



STRATEGIES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH BEHAVIOURAL MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which public secondary school administrators utilize behavioural modification strategies in enhancing organisational performance. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all 81 school administrators of public secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government. A total of 67 respondents comprising 27 and 40 school administrators of public senior and junior secondary school respectively were used for the study based on the number of instrument retrieved. Data collection instrument was a 30 item questionnaire, in 4 clusters drafted using a 4 point scale titled “Behaviour Modification Technique and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (BMTOPQ). A reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained using test-retest method. Validity was conducted by two experts from the departments of business education. Data was analyzed using mean for the research questions and z-test for the hypothesis. Findings from the study identified areas for the application of behavioural modification strategies in public secondary schools, also, that positive reinforcement strategies are utilized to a high extent for the enhancement of organizational performance while the extent to which punishment is generally used is low. Based on the findings it was concluded that behaviour modification practice is an important factor that can improve employee as well as organizational performance. Thus it was recommended among others that school administrators should try to adopt positive reinforcement which will enhance quality of work and increased in employee satisfaction and performance.

Keyword: *Organizational Performance, Behaviour, Reinforcement, Behaviour Modification*



Introduction

Everything has a function and it is the quality of its function that creates its ultimate benefit. Thus, the greatest benefit of any organization is its ability to achieve set goals. It is clear that human resources are the most valuable and important assets of any organization. This is because an organization may have the best set of investment opportunities, material resources and equipment but without competent employees at their disposal, the organization cannot harness or exploit these resources. The success and growth of any organization depends to a large extent on how employees in the organization are managed to ensure high performance. It thus follows that organizational performance is the sum of all employee performance. This implies that if employees are performing to the desired standard, overall organization performance will also be increased. However, it is the duty of the administrator to enhance the performance of individual members of organizations by ensuring that desired behaviours are reinforced and undesired behaviours are weakened, sharpened or eliminated. This task of sharpening the behavior of individuals in the organization to conform to organizational standards is what is referred to as “Behavior Modification”.

Behaviour Modification is the term for the use of behaviour change techniques demonstrated empirically either to increase or decrease the frequency of a behaviour, like altering the behaviour of an individual and reactions to stimuli through positive and negative reinforcement of adaptive behaviour and/or the reduction of behaviour through its extinction, punishment and/or satiation (Kondaikar, 2007). Golnaz (2015) wrote that behaviour modification has been shown to improve job performance, promote safe behaviours, reduce accidents in work place, improve customer service, and assist employees in identifying and improving on a range of more functional behaviour in the workplace. This principle traces back to the works of two pioneering psychologists: Edward Thorndike's Law of Effect and B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory. Edward Thorndike's Law of Effect states that behaviour with favourable consequences is repeated, while behaviour with unfavourable consequences tends to disappear. Skinner's Operant Conditioning argues that individuals emit a new behaviour to deal with new environmental conditions and the behaviour itself is strengthened by its consequences. According to Koko (2010) Skinner's Operant Conditioning is guided by major principles such as: desired behaviour can be reinforced by reward, desired patterns of behaviour can be



sharpened by rewarding successive approximations to the desired behaviour, undesired behaviour can be extinguished through lack of reinforcement and undesired behaviour can be discouraged through negative reinforcement.

Organizational Behaviour Modification Techniques can be used for motivating the employees as well as for enhancing organizational performance (Avinash, Rajendra, Nishith, 2013). A variety of behaviours in organization can be sharpened, enhanced and developed through these techniques which deal with changing behaviour through rewards or punishments. Halper (2015) wrote that behaviour modification makes administrators become conscious motivators, who analyze employee behaviour for substantial improvement in specific areas such as absences, tardiness and error rates. There are four basic behaviour modification techniques: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction, and punishment.

Positive Reinforcement is a technique that elicits and strengthens new behaviors by adding rewards and incentives instead of eliminating benefits (Derek, 2008). It can be applied in workplace through fringe benefit, promotion chances and pay. An employee for example, may find that when high quality work is done, the manager gives a reward of recognition since the employee likes recognition as a pleasant consequence, behaviour is reinforced and the employee tends to do high quality work again. To improve job performance, the management must apply a program of positive reinforcements (Brandon, 2012). Orogbu, Onyeizugbe, Onwuzuligbo, and Agu (2016) advised that to effectively enhance organizational performance, it is important that efforts of teachers in public secondary schools are recognized, acknowledged, praised, rewarded and positively reinforced by management. These according to the authors are major tenets of behaviour modification as situations where desired behaviour and efforts are not reinforced will lead to low performance.

Negative reinforcement takes place when individuals learn to avoid or escape from unpleasant consequences in the workplace. For example, when an employee avoids accidents in the workplace in order to escape safety warnings, ceasing required overtime when staff regularly meets their quota, no longer requiring employees to check in twice a day when their performance meets desired standard. Negative reinforcement strengthens and increases behaviour by the termination or withdrawal of an undesirable consequence (Surendra, 2008).



Punishment is a tool used to remove unwanted or undesired actions and it can be used to decrease the intensity of behaviour (Hall, 2013 in Leong & Rashad, 2014). Punishment weakens behaviour by following behaviour with undesirable consequences. A study carried out by Siang (2012) to investigate employees' punctuality to work, revealed that employees who were penalized for being late to work were later found to be effective. The percentage of employees who are late dropped 66% and 55% of them actually reported to work earlier. However, Williams (2007) pointed out that though punishment can weaken undesirable behaviour, managers must be careful to avoid the backlash that occurs when employees are punished at work.

Extinction is a reinforcement strategy in which a positive consequence is no longer allowed to follow a previously reinforced behaviour. By removing the positive consequences, extinction weakens the behaviour making it less likely to occur (Williams, 2007). For example, giving reward when the organization performs well, and not giving any reward when the organization performs poorly. It can be concluded that the Principals can gain the benefits of extinction by simply ignoring undesirable employee behavior. This study therefore, was carried out to seek the opinions of school administrators of public secondary schools in Port Harcourt to determine the extent to which positive reinforcement and punishment behaviour modification techniques are utilized in enhancing organizational performance.

Statement of Problem

Behaviour Modification is increasingly drawing the attention of managers and administrators in shaping behaviour of employees they deal with constantly in the organization. Educational institutions like any other organization are established to achieve high level performance making the behaviour of staff in the school environment paramount in determining the extent to which performance goals are actually achieved. However, human behaviour as essential as it seems is one of the most frequently overlooked elements in achieving performance goals in public secondary schools. Observation has shown that a great level of gross misconduct among teachers of public secondary schools in terms of commitment; efficiency, devotion to duty, punctuality, productivity, as well as performance. Kelly and Pohl (2018) also lamented that despite the acceptance of more severe punitive measures in schools, these measures have not provided the desired results. In the light of this, this study was carried out to determine the extent to which school administrators of



public secondary schools in Port Harcourt use positive reinforcement and punishment as behavioural modification techniques to enhance organizational performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

What are the areas for the application of behaviour modification techniques in public secondary schools?

To what extent do school administrators of public secondary schools enhance organizational performance through positive reinforcement technique?

To what extent do school administrators of enhance organizational performance through punishment technique?

What are the benefits of using behaviour modification technique for the enhancement of organizational performance?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school administrators on the areas for the application of behaviour modification techniques in public secondary schools.

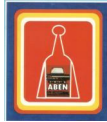
There is no significant difference in the mean response of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through positive reinforcement technique.

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through punishment technique.

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school administrators on the benefits of using behaviour modification techniques for the enhancement of organizational performance.

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey design, considered appropriate for seeking the opinion of school administrators. The study was carried out in Rivers state, specifically Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The population of the study comprised of 81 administrators of 27 public secondary schools in Port Harcourt



Local government area. The researcher adopted purposive sampling technique as such the entire population was studied due to its manageable size. A structured questionnaire of 30 items titled “Behaviour Modification Technique and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (BMTOPQ) in four clusters, A, B, C, and D was used for data collection. The questionnaire adopted a modified four point rating scale with options: very High Extent (VHE-4points), High Extent (HE-3points), Moderate Extent (ME-2points), and Low Extent (LE-1point) for research questions two and three and Strongly Agree (SA-4points), Agree (A-3points), Disagree (D-2points), and Strongly Disagree (SD-1point) for research questions one and four. The 81 copies of questionnaires were administered; however, only 67 were retrieved (27 senior school administrators and 40 junior secondary school administrators) and used for data analysis. The initial copy of the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by two research experts in Business Education. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using test-retest method and a coefficient 0.79 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were considered as high extent and accepted while those below 2.50 were considered as low extent and rejected. The decision rule for testing the hypotheses was that if calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, the hypothesis was upheld and rejected if calculated z-value is greater than critical z- value.

Results

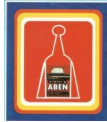
Research Question 1

What are the areas for the application of behaviour modification techniques to enhance organizational performance in public secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean ratings on areas for the application of behaviour modification to enhance organizational performance in public secondary schools. (N=67)

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Senior Decision	Mean	SD	Junior Decision
1	Tardiness	3.68	0.99	Accepted	3.45	0.80	Accepted
2	Absenteeism	3.88	0.97	Accepted	3.37	1.02	Accepted
3	Lack of devotion to duty	2.97	0.95	Accepted	3.05	0.96	Accepted
4	Employee ineffectiveness	2.62	1.03	Accepted	3.10	0.98	Accepted
5	Low employee performance	2.90	0.87	Accepted	2.75	1.01	Accepted
Grand Mean		3.21	0.96	Accepted	3.14	0.95	Accepted

Source: Research Data, 2019



Data in table 1 shows all the items with mean values ranging from 2.62 to 3.88 and above the criterion mean score of 2.50, indicating the agreement of the respondents on all areas for application of behaviour modification techniques and strategies to enhance organizational performance.

Research Question 2

To what extent do school administrators enhance organizational performance through positive reinforcement technique?

Table 2: Mean ratings on the extent school administrators enhance organizational performance through positive reinforcement technique. (N=67)

S/N	Positive Reinforcement Strategies	Mean	SD	Senior Decision	Mean	SD	Junior Decision
1	Giving rewards for desired behaviour	3.43	1.05	HE	3.41	0.80	HE
2	Praising high performing staff	3.47	0.97	HE	3.17	1.02	HE
3	Open recognition in front of other staff	3.04	0.95	HE	3.46	0.96	HE
4	Recommending staff for Promotion	3.89	0.87	HE	3.56	0.98	HE
5	Thanking high performing staff	3.30	0.87	HE	3.04	1.01	HE
6	Making staff a positive reference point	3.28	1.03	HE	3.51	0.99	HE
7	Giving staff special privilege	3.87	0.89	HE	3.10	0.98	HE
8	Appreciating staff with gift items	3.09	0.78	HE	3.34	0.74	HE
9	Recommend staff for training	3.39	0.62	HE	3.20	0.82	HE
10	Giving awards to outstanding staff at the end of the session	3.50	0.70	HE	3.30	0.85	HE
Grand mean		3.43	0.87	HE	3.30	0.92	HE

Source: Research Data, 2019

Table 2 shows the extent to which administrators of public secondary schools use positive reinforcement behaviour modification strategies to enhance organizational performance. The table revealed that all the listed strategies were highly utilized in the enhancement of performance with a grand mean of 3.43 and 3.30 for administrators of public senior and junior secondary school respectively.

Research Question 3

To what extent do school administrators enhance organizational performance through punishment technique?



Table 3: Mean ratings on the extent school administrators enhance organizational performance through punishment technique. (N=67)

S/N	Punishment Strategies	Mean	SD	Senior Decision	Mean	SD	Junior Decision
1	Issuing a written query to the staff	2.57	0.56	HE	2.50	0.46	HE
2	Placing the staff on suspension without pay	1.63	0.88	LE	1.70	0.70	LE
3	Demoting the staff to a lower position	2.35	0.63	LE	2.15	0.82	LE
4	Denial of rights, privileges and incentives	2.67	0.96	HE	2.55	0.63	HE
5	Giving the staff an open rebuke	3.09	0.75	HE	2.95	0.94	HE
6	Transfer of staff to remote or hardship areas	3.00	0.78	HE	3.01	0.67	HE
7	Recommend staff salary cut	2.10	0.96	LE	2.05	0.94	LE
8	Making the staff redundant	3.09	0.78	HE	3.24	0.4	HE
9	Recommending staff for psychological counseling and evaluation	1.93	0.63	LE	1.91	0.82	LE
10	Outright termination of staff appointment	1.87	0.85	LE	1.83	0.87	LE
Grand mean		2.40	0.60	LE	2.38	0.76	LE

Source: Research Data, 2019

Table 3 shows the responses of public secondary school administrators on the extent punishment technique is used to enhance organizational performance. The result revealed that punishment strategies such as issuing of query, denial of staff rights, privileges and incentives, giving open rebuke, transfer of staff to remote or hardship areas and making the staff redundant are used to a high extent to enhance performance while punitive strategies such as placing the staff on suspension without pay, demoting the staff to a lower position, recommending staff for salary cut, recommending staff appointment with mean scores lower than 2.50 were rated low. However, the grand mean of 2.40 and 2.38 for administrators of public senior and junior secondary school respectively indicated that punishment as a behaviour modification technique is generally used to a low extent in enhancing organizational performance.

Research Question 4

What are the benefits of using behaviour modification technique for the enhancement organizational performance?

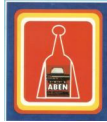


Table 4: Mean ratings on the benefits of using behaviour modification technique for enhancement organizational performance . (N=67)

S/N	Statements	Mean	SD	Senior Decision	Mean	SD	Junior Decision
1	Promotes employee commitment and effectiveness.	2.52	0.45	Accepted	2.76	0.86	Accepted
2	Promotes good employer/ employee relationship	2.58	0.69	Accepted	3.09	0.88	Accepted
3	Encourages employee recognition	2.91	0.99	Accepted	2.86	0.92	Accepted
4	Motivates employees for higher performance	2.68	0.87	Accepted	2.91	0.99	Accepted
5	Improves and employee job/ organizational performance.	2.86	1.01	Accepted	2.68	0.87	Accepted
6	Grand Mean	2.71	0.80	Accepted	2.86	0.90	Accepted

Source: Research Data, 2019

Table 4 revealed that respondents agreed to all the statements on the benefits of using behaviour modification techniques for enhancing organizational performance in public secondary schools with a grand mean of 2.71 and 2.68 for administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt respectively.

Hypothesis 1

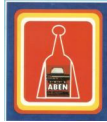
There is no significant difference in the mean responses of school administrators on the areas for the application of Behaviour Modification Techniques in public secondary schools.

Table 5: z-test analysis of school administrators on the areas for the application of behaviour modification techniques in public secondary schools

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	z-Cal	z-Cri	Decision
Administrators of Public Senior Secondary Schools	27	3.21	0.96	65	0.05	1.09	2.00	Accepted
Administrators of Public Junior Secondary Schools	40	3.14	0.95					

Source: Field Survey Data 2019.

Results in table 5 indicate no significant difference in the mean responses of school administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt as regards areas for the application of behaviour modification techniques. The result shows a z-calculated value of 1.09, which is less than the z-critical valve of 2.00 with degree of freedom of 65 and 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis is upheld.



Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through positive reinforcement technique.

Table 6: z-test analysis of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through positive reinforcement technique.

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	z-Cal	z-Cri	Decision
Administrators of Public Senior Secondary Schools	27	3.43	0.87	65	0.05	0.54	2.00	Accepted
Administrators of Public Junior Secondary Schools	40	3.30	0.92					

Source: Field Survey Data 2019.

Table 6 presents the z-test analysis of administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through positive reinforcement technique. The table showed that the z-calculated value of 0.54 is less than the z-critical value of 2.00. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of school administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt.

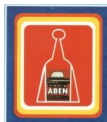
Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through punishment technique. **Table 7:** z-test analysis of school administrators on the extent organizational performance is enhanced through punishment Technique.

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	z-Cal	z-Cri	Decision
Administrators of Public Senior Secondary Schools	27	2.40	0.60	65	0.05	0.11	2.00	Accepted
Administrators of Public Junior Secondary Schools	40	2.38	0.76					

Source: Field Survey Data 2019.

Table 7 shows a z-calculated value of 0.11, against the z-critical value of 2.00. Since the calculated value is less than the table value, the null hypothesis is upheld that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of school administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools on the extent to which they enhance organizational performance through punishment behaviour modification technique.



Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school administrators (principals and vice-principals) of public secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State on the benefits of using behaviour modification technique in enhancing organizational performance in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 8: *z-test Analysis of school administrators on the benefits of using behaviour modification technique in enhancing organizational performance*

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	z-Cal	z-Cri	Decision
Administrators of Public Senior Secondary Schools	27	2.71	0.80	65	0.05	-0.13	2.00	Accepted
Administrators of Public Junior Secondary Schools	40	2.86	0.90					

Source: Field Survey Data 2019.

The z-calculated value of -0.13 is less than the z-critical value of 2.00 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 65, the hypothesis is therefore accepted and conclusion made that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of school administrators of public senior and junior secondary schools on the benefits of using behaviour modification technique in enhancing organizational performance in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion

The findings of the study from research question 1 identified the areas for the application of behaviour modification technique in public secondary schools. The results agreed with the opinion of Kondaikar (2007), Surendra (2008), Smirti (2016) and Orogbu *et al* (2016) that behaviour modification techniques can be applied to improve employee productivity, absenteeism, tardiness, safety and accident prevention, employee satisfaction, commitment, profitability, promptness, complaints, constructive criticism as well as improve performance. This therefore implies that behaviour modification strategies can also be applied in public secondary schools to curb tardiness, absenteeism, lack of devotion and commitment, ineffectiveness as well as low productivity and performance among teachers.



The study equally revealed in research question 2, a high extent of the use of positive reinforcement technique in enhancing organizational performance by school administrators in public secondary schools. This finding aligns with the views of Leong and Rashad (2014), Orogbu, *et al* (2016), as well as Kelly and Pohl (2018) that positive behaviour modification techniques are more effective than punishment and have been found to be effective in improving behaviour and school safety. That applying positive reinforcement method affords management greater possibility of modifying organizational behaviour in more consistent and productive ways. Therefore, to improve job performance, management must apply a program of positive reinforcements.

Research question 3 revealed the extent to which punitive technique is used to enhance organizational performance. Findings revealed that behaviour modification strategies are only utilized to a low extent. This finding aligns with the views of Surendra (2008) as well as Kelly and Pohl (2018) that despite the acceptance of more severe punitive measures in schools, these measures have not provided the desired results. Although punishment may be necessary sometimes to discourage undesirable/negative behaviour, it should be used with caution because it has certain limitations. However, it contrasts with the opinion of Leong and Rashad (2014) that although punishment is often not favoured as a behaviour modification technique, it has been proven to be effective when applied to areas like tardiness in organizations. The author added that often times those who are given penalty show better discipline. Golnaz (2015) also pointed out that for punishment to be effective; employees need to see a strong connection between the behaviour and the punishment.

The study also revealed from research question 4 the benefits of using behaviour modification techniques in enhancing organizational performance in public secondary schools. The study identified promoting employee commitment and effectiveness, promoting good employer/employee relationship, employee recognition, motivation of employees, and improving organizational performance as benefits of using behaviour modification techniques. This finding agrees with Golnaz (2015) that behaviour modification has been shown to improve job performance, promote safe behaviours, reduce accidents in work place, improve



customer service, and assist employees in identifying and improving a range of more functional behaviour in the workplace. Also, the study is line with Halper, (2015) that behaviour modification makes managers become conscious motivators, encourages managers to analyze employee behaviour to achieve substantial improvement in areas such as absences, tardiness and error rates.

Conclusion

The study identified behaviour modification as a powerful tool in shaping the behaviour of employees towards organizational performance. It was concluded behaviour modification plays an essential part in enhancing employee performance and is an effective means to reduce problem behaviours shown by employees in any organization. Effectiveness and performance are most highly emphasized nowadays; this is why it is so important for school administrators to understand and utilize behaviour modification techniques to encourage employees to behave positively in areas such as tardiness, absenteeism, low productivity and lack of devotion to duty.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

School administrators should strive enhance organizational performance through the application of appropriate behaviour modification techniques in the areas identified in this study.

Ministry of education, schools board and school administrators should adopt positive reinforcement which will lead to increased quality of work, increased employee satisfaction and desirable performance.

Punishment as a behaviour modification technique should only be applied as a last resort and the connection between the behaviour and the consequences properly defined.

Management should ensure to use the right reinforcement strategy at the right time; this implies that reinforcement should immediately follow the act of behaviour.



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