Predictive Value of Blocks of Time, Open Door Policy, Closed-Door Policy and Time-Management Practices: Lessons for Leaders

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Abstract

The study examined the predictive value of blocks of time, open-door policy and closed-door policy on senior-member administrators time-management practices in the Technical Universities in Ghana. The main objective was to assess whether open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time have impact on time-management practices of senior-member administrators. Two hypotheses were generated based on the objectives to guide the study. Predictive design was used for the study. Four hundred and forty-five senior-member administrators were selected through purposive sampling. Questionnaire was used to elicit responses from participants. The overall alpha coefficient of the items measured (α =.91) was obtained. Pearson correlation and hierarchical regression were the statistical tools used to analyse the data gathered. The findings indicated among others that there existed statistically significant and relationship between open-door policy, close-door policy, blocks of time and time-management practices. Findings equally showed that open-door policy made the strongest unique contribution to the prediction of time-management practices. The findings were discussed in relation to the literature. It was recommended among others that senior member administrators should be conscious of reinforcing the use of open-door policy, closed-door and blocks of time at the detriment of other variables. Specific time that can most conveniently help senior-member administrators to receive visitors and operate successfully should be pasted in front of the office door to control influx of visitors and avoid missing deadlines.

Keywords: Open door, closed-door, blocks of time, time management practices, walk-in visitors

INTRODUCTION

Managing interruptions is an important issue in university management. The quality of work performed and how the university functions is influenced by the kind of policies implemented by university senior-member administrators. Educational leaders are tasked to demonstrate the skill of managing institutions to promote efficiency through daily activities in the universities. In essence, effective senior-member administrators should be able to identify emergencies, urgencies and real priorities. The inability of senior-member administrators to differentiate between more pressing and less pressing activities affect the policy of open door, closed door and blocks of time (Smith, 2008).

The paper incorporated open door policy; closed-door policy and blocks of time as independent variables and total time-management practices as the dependent variable. Open door policy is the practice of leaving office door open for staff to feel welcome and informally meet the administrator, ask

questions and discuss matters that have been weighing on their minds (Kruse, 2015). Open door policy enables senior-member administrators to pay attention to staff inputs concerning areas of responsibility and support staff to solve problems encountered, in an attempt to complete assigned tasks (Smith, 2008). Senior-member administrators take time out of their responsibilities to receive visitors and this prevents them from maintaining schedule activities for the day. The reasons for open door are to demonstrate to people, administrators accessibility and to manage important situations (Schwartz, 2013). Open door policy can be detrimental to productivity therefore, senior-member administrators need a closed-door policy (Newport, 2016).

Closed-door policy is the practice of closing office door to perform administrative paper work for the purpose of creating control of time and increasing productivity. It involves planning time to meet visitors. This policy creates clearer and accurate expectations, manages interruptions and provides space for important task to be completed (Quast, 2013).

Time blocking involves organizing the work day in series of time slots and it enables leaders to manage time better. Each time period is devoted to a specific task and focuses on one task at a time. This helps to limit distractions and get things done faster (Kruse, 2015). Organizing the work day through time block reduces stress and assists administrators to be systematic in their operations by putting schedule in place and stick to it. (Kruse, 2015). Time blocking is the effective way of helping senior-member administrators to plan and get work done in timely manner. Staff should be permitted to access administrators calendar and be aware that some amount of time has been blocked on the calendar. This prevents visitors from distracting senior-member administrators work day (Newport, 2016). Inappropriate use of blocking time, open-door policy, closed-door policy affects achievement of set target of the universities.

Harder (2017) averred that leaders are confronted with endless demands, constraints, interruptions and find possible ways to best utilize time and provide great benefits. One way to accomplish this is through effective application of blocks of time, open and closed-door policies. Buller (2018) concluded that school leaders are confronted with many time-wasters which prevent them from focusing on more pressing issues.

The Technical Universities have high student population undergoing different programmes in various departments, spread among various faculties. This has probably resulted in administrative challenges particularly in official time usage. A situation such as this culminates in having some issues affecting students and staff almost not attended to. Indeed, this might be a contributing factor to senior-member administrators' inability to meet deadlines which has direct bearing on administrative performance in the Technical Universities. It is in response to this need that this paper was conducted to investigate the predictive value of blocks of time, open door policy, closed-door policy on senior-member administrators' time management practices.

Justification of the study

The knowledge gap that was addressed in this paper was the need to use inferential statistics. Sefenu's (2002) study applied descriptive statistics to assess the effects of open-door policy on central administration's time management. Adom (2009) used descriptive statistics. Osei-Amankwah (2010) used standard regression analysis. Previous studies overlooked hierarchical regression as data analysis tool to establish the impact of blocks of time, open door policy, closed-door policy on time-management practices. This paper sought to fill this vacuum.

Moreover, almost no empirical research has examined blocks of time, open-door and closed-door policies as influencing variables on Ghanaian Technical Universities senior-member administrators time management practices. This paper fills this gap.

Problem Statement

Official time management is generally perceived as less effective in the Technical Universities which results in unnecessary loss of work hours which is irreplaceable. Senior-member administrators seem to be interrupted with walk-in visitors and other unscheduled activities during official hours. It appears some senior-member administrators hardly complete assigned tasks during official hours in the Technical Universities yet, these senior-member administrators ought to finish assigned tasks within the stipulated time available. The questions that are bothering the researcher's mind are what relationship exists between blocks of time, open-door policy and closed-door policy and official time management? An even more crucial question is what impact do these variables have on senior-member administrators official time use? There is the urgent need to answer these questions.

Objectives

1. To establish whether relationship exists between blocks of time, open-door policy closed-door policy and time-management practices.
2. To assess the impact of blocks of time, open-door policy and closed-door policy on time-management practices.

Hypotheses Testing

Based on the objectives of the study, the following directional hypotheses were tested:

1. H_i: There is statistically significant relationship between open door policy, closed-door-policy, blocks of time and time-management practices
2. H_i: There is statistically significant impact of blocks of time, open door policy and closed-door policy on time-management practices.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed predictive desiign to ascertain whether the independent variables could predict time-management practices. Creswell (2013) postulated that the predictive design is well suitable for studying the breath of phenomena and has the potential to provide a lot of information from quite a large sample of individuals. However, the investigation cannot produce in-depth description or causality. Despite the shortcoming identified, predictive design was considered appropriate for generating data that would facilitate finding out whether the independent variables could predict senior member administrators time management practices.

Population

The target population was drawn from all senior-member administrators of the 10 Technical Universities in Ghana. In recent times, one could hear senior-member administrators complaining of their inability to complete assigned tasks and meet deadlines. The accessible population for the study was 517 senior-member administrators of the eight selected Technical Universities in Ghana.

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for inclusion in this study were that administrators are holders of second degree, had spent at least two years on their current positions and they could make informed decisions about their time-management practices in the universities.

Sampling and Sample Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select eight Technical Universities in Ghana. There was no need for random sampling senior-member administrators in the eight selected Technical Universities as a result, the entire population was purposively chosen (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). A sample size of 445 respondents was used for the study after data collected had been edited.

Instrument

The instrument used for gathering data structured questionnaire because it offers participants have the free will to give accurate responses and there is no interference on the part of the researchers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). The instrument was based on a five-point likert type scale (5-very often, 4-often, 3-sometimes, 2-really, 1-never) and it was used for the rating of the responses. Likert type scale was used because the items were mostly multiple scores (Babbie, 2021).

Reliability Test

Pre-testing of questionnaire items was conducted using a selected number of senior-member administrators (n=30) from the target population to determine such aspects as clarity of instructions and to detect ambiguities in the questionnaire items (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001)**.** It was aimed at testing the accuracy and strength of the questionnaire items in eliciting the needed information for the study. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire items and the overall alpha coefficient of the items measured ($\alpha =.91$) was accepted.

Data Analysis

After data had been retrieved, the researcher coded the items and fed them into the computer for processing. The analytical software used to process the data was SPSS 24.0. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the regression coefficient that determines the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

H_i: There is statistically significant relationship between open door-policy, closed-door-policy, blocks of time and time-management practices

Table 1: Pearson Correlation between blocks of time, open door policy, closed-door abd overall time-management practices

	Overall TMP	Open-door Policy	Blocks of time	Closed-door policy
Pearson Correlation				

Overall TMP	- .517**			
Open-door policy		-		
Blocks of time	.500**	.267**	-	
Closed-door policy	.279**	.201**	.142**	-

Source Computed from field data, 2020.   ** P<.01 (one-tailed testing)

a. Criterion variable: Overall Time-management practices

b. Predictors: Blocks of time, closed-door.

c. Predictors: Blocks of time, closed-door policy, open-door policy,

The results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient as shown in Table 1 revealed positive relationship between open-door policy and overall time-management practices. The coefficient of r =.517 indicated high and strong relationship between the two variables. The correlation was statistically significant at the level of .000 which was less than .01 alpha level (r =.517, n=445, p$\leq$.01. There was a strong, positive and significant relationship between time-management and open-door policy.

The relationship between blocks of time and time-management practices was statistically significant at .000 level. The significance level was lower than the alpha .01. The correlation coefficient of r =.500 showed high and strong relationship between the two variables (r =.500, n = 445, p$\leq$.01). There existed positive, significant and strong correlation between time-management practices and blocks of time.

At the alpha level of .01, closed-door policy correlated with time-management practices with a low coefficient of .279. The relationship was reported to be statistically significant and weak at .000 level (r=.279, n = 445, p$\leq$.01). There was a low, positive relationship between the variables. Thus, open-door policy, blocks of time and closed-door policy were related to time-management practices.

Hypothesis 2

H$_i$: There is statistically significant impact of closed-door policy on time-management practices.

The paper assess the composite impact of the three predictor variables on time-management practices. Hierarchical multiple regression was employed to assess the ability of the three control measures (open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time) to predict overall time-management practices. Table 2, provides the details.

Table 2: Composite impact of predictor variables on time-management practices

Model 1	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of Estimate	R^2 Change	F Change	d1	d2	Sig F Change
Block 1 Block 2	.639 .665	.408 .429	.405 .425	14.51352 14.27164	.408 .021	152.268 16.109	2 1	442 441	.000 .000

Source: Computed from field data, 2020.

a. Criterion variable: Time-management practices

b. Predictors: open-door policy, blocks of time.

c. Predictors: open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time.

In the model summary, open-door policy and blocks of time were entered at step 1, explaining 40.8% variance in time-management practices. After entering closed-door policy scale at step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 42.9%. The one control measure, closed-door policy, explained an additional 2.1% in time-management practices after controlling for open-door policy and blocks of time responding. R^2 change of 2.1% was obtained, F change $(3, 441) = 16.109$, $p \leq .001$. From Table 2 in the model summary, R^2 of 42.9% indicated that the combined predicting power of the predictor variables predicted nearly 43% of senior-member administrators use of time-management practices.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test of predictor variables and time management practices

Model 1		Sums of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig
1	Regression	64145.254	2	32072.627	152.261	.000
	Residual	93103.901	442	210.642		
	Total	157249.155	444			
2	Regression	67426.407	3	22475.469	110.347	.000
	Residual	89822.748	441	203.680		
	Total	157249.155	444			

Source: Computed from field data, 20220.   **$p \leq .01$

a. Criterion variable: Time-management practices
b. Predictors: Open-door policy, blocks of time,.
c. Predictors: Open-door policy, block of time, closed-door policy.

The ANOVA test in Table 3 showed that the model, which included both predictor and criterion variables was significant, F $(3, 441) = 110.347$, $p < .01$. This mean that the model fits the data and therefore, open-door policy, blocks of time and closed-door policy have impact on senior-member administrators use of time-management practices.

Table 4: Relative impact of predictor variables on time-management practices

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients Std B	Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.				Collinearity Statistics	
Block 1	(Constant)	88.363	2.939		30.063	.000					
	Open-door	3.100	.285	.413	10.869	.000			.398	.929	1.077
	Blocks of time	2.883	.281	.389	10.251	.000			.375	.929	1.077
Block 2	Constant)	79.195	3.684		21.498	.000					
	Open-door	2.904	.285	.387	10.202	.000			.367	.901	1.109

Blocks of time	2.779	.278	.375	10.005	.000		.360	.920	1.086
Closed-door	1.346	.335	.148	4.014	.000		.144	.951	1.051

a. Criterion variable: Total time-management practices
b. Predictor variables: open-door, closed-door policy
c. Predictor variables: open-doorpolicy, closed-door policy, blocks of time

The predictors were determined by using hierarchical multiple regression analysis with significance level of .000. It was indicated in Table 4 that the coefficients of open-door policy (.413), blocks of time (.389) and closed-door (.148) were significant. This showed that when the three predictor variables were considered, all the three variables were found to contribute significantly to the regression equation.
The'T' at .000, .000 and .000 levels was significant because the 'T' values obtained from the data were 10.689, 10.251 and 4.014. That is, the coefficients of open-door policy, blocks of time and closed-door had impact on the regression equation.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from hypothesis one revealed statistically significant, strong and positive relationship between open-door policy and time-management practices. The significant and positive relationship means that administrators who often practise open-door policy are more likely to use time-management practices in the performance of their activities. It can be concluded from the findings that open-door is related to administrators' time-management practices. Administrators leave office door open to receive drop-in visitors at a certain point in time. This provides room for obtaining information regarding issues affecting activities of the inmates of the universities and devise strategy to manage them. This ensures smooth running of the universities.

The significant relationship between closed-door policy and time-management practices implies that administrators who closed-door are likely to respond to all issues and avoid desk syndrome. Every activity on the 'to-do-list' will be covered and this results in achievement of goals of the universities. The study established that administrators should closed door at the convenient time.

The significant relationship existed between blocks of time and time-management practices means that these two variables are related. Hence, the study has established that lack of proper use of blocking time impedes administrative effectiveness. The inferences that can be drawn from the finding is that senior member administrators who demonstrate characteristic of blocking time when managing work are likely to practise effective time-management.

It could be concluded from the discussion that senior member administrators tend to use all the three variables in their operations. The blend of these three variables shows that senior member administrators are flexible in managing time. This is likely to result in effective time use which leads to efficiency in the universities because all the three variables are useful in managing the affairs of the Technical Universities. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is statistically significant relationship between open-door policy, closed door policy, blocks of time and time-management practices is accepted because there was sufficient evidence to support the claim that the variables are related.

Findings from hypothesis two proved that blocks of time, open door policy and closed-door policy had composite impact on administrators time-management practices. This means that the predictor variables

made significant contribution to the prediction, therefore, they were considered best predictors of time-management practices with open-door policy recording a higher 'Beta' value. This means that open-door policy is the potent contributor of time-management practices. The paper has established that senior member administrators need to reduce the rate of opening doors. This finding is in consonance with Sefenu's (2002) finding that 50% of the official time of administrative personnel was spent on open-door policy. The finding confirms earlier finding of Osei-Amankwah (2010) that heads are interrupted daily by drop-in visitors. On the contrary, finding from this study is not in conformity with Northouse's (2021) submission that many administrators avoid the practice of open-door policy because it takes them away from attending to other urgent needs of the institution.

It can be deduced from the findings that open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time have impact on administrators' time-management practices. The three predictor variables helped to explaining variance in overall time-management practices. That is, a unit change in the three variables will result in improvement in administrators time use by the average of 43% which, according to Pallant (2022) is quite a respectable amount of variance explained by the predictor variables. The three variables are fair enough to explain changes in administrators time-management practices. The remaining 57% was accounted for by other variables which were not included in the model. This finding is consistent with Osei-Amankwah's (2010) study that administrators are flexible in varying the mode of managing work.

Conclusions

On relationship, the paper found that there was statistically significant, positive and strong relationship between open-door policy, blocks of time and time-management practices. The relationship between closed-door and time-management was found to be statistically significant, positive and weak.

On impact findings indicated that open door policy, closed-door policy and block of time had statistically significant impact on time-management practices. Open-door policy made the strongest unique contribution to the prediction of time-management practices. The combined predicting power of the three predictor variables explained nearly 43% of the variance in total time-management practices.

Implications for practice

The positive impact of open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time on time management implies that the variables play key roles in administrators use of time management practices. Adequate and efficient use of the variables in the management of Technical Universities could help to explain changes in senior-member administrators' institutional practices and performance which could ensure effective management of the Technical Universities. The application of these variables may minimize interruptions which could promote effectiveness in managing official time by senior member administrators.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Senior member administrators should be cautious of reinforcing the use of open-door policy, closed-door policy and blocks of time taking the lead from the fact that these variables are related to time-management practices.

2. Specific time that could most conveniently help senior member administrators to receive visitors and operate successfully should be pasted in front of the office door to minimize influx of visitors taking the lead from the fact that open-door policy has the strongest impact on time-management practices.

3. Management of Technical universities needs to organize seminars for senior-member administrators every academic year to remind them of these predictor variables and apply them to improve official time use and make them efficient managers as required.

Contributions of the Paper

The paper concentrated on three variables (open door policy, closed door policy and blocks of time which enabled the researcher to establish the impact. The paper revealed that aside open-door policy, closed door policy and blocks of time, other variables may affect the use of time-management. The findings prompt senior member administrators of the need to pay attention to these three variables when performing their duties in higher institutions. It is crucial to be aware that managing official time at tertiary level is a collective responsibility and not individual responsibility.

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