
Online Communication Tools and Information Managers Job Performance in State Owned Universities in Rivers State.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper delved into the impact of Online Communication Tools on the Job Performance of Information Managers in State-Owned Universities located in Rivers State. The primary objective was to assess the extent to which online communication tools enhance the cost efficiency and productivity of Information Managers in these universities. The research employed a descriptive survey design, focusing on two state-owned universities within Rivers State: Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. To collect data, a structured questionnaire was utilized, utilizing a four-point Likert scale for grading responses. The analysis of the gathered data involved the use of mean and standard deviation statistics. Specifically, items with a mean value of 2.49 or lower were deemed to indicate a low extent, while those with a mean value of 2.50 or higher were regarded as demonstrating a high extent. The predetermined criterion mean for this study was set at 2.50. Hypotheses were assessed using an independent z-test. Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that a significant proportion of Information Managers exhibited a lack of proficiency in utilizing modern communication infrastructure, particularly Online Communication tools. Consequently, the study recommended that Information Managers should dedicate time to receive training and undergo periodic retraining, even amidst their demanding work schedules, to acquire proficiency in these tools. Additionally, the study advised Information Managers to adapt to emerging trends in the realm of e-communication or online communication and emphasized the importance of being attentive listeners in their roles.

Keywords: Online, Communication Tools, Information Managers and Job Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Communication has been an integral part of human society since its inception, as it is impossible to imagine a world where individuals did not interact with one another. The concept of communication is multifaceted, with varied interpretations depending on one's perspective. It functions as both a process and a means to access the thoughts of others. Moreover, communication serves as a unifying thread in all aspects of management, including planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and coordination.

According to Obamiro (2008), communication can be defined as the exchange of information between a sender (source) and a receiver (destination) with the aim of ensuring that the message is not only received but also comprehended, leading to subsequent action. Effective communication involves conveying a message and receiving feedback from the recipient, indicating their understanding. This process of transmitting and receiving information is pivotal in all facets of organizational life.

Throughout history, various forms of communication have emerged, with early humans resorting to diverse methods for interaction, whether in close proximity or across great distances. These methods encompassed verbal language, signals, symbols, gestures, music, dance, sounds, visual cues, and more. This analog mode of communication prevailed until the 21st century, marked by the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the proliferation of Online Communication.

Online Communication, as defined by IG Global authors and editors (2023), refers to electronic communication facilitated through channels like email, personal or instant messaging, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and various other transmission methods over the internet. Loglia (2016) emphasizes the ubiquity of online communication in modern society, underscoring its significance as a crucial tool in business operations. Almost everyone now engages in some form of online communication, enabling Information Managers to connect with individuals worldwide, whether halfway across the globe or just in the neighboring office. This mode of communication encompasses various channels, including Video-Conferencing, Email/SMS/Message, and Conference Calls.

Video conferencing enables people to communicate as if they were physically present in the same room, offering real-time audio, video, and text capabilities. It facilitates seamless communication regardless of participants' geographical locations. Email, the earliest form of online communication, has significantly reduced the reliance on traditional postal services. It remains a widely used method for personal and professional communication, relying on online interfaces hosted by various Internet Service Providers. SMS, or Short Message Service, is another text-based communication method for mobile devices, allowing users to exchange short messages.

Conference calls serve as an effective alternative to face-to-face meetings when properly managed. Efficient planning is essential to ensure that these calls yield productive outcomes.

Information Managers play a pivotal role in organizations by overseeing systems that provide information and safeguarding confidential data. They are responsible for organizing administrative tasks, managing data and information, and facilitating efficient communication. To excel in their roles, Information Managers must possess strong communication skills, both in general and in the realm of online communication.

Job performance is a critical aspect of an individual's contribution to an organization's success. It can be categorized into two dimensions: task performance and contextual performance.

Task performance involves the use of specific skills and knowledge to support an organization's core technical processes. It encompasses an employee's core job responsibilities and is reflected in the quality and quantity of work outcomes.

Contextual performance extends beyond formal job responsibilities and includes activities that contribute to the overall well-being of the organization. It encompasses behaviors such as coaching, strengthening social networks within the organization, volunteering for additional work, adhering to organizational rules, assisting coworkers, and going the extra mile for the organization.

Effective communication is a two-way process that not only involves conveying a message clearly but also actively listening to understand the full meaning of what others are saying. When Information Managers utilize Online Communication Tools, including Video-Conferencing, Email/SMS/Message, and Conference Calls, they can enhance their job performance by promoting cost efficiency, productivity, the smooth flow of information, on-time delivery, and improved service and work quality.

In conclusion, communication has been an integral part of human existence, evolving over time to encompass various forms, including online communication. Information Managers must harness these tools effectively to excel in their roles and contribute to organizational success. Effective communication is a key driver of job performance and overall productivity, emphasizing the importance of both transmitting and receiving messages clearly and comprehensively.

Conceptual framework

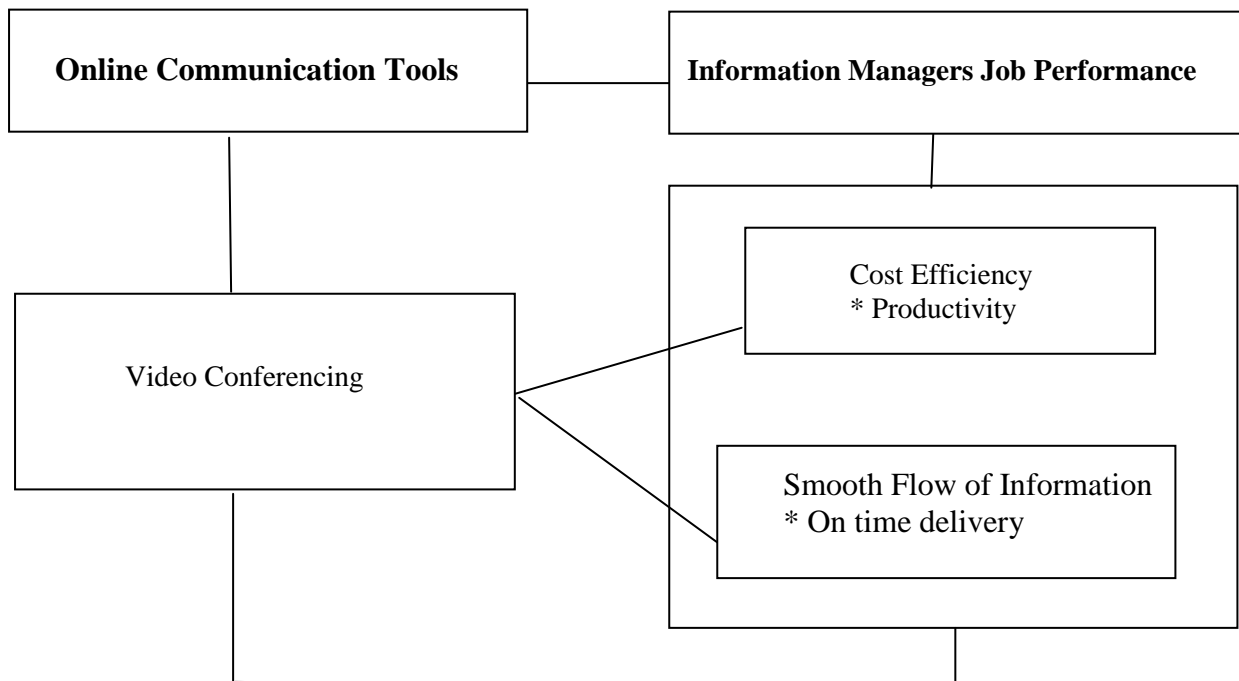


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of Online Communication Tools and Information Managers Job Performance in Rivers State Owned Universities

Source: Koopman, (2011), Spacey, (2018) & Researcher's Desk (2022)

Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to examine Online Communication Tools and Information Manager's Job Performance in State Owned Universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the general objectives of the study were to:

1. examine how online communication tools had improved information managers cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State.
2. determine how online communication tools had enhanced information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in line with the purpose of the study:

1. In what ways had online communication tools improved information managers job performance on cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State?
2. What are the online communication tools that had enhanced information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated in line with the purpose of the study and were tested at a 0.05% level of significance.

Ho₁. There was no significant relationship between cost efficiency and productivity of information managers' job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State.

Ho₂. There was no significant relationship on smooth flow of information and on time delivery of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State.

Concept of Online Communication Tools

Online Communication refers to electronic means of transmitting information over the internet, including email, personal or instant messaging, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and various wired or wireless transmission methods such as telephone lines and satellites. This mode of communication has become pervasive in our contemporary society, recognized as a fundamental tool in the realm of business. Nearly everyone engages in some form of online communication, facilitating connections with individuals worldwide, whether they are halfway around the globe or just in the adjacent office. It also encompasses the interaction between individuals and computers within a computer network, particularly on the internet.

Three prevalent forms of video conferencing are elaborated below:

a) **Desktop Video Conferencing:** This widely used method is typically employed on desktop computers or laptops. It is user-friendly, requiring simple software installation for instant communication. Basic equipment like a webcam and microphone, often integrated into modern laptops, is all that's necessary.

b) **Telepresence:** Often depicted in movies, telepresence creates a lifelike meeting experience where participants appear life-size on multiple screens or monitors simultaneously. These screens may encircle a desk in a circular arrangement or be mounted on a wall. Some advanced telepresence setups include large curved screens, specialized lighting, and acoustics, striving to replicate face-to-face interactions closely. The goal is to offer a virtual

version of in-person meetings, with some screens even displaying life-sized images, making it suitable for detailed product inspections and the like.

c) **Room-Based:** Room-based video conferencing is conducted exclusively from a dedicated room, serving as the venue for all meetings, whether in person or via video. These rooms are equipped with permanent screens and projectors, ensuring easy access for meetings.

The Concept of Job Performance:

Performance is a multifaceted construct aimed at achieving results and is closely tied to an organization's strategic goals (Mwita in Massoudi, 2016). Employee performance refers to the tasks related to a specific job and how effectively these tasks are executed by employees. In any organization, employee performance is of paramount importance, as the success or failure of the organization hinges on the performance of its employees.

Job Performance of Information Managers:

An Information Manager is responsible for overseeing systems that provide information to individuals within a company, institution, or organization while also safeguarding sensitive information. Internet technologies serve as their primary tools in tasks such as email management, web searching, intranet management, and website design. To be effective, Information Managers must excel in both efficiency, which involves performing tasks correctly and swiftly, and effectiveness, which entails prioritizing the right tasks to achieve desired outcomes.

Information Managers play a pivotal role in the daily operations of an office. They may manage administrative or support staff, organize meetings, maintain databases, coordinate events and conferences, handle correspondence, supervise tasks such as letter writing and report generation, manage office budgets, implement and maintain administrative procedures, delegate tasks, conduct new employee induction programs, maintain personnel records, and arrange interviews, among other responsibilities.

Types of Online Communication:

Online Communication encompasses a diverse range of methods, including chat rooms, internet messaging applications, email, online forums, form submissions, social media comments, social networking, and online conferencing, both video and audio. Here are explanations of a few of these methods:

a) **Chat Rooms:** Chat rooms facilitate synchronous and, at times, asynchronous conferencing. They allow users to share text-based information in real-time with a group of participants. Chat rooms differ from instant messaging programs, which are typically designed for one-on-one communication. Users in a chat room are connected through shared internet or similar connections, covering a wide range of subjects. Some chat rooms also incorporate audio and video communication.

b) **Instant Messaging Programs:** Instant Messaging (IM) refers to text-based communication between two or more participants over the internet or other networks. IM technology enables real-time text transmission, with short messages being sent when the user selects "send." Some IM applications offer real-time text transmission character by character. This technology facilitates quick communication between parties.

c) **Electronic Mail (Email or E-mail):** Email is a method of exchanging messages between individuals using electronic devices. Email systems allow the sending, forwarding, delivery, and storage of messages, with users not needing to be online simultaneously. Email has gained widespread acceptance in businesses, governments, and organizations worldwide and plays a pivotal role in modern workplace communication.

In the contemporary business world, where physical proximity is not always feasible, online communication offers a cost-effective and convenient means of exchanging information among individuals who may be geographically distant. Email, for instance, provides an efficient way to communicate without incurring setup costs and is generally more economical than in-person meetings or phone calls.

Information Managers leverage these online communication methods effectively to enhance job performance in universities and other institutions. These tools offer numerous benefits, making it easier and quicker for people to stay connected with friends and family worldwide.

Theatrical Framework

Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory

In 1992, Joseph Walther introduced the Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory within the realm of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The SIP Theory asserts that individuals engaged in communication through digital platforms exchange social information by means of the content, style, and timing of their online messages. It suggests that participants in CMC have the capacity to alleviate interpersonal uncertainty, form opinions, and foster connections in the virtual environment, similar to their abilities in face-to-face (F2F) interactions. This theory contradicts the notion that the absence of nonverbal cues hampers one's ability to exchange information effectively.

Nevertheless, online communication is inherently slower than face-to-face interactions due to various factors, including the limitations imposed by the medium itself and the constraints inherent to both instrumental and relational aspects of online discourse. These constraints can lead to inefficiencies in online communication. When time is restricted, digital interactions tend to become more impersonal and task-focused. Conversely, in situations where time constraints are less stringent or non-existent, communicators can attain levels of impression formation and relational development that are akin to those observed in face-to-face settings.

Methodology

The research employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the subject matter. The study was conducted within the premises of two state-owned universities in Rivers State, specifically Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample selection process involved the use of a simple random sampling technique, which resulted in the inclusion of 460 participants, comprising Faculty and Administrative Officers, as well as Secretaries, from both universities. Each university contributed 228 respondents to form the overall study population.

Data collection was facilitated through the utilization of a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale, with responses categorized as follows: Very High Extent (VHE - 4 Points), High Extent (HE - 3 Points), Low Extent (LE - 2 Points), and Very Low Extent (VLE - 1 Point). Prior to its use, the questionnaire underwent a thorough face validation process, involving assessment by three experts affiliated with the Department of Office and Information Management.

To ensure the instrument's reliability, a test-retest method was employed. This method involved administering the questionnaire to an equivalent number of participants from the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, who were not included in the original sample. The validated questionnaire copies were then distributed to the respondents through administrative channels and subsequently collected after a two-week period.

Data analysis was carried out using mean and standard deviation statistics. Items with a mean value of 2.49 or lower were classified as indicating a low extent, while items with a mean value of 2.50 or higher were deemed to reflect a high extent. This criterion was applied to assess the research findings.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1

In what ways had online communication tools improved information managers job performance on cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State?

Table 1. Distribution for Properties on ways online communication tools had improved information managers job performance on cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State

Dimension	Properties	RSU n=228			IAUE n=228		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
cost efficiency and productivity	Video conferencing enhances Information Managers productivity and cost efficiency	2.97	0.98	HE	2.82	1.00	HE
	Video conferencing is the only means Information Manager is productive	2.31	0.92	LE	2.10	0.88	LE
	Lack of encouragement reduces the productivity of information manager	3.12	1.00	HE	2.98	0.96	HE
	Information managers need regular training to be efficient and effective at his/her work place	3.00	0.86	HE	3.20	0.98	HE
	Grand Mean	2.85	0.94	HE	2.78	0.96	HE

The result from table 1 above revealed the grand mean ratings of the respondents in research question 1 which examine online communication tools can improve information managers job performance on cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State. Responses to items 1, 3, and 4 had a grand mean above 2.50 and were of high extent, while item 2 had a grand mean below 2.50 and was of low extent.

Research Question 2

What are the online communication tools that had enhanced information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State?

Table 2. Distribution for Properties on the ways online communication tools had enhanced information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State

Dimension	Properties	RSU n=228			IAUE n=228		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
smooth flow of information and on time delivery	Video conferencing enhances information managers on time delivery	3.00	0.88	HE	3.10	0.98	HE
	Information manager delivers information on time using video conferencing	2.92	0.96	HE	2.93	0.88	HE
	Information managers are never efficient in their communication with boss's and lacks smooth flow of communication with colleagues	2.23	1.00	LE	2.18	1.00	LE
	Healthy work place is a big plus to information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery at their work place	2.64	0.98	HE	3.10	0.96	HE
	Grand Mean	2.70	0.98	HE	2.83	0.96	HE

The result from table 2 above revealed the grand mean ratings of the respondents in research question 2 which investigated online communication tools that can enhance information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State. Responses to items 1, 2, 4, and 4 had a grand mean above 2.50 and were of high extent, while item 3 had a grand mean below 2.50 and was of low extent.

Hypotheses

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between cost efficiency and productivity of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State

Table 3: z-test Analysis on cost efficiency and productivity of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	Z-Cal	Z-Crit	LS	Decision
RSU	228	2.85	0.94	454	1.8052	1.96	0.05	Accepted
IAUE	228	2.78	0.96					

The table above shows that participants from Rivers State University had mean and standard deviation scores of 2.85 and 0.94 respectively, while participants in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education had mean and standard deviation scores of 2.78 and 0.96 respectively. The z-cal value was 1.85, while z-crit was 1.96 with a degree of freedom of 454 at a 0.05 level of significance. This result shows that z-cal was less than z-crit which implies that the null hypothesis was Accepted. Thus, there is no significant relationship on the mean responses of respondents on online communication tools on the cost efficiency and productivity of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State.

Ho₂. There is no significant relationship on work flow information and on time delivery of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State

Table 4: z-test Analysis on work flow and on time delivery of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	Z-Cal	Z-Crit	LS	Decision
RSU	228	2.70	0.96	454	1.8432	1.96	0.05	Accepted
IAUE	228	2.83	0.96					

The table above shows that participants from Rivers State University had mean and standard deviation scores of 2.70 and 0.96 respectively, while participants in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education had mean and standard deviation scores of 2.83 and 0.96 respectively. The z-cal value was 1.85, while z-crit was 1.96 with a degree of freedom of 454 at a 0.05 level of significance. This result shows that z-cal was less than z-crit which implies that the null hypothesis was Accepted. Thus, there is no significant relationship on the mean responses of respondents on information managers work flow and on time delivery of information managers job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings of this study strictly followed the two research questions and two hypotheses raised in this study. From the research question of ‘in what ways had online communication tools improved information managers job performance on cost efficiency and productivity in state owned universities in Rivers State, the association between the result from table 1 revealed the grand mean ratings of the respondents in research question 1. Responses to items 1, 3, and 4 had a grand mean above 2.50 and were of high extent, while item 2 had a grand mean below 2.50 and was of low extent. According to Loggia (2016), online communication is extremely prevalent in our current society, and it is an essential business tool. Almost everyone participates in some form of online communication; online communication allows us to communicate with one person half way around the world or a person in the cubicle next to us, send a message that can be answered later, or one that needs an immediate response. It means that if information managers are conversant with the use of online communication tools, there will be cost efficiency and productivity in their job performance in state owned universities in Rivers State.

The research question 2 revealed the grand mean ratings of the respondents in research question 2 which investigated online communication tools that can enhance information managers smooth flow of information and on time delivery in state owned universities in Rivers State. Responses to items 1, 2, 4, and 4 had a grand mean above 2.50 and were of high extent, while item 3 had a grand mean below 2.50 and was of low extent. Communication is a vital management component in any university and for information manager to have a smooth flow of information and on time delivery, effective communication plays an integral role (SHRM, (2023). To be successful therefore, universities should have comprehensive policies and strategies for communicating with their information managers especially and other university community at large.

Conclusion

In this paper it was revealed that communication is the nervous system of any organized group though it suffers a lot of difficulties in the sending and receiving process both internally and externally, but still it is the only means by which ideas, feeling, emotions and

all forms of interpersonal relationship can be communicated. It was found that organizational performance depends on effective Online Communication and also that organizational environment affect communication. It seems to me that Online Communication is a possibility and a challenge which we all should explore in our various universities. In communicating effectively, there should be understanding and retention of the information being past for the whole essence of communication to be achieved. The goal of Online Communication is the same as the goal in face-to-face communication which is to bond, share information, to be heard and be understood. Communication should be timely, useful and relevant for it to be effective and serve its purpose.

It therefore concluded that:

Most Information Managers are awkward in terms of modern communication infrastructure which is mainly the Online Communication tools, it is necessary therefore for Information managers to make out time to go for training and retraining despite their busy official schedules to master these tools. Information Managers are expected to know the difference between the various job performance in the universities which are task and contextual performances as to know where they fit better.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Information Managers should be more abreast with their various job performances.
2. They should adapt to new trends in the area of e-communication or online communication and also be good listeners.
3. There should be regular workshops/seminar trainings for information managers in organizations so they can be better equipped with online communication tools to enhance their administrative efficiency.

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