

# Family-Like Organization Based Culture and Employee Involvement and Productivity in the Nigeria Work Place

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## ABSTRACT

Every organized entity is culture bound. They develop some values, norms, belief systems, procedures, laws, rules, and regulations as well as some prescribed codes of conduct to guide their operations and behavior. A business organization is no exception to this rule. This study examined the impact of a family-like organization based culture on employee involvement. It adopted a descriptive approach and explored some critical value systems organizations could utilize to become operationally effective and efficient, achieve optimal growth and maintain its stability in the dynamic economic environment. Among the characteristics of a family-like organization based culture relevant for the actualization of goals and objectives of an organization are full and effective involvement of employees in all facets of organizational life, participation in decision making, employee empowerment, encouragement and employee willingness to assume some degree of authority and responsibilities and be fully committed in every activity they undertake on the job. This aspect of a unified culture will lead to employee loyalty, commitment to duty, diligence and corporate optimization or profitability due to operational efficiency and effectiveness based on proper and adequate value orientation and a balanced organizational climate.

**Keywords:** Family-like organization based culture, employee involvement, Commitment, productivity, growth and development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations can hardly be formed and operated without human input and interaction. People get hired into an organization, get trained, retained, developed and shaped by the organization through the introduction and implementation of rules, laws, regulations, policies, procedures and strategies through which employees get bonded together as a unit or family for the purpose of actualizing organizational goals and objectives. This concept of bonding infuses some norms, beliefs, and values which give an organization an image, identity, unified climate and culture without which the organization may wallow and flounder. This is why **Boone and Kurtz (1976)** cited in **Nwaeke (2005)** stated that organizations are made up of people who interact together and with the environment to develop a climate which enables them to utilize material, technical, financial and informational inputs to provide tangible goods and services to enhance social and economic development for the common good of all members of a given society. Failure to do so makes organizations become entropic thereby diffusing the essential impact of the global environmental synergy.

There is no doubt that in today's rapidly growing and modernizing world, pressures, challenges, and uncertainties are increasingly becoming the norm for organizations in all sectors of our economy. These pressures, challenges and uncertainties which are brought about by intense local and foreign competitions, capital flight, problems from customers' quest for improved quality products and services at lower costs, increase in global technological development, increased impact of globalization on national economy and other related factors have become serious causes of concern to many organizations, especially in Nigeria as a developing economy. An organization's ability to adapt, survive and achieve its goals and objectives in the midst of these numerous contingencies and challenges determines how effective, efficient and successful such an organization can be in the global competitive market economy. Organizations that succeed in the face of these multiple contingencies and challenges no doubt must be such with reliable strategic options and strong structures to depend on.

One of such Strategies for survival in the face of multiple challenges facing organizations is the total and absolute involvement of capable employees in the organization's processes. This will enable the organization tap into its potentials in order to develop a competitive edge in the world of business. Employees, today, have obviously proven to be the most essential ingredient in forging and building highly effective and successful organizations and will continue to do so in the future. They are seen as instruments capable of

transforming and moving organizations from where they are at present to where they want to be in the future. Employees who are skillful, knowledgeable, competent and highly committed and resilient are in high demand. They are also engaged and involved in all the dimensions of organizational processes and activities to enable it develop competitive advantage over and above other competitors in the market place.

At a time of unforeseen circumstances and turbulence organizations look for new ways to build a strong and effective base to gain some competitive advantage. Perhaps a family-like organization based culture approach to business operations that emphasizes interdependence, teamwork and total integration of member employees would give room for employees to be seen as members of the same family working together for the common good of all. A family-like organization based culture can be very vital as a strategy to encourage total employee involvement in the organization. It can also help the organization to utilize available human capital components to achieve its desired goals and objectives. To be able to achieve this, willing employees under this bond with the right skills, abilities and competencies need to be really involved in every corporate action if organizations must survive and progress.

Employee involvement, in this perspective, is seen as a process of participation and empowerment of member employees in order to use their input towards achieving higher individual and organizational performance (Sofijanovna and Zabijakin-Chatleska, 2013). It also involves participation of employees in decision making and problem solving which leads to increased autonomy in work processes. Employee involvement could be initiated by management and is intended to improve communication with employees, to generate commitment, and enhance employee contribution to the organization as they look forward for the best approach to handle the demands of customers for higher and better quality products and services, bring down the pressure of increasing global competition in order to be more efficient and productive and manage the rapid change in the global business environment. As Apostoluo (2000) had observed, successful companies believe that the only way to compete effectively is through employees who perform tasks that produce a product or service more effectively and efficiently. To achieve some degree of effectiveness and efficiency and an increase in productivity, organizations must not only need to employ and retain skilled and competent employees but seriously need to involve them in organizational processes to enable them exploit opportunities, minimize threat in the environment and develop a competitive edge over rivals. Thus, a family-like organization based culture comes into play as a model of a business culture and strategy that can generate corporate effectiveness, efficiency and good performance outcome.

In the western world, corporate culture is been adopted as an asset and strategy to create change and enhanced productivity. This is however, not the case in Nigeria where most organizations do not have a specific or distinct culture or structure to guide their operations. Predominant institutions of social and economic engagements in Nigeria are State and Federal Government Ministries.

Where production-oriented organizations abound, most of them try to imitate other foreign organizations in their vicinities in the way they do things. It is common to hear a manager of an organization in Nigeria tell his subordinates to try to find out what others are doing and see how they can replicate their activities. With the recent financial melt-down and economic recession threatening the very soul of our existence and those of major manufacturing firms in Nigeria, the use of a family-like organization based culture can be explored to serve as a strong strategy to gain the loyalty, cooperation and commitment of employees to generate a competitive edge that could enable organizations achieve their corporate responsibilities in a highly competitive, turbulent economic environment.

The aim of this paper is to theoretically explore the impact of a family-like organization based culture on employee involvement and commitment towards achieving organizational productivity in Nigeria. It will also examine the factors that can enhance effective and efficient level of productivity in the Nigeria work places.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been pointed earlier in the discourse that there are so many uncertainties that business organizations in Nigeria have to contend with in order to survive and become successful. The high level of enterprise competition and the chaotic business environment we found ourselves have made it difficult for organizations to remain competitive and productive. They can hardly sustain their competitive advantages in the turbulent environment they found themselves. With some profound realities and associated telling effects of fierce competition in the global market economy, it is imperative that appropriate measures be put in place in organizations that will guide them achieve their desired goals and objectives.

Managers cannot continue to assume that all is well and that it is no longer acceptable that corporate threats are treated in a piecemeal way to accommodate environmental vagaries. Managers must find a way to develop a central strategy which seeks to empower their organizations to gain some advantages over their rivals

in the market place. And one way of building this competitive advantage is by making every employee in the organization get engaged in the activities of the organization by seeing themselves as members of one family being unified by a codified culture. This is purely depended on how entrenched the culture and strategy instituted and put in place by the organization is and how bidding they seem to be on all employees.

Based on the need to build a high performing organization that can successfully adapt to environmental changes and approach that emphasizes interdependency, cooperation, trust, support and openness in an environment or setting where member employees see themselves as belonging to the same family; and where companionship means watching each other's back and helping and supporting one another to succeed; as well as helping the organization to survive and progress despite the circumstance it finds itself.

### CONCEPT OF CULTURE AND FAMILY-LIKE ORGANIZATION BASED CULTURE

Organizations as institutions of production and service tend to create and adopt certain acceptable modes of behavior that are largely self-manifest. Organizations tend to share some specific values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions which will help them stay apart and noticeable and also help them achieve their predetermined goals and objectives.

During periods of economic downturn when organizations are searching for reliable ways to build up high performance teams that can aid them to successfully compete with rivals at all fronts, they should be considering a family-like cultural approach to business that emphasizes trust, interdependence, and openness where members see themselves as members of one family and act collectively to help each other prosper.

The concept of culture is rooted from the sociological and anthropological epistemology which views culture as the way of life of members of a given society that embodies the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation (**Linton, 1945 cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008**). **Broom and Selznick (1977)** share the opinion that culture refers to shared ways of thinking, believing, perceiving and evaluating things around people in a given society. It is equally the realm of ideals, ideas, values and symbols and involves all the knowledge, beliefs, customs, arrangements and skills that are available to the members of a society. To **Horton and Hunt (1976)** culture is a set of rules, procedures, together with a supporting set of ideas and values and everything which is socially learned and shared by the members of a society that gives them a sense of belonging. **Giddens, Duneir and Appelbaum (2005)** have it that culture consists of the values the members of a given group hold, the languages they speak, the symbols they revere, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create. The values, norms and material goods characteristic of a people in a society give preeminence to their identity and image. While **Schaefer and Lamm (1995)** identified culture as the total of learned and socially transmitted behavior that includes the ideas, values and custom of a group of people for which they are identified.

Literature has shown that there is no existing definition of a family-like organization based culture as a new concept in management. The concept, however, could be drawn from the same sociological epistemology of family and culture and could be blended to represent concepts involving strategies and organizational culture which are important concepts relevant and applicable in the management domain that lend credence on how organizations could be piloted or guided successfully to become more productive.

It can be defined as a set of mindset, values, norms, ethics, ideas and attitudes initiated by an organization as a strategy to make every member of the organization as a family which they are part of, and belonged to, and therefore develop a feeling of bonding toward it, and commit employees efforts, ideals, skills, ideas or talents to seek its continuous well-being, development and progress as they (employees) would do for their biological families.

A Family-like organization based culture could be assumed to be a strategy which emphasizes recognition of employees as a vital ingredient of an organization's success and stressed that when employees develop organizational family-like attitudes, they will apply their collective resolve, knowledge, skills and competencies to generate competitive advantages for the organization over other competitors. In other words, a family-like organization based culture can be regarded as a strategy to make employees see themselves as united for one cause and be willing to accept leadership authority, responsibilities as well as being able to pull their collective effort towards the maximization of the organization's goals and objectives. As mentioned earlier, this form of cultural base can serve as a source of momentum for an organization to pull all other resources together to attain maximum productivity per employee and for the organization in general.

### DIMENSIONS OF A FAMILY-LIKE ORGANIZATION BASED CULTURE

The dimensions of a family-like organization based culture identified for this study is adopted from **Mckay and McKay (2013)**, sociologists who described them as pillars of a family culture. These are values, norms, rituals/tradition as well as beliefs and ethics which are conceptualized as follows:

**VALUES:** These represent the foundation of a family culture. Values are abstract ideas of what a society believes to be good, right and desirable (**Goodman, 1992**). According to **Williams (1970)**, a sociologist, values represent a set of collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable. In an organization, there are certain ideas of what are considered as good and desirable behavior that members are expected to follow. These values, in this concept, give an organization an overarching purpose and guide as to know how every member of the organization should act or behave in any situation just as is the case of families. Values help organizational members to choose what is thought to be good, moral and acceptable. Organization's values are therefore the moral and ethical code of behavior or principles initiated and upheld and transmitted within an organization as a form of loyalty, honesty, hard work and commitment among others. Added to the value content of an organizational life is the core value systems employees and the organization itself should imbibe in order to grow, develop and become visible. These core values are: Integrity, excellence and a profound respect for the individual within and outside the organization; be it the employee, customer or management. It is believed that proper adherence to a set of standard values is a key concept in a company's mission in going into business.

In view of this integrity which is one of the core values of individuals and the organization they work for embraces truthfulness, honesty and uprightness that are traits found in a family-based organization culture. The person with integrity honors commitment to duty schedules and deadlines which are very essential in ensuring the ultimate satisfaction of customers based on their resolve to ensure excellence and uphold the highest ethical standards required in operating an enterprise profitably.

Excellence represents the way and manner employees carry out their job responsibilities and the way employees and customers are regarded and treated in the organization. This centers on a profound respect for the individual; be it fellow employee, managers or the consumers of organizational products and services.

A commitment to excellence and the issue of dignity and intrinsic worth of individuals is as a result of personal involvement in the hiring process, decisions to allow workers to engage extensively in organizational decision making process. This means that employees must be provided a dignified and supportive work environment where they are viewed as valued, important, worthy, relevant and cherished.

**NORMS:** These are the spoken and unspoken rules of how a family operates. They are established rules and regulations of behavior or standards of conduct expected of members in a family. **Mackay and Mackay (2013)** posit that norms are values in action as they tend to guide family members on how they should interact with one another and with outsiders and define appropriate behavior towards others and the general society at large.

**Williams (1970)** defined norms as established rules of behavior or standard of conduct which represents the laid patterns of behavior put in place to guide the behavior of organizational members. In an organization, norms represent the laid down policies and procedures which are seen as central and significant to the proper functioning of an organization. They also represent the dos and don'ts put in place by management to guide individual and group member's behavior to be consistent with those of the organization.

**RITUALS/TRADITIONS:** These are set of behaviors and daily routines that provide a family a sense of belonging, identity and purpose. They are repetitive sequences of activities that express and enforce the key values of a family societally, it may involve singing some chants or anthem or reciting pledges or creed which members believe in. In organizations, it seeks to find out which goals and objectives that are most important for members to achieve and the set of people that are the most dependable for their actualization. In an organization, a ritual provides cohesion and represents formal procedures which every member of the organization should adhere to. Tradition on its own represents the belief and customs which an organization should hold so closely to and which should help to shape the behavior of its members and guide them in upholding its ethical standards which govern habits and which are followed by every member of the organization if the organization must progress, and grow to its optimum potentials.

#### **CLASSIFICATION OF FAMILY-LIKE ORGANIZATION BASED CULTURE**

Borrowing from the epistemology of sociology a family-like organization based culture can be classified into two domains. These two domains represent the main areas where organizational family culture can exist in a company. These are firm-based family culture and team-based family culture.

**FIRM-BASED FAMILY CULTURE:** This refers to the overall attitude, ideas, ethical considerations and behavior pattern which is put in place by management to help it succeed in making all employees see the organization as their unit of operation to which they belong, are loyal to and can depend on for their survival and general welfare. It involves some strategic options which intend to cover some operational dimensions of an organization by engaging on activities which are unique to organizational excellence and productivity. It

involves all what management can strategically plan to give an organization a focus and guide members to distinguish themselves and their organization from others through their collective responsibilities in carrying out their activities in the most profitable manner possible devoid unethical behaviors.

**TEAM-BASED FAMILY CULTURE:** This is that type of culture which is developed within an organization that is directed at the formation of teams, specialized units or departments that make members feel that they are very unique and quite different from other members of the organization. The special recognition given to these employees encourage them to accomplish some specialized tasks assigned to them which otherwise would have been difficult to accomplish without some specific talents, gifts or innate abilities. For these teams to succeed they have to develop some special inclinations to duty, some unique attitude and will power to perform above average. They seem to be tenacious, resilient, dedicated and have an extraordinary resolve to succeed on whatever they are set out to work on. These can lead to openness, support, trust, and cohesiveness that allow for unity of purpose, new ideas, new thought patterns, and make members become innovative and creative on the job. To ensure that a positive organizational family culture exists in teams managements usually select the right people with the right skills, competencies and expertise when putting the team in place. It is assumed that when the team is experienced and knowledgeable, what management only needs is to specify the team's expectations and encourage them to come up with positive results in accordance with specified standards.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF A FAMILY-LIKE ORGANIZATION BASED CULTURE**

A family-like organization based culture provides some benefits to employees and the organization that makes it a powerful factor for organizational success. These can be seen as follows:

- a) **Promotion of cooperation among members:** This organization cultural dimension provides a sense of shared values and assumptions to members and help the organization generate good will and mutual trust among members thereby encouraging member cooperation and absolute involvement on the affairs of the organization.
- b) **Ease of Decision making:** since culture involved shared beliefs held by members of a given entity or unit, it gives members a consistent set of basic assumptions which most often leads to a more official decision making process as members share the same values and ideas. This reduces disagreement and conflicts and promotes equality by ensuring that no employee is neglected, marginalized or maltreated. In addition, it promotes better internal communication and a high degree of involvement on matters concerning the overall welfare of the organization.
- c) **Internal control:** The cultural concept exposed above helps to provide some degree of control over several processes of an organization by providing a road map that members can rely upon to become effective and productive. Through organizational norms on behavior, members are guided as they are shown how every individual in the organization is expected to behave. This serves as a control mechanism that channels employee behavior towards expected and desired behavior away from those that are not desirable and expected.
- d) **General employee commitment:** This type of culture helps to foster strong identification which leads to and generates commitments by employees for the benefits of the organization. When employees see the organization as a family, they develop special interests to ensure that they get so involved to ensure that the organization accomplishes its set goals and objectives and remain very synergic.
- e) **Justification of member behavior:** A family based culture helps members to make sense of their behavior by providing appropriate reasons and measures for it. According to **Robbins, Judge and Sanghi (2009)** Corporate Culture has a boundary defining individual and organizational roles. It creates distinctions between one individual and the other and between organizations so as to enhance the stability of our social system and operational dimensions in the same vain (sense) a family-like organization based culture acts as a social glue that holds employees and organizations together by providing appropriate standards for what employees and the organization should do as they co-relate. According to **Davoren (nd)**, strong corporate culture improves the communication of roles and responsibilities of all members as employees know what is expected of them, how management assesses their performance, and what form of reward that will be available to them in response to established standard of performance on the job.



- f) **Creates member identity:** Organization based family culture conveys a sense of identity for organization members. It helps the organization and its members to be known for something worthy by way of products, services and philanthropy. Thus it creates distinctions between the organization and others and helps to create and show differences in ways different organizations do different things by way of their modus operandi and modus vivendi since each organization is very distinct in form, structure and operation.

### CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

The need for competitive policies to gear up performance and to develop competitive advantage in the market place has made organizations to adopt policies which seek to empower employees to be involved adequately in organizational processes and procedures (Khattak, Igbal and Khattah, 2012). Apostoluo (2000) stated that one of the underling factors of success or failure of an organization is the power of its people (employees) and how well that power is focused towards meeting organization's goals and objectives. Robbins and Coulter (2007), noted that the quality of an organization is, to a large extent, merely the sum of the quality of the people it hires and keeps. However, it is not enough to hire and keep high skilled employees; they must be effectively involved for an organization to survive, grow and develop a competitive edge over its rivals. Employee's knowledge, skills, competencies, ideas and creative abilities may remain waste and their benefits are likely to elude the organization which does not fully involve their inputs in their work processes.

Today, the one thing that distinguishes an organization from the other is not necessarily their commodities, financial base, service establishment, process or even their secret element in the production process, but the quality of their employee outputs.

Joseph and Dai (2009) had rightly stated that things are made possible, and will continue to be made possible in organizations because of employees who work there to meet the needs of the high and rapid changing environment. Employing employees and involving them, especially those with the right human capital deposit are a prerequisite for organization's survival (obiekwe, 2012).

Employee involvement is seen as the process for empowering employees to participate in managerial decision making and improvement in activities appropriate to their levels in the organization Kumari and Kumari, (2014). In the review of Price (2004), employee involvement is a process involving participation, communication and decision making which leads to industrial democracy and employee motivation. He further explained that involvement of employees in an organization's operations motivate and enable them to effectively and efficiently contribute to an organization's growth and development.

It is also the considered views of Sofijanova and Zabijakin-Chatleska, (2013), that employee involvement is a process of participation and empowerment of employees in order to use their inputs towards achieving higher individual and organizational performance. It is also a process of empowering employees to participate in managerial decision-making and get them involved in improving the activities of the organization that are deemed appropriate to actualize themselves and the organization they work for (Apostoluo, 2000) while Marchington (1992) posited that employee involvement can be initiated by management to improve internal systems of communication with employees to enable them generate a sense of trust and commitment which could enhance their contributions towards organizational growth and productivity.

### MEASURES OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Different dimensions of employee involvement have been identified by various authors. Khattak et al (2013) identified empowerment, team orientation and capacity building and development as major elements of employee involvement. On their own, Sofijanova and Zabijakin-Chatleska (2013) identified employee participation, empowerment and self-managed teams as key dimensions of employee involvement. Although some of these key issues have been raised and stressed in this discourse, the elements of participation, empowerment and team work will further be highlighted here as follows:

**Employee participation:** This is a management initiative or process in which employees are given the opportunity to take part in decisions relating to their work or allowed to discuss issues that can influence managerial decisions. According to Wagnew (1994), employee participation is the process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. It is the direct involvement of employees in participation in decisions that relate to or affect their immediate work assignments, duties and responsibilities. Luthan (2005) succinctly noted that the level of employee participation, in this context, is determined by such factors as the person/group experience and the nature of the task to be accomplished. Some other major benefits of this shared value is that putting decision making power as close as possible to the point of delivery makes the implementation of decisions taken possible and successful. It equally ensures quality outputs, enhances industrial harmony, improves staff morale, and instills a sense of pride and self-esteem as well as motivating employees to

increase productivity in order to achieve their goals and objectives (**Rice, 1987; Parshiadis, 1987 and Ward and Pascarelli, 1994**).

**Empowerment:** As noted earlier, empowerment refers to the concept of allowing employees greater freedom, autonomy and self-control over their work within an organization. They assume greater responsibility and have the liberty of opinions and actions on the job based on the scale of delegation accorded to them. **Conger and Kanungo (1988)** see it as the procedure of giving or decentralizing executive powers to other members of an organization to ginger up their morale to perform creditably. When employees do not have authority to partake in decisions or act on issues concerning their work at their various levels, they feel disenchanted, become less satisfied, unmotivated and less committed to duty. They feel controlled and disillusioned until when top management delegates authority and responsibilities to them will they have a sense of ownership towards the organization and begin to initiate strategies and develop some abilities to manage themselves their duties, work units and become highly productive.

One major way of empowering employees is to delegate authorities to them and make them take decisions to act with passion. An employee who has responsibility without a corresponding authority can never be effective. Delegation is the managerial process by which authority is decentralized. It is a tool that gives employees a chance to think on their own, use their initiatives, learn how to act, and get fully involved in problem solving situations. It equips employees with firsthand experience on how to handle some unforeseen circumstances and situations at the work place. **Nwachukwu (2006)** stated that no organization can function effectively without delegation. Delegation of formal authority and responsibility to another person does not relieve one of the necessities of accounting for it. Empowerment, thus, makes employees feel as if they owned their own job, increase their commitment for duty, improve job satisfaction, creativity and interpersonal trust.

**Team work:** a team is seen as a group of people who work interdependently to solve problems or accomplish tasks for which they were set up to accomplish. Team work is one of the most important ways of employee involvement. It is seen by **Manz and Sims (1993)** as an effective way of reducing organizational hierarchy and increase employee productivity. Team work allows employees to take extra responsibilities for their tasks without direct supervisions, to have discretion over work method and time, to multi-skill and to recruit other team members who they think are diligent and resilient enough to perform optimally.

**Marchington and Wikinson (1998)** observed that managerial control is at its most subversive and effective level when employees take on responsibility for peer surveillance. Teams depend on the performance of individual members to do great work. Team performance also depends on individual member's effort and collective work output (**Earley, 1993**).

Effective team building must be based on the skills, abilities, and competencies of the individual team member as many organizations depend on team based approach to improve their performance (**Denison, 2000**). Different types of teams exist in organizations. **Bateman and Snell (2007)** identified them as work teams, project and development teams, parallel teams, management teams, transnational teams and visual teams. Other types of teams are committees, tasks force, action committee, project teams, quality circles, employee participation group, joint union-management consultative teams, supervisory councils, and autonomous or self-directed work teams. It is however important to note that for good team performance to occur, members of the team must be collectively trained and guided on the best way to approach their jobs. They should also be allowed to use their initiatives and ideas, as this can be helpful in bringing about much needed innovativeness, and in building highly effective organizations.

### **BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT**

Employee involvement generates much benefits to both organizations and employees at all levels of the organization. **Rice (1987)** contented that making decision-making power available and also close as possible to the point of delivery makes the implementation of those decisions possible and successful when employees are given responsibilities and activities to act upon or take decisions over certain issues, they see those decisions as their own and work ceaselessly to ensure their success. This enhances responsibility, increases authority, and makes job challenging and interesting to employees based on their abilities and the anticipated needs of the organization. It brings about high levels of employees motivation, creativity, productivity and commitment on the job. In the view of **Apostolou (2000)** employee involvement enhances decision-making capability, results to employee empowerment, creativity, commitment, job satisfaction, improved motivation and their overall intent to stay on the job much longer. In the words of **Judge and Gennard (2005)** employee involvement increases the job security of employees by offering them priority in training and retraining and enhances organization's reputation as a destination of choice for employees. It equally improves employee-management communication and understanding which result to greater harmony and reduction of conflicts in the organization. It helps to foster interpersonal trust and a shared commitment to duty. **Kumari and Kumari (2014)** are of the option that employees are most likely to choose a firm as a place for work if they consider the level of involvement given

them most satisfactory and highly rewarding. It enhances self-worth and brings about the opportunity to develop oneself in order to earn the rewards of a job well executed. When employees are given the opportunity to become part of a successful team, they gain the appropriate knowledge needed for much needed tasks and learn the requisite skills from others that possess such skills and knowledge and use them to become more effective and efficient on the job. In like manner, if employees are allowed to take some level of decisions or actions in regard to their job, they will learn from practice what works and what does not work and think out solutions to problems involving their assignment or tasks. This leads to creativity and innovativeness. It also leads to receptiveness to change; a balanced approach to how things ought to be for the sake of growth and productivity.

#### **CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEMENT INVOLVEMNT IN NIGERIA**

Although organizations are fast realizing the importance of involving employees in organizational processes, effective employee involvement faces great challenges in the Nigerian work places. The most prevailing of these challenges are:

- a) **Unwanted fear by managers:** Most managers in Nigeria are not enthusiastic about involving employees in business decisions for fear of exposing important business strategies to competitors. In addition, some managers also fear that employee's empowerment will force them to make open-ended promises which may lead them to unknown consequences as they may have abdicated the right of vetoing bad, irrelevant or counterproductive ideas. Some equally fear that involving employees reduces their positional authority and responsibility. Managers must, however, realize that they do not give up the responsibility to make the final decision on operational processes. Carrying employees along is one of the essential strategies for optimal performance and must not be avoided.
- b) **Lack of qualified manpower:** A major challenge of employee involvement in the Nigerian work place(s) is the problem of absence or lack of qualified manpower. Most often, a human resource manager may decide to employ people with less qualification in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies because there are no available candidates that applied for the vacant position. When this happens, managers find it very difficult to allow those less qualified and in competent employees to make certain decisions on the job. However, adequate training and retraining and development opportunities given to employees can serve as suitable solutions to these challenges and help the organization to tone up their degree of effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.
- c) **Cost of implementation:** Employee involvement can be very expensive for organizations to handle or manage. Since most organizations in Nigeria are small with little financial base, they shy away from employee involvement and development programmes in order to cut costs and remain competitive.
- d) **Lack of management support:** No employee involvement programme can succeed without the direct and whole hearted support of the organization's top management. In Nigeria, most managers still believe that it is not yet timely to involve employees in major organizational actions and processes. As a result they withdraw their support and allow such a programme to collapse. It is worthy to note that no employee involvement programme can succeed without the total support of top management of any organization. Top management of these organizations should lend their total support for organization-wide employee involvement programme(s) in order to encourage progress and synergy.
- e) **Socio-cultural environmental factor:** In the Nigeria society, managers are always viewed and seen as those who know everything that is to be done. This mentally, most often, becloud some managers of the rightsense of reasoning to a point even when they do know what to do, they find it difficult to assign tasks and delegate appropriate authority and responsibility to their subordinates who may be highly qualified and skilled, and in many cases, highly experienced to handle such tasks. Besides, the paternalistic management attitude which is prevalent in most Nigerian organizations tend to make managers believe that they alone are in the right position(s) to make decisions over every operation in the organization, and that their decisions are always in the best interest of the organization and all employees.



### IMPLICATIONS OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN WORK PLACE

Some of the highly considered implications to managers in this perspective are that:

- a) **Healthy culture gives rise to employee involvement:** Employee involvement is an outcome of a healthy culture which seeks to generate policies that will bring about effectiveness and efficiency. A culture that does not anticipate changes in the environment and which consequently does not give room for employees to be fully involved is very unhealthy, and is capable of attracting clogs on the wheels of an organization's motion, progress and effectiveness. Organizations should structure its beliefs systems, values and patterns to enable them to adopt and implement effective and efficient organization change processes that will help them remain competitive in the global market economy. Nigerian organizations should not and must not be exception to this reality principle.
- b) **Employee involvement effectiveness** depends on management support. The full support of top and middle management, and good development policies adopted by organizations help them to build effective employee involvement programs in their workplaces. Without the earnest support of management, it becomes difficult for employees to become actively involved in organizational processes, and procedures. In fact, it is the duty of management to not only introduce the scheme but to continue it with proper resources and monitoring.
- c) **Employee involvement** is not an end to itself but just a means. Nigerian managers must therefore realize that employee' involvement is never a bag of solutions to the entire organization systems. It is just to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Managers should therefore ensure that good organizational climate be put in place to encourage the production of quality products, cut costs, introduce reliable strategies to generate organizational well-being, effectiveness and ability to survive. Since it is not a magic cure for all organizational problems and challenges, managers should carefully weigh the gains and problems associated with its introduction before its implementation to minimize risks and losses while optimizing its gains.
- d) **Employee involvement demand managers'** conceptual and interpersonal skills. The ability to create the needed interpersonal trust towards the organization by employees depends on good people management ability and skills. Nigerian managers who lack the requisite conceptual and interpersonal skills will not want to involve employees due to the fear of being overshadowed and out placed.
- e) **Employee involvement is a motivator** for employees who want to remain committed to the organization. When employees are given the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting them they consider themselves important members of the organization thereby try their best to ensure that such decisions succeed. In doing this, they consciously or unconsciously become more and more committed to the actualization of the organization's goals and objectives for corporate optimization.
- f) **Employee involvement demands for policy flexibility** in order to accommodate employees in different operational processes. Since employees are very vital for organizational success and survival, managers should ensure that company's policies on decision making, delegation and the structure of authority and responsibility should be made fixable so that employees who carry out the real operations of the organization should be involved in setting targets and processes that will help actualize them. This will boost their morale, reduce interpersonal and organizational conflicts and generate industrial harmony, improve employee satisfaction and full commitment on the job.
- g) **Finally, employee involvement is a call for** proper training, retraining and development of employees. When this is achieved it can help to enhance corporate innovativeness and creativity which in turn makes the organization stand tall in the scheme of global economic environment.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

With the realities and associated effect of the high level of competition facing organizations in the global economy, it is imperative that organizations put in place appropriate measures that will enable them to protect

their going concern's craving for stability especially in our present chaotic business environment filled with uncertainties, challenges and the consequences of economic recession.

Employee involvement, thus, has become a reliable strategy to help organizations cope, survive, grow and become highly synergic in the global economic order. Employee involvement is not merely a practice, but a vital business strategy used by organizations to cope and survive. These days when organizational survival is counted in minutes and days, not weeks, months or years any longer, companies that cannot empower their employees to make decisions on some vital organizational life are indirectly planning for their failure and extinction.

Family-like organization based culture creates a proactive and productive environment in which every employee feels valued, accepted and belonged and where their skills, talents and knowledge are being fully utilized and in which organizational goals and objectives are consistently met. It also creates stimulating workplaces where staff members feel motivated and supported because they feel that they are actually part of the organization structure and system.

The absence of employee involvement in organizational processes could result in decrease in morale, employee turnover and job satisfaction which probably could lead to confrontation which in turn could adversely affect productivity. Employee involvement is very critical to the survival of every organization and therefore needs to be taken very seriously in our various organizations. The involvement of employees in decision-making allows them to feel as part of the organization and to ensure the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. In today's global environment where the only certainty is uncertainty, where the market continues to shift, products proliferate and technology becomes obsolete virtually overnight and where economic recession is becoming part of everyday life, it is only the involvement of employees with the requisite skills, ability, knowledge and competency that can guarantee the survival of any organization, especially when the employee sees himself as a real part of the organization. Allowing that to happen, of course, means that everyone has a clear sense of the organization's processes and mission and how their work fits in with that of others to execute processes and to achieve that mission which the organization is set out to accomplish.

In the light of the above it is therefore pertinent to recommend that Nigerian organizations should encourage employee involvement programmes in order to enhance optimal performance, growth and competitiveness within the country and in the global scene through the adoption of a family-like organization based culture. This is because employee involvement can supplement strong cultures to develop innovativeness within organizations. Organizations should provide timely training, retraining and development programmes for their employees to enable them gain the necessary competencies needed to properly carry out assigned tasks and responsibilities and take right decisions concerning their tasks, duties and responsibilities. Where employees lack the requisite skills, expertise and experience needed to translate organizational inputs into tangible outputs employee involvement will not yield the necessary and expected results. In addition, management should ensure that a favorable positive organizational climate that makes an employee see and accept the organization as a unique family is put in place. When an employee adopts a unique family attitude and culture towards the organization, he yields himself to the organization, becomes loyal to it and accepts the authority and responsibilities of its management over him and earnestly seeks out for the well-being and progress of the organization since growth, productivity profitability are the underlying sine qua non of every operating organization anywhere in the world.

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