

Interpersonal Relations and Task Performance: A Multi-Level Empirical Evidence from the Nigerian Police Force

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study draws on the social network theory to examine the influence of interpersonal relations on the task performance at the individual employee, team and divisional levels in the Nigerian Police Force.

Design/methodology/approach: The study adopted a cross sectional survey design and a sample of 556 police men was selected through the application of multi-stage sampling procedures. The data collection instrument was designed in line with the 5-point Likert scale while the instrument was validated through content validity approach and the reliability of the instrument is determined using the test-retest method.

Findings: Data were collected through the self-report of the policemen while analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics, run mean test and Chi-square test and the results indicated that interpersonal relations influence employee, team and divisional task performance in the Nigerian Police Force.

Practical implications: We recommended that instrumental ties and social communities in the fabric of the Nigerian Police Force should be promoted to further advance the critical roles of crime fighting and prevention with a view to reducing criminality in Nigeria.

Originality/value: To the best of the authors' knowledge, this research is original and adds new value to the field by being the first of its kind.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The world of work and organizational life is a framework of different relationships (Eby & Allen, 2012). Accordingly, interpersonal relationship is one of the bond-cornerstones for the work setting, leading to effective and efficient job performance. The Nigerian Police Force engages in the task of crime fighting, prevention and maintenance of law and order in the country. Dambazau, (2014) states that there is a litany of security challenges bedeviling the Nigerian state and this circumstance requires instrumental ties for intelligence gathering, sharing of experience among colleagues and the pooling of work-related and socio-emotional resources for optimum performance of the police. The curbing of crimes in the society requires high quality networks, for crime fighting is inherently a relational act in the police force (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dutton & Ragins, 2007) Interpersonal relations, also known as one-on-one relationship suggests a strong, deep and close association between two or more people. Work place interpersonal relationship fosters true and positive feelings. This strong association among individuals working together in the same organization enhances

individual employee, team and divisional productivity of the police as they nurture and share a mutual bond for them to deliver their best.

Task performance has been a major focus of management and social science scholars who measure performance at the micro, meso and macro levels. In line with the position of (Colquitt, J.A. Lepine, 2011) task performance means a collection of employee behaviours which are tangential to the transformation of the resources of an entity to provide goods and services. It consists of duties, roles and responsibilities specified and expected of employees to fulfill and receive remuneration in return. In the context of the Nigerian Police in contemporary times, the police as a paramilitary agency are trained, armed and charged with the statutory responsibilities of crime prevention and detection, apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order, protection of life and property, control and regulation of traffic, protection of liberty of all its citizens and enforcement of all laws. Accordingly, the individual police officer, squads as teams and various divisions are obligated to fulfilling these responsibilities. Thus, task performance of the police with distinct responsibilities cannot be performed in a vacuum but embedded in psychological and behavioural relationships of groups and individuals (Campbell & Campbell, 2012)

Interpersonal relation as a trust moderator exerts effect on work performance in an organization (Pallotti & Alessandro, 2011). Obakpolo P, (2015) contends that performance of members of any business organization rely on the ability to effectively interact with their superiors, subordinates and other co-workers within the organisation, consumers, suppliers and the general public outside.

People problems are due to faulty interpersonal relations which hinders the attainment of organizational goals. At the end of the 20th century, the underlying thinking of management scholars is that human capital and resource (people) plays a more critical and an overarching role in public and private sector organizations as against financial and fixed capital such as cash, building or equipment. The 21st Century is driven by a knowledge economy and all the assets of an organization other than people are inert. Non-human resources are passive and require human application to create value (Poloski & Tamslare, 2004). Since we can see organisation as networks of connected people and as composition of relationship at large portion of work performance is tied to the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal connections. These interpersonal connections have a great impact on people's ability to get work accomplished and on the functioning of the organization as a whole (W. M. C et al., 2002; Nirea & Tomislare, 2004).

The diminishing capacity of effectiveness is ravaging both private and public sector organizations in Nigeria, especially the paramilitary agencies or institutions such as the Nigeria Police Force. In contemporary time, the Police force is however accused of performing poorly and particularly for lack of concern for the welfare and well-being of the rank and file. It is agreed by most people that, the police force is ill-prepared in meeting the demands with the modern policing ideologies (Linfoot, 2007). Some researches argue that, recruiting, selecting and hiring practices do not adequately identify those possessing adequate interpersonal skills, which is lacking in the Police Force in Nigeria (Decision, 2000; Mean et al., 2011b, 2011a).

Since the formation of the Nigerian Police Force, it has been trying to face its onerous task of crime prevention and control. As a critical part of the criminal justice system, the Police Force has been trying to maintain law and order but has been hindered by several obstacles ranging from lack of operational equipment and material, poor remunerations to inadequate training of officers and men (Rank and File) among others. Based on this, successive administrations in Nigeria and the Police leadership have tried to tackle these numerous challenges. Consequently, they have looked at the direction of improving the remunerations of officers and men, including provision of materials and retraining of personnel. But while these efforts have yielded minimal results, they have tended to be inadequate or even faulty.

They have appeared to have abandoned and overlooked interpersonal relations existing between officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force, as a critical variable to efficiency and effectiveness of the force. It is seen that the old top-bottom command chain, hierarchically structured and regimented nature of the force seems to be given a lot of trouble to the smooth functioning of the force and, in particular, to the overall performance of the force while, the officers do not have confidence in the men (Rank and File), the men on the other hand, seem to look at the officers with suspicion as they seem not to trust them. It is this fact above that have informed this research in order to redirect and refocus the attention of the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Government towards improving interpersonal relationship between officers and men in order to properly reposition the force for better performance. The broad objective of the study is to examine the influence of interpersonal relationship on the performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives of the study are to: examine how interpersonal relation influences employee task performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State; ascertain how interpersonal relation affects team performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State; establish the influence of interpersonal relation on divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State.

A. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The underpinning theoretical root of the study is grounded in the social network paradigm which stresses the connections between individual actors and social relations capable of generating social capital (Wasserman & Galaskiewicz, 1994). Interpersonal relations are embedded in the workplace and such relational structures grow beyond dyadic relations of superior-subordinate, leader-member, employer-employee and worker-coworker networks into poly-dyadic ties in an organizational fabric (Court et al., 2021; Eby & Allen, 2012; Granovetter, 1985).

In the light of the social capital framework, interpersonal relationships of police officers lay the groundwork for exchange of informational, expertise and experiential knowledge resources that facilitate the performance of crime fighting, prevention and institution of law and order in the society.

Accordingly, the Nigerian Police is to promote interpersonal relations in the performance of their statutory responsibilities at the individual, team and divisional levels. Furthermore, the Nigerian police would enhance the law enforcement capabilities through the building of instrumental ties and social communities with other relevant agencies at the macro level. In line with the theoretical foundation, scientific literature is reviewed to support the development of the hypotheses for the study.

B. Interpersonal relationships and task performance of the Nigerian Police

Interpersonal relation is a critical mass to organizational performance of the Nigerian Police Force. The failure of police officials and authorities to relate with others, especially the rank and file, crime fighting and prevention is bound to be a mirage. Hence system theory best suits this analysis. The system notion is often employed in social system, especially within the framework of functionalism. Important features that may define a system include interrelatedness or interconnection, interdependence or reciprocity, a network of role and, or interacting relationships, implicit in the concept of a system. Therefore, the Nigerian Police force structured or patterned relationships between a number of junior and senior officers, enables the system form a related whole. By implication, the effectiveness of a system and the decree of its sustenance, as well as the survival depend largely on the level of compatibility of the parts with themselves in their relationship to this whole (Onyeonoru, 2002).

With regards to one-on-one relationship of workers on organizational performances, the system approach is one of the most suitable theories. If the senior police officer relates properly, by knowing the needs of officers, family problem, to ask when an officer is happy or whether he has eaten or to be the level of interpersonal relational relationship, if a junior officer realizes that his superior care about him, he can begin to work hard to be productive and efficient. Therefore, the police force, effectiveness of the system, through interpersonal relations, can guarantee degree of its sustenance and survival in crime prevention, crime detection etc. This means that a forum of order or patterned social relationships in terms of groups and individuals should be instituted as an imperative for the effectiveness and efficiency the Nigeria Police Force.

One on one relationship between superior and subordinates is a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization. Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their utmost best. Brandt & Jones, (2006) argues interpersonal communication is the verbal exchange of thoughts or information between two or more people. Such words as share, discuss, argue and interact, refer to this form of two-way communication. Jacob, (2004) argues that Interpersonal relations is to develop and maintain effective relationships with other and to relate well with people from varied background and in different situations; show understanding, courtesy, empathy, concern and politeness.

Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, (1990) see interpersonal relations consisting of communication skills and rapport as vital aspects. Rapport is quite essentially differing among individuals and often regarded as clear concept. Rapport is a combination of mutual attention, positivity, coordination. Aberle et al., (2001) expanded these components into feeling of mutual interest and attention, positivity and coordination. Aberle et al., (2001) views these components into feeling of mutual interest and focus attention feeling and friendliness and warmth positivity, balance and harmony, coordination. He sees the efficacy of interpersonal skills in policing to involve mutual attention in the degree of interaction and experience. Positivity consists of the emotional aspect of this interaction and is characteristics of mutual liking or respect (Wojciszke & Baryla, 2009). Ahmed, (2002) asserted that to establish and maintain rapport, it requires six stratagems which are putting the subject at ease, expressing compassion, accessing the subject, showing expertise, establishing authority and balancing roles as major ingredients to foster interpersonal relations.

The effect of one-on-one relations breed trust on work group performance is easily cited as a hall mark of effective relations. This is one issue upon which experts from psychology, sociology, management, economics and political science tend to agree (Arrow, 1974; Berscheid, 1994; V. C, 2018; Coleman, 1990; Gambetta, 1988; Kramer & Tyler, 1996; Lindsfold, 1978) even though there is limited understanding of exactly what role interpersonal trust plays in a work relationship. Most of the trust-related research appears to position trust as a variable that has direct effects on work group process and performance. In other words when the level of

interpersonal relation increase, trust is increased, a group is expected to experience superior group process (e. g. higher levels of cooperation) and higher performance; but when trust is decreased as a result of lack of interpersonal relation, a group is expected to experience inferior group process and lower performance. This idea appears too implicit or explicitly underlines past and contemporary research on trust (Mc Gregor, 1967).

Though, scholars later, however argued that, although this proposition is intuitively appealing, there is no sufficient evidence to substantiate its validity. The approach described above, has so dominated the literature that other possible role for trust have been given limited attention. Although, many agree that Interpersonal trust tends to be a hallmark of effective groups, the effect of trust does not necessarily have to be direct. For example, Interpersonal trust could influence group process and performance indirectly through moderation. In this role, trust would facilitate (moderate) the relations between other variables and group performance. However, (Golembiewski, 1995) suggested that trust is a dynamic concept that may be reciprocated relating to group process and performance. Though, Kegan and Rubenstein's comment that, acceptance of this theory is often based on factors other than empirical testing and support (Klopfer & Rubenstein, 1977), still seems appropriate today. There is a growing body of empirical research, but the proposition's validity continues to rest mostly on implicit theories and conceptual literature as hinted by Klopfer & Rubenstein, (1977)

Golembiewski, (1995) has frequently cited trust arising from interpersonal relations determinants of group performance (Golembiewski, 1995). In prior research, the argument for a main effect of trust on performance is relatively straightforward. Simply stated, trust increases the ability of group members to work together. Since work group requires that individuals work together, trust is both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness expected to be positively related to trust as a result of group one on one relations, as the later may improve cooperation and the motivation to work jointly (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). That, in turn many improve the group's execution of its task. Efficiency is expected to increase, as trust reaches the need for control (e.g. rule, monitoring) and increases the ability to confront performance problems; both of these factors facilitate the maximal utilization of the group's resources (Bromiley & Gummny, 1995; Larson & LaFasto, 1989).

The performance of the Nigeria Police Force has not been satisfactory. The police are ineffective and inefficient in their jobs of prevention crime, criminal investigation, apprehension of crime perpetrators and response to distress call by citizens. The poor performance is due to several factors, namely; inadequate personnel in terms of quality of interpersonal relations, quality and competence at various ranks, poor training and guidelines of service; lack of public cooperation, poor remuneration and lack of welfare programmes etc.

C. Hypothesis of the Study

H₁: Interpersonal relation influences employee task performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State

H₂: Interpersonal relation affects team performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State

H₃: Interpersonal relation influences divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Bayelsa State

II. METHODS

Survey research approach is suitable and the focus of this study is cross-sectional, and the advantages of identifying attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals, the economy of the design and the rapid approach to data collection. Also, survey design is carried out mainly to test and validate hypothesis. The study population is 4,612 consisting of Senior Police Officer (SPOS, 354), Inspector of Police (Inprs 602), Sergeants (Sgts. 1, 062), Corporals (2,161) and Police Constable (433) across the eight Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The sample of the study is 553 police officers. This was determined through the application of Cochran simple size determination formula (Cochran, 1963). In selecting the sample of study, purposive sampling method was employed in the selection of eight divisional police headquarters. For the number of police men, a proportional stratified sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents from each divisional police headquarters and the cadre were adequately represented in the sample. The data collection instrument was designed on a 5-point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data were collected through the self-report of police officers and analysed through the application of descriptive statistics and run mean test and chi-square test for the hypothesis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on the Individual task performance of the Nigerian Police

<i>Interpersonal roles foster individual task performance</i>	
<i>N</i>	553
<i>Mean</i>	3.37
<i>Std. Deviation</i>	1.322
<i>Minimum</i>	1
<i>Maximum</i>	5
<i>25th</i>	2.00
<i>Percentiles50th (Median)</i>	4.00
<i>75th</i>	4.00

Source: SPSS 23 windows output

The table 1 displays the descriptive statistics on the influence of interpersonal relation on the individual task performance of the Nigerian Police. The statistics demonstrates the mean value of 3.37, standard deviation of 1.322 and the various percentiles are 25th is 2.00, 50th is 4.00 and 75th is 4.00. From the mean value, the respondents affirmed that interpersonal relations influenced the individual task performance of police officers as demonstrated that by the mean value above the criterion mean of 3 on the 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 2. Mean Runs Test of the influence of interpersonal relations on the individual task performance of the Police

<i>Interpersonal roles foster individual police task performance</i>	
<i>Test Valuea</i>	3.37
<i>Cases < Test Value</i>	215
<i>Cases >= Test Value</i>	338
<i>Total Cases</i>	553
<i>Number of Runs</i>	16
<i>Z</i>	-22.196
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000

Table 2 shows the Mean Run test to examine the influence of interpersonal relationships on the individual task performance of the Nigerian Police. The result indicated that interpersonal relationship has a significant

influence on the individual task performance of the Nigerian Police sine the p value is less than the chosen alpha ($Z = 22.20, P < 0.05$). Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on the team task performance of the Police

<i>The interpersonal relation encourages team performance</i>	
<i>N</i>	553
<i>Mean</i>	3.52
<i>Std. Deviation</i>	1.358
<i>Minimum</i>	1
<i>Maximum</i>	5
<i>25th</i>	2.00
<i>Percentiles50th (Median)</i>	4.00
<i>75th</i>	5.00

The table 3 displays the descriptive statistics on the influence of interpersonal relation on the team task performance of the Nigerian Police. The statistics demonstrates the mean value of 3.52, standard deviation of 1.35 and the various percentiles are 25th is 2.00, 50th is 4.00 and 75th is 5.00. From the mean value, the respondents affirmed that interpersonal relations influenced the team task performance of police officers as demonstrated that by the mean value above the criterion mean of 3 on a 5-point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 4. Mean Runs Test of the influence of interpersonal relations on the team task performance of the Police

<i>The interpersonal relation encourages team performance</i>	
<i>Test Value^a</i>	3.52
<i>Cases < Test Value</i>	224
<i>Cases >= Test Value</i>	329
<i>Total Cases</i>	553
<i>Number of Runs</i>	16
<i>Z</i>	-22.214
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000

a. Mean

Table 4 shows the Mean Run test to examine the influence of interpersonal relationships on the team task performance of the Nigerian Police. The result indicated that interpersonal relationship has a significant influence on the team task performance of the Nigerian Police since the p value is less than the chosen alpha ($Z=22.21, P < 0.05$). Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5. Observed Frequency Counts of the influence of interpersonal relations on the divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police

	<i>The interpersonal relation among departments in the Nigerian police promotes divisional task performance</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
<i>Southern Ijaw</i>	4	4	5	12	8	33
<i>Brass</i>	4	6	4	7	8	29
<i>Kolokuma/Opokuma</i>	7	5	2	16	5	35
<i>Nembe</i>	4	5	4	10	9	32
<i>Ogbia</i>	7	4	3	13	10	37
<i>Sagbama</i>	5	7	4	16	7	39
<i>Yenagoa</i>	47	50	29	122	63	311
<i>Ekeremo</i>	5	4	3	18	7	37
<i>Total</i>	83	85	54	214	117	553

Source: SPSS window 23 Output

Table 5 displays the observed frequency counts of the influence of interpersonal relations on the divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police. The frequency counts of the various divisional headquarters indicated that most of the respondents affirmed that interpersonal relationship influenced the task performance of the divisions in Bayelsa state. By examining the column totals, the frequency counts for strongly agree and agree has the higher frequency counts as against disagree and strongly disagree. This simply shows that interpersonal relations influenced task performance of the police at the divisional level.

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests on the influence of interpersonal relations on divisional task performance of the Police.

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
<i>Pearson Chi-Square</i>	13.034a	28	.993
<i>Likelihood Ratio</i>	13.082	28	.993
<i>Linear-by-Linear Association</i>	.008	1	.930

N of Valid Cases 553

a. 12 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.83

Table 6 above is the chi-square test to determine the influence of interpersonal relations on the divisional task performance of the Nigerian police. The results indicated that interpersonal relations significantly influenced the divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police Force. ($X^2 = 3.03, p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7. Symmetric Measures of the interpersonal relation and divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police Force

		<i>Value</i>	<i>Approx. Sig.</i>
<i>Nominal by Nominal</i>	<i>Contingency Coefficient</i>	.152	.993
<i>N of Valid Cases</i>		553	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 7 indicates the direction of the influence of interpersonal relation on the divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police. The result from the contingency coefficient shows that interpersonal relation has a positive influence on the task performance at the divisional level ($N = .0. 15$).

A. Discussion of Findings

From the data analyses, the results demonstrate that interpersonal relationships influenced the individual task performance of police officers, the team task performance of the police officers and the divisional task performance of the police officers in Nigeria. The finding that interpersonal relation influenced the task performance of the individual police officer is in agreement with the prior study of (Ayoke & Martha, 2022) who found that the dimensions of interpersonal relationships of effective communication, team building and social support contributed to employee performance in deposit money banks. In combination of the dimensions, the study further indicated that high quality interpersonal relationships influenced the task performance of employees.

At the team and group level of performance, the current study indicated that interpersonal relationships significantly influenced the team performance of the Nigerian Police. The empirical evidence of our study is consistent with the work of (Jehn & Shah, 1997) that there was a relationship between interpersonal relations and group performance and that friendship group performed better than acquaintance groups on the decision making and motor task performance of greater degree of commitment and co-operation.

Adsubomi, (2018) investigated the roles interpersonal relationship in contemporary Nigerian organizations and affirmed that interpersonal relationships among people stimulated the organizational efficiency of telecommunications and new generation banks. From the point of the divisional police office, the prior empirical evidence corroborated the finding of the current study that interpersonal relations positively affected the divisional task performance of the Nigerian Police Force. In addition, the findings of the current study underpinned the social capital and the social network theoretical foundations that workplace is a web of relationships which provide the seedbed for the exchange of useful resources, thereby promoting task performance the police force at all levels.

The result of this study shows lack of one-on-one relation among officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force. It also shows that, interpersonal relations can encourage teamwork, performance and efficiency in the Police Force. One major finding is as a result of top-Bottom Command system were officer give orders and directives, and are taken by the rank and file without questioning. This Command structure failed to encourage empathy among and it encouraged feeling of fear and unwillingness to carry out one’s responsibility including: lateness to work, absenteeism, truancy and act of hostility to both colleagues and the public. In other words, lack of interpersonal relation negatively influences performance in Bayelsa state Police Command.

This find further confirms the system theory which emphasizes the need to see an organization consisting of interdependent parts and units. Thus, every individual, groups, divisions should work as one to ensure efficient and effective performance of the Nigerian Police force. There is disconnect between the superior

officer and men of the force, which also destroys group performance, in form of in-put-process-output model. We expect behavior process to carry the relationship between trust and group performance.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Recommendations

In order to successfully deal with subordinates, senior Police officers should be given knowledge and should possess the following interpersonal skills. Based on the findings of the study, we recommended that

1. Police officers should foster relationship building, develop and maintain conversation and interaction and not orders and commands.
2. Both senior and junior police officers should cultivate the attitude of listening to junior officers, both vertical and horizontal relationship is required for efficiency,
3. Superior police officers should imbibe empathy by understanding needs and feelings of others, which is against the command system.
4. Police officers should encourage giving feedback in communication process, listening skills are the beginning of successful communication, and they are especially important for good interpersonal relations with subordinates.

Conflict of Interest. The authors declare no potential conflict of interest in regard to the publication of the manuscript.

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