

Management Challenges of Nigerian Workplaces: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract: The optimal realization of increased organizational productivity is a vital business objective that requires the presence of highly skilled and experienced management team saddled with responsibilities of planning, organizing, directing and coordinating organizations' resources in a manner that ensures that employees put in needed efforts to help management achieve predetermined objectives amidst various challenges facing such organizations in their operating business environments. This study examines the management challenges of Nigerian workplaces with focus on task, behavioral, situational, and structural and process challenges, and their implications to organizational productivity. To effectively overcome these challenges, management in Nigeria should develop their conceptual skills as well as train, retrain and develop the available human resources in order to promote innovativeness and competencies that could lead to increased productivity. In addition, management of organizations in Nigeria should constantly scan their business environments in order to take advantage of available opportunities and minimize the threats in the environment so as to promote organizational productivity and survival.

Keyword: Management, environmental challenges, Nigerian workplaces, Organizational productivity, survival, business improvement.

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I. Introduction

Across the globe, it is now obvious that of the factors that are necessary for efficient and effective operations of an organization, none is to be stressed more than management. Efficient management of an organization, in the main, depends on the quality, knowledge and other abilities of leadership present in the organization. And Nigerian organizations are not exceptions. Lamentably, the industrial sector, which in other countries, has served as the engine block of the economy, appears to have disappointed the Nigerian nation as it has failed to contribute meaningfully towards economic and social development of the country. Factors responsible for this have been traced to inefficient and incompetent management, as management holds the key that unlocks the forces of economic and social development in any modern economy (Nwachukwu, 2006).

Today's business environment is one that is constantly experiencing high rate of changes, which are, at large unpredictable, and whose impact is not always known in advance. Managing in such environment poses many challenges to management all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception. Many management challenges are universal, but may differ in size. Being a manager in today's Nigerian high-place changing business environments and workplaces provides many challenges which have been occasioned, in part, by unfavorable factors, which are most often beyond the immediate control of these organizations' management. It becomes a daunting task for management to ensure that they achieve organization's mission, vision and strategic objectives. Nwachukwu (2000) contend that, of all factors necessary for economic take-off, none is to be stressed more often than management. In other words, management holds the key for the success or failure of any organization be it profit making or not-for profit making organization.

The need for qualified and experienced managers in Nigeria can hardly be overemphasized due to enormous challenges they are facing in their various organizations today. Management not only face the serious task of ensuring that their organizations survive, they also face the challenges of stakeholders' expectations which often vary and sometimes conflicting, as well as the unpredictable operating environments which continue to be more unstable, complex and changing more rapidly with high wave of globalization and intense competitions. Manager's ability to cope with these changes and challenges are therefore being put to serious question. The skepticism is not only about the managers' competency, but also about their personality, and commitment towards the organizations they serve.

Victor, Nzor, Abolo&Emenike (2012) stated that the peculiarity of Nigeria's work environment demands some peculiar considerations with a view to proffering some peculiar assertions. They noted that bearing in mind the ever increasing challenges faced by managers that manage in an environment like Nigeria, a

major challenge becomes how to function well as a manager with such tasking environment which seems outside the reach of control of managers. Managing at such moment becomes a daunting challenge. This is in line with the position of Nwachukwu (2006) when he commented on the glaring capital wastage in Nigeria which shows the challenge faced by managers in Nigeria:

“Nigerian industrial landscape is littered with debris of dead industries and that of those struggling to death by the harsh economic environment that prevails in the country. There is pronounced government indiscipline, corruption, financial recklessness, fragile social and productive base and lack of proper planning traceable to the absence of visionary leadership”.

The performance of managers in Nigerian institutions has not met the high standard expected of them, regardless of what performance measures are applied; be it key business performance indicator (profitability, growth, return on investment, innovation, survival, etc), customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, or compliance with the society’s expectation. In fact, the challenges of global competition, poor and ineffective leadership and environmental factors are some of the problems that managers of organizations must contend with in Nigeria if they must be effective and efficient.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to highlight management challenges related to the internal organization capacity, leadership capacity and business environment, under the task, behavioral, situational, structural and process challenges with a view to preferring suitable recommendations that will minimize the negative impact of these challenges and help management succeed in their quest to achieve increased organizational productivity in their workplaces.

Concept of Management/Managing

Every human endeavor requires proper management for its proper functioning. All types of organization require good management to function effectively and for it to achieve its missions, aims, purposes, and objectives as may be specified by its article of incorporation. Managing permeates all organizations and takes place when managers coordinate people to work together for the achievement of predetermined goals and objectives. It involves coordinating people to ensure that the aims and objectives of an organization are realized in the most effective and efficient manner (Nwachukwu 2006). It is the effective performance of the established functions of management. Managing thus requires special skills, roles and competencies in order to get people put on their best at work.

Management is equally defined as a process of getting things done by using some other people to achieve a set objective. It refers to the process by which managers create, direct, maintain and operate purposive organizations through systematic coordinated, cooperative human effort (Jaja&Zeb-Obipi, 2005). Management also means “getting things done through and with people and the process of organizing and employing both human and material resources to accomplish some predetermined objectives” (Baridam, 2002; and 1995:44). It also entails the supervising, controlling and coordinating of all managerial activities to attain optimum results with organizational resources (Nwachukwu 2006: 3; Robbin& Coulter, 2007). According to Koontz and Wehrlich (2006) management is defined as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals working together in groups can efficiently accomplish selected aims and objectives. It is the process of allocating an organization’s inputs (human and economic resources) by planning, organizing, directing, and controlling for the purpose of producing outputs (goods and services) desired by its customers so that the organization’s objectives are accomplished. In this process, work is performed with and through the organization’s personnel in an ever-changing business environment (Thierauf et al 1977, in Nwibere et al, 2013). As Koontz (1997:11) aptly put it, without management, there is no institution and institutional activities. It is the specific organ of modern institution that requires the art or science of management. It is the organ of an organization whose performance results to the survival of the institution. Management therefore can be seen as the agent of resource integration in order to achieve organizational objectives. The Success or failure of an organization therefore is a function of the quality of the management in such an organization.

Effectively, management of an organization requires the presence of experienced and competent individuals or personnel who will be responsible for policy making and directing the organization to achieve expected end results. In other words, it requires hierarchies of individuals who play a direct and major role in the performance of the basic managerial functions, engage in economic decision making and the coordination of the organization’s productive functions. The manager has the task of creating a true whole that is larger than the sum of its parts, a productive entity that turns out more than the sum of the resources put into it. This is what Nwaeke (2005) calls the synergic process. Nwibere, Emecheta and Chikwe (2013) stated in a clear term that every organization that wants to succeed needs managers that are experienced and knowledgeable to pilot the affairs of such an organization. And this involves effective and efficient managerial processes or systems.

Roles of Management/Managers

Managers are individuals who sometimes have the unenviable task of making decisions, solving difficult problems, setting goals, planning strategies, and rallying the workforce. A manager's role in an organization is very crucial and most at times very indispensable. The success of a manager depends upon his ability in utilizing organizational resources for achieving the pre-determined goals and objectives. Management roles are position expectations of management, and these consist of all the activities a manager carries out in the performance of his tasks in the workplace. Basically, the role of managers is to steer their organizations towards goal accomplishment. Robbins and Coulter (2007) see it as the specific categories of managerial behavior at work. According to Mintzberg (1973), managers perform ten different but interrelated roles grouped into three: namely interpersonal roles (figure head, leader, and liaison), informational roles (monitor, disseminator and spokesperson), and decisional roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator). However, the emphasis that managers give to the various roles seems to change with organizational level. Nwibere et al (2013) state that Fayol's definition of management roles and actions are distinguished between five elements (i) Prevoyance (forecast and plan) (ii) to organize (iii) to command (iv) to coordinate (v) to control. The roles of management are therefore vital for every organization that has the "going concern's" craving objective.

Management challenges in the Nigeria workplace

Managers face identical challenges universally but the challenges varies from one country to another. Managing organizations today can be very tasking especially where fast paced competitions and everyday changes make accurate business forecasts nearly impossible. Managers have to deal with a variety of personalities and in many times have to do with limited resources, as well as motivating the workers in face of uncertainty and chaos to perform optimally. The competitive pressures faced by the modern day organization for survival and success will continue to create room for future demand for organizational excellence and increased productivity, thereby creating more challenges for management all over the world. Though management faces different challenges all over the world, managers in Nigerian workplaces are faced with even greater challenges that require serious determination for managers to continue to work the next day, and for them to succeed they require incredible sensitivity and understanding of the general business environments of their organizations. These challenges are here summarized as the task, situational, behavioral, process and structural challenges of their work places.

Situational Challenges in Nigeria workplace.

Most often, the environment in which businesses operate creates so many challenges often beyond the control of the managers. Etuk(1982) observed that the success or failure of any business depends significantly on the knowledge and understanding of the business environment. This is because no manager can initiate a successful business strategy without taking the economic, political, social, and technological environments into consideration. Today, the massive trade liberalization brought about by globalization has created more challenges for managers in Nigeria. Globalization has intensified interdependence and competition between economies in the world market. Thus, domestic economies and business developments are not determined entirely by a country's policies or local market conditions but by forces often beyond the control of the managers. Organizations in Nigeria are at a very big comparative disadvantage when compared with their competitors which are mostly multinational firms, with the state of art production facilities, improved technologies, and easy access to investment funds. Managers in Nigeria have to compete for foreign sources of supply of raw materials and other inputs including technology with global companies which have better access to information and are better equipped technologically to negotiate more favorable terms of supply (production). Another challenge here is one posted by information communication technology. With much advances in information communication technology, market information are now at the fingertips of competitors and consumers who are now more empowered to access goods and services from any source from across the globe. Moreover, given the wide range of products and services that are now available in our global markets, customers now demand better quality products than the local companies have hitherto been able to provide and at lower prices than they can afford to exchange given their high costs of production. This can be a serious headache to any manager given that no manager has absolute control of factors of production outside his organization's domain.

Due to globalization, managers now face business challenges which require the organization to build new capacities. There are now, rising concerns for processes and competencies and more emphasizes on customer/client satisfaction. Managers are also faced with the challenges of ensuring that they utilize what information technology offers and make them to be a veritable productive part of their work setting and tools (Anyim et al 2011). Additionally, management faces the challenge of improving customer services without which they cannot be optimally competitive globally. Today, due to hyper inflated foreign and local

competitions, organizations are restructuring themselves to ensure that they satisfy customers through improving customer service. But this is not always easy. In addition, management faces a challenge of insuring that employees do what it takes to please customers. Robbins et al (2009) observed that managers are held directly responsible for customer service. According to Workman & Bommer (2004), many an organization has failed because its employees failed to please customers. Managers then face the uttermost challenge of creating an organization culture in which employees are friendly and easily accessible, knowledgeable, prompt in response to customers need and willing to do what is necessary to keep them. The political environment also poses some challenges to management in Nigeria. Nigeria faces a high level of uncertainty about her political situations, especially during periods of transition, from one regime to another. With the political rowdiness in place, old investors are now unwilling to continue to invest and are taking their portfolios to other countries with a more predictable political atmosphere. The situation is made worse by the high level of insecurity in various zones of the country. For instance, the activities of Boko Haram terrorists and Herdsmen's killing and abduction activities in the North Eastern part of the country and the different/several militant groups in the South-Southern part of Nigeria. In fact, the level of challenges insecurity poses for managing in Nigeria is enormous. Victor et al (2012) contend that most working environments today are so hostile that managing becomes almost impossible where bomb blasts are the order of the day., thereby making organizations spend above the required procedure for specific, tasking and less productive activities owing to an insecure working environment. Closely associated to this is the challenge of improving ethical behaviors within an organization. Nwachukwu (2006) sees ethics as the "science of conduct", which involves learning what is right and doing the right thing. He enumerated several factors that determine ethical behaviors in the work place; as socially accepted ethics, ethical climate in the company, formal company policy or late thereof, one's personal financial needs. Thus, it is a serious challenge to manage employees who are unethical and see nothing wrong with their own behaviors. In other words, managers are realizing very fast that in making decisions, they select from alternatives that are neither wholly right nor wrong. In such cases, managers are in a dilemma of deciding what is right or wrong in employees' actions.

Robbins et al (2009), however, have listed out some of the ways managers can combat this challenge as writing and distributing code of ethics to guide employees through ethical dilemma, offering of seminars, workshops and other training programs aimed at improving ethical behaviors, provision of in-house advisers and provision of protective mechanism to employees who reveal internal unethical practices.

Structural Challenges of Management

Successful managing in today's workplace in Nigeria requires an incredible sensitivity and understanding. Managers need to know how their decisions and actions are viewed by people within and outside their organizations. They face the challenge of adjusting their leadership styles and management practices/approaches to accommodate the views of onlookers, while still being as efficient and effective as possible in achieving the organization's goals and objectives. Perhaps the most profound structural challenge is the challenge of leadership of an organization. This consists of the personal problems of the manager himself and that of his subordinates. Nwachukwu (2007), states that many of the managers are highly unqualified and that:

"Because many of the managers are not trained and are lacking in experience, they are neither motivated nor do they know what it takes to motivate the employees. Instead some make excuses for inefficient workers and apologies when they have to demand a fair day's output for the money the employee receives"

Besides, a close look on how appointments are made into leadership positions is a sure guarantee of failure for organizations in Nigeria. Instead of making appointments or granting promotions on merit, experience, qualification and knowledge of the job required, the situation in Nigeria is such that celebrates mediocrity under the guise of indigenes or federal quota system., where people are appointed to managerial positions based on political factors., nepotism (*IM*: man-know-man factor) or based on family relationships. The manager, due to lack of knowledge, experience or qualification fails to anticipate changes and exploit opportunities in the business environment. Robbins and Coulter (2000) have stated that while we recognize that there are factors that influence the performance of managers in their organizations, it is equally true that good managers anticipate change, exploit opportunities, correct poor performance and lead their organizations towards their objectives., which may be changed if necessary.

Whenever there is a questionable and incompetent leadership, one can be sure that the organization suffers lots of setback. Closely related to the issue of experience of the manager is the leadership style of the manager. Most managers still adopt the authoritarian leadership style in trying to persuade employees to be more productive. This has, however, created the eye service syndrome and a counter productive effect as managers want compliance from subordinates and never give them room to utilize their creativity, nor take part in decision making that affects them and their work operations, thereby creating loss of commitment and low morale which ultimately results in lower organization productivity. While it is not the intension of this paper to

discuss the various leadership styles and their implications to managerial effectiveness, the challenge of appropriate leadership style is to identify which style that is more effective in any given situation. However, it seems generally true that whatever style that is adopted, there is the need to have a “good” balance between task oriented management and people oriented management style. The interaction among the three variables, leader/subordinate relations, structure of the job and the leader authority is critical for managerial success in organizations. Therefore, the ability to manage or coordinate subordinates is a challenge that cannot be easily set aside by a wave of the hand. This is so because a leader will not succeed unless he/she understands the factors which motivate his/her subordinates (Steers et al: 646). This opinion was supported by Baridam and Nwibere (2008:10) when they stated that managers may even discover that by creating a positive work environment for employees, they have increased their own job satisfaction as well.

Behavioral Challenges (Human Relations Challenges) of Management

The new emphasis on employees in the form of human relations is to re-emphasize that success in organizations depends, in the main, on an organization’s ability to manage human resources within her disposal. The goals of organizational development are anchored on the maximum possible utilization of human beings in the productive activities and fullest possible development of skills, abilities, knowledge and capabilities of the labor force (Hemison 1975). The ability to develop and maintain the human resources component of an organization has come to be a major challenge facing managers in the Nigerian workplaces today. No nation can achieve swift industrialization unless there is proper utilization of skilled, highly skilled and well trained manpower. Obiekwe (2012) contends that the right utilization and right appropriation of employees by an organization helps to increase productivity, profitability and the long term survival of an organization at all corporate levels. But when the available workforce lacks the competent human capital-skills, knowledge, competence, experience etc, and the manager is faced with a problem of manpower mix and this becomes a challenge for efficient and effective operations of the said organization. Closely allied to this is the challenge associated with subordinates. Nwachukwu (2002) stated that among the major problems of managers in Nigeria is the scarcity of qualified manpower. Even when the manager is highly experienced with all round knowledge of the factors that will bring about success of a business, the manager may still find it difficult to manage when the qualified personnel to carry out the task are not available or are insufficient. Employees are in organizations not only to help organizations to achieve their goals and objectives but also to achieve their own personal goals or aims. When this happens, there is a state of congruence in the organization. But the ability of an employee to achieve goal congruence lies in his manager’s ability to know what motivates and satisfies him or help him by positioning the employees to achieve their personal goals, while helping the organization achieve hers. The ability to successfully do this is a challenge that every manager has to face. Employees have different aspirations, needs, desires as well as other things they want to achieve. The manager then faces the challenge on how to manage organizational needs with employees’ needs as well as provide appropriate working conditions and environment, equity and opportunity for employees to take part in certain decision making processes as well and recognizing the effort and activities of every employee working with the organization. In addition, the challenge of how to design the job is what every manager must contend with. Should the job be designed to suit the man, or the man made to fit the job? Nwachukwu(2002) opined that if a job is designed to suit the job holder, taking into account his experience, age, abilities, etc when he retires, promoted or withdraws a new problem occurs as redesigning of the job to suit another person that will occupy it may affect others. The inability to provide a favorable work environment for subordinate’s motivation is another major reason managers fail. An unmotivated employee will not commit himself to the organization or work goal. Krautz (1990) noted that “Leadership and employee motivation are closely related”. Most importantly, adapting to people who are different and coordinating the work efforts of diverse organizational members is a big challenge confronting management in every organization. Today’s organizations are characterized by workforce diversity- a workforce that is heterogeneous in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age and other characteristics that reflect major individual differences. Whereas globalization focuses on differences between people from different countries, workforce diversity addresses differences among people within every given country (Robbins, Judge and Sanghi, 2009:19). Baridam and Nwibere (2008: 48) observed that diversity of material resources and people of different capabilities, resources and perspectives who converge at a work place along with distinctive, performance aspirations and style will result to a lot of challenges. Managing these diversities in Nigeria is a major challenge facing managers in different Nigerian organizations as well. Managers have to accommodate a workforce that is very diverse in terms of socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic compositions. Baridam and Nwibere (2008) argued that management needs to shift their philosophy from treating everyone alike, to recognizing individual differences of employees and responding to those differences in ways that can ensure employees attraction, retention and greater productivity, while at the same time, not discriminating against them. Robbins and Coulter (2007: 149) noted that diversity, if well managed by a manager, can be an asset as it brings solving skills to a company and additionally helps organization better understand a diverse customer base. It can

also lead to increased creativity and innovation as well as improve decision making by providing different viewpoints on organizational problems (Baridam and Nwibere, 2008, Robbins and Coulter, 2007 and Robbins et al 2009, Jayne and Dipboye, 2004). However, lack of common view point usually means more time is spent discussing an issue. Seeking out diverse opinions can also make the decision making process more complex, confusing and ambiguous. When diversity is not managed properly, there can be some potentials for high turnover, more difficult communication gaps and more inter personal conflicts (Smith, 2003). And with multiple view points, it becomes difficult to reach a single agreement or to agree on specific actions affecting organizations' daily activities. Communication may also be a problem particularly if a manager does not understand or speak the language of the country of business location and operation and vice versa. Harnessing the challenges of diversity thus becomes a challenge for managers in Nigeria especially with the global integration of today's workforce.

Task and Process Challenges of Management

A major challenge facing managers in Nigeria is the challenge of improving customer service as well as improving quality and productivity. Organizations around the world have added capacity building in response to increase in demand of organizational outputs. With almost free access to information, customers now are able to negotiate better deals for quality goods and services at cheaper prices. Excess capacity must therefore translate into increased competition in other for organizations to be able to dispose their products. Increase in global competition now is posing a challenge to managers as managers are forced to reduce costs and at the same time, improve their organization's productivity and the quality of the products and services they offer. Robbins et al (2009) maintained that to ensure that organizations improve quality and the productivity of their products and services, managers are faced with challenges of implementing programs such as quality management, quality cycles, and process re-engineering programs that require extensive employee involvement. However, the presence of qualified and skilled manpower are lacking in most Nigerian organizations for these processes to be adopted. This poses a challenge to managers who find it difficult to transform organizations resources (human and materials) into tangible outputs. Management also faces the challenge associated with span of control problem. Span of control relates with the number of subordinates that a manager can effectively supervise. There is a strong relationship between span of control and effective supervision, communication, motivation, productivity and job satisfaction. Creating an ideal span of 5 to 10 persons has the advantage of prompt identification of inefficient workers and offering of adequate remedial measures, close supervision, recognition of each employee and offering of on the spot solution or correction to identified problems. The challenge thus becomes the ability of the manager to effectively supervise/control all the employees placed under him, whether it is a small or large span. Serious problems can arise when a manager finds it difficult to control the number of subordinates he/she is supposed to oversee.

Lack of Skills and personal competencies of the manager: The effectiveness of a manager in carrying out his roles and responsibilities depends mainly on the ability and individual personality of the manager. Managers that lack the basic management skills cannot succeed in taking any organization to its desired destiny. Managers therefore need a variety of skills which constitute specific abilities, and aptitude to manage effectively (Nwibere *et al* 2013). When these skills, abilities and aptitudes are lacking, managing becomes a serious challenge for a manager himself. A manager that is not trained or qualified or has the basic skills always displays actions and will be incapable to manage effectively and this will be detrimental to productivity. More harm has been done to the Nigerian economy and organizations in the hands of inexperienced and poorly initiated managers than by any other factor. Managers know what it takes to motivate employees (Baridam and Nwibere, 2008: 46). A manager who does not know his job, does not delegate responsibility, even when he does, withholds the authority to carry out the responsibility, is a threat to his organization and will face challenges of motivating the employees to give their best in an effort to increase productivity. Lack of technical, interpersonal and conceptual skills resulting from the background of the manager is another major challenge of managers in Nigeria. A manager without these skills finds it difficult to create innovative ideas, think analytically and interpret and apply abstract theories. The possession of these necessary skills helps managers to succeed in their pursuit of the company's overall objectives and strategy, interaction among different parts of the organization, and the application of specific roles of the business within the environment. Nwachukwu (2000) noted that, Managers in Nigeria are also faced with challenges arising from organization policies and management decisions. These challenges are : Failure of the company to provide needed training for an employee to perform his tasks, the company's time implications in providing the training, the inability of a company to implement decisions already taken or agreed upon, placement of employees on the right task, placement error, and challenges posed by the span of control etc. Technological change is another challenge faced by managers in the Nigerian work place. Victor *et al* (2012) defined technological change as the environment that allows the creating of new ideas that transform into creative and innovative products and

services which impact on the technological advancement within a given system. Because the future is uncertain and may adversely affect employee's competencies, and coping abilities, employees generally tend to resist change unless connected with stronger reasons to do so. To introduce change becomes a challenge for managers in Nigeria as the employees may resist it if they think that the change will not favor them. Baridam and Nwibere (2008) stated that introducing change in Nigerian organizations is always an arduous task as organizations are short of change masters who have the ability to design change and its implementation. Because of these, many managers in the Nigerian work environment have not been able to compete with their foreign competitors as they continue to adopt outdated technological production procedures, methods, equipments, machineries and processes.

II. Conclusion/Recommendation

Managing is not an easy task in Nigeria especially when one considers the mounting of challenges facing management of employees in the Nigerian workplace. These challenges derive from globalization, employee empowerment and motivation, improving quality and productivity, managing workforce diversity, improving ethical behavior and personal problems of the manager himself among other. This shows that organizations will no longer be shaped by management hierarchy, but by societal changes, globalization and technological developments. These forces however, cannot be accurately predicted. The full awareness and appreciation of these problems have to be an ongoing challenge for any management of organizations especially those in Nigeria in order for them to survive in years ahead. The key challenge for management is to innovate and transform their businesses to be adaptable to these forces whilst maintaining the integrity of the business as usual "mentality". It is therefore recommended that the management of organizations in Nigeria should ensure that they engage in developmental programs to acquire the basic and conceptual skills that will help them develop and acquire relevant human capital to effectively manage and allocate the available resources of their organizations to their various activities. Managers in Nigeria should engage in constant scanning of the operating environments to enable them to dictate threats and opportunities around them as they abreast themselves with events in the global workplace to strategize on how to make their organizations more productive and achieve organizational goals and objectives through inspired, motivated and well developed workforce. In addition, managers should also create a positive work climate that will encourage employees to develop organizational family like attitude that will make them commit themselves to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, become highly optimal and stable in the highly competitive Nigerian and global business environments.

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