Diversity Management and Employee Performance in Plastic Manufacturing Firms in Anambra State

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Abstract: *The seeming lack of management support in making deliberate attempts and policies to recognize and encourage diversity in the studied firms, which manifest in the lack of flexibility in work patterns necessitated this study. The broad objective of the study was to determine the type of relationship existing between diversity management and employee performance in Plastic manufacturing Firms in Anambra State. The study adopted a survey research design. The study population was 443 and complete enumeration was adopted. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship existing between flexible working pattern and employee retention in the selected plastic firms in Anambra State (r = .949 p-value < .05). In conclusion, the study stated that diversity management greatly influences the performance of the employees in the studied organization. It was thus recommended that there should be scheduling of work that will recognize individual differences, strength and weaknesses so as to enhance the employee retention capability of the studied organizations and that more consultations should be inculcated into scheduling of work by management of the studied organizations which will enhance employee retention of the organization.*
Keywords: Diversity Management, Employee Performance, Plastic Manufacturing Firms

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I.   Introduction

Every organization exists for a purpose; it could be to offer services or to produce or distribute goods. No matter how technologically advanced the organization is, it must need one or two people to supervise the efficacy of its performance, thus making people (employees) inevitable in all kinds of organization. Citing the importance of employees, Wambui, Wangombe, Muthura, Kamau and Jackson (2013) state that human capital is one of the most important factors for any organization since it forms the engine that drives that organization.

All organizations require people of varied skills, profession and discipline that will help in the actualization of its goals and objectives. It is pertinent therefore, for any organization to have in place the right people with the correct professional, academic and social skills for the various functions that have to be fulfilled. To have people with different perspective about life, different skills, knowledge and abilities, belief and culture, of different age, gender and qualification, then such group of people must be drawn from different parts or segments of the community. Wambui, et. al, (2013) opine that having such variegated workforce implies that individuals are likely to be drawn from different 'sources'- geographical, social cultural and political backgrounds. This makes diversity in the workplace an inevitable reality even when it is not officially recognized in the organizations.

No two individuals are the same in all ramifications, and since an organization hire different individuals, differences are bound to exist. This means that the age old misconception that diversity only applies to ethnic differences is misplaced, although it forms the biggest part of diversity in places of multicultural pool of human capital (Wambui, et. al, 2013). A lot of factors have given credence to the issue of diversity; one of such factor is globalization. It is the biggest factor that has given fillip to diversity on the international or global stage. People no longer live and work in an insular marketplace; they are now part of a worldwide economy with competition coming from nearly every continent. The modern workforce is far more varied in its composition than it has been previously, due to demographic factors, such as immigration and economic factors like globalization (Christian, Porter & Moffitt, 2006). For this reason, profit and non-profit organizations need diversity to become more creative and open to change (Valery, 2013).

Individual diversity comes in different ways and forms; it could be differences in age, gender and culture. Rašticová (2011) posits that in a diverse workplace, managers are dealing with individuals of different age, gender, nations, and cultures, individuals who graduated from different universities and have different

mental and physical skills. As a result of these dimensions of diversity, management is faced with a herculean task to manage it because it comes with its own fair share of disadvantages. Mathis and Jackson (2000) state that diversity has got its share of negative perspectives as well. It may elicit continuous tensions and conflicts in the organization if the necessary managerial expertise is not applied. "Failure to curtail diversity issues can result in the potential eruption of high turnover rates, communication lapses and conflicts of interpersonal nature" (Robbins, 2005). The management of the diverse workforce is therefore a crucial topic for a successful business case (Management Consultancy Tschare (MCT), 2010).

An effective diversity management program will promote recognition and respect for the individual differences found among a group of employees (Osmond, 2008). The idea of this management approach is to encourage employees to be comfortable with diversity in the workplace and develop an appreciation for differences in race, gender, background, sexual orientation or any other factors that may not be shared by everyone working in the same area of the company (Ike & Eze, 2013).

Workplace diversity management is the "voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various background into the formal and informal organizational structure through deliberate policies and programs" (Mor-Barak, 2011).Yang and Konrad (2011) aver that it is a set of formalized practices developed and implemented by organizations to help them manage diversity effectively. It help organizations to acknowledge the reality that people differ in many respects; visible or invisible, mainly age, gender, marital status, social status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, personality, ethnicity and culture (Kossek, Lobel & Brown, 2005).

II. Statement of the Problem

Managing diversity entails recognizing individual differences and making deliberate effort to harness such differences for the betterment of the organization. This however seem not to be the case in the studied plastic firms in Anambra State where they appear not to recognize individual differences and preference when scheduling work. There seem to be absence of work flexibility; their work schedule does not recognize individual differences and the need to vary these times for the employees. This is possibly the reason retention of valued employee is at its lowest in the focused firms. These issues propelled the need to explore diversity management and employee performance in the focused firms.

The broad objective of the study is to determine the type of relationship existing between diversity management and employee performance in Plastic Firms in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the type of relationship that exists between Flexible Working Pattern and Employee Retention in Plastic Firms in Anambra State. The conjectural statement put forward for testing is that there is a significant relationship existing between Flexible Working Pattern and Employee Retention in selected Plastic Firms in Anambra State.

2.1 Conceptual Review
Diversity Management

The concept of diversity management (DM) gained attention with globalisation and the need for more organisations to spread globally to reach customers across the world (Ongori & Agolla, 2007). It is a conscious effort made by organizations and their management to gain from diversity in the organization. Mor-Barak (2013) posit that DM is "the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs". Ongori and Agolla (2007) define DM as a systematic and planned commitment by the organisations to retain, reward and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees. Kreitner (2001) opines that it is the "process of planning, directing, organizing and applying all the comprehensive managerial attributes for developing an organizational environment, in which all diverse employees irrespective of their similarities and differences can actively and effectively contribute to the competitive advantage of a company or an organization".

DM helps in making the employees to not just understand and appreciate their differences but to also tolerate each other for the betterment of the organization. Satus (2003) states that it is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. It is a strategy aimed not so much for the traditionally disadvantaged groups in the labour market and in organizations such as: women, elderly people or people with disabilities but rather to all employees of the organization (Maj, 2015). The aim of managing diversity in the work place is for better employee and organizational performance. It is the ability of a manager to achieve success for an organization by making the best use of the similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, as well as in terms of personality, values, attitudes, perception and cognitive style (Ugwuzor, 2014). It is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can

reach their potential and maximize their contributions to an organization's strategic goals and objectives (Wambui, et. al, 2013).

Flexible Working Pattern

The fact that employees differ in various aspect like the time of the day one will be more productive, when an employee will be more relaxed and the time the employee would want to be at home or at work brings to the fore the importance of flexibility in work pattern in organizations. An employer may allow an employee to work a flexible working pattern to accommodate for example breast feeding mothers to take care of their babies as they work, or a Muslim to take a break in-between work for prayers especially on a Friday. All these are areas where flexibility is required to effectively manage diversity in the workplace.

Flexible working refers to those working arrangements that are significantly different from regular work patterns. It allows employees to choose his/her place or time of work by exploiting the technological advancements that makes it possible to connect to work virtually without having to commute to office and/or do so during hours of the day that suits a particular employee (Deshwal, 2015). It refers to programmes, policies and practices initiated by employers that allow workers at least some discretion in adjusting the length and/or scheduling of their working time to meet their preferences. In contrast, when working time is adjusted exclusively to meet business needs for flexibility, this is referred to as "variability", and the number of hours worked or schedules may have little to do with worker preferences (Golden, 1998; Costa, Sartori & Akerstedt, 2006; Lambert & Henly, 2010; McNamara, Bohle & Quinlan, 2011).Thus, flexibility in work might be summarized as the ability of employee to control his/her working time duration as well as location of work (remotely from office), this ability in scheduling work supposed to be offered by the employer (Deshwal, 2015). It is the ability of workers to adjust their daily or weekly working hours in a way that best fits their preferences and constraints. Such flexibility may range from varying workday start and end times (e.g. flexitime) to complete autonomy as to when work is performed (see Golden, Lambert, Henly & Wiens-Tuers, 2011). It implies having both access to and use without jeopardy of flexible scheduling practices (Budd & Mumford, 2006).

There are so many ways with which to accommodate flexibility in the working pattern of employees as suggested by extant literatures. Some of the options available to build in flexibility in the organization include For example flexitime, voluntary reduced hours, part-time and part-year arrangements, compressed workweeks and annualized hours (Lambert & Henly, 2010). These options available have been observed to positively correlate with good employee behaviour and retention. Konrad and Mangel (2000) found such options to be positively associated with individual productivity gains, as measured by sales per employee. The strongest productivity gains were found in companies that had a relatively high percentage of women and professional employees

Employee Performance

Employee performance is one of the most wildly studied construct in organizational studies. This is probably because it plays crucial role in determining the overall performance of the organization. It has generated a lot of different opinions as to what the definition of the construct is. However, it will be helpful to review the concept of performance separately so as to fully appreciate the concept of employee performance fully. Performance as it has to do with organizations is the organization's ability to accomplish its aims through the use of resources in a properly structured manner (Daft, 2000). Brudan (2010) opined that performance in management parlance is about personal performance or individual performance or the performance of the team or it can also be an organizations performance. In recent years, researchers have come to accept that performance is best defined as being a function of employees' workplace behaviours (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Hence, the need to look at performance from the competences, skill levels, commitment and innovativeness of the employees. All this employee performance indicators can be triggered through the way and manner diversity is handled in the organization.

Managing diverse workforce entails that there is already a diverse workforce to be managed. A diverse workforce ensures that ideas, training, perceptions are not the same as a result of the inherent difference. Ongori and Agolla (2007) state that managing a diverse workforce entails a minimization of cloning that is preventing the production of an exact copy in selection and promotion. This leads to a wider range of ideas and abilities, offering greater scope for innovation and competitive performance in the future therefore enriching an organizations human capital (Ongori & Agolla, 2007). A research conducted by Chartered Institute of Personnel And Development (2005) found that organizations that do not manage well and follow the right practices concerning diversity will incur more cost and experience poor performance.

Diversity brings with it heterogeneity that needs to be nurtured, cultivated and appreciated as means of increasing organizational effectiveness in this competitive world (Ongori & Agolla, 2007). Diversity in the workforce can be a competitive advantage because different viewpoints can facilitate unique and creative

approaches to problem-solving, thereby increasing creativity and innovation, which in turn leads to better organizational performance (Allen, Dawson, Wheatley & White, 2004). Appropriately managed diversity can improve organisational effectiveness. Organisations that develop experience in and reputations for managing diversity will likely attract and retain the best personnel (Carrel et al., 2000). Businesses must have a more diverse workforce in order to be more effectively understood and meet the needs of a rapidly growing base of minority consumers (Ongori & Agolla, 2007). According to a research done worldwide three million employees indicated that diversity brings about satisfaction and improved employee and organizational performance (Wambui, et. al, 2013).

Employee Retention

Employees in an organization with time start forming productive understanding with each other; they become more at home and willing to share ideas with each other. They begin to make friends and form social groups, and the more the group is retained, the better it will be for the organization because the employees will perform better. But when this group of friends or colleagues who understand themselves are separated probably as a result of turnover, this could destabilize the others and affect their performance. Thus, bringing to the fore the concept of employee retention and the role it plays in influencing performance of not just the organization, but also employees.

Employee retention is seen as the effort organizations put to ensure that employees, especially the skilled and knowledgeable are kept within the organization. These efforts could come in different ways, it could be in the way of designing jobs that will suit employees and make them to be able to choose from a list of options the best. It could also be in the form of effectively managing differences and similarities so that everybody will have a sense of belonging. Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004) posit that employee retention has been defined as "the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet business objectives". Employees are one of the most important asset in the disposal of organizations, thus retaining them is pertinent. This is because the more employees quit an organization, the more costly it is for the organization to replace them and the more it disrupts performance. Boxalland Purcell (2003) opine that employees contribute significantly to organizations in terms of abilities, skills and knowledge, which also help in gaining competitive advantage. Twum (2015) states that employee retention is a serious issue for organizations and managers because employees are the organizations' human resource base and a failure to retain them leads to turnover which costs organizations a lot of money.

Diversity management is one of the things organizations could use to retain quality employees. Aligning with this thought, Wambui, et. al, (2013) state that employees feel valued, rewarded and motivated while working in an organization that manages diversity well. The core objective of managing diversity emerged as a result of voluntary corporate initiatives to help in recruitment and retention of employees found in a diverse social identity groups (Konrad, Prasad & Pringle, 2006). Lack of proper management of diverse workforce can lead to increased absenteeism, creates tension and misunderstanding between employees, communication difficulties and this can lead to low productivity and higher turnover (Mor Barak, 2011). Skalsky and McCarthy (2009) state that researchers like Allen and Von Bergen have unearthed diversity benefits such as retention and attraction of qualified workers, problem solving improvement techniques and improvement in all areas of performance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Job Characteristic Theory credited to the work of Hackman and Oldham in 1976. This is the most widely used theory of job design. It provides a set of implementing principles for enriching jobs in organization settings to ensure employee satisfaction and commitment. The theory proposes five key features in every job that makes the job more enjoyable and satisfying. The features which the theory proposes that must be enshrined in jobs are autonomy, skill variety, task identity, task significance and feedback. Out of these features, the one that has the most relationship with this study is autonomy. Autonomy as proposed by this theory suggests a high degree of freedom and leeway in achieving the task requirement. The freedom or leeway here could come in various forms, one of which is flexibility in work pattern. With flexibility, employees have the freedom to pick which work pattern best suits him/her in other to be effective and efficient. Flexibility recognizes that all employees are not the same and so may not function maximally at the same time, thus making provision for them to choose which time of the day to function, how long to work at a stretch or the number of days to work in a day. When employees are given these kind of choices, it will influence their retention rate as they would want to stay in an organization that allows them to pick how and when to work. This is supported by Oldham and Hackman (2010) who posit that all these features of effective job design affect work related outcomes such as motivation, satisfaction, performance, absenteeism and turnover.

Empirical Review

Mba and Eze (2013) discussed the concept of diversity and management with a view to portraying the necessity of diversity in management of any organization in Nigeria. It was also aimed at elucidating the significance of different management styles and ethics in any particular organization or institution and getting organizations reassess their structures for a successful management through alternative approaches of thinking and actions. It discussed different types of styles and ethics involved in management and detailed the importance of diversity in management. The paper generally recommended that diversity should be utilized in the management of organizations to ensure that everyone was carried along irrespective of cultural background, ethnic group, tribe, race, or colour.

Ogbo, Kifordu and Ukpere (2014) carried out a study to determine whether workforce diversity has a positive influence on customer related issues; and to ascertain the effect of education as a tool on the management of workforce diversity to enhance high profitability index in Nigeria. A combination of secondary data, oral interview, and content analysis were adopted in data gathering. A spearman's rank correlation coefficient of 0.95 was obtained. Findings revealed that workforce diversity has a positive effect on customer's related issues in an organisation. In addition, it was found that education as a tool could be effectively utilized in managing workforce diversity to enhance high profitability.

Saltson and Özgür (2015) investigated the impact of workforce diversity on a business organization's non-financial performance, with moderation effect from leadership style and perceived organizational support (POS). Leadership style was measured by two dimensions such as charismatic and transformational leadership styles. Non-financial performance was also measured by two dimensions, internal and external performances. The research adopted a quantitative methodology to analyse three hypotheses using 120 respondents from three organizations (a bank, hospital and telecommunication company) in Nicosia, Cyprus. The results led to the support of the main hypothesis that workforce diversity has an impact on an organization's internal and external non-financial performance. The hypotheses that sought to measure the impact of POS and leadership style (charismatic and transformational leadership) as moderating variables on both aspects of non-financial performance measures were rejected. The study concluded that organizations can be encouraged to take workforce diversity seriously because of the potential benefits attached to its effective management.

Emiko and Eunmi (2009) carried out a study in Japan and Korea on diversity management and the effects on employees' organizational commitment. The research described the realities of diversity management practices in Japanese and Korean companies, and empirically examined how the practices influence employees' attitudes at the workplace. The results indicated that diversity management practices trigger positive effects on employees' organizational commitment, which was mediated by their perception of procedural justice.

Bushiri (2014) carried out a study that aimed to assess the impact of working environment on employees' performance at Institute of Finance Management in Dares Salaam Region. Descriptive research design was used. Simple random sampling technique was respectively used to select the respondents for the study. Respondents for the study were fifty (50) made up of twenty-five (25) senior staff and twenty-five (25) junior staff. Structured questionnaire were used for data collection. The study findings indicate that, organization working environment had an impact on members as far as respondents are concerned. The study also revealed that employees' will improve their performance if the problems identified during the research are tackled by the management. The problems are flexibility of working environment, work noise distraction, supervisor's interpersonal relationship with subordinates, presence of job aid, the use of performance feedback and improve of work incentives in the organization so that to motivate employees to perform their job. The study recommended that, the organization needs to have periodic meetings with employees to air their grievances to management and serve as a motivating factor to the employees. Management should find ways and means of communicating their goals and strategies to their employees in order to achieve what the organization is in business for, its mission and vision.

Deshwal (2015) did a study on the impact of flexible working arrangements in the Multinational Companies of Delhi, India. The study employed an Exploratory Research design.Employees from various MNCs of Delhi constitute the universe and the sample design of the study was non-probability (convenience) sampling and the number of respondents were 300. Questionnaire and interview method were used in eliciting for information. Descriptive statistics was used in analysing the data so collected. It was therefore recommended that all the options in respect of FWA are required to be implemented that employees should be properly educated regarding FWA as to who can avail, under what circumstances, the authority who can give permission etc., to make most of this policy.

III.   Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design because of the way the study is structured and how data was elicited for the study. Nworgu (2006) posits that survey designs are designs in which a group of people or

items are studied through collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. In this case, ten Plastic firms were selected in Anambra State considered to be adequate representation of the population were studied.

The population of the study is made up of four hundred and forty three (443) employees of different categories in the ten (10) selected Plastic firms in Anambra State. A complete enumeration was adopted, hence there was no sample size. The study utilized two major sources; primary source which is questionnaire and secondary source which include journal publications, article, and company records on personnel and some text books. The instrument used for data collection was validated using face and content measure. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Crombach Alpha reliability. A pilot study was conducted using 44 copies of the questionnaire representing 10% of the population size of the study. An 83% (.831) consistency level was obtained from the result. A total of 378 copies of questionnaire were analysed out of the 443 distributed and 404 collected. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed in data analysis using 5% level of significance to test the hypothesis of the study.

IV. Presentation Of Result
Table 1: Responses on Flexibility and Employee Retention

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)	Mean
	Flexible Work Pattern						
1	We have different work schedules in my organization according to our individual differences.	35	25	222	65	31	2.93
2	I am free to choose when to work for better performance in my organization.	-	9	138	231	-	2.62
3	Our differences are taken note of when scheduling works in my firm.	-	19	161	170	28	2.44
4	There are days I can go home early to attend to family issues.	9	44	187	129	9	2.93
5	We are asked to note how best to make our work pattern to suit our individual differences.	-	-	190	188	-	2.52
6	Our work schedule does not vary according to our choice.	153	179	46	-	-	4.20
7	How best we would want to schedule our work is not considered while scheduling work.	200	156	22	-	-	4.25
	Employee Retention						
8	I will stay longer in my firm if the work schedule favours me.	111	178	42	-	47	3.58
9	I will be encouraged not to leave my organization if my needs are recognized by my work schedule.	81	210	17	62	8	3.28
10	If allowed to choose when to work, I will appreciate it.	198	111	62	-	7	4.08
11	I will not be in a hurry to leave if the work pattern in my firm suits me.	201	98	19	44	16	3.44
12	With flexibility in work pattern, I will stay long in my organization.	93	167	78	10	30	3.15
13	Staying longer in my organization has nothing to do with my work schedule.	56	95	121	99	7	3.09
14	I am comfortable with the way works are scheduled in my firm.	21	89	140	122	6	2.99

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Flexible Working Pattern and Employee Retention
Correlations

		FLEXWP	EMPRET
FLEXWP	Pearson Correlation	1	.969[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	378	378
EMPRET	Pearson Correlation	.969[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	378	378

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis on flexible working pattern and employee retention in the selected plastic firms in Anambra State. The result indicates that a positive relationship exists between the variables and that the relationship is statistically significant as shown by the p-value which is lesser than the 5% level of significance used.

Discussion of Findings

From the test of hypothesis whose objective was to examine the type of relationship that exists between flexible working pattern and employee retention in the selected Plastic Firms in Anambra State, it was revealed that there is a significant positive relationship existing between flexible working pattern and employee retention in the selected Plastic Firms in Anambra State. This result signifies that flexible work pattern increase employee retention. This is because the result observed is a direct relationship. The more job patterns are variegated, the more its potential to suit employees need according to their differences and the more employees will cherish it and elect to remain with the organization. This result aligns with that of Deshwal (2015) who carried out a study on the impact of flexible working arrangements in the Multinational Companies of Delhi, India. From the analysis carried out, it was revealed that the employees give due weight age to flexi work arrangements, that employees feel that Flexible Work Arrangement helps them to balance work and life, reduce stress, have longer tenure in the organization and be more committed towards the organization. Here, the result showed that it makes the employee to have longer tenure in the organization which is the same thing as boasting employee retention. Similarly, the study of Emiko and Eunmi (2009) in Japan and Korea on diversity management and the effects on employees' organizational commitment also corroborate the findings of this study. From their study, it was revealed that diversity management practices trigger positive effects on employees' organizational commitment, which was mediated by their perception of procedural justice. Diversity management practice here could be in the area of arranging the work patterns to be flexible enough to accommodate individual differences which will improve employee commitment and invariably elongate their tenure or improve retention. Also aligning with the result of the present study is that of Bushiri (2014) that carried out a study that aimed to assess the impact of working environment on employees' performance at Institute of Finance Management in Dares Salaam Region. The study's findings indicate that, organization working environment had an impact on members as far as respondents are concerned. The study also revealed that employees' will improve their performance if the problems identified during the research which include flexibility of working environment, work noise distraction, supervisor's interpersonal relationship with subordinates, presence of job aid, the use of performance feedback and improve of work incentives in the organization are tackled by the management. The issue of flexibility in the working environment could be tackled by initiating a policy that inculcates the practices of flexible work pattern that recognizes employee differences.

V.   Conclusion

The study concludes that diversity management greatly influenced the performance of the employees in the studied organizations. This is hinged on the fact that from the analysis carried out, the variables used in decomposing diversity management and employee performance had a positive relationship. Moreover, flexible working pattern affected employee retention in selected Plastic Firms in Anambra State.

The study therefore recommends that there should be scheduling of work that will recognize individual differences, strength and weaknesses so as to enhance the employee retention capability of the studied organizations. More consultations should also be inculcated into scheduling of work by the firms' management.

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