were also found to affect job performance. Low income, irregular wages and low level of education in the views of Haiwania and Higert (1977) can adversely influence workers commitment to work.

The attitude score of the respondents is a reflection of their job performance score as shown in Table 4. This indicates that a further increase in attitude can lead to increased job performance since attitude significantly influences job performance.

Uche (1984) noted that the nonchalant attitude to work of Nigerian workers is independent of geographical location of rural urban residence, religious affiliation, sex or age. It is therefore a case of interest in the work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study showed that NGO workers in the Cross River State of Nigeria were predominantly males (71.1%). They were mostly married with about 77.7% within the age category of between 31 and 50 years. A simple majority of the respondents earned adequate income.

It was observed that the job performance and attitude score were relatively high with 97.8% and 93.3% of the respondents scoring average and above respectively, for both variables.

NGO workers' reactions to some constraints to job performance such as unsatisfactory condition of service, low and irregular wages and non-availability appropriate materials and tools to carry out work, were almost equally divided. Other constraints affected only very few of the respondents.

A significant relationship was found to exist between education, and attitude and job performance. There was also a significant difference among the respondents in the ranking of constraints to job performance.

In conclusion, young and qualified personnel who have interest in rural development should be employed to do the job and NGOs, as responsive organisation should strive to provide solutions to the constraints that affect job performance.

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