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IMPACT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES' HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON WORKERS PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Studies in the human resources domain have made cases and brought forward evidence that human resources practices of organizations have an impact on worker`s performance. The challenge of understanding this assertion still exist in the construction industry especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

Design/methodology/approach: To clarify this, human resources management touchstones such as training and development, selection criteria in construction firms and employee`s participation were examined using questionnaire survey of 40 small and medium-sized construction companies in Kano state, Nigeria.

Findings: The finding revealed that human resources management practices such as: training and development, selection criteria in construction firms and employee's participation have an impact on worker`s performance in small and medium construction companies. The study concludes that human resources management practices have an impact on worker`s performance in small and medium construction companies.

Originality/value: Despite the importance of human resources management practices in achieving organisation objectives, research on the impact regarding small and medium construction companies in developing countries particularly in Nigeria is still scarce. Investigating the impact will increase worker`s performance and enhance productivity in the construction industry.

Keywords: Human resources management; small and medium construction companies; training and development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of most countries and good employer of skilled and unskilled labour (Ibrahim and Shakantu, 2017). Naismith (2007) noted that variability in the number, type and size of construction projects undertaken by small and medium-sized construction company

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occurs frequently in the construction industry, which significantly affects the number of workers needed and available for the execution of construction projects. Buyens, Wouters and Dewettinck (2001) put forward that one of the most important resources a company can possess are workers. They further added that continuous training and development would encourage and retain key workers in a small and medium companies which enable them sustain competitive advantage over larger companies. Chen, Liaw and Lee (2003) submitted that successful human resource management is central to worker`s performance in the construction industry. Ameh and Daniel (2017) believed that low level usage of plants and machines in the construction industry in developing countries like Nigeria makes it imperative to heavily depend on human for its operations. Employees' competency and motivation is hinged on human resources practices adopted by construction companies (Moore, Cheng and Dainty, 2002). Human resources management involves, employment of qualified personnel, training and retraining of existing employees (Tabassi and Abu Bakar, 2009). Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2009) submitted that the level of training and motivation of construction workers determines the success of construction projects.

Huemann (2010) noted the acceptability of human resources management, as a panacea to development. Ogunyomi and Bruning (2016) noted the acceptability of human resources management in the behavioural sciences domain in order to achieve set targets. But on the other hand, Loosemore, Lingard and Dainty (2003) submitted that researchers in the construction industry have paid little attention to human resources management. Again, Tabassi, Ramli and Bakar (2012) believed that research regarding the impact of human resources management policies relating to workers training, development and participation is suboptimal in the construction industry. Furthermore, Price and Newson (2003) noted that large numbers of small and medium construction companies exist in most countries however, they often record abysmal performance with respect to human resources management. Empirical research on human resources management practice is lean in the Nigeria construction industry. Studies available on human resources management with respect to the Nigerian construction industry includes those of Ameh and Daniel (2017), who`s study focused on the challenges and practices of human resources management in Lagos, Nigerian. The study revealed that although, due process was often employed during recruitment process but interference from various quarters often disturb the process. The study further revealed that orientation and training for newly recruited staff members are hazily carried out. A study by Adeagbo and Oyemogun (2014) focused on factors influencing human resource development in the Nigerian construction industry. The study concluded that increase in performance and productivity and market forces/economy and technology are major drivers for human resources development among local construction firms in Nigeria. Even with the growing body of research in this area, none of these studies have specifically focused on examining the impact of small and medium construction companies' human resources management practices on worker's performance from a developing country`s perspective. The only research close to this research is the work of Ajayi, Akinsiku and Salami (2019) which focused on factors affecting human resources practices in small construction firms in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. The study concluded that performance appraisal, training, employee involvement and strategic development of staff are majorly adopted human resources practices by small construction firms in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. It is on this premise that the research examines the impact of small and medium construction companies' human resources

management practices on worker's performance for a developing country`s perspective and particularly the Nigerian construction industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Human resources management

Human resources management focuses on attracting, developing and retaining distinguished individual in an organization that will enable such organization to achieve set objectives (Ameh and Daniel, 2017). Jiang, Lepak, Han, Hong, Kim and Winkler (2012) submitted that selection criteria, participation of employees and training and development policies, and compensation policies are important human resources management policies employers need to focus on.

Beardwell and Holden (1997) noted that the development of employees' skills and ability solely lies in how effective companies' human resources management policies are effective. Chen et al. (2003) submitted that a robust and effective human resources management policy is a vital asset a company can own. This is not the case in the construction industry. Naismith (2007) provided evidence in his study why construction industry pays little attention to human resources management. He attributed the sensitivity of the construction industry to economic activity, continuous growth and development of cities which continuously demand for skilled and unskilled workers as the reasons why human resources management uptake is low. But Moore and Dainty (2001) specifically stated that the over-reliance on unskilled labour is the sole reason why the construction industry has paid little attention to human resources management. Shaffek (2016) believed that small and medium construction companies` nonchalant attitude to human resources management practices could be attributed to their over-dependence on the use of labour sub-contractor.

Zhai, Lui and Fellows (2014) study on the role of organisation`s management policies on human resources practices in enhancing organisational learning in Chinese construction organisation relived that management human resources practices have a significant positive effect on organisational performance. Similarly, Yankov and Kleiner (2001) noted in their study that human resources management practices have impact on worker participation, management and commitment and effective training. Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2009) study in Iran investigated the impact of human resources management practices such as: training, motivation on workers` performance. The finding revealed barriers to workers` performance are training and motivation. Ameh and Daniel (2017) study in Nigeria on the practices and challenges regarding human resources management in the Nigerian construction firms showed that the challenges inherent in the Nigerian construction industry are socio-cultural and training practices carried out are often shallow.

2.2. Training and development

Akdere (2003); Jon *et al*. (1999) defined employees training and development as the introduction of employees of an organisation to practices that improves their knowledge to carry out assigned duties effectively. To enhance employees' productivity, it is imperative to train and develop employees Huemann (2010) believed that workers training and development is imperative for a company continuous survival and existence. According to Jon *et al*. (1999), the onus of workers training development and skills acquisition lies

heavily on the shoulder of the executives, managers and supervisors. Tabassi *et al*. (2012) opined that current world development, particularly in the construction industry, requires employees with diverse experience, skills and knowledge. Loosemore *et al*. (2003) aver that the complexity and dynamism in the construction industry make training, development and workers participation a challenge to the industry.

2.3. Employee participation

Jiang, Lepak, Han, Hong, Kim and Winker (2012) posits that empowerment, employee participation, and dissemination of information are policies that determines employee's participation in an organization. Ichniowski, Kochan, Levine, Olson, and Strauss (1996) noted that training employees to recognize problems will enhance organization to achieve set objective, but given them the mandate to solve the problem will guarantee and enhance efficiency. Wilkinson (1999) submitted that small and medium companies do not give their employees the opportunity to have a viable trade union. Naismith (2007) opined that owners of organization do not support her employee`s participation in union activities due to individual ideological stance.

2.4. Selection and recruitment criteria in construction companies

Recruitment and selection of new workers with high competence could have an impact on worker`s knowledge and skills (Jiang et. al. 2012). Ostroff and Bowen (2000) added that proper recruitment and selection of job applicants with adequate skills, would have an impact on job applicants initial acquisition of knowledge and skills. Larraine and Cornelius (2001) suggested the criteria for the selection and recruitment of staff in organisation to be: assessment of needs skills and expertise, advertisement of vacancies to prospective applicants, establishment of appropriate remuneration for selected candidates. Naismith (2007) believed that when employees are poorly selected and recruited in small and medium construction companies without due diligence, discipline action could arise.

2.5. Compensation in construction firms

Compensation is an important human resources tool to motivate workers. Jiang *et al*. (2012) noted that a company compensation policy could be based on worker`s performance or worker`s seniority. Druker and White (1996) noted that organisations that fails to compensate it`s workers could lose its best workers to competitors. This might be a reason why Jiang et. al. (2012) believed that compensation policies are introduced by organizations in order to motivate an employee performance and effort rather than abilities when carrying out a task. Naismith (2007) opined that small and medium sized construction firms lack policies that caters for employee's compensation.

2.6. Small and medium construction companies

The small and medium construction companies are vital to the economic development of a nation. Kheni, Gibb, Gibb and Dainty (2006) noted that in developing countries, the small and medium-sized construction companies' carry out the majority of the construction project in developing countries. AbdulHafeez, Ibrahim and Mustapha (2016) posits that 80% of construction companies operating in Nigeria fall between micro, small and medium

scale business enterprises. DTI Statistical Bulletin (2004) put forward that 99% of the construction companies fall between small and medium-sized companies. Even with its constitution to the economy, Onugu, (2005) put forward that about 5–10% of small and medium companies fold up within their first 5 years of establishment. Mathis and Jackson (1991) attributed the early folding up of small and medium-sized companies to lack of adequate human resources management practices. Shafeek (2016); Dainty, Ison and Root (2004) noted that the emergence and rise in the use of small and medium construction companies as outsourced staff have made organization to pay little attention to human resources management. Furthermore, Naismith (2007) noted that little is known regarding small and medium construction companies key processes such as: selection and recruitment, employee participation and employees training and development.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilised a well-structured questionnaire for data collection for selected small and medium-sized construction companies in Kano state, Nigeria. Kano state was chosen due to the high rate of construction activities. According to the Directory of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) 2019, there are Forty (40) fully registered small and medium construction companies in Kano state. The entirety of these companies were purposely sampled and a well-structured questionnaire was distributed to them. Purposive sampling was adopted in distributing questionnaires to the respondents in order to prevent bias as vigorously stated by Ngwenga and Aigbavboa (2017). All the distributed questionnaires retrieved, were valid and used for the analysis. The designed questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section elicited response regarding respondent`s demographics while the other section focused on human resources management touchstones such as training and development, selection criteria in construction firms and employees participation. Thirty-three (33) numbers of questionnaires were returned and valid for analysis having 83% response rate. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted to seek information from respondents where: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree. The Likert scale was transformed to Mean Item Score (MIS). Data from the field was analysed by using the relative importance index (RII) adopted by Ibrahim and Mbamali (2013) to determine ranking factors among the variables studied. The Interpretations of the mean values used are as follows:

RII < 0.60, item is assessed to have a low ranking

0.6 = RII < 0.80, item assessed to have high ranking

RII = 0.80, item assessed has very high ranking.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.1 shows that 36% of the respondents have more than 10 years of work experience working, 12% of the respondents have 6-10 years of work experience, 49% have 3-5 years of work experience and 3% of the respondents have less than 2 years of work experience. Table 1.2 depicts that 100% of the respondents are made up of males and non (0%) of the respondents were females. Table 1.3 shows that all of the respondents in the research are all graduates. None of the respondents fall under the undergraduate or postgraduate category. This means that all the respondents are capable to give valid response needed for the study.

Table 1.1: Work experience

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	< 2 years	1	3
2.	3-5 years	16	49
3.	6-10 years	4	12
4.	> 10 years	12	36
	Total	33	100

Table 1.2: Gender

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	33	100
2.	Female	0	0
	Total	33	100

Table 1.3: Educational level

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Undergraduate	0	0
2.	Graduate	33	100
3.	Postgraduate	0	0
	Total	33	100

Table 1.4 depicts that the majority of the construction firms (70%) can be categorised as medium seized construction companies having 50-249 employees in their organisation while 30% of the construction firms can be categorised as small seized construction companies having 1-49 employees in their organisation. The classification adopted for the research is based on the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise of Nigeria (SMEDAN) classification.

Table 1.4: Company seize

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Small (1-49 employees)	10	30
2.	Medium (50-249 employees)	23	70
3.	Large (over 200 employees)	0	0
	Total	33	100

The impacts of training and development on worker`s performance in small and medium-sized construction companies are depicted in table 1.5. It can be seen that new knowledge and skills are imparted on employees periodically to work in teams (RII= 0.84) was ranked 1st by the respondents to impact on worker`s performance. Our organisation conducts extensive training programs for its employees in all aspects of quality (RII= 0.78) was ranked 2nd by the respondents while the respondents ranked employees in each job will normally go through training programs every year as least factor that impact on worker`s performance with (RII= 0.69). From the result of the impacts of training and development on worker`s performance, can be inferred that all the examined training and development

indices have between high and very high impacts. The implication of this finding is that worker`s output improves when management in small and medium construction companies see the need for training and development for its workers. This result is consistent with that of Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2009); Buyens *et al.* (2001) regarding the impact of training and developing on worker`s performance.

Table 1.5: Training and development

S/N	Training and Development	Frequency of Response					MIS	RII	Rank
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)			
1	New knowledge and skills are imparted on employees periodically to work in teams	1	1	2	20	10	4.18	0.84	1st
2	Our organisation conducts extensive training programs for its employees in all aspects for quality	1	2	2	27	25	3.91	0.79	2nd
3	There are formal training programs to each new employee's the skills they need to perform their jobs.	1	0	5	28	25	3.97	0.78	3rd
4	Training needs are identified through a formal performance appraisal mechanism.	1	0	5	31	21	3.85	0.76	4th
5	Employees in each job will normally go through training programs every year.	1	0	5	26	26	3.67	0.69	5th

Table 1.6: Employee participation

S/N	Employee`s participation strategies	Frequency of response					MIS	RII	Rank
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)			
1	Employees are provided opportunity to suggest improvements in the way things are done here.	0	0	4	22	7	4..09	0.82	1st
2	Employees in this organization are allowed to make decision related to cost and quality matters.	0	3	9	12	9	3.82	0.76	2nd
3	Employees in this organisation are asked by their superiors to participate in operations related decisions.	0	2	10	15	6	3.76	0.75	3rd

Table 1.6 indicated the impact of employee`s participation in small and medium-sized construction companies on performance. It can be seen that respondents ranked employees are provided with opportunity to suggest improvements in the way things are done as 1st with (RII= 0.82), employees in this organization are allowed to make decision related to cost and quality matters as 2nd (RII=.76) while employees in this organisation are asked by their superiors to participate in operations related decisions was ranked the third 3rd by responded with (RII= 0.75). From the result of the impacts of employee`s participation on worker`s performance, can be inferred that all the examined employee`s participation indices have between high and very high impacts. This result suggests that employee`s participation strategy has an impact on worker`s performance. This finding is consistent with the research of Moore *et al.*, (2002) who submitted that employees' participation is hinged on types of human resources practices adopted by construction companies.

Table 1.7: Selection criteria

Selection criteria	Frequency of response					Mean	RII	Rank
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)			
1. The selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous.	0	0	2	13	18	4.49	0.90	1st
2. In our organisation, line managers and HR managers participate in selection.	0	0	4	20	9	4.16	0.83	2nd
3. Selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous.	0	1	3	21	8	4.09	0.82	3rd
4. Valid and standardized tests are used when required in the selection process.	0	0	3	22	9	4.06	0.81	4th

Table 1.8: Compensation in small and medium-sized construction companies

Factors consider in Compensation	Frequency of response					Mean	RII	Rank
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)			
1. Job performance is an important factor in determining the incentive compensation of employees.	0	0	2	29	2	4.00	0.80	1st
2. The compensation for all employees is directly linked to his/her performance.	1	2	5	13	12	4.00	0.80	1st
3. In our organization, salary and other benefit are comparable to the market.	0	2	4	22	5	3.91	0.78	3rd
4. In our organization, compensation is decided on the basis of competence or ability of employee.	0	4	5	18	6	3.79	0.76	4th
5. In our organization, profit sharing is used as a mechanism to reward higher performance.	0	3	4	23	3	3.79	0.76	4th

Table 1.7 depicts the criteria adopted by small and medium-sized construction companies in selecting and recruiting their staff. The respondents ranked the selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous as 1st with a relative importance index of 0.90. In our organization, line managers and HR managers participate in selection came 2nd with a relative importance index of 0.83. Selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous was ranked 3rd with a relative importance index of 0.82 while valid and standardized tests are used when required in the selection process came 4th with a relative importance index of 0.81. This result shows that all the criteria adopted by organizations in selecting and recruiting their staff: the respondents ranked the selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous, in our organization line managers and HR managers participate in selection, selection system followed in our organization are highly scientific and rigorous and valid and standardized tests are used when required in the selection process have very high impact, with RII values approximately equal or greater than 0.80. The result means that all

the criteria adopted by small and medium-sized construction companies have very high impact. The implication of this finding is that worker`s productivity in the small and medium construction companies will increase when the selection process is rigorous and standardised. This finding is in tandem with Tessema and Soaters (2006) regarding the impact of worker`s recruitment and selection process.

Table 1.8 shows the indices of compensation in small and medium-sized construction companies. Job performance is an important factor in determining the incentive compensation of employees, the compensation for all employees is directly linked to his/her performance were ranked 1st by respondents with relative importance index of 0.80. Next is in our organization, salary and other benefit are comparable to the market as 3rd with relative importance index of 0.78. In our organization, compensation is decided on the basis of competence or ability of employee and in our organization, profit sharing is used as a mechanism to reward higher performance followed in the 4th position with relative importance index of 0.76. from the result in Table 1.8, it can be observed that all the indices of employee's compensation were all ranked "very high" (0.60=RII< 0.80). The implication of this finding is that worker`s efficiency will increase when adequately compensation is paid to workers in small and medium-sized construction companies. This result confirms the study of Knick and Kreitner (2006) with regards to employee's compensation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of human resources management cannot over-emphasised as it stands as a key factor that determines the success of an organisation. When an organisation pays greater attention to human resources management practices such as: training and development, selection criteria and employees participation, there is high tendency such organisation would meet her set objectives. Thus, the study examined the impact of small and medium construction companies' human resource management practices in small and medium construction companies' on worker`s performance in Kano state, Nigeria. Findings from the research revealed that, employees training and development, selection criteria, compensation and employees` participation have an impact on their performance. Therefore, when small and medium construction companies pay adequate attention to training and development, employees participation and selection criteria, these may enhance their efficiency in meeting organisation`s objectives. From the result obtained from this research, the study concludes that human resources management practices have an impact on workers' performance in small and medium construction companies. Based on research findings, the study recommends that small and medium-sized construction companies should pay special attention to compensation of workers, employees training and development and employees participation to enhance worker`s performance in order to engender over efficiency in the construction industry.

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