



# Skill Variety and Service Delivery of Non-Academic Staff in Public Universities in Bayelsa State

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the relationship between skill variety and quality job delivery of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured, self-administered questionnaire. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was 815 non-academic staff in the 4 Public Universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A sample of 268 respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The research instrument was validated through supervisor's vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The study findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between skill variety and service delivery of non-academic staff in of public universities in Bayelsa. The study concludes that an effective adoption of skill variety practices positively enhances service delivery of non-academic staff of public universities in Bayelsa State. The study recommends that Public Universities should encourage cross-functional teams that bring together individuals with different skill sets and perspectives can lead to more innovative and creative approaches to problem solving.*

**Keywords:** *Skill Variety, Service Delivery, Service Reliability, Service Responsiveness.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Service quality delivery is designed to satisfy organizational members by means of innovating service delivery and as a result stretching out organisations' service range. Banks should understand their targets and deal with these targets in a proper way. In order to attain excellent service positioning, service organisations need to deliver services and products by means of distribution techniques in new innovative ways that make use of their unique competencies like knowledge and skills. In fact, the innovative usage of delivery methods is a lot more turning into a completely new resource for differentiation and innovation for firms (Chen & Huang, 2009).

Service quality delivery is defined as the difference between customer expectation of the service delivery and the outcome of the delivery. If the service rendered by an organization meets customer expectation, the customer will consider the service to be of high-quality delivery and when the customer expectation is not met by the service rendered, then the service delivery is said to be poor. Basically, the quality of service varies from one service industry to another but Parasurman, Zeithaml and Berry (1994) believes that the key determinants of service quality are

tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. As said by Vilho Rainsanen (2003), service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customers' perception of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibility. Achieving quality service delivery will require organizations to undertake job enrichment practices that will make employee jobs more meaningful in contributing to their overall service delivery objectives.

Every employee aspires or hope to maximize satisfaction from their jobs while giving their best to the organization and managers want the employees to deploy their skills and special abilities in performing their jobs in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between skill variety and quality job delivery of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the relationship between skill variety and service responsiveness of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.
- ii. Determine the relationship between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.



**Figure 1: conceptual model for the relationship between skill variety and service delivery**

**Source:** Desk Research (2023)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### **The Job Characteristics Model (JCM)**

This study is based on the job characteristics theory developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). An important view on factors affecting jobs and motivation is provided by Hackman and Oldham (1974) in the job characteristics model. Hackman and Oldham's framework distinguished five key components of a job that are useful in making jobs more satisfying for staff. Crucial elements of employments are specifically; skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and

feedback. This study is based on this model which is the lead model. The JCM model is one of the primary endeavors to configure occupations or jobs with expanded motivational properties. The model proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) portrays five center employment measurements prompting three basic mental states, bringing about business-related results. The proximity of these five main occupation measurements drives workers to interact with three mental states. They see their work as significant, they feel responsible for the results of their job, and they achieve knowledge of outcomes.

Garg and Rastogi (2005) noted that, this theory was built on the previous knowledge and research from other theories such as Hierarchy of Need Theory, Expectancy Theory, and Frederick Herzberg Two-Factor Theory. According to Hackman and Oldham (1976), job enrichment is based on job characteristics that offer motivation, satisfaction, commitment, involvement and performance quality.

The theory assumed that the job itself should be designed to possess certain characteristics that create conditions for high work motivation, satisfaction, performance involvement and commitment. The theory identifies the tasks condition in which an employee is predicted to prosper in his work. Job characteristics theory provides management with the insight that employee effectiveness can be enhanced by enriching their jobs with high levels of key characteristics and ensuring that those employees with appropriate individual qualities are assigned to those jobs (Garg, 2006). Organizations exist primarily to achieve their goals and expand business operations/objectives in terms large market share, high profitability, competitive advantage and employees' satisfaction among others. The main reason for adopting the Job Characteristics theory is that, it posits clearly that jobs should be designed in such a way that provide autonomy, robust feedback mechanism and opportunity for skills variety development that encourage and support organizational innovation. Skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback will not have uniform effects. According to Sandra, Raymond, John, Barry and Patrick (2012), the more of these characteristics a job has, the more motivating the job will be. The job characteristics model foresees that a person with such a job will be highly satisfied and will produce more and better work, which is better performance. This model will be very useful in the study as it contains and explains the main independent variables in the study, which are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Furthermore, the particular characteristics that should be subsumed into the job design should be able to create opportunities for work motivation, satisfaction, commitment and autonomy, deploy individual skills and know-how that promotes organizational innovation.

### **Skill Variety**

This is the first core job dimension which involves the number of different types of skills that are used in performing a task. It focuses on the degree to which a task challenges the job holder to use different kind of skills, abilities and talents. It is believed that when only one skill is adopted in performing tasks repetitively, it tends to bring fatigue, stress and boredom which will in turn affect their morale and productivity at workplace. Derek and Laura (2000), argued that

movement of employees from one job to another job within a particular organization and allowing them to adopt a variety of tasks in their work helps in avoiding repetitiveness, dullness and boredom. Several researchers added that the use of skill variety serves as a means of retaining and motivating workers for higher performance. Bratton (2007), also pointed that when a variety of skills are necessary to complete a task and those skills are perceived to be of value to the organization, employees find their work to be more meaningful.

Skill variety is the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities and involves the use of a number of various skills and talents of the workers. Jobs that are high in skill variety are seen by workers as more challenging because of the range of skills involved; relieve monotony that results from repetitive activity, and gives employees a greater sense of competence. According to Bratton (2007), when a variety of skills are essential to complete a task and those skills are perceived to be of value to the organization, employees find their jobs to be more meaningful. The idea behind providing skill variety in job design is that it will reduce boredom, thereby increasing job satisfaction and motivation. It has been proven that one-skill jobs that lead to repetition and monotony could bring about boredom, fatigue and stress that may negatively affect performance and productivity. According to Laura and Derek (2000), movement of employees from one job-task to another job within the organization and allowing them to adopt a variety of tasks in their work helps in mitigating the effect of repetitiveness and boredom.

Skill Variety, according to Hackman and Oldham (1975) is the instance where a job requires various tasks in order to carry out a complete piece of work and involves using various skills and abilities by the employee. Just as the job characteristics model indicates, the different skills that are required to complete a task often lead to desired performance by the intervening psychological state of experienced importance of a job. Garg and Rastogi (2005) indicated that skill variety involves the degree of utilization of different skills and abilities. A variety of Skills variety is one factor in the JCM which affects the meaningfulness of a job. A job that is high in the level of skill variety always requires a wide array of skills and abilities (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

### **Service Delivery**

Service quality is an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations. Service providers often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify problems, and to better assess client satisfaction. To this end, many authors agree that service quality plays a pivotal role since its inception in terms of getting positive results in a firm's performance. Offering superior level of service quality will surely enhance the firm's image and increase her chances of acquiring new customers (Elmayar, 2011; Siddiqi, 2011).

Johnston (1987) defines service quality with the phrase "customer satisfaction," that is the grade of correspondent between customer's expectation and perceptions of service. Further, the service attributes of perceived service quality relate to customer satisfaction (Parasuraman & Berry, 1991). Responsiveness or dissatisfaction helps to gain information and experience with the

service, which impact the perceived quality of the service. According to Zeithaml (1988) perceived quality is defined as: "Consumers' appraisal of a product's overall excellence or superiority". Previous researchers agreed that perceived service quality can be recognized as matching the customer service actual performance perceptions with the service performance expectations (Gronroos, 2006).

Service quality is defined as customer's perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithmal 1985). Service quality is often judged by customers and not by the organization itself (Abbasi, Khalid, Azam and Riaz, 2010). Martin (1999) suggested that a service is characterized by attributes such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability which delineate a service from a good which further complicates

### **Measures of Service Delivery**

#### **Service Responsiveness**

Providing service in a timely manner is highly appreciated by customers. Good service providers understand this aspect (Iqbal et al., 2010). Furthermore, firms that value efficiency pay attention to the services that they offer so that they can have an advantage and use this to keep off competitors (Karim & Chowdhury, 2014). Akbaba (2009) also stated that responsiveness is positively related to customer satisfaction and customers can refer others if satisfied. According to Timothy (2012) the steps taken to keep customers informed when problems occur can strengthen or harm the relationship. Keeping customers well informed of what is going on can have lasting effects on the relationship. By letting customers work out their problems and not being proactive, firms miss an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships (Armstrong, 2012). If the customer gets the understanding that you're working hard trying to fix the problem, then the customer will feel well taken care of and feels that he is getting his money worth (Ramzi, 2010).

Besides being trained on how to deal with customers, employees should be given the freedom to enable them use discretion in informing customers on the progress of their demand and a platform of asking when they are not sure (Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Employees should know their customers' needs and what they think of the firm. Firms may be able to develop relationships with customers that will benefit both parties by talking to them about their needs. Mudassar et al. (2013) argued that however skilled you are at workplace, always provide customers with exceptional service as desired. These includes providing timely responses to customer questions and inquiries, and informing your clients promptly. Greeting them warmly, involving them to determine what they have come for, and responding promptly and accurately to inquiries show customers' quick understanding of the firm. Failure to do so can result in lost business or damage a firm reputation (Kariru & Aloo, 2014). The most common customer complaint is being kept waiting. Being reluctant to return calls or fulfill orders may lead to loss of

customers. The customers may be pushed to switch to another company. They may also engage in negative word of mouth due to the dissatisfaction felt (Armstrong, 2012).

Geetika and Nandan (2010) further explain that to deliver the quality of service that a firm expects hiring and recruiting staff that are willing to assist customers is a prerequisite. In the recruitment environment, a firm has to compete with similar firms to get the best people with this kind of attitude. Demonstrating that you are listening through body language and making eye contact shows a customer that you are willing to assist them. Willingness to help makes the customer feel understood and appreciated. Customers want firms to focus on helping them (Mohsan et al., 2011). Attitude will always have an upper hand compared to aptitude. Most firms will choose the ones with willingness to go the extra mile or show sacrifice over some with greater technical skills when hiring. It is often easy to increase the technical skills of an employee than change reluctant behavior. Employees who thrive in the service industry have a natural desire to serve and express willingness when dealing with customers. This is because their free spirit nature to help the customers helps them in retaining and attracting new customers (Ouyung, 2010).

### **Reliability**

Safwan et al. (2010) argued that reliability shows the service provider's ability to perform services in a dependable and accurate manner. Furthermore, it involves doing it right the first time and it is a crucial service component of customers (Messay, 2012). It is noted that being reliable is an exceptionally important quality to have, especially in the banking industry (Ghost & Gnanadhas, 2011). Reliability improvement is key in service quality enhancement efforts. This is because when a firm is unreliable, they communicate less concern to what customers care about. Customers may form a negative perception about the firm and will switch to a competitor without second thoughts (Sakhaei et al., 2014).

It is not easy for many types of service businesses to maintain a higher level of reliability day in day out. Customers view, experience and judge mishaps in the service sector immediately they interact with the firm (Mudassar et al., 2013). In such a sector, variability occurs largely when services are being offered. It is difficult for service providers to control such variations since each employee is somewhat different from the others in personality, skills and attitudes (Mohammad & Alhamadani, 2011). The key aspects under reliability include providing service as promised, dependability in handling customer service problems, performing services right at the first time and maintaining error free records (Armstrong, 2012).

Ramzi (2010) pointed out that providing services as promised is one of the important factors of customer satisfaction. A good way of impressing customers is by doing what you promised and doing it right at the first time experience. This will enhance repeat business. Research has shown that delivery is the most important factor for customers and is one of the main causes of account abandonment if not achieved (Messay, 2012). Providing service as promised is hence fundamental in any business. This will build a firms' reputation and with good reputation, there

is high chances of repeat business. In addition, new business will be generated by word of mouth and it will set a firm apart from its competitors as well. This is because they may sell similar products but their company could lack in delivering as promised (Armstrong, 2012).

### **Skill Variety and Service Delivery**

Skill Variety, according to Hackman and Oldham (1975) is the instance where a job requires various tasks in order to carry out a complete piece of work and involves using various skills and abilities by the employee. Just as the job characteristics model indicates, the different skills that are required to complete a task often lead to desired performance by the intervening psychological state of experienced importance of a job. Garg and Rastogi (2005) indicated that skill variety involves the degree of utilization of different skills and abilities. A variety of Skills variety is one factor in the JCM which affects the meaningfulness of a job. A job that is high in the level of skill variety always requires a wide array of skills and abilities (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Jobs that are complicated have shown substantial but positive relatedness with job satisfaction, internal employee motivation and employee output (Jassen, 2001). Chandler (2007) stated that a wide range of skills are required for employees to grow and a vast range of skills is also necessary for the purpose of being flexible at work. Chandler (2007) further suggests that to be effective, employees must break their alliance on a contracted assortment of job competencies created when working on a particular task. Work which needs the input of various skills will allow for workers to complete a meaningful piece of a job as opposed to just repeating simple tasks are viewed to have an impression on other people and also seen as worthwhile and meaningful the employees in these jobs. Skill Variety could also incorporate the influence of task difficulty. Work that involves too much repetition of an exercise and require less skills and talent is seen to be of low task difficulty while the work that involves varying tasks, activities and skills are considered to have high task difficulty (Spector, 2012).

In other studies, skill variety is considered as the number of various task elements that are necessary for the job fulfilment. Task Variety communicates clarity of knowledge (Pentland, 2003). According to the literature of careers, employees at the start of their careers make attempts to discover tasks from which they attain or achieve their goals (Feldman & Thomas, 2012). Inherent characteristics of a job including significance of a task and skill variety are usually mostly associated with low rates of absenteeism (Taber & Taylor, 1990).

From the foregoing discourse, the study hypothesized thus:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between skill variety and service responsiveness of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff in in public universities in Bayelsa State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured, self- administered questionnaire. Primary data was generated



through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was 815 non-academic staff in the 4 Public Universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A sample of 268 respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0 as shown below:

**Table 1 Correlation Matrix for Skill Variety and Measures of Service Delivery**

			Skill Variety	Service Responsibility	Service Reliability
Spearman's rho	Skill Variety	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.825**	.974**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	279	279	279
	Service Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.825**	1.000	.829**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	279	279	279
	Service Reliability	Correlation Coefficient	.974**	.829**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	279	279	279

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

**Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between skill variety and service responsiveness of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

From the result in Table 1, it is shown that a strong positive relationship exists between skill variety and service responsiveness with *rho* value 0.825. This represents a high correlation indicating a strong substantial relationship. By interpretation, there is a strong positive relationship between skill variety and service responsiveness of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State. Similarly displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p-value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between skill variety and service responsiveness of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

From the result in Table 2, it is shown that a strong positive relationship exists between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff with *rho* value 0.974. This represents a high



correlation indicating a strong substantial relationship. By interpretation, there is a strong positive relationship between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State. Similarly displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p-value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the probability value is  $(0.000) < (0.05)$  level of significance; hence the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between skill variety and service reliability of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This study investigated the relationship between skill variety and service delivery of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State. The findings revealed a positive significant relationship between skill variety and quality job delivery using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that skill variety have a positive and significant relationship with quality job delivery. This reinforces previous studies by Bremner and Carrière (2011) who studied on the effects of skill variety, autonomy, task significance and task identity on job-related work stress at the medical facility and the mediating effect of the importance of work. The study established that skill variety was the most significant of all other job characteristics. The direct relationship between skill variety and cynicism suggests that having the opportunity to conduct complex and challenging work is engaging for those that work in the healthcare field.

The finding of this study corroborates with the earlier finding of Kemboi, Biwott, Chenuos and Rutto (2013) who examined skill variety, feedback and employee performance: A case of Moi teaching and referral hospital Eldoret and found that skill variety significantly affect job performance ( $\beta_1=0.422$ , P Value =0.000). However, feedback has no influence on job. Nurses need to be provided with more training to enhance their skills, in order to improve their job performance. Also, the finding agrees Okache (2020) who investigated the relationship between skill variety and employee withdrawal behaviour in telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria and found that there is a significant relationship between skill variety and employee withdrawal behaviour in telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The finding also confirms the earlier work of Senen, Sumiyati and Masharyono (2016) on the effect of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback on job performance and the results showed skill variety affected to job performance.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concludes that an effective adoption of skill variety practices positively enhances service delivery of non-academic staff of public universities in Bayelsa State. Based on the conclusion of the study, it can be inferred that there is a positive correlation between the adoption of skill variety practices and the service delivery of non-academic staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

Based on the findings the study recommends that:

- i. Public Universities should encourage cross-functional teams that bring together individuals with different skill sets and perspectives can lead to more innovative and creative approaches to problem solving.
- ii. Public Universities by implementing skill variety practices, such as job rotation, cross-training, and job enrichment, the non-academic staff can develop a broader range of skills, which can improve their job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. As a result, this can lead to an improvement in service delivery and overall performance of the staff in public universities in Bayelsa State.

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