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Personnel Management Practices and Employee Productivity in Nigerian Manufacturing Industries: An Industrial Sociology Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Personnel management is the heart of industrial sociology. No industry can function without effective management of its human resources. This study examines the relationship between personnel management practices and employee productivity in manufacturing industries in South-East Nigeria. Industrial sociology views the factory not just as a place of production, but as a social system where human relations, welfare, motivation, and conflict determine output. Using a mixed-methods design, data was collected from 200 factory workers and managers in Owerri, Onitsha, and Aba. The study found that poor recruitment, lack of training, inadequate welfare, and autocratic leadership are the major factors responsible for low productivity, high turnover, and industrial strikes. Conversely, industries that practice participatory management, regular training, fair promotion, and good welfare have higher productivity. The paper is anchored on Elton Mayo's Human Relations Theory and Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. It concludes that personnel management is not an administrative function alone, but a sociological function that determines the success or failure of industries in Nigeria.

Keywords: Industrial Sociology, Personnel Management, Productivity, Employee Productivity, Human Relations, Manufacturing

INTRODUCTION

Background

Personnel management has emerged as one of the most critical determinants of organisational success in the contemporary business environment. In Nigerian manufacturing industries, where competition, technological change, and economic instability are persistent, the effective management of human resources is no longer optional but essential for survival and growth. Manufacturing industries in Nigeria contribute significantly to employment generation, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and industrial development. However, the sector continues to face challenges such as low productivity, high labour turnover, industrial disputes, inadequate training, and poor welfare of workers. These challenges are largely attributed to ineffective personnel management practices.

Personnel management refers to the process of recruiting, selecting, training, developing, motivating, compensating, and maintaining employees to achieve organisational goals. It ensures that the right people are placed in the right jobs at the right time, and that they are adequately motivated to perform optimally. Employee productivity, on the other hand, refers to the level of output or performance achieved by employees in relation to the resources used. In manufacturing, productivity is measured by the quantity and quality of goods produced, efficiency, reduced wastage, and timeliness in meeting production targets.

In Nigerian manufacturing industries, many organisations still operate with traditional personnel practices where workers are seen as costs rather than assets. This has resulted in poor working conditions, delayed

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salaries, lack of promotion, inadequate training, and low morale — all of which negatively affect productivity.

Studies have shown that when personnel management strategies such as fair recruitment, continuous training and development, effective performance appraisal, proper motivation, and good employee relations are properly implemented, employee productivity increases significantly. Conversely, where these strategies are neglected, productivity declines and organisational performance suffers.

It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the relationship between personnel management and employee productivity in Nigerian manufacturing industries, with a view to identifying the personnel practices that enhance productivity and recommending strategies for improved organisational performance

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian manufacturing industries face low productivity, high labour turnover, frequent strikes, and absenteeism. Workers complain of poor salaries, no training, and no promotion. Managers complain of laziness and indiscipline. Who is right? The problem is poor personnel management practices that do not fit the sociological realities of Nigerian workers.

Nigerian manufacturing industries are expected to be the engine of economic growth, employment creation, and industrial development. However, in recent years, the sector has been plagued by low productivity, high rate of labour turnover, frequent industrial unrest, poor quality of products, and inability to meet production targets.

Despite the huge investments in machines, raw materials, and technology, many manufacturing firms in Nigeria still record low output. This situation has been linked to ineffective personnel management practices. In many firms, recruitment is based on favouritism rather than merit, training and development are neglected, performance appraisal is subjective and punitive, promotion is delayed, and welfare of workers is poor.

As a result, workers are demotivated, insecure, and lack commitment to the organisation. This manifests in absenteeism, lateness, low morale, resistance to change, high turnover, and reduced productivity. Some workers have even resorted to strikes and other forms of industrial action, thereby disrupting production activities.

Although several studies have examined personnel management and performance in the educational and public sectors (Okonkwo, 2024; Eze, 2024; Nwokorie, 2025), there is limited empirical evidence on how personnel management practices affect employee productivity specifically in Nigerian manufacturing industries.

Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is: *to what extent do personnel management practices affect employee productivity in Nigerian manufacturing industries, and what strategies can be adopted to improve productivity in the sector?*

Objectives

- To examine personnel management practices in Nigerian manufacturing industries.
- To assess the effect of recruitment, training, and welfare on productivity.
- To analyze the relationship between leadership style and worker morale.
- To recommend effective personnel management strategies for Nigerian industries.

Research Questions

- How does recruitment affect productivity?
- What is the effect of training on worker output?
- How does welfare and motivation influence productivity?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Personnel Management

Personnel management, according to Flippo (1984), is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of the procurement, development, compensation, integration, and maintenance of people for the purpose of contributing to organizational goals.

Personnel management is the administrative function of an organisation that deals with the human element. According to Okonkwo (2024), personnel management involves recruitment, selection, training, appraisal, compensation and welfare of workers to ensure optimum utilisation of human resources. Eze (2024) added that effective personnel management creates a work environment where employees feel valued, secure, and motivated to perform.

Personnel management is the aspect of management concerned with the human resources of an organisation. It is the process of planning, organising, directing and controlling the procurement, development, compensation, integration and maintenance of people for the purpose of contributing to organisational goals.

According to Okonkwo (2024), personnel management is the administrative function which deals with the human element in an organisation — recruitment, selection, training, appraisal, promotion, welfare and retirement of workers to ensure optimum utilisation of human resources for increased productivity.

Nwokorie (2025) sees personnel management as a strategic function, not just an administrative one. He notes that in modern organisations, personnel management goes beyond hiring and firing to include employee engagement, leadership style, communication, culture, and participation in decision-making — all of which influence productivity.

Akintola (2026) in a systematic review of 22 studies in Nigerian organisations, concluded that personnel management practices act as a buffer against insecurity and low performance. He found that training, welfare and clear communication are the most effective personnel strategies for improving employee output.

Industrial Sociology and Work

Industrial sociology, as developed by Weber, Marx, and Durkheim, studies work as a social activity. Durkheim argued that division of labour creates interdependence. Weber argued for bureaucracy. Marx argued that capitalist management alienates workers.

Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Studies (1924-1932) discovered that workers are not motivated by money alone, but by social factors — attention, belonging, and informal group norms. This is the foundation of modern personnel management.

Work is any human activity, physical or mental, aimed at producing goods and services for livelihood (Watson, 2008).

Durkheim (1893) in _Division of Labour in Society_ saw work as a source of social solidarity. He argued that as society industrializes, division of labour becomes complex and creates interdependence, but can also cause anomie if not regulated.

Productivity and Personnel Management in Nigeria

Studies by Fajana (2002), Okonkwo (2019), and Nwosu (2022) found that Nigerian industries that invest in training and welfare have 40% higher productivity than those that do not. Poor personnel management is a major cause of industrial collapse in Nigeria.

Personnel Management, now called Human Resource Management (HRM), is the management of people at work to achieve organizational and personal goals (Ubeku, 1975).

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Ubeku, A.K. (1975), argued that personnel management in Nigeria failed because employers see workers as tools, not assets. He identified tribalism, favouritism, and lack of training as major problems reducing productivity.

Fajana, S. (2002), noted that productivity in Nigerian public sector is low due to outdated personnel system, poor motivation, and politicization of recruitment. He advocated for modern HRM practices - merit, training, performance appraisal.

Yesufu, T.M. (1984), showed that personnel management in Nigeria is influenced by government intervention, trade unions and economic environment. Low wages and poor welfare lead to low morale and low productivity.

Otobo, D. (2016), found that lack of participative personnel management and reliance on casualization reduces commitment and productivity in Nigerian firms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Relations Theory - Elton Mayo: Workers respond to social and psychological factors, not just economic incentives. If management treats workers as humans, productivity increases.

Two-Factor Theory - Herzberg (1959): Herzberg distinguished between hygiene factors (salary, working conditions, job security) which prevent dissatisfaction, and motivators (achievement, recognition, responsibility) which increase satisfaction. Nigerian industries provide neither.

Karl Marx (1818-1883):* Marx viewed industrial work under capitalism as alienating. In his theory of alienation, workers are alienated from the product, process, fellow workers and self. Capitalist industrial system exploits workers, leading to class conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Max Weber (1864-1920): Weber introduced bureaucracy and rationalization. He argued modern industry is organized on rational-legal authority with rules, hierarchy and efficiency. But this rationality leads to "iron cage" where workers lose freedom. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917): He focused on how industrial work affects social order. He believed industrial sociology should manage anomie through occupational associations

METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design**: Mixed methods survey.
- **Study Area**: Manufacturing industries in Owerri (Imo), Onitsha (Anambra), Aba (Abia).
- **Population**: Factory workers, supervisors, and personnel managers.
- **Sample Size**: 200 respondents — 150 workers, 30 supervisors, 20 managers.
- **Sampling**: Stratified random sampling.
- **Instrument**: Structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews.
- **Analysis**: Frequency tables, percentages, and thematic analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Personnel Management Practices

Practice	Good	Poor
Recruitment Process	34%	66%
Training Opportunities	28%	72%
Promotion Fairness	31%	69%

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Welfare Package	25%	75%
Communication	38%	62%

Table 2: Effect on Productivity

Statement	Agree
Poor training reduces my output	82%
When welfare is good, I work harder	88%
Autocratic leadership reduces morale	79%
I will leave if I get a better personnel policy elsewhere	71%

Qualitative Finding

A worker in Aba said: "They treat us like machines. No leave, no training. If you complain, you are sacked. How can we produce well?"

A manager in Onitsha said: "We want to train them but cost is high. We need government support."

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm Mayo's theory. Workers in South-East manufacturing industries are not lazy — they are poorly managed. When personnel management is poor, informal groups emerge that resist management. This leads to low productivity, sabotage, and strikes.

Good personnel management is not expensive. It is about respect, training, and fair treatment. Industries that practice participatory management — where workers are consulted — have higher commitment.

The study also shows that personnel management in Nigeria is still traditional. It focuses on hiring and firing, not on development. Modern industrial sociology advocates for human capital development.

CONCLUSION

Personnel management determines the fate of Nigerian industries. Without good management of people, industries will continue to collapse. Productivity is not a technical problem, it is a sociological problem.

Recommendations

- Industries should adopt modern personnel management — merit-based recruitment, not tribalism or nepotism.
- Regular training and retraining for workers.
- Fair and transparent promotion system.
- Provision of welfare — health insurance, housing, pension.
- Participatory leadership style — workers should be involved in decision making.
- Government should enforce labour laws and provide incentives for industries that train workers.

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