

HUMAN RELATION PRACTICE AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF PLASTIC MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

Nneji, Onyinyechi Victoria & Eludi Austin O
**Ph.D Student of Department of Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, Rivers State, Nigeria**

Email Address; victoriameford@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Human Relation Practice and Employee Performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of this study consisted of 8 plastics manufacturing firms in Rivers State. Questionnaires were retrieved from plastic manufacturing firms in Rivers State who are members of the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN), and having total employees of 261. The study adopted a census sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled human relation practice and employee performance was used to collect data from respondents. The researcher used research assistant from the 8 plastic manufacturing firms in order to retrieve data from the respondents and in a bit to avoid researcher bias. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for univariate analysis while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation at 0.05 significance level. The study revealed from its findings that there is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt, There is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt, There is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that human relation practice is imperative and essential for effective employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in port Harcourt. The study recommended as follows: For effective communication to take place, the barriers to communication must be reduced since they cannot be completely removed. In general, communication should flow in all directions in the organization, the clarity of language used should be concise and the person receiving the contents of the communication should pay attention. Management should motivate employee through appropriate and adequate incentive packages in order to enhance employee performance. Management should share in employee feelings by empathizing with them. Management should see employee as part of the organization and not as mere working instrument, hence employee problems should be their concern as well in order to enhance employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

Human relations study has to do with the ways in which people relate to each other in group situations, especially work, and how communication skills and sensitivity to other people's feelings can be improved. According to Law et al (2005) 'human relations deals with motivating people in organizations to develop teamwork which effectively fulfills their objectives and achieves organizational objectives'. In the words of Scott, "human relations is a process of an effective motivation of individuals in a given situation in order to achieve a balance of objectives which will yield greater human satisfaction and help accomplish company goals". The human relations movement presents a counterpoint to the scientific management view that focuses on maximizing the productivity and income of individual manual workers, and on the separation of mental and physical work between management and workers. In contrast, supporters of the human relations movement believe that workers want to feel as a part of the team with socially supportive relationships and to grow and develop (Lepine et al, 2009).

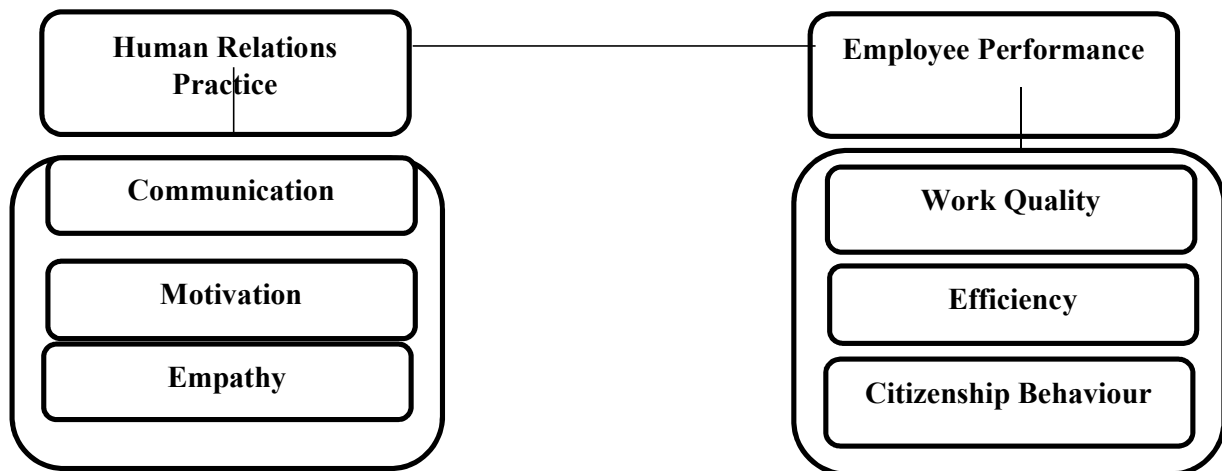
Human relations can be defined as the cordial atmosphere in an organization in which people practise the art of living in such a way that they communicate, act, interact and transact in a cordial manner, recognizing each other's needs, views, values and temperaments so that every interaction

and transaction taking place in an organization would have concern for each other's interests and feelings, leading to better motivation and morale of people at all levels in the organization. Various studies have been carried out on human resource management practice, strategic human resource management and organizational performance. However, very few or limited study have been carried out on human relation practice and how it affects employee performance. It is in the light of the above that this study is carried out to examine the relationship between human relations practice and employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

Employee performance forms a crucial aspect in overall organizational excellence hence, effective understanding of factors that influence their performance is imperative. The nature of human relations practices within an organization can have a remarkable impact on employee performance. According to Nielsen et al (2009) attracting and retaining valuable employees within the organization calls for the adoption of human relation practices that enhance the productivity of employees. This ensures that employees are capable of performing at an optimal level, based on the HR practices that influence their work. Despite extensive studies on effective human resource practices, their impacts on employee performance remains largely unexplored, such that organizations do not have the necessary information required in making important decisions. As employee performance becomes increasingly important in contemporary organizations that seek to derive value from employees, the need to understand that the impact of organizational HR practices is undeniable. This calls for an evaluation of how these practices influence employee performance. There are numerous problems and challenges when it comes to conflicts within human relations, which factor in a range of dynamics and individual criteria. However some major issues which are common to most situations are: Self esteem, Mutual respect and Group Dynamics. Human relation practices are known to influence the performance of employees to a significant extent, based on how organisations address employee needs and expectations. Therefore, HR practices within the organization act as motivation for employees. Practices including compensation, training, career development, employee involvement and performance evaluation among others determine the level of motivation among employees depending on how they are designed. The design of HR practices must involve the alignment of organizational needs with employee needs in order to effectively promote performance. In this relation, organizations must understand the characteristics necessary for the creation of effective HR practices in order to promote employee motivation and subsequently influence their performance.

Conceptual framework



Source: Dessler (2008) and Lepine et al, (2009).

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between human relation practice and employee performance of plastics manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. Other specific objectives are to:

1. To determine the relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.
2. To determine the relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.
3. To determine the relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does communication influence work quality of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt?
2. To what extent does motivation enhance work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt?
3. To what extent does empathy affect citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt
2. There is no significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt
3. There is no significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Human Relation

According to Armstrong (2001) Human relations is an integrated body of knowledge composed of several elements from different disciplines. Human relations is an inter-disciplinary field because the study of human behaviour in an industrial or business setting must include the research of several social and physical sciences if it is to be coherent. The inter-disciplinary approach requires an understanding of the separate contributions made by other disciplines and then the integration of that information into a unified whole. Human relations refer to all the interactions that can occur among people, whether they are conflict or cooperative behaviours. The study of human relations in business and industry is the study of how people can work effectively in group in order to satisfy both organizational goals and personal needs. Psychologists have done extensive research and experimentation on the relation of the individual to the work environment, (particularly job satisfaction, training, job placement, incentives, testing, counselling and various other work-related areas). The social psychologists, through their scientific study of the behaviour of individuals, have provided an answer to why people behave as they do (Armstrong, 2001). Sociologists have made major contributions to human relations with their studies 'group behaviour' and 'group dynamics'. They have strived to develop laws and generalisations about human nature, social interaction, culture and social organisation. Anthropology examines all the behaviours of man which have been learned, including all the social, technical and family behaviours which are a part of the broad concept of "culture". Their concepts of role behaviour, status and effects, and the influence of informal groupings have proved invaluable understanding of human behaviour in work environment.

They give answer to why groups behave as they do. Economics has contributed both theories and information to a total theory of industrial relations. The Science of semantics and the field of information theory have made useful additions to the practice of efficient communications in business and industry (Banjoke,2006). The political science has contributed useful information about the relationships between organisational structure and human relations as well.

According to Armstrong (2001) It should be stated that all these fields have added separate and useful elements to the knowledge of human relations. Human relations are likewise concerned with the 'why' of the people and their groups. Moreover, in the study of human relations, in addition to why, one also learns 'what' can be done to anticipate, prevent or resolve conflict among organisational members. In other words, "the field of human relations is action-oriented, emphasizing the analysis, prevention, and resolution of behavioural problems within organisations." Generally, human relations are used in the context of social setup, while employee relations refer to organizational setup. An organisation is composed of people who come from different walks of life and having different social, economical, psychological and political background. Human relations is the medium through which both employees and organisation mutually cooperate to achieve high performance standard in the society (Dessler, 2008).

According to Armstrong (2001) the quality and quantity of employees are modified by environmental factors such as education, training and development, because the human beings differ from one another in their basic mental abilities, personality, interests, skills, intelligence, attitudes, aspirations, energy, qualifications, experience and behaviour. The handling of physical material and financial resources are also quite different from that of human beings because the later are not standardised and interchangeable. Owing to differences in traits such as ability to think, develop, create, invent, feel, love, give, respect, hate, analyse and destroy, the human beings are more complex in their behaviour and psychological make-up. Therefore, the understanding of human behaviour is essential for establishing and maintaining human and employee relations. In a broader sense, human relation is the art of successful living.

Human relations stress the prime importance of getting a job done in an organisation. They recognise the importance of the dignity, integrity and self-respect of the workers. They seek to distinguish between the workers as a mere cog in the production machine and the worker as an individual (Fajana, 2002). A personnel manager has been compared to an industrial engineer. If the machinery in a production department breaks down or operates improperly, production stops or goes down, and losses are incurred. The engineer attempts to analyse the defects and tries to handle the malfunctioning machine at the earliest possible moment. Similarly, as much time and energy are spent in discovering the causes of human malfunctions, the correction has to be expedited to improve production. According to Armstrong, (2001) the philosophy of human relations is expressed in the following ten basic tenets:

- 1) Sound company personnel policies and practices must be designed to safeguard and promote the rights, interests and welfare of employees as persons.
- 2) No policy, whether that of the management or of labour, which violates or affronts the rights and freedom of the individual, can long survive in a free society.
- 3) The co-operation of the individual in the productive process must be won and deserved. It cannot be forced.
- 4) The individual employee, in respect of his status, rights, prospects for advancement, and his economic well-being, is inescapably linked with the success of the enterprise by which he is employed.
- 5) The relationship of the individual with the enterprise is a basic one, irrespective of whether there is or there is no trade union in the plant. The policies and activities of government, of labour unions, or of a management in the field of industrial relations must be judged in the light of whether they promote or jeopardise this basic relationship.
- 6) An individual enterprise, in its operation, must take full account of the social, spiritual, and economic needs of the individual as an employee, as a stockholder, as a consumer, and as a member of society.

- 7) The Industry exists for the individual and not the individual for the industry.
- 8) Loyalty is not an "either-or" proposition. There is no basic inconsistency or incompatibility between an employee's interest in his unit and his acceptance of a trade union membership.
- 9) Employers should, as far as it lies within their control, work for and provide the maximum degree of economic security for their employees.

Dimensions of Human Relation Practice Communication

Communication is the way in which information and understanding are transmitted. It unifies group behaviour, and provides the basic for group cooperation. If management cannot communicate effectively with employees, they cannot motivate or lead them. On the other hand, if workers cannot communicate well with the management, they cannot perform their jobs properly, and cannot receive adequate recognition for their work. Lack of effective and good communication in organisation fails to satisfy people at work (Igbinomwanhia, 2010).

According to Armstrong (2001) In all human endeavours communication plays pivotal role. Miscommunication or misunderstanding can have deadly consequences. Thus, no group or organisation can exist without communication. The word, communication is derived or originated from the Latin word, *communis* meaning common. Communication is the process of transmitting information and meaning from one person to another with the message being understood by the recipient. Communication involves the act of imparting a common idea or understanding to another person. In the world of business or work, communication refers to the process by which employers and employees or managers and managees interact and transmit information to one another for the effective performance of their duties and to further the basic purpose of the organisation. In the world of business, communication is both internal and external. We can rightly say that communication is the lifeblood of all human groupings and businesses. Communication is a very important subject to any manager (Mamoria et al, 2007). Managing is getting things done through others, a task which requires the human resource professionals to communicate with other people. "Communication refers to the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people" (Manoharan et al, 2009). It should be noted that communication is an integral part of the organizational process as the flow of communication up and down the organizational hierarchy has its effects on efficiency, decision- making and morale of organizations. Thus, effective communication is regarded as the foundation of organizations today (Mathias et al, 2004). Communication strategies are common in the business world, where they are used as part of a business plan, detailing how to communicate with various groups of people. A single business may have multiple strategies for different categories of people, such as clients, investors, competitors or employees.

A strategy is by definition the starting point for corporate behavior. It expresses an organization's ambitions, sets out its chosen direction and describes the principal initiatives and projects necessary to achieve its mission. Communication strategies are common in the business world, where they are used as part of a business plan, detailing how to communicate with various groups of people. Some companies even have an internal communication strategy for communicating within the business itself. These strategies are used to determine things like what information to share with the clients or investors, as well as how that information should be presented. Communication strategies, systems, and practices do play a central role in high-performance. Information, understanding, and knowledge are the lifeblood of the organizational body (Mathias et al, 2004). A thoughtful and comprehensive communication strategy is a vital component to any successful change and improvement.

Communication strategy is conceptualized as a functional strategy, providing focus and direction to the Communication function. It is facilitated by a practitioner performing the role of the communication manager at the functional organizational level. It is the outcome of a strategic thinking process by senior communication practitioners and top managers, taking strategic decisions on the management of, and the communication with, strategic stakeholders. Strategic

communication is an intentional process of presenting ideas in a clear, concise, and persuasive way (Pattanyak, 2010). A manager must make an intentional effort to master communication skills and use them strategically, that is, consistently with the organization's values, mission, and strategy.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to put oneself in someone else's place and to feel sympathy for that person's motives and point of view. Lack of empathy is the primary cause of conflict in organisations, and a barrier to communication. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. While this seems similar to being "sympathetic," it's actually a little different. Having sympathy means that you are able to understand and support someone else with compassion. Empathy takes that one step further by actually experiencing and relating to the thoughts and emotions of another person (Armstrong, 2001). The ability to be empathetic is important because it allows you to be more sensitive and understanding about the unique and specific needs of others. This can guide your decisions, as well as inform the ways you work with and talk with other people. Research has shown that the ability to have and display empathy is an important part of effective leadership. Being empathetic with employees often leads to a higher level of satisfaction and improved retention, since it creates a sense of appreciation and trust. When you're being empathetic, you are truly taking time to consider what your skilled workers are experiencing and using that knowledge to drive your business decisions and interactions. The very act of displaying empathy shows workers that they are valued. This can help them navigate challenging times and frustrations. Allowing empathy to guide your actions and messaging doesn't require grand gestures. Consider these examples: Workers are wondering why they're being required to have their temperature checked when entering new sections of your facility or simply showing up at the beginning of a shift. Empathy is taking time to explain the why behind these and other precautions, relating it to the greater impact it could make, which helps workers understand the necessity of such actions and why they matter.

According to Armstrong (2001), workers may be concerned about their retirement accounts as the economy experiences fluctuations and uncertainty. Empathy is emphasizing that you understand these worries while sharing resources where they can obtain more information. Workers may be concerned and nursed the fear that they will arrive at work only to experience a delay or shutdown due to an infection. Empathy is taking these fears and concerns into consideration and enacting processes that help workers feel reassured that their jobs are secured and that they will be safe on-the-job. Communicate openly about health and sick leave policies, and be open to adapting. Workers are worried about their own health; some may be in a higher-risk population with chronic health conditions. Empathy is formulating policies about protective measures, health insurance, and sick leave and sharing those resources with workers (Armstrong, 2001).

Motivation

According to Pattanayak (2010), motivation implies total response of individuals to various motivating forces. People in organisation relate to each other in the ways they do because they are driven by psychological, social and economic forces that have the power to motivate them to behave in particular ways. It is through proper motivation that productivity can be increased and conflicts avoided. Managers need to discover how best to motivate employees in order to secure their commitment to the goals of the organization. In an increasingly competitive and turbulent environment, organizations need full commitment of the participants to succeed. Eze, (2006) defined motivation as "that which emphasizes, directs and sustains human behaviour", while Armstrong (2001) in his own defined the concept stating that "it is concerned with the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways". Motivating people, therefore, is about getting them to move in the direction you want them to go in order to achieve a result. This is not an easy thing to do, as no two human beings behave exactly alike, or their drives the same. What motivates one person may not necessarily motivate another. Organizations must give close attention to how individuals can best be motivated through such means as incentives, rewards, and leadership and, importantly,

the work they do and the organization context within which they carry out that work.

Staff remuneration or “pay affects the way people work in terms of how much and how well” (Purcell et al, 2003). Most conflicts at work could be explained by poor pay and other pay- related issues. The outcome of pay dissatisfaction may include lower job performance, increased grievance, and incessant absenteeism as well as labour turnover. On the other hand, excessive compensation costs can reduce an organization’s competitiveness and its ability to provide jobs (Pattanayak, 2010). Sound compensation policy should create a balance between satisfaction and competitiveness. Pay is a contractual phenomenon, as the payment of salaries and wages is an indication of a relationship and transaction between the employees and employers. It is a consideration or quid pro quo which is extended to employees for services rendered. Staff remuneration otherwise called compensation refers to the totality of both the financial and non-financial rewards that an employee receives in return for his/her labour or services to an employer or organisation. It includes the basic pay, incentives and numerous financial and non- financial benefits “Compensation is what employees receive in exchange for their contributions to the organisation” (Pattanayak, 2010,). According to Price (2004), compensation connotes the adequate and equitable remuneration of personnel for their contributions to organisation’s objectives. Rao (2005) identified three components of compensation as: basic wage or salary (to attract qualified candidates); variable compensation (to motivate job performance); and supplementary fringe benefits (to retain talented staff). The essence of sound remuneration policies therefore is to attract, motivate and retain skilled staff. The concept of total remuneration and total reward are well explained by Armstrong (2001).

Employee performance

Performance is the process of assessing the proficiency with which a reporting entity succeeds, by the economic acquisition of resources and their efficient and effective deployment, in achieving its objectives. Performance measures may be based on non-financial as well as on financial information. (Taylor, 2008) It is the process of developing measurable indicators that can be systematically tracked to assess progress made in achieving predetermined goals and using such indicators to assess progress in achieving these goals. (Tessema et al, 2005). The essence of performance is the creation of value, which is the essential overall performance criterion for any organisation. In relation to SHRM, people are a key resource and a critical element in an organisation’s performance. The basis for SHRM is that by integrating HRM with the organisations’ strategy and applying particular systems of HRM practices will lead to effective management of employees and resultant improvement in individual and organizational performance (Wright et al, 2005). Performance is defined using the 3E, which are efficiency, effectiveness and economy. Wright et al (2005) is of the opinion that the three concepts of efficiency, effectiveness and economy can be associated with performance.

Measures of Employee Performance

Work quality

Quality or high quality has a pragmatic interpretation as the non-inferiority or superiority of something (goods or services); it is also defined as being suitable for the intended purpose (fitness for purpose) while satisfying customer expectations (Aiya et al, 2020). Quality is a perceptual, conditional, and somewhat subjective attribute and may be understood differently by different people. Consumers may focus on the specification quality of a product/service, or how it compares to competitors in the marketplace. Producers might measure the conformance quality, or degree to which the product/service was produced correctly. Support personnel may measure quality in the degree that a product is reliable, maintainable, or sustainable. In such ways, the subjectivity of quality is rendered objective via operational definitions and measured with metrics such as proxy measures.

Work quality is the value of work delivered by an individual, team or organization. This can include the quality of task completion, interactions and deliverables. Work quality is a common consideration in managing the performance of programs, projects, vendors and individuals.

Efficiency

Efficiency is the ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, efforts, money, and time in doing something or in producing a desired result. In a more general sense, it is the ability to do things well, successfully, and without waste. Nwa, (2000) posited that efficiency is doing things right. As defined by Deborah Stone, efficiency is "thus not a goal in itself. It is not something we want for its own sake, but rather because it helps us attain more of the things we value. Efficiency in a company or organization is the ability to produce using the least input (Cletus, 2019). The input may be in the form of energy, money, time and other various raw materials in a company.

Citizenship behaviour

Citizenship behavior (CB) refers to all those conduct, behaviour, and attitudes of employees which, though not part of the company's official rules or mandated by the company, are expected of everyone. CB is a person's voluntary commitment within an organization or company that is not part of his or her contractual tasks. Organizational behavior has been linked to overall organizational effectiveness, thus these types of employee behaviours have important consequences in the workplace (Nielsen et al, 2009).

CB has often been compared to contextual performance. Similarly to CB, the concept of organizational behaviour emerged in response to the realization that only looking at job specific work behaviours ignored a significant portion of the job domain. Originally, experts in this field focused only on activities that directly supported the output of the organization. As the job market became more aggressive, it became necessary for employees to go above and beyond that which is formally required by the job description in order to remain competitive (LePine et al, 2002). Contextual performance is defined as non-task related work behaviours and activities that contribute to the social and psychological aspects of the organization.

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on Human Relation Theory

Human Relation Theory

Human Relations Theory focuses specifically on the individual's needs and resultant behaviours of individuals and groups. It takes an interpersonal approach to managing human beings. It presents the organization as an entity made up of formal and informal elements. The formal elements of an organization are its structure. The informal aspects of the organization include the interactions between individuals. In this way, the organization is a type of social system that should be managed to create individual job satisfaction and the resultant motivation of the individual. Notably, much emphasis is placed on how individuals interact within groups and the result of group behaviour and performance.

At the core of human relations theory are these six basic propositions: A focus on people, rather than upon machines or economics. The organizational environment is not an organized social context. Human relations are important in motivating people. Motivation depends upon teamwork, requiring co-ordination and cooperation of individuals involved. Human relations within teams must fulfill both individual and organizational objectives simultaneously. Individuals and organizations desire efficiency by achieving maximum results with minimum inputs.

Also, central to the understanding of Human Relations theory is the concept of individual motivation. The drawback of this theory is that it requires the acceptance of numerous assumptions about human behavior. The primary contributors to Human Relations Theory are: Elton Mayo - Mayo is best known for his contribution to human relations management through the Hawthorne experiments.

Professor Elton Mayo is known as the Father of the Human Relations Approach to Management Theory. From 1924 - 1932, he, along with Fritz Roethlisberger, T.N. Whitehead and William Dickson, conducted the Hawthorne studies (so named for the location of the studies - the Hawthorne Plant of Western Electric Company). In these experiments, Mayo evaluated the attitudes and psychological reactions of workers in on-the-job situations. It began by examining the impact of illumination levels on worker productivity. Eventually, the study was extended through the early 1930s and addressed a broader range of workplace conditions.

The results, however, identified a unique identifier of group performance - attention. The control and experimental groups' performance improved irrespective of the environmental conditions. The theory became known as the Hawthorne Effect. Individual performs better when given special attention. The study also addresses other major concerns, such as: individual vs group job performance, worker motivation, and production standards. The findings were as follows: Group dynamics (Social Factors) are important determinants of job performance and output. Groups have their own norms and beliefs, independent of the individual members. Individuals are not solely motivated by compensation. Perceived meaning and importance of one's work are the primary determinants of output. Employees prefer a cooperative attitude from superiors, rather than command and control. Communication between management and employees is essential to understanding employee issues. Workplace culture sets production standards - despite standards set by managers. The work of Mayo, through the Hawthorne studies, was instrumental in understanding the roles of group behaviour and individual psychology in management practice. Mary Parker Follet employed psychological tools to understand the efficient use of people. She introduced the concept of depersonalized authority and responsibility. She also advocated for the integration of decision making through communication channels.

Follet researched classical management principles in the context of human elements. She employed psychology to understand employee interactions and to promote the efficient use of people in the organization. In her collective works, *Dynamic Administration*, Follet used psychology to explore various aspects of the organizational environment: She opined that workers must participate in the decision-making process through defined communication channels. Employees prefer to be integrated into the decision-making process rather than subject to the command and control of managers. Working in groups is generally more productive than working individually. Authority and order in an organization should be depersonalized. The facts of a situation determine the basis of authority and responsibility. Managers must integrate employee input in the resolution of conflicts that provide a benefit to all interested parties. Integration between departments or groups within the organization is preferable.

Empirical Review

Aiya, Fidelis, Omoregie, Alfred Nosa and Gregory Imafidon Ogbeide, (2020) carried out a study on Human Resources Management Practices and Organizational Performance in Nigeria. The study focused on the impact of human resource management practices in Nigeria organizations using the manufacturing industry as case study. This study tries to understand the need for HRM practices and specifically questions how HRM practices, such as the importance of HR department, objectives, recruitment, promotion, transfer and staff separation, performance appraisal and compensation, enhance organizational performance. A multiple-respondent survey of 120 staff of the selected manufacturing companies in Nigeria was undertaken to study the impact of HRM practices on organization performance. The data was collected using structure questionnaire and was analyzed using simple percentages and hypotheses tested using chi-square (χ^2) analysis. The survey found that a well-coordinated HRM practices, add value to the company's production processes and the contribution made by each employee have more effect on the results obtained by the organization as a whole. More so, the result of the study revealed that a good HRM practice enhances staff productivity and therefore boost organizational performance in Nigerian organizations.

Cletus I. Emeti (2019) undertook a study on Employees Motivation/Incentives and Organizational Performance in Paint Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study tried to find out how

well motivation/incentive practices have been applied in paint manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria as a means of determining whether the performance of these firms have positively been influenced by the practices. Relevant literature was reviewed to back up the study. A cross sectional survey design sampled the entire 312 staff of the 14 listed paint companies in Rivers State. Questionnaire validated by management experts was used to collect data and analysis made using fivepoint rating scale and Pearson Product Moment Correlation via SPSS 0.15. Major findings include: motivation/incentive practices of paint companies were not effective; motivation/incentive practices of firms were inadequate to engender significant impact on workers' overall performance. Recommendations: in the face of operational difficulties, paint companies should use other cheaper means of motivating their workers and giving incentives as these are vital to organizational high performance; managers should try to match workers' reward to performance.

Knowledge Gap

Various studies have been carried on human resource management practice, strategic human resource management and organizational performance however very few or limited study have been carried out on human relation practice and how it affects employee performance. The methodology of plastic manufacturing firms adopted in this study has not been understudy before, hence this study seeks to add in the body of knowledge by filling this lacuna and providing empirical evidence as regards to human relation practice and employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers state.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study seeks to establish a relationship between human relation practice and employee performance of plastics manufacturing firms, hence correlational survey research design was considered appropriate and adopted for the study.

Research Population

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. A research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. The population of this study consisting of 8 plastics manufacturing firms in Rivers State was retrieved from Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN).

Table 1: Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) Plastic Manufacturing Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

S/N	Firms	Address	Categories	Population
1	Oasis Preform Synergy Ltd	106A Rotary Club Road Trans Amadi Layout. Port Harcourt Rivers State	Plastics	30
2	Prazic Preform Ltd	Diplomatic Street Rumuekini. Port Harcourt Rivers State.	Plastics	27
3	Obinnakwueze A.A.I. Ltd	East -West Road Rumuodara, Alionahi. 500102. Port Harcourt, Rivers State	Plastics	28
4	Luyah Global Resources	11 Grace Lifestreets off Okoro Road Elowhani, Rumuodara Junction, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	Plastics	40

5	C.C. Igbokwe Investment Ltd	Opp. Genesis Restaurant and Port Harcourt Expressway Oil Mill, Rumukwurushi, Port Harcourt, Rivers State	Plastics	30
6	Piprox Energy Services Ltd	24 Chief Nuke Street, Trans Amadi, Port Harcourt, Rivers State	Plastics	30
7	New Rivoc Nigeria Ltd	80/ 81 Rivoc Street, Trans Amadi Industrial Layout Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	Plastics	26
8	Ace Footwear Industrial Ltd	Plot 34, Trans Amadi Industrial Layout, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	Plastics	50
Total				261

Source: Nigerian Business Directory

Retrieved from https://www.directory.org.ng/list-manufacturing_and_production?st=rivers

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study consisted of 261 respondents which was the total population of 8 plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The sampling technique employed for this study is census sampling technique because the researcher considered the population reasonable and researchable; hence the entire population was used for the study.

Method of Data Collection

A structured questionnaire titled human relation practice and employee performance was used to collect data from respondents. The researcher used research assistant from the 8 plastic manufacturing firms in order to retrieve data from the respondents and in a bit to avoid researcher bias.

Method of Data analysis

Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for univariate analysis while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation statistics at 0.05 significance level. The Pearson product moment coefficient correlation was used since the hypotheses contain two ranked variables, and the relationship between the two variables is sought; whether, as one variable increases, the other variable tends to increase or decrease.

RESULT

Table 2: Questionnaire distribution and retrieval

S/N	FIRMS	Distributed copies	retrieved copies	Not retrieved	Retrieved usable	Retrieved not useable
1	Oasis Preform Synergy Ltd	30	25	5	24	1
2	Prazic Preform Ltd	27	26	1	26	0
3	Obinnakwueze A.A.I. Ltd	28	26	2	25	1
4	Luyah Global Resources	40	25	15	25	0

5	C.C .Igbokwe Investment Ltd	30	26	4	26	0
6	Piprox Energy Services Ltd	30	26	4	25	1
7	New Rivoc Nigeria Ltd	26	26	0	26	0
8	Ace Footwear Industrial Ltd	50	26	24	25	1
Total		261	206	55	202	4

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Univariate analysis

Table 3: Frequencies on item of Human Relation Practice

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
1	There is effective communication (horizontal, vertical and lateral) practice in our firm	91 45%	65 32.2%	32 16%	10 5%	4 1.8%	202 100%	4.1	Agree
		455	260	96	20	4	835		
2	My organization provide financial benefits and other incentive to her employees	160 79.2%	27 13.4%	12 5.9%	3 1.5%	0 0%	202 100%	4.7	Agree
		800	108	36	6	0	950		
3	My organization share in employee pains and other related feelings	124 61.4%	58 28.7%	20 9.9	0 0%	0 0%	202 100%	4.5	Agree
		620	232	60	0	0	912		
4	Generally, the level of human relation practice in our firm is above average but needs improvement	110 54.5%	62 30.7%	28 14%	2 0.8%	0 0%	202 100%	4.4	Agree
		550	248	84	4	0	886		
	Total	485	212	92	15	4	808	4.4	Agree
		2425	848	276	30	4	3583		

Source: SPSS output, 22

Table 3 showed that the respondents agreed on each of the four items of Human Relation Practice (mean scores greater than 3). There is effective communication (horizontal, vertical and lateral) practice in our firm has a mean score of 4.1, My organization provides financial benefits and other incentives to her employees has a mean score of 4.7, My organization share in employee pains and other related feelings has a mean score of 4.5, Generally, the level of human relation practice in our firm is above average but needs improvement has a mean score of 4.4. The grand mean is equally greater than 3. On each item, statements' means are greater than the mean criterion of 3.0; indicating that Human Relation Practice has a positive effect on Employee performance.

Table 4: Frequencies on item of Employee performance

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
1	The quality of work in my organization is satisfactory in the aspect of job standard and performance intensity.	30 14.9%	27 13.4%	43 21%	56 28%	46 23%	202 100%	2.7	Agree
2	I am efficient in my duties in terms of timeliness and proactiveness	65 32.2%	46 22.8%	44 22%	39 19%	8 4%	202 100%	3.6	Agree
3	As an employee I exhibit citizenship behaviour towards my organization which help in organizational goal attainment	84 41.6%	63 31.2%	32 16%	17 8.4%	6 2.8%	202 100%	4.0	Agree
4	The level of employee performance in my organization in terms of work quality, efficiency and citizenship behaviour is above average but more still need to be done.	114 56.4%	73 36.1%	8 4%	7 3.5%	0 0%	202 100%	4.5	Agree
	Total	293	209	127	119	60	808	3.7	Agree
		1465	836	381	238	60	2980		

Source: SPSS output, 22

Table 4.2.2 showed that the respondents agreed on each of the four items of employee performance (mean scores greater than 3). The quality of work in my organization is satisfactory in the aspect of job standard and performance intensity has a mean score of 2.7, I am efficient in my duties in terms of timeliness and proactiveness has a mean score of 3.6, As an employee I exhibit citizenship behaviour towards my organization which help in organizational goal attainment has a mean score of 4.0, The level of employee performance in my organization in terms of work quality, efficiency and citizenship behaviour is above average but more still need to be done has a mean score of 4.50. The grand mean was equally greater than 3. The various means on each item statements are greater than the mean criterion of 3.0, indicating that employee performance has a positive effect Human relation practice.

Test of Hypotheses

Correlations 1: There is no significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt

		communication	work quality
Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.688**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	202	202

work quality	Pearson	.688**	1	
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.002
	N			202

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (correlation. 1) reveals that there is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where "rho" = .688 and p = 0.000) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate *that There is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt.*

Correlations 2: There is no significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt

Correlations

		motivation	work efficiency	
Motivation	Pearson	1	.728**	
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.002
	N			202
work efficiency	Pearson	.728**	1	
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.002
	N			202

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (Correlation 2) reveals that, there is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where "rho" = .728 and p = 0.000) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate *that there is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt.*

Correlations 3: There is no significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt

Correlations

		empathy	citizenship behaviour	
Empathy	Pearson	1	.888**	
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.002
	N			202
citizenship behaviour	Pearson	.888**	1	
	Correlation			

Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
N	202	202

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H₀₃: there is no significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (correlation. 3) reveals that there is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where rho = .888 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate *that there is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt.*

Summary of findings

Table 4.2.3.1 Summary of the Result and Decision Making

S/N	Hypotheses	Outcome	Extent of Relationship	Decision
H ₀₁	There is no significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt	(rho = .688 p =0.000)	Positive Relationship	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₂	There is no significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt	(rho = .728 p =0.000)	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₃	There is no significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt	(rho = .888 p =0.000)	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject Null Hypothesis

Source: SPSS Output,22

Discussion of Findings

Communication and Work Quality

Correlation 1 reveals that there is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where "rho" = .688 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that There is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt. According to Armstrong (2001) In all human endeavours communication plays pivotal roles. Miscommunication or misunderstanding can have deadly consequences. Thus, no group or organisation can exist without communication. The word, communication is derived or originated from the Latin word, communis meaning common. Communication is the process of transmitting information and meaning from one person to another with the message being understood by the recipient. Communication involves the act of imparting a common idea or understanding to another person. In the world of business or work, communication refers to the process by which employers and employees or managers and managées interact and transmit information to one another for the effective performance of their duties and to further the basic purpose of the organisation. In the world of business, communication is both internal and external. We can rightly say that communication is the lifeblood of all human groupings and businesses. Communication is a very important subject to any manager (Mamoria et al, 2007).

Motivation and Work Efficiency

Correlation 2 reveals that, there is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where " ρ " = .728 and $p = 0.000$) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that there is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt. Similarly, Aiya, Fidelis, Omoregie, Alfred Nosa and Gregory Imafidon Ogbeide (2020) undertook a study on Human Resources Management Practices and Organizational Performance in Nigeria. The study focused on the impact of human resource management practices in Nigeria organizations using the manufacturing industry as case study. This study tries to understand the need for HRM practices and specifically questions how HRM practices, such as the importance of HR department, objectives, recruitment, promotion, transfer and staff separation, performance appraisal and compensation, enhance organizational performance. The survey found that a well-coordinated HRM practices, adds value to the company's production processes and the contribution made by each employee have more effect on the results obtained by the organization as a whole. More so, the result of the study reveals that a good HRM practice enhances staff productivity and therefore boosts organizational performance in Nigeria organizations.

Empathy and Citizenship Behaviour

Correlation 3 reveals that there is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt (where $\rho = .888$ and $p = 0.000$) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that there is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt. Similarly Cletus I. Emeti (2019) undertook a study on Employees Motivation/Incentives and Organizational Performance in Paint Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study tried to find out how well motivation/incentive practices have been applied in paint manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria as a means of determining whether the performance of these firms have positively been influenced by the practices. Relevant literature was reviewed to back up the study. Major findings include: motivation/incentive practices of paint companies were not effective; motivation/incentive practices of firms were inadequate to engender significant impact on workers' overall performance. Recommendations: in the face of operational difficulties, paint companies should use other cheaper means of motivating their workers and giving incentives as these are vital to organizational high performance; managers should try to match workers' reward to performance.

CONCLUSION

This study primarily examined the relationship between human resource practice and employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. The study revealed from its findings that there is a significant relationship between communication and work quality of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt, There is a significant relationship between motivation and work efficiency of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt, There is a significant relationship between empathy and citizenship behaviour of plastic manufacturing firm in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that human relation practice is imperative and essential for effective employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study. Firstly, for effective communication to take place, the barriers to communication must be reduced since they cannot be completely removed. In general, communication should flow in all directions in the organization, the clarity of language used should be concise and the person receiving the contents of the communication should pay attention. Secondly, ownership of efforts by top management and acceptance by middle managers and operatives will motivate employees to perform better.

Thirdly, feedback is an essential element in effective communication; hence a comprehensive feedback system of communication should be adopted in plastic manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Fourthly, management should motivate employee through appropriate and adequate incentive packages in order to enhance employee performance.

Fifthly, management should share in employee feelings by empathizing with them. Management should see employee as part of the organization and not as mere working instrument hence employee problems should be their concern as well to enhance employee performance.

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