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Participative Management and Employees' Commitment in Industrial Organizations in Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study examines the impact of participative management on employees' commitment in Niger Mills Nigeria Limited and Cross River State Water Board Corporation, Calabar, Nigeria. The study elicited data from 560 respondents using structured questionnaire. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested to in this study. The test statistics was Pearson product moment correlation (r). Findings revealed that workers participation in decision making, their independence and exposure to organizational information significantly influence their commitment to work. The paper recommends among others, that, management of industrial organizations should make administrative policies that are guided by the philosophy of participative management.

Keywords: *Participative management, employees' commitment, decision making, workers independence, industrial organizations.*

1. Introduction

The success of any organization depends on the effective mobilization and utilization of both material and human resources. This implies that employees should be integrated to their work. The behaviour of workers must also be favourably influenced by management. It includes setting up conducive environment for workers to carry out their duties (Betts, 1975; Agba, Nkpoyen & Ushie, 2010; Agba, Attah & Edem, 2015).

Employees in industrial organizations naturally work well, seek the opportunity to exercise self-discipline and control, and have great potential to develop in the right circumstances. The organizational environment is vital in determining the workers' attitude to work (Agba, 2007). Workers cooperation with one another and even with management is also influenced by the environment especially organizational policies. Leadership style is a significant determinant of the workers' attitude to work. Participative management allows workers to participate in decision making and this stimulates employees' effectiveness and commitment in the organization (Ushie, Agba, Agba & Chime, 2010; ILO, 2015).

Decisions made by management must be interpreted and implemented by workers throughout the organization. If this process is to be successful, workers must not only understand the decision but also accept them. A good way to get workers to understand and accept decisions is to involve them in a strategic management process. This implies that, when setting the corporate level objective, top management and affected divisional managers should be involved in the process (Rue & Holland, 1989).

Financial rewards are also used to encourage workers' commitment in industrial organizations in Nigeria. Despite management efforts, most organizations are plagued with high labour turnover, low productivity, absenteeism, lazy attitude towards work, lateness, general dissatisfaction, poor job performance and lack of enthusiasm. This reveals that workers' negative attitude towards work may not be unrelated to financial rewards. It is also obvious that abysmal performance of most industrial organization is not unconnected with lack of participative management (Nkpoyen, 2003; Becton, Wysocki & Keper, 2009; Agba & Ushie, 2013).

The perennial problem confronting most organizations in Nigeria is that, the working man is not consulted on matters affecting his work. Employees do not take part in decision making. The employees' interest is not defended and promoted. The worker is not adequately exposed to information and because the work environment permits little autonomy by not injecting democracy into it, the worker feels alienated, frustrated and demoralized in the production process (Nkpoyen, 2003; Agba, Mbotto & Agba, 2013).

In view of the above, this study is designed to investigate the relationship between participative management and employees' commitment in industrial organization. Specifically, the study looks at the impact of participative management components such as decision making, workers independence in the organization, workers exposure to relevant information on employees' commitment in Niger Mills Nigeria Limited and Cross River State Water Board Limited, Calabar.

1.1. Study Areas

This study is carried out in Niger Mills Plc and Cross River State Water Board Limited, Calabar, Nigeria. Calabar lies between latitude 4⁰ and 5⁰ north and longitude 8⁰ and 9⁰ east of the equator (Agba, Ikoh & Ashibi, 2010). Located at the extreme end of South Eastern Nigeria, Calabar is a seaport town, with many industrial organizations. Calabar is the capital of Cross River State and is divided into two local government areas: Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Area. The population of Calabar is estimated at 328,877 with a density of 980 persons per square kilometre (National Population Commission, 2006).

1.1.1. Niger Mills

Niger Mills Nigeria Limited originally is situated in Calabar along Murtala Mohammed Highway. It was incorporated as a private limited liability company on 30th September, 1967 with authorized share of 400,000. Sixty percent equity shares of the company were owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. In December 1978, Niger Mills entered into management agreement with Flour Mills of Nigeria for an effective operation of the Company.

Administratively, the Company is headed by a Chairman and Board of Directors. The board is the policy making body of the establishment. It consists of a chairman and seven other members. The general manager is the chief executive of the Company and is responsible for the execution of the policies of the Board and the day to day running of the affairs of the Company. The secretary in Niger Mills is appointed by the board of directors and is responsible for keeping of records and conducting the correspondence of the Company. Other principal staff of the Company includes the personnel manager, chief accountant, the chief miller, technical manager, sales manager, and over five hundred direct and indirect labour forces (Nkpoyen, 2003).

1.1.2. Cross River State Water Board Limited

Cross River State Water Board Limited (CRSWBL) was established by Edict No.13 of 1975 as a parastatal of government in the then South Eastern State of Nigeria. As a parastatal, its duties include among others the control and management of all existing waters works in the then South Eastern State. The Board was also saddled with responsibilities of establishing new water works and provision of adequate potable water to residents and companies within its jurisdiction (Ushie, 2005).

Like other state owned enterprises (SOEs) in Nigeria, CRSWBL was suffering from perennial operational inefficiency; this led to the partial privatization of the corporation in 2003. Ortech Nigeria Limited in partnership with the Cross River State Government now runs the Company, with the former charged with the responsibility of technical operations, production and commercial functions.

With a staff strength of over 280 workers, CRSWBL is now spread across the state with branches at Ugep/Ediba, Akamkpa, Obubra, Ogoja and Obudu. CRSWBL has a board that is responsible for policy formulation and ancillary staff that assist in the day to day running of the enterprises.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Participative Management

Participative management is a process which involves bringing workers into the organizational decision making to varying degree. The more workers participate in taking decision in what they do, the better they will do. Involving workers in decision making will alleviate organizational problems associated with alienation. Associate involvement in decision making allows the worker self-expression, commitment and recognition in the organization. Integrating workers' goals with that of the organization through participative management brings out the potential of the worker (Nkpoyen, 2003; Dhameja & Dhameja, 2009).

The perception of ownership and the feeling that associates ideas are genuinely welcomed by the manager, significantly influence subordinates' commitment to the organization. Participative management leads to job satisfaction and divorces the establishment from labour unrest and industrial disputes. Workers participation in decision making brings the experiences and aspirations of associates into the decision making, planning and operations of the organization. It is therefore pertinent that management provides a work environment where every associate has a chance to grow and mature on the job (Ushie, Agba, Agba & Chime, 2010; Ajala, 2012).

Participative management is both motivational and structural device (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1978; Armstrong, 2004). Research findings revealed direct relationship between employee participation and commitment; and have also tended to make certain assumptions about motivation and productivity. Participation foster ego expansion, self control and intrinsic satisfaction of employees (Thierauf, 1977; Ushies, Agba, Agba & Chime, 2010). A workers who identifies with an organizational goal and accepts it as his own, the achievement of that goal becomes a source of satisfaction and heightens commitment (Nkpoyen, 2003). When employees participate in decision making their satisfaction, performance and productivity increases.

In spite of the fundamental attributes associated with participative management its automation and specialization can limit participation (Thierauf, 1977). Participation could also been seen as a clever manipulation device whereby management achieves its objectives by devious means (Luthans, 1973). Technology is the greatest problem to participative decision making. Production results in highly fragmented and repetitive tasks, which could limit the formation of sociable groupings, thus restricting participation.

Despite the limitations of participative management, its advantages are remarkable. The demand by associates to participative in decision making is not a passing fancy. They want some control over what affect them. It affords them the means of building some of the human values needed at work place.

2.2. Participative Management and Workers Exposure to Organizational Information

Information is a catalyst, which helps to speed up productivity, and necessary factor which helps to place employees in a situation where unfavourable reaction can be reduced to a minimum. Participation is inevitably involved in communication process. Effective communication is fundamental to real participation. Associates cannot participate effectively in organizational activities unless they know what is going on. To reduce labour turnover in any organization to a minimum level, it is essential, that the officials from the top to down be kept supplied with relevant information (Pigars, 1973; Mamoria, Mamoria & Gankar, 2009).

It is obvious that management accomplishes its tasks through employees; and workers are influenced through human relations and communication. Information is fundamental resource of an organization. It is the life blood of the organization, the fabric of an organization, or the agent of sustaining organizational viability. It is a necessary factor in participative management. The first executive function of any manager is to develop and maintain a system of communication and the manager's position is the communication centre. Therefore, communication procedures plays important role in planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling activities.

Effective communication flow ensures industrial harmony and improves organizational effectiveness. It also boosts the morale of workers and increases the quality and quantity of organizational output. He stressed that effective communication is capable of creating understanding between workers in general and management in particular. Effective, communication, is a morale booster and a source of motivation for workers in industrial organizations (Ratman, 2007).

Katz and Kahn (1978) emphasize that many tasks require coordination in order to get done, and bilateral communication is essential in this respect. Personal level, communication is important for its contribution to the satisfaction of individual needs, for helping to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, for entertainment, for the creation of understanding amongst people and for promoting employee morale and well being. Smith (1991); Ushie and Iyam (2004) concludes that upward communication is particularly important for fostering employee participation, involvement and commitment.

2.3. Participation and Workers Commitment

Commitment to the organization, profession and role has received wide attention in recent organizational behaviour literature (Steer, 1977^{a&b}). Becker (1960) argues that commitment involves consistent lines of activity in behaviours that are produced by exchange considerations. Commitment is a more active and positive orientation towards the organization. It is an attitude or an orientation towards organizational goals or objectives. Hall and Schneider (1972) observe that commitment is a phenomenon whereby the goals or objectives of the organization and those of the worker become increasingly integrated or congruent.

Employee commitment also deals with the level of job involvement (Lodahl & Kejners, 1965) and internal work motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1978). It includes high level of effort in the job on behalf of the organization. It is the willingness to invest personal effort as an associate of the organization, and for the sake of the establishment (Agba, Nkpoyen & Ushie, 2010; Agba & Ushie, 2010).

There are fundamental factors that affect workers commitment in industrial organizations. These include – constraints on an individual's ability to leave the organization; the extent to which the individual has made a committing choice; and the characteristics associated with job situation which increase the workers felt responsibility (Salanick, 1977). Organizational commitment can also be used to predict employee effort, performance and retention (Dublin, Champoux & Porter, 1975; Agba & Ushie, 2010).

2.4. Theoretical Consideration

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is mainly based on the Human Relations School and its variant, the consensual democratic school. The Human Relations School sprang up in the mid 1920s and was developed by George Elton Mayo and others. The school believes in the importance of recognizing human beings and their needs as paramount in achieving organizational commitment and high productivity. The consensual democratic school derives its significance from Hawthorne School of Human Relations theorists. It directs attention to a consensual democratic model for enterprise.

Human Relations theory emphasis the fact that participation aids management in integrating workers with the organization. Both managers and employees can realize goals and attain stronger commitment and satisfaction. The theory asserts that there are many rewards which managers expect from participative management. These include greater commitment, motivation, better appraisal base on results, closer to the scene of action, greater freedom to manage resources to reach objectives, and greater job satisfaction (McGregor, 1960).

The school contends that participative decision making is a veritable management tool. The demands by employees to participate appear to be deeply rooted in the culture of freedom around the world, and are probably a basic drive in human beings. They want some control over things that affect them. Thus, employees' level of independence affects participation in organizational activities. Autocratic leadership style affects participative management and employees' commitment (Nkpoyen, 2003; Ushie, Agba, Agba & Chime, 2010).

Autocratic leadership centralized power and decision making. Participative decisions arise from consultation. According to the Human Relations School, participation is an important contributor to organizational effectiveness. The consensual democratic school sees

participative management as leading to increase employee commitment, performance, and job satisfaction. The school believes that the scheme can help people fulfil their need for status, recognition and self-actualization.

Human Relationists also believe that effective communication facilitates employees' participation in decisions that affect them in the work place. This is because people are the main factor of production and unless they participate effectively in the running of the organization, the establishment will die overtime (Nkpoyen, 2003).

3. Methodology

Survey design was adopted in this study. The design was adopted because it allowed for drawing of inference (Hart, 1969; Agba, Nkpoyen & Ushie, 2010). The design was opted for because it allows for accurate collection of data and objective description of existing phenomena (Agba, Ikoh & Ashibi, 2010). Survey design is economical over other design, because it allows representative samples (Denga & Ali, 1998).

The study drew her sample from six categories of employees of both sex in the departments of Engineering, Security, Accounting, Administration, Marketing and Production. Purposive method was used to select 560 participants from Niger Mills and Cross River State Water Board Limited, Calabar, Nigeria. Data was elicited from respondents using structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A elicited the demographic data of respondents while Section B was used to collect data on the impact of participative management on employees' commitment.

The data elicited from respondents were coded for various response options as shown in Table 1. Where:

VSA	=	Very Strongly Agree
SA	=	Strongly Agree
A	=	Agree
D	=	Disagree
SD	=	Strongly Disagree
VSD	=	Very Strongly Disagree

Response option	Positive	Negative
VSA	6	1
SA	5	2
A	4	3
D	3	4
SD	2	5
VSD	1	6

Table 1: Coding of variables

As noted in Table 1, positive response to a positive question is rank highest (6) that is for Very Strongly Agree (VSA). While negative response to negative answer received the highest score of (6) for Very Strongly Disagree (VSD). Other scores follow the same sequence.

4. Results

Bio-data of respondents revealed that most of the participants were males (N = 335, 59.82%) while 40.18 percent were females. Majority of the respondents were between the ages of 21-30 years while the least were 51 years and above. More than 29 percent of the respondents were B.Sc/HND holders, 32.14 percent were OND/NCE holders; 20 percent and 18.22 percent were professional and post graduate degree holders respectively. Majority of the worker had work with their establishment for 6-10 year (N = 206, 36.79%), only 5.17 percent had put in 16 and above years in service.

Particulars of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	335	59.82
Female	225	40.18
Total	560	100.00%
Educational Qualification		
OND/NCE	180	32.14
B.Sc/HND	166	29.64
Professional Degree	112	20.00
Post Graduate Degree	102	18.22
Total	560	100.00%
Age		
21-30	192	34.29
31-40	170	30.36
41-50	163	29.11
51-60	35	6.24
Total	560	100.00%
Years of service		
0-5	198	35.36
6-10	206	36.79
11-15	127	22.68
16 and above	29	5.17
Total	560	100.00%

Table 2: Bio-data of respondents
Source: Data from fieldwork 2014

The first hypothesis sought to test whether there is a significant relationship between participative decision making and employee commitment. In the analysis, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) was used with participative decision making scores (x) as the independent variable and employee commitment scores (y) as the dependent variable.

The coefficient of correlation (r) was applied and the result was 0.763. To test for statistical significance of coefficient of correlation (r), the study consulted the table of critical value of (r) which was found to be .088. This shows that the level of workers commitment is significantly influenced by their participation in decision making in the organization.

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r_{xy}
	$\sum y$	$\sum xy^2$		
Participative decision making (X_1)	1068	6535		
			6038	0.763
Employee commitment (Y)	1196	7949		

Table 3: Relationship between participative decision making and employees' commitment to the organization

$P < 0.05$; $df = 558$; critical $r = .088$

Source: Data from fieldwork 2014

The second hypothesis tested the relationship between employees' independence and their commitment in industrial organizations. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used. The employee independence (organizational autonomy) was the independent variable and employee commitment the dependent variable. Obtained (r) was 0.886 while critical (r) was .088. Meaning workers who has low commitment to the goals of the organization equally has a low level of independence in the organization.

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r_{xy}
	$\sum y$	$\sum xy^2$		
Employee independence (X_2)	961	4215		
			5350	0.886
Employee commitment (Y)	1196	7949		

Table 4: Employees' independence and workers commitment

$P < 0.05$; $df = 558$; critical $r = .088$

Source: Data from fieldwork 2014

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r_{xy}
	$\sum y$	$\sum xy^2$		
Employee exposure to information (X_3)	743	6898		
			4980	0.787
Employee commitment (Y)	1196	7949		

Table 5: Employees' exposure to information and workers commitment

$P < 0.05$; $df = 558$; critical $r = .088$

Source: Data from fieldwork 2014

The third hypothesis tested the relationship between employee exposure to information and workers' commitment in the organization. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The result revealed that calculated r was 0.787 while r -critical = .088 with 558 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance. This shows that employee exposure to information significantly influence their commitment in the organization. This means that management should communicate its goals to workers to enhance their commitment.

5. Discussion of Findings

The coefficient of correlation (r) of 0.763 as shown in Table 3 indicates a positive relationship between participative decision making and employee commitment. This finding is consistent with the studies of Steer (1977^{a&b}) who found a significant positive relationship between perceived job characteristics and organizational commitment. The finding also who observe that when employees participate in decision making, their satisfaction, commitment and productivity increases.

Participative management tends to improve motivation because employees feel more accepted and involved in the situation. Participative management increase workers self esteem, job satisfaction and enhances workers cooperation with management. The absence of participative decision making could explain the presence of low morale, commitment and productivity in most organizations. Participative management should therefore be encouraged in industrial organizations.

The study also showed a significant relationship between the level of employee independence and organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with Parker (1962) observe that industrial autonomy has many rewards for both management and the workers. Workers show better interpersonal relations, high morale, high dedication and greater productivity under a democratic leadership style. This is because a worker who is less controlled and directed by his supervisor participates highly in the organization's decision making process.

The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between exposure to information and employee commitment in industrial organizations in Calabar. This finding is consistent with Steers (1977^{a&b}), they observe that employee's understanding of his job and his duties obviously depends on the quality of communication in the organization. This implies that, if departmental managers and supervisors are to form an effective line with the shop floor, they must consistently receive full and timely information and be alive to their responsibility of passing information to workers in the organization.

Furthermore, the existing relationship between exposure to information and employee commitment pre-suggests that communication has a positive relationship with good human relations; enhances workers motivation, morals and commitment to the organization. This could in turn enhance organizational effectiveness. Ushie, Agba, Agba and Best (2010) observe that when employees are committed to work it leads to increase in productivity.

5.1. Policy Recommendations

On the strength of these research findings, the following recommendations were reached:

- i. Workers should be encouraged to take active part in organizational problem solving. This would enable subordinate develop mental and emotional involvement in the collective goals of the organization. It would also create a democratic atmosphere which would in turn promote industrial harmony in the organization.
- ii. Management should keep workers informed of the true situation in the organization at all times. There should be adequate flow of communication in the organization. Information should flow vertically and horizontally. Management should be able to pass information to subordinate as well as obtain feedback from associates.

6. Conclusion

The relationship between participative management and workers commitment in industrial organizations is quite revealing. Findings in this study show that workers participation in decision making, their exposure to organizational information and employee independence significantly affects employees' commitment in industrial organizations. Participative management boosts workers morale, performance and enhances their job satisfaction. It creates the spirit of belonging among workers as well as enhances organizational efficiency. The study recommended among others that management in industrial organizations should make policies that encourage participative management.

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