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**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND WORKER PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE  
HOSPITALS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE,  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the relationship between Employee Recognition and Worker Performance of Private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers state, Nigeria. The hospitals were selected on the basis of bed capacity, level of care, and year of commencement of operation and the researcher adopted cross sectional survey design. The Population of the study comprised of 479 workers of the selected private hospitals and a sample size of 218 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. With the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 20), Spearman's rank order Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that there is a moderate and significant positive correlation between Employee Recognition and Worker Performance as depicted through its dimensions (Task Performance and Contextual Performance). The study also revealed that the level of Task Performance and Contextual Performance are low in Private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study concludes that Employee Recognition has a significant positive relationship with Task Performance and Contextual Performance. Finally the study recommends, an improvement of the Fringe Benefits for workers as well as Career Development Opportunities. This will translate to improved Task Performance and Contextual Performance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Employee Recognition, Worker performance, Task performance, Contextual performance.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of an organization is to enable common men do uncommon things, and the test of an organization is the spirit of performance (Drucker, 1975). This profound statement from a management legend puts the responsibility of worker performance on the shoulder of management since the organization is driven by them. He, Drucker, argued that it is the responsibility of an organization to make ordinary persons (workers) perform better than they seem capable of, to bring out whatever strength there is in its members, and to use each man's strength to help all other members perform. Organizations use different mechanisms to get the best out of its organizational members (workers) in order to satisfy its customers as well as maximize shareholders wealth. One way through which this is achieved is employee recognition which has been identified as an intrinsic reward (Jansen, 2011).

Intrinsic rewards promote intrinsic motivation which leads to better performance (McCrill 2011). They include verbal rewards such as positive feedback and praise which lead to job satisfaction. According to Jansen (2011), intrinsically motivated employees participate eagerly in their jobs for internal reasons. Donata (2011) suggests that intrinsically motivated employees get pleasure out of completing a task, recognition or the job itself. Shah and Shah (2007) state that employee recognition is a leadership tool that sends a message to employees about what is important to the leaders and the behaviors that are valued. Kendra (1996) observe that an award is that which follows an occurrence of a specific behavior with intention of acknowledging the behavior in a positive way. The award therefore has the intent of encouraging the behavior to happen again. While recognition may have monetary value (e.g. luncheon, gift certificate or plaques), money itself is not given to recognize performance, Gale (2002).

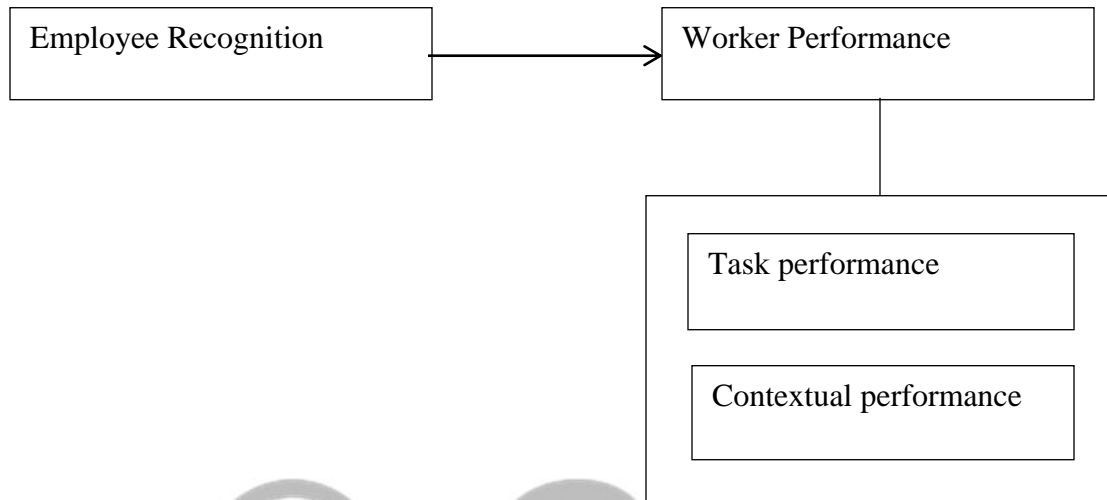
While studies have been done on Employee recognition and worker performance in other sectors and geographical regions, the private health sector in Rivers state is yet to be studied(Kaufman, Chapman, and Allen, 2003). It is for this reason that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between employee recognitionand worker performance in private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria.

This was accomplished through the followingspecific objectives:

1. To examine the extent of the relationship between employee recognition and task performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
2. To examine the extent of the relationship between employee recognitionand conceptual performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

The following research questions were necessary to guide this research:

1. What is the relationship between employee recognition and task performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers state?
2. What is the relationship between employee recognitionrelate with contextual performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers state?



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the relationship between Employee Recognition and Worker performance

**Source:** Researcher's conceptualization

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employee Recognition

Recognition is the acknowledgement, appreciation, or approval of the positive accomplishments or behaviors of an individual or team (Caligiuri, Lepak & Bonache, 2010; Nelson, 2005). According to Gostick and Elton (2007), recognition refers to praise or a personal note acknowledging achievements including small gestures that are important to employees. Employee recognition programs cover a wide spectrum of activities. They range from a spontaneous and private thank you to broad and formal programs in which specific types of behavior are encouraged and in which the procedures for attaining recognition are clearly

identified. Robbins and Judge (2008) identifies appreciation as a fundamental human need. Employees respond to appreciation expressed through recognition of their good work because it confirms their work is valued. When employees and their work are valued, their satisfaction and productivity rise, and they are motivated to maintain or improve their good work.

There are many ways employees can be recognized or appreciated. Recognition can include letters or postcards (“Thanks! You Made A Difference” Award), memory items (a plaque or mug) that last longer than cash, nonmonetary awards that have trophy value, lunch with managers/supervisors, a picture displayed in a prominent place, having a room or hallway named after the employee, posting names (employee of the week or month) in the organization’s notice board or website, a video rental certificate, a coffee card, an event ticket, or a candy bar (Darling, Arm and Gatlin, 1997; Nelson, 2005; University of Iowa, 2009). Recognition ranks as one of the most powerful motivators and plays a key role in effective reward practices. It requires minimal planning, efforts or expense (Darling et al., 1997; Gostick and Elton, 2007) and can be given for a number of reasons including recognition for a job well done, a birthday, a service anniversary, a special favor, completing an unpleasant task, or saving the company time or money (Darling et al., 1997). Effective recognition measures can also include verbal and written praise, public praise, and symbolic gestures by managers (Nelson & Spritzer, 2002). Recognition efforts that are timely, sincere, and personal can serve as a major means of motivation to employees. Nelson and Spitzer (2003) state that managers need to be in constant contact with the employees if they are to determine what employees most value and then find ways to act systematically on those desired forms of recognition and rewards as they perform well. This suggests that managers need to vary the forms of recognition, adding new things, experimenting with them, and eliminating others that have run their course and are no longer motivating to employees. If managers are

timely, sincere, and specific in thanking employees when they have done good work, it will maintain credibility in the recognition process.

### **Worker Performance**

Workers refer to persons that are hired to provide services to an organisation on a regular or part time basis in exchange for compensation. They are also referred to as employees. Luthans and Stajkovic (1999); Pfeffer (1994) argue that employees are a primary source of competitive advantage in service-oriented organizations. Macky and Johnson (2000) draw our attention to the fact that improved individual employee performance is a recipe for better organizational performance. Generally, researchers agree that job performance can be defined on a micro level as actions and behaviors of an employee that contribute to the goals of the organization (Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989).

Literature indicate that for a long period, the only behaviors that received attention in the research literature and by organizations were those behaviors associated with the production of goods or the provision of services, namely task performance. Some researchers propose that employees do not spend all of their time at work performing activities that are strictly related to task performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Katz and Kahn, 1978). For example, employees help coworkers or volunteer to engage in activities that benefit the organization. These behaviors also contribute to the organization in positive ways and have been given a variety of names e.g. organizational citizenship behavior, contextual performance, extra-role behaviors.

Murphy (1989) states that job performance should be defined in terms of behaviors rather than results. He explains that results-based measures are not always functional to the organization, as

employees may try to maximize results at the expense of other things. For instance, for a retail sales clerk, examples of behaviors include greeting customers, answering questions about store products, and demonstrating knowledge of store policy and procedures. In a situation where employees are evaluated on sales only, employees may compromise certain behaviors (being polite to customers) in order to try to maximize sales (e.g. forcing products on customers). He added that performance refers to behaviors that are related to the goals of the organization. Campbell (1990) defines performance as those actions or behaviors under the control of the individual, that contribute to the organization's goals, and that can be measured according to the individual's level of proficiency, a definition that is consistent with the others. Campbell, McHenry and Wise (1990) define Workers performance as the observable behavior that employees do in their jobs that are relevant to the goals of the organization.

Darden and Babin (1994) said employee's performance is a rating system that is used in many organisation to determine the abilities and output of an employee. Kane (1996) defined performance as simply the outcomes of work; a record of a person's accomplishments. Deadrick and Gardner (1997) also agree with the above definition by Kane (1996) by defining workers performance as the record of outcomes achieved, for each job function during a specified period of time. Performance is therefore represented as a distribution of outcomes achieved, and it could be measured by using a variety of parameters which describe an employee's pattern of performance over a time period. The definitions of job performance reviewed here have some common features. These features include a focus on behaviors that are under the control of an individual, not just results; as well as on behaviors that contribute to the goals of the organization.

Armstrong (2012) asserts that a more comprehensive definition of performance is that which sees it as embracing both outcomes and behavior.

### **Measures of Worker performance**

Traditionally, job performance was evaluated in terms of the proficiency with which an individual carried out the tasks that were specified in their job description. However, the changing nature of work and organizations has challenged the traditional view of job performance (Kappagoda, Othman, and De Alwis, 2014). Borman and Motowidlo (1993) introduced several taxonomies that have been developed to explore the domain of job performance. One of the fundamental distinctions made in these taxonomies is between in-role performance (or behavior that is directly related to the job tasks or requirements) and extra-role performance, (or behaviors that are not directly related to the job but contributed to organizational outcomes (Shaffer and Shaffer, 2005). They divided the performance domain into the task and contextual performance, which distinguishes between behaviors that are directly related to the job and behavior that contribute to organizational outcomes in ways that are not related to core job functions. In today's competitive business environment, task performance and contextual performance of the employees have been identified as crucial factors in achieving organizational performance; therefore managers are now more concern about managing the task and contextual performance of their employees.

### **Task Performance**

Task performance refers to the prescribed role an employee should comply with in order to attain organizational goals. It can be defined as the efficacy with which incumbents perform activities that contribute to the development of the organization's technical core. This contribution can be direct, including the application of a part of organizational technology, or indirect, providing



materials or services needed to perform organizational technical processes (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). Task performance relates to transforming raw materials into the goods and services which are specific to the job, the core technical skill. Arvey and Murphy, (1998) observed that, cognitive abilities are more relevant for the prediction of task performance.

### **Contextual Performance**

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined contextual performance as an individual's performance which maintains and enhances an organization's social network and the psychological climate that supports technical tasks. They explained that contextual performance includes activities that may not represent formal work tasks, although they still make an important contribution to the effectiveness of an organization. This type of performance is often not written in a job description, but it is considered to be an important component of job performance. Contextual performance, also called citizenship performance, involves those behaviors not directly related to job tasks, but having a significant impact on organizational social and psychological contexts. These behaviors serve as catalyzers for the efficient undertaking of the entrusted tasks. Borman and Motowidlo, (1997) contend that it is the contextual dimension of job performance, rather than the technical components, that can be predicted from personality constructs. Borman, Penner, Allen and Motowidlo (2001) conclude that personality (Conscientiousness and Dependability) correlates more highly with organisational citizenship behaviours than with task performance.

Borman and Motowidlo (1997) proposed a model that included five types of citizenship behaviors: persisting with enthusiasm and extra effort to complete one's task activities; volunteering to carry out task activities that are not part of one's job; helping and cooperating with others; following organizational rules and procedures; and endorsing, supporting, and

defending organizational objectives. In this kind of performance the initiative, support, and persistence that employees demonstrate is more important than the technical competence displayed (Poropat A. E., 2002). Ployhart, Schneider, and Schmitt (2006) contend that contextual or civic activities support and create the context or social environment in which the technical core of the organization must function, while task activities serve to support and create the technical core itself. Jenkins and Griffith (2004), argue that when the personality variables used in the prediction of performance are derived through job analysis, they predict task-related performance, as well as contextual job performance.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses are stated as follows:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Employee recognition and Task performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Employee recognition and Contextual performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts cross sectional survey approach. The population of the study comprised of 479 employees of 10 private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis. Primary data was collected with the use of structured questionnaire administered on the randomly selected respondents by the researcher. The hospitals were selected based on the number of bed capacity (35 and above), level of care (primary and secondary services), year of commencement of operation (2010 and below), and ownership and management (owned and managed by medical doctors). Respondents were chosen randomly. The sample size of the study is 218 determined using Taro Yamane

formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the research instrument was ascertained through a pilot administration of the structured questionnaire on 50 respondents and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability gotten. Table 1 below shows that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficientsof the items are all above the benchmark of 0.70 thereby indicatinga high internal reliability.

**Table 1: Reliability of Coefficient of Variables**

S/No	Variables	Numberof Items	Numberof Cases	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Employee Recognition	4	50	0.921
2	Task Performance	4	50	0.946
3	Contextual Performance	4	50	0.911

*Source:* Research survey 2019(SPSS output, version 20).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Test of Hypothesis One (Relationship between Recognition and Task Performance)

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between Recognitionand Task performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

**Table 2: Correlations of Recognition and Task Performance**

		Recognition	Task Performance
Spearman's rho	Recognition	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.428**
		N	.000
Task Performance	Task Performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.428**
		N	.000
		N	205

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Research survey 2019(SPSS output, version 20).

The result of the analysis as depicted in table 2 above reveals a significant association between the two variables (Employee Recognition and Task Performance) given that  $p < 0.05$ ; where correlation is at 0.428. The rho coefficient reveals a moderate correlation which indicates that there is a moderate and positive relationship between Reward Systems and Task Performance; consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Test of Hypothesis Two (Relationship Recognition and Contextual Performance)**

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Recognition and Contextual performance of workers of private hospitals in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

**Table 3: Correlations of Recognition and Contextual Performance**

		Recognition	Contextual Performance
Recognition	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	205	205
Spearman's rho Contextual Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.481**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	205	205

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Research survey 2019(SPSS output, version 20).

The result in table 3 above shows that the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (rho) is 0.481. This indicates that there is a moderate and positive correlation between the variables (Employee Recognition and Contextual Performance) and consequently a moderate and positive relationship. This association is significant at  $P < 0.05$ ; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The test of hypotheses one and two as shown above in tables 2 and 3 respectively depicts that Employee Recognition has a positive correlation with Task performance as well as Contextual Performance. The positive correlation coefficients of 0.428 and 0.481 for Task performance and Contextual Performance respectively show the strength of the relationship between the variable. The p-value (0.00) is less than the level of significance at (0.05). Thus there is a significant relationship between employee recognition and worker performance of private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state. The study findings corroborates with that of Kaufman, Chapman and Allen, (2013) that a significant relationship exists between employee recognition and employee performance; and that well-recognized employees have more drive and determination, therefore perform better.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study has empirically demonstrated the strength and direction of the connections between employee recognition and the measures of worker performance (task performance and contextual performance) of private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis. It has revealed that employee recognition, by reason of the moderate positive relationship it shares with both task performance and contextual performance, has the potential of improving the current low task and contextual performance level in the private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis. Contextual performance, also seen as organization citizenship behavior, is a hallmark of commitment.

The researcher therefore concludes that employee recognition is a dependable tool that management of private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state can used to improve the performance of their workers. The researcher recommends the following:

1. Management of private hospitals in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state should consciously develop various employee recognition programs aimed at boosting the morale of workers in order to improve their performance. The programs should communicate attitudes and behaviors that prompt employee recognition.
2. Managers should establish fair and equitable process of identifying employees who qualify for formal recognition by the organisation then recognize anyone who meets the criteria.
3. Recognition programs should not be restricted to formal work task (task performance) but should include contextual performance (such as persisting with enthusiasm, volunteering to carry out task activities that are not part of one's job; helping and cooperating with others; following organizational rules and procedures; and endorsing, supporting, and defending organizational objectives).
4. Management should be specific and prompt (timely) when providing recognition; this will help to create a link between behavior and reward (recognition) thereby resulting in employee motivation.

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