

Continuous Learning Activity, Emotional Stability and Adaptive Performance among University Non-Academics

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Abstract

This paper investigated continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics. The descriptive survey research design was used. Employing multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, three stated hypotheses were tested and results showed a statistically significant influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance of university non-academics [$F(2, 229) = 30.48$] was calculated, and the obtained value was greater than tabulated critical [$F^2_{,229}(0.05) = 3.04$ $p = .00$], with R^2 at 0.21. This presupposes that 21% of the variance in adaptive performance is as a result of continuous learning activity and emotional stability. Also, a positive and statistically significant relationship was found between university non-academics continuous learning activity and their adaptive performance ($r = .44$, $p = .00$). Further, a positive and statistically significant relationship was found between emotional stability and adaptive performance of university non-academics ($r = .21$, $p = .00$). From these findings, it could be recommended amongst others, that continuous learning activity and emotional stability machinery should be strengthened among non-academics by the management of university.

Keywords : Continuous learning activity, emotional stability, adaptive performance, university non-academics, university management.

Introduction:

Due to the rapid changing nature of the global and technological work environment, organizations are incessantly confronted with new challenges and working conditions (for example, new work location and job position). These new challenges and situations demand for active workers, who uniquely can adapt to these changing conditions, as well as perform meritoriously in order to achieve organizational success. Adaptive performance of workers is an indication of effectiveness of any organization (Lim, Yoo, Kim & Brickell, 2017), in a globalized world. Neal and Hesketh (1999) observed that, adaptive performance is concerned with a person's ability to adapt to dynamic work conditions. In the same vein, Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon (2000) described adaptive performance in eight behavioural classifications: solving problems creatively; dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations; demonstrating physically oriented adaptability; handling emergencies or crisis situations; handling work stress; learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures; demonstrating interpersonal adaptability and demonstrating cultural adaptability. It can be inferred from these descriptions that adaptive performance characterizes the ability of worker(s) in organization(s) (private or public) to adjust to changing work situations in their organizations with a view to achieving organizational success and competitive advantage. 'Continuous learning activity', denotes the process where individual and/or organizational learning is encouraged on a permanent basis (Tannenbum, 1997). 'Continuous learning activity' is vital in today's intricate, ambiguous and incessantly changing work environment (Patrick & Kumar, 2012; Sessa & London, 2015). This suggests that continuous learning activity help workers to update their knowledge, skills and aptitudes needed to accomplish the organization's present tasks and tackle future challenges. The bottom line is that an employee who is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge should be able to adapt and perform in an intricate work situation. Congruently, emotional stability connotes the capability of an individual to maintain emotional balance under stressful conditions (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). Nettle (2006) as cited in Huang, Ryan, Zabel and Palmer (2014) observed that emotional stability is concerned with the feeling of an individual to fight or fly in the presence of likely danger. In today's work environment, the difficulties that workers are beleaguered with, and cope with, are not ones where

organizations would want workers to depart (fly), but it requires workers to employ available resources to outlive the change (fight)(Huang et al., 2014). Therefore, emotional stability becomes key to adaptive performance of workers. This study posits on the submission of Pulakos et al. (2000) that, university non-academics who engage in continuous learning activity and are emotionally stable should adapt to and perform competently when transferred to new work locations or consigned with new job position. Workers who are involved in continuous learning activity, perform tasks promptly (Sinaei, Kamali, Nematollahi & Etminan, 2017), have better team performance (Fapohunda, 2013) and involve in ground-breaking activities. Correspondingly, workers who are emotionally stable cope with work stress (Liu, Wang, Zhan, & Shi, 2009) and have higher foci to achieving. The current study therefore, examines adaptive performance as the corollary of continuous learning activity and emotional stability among university non-academics. This study, among other things, aims to contribute to existing literature in the area of training and development, workplace adaptive performance and organizational behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

In view of increasing need for a dynamic workforce with ability to cope with the changing work environment, in Nigeria, there is need for a study on adaptive performance. That is, workers who can demonstrate the ability to cope with job or organizational transformation and transfer knowledge from one task to the other as work demands (Rowe, 2014). For workers to acclimatize appropriately to the changing working conditions, they need to engage in learning activity continuously to make up for their skill deficits, stay informed of advancements in their profession and foresee, how changes in their organization may disturb work demands and skills requirements (London & Smither, 1999; Noe, Tews & Michel, 2017). Additionally, when workers are equipped continuously with the requisite knowledge to cope with the changing work conditions, they also need to be emotionally stable in order to transfer the learnt aptitudes to the changing work roles (Boyes & French, 2010; Jundt, Shoss & Huang, 2015). The above observation justifies the study to investigate the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance, as well as the relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance. Extant literatures in Nigeria show that researches on adaptive performance is at the sprouting stage, and the domain remains an unexplored area within the Nigerian context. Mang, Aondo and Fada (2016), investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on adaptive performance of entrepreneurs in Jos-North, Nigeria and recently Genty and Bankole (2017) examined work-life balance and adaptive performance of techno-entrepreneurs in Lagos State, Nigeria. But a conspicuous gap exists on the relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance particularly amongst university non-academics. Thus, this study aims to fill that gap and contribute to the growing body of literature on the subject-matter. The study examines the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance, and the relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics using samples from Lagos State University in Ojo, Ikeja and Epe campuses. Also, a paucity of literature on continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance from the Nigerian perspective corroborates the rationale for this current study.

Literature Review

This section encompasses conceptual elucidation on adaptive performance, continuous learning activity and emotional stability. Also, the theoretical framework to guide this study was appraised, and lastly the review of extant literatures on the relationships between the variables was carried out. The following sections deal with conceptual descriptions of adaptive performance, continuous learning activity and emotional stability.

Adaptive Performance

Pulakos et al. (2000) stated that, adaptive performance can be understood using eight behavioural dimensions and they include: solving problems creatively; dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations; demonstrating physically oriented adaptability; handling emergencies or crisis situations; handling work stress; learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures; demonstrating interpersonal adaptability and demonstrating cultural adaptability. Also, adaptive performance occurs when workers accept new roles and procure new skills (Chan, 2000), so as to react to actual or predicted work changes, and achieve organizational aims. Similarly, Jundt et al. (2015) describe adaptive performance as task-performance-directed actions that individuals enact in response to or in anticipation of changes relevant to job-related tasks. This observation was substantiated by Wihler, Meurs, Wiesmann, Troll and Blickle (2017), who stated that adaptive performance is premised on individual's ability to respond to changing work conditions and stay effective and efficient. This presupposes that

adaptive performance is concerned with the capacity and capability of an individual to respond competently to changes in working situations.

Continuous learning activity

Continuous learning activity has been described as long term knowledge acquisition task, engaged in by an individual, in order to avoid skills and occupational obsolescence (Kuznia, Kerno & Gilley, 2010). It aids the achievement of long and short term successes of employees and organizations (Jain & Martindale, 2012). It can be inferred that continuous learning activity could be a blessing to individuals who would engage in it, and an impediment to those who would be hesitant or reluctant to upgrade their skills.

Emotional Stability

The concept of emotional stability, also known as neuroticism, is a personality specific trait that involves how an individual responds to certain conditions. According to Bostjancic (2010), emotional stability was perceived to be the equipment of an individual with the appropriate competences and flexibility to resolve life contradictions with peace and cleverness as a way to reaching immediate answers or results. On the other hand, Goleman (2006), argued that emotional stability is the capability of an individual to maintain perseverance, zeal, self-conduct, and self-motivation through the understanding of self-emotions as well as recognizing other people's feelings. Also, emotional stability is a chance to communicate with others through clear reasoning (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2012) under an unstable condition.

Theoretical Framework

Updating model by Dubin (1990) will support this study in understanding the relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance.

Updating model

Dubin (1990) observed that owing to speedy growth and intricacy of knowledge, an employee's knowledge can be outdated within a period of five years. This obsolescence varies from one field to another. Consequently, keeping up to date on new knowledge and skills necessitates employees to embrace continuous learning activity needed for adaptive performance (Sullivan, 1999; Arik & Dunne, 2014; Johnson-Coffelt & Gabriel, 2017). Furthermore, Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) submitted that updating helps achieve emotional reinforcement which ultimately leads to organizational creativity, job embeddedness and employees' ability to cope to uncertainty. The updating model will serve as the theoretical backdrop to this study. This is because the model acknowledges that getting involved in continuous learning activity enhances the adaptability of individuals to unforeseen situations and contributes to their emotional stability.

Relationship among Continuous Learning Activity, Emotional Stability and Adaptive Performance

It is obvious from available literature that there are inadequate data to understand the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance. Eldor and Harpaz (2016) in their study, noted that learning climate in organizations could be helpful to employees' extra-role performance on the job. It can be inferred that continuous learning process of employees is a principal determinant to understand their adaptability to unforeseen conditions in the organization (Pulakos et al., 2000). Further, the stability of employees' emotions is equally vital for adapting to unanticipated circumstances (Van der Horst, Klehe & Van der Heijden, 2017).

Relationship between Continuous Learning Activity and Adaptive Performance

Continuous learning activity manifests a positive orientation toward employees' job mastery (Han & Williams, 2008). It is the practice of constant individual enhancement through preparation, knowledge acquisition and utilization of new knowledge and skills towards changing organizational environments (London & Mone, 1999). In this context, continuous learning incorporates the individuals' career vision and the organization's future performance requirements (Han & Williams, 2008). Recently, the work of Pradhan, Jena and Singh (2017), found a significant and positive relationship between organizational learning activity and adaptive performance in the Indian manufacturing industries.

Relationship between Emotional Stability and Adaptive Performance

Among the U.S. Army, Pulakos et al. (2002) found a significant positive relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance. Boyes & French (2010) observed that when confronted with a stressful assignment, emotionally stable employees have a tendency to cope better and get more involved than the emotionally unstable person, who would like to avoid assignments. Similarly, Huang et al. (2014) in their meta-analysis of personality and adaptive performance at work, confirm a positive relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance. This submission corroborates the argument of Barrick and Mount (1991), who noted that, individuals with neurotic predispositions are not emotionally stable and are less prosperous in all jobs as their worry, anxiety, extreme thoughtlessness and unwary temperaments prevent them from achieving their responsibilities. Under a stressful situation, neurotic personalities are interconnected with life-threatening emotional responses, which result in poor health (Baek et al., 2016). Consequently, they cannot adapt to uncertainty. Antithetical to the submissions above, Smillie, Yeo, Furnham and Jackson (2006) in their two studies (a laboratory experiment and longitudinal study) found a negative relationship between neuroticism and performance. Similarly, Corr (2003) found no relationship between neuroticism and task processing.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance among university non-academics.
2. To examine the relationship between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance among university non-academics.
3. To examine the relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics.

Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: Continuous learning activity and emotional stability do not have significant influence on adaptive performance of university non-academics.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance of university non-academics.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance of university non-academics.

Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance, and the relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics. The study population includes all non-academic staff of Lagos State University and it is one thousand seven hundred and eighty, according to LASU non-academic staff establishment. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling size determination table, a sample of three hundred and seventeen (317) were drawn from the population. Data were collected using the multi-stage sampling technique. Using the stratified sampling technique, the non-academics were assigned to two strata, based on their category, i.e. senior and junior category. Table 1 shows the non-academic strata and the numbers in the brackets represent the samples drawn from each stratum using the convenience sampling technique.

Table 1: Non-academic staff category and sampling determination

S/N	Senior Category	Junior Category
1	1009(181)	771(136)
Retrieved	135	98
<i>N=1780, n=232</i>		

***Note:** N= Population, n= sample size used for final analyses

The study adapted three scales for data collection purpose. For continuous learning activity, the Continuous Learning Opportunity Dimension (CLOD) developed by Marsick and Watkins (2003) was adapted, using a 5-point Likert's type rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has yielded good internal consistency and its reliability estimated ranged between .72 to .81 (Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang & Howton, 2002; Song, Joo & Chermack, 2009). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was $\alpha=.78$. Further, items 1 and 6 of the scale were reverse scored to guide against acquaintance bias. The construct of emotional stability was measured by adapting items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34 and 39 of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999). The 8 items measured emotional stability on a 5-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Alansari (2016) reported a good internal consistency of Cronbach alpha coefficient of .83 among males and .74 among females in the Arabian world. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .73. Also, items 1 and 8 on emotional stability scale were reversed scored to guide against response set. For adaptive performance, the Adaptive Performance Scale (APS) developed by Pulakos et al., (2000) was adapted, using a 5-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). According to Javed, Bashir, Rawwas and Arjoon, (2017), the scale produced a Cronbach alpha of .78 among employees of the hospitality industry in Pakistan. In the current study, Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was $\alpha=.79$. Items 1 and 10 of the scale were reverse scored to guide against acquaintance bias. Data were collected from the respondents for three weeks. The research instruments were distributed personally by the researchers at the main campus of the university. A total of three hundred and seventeen questionnaires were distributed, out of which two hundred and forty-two questionnaires were returned, but only two hundred and thirty-two were found fit for final analysis. The version 20 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for analyses.

Results

This section presents statistical results of the tested hypotheses and the discussion of results.

Hypothesis 1

Tables 2, 3, 4: Results of multiple regression analysis on the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance

Table 2: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.46 ^a	.21	.20	.41

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Continuous_Learning_Activity, Emotional_Stability
- b. Dependent Variable: Adaptive_Performance

Table 3: ANOVA of regression analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.27	2	5.14	30.48	.00 ^b
	Residual	38.58	229	.17		
	Total	48.85	231			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Continuous_Learning_Activity, Emotional_Stability
- b. Dependent Variable: Adaptive_Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.37	.22		10.58	.00
	Emotional_Stability	.10	.04	.140	2.35	.02
	Continuous_Learning_Act.	.35	.05	.414	6.94	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Adaptive_Performance

Tables 2, 3 and 4 state the result of a multiple regression that was estimated to predict adaptive performance based on continuous learning activity and emotional stability. A significant regression coefficient was found ($F(2, 229)=30.48, p<.00$), with R^2 of .21. Which presupposes that 21.0% of the variance in adaptive performance is as a result of continuous learning activity and emotional stability. Also, from table 4, the beta value under the standardized coefficients shows that continuous learning activity is the highest contributor to the change in the dependent variable ($\beta=.414, p<.00$), while emotional stability contributes ($\beta=.140, p<.02$). The null hypothesis was rejected because results show that, continuous learning activity and emotional stability influences the adaptive performance of university non-academics.

Hypothesis 2

Table 5: Results of bivariate correlation between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance among university non-academics with descriptive analysis

Variables	N	Means	Std. Deviation	r	p
1 Continuous Learning Activity	232	4.03	.55		
2 Adaptive Performance	232	4.08	.46	.44	.00

** p is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results in Table 5 above established the relationship between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance among university non-academics. The result shows that the relationship was positive and statistically significant ($r=.44, p<.00$). The null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance of university non-academics was rejected while the alternate was accepted.

Hypothesis 3

Table 6: Results of bi-variate correlation between emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics with descriptive analysis

Variables	N	Means	Std. Deviation	r	p
1 Emotional Stability	232	3.03	.62		
2 Adaptive Performance	232	4.08	.46	.21	.00

** p is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 above indicates the relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance among university non-academics. The result indicated that the relationship was positive and statistically significant ($r=.21, p<.00$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance of university non-academics was rejected while the alternate was accepted.

Discussion

Hypothesis-1 which states that, continuous learning activity and emotional stability do not influence adaptive performance among university non-academics was rejected, because the finding shows that university non-academics involvement in continuous learning exercises and their emotional stability jointly influence their adaptive performance. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. As suggested by the updating model, workers' who engage in continuous learning initiatives and workers who are emotionally stable tend to be more creative on the job, and can adapt better to uncertainties on their jobs.

From the stated findings in Tables-2, 3 and 4, this study validates the stance that continuous learning activity and emotional stability have significant influence on adaptive performance of university non-academics. University

non-academics, who are involved in continuous learning activity and are emotionally stable have the tendency to perform under situations of uncertainty, handle work stress effectively, exhibit physical adaptability (Pulakos et al., 2000) and aid extra-role-performance (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016).

With respect to hypothesis-2, a positive and significant relationship was detected between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance. Non-academics, who are involved in continuous training, development and education will likely demonstrate higher adaptability to unanticipated working conditions, than those who do not participate. This can be said through the obtained positive relationship between continuous learning activity and adaptive performance ($r=.47$) as shown in table- 5. This finding corroborates the study of Pradhan et al., (2017), who found a positive relationship between organizational learning activity and adaptive performance. In practice, getting employees involved in regular training, development and education, ensures effective team building in the workplace (Fapohunda, 2013), and that further aids to enterprise sustainability (Idris, Adekalu & Genty, 2014) and fulfilment of organizational needs (Jayeoba, 2016).

Equally, a positive and significant relationship was established between emotional stability and adaptive performance in this study. The result substantiates that of Pulakos et al. (2002) and Huang et al. (2014), who found a significant and positive relationship between emotional stability and adaptive performance. This endorses that emotionally stable university non-academics can cope with uncertain working conditions and handle work pressure better than those who are emotionally unstable. However, it refutes the submission of Smillie et al. (2006), who found a negative relationship between neuroticism and performance in their laboratory experiment and longitudinal study.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study assessed the influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance of university non-academics. The researchers conclude that there exists an influence of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance of university non-academics. Also, there is a significant and positive relationship among continuous learning activity, emotional stability and adaptive performance of university non-academics. The significance of these results lies in the fact that continuous learning endeavours and emotional stability can improve adaptive performance of non-academic staff of Lagos state university.

The study therefore, recommends that management of the university shall encourage the involvement of their non-academic staff in continuous learning schemes, within and outside the university. Similarly, the emotional stability of non-academics should be strengthened by not subjecting employees to excessive work stress. Also, the study recommends that continuous learning activity and emotional stability machinery should be strengthened for non-academics by the management of the university. Consequently, the adaptive performance of non-academics will be improved. The findings described in this paper are restricted to understand the impact of continuous learning activity and emotional stability on adaptive performance among university non-academics, utilizing data gathered from a university in South-West, Nigeria. Data could be gathered from other universities to replicate the study. Lastly, similar studies can be conducted in industries and organizations to bring about cross-sectorial insight.

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