

Cultural Environmental Influence on Employees' Perception of Motivation in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector (A Case Study of Selected Polytechnics in South-West Nigeria)

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Abstract- Most HR practitioners today face issues such as low level of motivation resulting in low morale, which bears an impact on performance. Therefore, the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector has been considered to see the impact that work culture has on employees' and managerial motivation and performance. Work culture is essential for maximising the value of human capital, and culture management should therefore become a critical management competence as this has become an important challenge for managers is to determine the most effective culture for their organisation. Therefore, one of the major challenges of corporate organisation and institutions is their adaptation to different socio-economic and cultural contexts of their various available markets, audience and employees. In the light of the above, this paper is poised to look at and address the issues of cultural diversity and their management in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector (NPES) as it affects employees' motivation and performance and overall organisational behaviour. Utilising a semi-structure interview and focus group discussion with 86 respondents purposively selected from 6 Polytechnics in south-west Nigeria, the study exposed the most dominant cultural factors in employees' motivation and suggested ideas on how present days managers and practitioners in the NPES can maximise the usage of this socio cultural diversity in enhancing employees' performance and organisational behaviour. Suggestions were equally made for further studies in this regards.

Keyword: Environment; Motivation; Work Culture;

1. INTRODUCTION

Managers of present day organisations today face not just their immediate and remote environment but also an external environment that is fast changing, complex, uncertain and more vigorously competitive than before (Thomas 2002). The maximum integration of human resources capacity into organisation goals and objectives has become issue of concern to the present day managers striving to accurately match employees' potentials to corporate goals and employing motivational strategies of different kinds to effect this. Employees' cultural diversity and beliefs has been a bane militating against this lofty objective. It is arguable that the interest in the topic of cultural effects and influence on employees' motivation is caused by two factors. The first is the enduring assumption that the performance of organisations is dependent on the extent to which employee values are aligned to company strategy. The second is the contentious view that work culture generally is subject to conscious manipulation by management, who are argued to be capable of directing culture to their desired end (Sinha, Ajah Kr, Nisha, and Rajul, 2010).

Most HR practitioners today face issues such as low level of motivation resulting in low morale, which bears an impact on performance. Therefore, the Nigerian

Polytechnic Education Sector has been considered to see the impact that work culture has on employees' and managerial motivation and performance. Work culture is essential for maximizing the value of human capital, and culture management should therefore become a critical management competence. An important challenge for managers is to determine the most effective culture for their organisation. Hence, this paper focuses on the impact that environmental and societal culture has on both the role motivation and contextual performance of employees in the NPES.

Most investigations into the culture related behaviour relationship have focused on variations in behaviour as a function of culture (Barrett, Wosinska, Butner, Petrova, Gormik-Durose, and Cialdini, 2004) In contrast, the present research takes a different approach to this relationship by examining culture-based individual differences not only in the behaviour itself but also in the reasons given by actors with divergent cultural orientations for performing similar or related behaviour especially as it relate to their motivation at work. D'Andrade (1992) noted, in the context of anthropology, that there is a need to incorporate the concept of motivation into the study of culture.

This sentiment is also applicable to social psychology, and this current research represents an example of the type of

effort D'Andrade (1992) called for. The domain of social influence is particularly apropos for research on motivation and culture in part because the impact of culture on social influence processes has not been extensively studied, and in part because social influence research has generally not examined individual cultural differences in people's stated reasons for compliance or rejection of organisational policies, strategies, and procedures (Barrett *et al.*, 2004; Igusi, 2009; Sinha *et al.*, 2010).

Internationalisation of institutions and corporate organisations operations results in competitive advantage only when such institutions and corporate organisations are involved in integration of local differences in human resource management, realising global economies of scale, and effectively transferring knowledge and technology across borders. Without significantly understanding organisational and institutional socio-economic and cultural factors, corporate organisations may not succeed in taking full advantage of available resources and opportunities (Gupta & Govindarajan 2001; Abdullah, Boyle, and Joham, 2013). Therefore, one of the major challenges of corporate organisation and institutions is their adaptation to different socio-economic and cultural contexts of their various available markets, audience and employees (Tayeb 1998). In the light of the above, this paper is poised to look at and address the issues of cultural diversity and their management in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector (NPES) as it affects employees' motivation and performance and overall organisational behaviour.

Oghojafor, Alaneme, and Kuye (2013) succinctly put it that to a large extent, the style or method used in managing an organisation at any given time reflects the general level of development of the society in which that organisation operates. Expectedly, as a society progresses, the organisations existing within it improve or grow by way of capacity, performance and general efficiency (Duke II, 2008). Western management concepts and writings dominated the thinking of academics and managers in Africa for a long time, and such writings did not show how culture may be taken into account in managerial practices (Gbadamosi, 2003). This portrayed Africans as people without root or contribution as far as managerial practices were concerned. It has been argued that the application of Western management methods often proves less effective when transplanted elsewhere, hence, every nation, culture and setting is rooted in its contextual value system and culture (Ahiauzu, 1999; Adeleye, 2011; Zoogah, 2009). This underscores the existence of African leadership styles which have their roots in African culture.

Oghoja for *et al.* (2013) further posits that in Africa and Nigeria in particular, the indigenous peoples had their own management philosophies and practices before the advent of colonialism and they were indeed able to survive a very tortuous past-slavery, colonialism, brutal economic exploitation and attempted cultural annihilation- through these philosophies and strategies (Muo and Oghojafor, 2012). Some African authors (Mbigi, 2002; Ituma,

Simpson, Ovadje, Cornelius, and Mordi, 2011; Muo and Oghojafor, 2012; Oghjafor *et al.*, 2013) have all advocated the integration of African traditional thinking with the strengths of the scientific and rational approach in order to accommodate and use some often irrational desires and behaviours for better organisational performance.

The influence of cultural diversity of employees on employees' expectation of employment relationship cannot be underplayed. It is a salient but important element of the employment relationship playing a significant role in shaping employees' behavioural and cognitive outcomes and performance in the workplace. Organisational researchers in recent years have focused mainly on the core issues associated with the unfulfilled employee expectations (Chelliah & Davis 2007; Rousseau 1998). Employment relationship itself is one key aspect of consideration in the human resources management; this is shaped by cultural context because very many aspects of the employment relationships are neither unwritten nor formally documented between both employer and their employees. (Rousseau 1989). The unwritten or informal aspects of the employment relationship were based on the employees' perceptions and interpretations of the communication about promises made by the employer (Rousseau 1989; 1995). This portion of the employee-employer relationship is always in the mind of the employee forming an expectation developed from either implicit or explicit promises that were made at the conception and during the employment relationship, as well as how they are to interpreted and executed in any given context (Rousseau & Schalk 2000; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013).

While the effects of motivation on performance and other organisational behaviour has been studied extensively (Monzoor, 2012), very little has been done in the area of identifying the influence of cultural environment on employees perception on the effectiveness of the various motivational strategies introduced by managers (Abdullah et al, 2013). Reviews of the employee motivation literature reveal that organisational researchers have studied various factors that may influence and shape employees' perceptions of breach or fulfillment of their expectations on employees motivation. For instance, Abdullah et al (2013) quoting Kickul, Lester & Belgio 2004 on the role of national culture, identified that the role of national culture has been studied in the Western context as a factor influencing the employees' perception about fulfillment or breach of employee expectations at work. He further posits that there is a lack of research about how employees' perceive the relative fulfillment or breach of their personal job expectations in non-Western cultures (Rousseau & Schalk 2000). Therefore, another purpose of this research is to contribute to this furthering study by identifying the culturally congruent elements of HR practices that affect employee motivation expectations and the resultant cognitive as well as behavioural outcomes thereof of senior staff employees in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector (NPES).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CULTURE CONCEPTIONAL DEFINITION

The last decade has brought a renaissance of interest in cultural phenomena in societies and organisations. Researchers from a variety of disciplines have provided range of theoretical and analytical studies. Perhaps because of the different epistemological, methodological and political orientations that distinguish these disciplines, the literature remains theoretically unallied on this i.e. remains in a state of conceptual chaos. Therefore, before reviewing the extant and relevant literatures about culture, and the impact of culture on motivation management, it would not be out of place to first agree on a workable definition of culture as it relates to this research study. Culture is a common word and like all common words it comes with much conceptual baggage, much of it vague, some of it contradictory, and at least one definite to purpose for which it was actually intended.

2.1 Contemporary Concepts of Culture and Motivational Management

Some management researchers subscribed to the view that sees culture as- a shared homogenous way of being, evaluating and doing-, which are ideas, shared by members of a cultural group (Sinha *et al.*, 2010; Iguisi, 2009). Others see culture as heterogeneous combining differentiated and dynamic subcultures; still, others see culture from a multi- fragmented perspective that bring ambiguity into culture discourse - which are vital to motivation (Iguisi, 2009). As numerous intercultural scholars have noted, each culture has its own unique “world-view” or means for making sense of the world (Zahama, 2000).

Hofstede (2003) defines culture as the “software of the mind”, a collective phenomena, shared with the people who lived in the social environment. It is the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one social group or category of people from another. Deresky (2003) posits that culture comprises the shared values, assumptions, understandings and goals that are learned from one generation, imposed by the current generation, and passed on to succeeding generations. Valentini (2005) defined culture as the repository of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, timing, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a large group of people in the course of the generations through individual and group striving. On their part, Blackwell *et al.* (2007) stated that culture has two fundamental components: Abstract and Material. In terms of abstract components, one may consider values, attitudes, ideas, type of personalities, symbols, rituals and summary constructs like politics and religion.

Hawkins *et al.* (2006) propagates that the main operational regime of culture starts by earmarking stated boundaries

for individual behaviour and by guiding the functioning of such institutions as the family and mass media. In a societal setup these boundaries are termed as ‘norms’. Further, norms are derived from cultural values. Given the commonalities among the various authors of culture quoted above, it is obvious that they concur that culture should be defined as that which is shared, harmonious, homogeneous, but the definitions disagree with what exactly is being shared or harmonious and homogeneous (Iguisi, 2007; *op cit*, 2009). Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditions (that is, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values (*op cit*, 2009).

From a more dynamic perspective, culture is conceived as being made up of relations, rather than as stable suggests that every individual embodying unique combination of personal, cultural and value systems. This implies that national cultures, corporate cultures or professional cultures, for example, are seen as symbolic practices that only come into existence in relation to, and in contrast with, other cultural communities (Iguisi, 2009).

Cultural norms and values can play a significant role in the employee perception and expectation formation process and its related logical obligations within a given culture (Kickul, Lester & Belgio 2004; Ogghojafor *et al.*, 2013). National cultural context can shape how individual employees receive and process information within their cultural environment (Kickul, Lester & Belgio 2004). Consequently, culture can influence perceptions about employee expectations and related obligations that usually define an employee’s commitment, dedication, and loyalty to his or her employer (Kickul, Lester & Belgio 2004; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013).

Usually societies comprise of familial, economic, religious, and political micro environments and institutions that are closely intertwined with the phenomenon of “Culture,” each of which can strongly and powerfully shape employment practices and how individuals experience them (Carnoy 1993; Castells 1996; Duke II, 2010; Ogghojafor *et al.*, 2013). For instance, culture may determine acceptable work and family roles based on gender (Kickul, Lester & Belgio 2004).

The extent to which a culture influences whether members perceive motivation and incentives as satisfying and goal oriented, may be a bit cumbersome to measure numerically; however, factors can be identified around these perception and expectations upon which one can sum up the relationship at which these identified factors can influence employees perceptions and expectation of the various motivational strategies employees are exposed to. Employees in the viewpoint of Victor Vroom expectancy theory (1964) lives on the promises that an expectation is to be fulfilled if a desired outcome is achieved thereby bringing forth satisfaction. In a relaxed culture (where

promises are made and believed based on trust), promises mean that the promise-making parties (employer and employees) will try to do something, meaning the result is not guaranteed (Rousseau & Schalk 2000).

This perception of the binding and non-binding nature of promises made can certainly affect the employees' perception about how the promises are fulfilled. In rigid cultures (where promises are made and executed through documents that are enforceable by labour union or law), employee expectations are usually high about complete fulfillment of the promises made by the employer, while expectations of fulfillment of promises are quite low in more relaxed cultures (Rousseau & Schalk 2000).

2.2 Research Methodology and Sample Demographic Profiles

This research is a case study of the Nigerian Polytechnic education Sector. Case study is a useful approach of enquiry as it affords the organisational researchers the opportunity to comprehensively explore motivations, meanings, experiences, and implications attached to daily 'events, activities or processes of one or more individuals' (Cresswell, 2009). Yin (2009) and Stake (2005) added their voices to assert that case study is principally suitable when the margins between the phenomenon being studied and its environments are blurred. This research seeking to study the influence of culture on employees' motivation adopted the semi structure interviews and focus group discussions as major means of gathering relevant information required for this study. Although case study engendered abundant data about one or more individuals or situations, generalizations often cannot be made from the specific case to the general population. Nevertheless, case study is useful in highlighting the importance of key research questions, clarifying concepts and theories (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012).

Eighty five (85) senior staff and managers were purposefully chosen from three Polytechnics in Osun state south-west Nigeria for this study. The three Polytechnics chosen each represents the three major players in the Polytechnic education sector in Nigeria, which are the Federal, State, and privately owned Polytechnics. The sections include both face-to-face verbal interviews that lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes each, and three sections focus group discussions of 10 participants each from each institution sampled and visited lasting for almost two productive hours. The selected senior staffs were available and willing to participate in the research study haven explained to them the purposes and significances of the study. Being academic and senior administrative managers holding one management positions or the other, the participants discussed freely on the subject area and the researcher was able to explore the extents to which cultural environment and diversity affect employees' perception on motivation and organisational behaviours. The selected samples consist of both male and female with wealth of experience within the education industry in Nigeria cutting across all the major departments in the Polytechnics.

The demographic representations of the respondents are portrayed below:

<i>Demographic Factors</i>	<i>Range/ Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative (%)</i>
Sex:			
Male:	62	73	73
Female:	23	27	100
Age:			
20 – 35:	20	23	23
36 – 55:	48	57	80
Above 56:	17	20	100
Qualifications:			
BSc/HND	9	10	10
Masters	57	67	77
PhD	19	23	100
Years of Experience:			
0 – 5	11	13	13
6 -10	26	30	43
Above 10	48	57	100
Total Respondents	85	100	100

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the conducted interviews and focus group discussions centered around four major themes relating to socio-cultural context; these four key themes representing the culturally congruent elements of Human Resources practice are presented as work environment, familial considerations, manager/subordinates relationship, and financial stability. These culturally congruent elements of HR practices are presented as:

- Work Environment – secured and peaceful. Societal values and acceptance;
- Financial Stability – Enhancing meeting employees financial needs;
- Manager/Subordinates relationships – Motivational enhanced personal relationship; and
- Familial Consideration – Love for children and parents.

These evolving themes therefore will form the basis for discussion in this paper with the hope that they addressed the fundamental realities of culturally enhanced motivation in the sector under study – NPES.

The Work Environment

Work environments refer to the milieus around employees. It is the social and professional environment within which

organisational employees interact with each other (Jones and George, 2008; Cole and Kelly, 2011; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013). The Boko Haram¹ insurgency in northern Nigeria and the Niger Delta militancy in the south coupled with other violent and volatile sectorial groups in most parts of the Nigerian nation have really made the work environment a factor for consideration in employees' motivation in the Nigerian education sector. Responses from respondents in the course of the interviews and the focus group discussions showed that majority of the respondents preferred to work and stayed in the south western part of the country where there is relative peaceful and harmonious working environment than any other parts of the country.

One of the senior managers in a federal Polytechnic put it that:

".....I wonder how much or how lucrative a benefit can be now or how much anybody or organisation can be willing to pay me now to propelled me to take up a job appointment in the northern part of the country that I would consent. It has become so bad now that students and higher institutions of learning is now their target. I will not trade the security I enjoyed here for anything or jettison the lives of my family and loved ones for the love of extra benefits in the name of work. The south west is enjoying relative peace compared to other parts of the country and that is the best place for me now to stay and enjoyed working." (Senior Manager, Registry Department, Federal Polytechnic).

In the voice of another senior manager from one of the state Polytechnics, the respondent attributed his high motivational factor in employees' motivation from the perspective of the cultural work environment through the value people around him in the host and immediate society placed on the job title and the associated benefits that are attached in terms of respect earned and other community fellowship. In his words, he put it that:

".....Employees motivation is not only what you get from your employer or work related benefits alone but also on what the society equally offers associating with your job titled. Here in this community, you are well respected for this job you do. The culture is such that when you are doing a domestic task, the junior ones around and sometimes, even the elderly, approached you and offered to help. The children and youths will not just sit back watching you performing a domestic chores or task without them taking it over from you and even asked you if there are other things you want them to do for you. They are doing all these because it is part of their culture to show respect for the elderly and value people in position of trust and authority. There are other culturally value added

benefits that are really motivational that you would not get from the western world or other parts of the country." (Deputy Rector, Private Polytechnic).

In the voice of another senior manager corroborating the societal culturally oriented benefits and value attached to their job as well as the extents this has gone in motivating him as a person; he put it that:

".....One of our colleague was given a local chieftaincy title by the king in the community here in recognition of his service to the community despite the fact that he is not an indigene of this land; that shows you the extents to which the community placed so much value on what we do here in the Polytechnic. I never imagined it happening, but when it happened, I knew I can definitely go ahead and be my best here since it is not just my employer or the students that are watching, the entire community does and are willing to appreciate you for what you are." (Deputy Registrar, Student Affairs, Registry Department, Federal Polytechnic).

These assertions above are clear indications that employees placed so much value on motivational benefits available within the ambits of their immediate working environment. People are very responsive to praises, recognition, respects, and encouragement; expressed not only in words but also in action to give their best efforts to the organisations they worked for (Dubnick, 2005; Nyameh, Douglas, Teru, and Titus, 2013). Social recognition is defined as the public acknowledgement of a person's status or achievements (Barrett *et al.*, 2004; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013). The recognition of an individual's achievements is seen by many as an important part of their work as it can lead to them receiving special status both inside and outside of their organisation (Barrett *et al.*, 2004; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013). A number of organisational studies have also found out that the work environment is positively related to employee behaviours such as job satisfaction, commitment, participation and retention (Rose & Griffin 2002); it is expected that employees would prefer a sympathetic and harmonious work environment, rather than the more individualistic and competitive environment associated with Western countries (Abdullah *et al.*, 2013).

The presence of security of life and properties, respects for one another and for people in position of trust and authority, recognition of hard work in the general society, as well as, community fellowshiping are all seen as motivational by employees of the Nigerian Polytechnic education sector. Though not extantly documented in the western literature, they are seen as a very vital tool of employees' motivation in a cultural setting where so much value is placed on this factor. Dodlova and Yudkevich (2009) and Nyameh *et al.* (2013) further posits that for any organisation to record any degree of meaningful success in the pursuit of its goals and aspirations, it must have the ability to create values (motivation) enough to compensate for the burden imposed upon employees. Vroom (1964) posited that efforts combined with employees ability together with environmental factors interplaying

¹ The Boko Haram is an Islamic sect in the northern Nigeria clamouring for an Islamic state in northern Nigeria. More than 3000 death has been linked to this sect in act of terrorism and their actions has raised a lot of security issues in present day Nigeria (See BBC report of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria of 19th September, 2013).

performance leads to various outcomes each of which has an associated value called valence. The attributes and importance placed on the values and benefits from the social and culturally controlled environment is one of these valence sought by employees.

3.1 Financial Stability

No one wants to work for free and no one should do (Sahoo, Sahoo, and Das, 2011; Manzoor, 2012). Financial and non-financial rewards provided to employees in exchange for their contributions to the organisation are referred to as remuneration (Abdullah et al, 2013). These include not only salary, bonuses and vacation pay, but also medical allowances or other financial benefits that are part of an employment package (Abdullah et al., 2013). Employees want to work and earn reasonable salary and payment, and employers desired their workers to feel that that is what they are getting. Money and financial rewards become a fundamental inducement that no other incentives or motivational techniques come even close to it with respect to its influential value as it has the supremacy to magnetised, maintained, and motivate individuals towards higher performance (Manzoor, 2012).

The Nigeria nation though not poor but with resources not well managed and corruptions in high places has made social welfares and economic conditions to be in a very poor state (Gbadamosi, 2003; Obioha and Ayilara, 2009; Ituma et al., 2011; Oke, 2012). This has made employees to responsible for their own social welfare and economic stability as it affect their individual family; this has made them to places so much emphasis and focus on achieving high, regular, and consistent or secure form of income in wages and salaries and other related benefits; and therefore, jobs that are well paid and valued are well sought after. The importance of financial stability through good salaries and benefits cannot be underplayed in this cultural setting as most of what needs to be done is linked in one way or the other to the amount of money you have or can command.

In the opinion of one of the federal Polytechnic Rector, he asserts that the management of the institution aligned the management structure, actions and policies to foster employees' financial stability, encouraged saving and achieve desirable personal development. In his words:

".....we recognised the needs for employees' financial stability and put in place structures to support them in achieving this. One of the things we did was to support their money contribution system in their various cooperative societies by helping them to deduct members contributions from source when salaries are to be paid and this has really helped them in pooling their money together in achieving their individual desirable target of buying cars, building houses or payment of children school fees. Some of them even borrowed money upfront in form of salary advance and if their case is found to be genuine, the request is granted. There are also other structures put in place to meet employees' immediate financial needs like special loans to meet special needs like car refurbishing

loan, housing loan and so on; in fact, the list are endless. This has really helped the management in getting things done in time and appropriately. (Rector, Federal Polytechnic)

Another senior employee has this to say:

"The blend of management structure here to meet societal and cultural financial challenges of employees is really motivational. That you don't have to rely only on your salaries to meet your needs gives you a lot of financial independence and live the life you wish to live by spreading the cost of what you needed urgently over time having collected the money from a source within the system when there is a dire need for it. Salaries are even paid earlier during festive periods, or when children are resuming schools. That the management is conscious of these important periods and rising up to the occasion to meet us at it is a unique way of motivating us financially and ensuring our financial stability over time. (Senior Human Resources Lecturer, Federal Polytechnic).

Given the state of the importance of money in societal and family well being, it is not surprising that employees are paying much more importance to it than any other forms of motivational strategies. Ituma et al. (2011) posit that in identifying one of the core domains of managerial importance in Nigeria, financial stability stands out as one of the key domains of managerial importance and influence in the Nigerian state.

3.2 Manager/Subordinates Relationship

Another key theme identified in this study is the enhanced manager-subordinates relationship existing within the NPES. This has intertwined in such a way that it can be termed "playing to your strength" or "use what is handy to get what is expected" within the generally acceptable societal cultural domain. Scholars and researchers in the HR domain (Barrett et al., 2004; Jones and George, 2008; Sahoo et al., 2011; Monzoor, 2012; Abdullah et al., 2013; Nyameh et al., 2013; Oghojafor, et al., 2013) have all adduced to the fact that relationship existing between cordial managers and subordinates relationships as it goes a long way in employees motivation, inducing efforts, gingering enthusiasm, and improving organisational performance.

This become paramount and important for considerations going by the ways at which this has been enmeshed within the societal cultural contest to enhanced employees motivation in the NPES. These are well illustrated in the responses quoted below:

"I was taken aback by the support and assistance I received from the entire management and staff of this institution when I got married few years ago. The support I received was too overwhelming; staff and management went all the way to buy 'aso ebi' (common uniform for identification) for themselves even without me having any privy of it. Despite the fact that I am from other part of the country, they all made me feel acceptable by their singular action of identifying with me. This has also been done to other colleagues who are either burying their aged parents

or giving out their children in marriage. It is like a bond now and everybody wants to be part of it and no one is ready to break that chain. That shows the extents of the bond that existed between the management staff and other employees and this is very motivational as I never see myself as an outcast or not being part of the system here, formal relationship notwithstanding.” (Senior Lecturer in Engineering, State Polytechnic)

A senior registry staff in the federal Polytechnic also asserts that:

“The relationship between managers and subordinates here are so enhanced and culturally inclined in such a way that certain things are done not because it is part of the policy statement of the institutions but because failure to do it will make you to be informally ostracised in the general society. Let me give you an example; the registry staff here has an association where members contributed stipend monthly depending on their financial buoyancy towards the end of the year. The idea is that you are given whatever you have been contributed at the end of the year parting with certain percentage for an end of year gift. These gifts are given equally across every member irrespective of status and contributions; the idea behind it is that the most senior staff contributing huge amount of money are indirectly paying more for these gifts that are evenly shared. The staffs recognised this and appreciate us for it and by so doing, we are enhancing the cordial relationship between the management staff and other employees.” (Deputy Registrar Admin, Federal Polytechnic)

One of the private Polytechnic Rector gives his own voice thus:

“To me, enhancing manager-subordinate relationship is like using what you have to get what you need. As manager and chief executives of this institution I use everything within my reach to enhance the relationship existing between this office and my subordinates and motivating them to work. As a peasant farming done at my leisure, I took it upon myself to give some of my farm products to my staff to show them the extents to which I cared about them. Sometimes on my way from the farm, I bring along bunches of banana, pine apples, fresh vegetables and pawpaw which are freely distributed to them. They all look forward to this anytime I tell them I will be going to the farm. I equally practiced an open door policy where every one of them irrespective of cadre and status can freely walked in to my office to share anything bothering them with me. This has gone a long way in enhancing the relationship that existed between us and improves the performance level of the staff in general.” (Rector, Private Polytechnic)

These respondents see enhanced managers-subordinates relationship as a means of employees’ motivation improving performance and organisational behaviour.

3.3 Familial Consideration

A number of participants and respondents agreed that they enjoyed working with their present employer and

motivated to work because of the flexibility it carries in allowing them to cater for their families. In terms of socio-cultural context, Nigerian society is broadly collectivist with a traditionally organised gender-based system and a respect for/acceptance of hierarchy (Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Ulabor & Mordi, 2013). Within the collectivist cultures, a family orientation is seen as a dominant trait (Wagner & Hollenbeck 2005; Hofstede 1984) and an emphasis on the extended family system in which strong ties and obligations developed forms the basis of a ‘social insurance’ that often takes priority over personal goals and aspirations where it is the social norm to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of their families. For example, the need to take care of older family members or children often takes precedence over their individual career aspirations (Jackson 2004; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013; Ulabor & Mordi, 2013). Thus, the education and upkeep of children are a concern of the entire community in Nigeria and children are expected to provide both financial support and personal care to their ageing parents. Individuals who do not live up to these expectations are socially sanctioned. Another important feature is its traditionally gendered social organisation in which men are socialised to become breadwinners while women are expected to engage mainly in domesticity. The implication is that men’s careers are given more attention than those of women (Chovwen 2006; Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Ulabor & Mordi, 2013).

A senior HR lecturer put it that:

“I feel motivated when I am able to handle my family and other work commitments together comfortably. As a mother of children, I have responsibility to my children and husband and at the same time must create a balance between work and home. I therefore see motivation as being the ability to live a satisfying family life, being a good wife and mother, supporting family goals and at the same time not rocking the boat at work.” (Senior HR Lecturer)

Another senior manager put it that:

“Motivation is giving me the room to strike a balance between work and family. Life itself is all about family. If you want to motivate me, then give me the ability to make my children and husband happy. It is about raising my children well to become useful and keep the family name. You know we women are judged in Nigeria by how we raise our kids while men are judged by how much they bring in to the house in terms of money. For example, if my child does not behave well or fails in life, the society will blame me the mother but if the child succeeds everyone will give credit to the father. This is why everything I do my family comes first because I want to be seen as a successful woman.” (Senior manager, State Polytechnic)

Another senior staff reiterates his stance thus:

“Being highly motivated to remain on this job is principally because of my children and aged mother living with me. This job is most suitable for me because it allows me the flexibility I needed to strike a balance between work and looking after them. Sometimes when I am not too

busy, I can quickly dashed home to see how mother is doing and I can equally take my children to school and pick them of thereafter at close of school. If I had been a banker or something other than this, am so positive I will not have that luxury.” (A senior Accounting Lecturer, Federal Polytechnic)

4. SYNOPSIS

This study has successfully identified four critical themes and elements of human resources practice from the cultural perspective significantly in the non-western context of south-west Nigeria that can affect employees' motivation in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector. These emerging themes as named work environment, financial stability, managers-subordinate relationship, and familial consideration have emerged as the most significant cultural congruent elements of HR practices in the NPES and these themes are directly or indirectly affected by cultural orientation of the employees and that of their immediate environment; both management and employees alike have both employed prevailing cultural norms and values within their locality and at the same time aligning employees' cultural diversities in enhancing employees' motivation and organizational behaviour and performance.

The NPES employees' preference for a peaceful, harmonious, caring and helpful work environment can be said to be consistent with the traits of a collectivist society outlined by Wagner and Hollenbeck (2005) and conclusion of Oghojafor *et al.*, (2013). Despite disparity in pay of the three types of Polytechnic players in Nigeria, majority of the employees have a onerous voice of their preference and satisfaction to work and remain the south-west part of Nigeria where there is relative peace and security of lives compare to other parts of the country where sectorial groups are cropping up daily unabated. This finding is consistent with Rose and Griffin's (2002) study which found strong links between work environment and employee reactions such as: job satisfaction, commitment, retention, well-being of the employees. These findings also reveal the sharp contrast between collectivist and individualistic cultures. In individualistic cultures, people prefer a more competitive and productive environment rather than a congenial, caring and low performance work environment (Hofstede 1984; Hofstede, 1993; Abdullah *et al.*, 2013).

Financial Stability also emerged as important theme in this qualitative study as employees placed very high importance on their financial stability and sustainability through high wages and salaries as well as other benefits from their employers. Maintaining financial stability has always been a major concern for most employees of developing countries unlike in the western and developed countries (e.g. Britain and North America) where employees receive monetary and other forms of social benefits from their governments to support themselves (Child benefit, Tax relief, Disability allowances, housing, and medical et al). In the absence of assistive benefits like

these from the government in Nigeria (Ituma *et al.*, 2011), it is natural that employees in the developing countries like Nigeria are expected to get a job that pays well and that can sustain their financial stability as employees want to make sure that they get enough remuneration (financial and non-financial benefits) from their employers (Sahoo *et al.*, 2012) to survive through uncertain situations that may arise at any point of their life.

It is also evident from the data analysis that employees' job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment level are positively related to how satisfied employees are with the salaries and other benefits they receive from their employers. The management team having recognized the importance of this employed the local and cultural settings to meet this yearning of financial stability.

Another important theme emerging from this qualitative study is that discussing the importance placed on familial consideration by employees. This aligned with the notion proposed by Wagner & Hollenbeck (2005), Ituma *et al.* (2011), Ulabor & Mordi (2013), Abdullah *et al.* (2013), and Oghojafor *et al.* (2013) that people are more concerned about their families in the collectivist culture and many of the respondents and participants linked their career goals, motivation, and organisational performance with their family well-being.

This study is part of an ongoing research into employees' motivation in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector and implication for further and future research can be guided by its findings. It is important and behoves on managers to take into consideration and manage specific cultural context as they can significantly influence employees' cognitive motivation mechanisms and behavioural outcomes. Future research can however replicate this study in another organisational setting in furtherance of examining relationships among studied variables.

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