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PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON WORKFORCE EFFICIENCY IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WITHIN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of personnel management practices on workforce efficiency in construction projects in Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a qualitative approach, the research examines key HRM practices, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and leadership styles, and their influence on workforce productivity. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with project managers, HR personnel, and workers, alongside document analysis of relevant HR practices and project reports. The findings indicate that effective recruitment, formal training programs, regular performance appraisals, and transformational leadership significantly enhance workforce efficiency. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including a shortage of skilled labor, informal performance management systems, and inconsistent training programs, which hinder workforce productivity. The study recommends that construction firms in Anambra State prioritize strategic recruitment, expand training initiatives, standardize performance appraisals, and adopt transformational leadership styles to improve workforce efficiency. The study contributes to the understanding of HRM practices in the Nigerian construction sector and provides practical insights for improving workforce performance in developing regions. Limitations of the study include the small sample size and regional focus, and future research is suggested to explore broader geographical areas and employ quantitative methods to further investigate the impact of HRM practices on workforce efficiency in construction projects.

Keywords: Personnel management practices, workforce efficiency, construction projects, performance appraisal, leadership styles, human resource management, workforce productivity.

INTRODUCTION

Personnel management practices are critical to determining workforce efficiency and, by extension, the success of construction projects. According to Chileshe and Haupt (2010), HRM practices such as recruitment, training, and performance evaluation are crucial in shaping employee behavior and improving productivity within the construction industry. In many developing regions, particularly Nigeria, the construction industry grapples with challenges such as inadequate training, skill shortages, and poor management practices, which hinder the successful completion of projects. Research conducted by Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023) highlights that many construction firms in Nigeria struggle with insufficient workforce training and leadership, which contributes to inefficiencies in project delivery.

Furthermore, Sweis et al. (2020) argue that construction firms often face issues like poor management practices, which negatively impact project outcomes. Anambra State, with its burgeoning construction sector, serves as an ideal setting to examine how personnel management practices affect workforce efficiency. However, while the importance of human resource management (HRM) in the construction sector is increasingly acknowledged, a significant gap exists in understanding the specific impact of HRM practices on workforce performance in the context of Anambra State. Research by Chimezie and Okoro (2020) reveals that HRM practices in the Nigerian construction sector are often not sufficiently aligned with local needs, leading to persistent inefficiencies. Despite several efforts to address these challenges, there remains a lack

of localized research that directly connects HRM practices with workforce efficiency within this region.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of HRM practices in shaping employee performance. For instance, Grobler et al. (2011) emphasize that key HRM practices such as recruitment, training, and performance evaluation are essential for influencing workforce behavior and improving productivity. In the construction industry, where tasks are often labor-intensive and time-sensitive, the proper application of these HRM practices can significantly enhance the efficiency of workers and the overall success of projects. However, despite the global recognition of these practices, Anambra State's construction sector faces unique challenges that hinder their implementation. As identified by Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), many construction firms in the state struggle with applying effective HRM practices due to limited resources, poor leadership, and the lack of comprehensive training programs. Furthermore, Sweis et al. (2020) argue that HRM practices in construction are often not adapted to local needs, leading to inefficiencies and poor project outcomes.

While there have been several attempts to address HRM challenges within Nigeria's construction industry, these efforts have been insufficient to bring about lasting improvements. For instance, a study by Chimezie and Okoro (2020) examined the role of HRM practices in Nigeria's construction firms but found that a lack of alignment between HRM policies and project requirements led to continued inefficiencies. Moreover, research conducted by Mehmood et al. (2017) revealed that despite the increasing awareness of HRM's importance, many construction firms in developing countries, including Nigeria, still fail to implement best practices, resulting in suboptimal workforce performance. These studies indicate that while some progress has been made,

significant gaps remain, particularly in understanding how these practices affect workforce efficiency in Anambra State specifically.

The need for localized research focusing on the relationship between HRM practices and workforce efficiency in Anambra State's construction industry is therefore evident. Wright and Ulrich (2017) argue that HRM practices directly influence both individual and organizational performance. However, existing studies, such as those by Chileshe and Haupt (2010), have primarily focused on global HRM frameworks without considering the unique challenges of local construction sectors like Anambra's. According to Yalwa et al. (2025), construction firms in Nigeria often face issues such as inconsistent application of HRM practices and a lack of formalized workforce training, leading to low productivity and project delays. Thus, it is crucial to examine the HRM practices in Anambra's construction firms to understand the barriers to effective workforce management and to identify solutions that can improve performance in this local context.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the role of HRM practices in shaping workforce efficiency within construction projects in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the impact of practices such as recruitment, training, and leadership on workforce productivity and project success. Through qualitative methods, this research will provide insights into the challenges faced by construction firms in Anambra State and suggest targeted strategies to improve HRM practices. The findings of this study are expected to inform both academic understanding and practical approaches to HRM in the Nigerian construction sector, offering a roadmap for enhancing workforce efficiency and improving project outcomes in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personnel Management Practices in Construction Projects

Personnel management practices in construction projects are critical to shaping the workforce's behavior, improving job performance, and ensuring project success. These practices generally encompass recruitment, training, development, leadership, and motivation. According to Grobler et al. (2011), HRM practices such as recruitment, selection, training, and performance appraisals directly affect workforce effectiveness, influencing both individual and organizational performance in the construction industry. The significance of training and development cannot be overstated, as construction workers need to continually update their skills to keep pace with technological advancements and safety protocols. As Ajao and Aroge (2024) note, the lack of adequate training programs in Nigerian construction firms results in inefficiencies and poor quality of work. Moreover, research conducted by Chileshe and Haupt (2010) emphasizes the importance of leadership in motivating employees and creating a work environment that fosters high productivity.

Leadership, in particular, plays a crucial role in guiding the workforce, enhancing employee motivation, and ensuring effective project delivery. Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023) argue that transformational leadership, which focuses on motivating and inspiring employees, is particularly effective in construction projects. Effective leaders create a supportive work environment, making employees feel valued and capable of contributing to project success. Additionally, motivation techniques, such as financial incentives, recognition, and career advancement opportunities, have been identified as key drivers of workforce efficiency in construction settings. According to Wright

and Ulrich (2017), HRM practices that cater to intrinsic motivation, such as employee development and empowerment, often lead to better job satisfaction and productivity.

Workforce Efficiency

Workforce efficiency is defined as the ability of employees to perform tasks effectively within a set timeframe, using the least number of resources possible. In construction projects, workforce efficiency is closely tied to meeting project deadlines, staying within budget, and ensuring the quality of work. According to Sweis et al. (2020), efficiency can be measured through several indicators, including worker productivity, adherence to timelines, and quality control. These factors are essential to the successful delivery of construction projects, as delays and cost overruns are common challenges in the industry. Research conducted by Fapohunda (2020) highlights that poor workforce efficiency is often a result of ineffective HRM practices, such as insufficient training, lack of clear communication, and low levels of employee engagement.

In the context of construction projects, measuring workforce efficiency can also include assessing the level of task completion, the speed at which tasks are completed, and the effectiveness of safety practices. As noted by Chimezie and Okoro (2020), HRM practices such as performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms can serve as effective tools for measuring workforce efficiency. Leveraging on the regular assessment of worker performance, construction firms can identify areas for improvement and implement corrective measures to enhance productivity.

Theoretical Framework

To frame the study, this research draws on two main theoretical perspectives: **Human Resource Management (HRM) Theory** and **Motivation Theory.**

Human Resource Management Theory focuses on the strategic approach to managing people within organizations. According to Becker and Huselid (2015), HRM theory posits that the alignment of HRM practices with organizational goals leads to enhanced performance and competitive advantage. In the context of construction, the effective implementation of HRM practices such as recruitment, training, and performance management contributes to workforce efficiency. This theory serves as the foundation for examining how HRM practices in Anambra State's construction firms influence workforce efficiency and project outcomes.

Motivation Theory, particularly Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), is also relevant to this study. Herzberg argues that intrinsic factors (e.g., personal growth, recognition) and extrinsic factors (e.g., salary, job security) both play a significant role in motivating employees. This theory is useful for understanding how motivation-driven HRM practices, such as career development opportunities and reward systems, can impact workforce efficiency in construction projects. According to Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), a motivated workforce is more likely to perform at a high level, leading to better project outcomes in terms of quality, timeliness, and cost-efficiency.

Previous Studies

Several studies have explored the relationship between personnel management practices and workforce efficiency in construction projects, both globally and within the context of Nigeria and Anambra State.

Globally, research by Armstrong and Taylor (2020) affirms that effective HRM practices lead to improved workforce efficiency in the construction sector. The study emphasizes the role of comprehensive training programs, employee development, and performance management in increasing productivity. In a similar vein, a study conducted by Bao et al. (2021) in the global construction sector revealed that high-performance HRM practices, which emphasize employee involvement and skill development, lead to improved workforce efficiency and overall project success.

In Nigeria, studies have pointed to the challenges faced by construction firms in implementing effective HRM practices. Ajao and Aroge (2024) assert that the lack of formal HRM systems in many Nigerian construction firms leads to inefficiencies and low workforce morale. This is compounded by limited training programs and a lack of career development opportunities, which prevent workers from fully realizing their potential. Research conducted by Mehmood et al. (2017) supports this argument, highlighting that many construction firms in developing countries, including Nigeria, fail to integrate modern HRM practices, resulting in suboptimal workforce performance.

In Anambra State specifically, there is a dearth of research examining the direct impact of HRM practices on workforce efficiency in construction projects. However, studies like those by Chimezie and Okoro (2020) suggest that construction firms in Anambra face similar challenges to those in other parts of Nigeria, such as poor leadership, inadequate training, and a lack of alignment between HRM practices and project goals. These challenges contribute to low productivity and delayed project delivery. Sweis et al. (2020) further support these findings, asserting that the construction sector in Anambra, like much of Nigeria, struggles with effectively implementing HRM practices, which ultimately affects workforce efficiency.

While there is significant research on HRM practices and workforce efficiency in construction projects globally, there remains a notable gap in research focused specifically on Anambra State. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the relationship between HRM practices and workforce efficiency in construction projects within the region, providing a detailed understanding of the challenges faced and offering potential solutions for improvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suited for exploring personnel management practices and workforce efficiency within construction projects. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals involved in construction projects, which is essential when examining complex factors like HRM practices. As emphasized by Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), qualitative methods are effective in exploring subjective experiences and capturing the nuances of organizational practices, especially in a context where quantitative data may not fully capture the complexities of human resource management. By utilizing this approach, the study seeks to gain insights into how personnel management practices influence workforce efficiency in the specific setting of Anambra State's construction industry, where existing research is limited.

The research design is based on a case study approach, which enables a detailed exploration of HRM practices within construction firms in Anambra State. Case studies provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the practices, challenges, and outcomes specific to a particular industry or region (Yin, 2017). The target population includes construction firms, project managers, HR personnel, and workers involved in construction projects within Anambra State. To ensure that the study captures the most relevant perspectives, a purposive sampling method will

be employed. This approach allows for the selection of participants who have direct knowledge and experience with HRM practices and workforce efficiency in construction projects. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews with project managers, HR personnel, and workers, complemented by a document analysis of relevant materials such as personnel policies, project reports, and HR practices. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to HRM practices and workforce efficiency, with findings interpreted to provide insights into how personnel management influences project outcomes in Anambra State's construction industry.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Personnel Management Practices

The study identified several key personnel management practices that significantly affect workforce efficiency in construction projects in Anambra State. These practices include recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and leadership styles, which emerged as central to shaping workforce behavior and project outcomes.

Recruitment was found to be a critical HRM practice that influences workforce efficiency. According to Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), recruitment practices that prioritize skill match and cultural fit lead to better alignment between workers and organizational goals, which in turn enhances productivity. In Anambra State, however, many construction firms face challenges in attracting qualified personnel, particularly in specialized trades. This was corroborated through interviews with project managers, who noted that recruitment efforts often prioritize quantity over quality, leading to a workforce that is not fully equipped to meet the demands of complex

construction projects. As Chimezie and Okoro (2020) point out, a failure to implement strategic recruitment practices results in skill gaps that hinder project progress.

Training emerged as another critical practice that impacts workforce efficiency. The lack of consistent and comprehensive training programs was highlighted as a major issue. Research conducted by Ajao and Aroge (2024) reveals that inadequate training is a significant barrier to workforce efficiency in Nigeria's construction industry. In Anambra State, workers often report that their training is limited to on-the-job learning, which does not adequately address evolving industry standards or safety requirements. The study found that workers who received formal training reported higher job satisfaction and better performance, further emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development in enhancing workforce efficiency.

Performance appraisal practices also played a significant role in workforce efficiency. In construction firms in Anambra State, performance appraisal systems are often informal and inconsistent. Interviews with HR personnel revealed that appraisals are sometimes based on subjective assessments rather than objective criteria, which can lead to employee dissatisfaction and lower motivation. According to Sweis et al. (2020), well-structured performance appraisal systems contribute to workforce efficiency by providing clear feedback, fostering accountability, and identifying areas for improvement. However, in the case of Anambra's construction firms, performance appraisals are often overlooked or conducted irregularly, which results in missed opportunities for improving workforce performance.

Leadership styles were found to significantly influence workforce motivation and efficiency. In the Anambra State construction sector, project managers tend to adopt either an autocratic or laissez-faire leadership style. While an autocratic style may be effective in directing workers

during tight deadlines, it often leads to low morale and a lack of initiative among workers, as noted by Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023). On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership, where project managers give workers more autonomy, was reported to create confusion and a lack of accountability, negatively impacting workforce efficiency. Transformational leadership, which involves motivating employees through inspiration, clear communication, and support, was identified as the most effective style in enhancing workforce performance. As noted by Wright and Ulrich (2017), transformational leaders who provide guidance, support, and opportunities for growth tend to foster high levels of workforce engagement and productivity.

Impact on Workforce Efficiency

The relationship between personnel management practices and workforce efficiency in Anambra State's construction industry was clear. Effective recruitment practices, when aligned with organizational needs, helped firms build a skilled workforce, which in turn increased productivity. This finding aligns with the work of Grobler et al. (2011), who argue that aligning recruitment with strategic goals leads to better job performance. In this study, it was found that construction firms that invested in proper recruitment were able to complete projects more efficiently, meet deadlines, and maintain high-quality standards.

Training was also strongly linked to workforce efficiency. Workers who had access to training programs reported better performance, higher job satisfaction, and fewer errors in their work. According to Ajao and Aroge (2024), continuous training equips workers with the necessary skills to adapt to new technologies and methodologies, which ultimately improves productivity. In contrast, firms in Anambra State that did not prioritize training experienced higher turnover rates and a lower standard of work, which affected project timelines and budgets. The study also

revealed that employees who received feedback through regular performance appraisals were more motivated and better equipped to meet project goals, further validating the importance of performance management systems.

Leadership practices were found to be one of the most significant factors influencing workforce efficiency. Project managers who adopted a transformational leadership style fostered higher levels of employee engagement, motivation, and loyalty, leading to greater workforce efficiency. As reported by Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), employees working under transformational leaders demonstrated increased initiative, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities, all of which contributed to more efficient project delivery.

Challenges in Personnel Management

The study identified several barriers that hinder the effective implementation of personnel management practices in Anambra State's construction firms. One of the primary challenges is the lack of skilled personnel. According to Ihedigbo and Jimoh (2023), despite the growing demand for skilled labor in construction, there is a shortage of qualified workers in Anambra State, which impacts the ability of firms to implement effective HRM practices. Recruitment efforts are often hindered by the limited availability of skilled workers, and firms sometimes resort to hiring unqualified personnel, which lowers the overall quality of work.

Another significant challenge is the informal nature of performance appraisal systems in many construction firms in Anambra State. As reported in interviews with HR personnel, the lack of structured and objective appraisal systems results in subjective evaluations, which undermine the motivation and job satisfaction of employees. According to Sweis et al. (2020), poorly

implemented performance appraisals can lead to feelings of unfairness and dissatisfaction, which negatively affects workforce efficiency.

Additionally, there is a lack of investment in training and development programs. As highlighted by Chimezie and Okoro (2020), many firms in Anambra State do not provide regular training opportunities, which results in workers being ill-prepared for the demands of the job. This gap in training contributes to inefficiencies, errors, and delays on construction sites.

Comparative Insights

When comparing the findings from Anambra State to other regions, it is evident that while personnel management challenges are widespread in the construction industry, the severity of these issues is more pronounced in developing regions like Anambra. Research conducted by Chileshe and Haupt (2010) in South Africa found that construction firms that implemented strategic HRM practices, such as comprehensive training programs and formal performance appraisals, experienced higher workforce efficiency and better project outcomes. Similarly, studies in other parts of Nigeria, such as Lagos State, have shown that HRM practices aligned with international standards led to improved performance (Fapohunda, 2020). However, Anambra State's construction firms, as this study suggests, face significant challenges related to recruitment, training, and leadership, which have not been adequately addressed in previous research.

The study highlights the crucial role of HRM practices in enhancing workforce efficiency in Anambra State's construction sector. It reveals that effective recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and leadership styles are all key drivers of workforce productivity. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of the lack of skilled labor, informal performance

management systems, and limited training opportunities. These barriers need to be addressed to improve workforce efficiency and project outcomes in Anambra State's construction industry.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of personnel management practices on workforce efficiency in construction projects within Anambra State. The findings reveal that effective recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and leadership practices are essential for improving workforce productivity. Strategic recruitment helps build a skilled workforce, while training ensures that workers are equipped with necessary skills to perform effectively. Consistent and objective performance appraisals enhance employee motivation, and transformational leadership fosters higher engagement and collaboration. However, challenges such as a shortage of skilled labor, informal performance management systems, and inconsistent training practices were identified as barriers to workforce efficiency. To address these issues, construction firms should prioritize effective recruitment practices, expand formal training programs, standardize performance appraisals, and adopt transformational leadership styles to foster a more efficient and motivated workforce.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its qualitative nature and a small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study's focus on Anambra State means the results may not apply to other regions of Nigeria or other developing countries. Additionally, limited access to detailed HR data from construction firms may have affected the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Future research could expand the sample size, incorporate quantitative methods, and explore the long-term impact of HRM practices on project success, as

well as investigate the role of technology in streamlining HRM processes in construction firms. Such studies would provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between personnel management and workforce efficiency, both in Anambra State and beyond.

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