

# **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REWARD STRATEGY AND INDUSTRIAL HARMONY AMONG MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between reward strategy and industrial harmony was investigated using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. The study utilized cross-sectional research design and used questionnaire to collect the primary data. The results of the analysis revealed that there were strong correlation between the dimensions of reward strategy and the measures of industrial harmony. Consequently, the study recommends the following: (1) Employers should expand their benefit package to include items that workers value and their dependants can equally have access to use. Items like hospital facility for employees and their dependants, accommodation, recreational facilities, pension scheme have great motivational impact on workers.

**Keywords:** Reward Strategy, industrial harmony, benefits, low grievance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human resource is considered the most important asset of any organization due to their ability to co-ordinate other resources of organizations (Zaman, 2011). It is imperative to mention that other resources of organizations such as money, machine, method and material must be co-ordinated by employees in order to translate them to desirable results. This is why the motivation of employees is important in order to achieve harmony in organizations which is a prerequisite for enhanced organizational performance. This fact obviously underpins why organizations globally are in recent time focusing on reward strategy to improve organizational competitiveness and sustainability.

Reward strategy relates to mechanisms which organizations develop and deploy in order to compensate efforts that lead to achievement of business aim. The essence of giving rewards to employees basically is to pay for their services and contributions to the organization. In other words, employees get remunerated for doing things that support the delivery of organisation's pursuit.

The process of rewarding employees results in motivation. According to Guay (2010), motivation is a factor that conditions behaviour. Motivation has implications for both the employers and the employees. For employees, effective motivation will lead to job satisfaction and where employees enjoy job satisfaction, they barely could engage Management in conflicts. Again, for employers, effective motivation will result in eliciting employees' commitment to their jobs and to the organisation's entire efforts.

Industrial harmony relates to a situation where both Management and employees deliberately pursue agreeable and co-operative working relations which serve their mutual benefits (Osad & Osas, 2013). The agreement is critical in ensuring that each party understands its responsibilities and obligations towards the other. It is pertinent to mention that industrial harmony is critical for the success of any organization, hence, it is reasonable for the management to secure peaceful environment in the workplace.

### Statement of the Problems

Decision on formulation and deployment of effective and sustainable reward strategy has become imperative for organizations in view of the prevailing dynamic and competitive business environment. How to develop and deploy reward programs that specifically align reward mechanisms with organizational goals/objectives is a challenge facing many organizations. To this end, Armstrong (2009) stresses the importance of Human Resources plans and strategies to be developed within the context of the organisation's objectives.

In the same way, to develop and deliver reward programs that specifically encourage industrial harmony has become pertinent. Furthermore, to entrench harmonious relationship at workplace, manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt must develop and offer reward strategies capable of discouraging disharmony, disagreement, dissatisfaction and strife amongst its workforce.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that lend credence to this study are Expectancy Theory and Conflict theory. Vroom (1964) asserts that force, valence and expectancy are major factors

that enhance individual's motivation. Expectancy theory believes that people will be committed to doing something to achieve a specific goal which they value, if they perceive that their efforts will resonate to achieving that goal. In simple term, what makes people to select any action is the importance they attach on the outcome of their effort and their averred conviction that their effort will fetch them what they wanted. At the centre of employers-employees relation is expectation. The employees expect from employers to provide requisite platform where for example, equitable pay, safe working environment and good leadership are entrenched to enable them function optimally. Also, employers expect from workers to carry out their tasks and targets effectively and discretely, showing commitment, creativity and responsibility in their response to business needs. At the same time, Conflict theory originated from Karl Marx's classic work. The main thrust of this theory is that inequity is a major cause of social conflict. Conflicts stem from the struggle over acquisition, control and distribution of scarce resources among various actors in the society (Girigiri, 2003). This theory is relevant to this study because dissatisfaction, grievance and general disharmony occur in organization when employees perceive inequity in the distribution of organisation's prosperity by management.

**HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Benefit and Low Grievance in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.**

### **Benefits**

Benefits represent non-cash rewards that employees receive in their employment relations. Benefits include: clinic facilities, pension schemes, company-sponsored holiday trips, free lunch, company accommodation, recreational facilities, staff buses, status cars, etc. Benefits majorly are provided to motivate employees to high productivity and for ease of operations. For example, some organizations provide cafeteria services where free lunch is served to workers in order to save man-hours which are in turn utilized more productively in executing organisation's operations. Again, why some organizations establish clinics within the office complex include, to ensure workers receive timely medical attention in case of emergency.

Benefits unlike bonus or incentives do not put cash in the hands of employees, it equally make them not to spend cash. This is because those items are provided free. However, benefits have financial implications for the employers because they spend money to either provide the services or pay those who provide them on their behalf. This is why Lum, Kervin, et.al (1998) assert that given the impact of globalization and competitive business environment, organizations are reinforcing efforts at deploying not only financial incentives as reward strategy to attract and retain proficient employees, but are vigorously focusing on non-financial rewards such as benefits.

### **Grievance**

Grievance manifests in employment relations when employees or union perceive ill-treatment or violation of terms of contract agreement by employers (Bemmels and Foley, 1996). Grievance relates to a feeling that infringement has occurred in contract relationship. In such instance, three options are available for employees. These include: the worker may choose not to report grievance officially, in which case, he wallows in his pains and frustration; or quit the job; or courageously report his grievance officially following an official laid down procedure in defiance of any consequence (Petterson and Lewin, 2000). Hirschman (1970) postulated 'exit, voice and loyalty' theory. The crux of this theory is that the tendency for an employee who officially reported grievance to get positive response or management

retaliation in terms of job relieve is predicated on his loyalty or importance and the criticality of his job to the organization. What this means is that an employee who feels his job is not critical to his employer may be constrained from initiating grievance filing even when unfair treatment is present.

In a unionized workplace, grievance procedure serves as official platform for aggrieved employees to report perceived unfair treatment and seek redress. The procedure outlines steps and stages which should be followed in order to effectively manage conflicts (Colvin 2003; Lewin 2005). Similarly, Colvin (2003) believes that collective bargaining is a process through which disputes are managed and employees receive fair response in a unionized setting. However, Bingham (2004) maintains that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) which covers open-door systems, early mutual investigation, review panels are some useful paths to managing disputes in a non-unionized situation.

### III. Research Methodology

Cross-sectional survey research design was used in this study. The design is suitable for collecting data from seemingly large number of respondents.

Target population for this study consists of 600 employees from 33 manufacturing firms registered with the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Rivers State Chapter. Through purposive sampling, 6 firms were selected as assessable population while 263 employees became our sample size. The sample size was determined through Krejcie & Morgan Table (1970). Questionnaire was used to generate field data. 184 of the questionnaires were returned and thereafter used for onward analysis.

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was the research technique used in analyzing the data with the aid of SPSS.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Hypothesis I.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between benefits and Low grievance of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4.1: Spearman's correlation of benefits and measure of industrial harmony**

			BF	LG
Spearman's rho	BF	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.754
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	184	184
	LG	Correlation Coefficient	.754	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	184	184

**Source:** Data output, 2017

**Benefits and low grievance:** The results of the analysis reveal that there is a significant relationship between benefits and low grievance which is a measure of industrial harmony. This is as the rho value = .754 and level of significance where  $P = .000$  indicate a high level of association between both variables; hence based on the decision rule of  $P < 0.05$  for the tests, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected as the result shows a significant relationship between benefits and low grievance.

## Discussion of Findings

### **Benefits and industrial harmony:**

The analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between benefits and industrial harmony; this implies that employees tend to follow measures like low grievance because of the welfare they enjoy from their employers. This observation is in line with that of Lum, e.tal, (1998) who posit that due to the impact of globalization and competitive business environment, organizations are reinforcing efforts at deploying not only financial incentives as reward strategy to attract and retain highly skilled and talented workers but are vigorously focusing on non-financial rewards such as benefits which includes but not limited to healthcare facilities, company status car, insurance policy, paid holidays, free lunch meals, company buses to convey workers to and from work, company accommodation facilities, recreational systems and pension services. Also Arnolds, C. A., and Venter, D. J. L., (2007), revealed that fringe benefits have the greatest motivational effect on employees. From the result of this research, it is arguable to say that employees who have enhanced benefits such as healthcare facilities for themselves and family members, pension scheme to sustain themselves after retirement, company accommodation, etc. will do everything to keep the jobs and may not engage in strike because there are not too many organizations that have the capacity to offer such benefits. It is pertinent to posit that benefit is the only rewards component that has direct beneficial effect on the family members of the employees. Take for example, the healthcare facilities accommodate not only the workers but their spouses and children. The same way, the family members enjoy the status cars, the recreational facilities, and the paid holidays. To this end, benefit commands high motivation for employees who supposedly will reciprocate the good gesture with commitment, loyalty and peaceful conducts.

Consequently, organizations that offer employees enhanced and quality benefits will experience absence of strike and very low grievances. Furthermore, it is perhaps pertinent to mention that benefit can result in improved performance only if the employees value the scheme. Consequently, it is important for managers to ensure that the items in their benefit package are things that workers attach high value in order to attract the desired results.

## V. CONCLUSION

The general objective of this study was to determine the relationship between reward strategy and industrial harmony. From the analysis carried out and the results obtained, a significant positive relationship between reward strategy and industrial harmony was established. Benefits were found to have significant motivation on employees which is a prerequisite for a harmonious relationship between the employees and the managements within the industry. We therefore conclude that Reward Strategy as a Human Resources practice is critical in entrenching and sustaining industrial harmony in manufacturing industry.

**VI. RECOMMENDATION.**

Based on our findings and conclusions, it is recommended that:

1. Due to the significant contribution of benefit in entrenching low grievance and absence of strike in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, management should expand the items in their benefit package to include those items that employees value and their dependants can equally have access to. Benefits such as healthcare facility, company residential accommodation, company recreational facilities have the potential of eliciting indirect support to the organization from the spouses and dependants of their employees because they will not want to lose the privilege and comfort they are getting. This is essentially important in a country like Nigeria, where government does not offer her citizens social services free and few organizations have capacity to do so. To this end, organizations that want to attract and retain highly skilled and talented employees and also elicit employees' commitment and enjoy harmony at workplace should ensure that the benefit items they offer are the items that are of high value to the workers and such that their family members will equally have personal benefit and access.
  
2. Furthermore, management of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt should ensure the reward strategies they deploy are giving verifiable and desirable results. The reward mechanism should be aligned to the needs of the organizations. Reward should not be given because it is the practice in the industry. If management design their reward strategies to address specific business target and the employees are aware that getting the rewards are dependent on meeting certain and specific business target, they will enthusiastically support the organisation's pursuit.
  
5. Finally, the management and human resources practitioners in manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt should learn to abide by the terms and conditions as contained in the collective bargaining agreement which regulates their relationship with workers as well as maintain their employment conditions which they offer to workers at the point of hiring them.

**Contribution to Knowledge**

The strength of association of the variable studied in this research is contrasted with some of the precious studies that used the same variables,

S/N	STUDIES	REWARD DIMENSIONS	BIVARIATE CORRELATION
1	Present study	Benefits	.754
2	Abdul Hameed et al (2014)	Salary	.189
		Incentive	.119
		Indirect payment	.178
3	Payam Gohari (2013)	Pay	.190
		Bonus	.162
		Benefit	.106

The higher correlation figures recorded in this study is our contribution to knowledge.



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