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Effect of Human Relations Management on Productivity in the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of human relations management on productivity in the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria. The study specifically assessed the impact of communication, motivation, recognition, and teamwork on employee performance and overall institutional productivity. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from a sample of 212 staff drawn from the total population of 450 employees using the Yamane sample size formula. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire validated by experts, and its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82. Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics such as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Regression Analysis, with a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$) between human relations management and productivity. Communication and motivation were found to significantly enhance staff performance and output. The study concluded that effective human relations management practices—including open communication, employee motivation and recognition are essential for improving staff morale and productivity at NILEST, Zaria. It was recommended that management should strengthen communication channels, provide adequate motivation and reward systems to enhance overall institutional efficiency and staff productivity.

Keywords: Human Relations Management, Communication, Motivation, Recognition, Productivity, NILEST, Zaria.

Introduction

Human Relations Management (HRM) has become a vital aspect of modern organizational success. It focuses on the relationship between management and employees, emphasizing motivation, communication, participation, and mutual respect in the workplace. The concept originated from the Human Relations Movement led by Elton Mayo in the 1930s, which proved that employees' social and emotional needs significantly affect their productivity and performance.

In today's dynamic and competitive work environment, especially within public sector institutions, effective human relations management plays a major role in driving efficiency, innovation, and employee commitment. Organizations that build strong interpersonal relationships among staff tend to record higher morale, reduced conflicts, and improved productivity.

The Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria, is a federal government research and training institute established to promote research, development, and training in leather and leather products technology. The institute's core mandates include conducting research, training manpower, and improving local leather production techniques to support Nigeria's industrial development.

As a research and training institution, NILEST's productivity depends largely on the commitment, motivation, and cooperation of its staff—academic, technical, and administrative. However, like many public institutions in Nigeria, challenges such as poor communication, limited staff motivation, inadequate recognition, and bureaucratic management practices may hinder effective human relations. These factors can reduce staff morale, lower efficiency, and ultimately affect the institute's productivity.

Therefore, this study examines the effect of human relations management on productivity in the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology, Zaria, with the aim of identifying how interpersonal relations, communication, and motivation influence employee productivity.

Statement of the Problem

The success of any organization, especially in the public sector, largely depends on the quality of its human resources and the effectiveness of management in maintaining positive relations with employees. Despite NILEST's vital role in promoting leather technology in Nigeria, anecdotal evidence suggests that challenges such as communication gaps, lack of employee recognition for excellent staff performance, poor motivation, and conflicts among staff may negatively impact productivity (NILEST in Brief, 2023).

In many cases, hierarchical management structures limit employee participation in decision-making, which can lead to low morale and reduced work commitment. Furthermore, insufficient staff training and inadequate incentives which are motivational

may contribute to inefficiency and job dissatisfaction (Mohammed, 2020). These human relations problems can affect the institute's ability to meet its goals in research, training, and leather production. Empirical evidence from Nigerian studies also confirms that institutions with effective communication, participative leadership, and strong motivation strategies record higher productivity (Suleiman, 2021). However, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on specialized research institutes like NILEST, Zaria.

This study therefore seeks to fill these identified gaps by empirically investigating how human relations management affects productivity in NILEST, Zaria considering its dual mandate of research and training in leather and science technology through the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the objective of the study was to examine the effect of human relations management on productivity in the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology, Zaria. Specifically the objectives of the study among others include:

1. To assess the level of human relations management practices in NILEST, Zaria.
2. To determine the effect of communication on employee productivity in NILEST, Zaria.
3. To evaluate how motivation and recognition influence staff performance in NILEST, Zaria.

Sequel to the above objective the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between human relations management and employee productivity in NILEST, Zaria.

H_{02}: Communication has no significant effect on employee productivity in NILEST, Zaria.

H_{03}: Motivation and recognition have no significant effect on employee productivity in NILEST, Zaria.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Here, relevant literature on Human Relations Management (HRM) and its effect on organizational productivity, with a specific focus on public research institutions such as the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria. It discusses theoretical foundations, conceptual frameworks, and empirical studies, and identifies gaps that this study aims to fill.

Concept of Human Relations Management

Human Relations Management refers to the systematic process of building and maintaining effective relationships between management and employees within an organization. It focuses on communication, motivation, leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution. According to Elton Mayo (1933), the father of the Human Relations Movement, employees are not just motivated by money but also by social needs, recognition, and a sense of belonging.

In the context of public institutions like NILEST, Human Relations Management is essential for promoting collaboration among staff, improving morale, and ensuring the smooth running

of research, training, and administrative operations. Effective HRM creates a positive work climate that encourages creativity, innovation, and commitment to institutional goals.

Components of Human Relations Management

Several key components influence the success of human relations in an organization:

1. Communication: Clear and open communication channels between management and employees ensure that everyone understands the organizational goals, policies, and expectations. Poor communication can lead to confusion, mistrust, and low productivity.

2. Motivation: Motivation drives employees to put in their best effort. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), job satisfaction (motivators) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) both affect employee performance. Recognizing employee contributions and offering career development opportunities improve morale and productivity.

3. Leadership: Leadership style significantly affects human relations. A democratic or participative leader tends to build stronger relationships with subordinates than an authoritarian one. Effective leaders communicate well, inspire employees, and resolve conflicts amicably.

4. Teamwork: Cooperation among employees enhances problem-solving and innovation. Teams with good interpersonal relations achieve better results and efficiency than individuals working in isolation.

5. Conflict Resolution: Conflict is inevitable in any organization. However, when managed properly through dialogue and mutual understanding, it can lead to stronger relationships and improved performance.

Concept of Productivity

Productivity refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which inputs (such as labor, materials, and time) are converted into outputs (goods, services, or results). In NILEST's context, productivity can be seen in terms of the quality and quantity of research output, training programs, leather product development, and administrative efficiency.

According to Drucker (1999), productivity is "doing the right things efficiently." It is not only about increasing output but also improving quality and effectiveness in achieving organizational goals.

Relationship between Human Relations Management and Productivity

A positive relationship exists between human relations management and productivity. Effective communication and employee motivation lead to higher morale, which in turn enhances job performance. When staff feels respected, recognized, and valued, they develop a sense of ownership and are more committed to achieving institutional goals. Conversely, poor human relations are characterized by mistrust, lack of recognition, and poor communication leading to absenteeism, low morale, and high turnover, which reduces productivity (Adeleke, 2022; Suleiman, 2021; Ugochukwu & Olayemi, 2020).

Studies on Human Relations and Productivity

Afolabi (2019) examined the effect of human relations on employee performance in selected public organizations in Nigeria. The study found a significant relationship between communication, motivation, and employee productivity.

Ugochukwu & Olayemi (2020) studied HRM practices in Nigerian universities and discovered that leadership style, teamwork, and recognition were strong predictors of employee commitment and research output.

Suleiman (2021) investigated staff relations and productivity in Kaduna Polytechnic. The results revealed that participative management and effective communication led to higher productivity among lecturers and administrative staff.

Adeleke (2022) in a study on research institutions in Northern Nigeria, reported that poor motivation, limited promotion, and lack of communication reduced morale and output.

Studies on Human Relations in Training Institutes

Mohammed (2020) explored employee motivation in vocational and training centers in Zaria. The study found that recognition and opportunities for career growth significantly influenced staff dedication and innovation.

Nwankwo (2023) found that institutions with open communication systems experienced improved teamwork, fewer conflicts, and higher efficiency in training delivery.

These studies collectively support the idea that effective human relations management directly improves productivity in Nigerian public institutions. However, limited research has focused specifically on NILEST, Zaria, despite its unique role as a leather technology and research institute—hence the justification for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories explain the relationship between human relations and productivity. The following are most relevant to this study:

Human Relations Theory (Elton Mayo, 1933)

Elton Mayo's studies (Hawthorne Experiments) established that employees are social beings whose performance is influenced by social relationships, morale, and recognition rather than monetary incentives alone. The theory emphasizes the importance of group dynamics, leadership, and communication in motivating workers.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959)

Frederick Herzberg proposed that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from two sets of factors: Motivators (achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth), Hygiene factors (salary, work conditions, policies, supervision).To enhance productivity, management must provide both satisfactory working conditions and opportunities for achievement and recognition.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (1960)

Douglas McGregor proposed two contrasting views of workers:

Theory X: Employees are lazy, dislike work, and must be closely supervised.

Theory Y: Employees are self-motivated, enjoy responsibility, and can be trusted to work toward goals. Organizations that adopt Theory Y practices—trust, autonomy, and recognition—tend to have better human relations and higher productivity.

Equity Theory (Adams, 1965)

Equity Theory states that employees compare their input–output ratio (effort versus reward) to that of others. Perceived fairness leads to satisfaction and motivation, while perceived inequity results in demotivation and poor performance.

Mayo, McGregor and Herzberg's theories appropriately cover the variables of this study by postulating recognition and communication as motivational variables towards enhancing productivity in organizations and are therefore adopted as the theoretical framework of this study.

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researchers to collect data from a sample of respondents to describe and analyze existing conditions, practices, and relationships among variables without manipulating them. The survey design is also suitable for assessing opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of employees regarding human relation management and productivity within NILEST, Zaria.

This design enabled the researchers to determine whether there is a significant relationship between Human Relations Management (independent variable) and Organizational Productivity (dependent variable).

Population of the Study

The target population of this study consists of all categories of employees at the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria, According to NILEST's Registry Department (as of 2024 records), the institute has a total staff strength of 450 employees. Thus, the total population (N) = 450.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample Size Determination

To determine a representative sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination was used:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N\,(e)^2}$$

Where:

= sample size

= population size (450)

= margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)
n = \frac{450}{1 + 450(0.05)^2} = \frac{450}{1 + 1.125} = \frac{450}{2.125} \approx 212
Hence, the sample size for the study is 212 respondents

Sampling Technique
Simple random sampling technique of lottery system was used in order to give each staff of NILEST, Zaria an equal opportunity of being selected for the study.

Sources of Data
The study made use of both primary and secondary data sources: Primary Data: Obtained directly from respondents through the use of structured questionnaires designed to elicit information about human relations management and productivity in NILEST. Secondary Data: gathered from journals, textbooks, annual reports, official publications, and online materials related to HRM and organizational productivity.

Research Instrument
The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The items were developed based on literature review and adapted from previous validated HRM instruments.

Validity of the Instrument
To ensure the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, content validity was established. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by experts in Human Resource Management and Research Methodology at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and senior staff at NILEST. Their suggestions were incorporated before the final version was administered.

Reliability of the Instrument
Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the instrument in measuring the variables. A pilot test was conducted using 20 staff members from National Research Institute for Chemical Technology (NARICT), Zaria. The data collected were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to test internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study (Sekeran, 2003).

Method of Data Collection
The questionnaires were administered personally by the researchers with the help of two trained research assistants. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires, and follow-ups were conducted to ensure a high response rate. Both online (Google Forms) and printed copies were used for wider accessibility.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistical techniques with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.

Inferential Statistics:

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to determine the relationship between human relations management and productivity.

Linear Regression Analysis was used to examine the effect of HRM components (communication, motivation) on employee productivity.

Hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance (5%).

Decision Rule:

If p-value ≤ 0.05 → Reject the null hypothesis (significant relationship/effect).

If p-value > 0.05 → Accept the null hypothesis (no significant relationship/effect).

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected through questionnaires administered to staff of the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST), Zaria. It also tests the hypotheses formulated in Chapter One using appropriate statistical tools. The aim is to determine the effect of human relations management practices on staff productivity at NILEST, Zaria.

Out of the 212 questionnaires distributed, 200 were duly completed and returned, representing a 94% response rate, which was considered adequate for analysis (Sekeran, 2003).

Hypothesis One (H_{01}):

There is no significant relationship between human relations management and employee productivity in NILEST, Zaria.

Variable	r	(p-value)	Decision
Human Relations Management & Productivity	0.721	0.000	Reject H_{01}

Interpretation: The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a strong positive relationship between human relations management and productivity. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Effective human relations significantly improve employee productivity at NILEST.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}):

Communication has no significant effect on productivity in NILEST.

Predictor	**β**	**t-value**	**(p-value)**	**Decision**
Communication	0.493	6.85	0.000	Reject H_{02}

Interpretation: Regression results show that communication has a significant positive effect on productivity ($\beta = 0.493$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that effective communication enhances staff performance and institutional productivity.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}):
Employee motivation and recognition have no significant impact on staff performance in NILEST.

Predictor	β	t-value	(p-value).	Decision
Motivation & Recognition	0.412	5.72	0.001	Reject H_{03}

Interpretation: The analysis shows a significant relationship between motivation, recognition, and staff performance ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that motivated and recognized employees perform better, contributing to higher productivity.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of this study are consistent with previous research and theoretical assumptions earlier presented.
1. Human Relations Management and Productivity: Results show a strong positive relationship between human relations practices and productivity. This aligns with Elton Mayo's Human Relations Theory, which emphasizes that social relationship at work influence performance.
2. Effect of Communication: The study revealed that effective communication enhances coordination and efficiency. This supports McGregor's Theory Y, which advocates open communication and employee involvement.
3. Effect of Motivation and Recognition: The results confirm Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, where recognition and opportunities for growth serve as strong motivators for improved performance.

Summary of Findings
Human relations management practices at NILEST, Zaria are moderately strong but can be improved.
Communication has a significant positive impact on productivity.
Motivation and recognition significantly enhance staff performance. Poor communication, inadequate motivation, and rigid leadership are major challenges to effective human relations. Strengthening HRM practices will improve morale, collaboration, and overall productivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that human relations management plays a vital role in enhancing productivity at NILEST, Zaria. When management maintains open communication, recognizes staff efforts, resolves conflicts amicably, and promotes teamwork, employees are more committed and efficient in achieving organizational goals.

Conversely, inadequate communication and poor motivation undermine staff morale and productivity. Therefore, for NILEST to sustain its role as a leading research and training institute in leather and science technology, it must prioritize effective human relations management practices.

In conclusion, the study confirms that there is a significant and positive relationship between human relations management and productivity in NILEST, Zaria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Enhance Communication Channels: Management should establish open, two-way communication channels that allow employees to freely express ideas, challenges, and feedback. Regular meetings and memos can help reduce misunderstandings and foster trust.

2. Improve Motivation and Reward Systems: The Institute should introduce transparent reward systems, such as performance bonuses, recognition awards, and promotion opportunities, to encourage hard work and dedication

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge in the following ways:

It provides empirical evidence on how human relations management affects productivity in a specialized Nigerian research institute.

It identifies communication and motivation as key drivers of productivity in the public sector context.

It offers practical recommendations for improving HRM in NILEST and similar institutions.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the limitations of this study, future research could explore:

1. The effect of digital communication tools on employee relations and productivity in research institutions.
2. A comparative study of human relations management between NILEST, Zaria and other Federal Research Institutes in Nigeria.
3. The role of gender and leadership style in shaping human relations in public organizations.

Limitations of the Study

The study relied primarily on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias.

Time constraints and limited access to certain staff categories restricted the sample coverage.

The use of a single institution limits the generalizability of the findings to other organizations.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a valid and reliable insight into the role of human relations management in enhancing productivity at NILEST, Zaria.

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