Social Control And Emotional Control As Predictors Of Job Engagement Among Officers In Nigerian Immigration Training School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the extent to which social skills of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training School predicts their job engagement. The social skills dimensions investigated in the present study were social control and emotional control. Two research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses were developed to guide the study. A sample of 217 training officers was drawn for the study using the census sampling technique. Data collection was done using two instruments titled Social and Emotional Control Assessment Scale (SECAS) and the Employee Engagement Scale (EES). Validity of the instruments were established through the expert panel approach whereby the instruments were given to test experts. Reliability of the instruments were established using the Cronbach Alpha method with the total scales of the SECAS yielding a coefficient of 0.86, while the EES had a coefficient of 0.87. Simple regression was used to answer research questions. For testing the corresponding null hypotheses, ANOVA associated with simple regression was used. Result revealed that social skills of social control and emotional control were significant predictors of job engagement. Based on this results, it was recommended among other things an evaluation system should be provided whereby the social skills level of training officers can be assessed and improved upon.

Keywords: social skills, social control, social expressivity, job engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Immigration Service has undergone tremendous changes since 1958 when it was extracted from the Nigerian Police Force. As it was called then, the Immigration Department was entrusted with the core responsibilities of protecting the national borders, issuing visa and the coordination of businesses for Nigerians wishing to do business in foreign lands or foreigners desirous of doing business in Nigeria. The first legal authority of the immigration service came in 1963 when the Immigration Department was formally established by an act of parliament. It was housed as an agency under the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs. Since that time the structure has been changed to accommodate added responsibilities as well as handle emerging trends in international cooperation and integration. As an organization, the Nigerian Immigration Service is structured in a manner that can ensure its optimal performance. Among others, the 2003 Immigration Act empowered the body to have a human resource directorate with the mandate of appointing, promoting and disciplining officers, improve staff welfare, conduct staff training and development as well as provide the necessary administrative and technical support for the smooth running of the service nationally. A general look at the specific functions of the human resource directorate will show that it is the lifeline of the service. This directorate is expected to appoint service officers as well as provide suitable working environment for them to perform optimally in whatever capacities they may be deployed. In line with it follows that after appointment of officers, the
next most important task is to see that officers are trained to effectively execute their job. It was in line with this that the immigration training schools were established.

The Nigerian Immigration Training Schools is one of the formations of the Nigerian Immigration Service. Currently located in Rivers, Kano, Imo and Sokoto States, the schools are the preparatory and development ground of officers for the service. As a veritable part of the service, the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools provide learning experiences for both new recruits and experience officers. New recruits are required to undertake a two-month programme in any of the schools. This programme is expected to provide them with the skills and competences needed to excel in the service. For experienced officers, the schools provide continuous professional development programmes for them to improve on their capacity to deliver on the core mandate of the job (Nigerian Immigration Service, 2019).

Officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools are considered important for the growth of the service, as well as for the nation. Their skills in dealing with new recruits as well as experienced ones is a reflection of how the officers are to interact with others when they are deployed to the field. Furthermore, officers of the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools are expected to mirror the ideals of the service in a manner that motivates those who pass through the school to be better engaged when they perform their role. It has become necessary to understand the job engagement of immigration educators at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

The concept of job engagement has received considerable attention from scholars and researchers. One of the most commonly cited definition of engagement is that provided by Kahn (1990) who defined engagement as the tendency for organizational employees to harness themselves to their work roles while expressing themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance. Since the early 2000, there have been explosion of interest in the construct. Harter (2002) defined employee engagement as the individual’s involvement and satisfaction, as well as enthusiasm for work activities.

With the burgeoning interest in employee engagement, they have been a proliferation of dimensions of job engagement. However for the purpose of this study, employee engagement will be conceptualized from the perspective of Shuck, Adleson and Reio (2016) who view engagement as a constellation of three distinct, but related construct of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagements. This dimension of engagement refers to the intensity of mental energy expended towards positive organizational outcomes. Employees who are cognitively engaged are concentrated and attentive in their workplace. They express mental laden energy towards work-related activities. Affective engagement is defined as an employee’s intensity and willingness to invest emotionality toward positive organizational outcomes (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Concretely, it entails offering of emotionally connected, personal resources, such as believing in, feeling a sense of personal meaning toward, and being emotionally connected, to a situation, person, or context within the full experience of work. This dimension indicates a deep, active, and emotional connection to the active working experience. Behavioural dimension of engagement refers to employees who are willing to put in extra effort, work harder for their team and organization, and to do more than is expected.

This study seeks to take a different view of predictors of engagement by adopting a psychosocial perspective and focusing on social skills. These factors are social skills. The concept of social skills is not to the study of organizational behavior and performance. According to Ferris, Perrewe and Douglas (2002), social skills facilitate positive social interactions and results in higher performance ratings, increased number of promotions and salary increase. Therefore when properly identified, promoted and enhanced, social skills can contribute to employees success and organizational growth. Despite these seemingly obvious benefits of social skills to career and organization growth, how social skill is conceptualized and measured has remained inconsistent.

In defining social skills, Wu (2008) sees it as comprising of three distinct skills which are social presentation (the skill that individuals use to present themselves in socially appropriate behavior), social scanning (the skills to detect and identify changing social environment) and social flexibility (the skill to adjust social presentation based on the changes observed from scanning the social environment). Schneider (1992) using the term social competence defined it as an individual’s difference ability in socially effective behavior that is helpful in achieving social goals. Social skills are components of
behaviors that enables people to comprehend and suitably adjust across different social environments (Steedily, Schiwart, Levin & Luke 2011). To Zins, Weissbert, Wang and Walberg (2004), social skills is the ability to identify, recognize, manage and regulate emotion, as well as develop and maintain good relationship with others. Similarly, Wu (2008) regarded social skills as the group of knowledge and abilities that stimulate effective interaction between an individual and others. Social skills are the set of competencies utilized by people to interact and communicate well with one another (Feitosa, Del Prette & Del Prette 2012).

As with most psychological constructs, Riggio in Orluwene and Ugwu (2018) developed a model of social skills. In Riggio’s conceptualization, social skills are considered as a set of skills that are made up of verbal (social) and non-verbal (emotional) components of communication skills. Each component of Riggio’s model of social skills presumes that three basic skills make up social skills. These three basic types of skills/abilities are expressive (encoding) skills, sensitivity (decoding) skills and control (regulatory) skills. This model further posits six fundamental components of effective communication in which three different basic abilities make up each of the two components social (verbal) and emotional (nonverbal) skills. Both the social and emotional components of communication include expressivity, sensitivity and control skills leading to social expressivity (SE), social sensitivity (SS), social control (SC), emotional expressivity (EE), emotional sensitivity (ES) and emotional control (EC) (Riggio, 2003).

Within the context of the current study, only the skills of social control and emotional control are considered. Social control, it is the ability to be effectively involve in role-playing and social self-presentation. Furthermore, emotional expressivity is the ability of individuals to outwardly display their emotions irrespective of the direction and place. Considering emotional control, Lazamu and Folkman in Skinner (2013) viewed it as the ability to exert influence over emotion through the use of cognitive or behavioural strategies. It is also the ability of an individual to manage the production, experience or display of emotion.

The importance of social skills in the development of an engaged workforce cannot be overemphasized. According to Riggio (2006), social skills are important in organizations where the bulk of performance are often in the area of interactions with others. The job description of immigration officers clearly fits this design. Immigration officers are basically saddled with the responsibility of controlling and regulating the influx and exit of people through national borders. As such, individuals in the services are required to possess considerable social skills, which can enable them work effectively as citizens and immigrants respectively. However, these skills may not be attained if those mandated to train them do not display such skills. It is therefore against this background that the current study seeks to investigate the extent to which social skill dimensions of social and emotional control are predictors of job engagement among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in Southern Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

At present the Nigerian nation along with other African nations have been the subject of global ridicule because its teeming population of youths are daily making the hazardous journey of crossing to Europe and the Middle East in search of greener pasture. Although this problem is a systematic one, a closer look will reveal that officers of the Nigerian Immigration Service cannot be absolved from the blame because they are expected to be watchers of our borders and national boundaries, as well as regulate the movement of foreigners into the country. Similar condemnations have been labeled against officers of the Nigerian Immigration with the escalation of violence in Northern Nigeria due to the Boko Haram menace. Observers of the situation have blamed officers of the immigration as being complacent, if not involved, in the influx of illegal weapons and foreign mercenaries from neighboring nations. Observers of the situation have blamed officers of the immigration as being complacent, if not involved, in the influx of illegal weapons and foreign mercenaries from neighboring nations. These and similar accusations leveled against the service may not be unconnected to other factors like funding shortages and inadequate training but may also be a strong indication of low level of job engagement experienced by officers of the force. However with the recent deportation of Nigerians from other countries, especially Libya, the extent to which officers of the Nigerian immigration service have achieved their mandate has come under greater scrutiny, as such the need to empirically ascertain the level of job engagement. It is further the position of this researcher that unless adequately trained in the operation of the service, immigration officers cannot live up to their expectation. The problem of the
present study therefore was to investigate the extent to which social skill dimension predict the level of job engagement among officers of the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in Southern Nigeria.

**Purpose of the Study**

The specific objectives guiding the study are to:

1. Determine the extent to which social control predict the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.
2. Investigate the extent to which emotional control predict the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does social control predict job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools?
2. To what extent does emotional control predict job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools?

**Hypotheses**

1. Social control does not have any significant prediction on the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.
2. Emotional control does not have any significant prediction on the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** The research design adopted for this study is the correlational research design. The present study therefore meets the requirement of a correlational research as the study aptly investigated how social skills of social and emotional expressivity predict the job engagements of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in South-South Nigeria.

**Population of the Study:** The population for the current study is made up of 236 officers in two immigration training schools in Southern Nigeria. These are the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools in Ahoada, Rivers State and Orlu, Imo State (Directorate of Personnel Administration, Nigeria Immigration Service, 2018).

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** The sample for this study was made up of all 236 officers in the two selected immigration training schools in Southern Nigeria. The census sampling technique was used because the sample is relatively small and can be studied by the researcher within the time of the study.

**Instruments for Data Collection:** Two instruments were used for the collection of data. They are Social and Emotional Control Assessment Scale (SECAS) and Employee Engagement Scale (ESS). The SEEAS is a self-report scale developed by Riggio (1986) and adapted by the researcher. The researchers adapted the instrument in relation to the number of items as well as in modifying the instruments from their original phrase format to sentence format. The items’ statement were responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale of Exactly Like Me, Very Much Like Me, Like Me, A Little Like Me and Not At All Like Me. These scale points were weighted 5 points, 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. The two subscales elicited information on respondents’ levels in social expressivity and emotional expressivity. The second instrument tagged Employee Engagement Scale (EES) was adapted from Shuck et al (2016). The instrument was a 15-item structured questionnaire with five items each assessing cognitive, emotional and behaviour engagement of employees.

**Validity of the Instruments:** To establish the face and content validity of the instruments, draft copies of the instruments were submitted to three experts each in Educational Psychology, as well as measurement and evaluation, along with the objectives and research questions of the study, to evaluate the instrument on item content, relevance, comprehensiveness, clarity, and literacy demand. Their suggestions, corrections and modifications were integrated into the final version before the instruments were administered.
Reliability of Instrument: The reliability of the instruments were ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha technique. First, draft copies of the instruments were administered on 30 officers who were not sampled as part of the final sample used for the study. For the first instrument, the scores of the scale were based on the two different subscales hence the reliabilities coefficients obtained were 0.81 and 0.90, for SC and EC respectively, while the reliability coefficient for the overall instrument was scale is 0.86. For the second instrument EES, reliability coefficient obtained was 0.87. So considering the reliability coefficients obtained, it was evident that the instruments were adequately reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection: The administration of the instrument was done directly by the researchers and two officers in each of the training schools who served as research assistants. Copies of the instruments were retrieved on the spot immediately after the respondents complete it.

Method of Data Analysis: Research questions were answered using simple regressions while the corresponding null hypotheses were tested using ANOVA associated with linear regressions where applicable. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of tenability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Simple regression analysis of prediction of officers’ job engagement from social control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj R²</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>7.524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
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<td>3891.978</td>
<td>68.738</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
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<td>215</td>
<td>56.620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16065.382</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

From the result presented in Table 1, it can be observed that when officers’ score on social control were used to predict their job engagement, an R-value of 0.492 was obtained with an associated R² value of 0.242 and an adjusted R² value of 0.239. From the result obtained, it is implied that the skill of social control skill among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had an independently predict of 23.9% of their reported job engagement. Furthermore, testing of the corresponding null hypotheses using ANOVA associated with linear regression yielded an F-value of 68.738 at 1 and 215 degrees of freedom, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Based on the resultant p-value which was lesser than 0.05, the chosen level of significance, it can be seen that social control skills of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training School had a significant independent prediction on their job engagement. Thus the stated null hypotheses was rejected.

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of prediction of officers’ job engagement from social control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj R²</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimates</th>
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Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<th>df</th>
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<td>71.498</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16065.382</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result presented in Table 2, it can be observed that when officers’ score on social control as obtained from the SSAS were used to predict their job engagement, an R-value of 0.492 was obtained with an associated R² value of 0.242 and an adjusted R² value of 0.239. From the result obtained, it is implied that the skill of social control skill among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had an independently predict of 23.9% of their reported job engagement. Furthermore, testing of the corresponding null hypotheses using ANOVA associated with linear regression yielded an F-value of
68.738 at 1 and 215 degrees of freedom, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Based on the resultant p-value which was lesser than 0.05, the chosen level of significance, it can be seen that social control skills of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools had a significant independent prediction on their job engagement. Thus the stated null hypotheses was rejected.

Summary of Findings
The major findings obtained after the analysis of data are briefly summarized as shown below

1. Social skill of social control has a significant independent prediction of 23.9% among officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.
2. Emotional control has a significant prediction on the job engagement of officers in the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools as evident by the independent prediction of 4%

CONCLUSION
From the data analysis and interpretation, the conclusion reached is that social skills dimensions had a significant prediction on the job engagement of officers at the Nigerian Immigration Training Schools. However, the dimensions varied in their predictive power with social control having the highest independent prediction and emotional control having the least independent prediction. This therefore informed the conclusion that social skills are essential for the appropriate development of job engagement characteristics among training officers in Nigerian Immigration Training Schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is the need for the establishment of a reward system that recognizes the importance of social skills. Training officers who have shown themselves to be excellent in their discharge of social skills should be acknowledged and rewarded.
2. An evaluation system should be provided whereby the social skills level of training officers can be assessed and improved upon. This can be achieved if the students are given opportunity to provide feedback on the extent to which the officer utilize the various social skills.
3. Officers outside the training schools who have shown deep engagement to their jobs can be invited to act as training officers in the school. This is to enable them impact positively on the learning culture and environment in the school.

REFERENCES

