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IN NIGERIA

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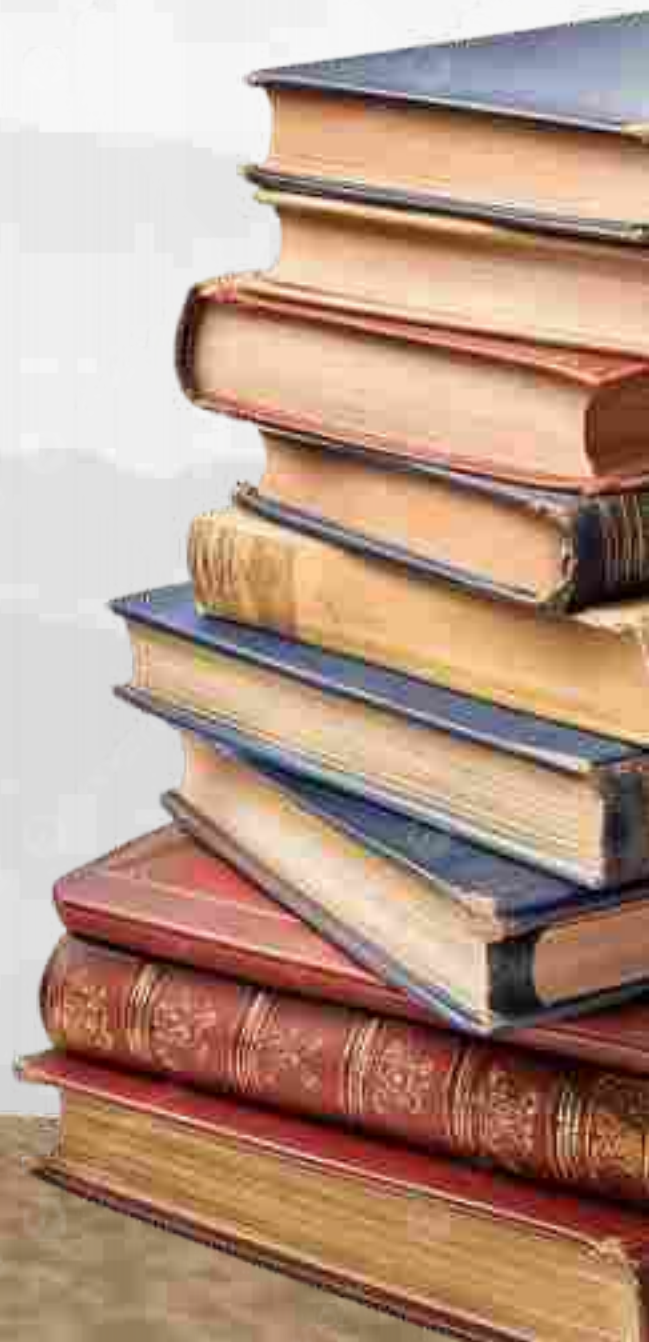
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CHAPTER SEVEN

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA AND HUMAN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

By

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines human relations management strategies in Nigerian tertiary institutions, highlighting their roles in fostering institutional stability, academic excellence, and national development. Drawing on policy documents (e.g. National Policy on Education, 2013) and empirical studies from Nigerian universities and colleges, the chapter defines key concepts such as human relations management, tertiary education, and human relations management strategies. It identifies effective practices—including open communication, participatory decision-making, conflict resolution and mediation, recognition and motivation, teamwork and capacity building, welfare support, and fairness—that promote positive human relations among administrators, academic and non-academic staff, and students. The chapter also discusses major challenges undermining these strategies in the Nigerian context: inadequate funding, poor leadership styles, frequent industrial actions, administrative bureaucracy, cultural diversity, resistance to change, and weak communication structures. Finally, it proposes that institutional leadership adopt more democratic, inclusive, and well-funded human relations frameworks, backed by continuous training and transparent policy implementation, to harness human resources as strategic assets.

Keywords: Tertiary Institutions; Human Relations Management; Nigeria; Conflict Resolution; Institutional Leadership; Staff Motivation

7.1. **Introduction**

Human relations are at the heart of every organization, and tertiary institutions in Nigeria are no exception. As centers of learning, research, and innovation, these institutions bring together diverse groups of people—administrators, academic staff, non-academic staff, and students—each with different roles, expectations, and perspectives. The ability to manage these relationships effectively determines not only the quality of the academic environment but also the overall success of the institution.

Human relation management strategies focus on fostering mutual respect, collaboration, and open communication among members of the institution. They help to reduce misunderstandings, improve motivation, and enhance teamwork, all of which are crucial in achieving institutional goals. In the Nigerian context, where tertiary institutions often face challenges such as limited resources, cultural diversity, and frequent disputes, adopting effective human relation management strategies becomes even more important.

This chapter therefore examines the various strategies that can be employed to promote healthy human relations in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It highlights their relevance to institutional stability, academic excellence, and national development, while also exploring the challenges that may hinder their effective implementation.

7.2. **Clarification of concepts**
  i.   **Concept of Tertiary Education**

Tertiary education is defined by National policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education offers a broad range of academic disciplines and professional programs, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctoral degrees, and professional certifications. It focuses on in-depth exploration of subject areas, critical thinking, research skills, and the development of specialized expertise (Proctoredu 2023).

Tertiary education, also called post-secondary education, is any level of education pursued beyond high school, including undergraduate and graduate credentials. These credentials encompass certificates, diplomas or academic degrees. Tertiary education refers to specialized education in a specific field, taken on after finishing high school. Tertiary education is non-compulsory and provided in a specialist institution, usually a college, polytechnic or university. This form of education may be delivered virtually or at a distance (Top-hat, 2023). Tertiary education according

to Ogunode (2025) is an organized educational system that is consciously designed for manpower production, in-service training and national development. Tertiary education is an education that advances teaching, research and community services for national development. Tertiary education is an education industry that is meant for the production of manpower and national development via implementation of teaching, research and provision of community services. The objectives of tertiary education according to Ogunode (2025) includes; to provide higher education opportunities via effective teaching, researching and provision community services; to develop produce students with specialized knowledge and skills for solving personal problem and national problem; to prepare student for national workforce and to contribute to societal and community development; to provide academic program of various disciplines; to provide quality instruction in field of studies and to conduct researches to generate new knowledge for national development and to solve complex problems.

ii.   Concept of Human Relation Management

At its core, human relation management is about people and the way they work together. Every organization, whether a business, a school, or a tertiary institution, depends on the ability of individuals to interact, communicate, and collaborate. Human relation management recognizes that people are not just workers or students who follow rules and complete tasks—they are human beings with feelings, needs, ambitions, and challenges. The idea became popular through what is known as the Human Relations Movement, which showed that when people feel respected, listened to, and included, they perform better and contribute more meaningfully to the organization. In simple terms, it's not only about what people do, but also about how they feel while doing it (Bingwa, & Ngibe,2021).

Good human relation management involves things like open communication, listening to others, resolving disagreements fairly, appreciating contributions, and creating an environment where everyone feels like they belong. It's about building trust and mutual respect so that people can work together more smoothly (Colle & Yonggong, 2002). In Nigerian tertiary institutions, this is especially important. With students, lecturers, non-academic staff, and administrators all coming from different backgrounds and interests, there is bound to be tension at times. Without good human relations, small issues can grow into bigger conflicts, affecting learning and productivity. But when human relation strategies are applied—through dialogue, teamwork, and mutual respect—these institutions can become healthier spaces where everyone thrives.

iii.   Concept of Human Relation Management strategies

Tertiary institutions are unique environments where students, lecturers, administrators, and non-academic staff interact on a daily basis. Because of this diversity, effective human relation management strategies are necessary to promote harmony, cooperation, and productivity. Below are some key strategies:

a) Effective Communication

Open and transparent communication is the foundation of good human relations. When management communicates policies clearly, listens to staff and students, and encourages feedback, misunderstandings are reduced. For example, regular meetings, notice boards, emails, and student forums can help ensure that everyone stays informed and feels included. Another key aspect of effective communication in human relation management strategies is the use of feedback. Feedback allows individuals to give and receive constructive criticism, which is essential in personal and professional growth. In a tertiary institution, feedback can be given through various means such as assessments, evaluations, and open discussions, all of which contribute to improving communication and relationships among members of the institution (European Commission 2012). Effective communication is an essential aspect of human relation management strategies in tertiary institutions. It involves the exchange of information, ideas, and thoughts in a clear and concise manner to achieve mutual understanding and build positive relationships between individuals. In the context of tertiary institutions, effective communication plays a crucial role in maintaining a harmonious and productive environment among students, faculty, and staff. One way in which effective communication is integrated into human relation management strategies is through the use of various communication channels such as verbal, written, and non-verbal communication (Eneasato, Azubuike, & Oko, 2019).. These channels allow for the sharing of information and ideas between individuals, fostering a sense of collaboration and understanding. Effective communication also involves active listening, which is the ability to fully understand and comprehend the message being conveyed by the other person. This is particularly important in a tertiary institution setting where there may be a diverse range of perspectives and opinions. By actively listening, individuals can better understand and respect each other's views, leading to a more inclusive and supportive environment (Kwashabawa, & Mustapha, 2023).

b) Participatory Decision-Making

Involving staff and students in decisions that affect them fosters a sense of belonging and ownership. For instance, student representatives in committees or academic boards, and staff unions participating in policy discussions, can help institutions make fairer, more widely accepted decisions (Ogunode & Emmanue 2023). Participatory decision-making is a key aspect of human relations management strategies in tertiary institutions. By involving various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and staff, in the decision-making process, it promotes a sense of inclusivity and collaboration within the institution. This approach allows for a more democratic and transparent decision-making process, where all voices and perspectives are considered. Additionally, it fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, leading to better implementation and execution of decisions. Moreover, participatory decision-making promotes a culture of communication and cooperation, which are crucial elements for a healthy and functional academic community (Kumar, & Siddika. 2017).

c) Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Conflicts are inevitable in tertiary institutions, but the way they are handled makes a difference. Using dialogue, negotiation, and mediation ensures that disagreements are resolved fairly and without escalation. Establishing functional grievance-handling units can also reduce tensions between students, staff, and management. Conflict resolution and mediation are essential strategies in human relation management in tertiary institutions (Ogunode, 2025). These strategies aim to address conflicts and disputes between individuals or groups in an effective and peaceful manner. Conflict resolution involves identifying the root cause of conflicts and finding a mutually agreeable solution, while mediation involves a neutral third-party facilitating communication and negotiation between conflicting parties. These strategies are crucial in tertiary institutions as they promote a positive and harmonious working environment, improve communication and decision-making skills, and foster a culture of respect and understanding among individuals (Musa, 2023). By utilizing conflict resolution and mediation, tertiary institutions can effectively manage interpersonal conflicts, promote cooperation and collaboration, and ultimately create a conducive learning and working environment

d) Recognition and Motivation

The recognition and motivation of individuals play a crucial role in human relations management strategies within tertiary institutions. By acknowledging and valuing the efforts and contributions of individuals, organizations can foster a positive and supportive work environment that promotes mutual respect and collaboration. Additionally, effective recognition and motivation can also serve as a powerful tool in promoting job satisfaction, performance, and productivity (Osakwe, 2014; Omale, Ojo, Ibrahim, & amp; Yusufu, 2023).. In this way, recognition and motivation are essential components of human relations management strategies in tertiary institutions, as they establish a strong foundation for building successful and harmonious relationships between individuals and the organization (Olabisi, Okolo, & Ogunode 2023). Acknowledging the efforts of both staff and students builds morale and strengthens relationships. Rewards such as promotions, scholarships, awards, or public recognition during events motivate individuals to contribute positively to the institution (Ogunode, & Kasimu, 2023; Ogunode, Salman, & Ayoko, 2023).

e) Teamwork and Collaboration

Encouraging teamwork among staff and students helps build trust and cooperation. Group projects, staff–student research collaborations, and inter-departmental committees can strengthen relationships and reduce divisions within the institution. Teamwork and collaboration are essential management strategies in tertiary institutions. These strategies involve individuals working together towards a common goal, where each individual is responsible for their own contribution towards the success of the team. This approach to human relation management involves building strong relationships among team members, encouraging open communication, and promoting a

sense of shared responsibility for achieving goals (Ogunode 2025). Through teamwork and collaboration, the human relation management in tertiary institutions aims to create a positive and productive work environment. This is achieved by fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect among team members, promoting effective communication and problem-solving skills, and encouraging individuals to share their ideas and take ownership of their work. Furthermore, teamwork and collaboration also promote diversity and inclusivity within the team. By bringing together individuals from different backgrounds and with varying skill sets, human relation management in tertiary institutions can leverage the strengths of each team member to achieve greater success. This also helps in the personal and professional growth of individuals as they learn from each other and develop new skills.

f) Training and Capacity Building

Workshops, seminars, and professional development programs equip staff with interpersonal and leadership skills. Students can also benefit from training in areas such as communication, emotional intelligence, and conflict management, which improve the overall human relations climate Ogunode, et al 2023; Musa, 2022). The concept of Training and Capacity Building is a crucial aspect of Human Relation Management strategies in tertiary institutions. It refers to the process of equipping individuals or teams with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their roles effectively. This includes providing training on topics such as communication, conflict resolution, and leadership, as well as developing employees' professional and personal competencies ((Ogunode, et al 2023; Ojo, 2022). By investing in Training and Capacity Building, tertiary institutions aim to improve the overall performance and productivity of their employees, foster a positive work environment, and promote continuous learning and development within the organization. This, in turn, contributes to the success and sustainability of the institution.

g) Welfare and Support Systems

Providing welfare support—such as counseling services, mentorship programs, health facilities, and financial assistance for needy students—shows concern for the well-being of community members. When people feel cared for, they are more likely to maintain positive relations. Welfare and Support Systems in tertiary institutions are closely tied to Human Relation Management strategies. The implementation of comprehensive welfare and support systems is a key aspect of promoting healthy and productive relationships within the academic community. By providing students and faculty with the necessary resources and support, institutions can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment which in turn can have a positive impact on overall academic success and satisfaction (Muhammed, 2021). Additionally, the implementation of welfare and support systems allows for the development of strong human relation management strategies, as individuals feel valued and cared for within the institution. This results in increased engagement

and motivation among both students and faculty, leading to a more productive and cohesive academic community."

h) Equity and Fairness

Institutions must ensure that policies, promotions, grading, and disciplinary measures are fair and transparent. Perceptions of favoritism or bias often fuel resentment and conflict, while fairness builds trust and unity. Equity and fairness are crucial strategies in human resource management within tertiary institutions. These strategies refer to the principle of treating all individuals with equality and justice, regardless of their race, gender, or social standing. In the context of tertiary institutions, these strategies are aimed at creating a harmonious and inclusive environment for all individuals. This is achieved by ensuring that all individuals are given equal opportunities and are treated fairly in all aspects of their academic journey. One way in which equity and fairness are incorporated in human resource management within tertiary institutions is through the recruitment and selection process. This process ensures that all individuals are given a fair chance to apply for positions or programs, without any biases or discrimination based on their background. Additionally, the selection process is designed to be transparent and fair, providing all individuals with an equal opportunity to succeed. Equity and fairness are also implemented in the development of policies and procedures within tertiary institutions. These policies ensure that all individuals are treated equally and fairly when it comes to access to resources, academic support, and opportunities for advancement.

7.3. Challenges facing implementation of Human Relation Management strategies

These challenges cut across structural, cultural, financial, and leadership issues:

i. Poor Communication Structures

In many institutions, communication between management, staff, and students is weak or one-sided. Policies are often imposed without proper consultation, and channels for feedback may be ineffective. This creates mistrust and reduces the effectiveness of human relation strategies. Poor communication structures are a significant challenge when it comes to the implementation of human relation management strategies. This issue arises due to the lack of effective communication channels and systems within organizations, which can hinder the successful implementation of HRM strategies. One of the main ways in which poor communication structures impact the implementation of HRM strategies is by causing miscommunication (Anaehobi et al 2019; Bingwa, et al 2021). This can occur between different levels of the organization, such as between management and employees, or between different departments. As a result, important information may not be effectively conveyed, leading to misunderstandings and potentially derailing the implementation of HRM strategies. Moreover, poor communication structures can

also lead to a lack of clarity and direction in the implementation of HRM strategies. Without clear and effective communication, employees may not fully understand their roles and responsibilities in the HRM strategy, or the overall goals and objectives that the strategy aims to achieve (.Afolabi & et al 2012). This can result in confusion and disorganization, making it difficult for the strategy to be successfully implemented. Additionally, poor communication structures can hinder collaboration and teamwork, which are essential for the successful implementation of HRM strategies. Without effective communication channels and systems, employees may struggle to work together and share ideas, leading to a lack of innovation and potentially compromising the strategy's effectiveness.

ii. Leadership and Management Style

Some institutional leaders adopt authoritarian or top-down leadership approaches, which leave little room for participatory decision-making. Such styles discourage openness and collaboration, which are central to human relation management. One of the main challenges facing the implementation of human relation management strategies is the leadership and management style employed by organizations. The style of leadership and management adopted by an organization can greatly impact the success of human relation management strategies. For instance, if an organization has an authoritarian and top-down management style, it may face challenges in encouraging employee participation and cooperation, which are key components of human relation management strategies (Abdulaziz, Olokooba, & Iyekolo, 2020; Akinyemi, 2013). On the other hand, organizations with a more democratic and participative management style are more likely to successfully implement human relation management strategies. Moreover, the leadership style also plays a significant role in shaping the organizational culture, which in turn affects the adoption and implementation of human relation management strategies. Organizations with a culture that promotes trust, open communication, and employee empowerment are more likely to implement human relation management strategies effectively. However, organizations with a culture that is hierarchical, competitive, and focused on individualism may face challenges in implementing such strategies.

iii. Frequent Industrial Actions and Conflicts

The implementation of Human Resource Management strategies is often faced with the challenge of frequent industrial actions and conflicts. These are common issues that can hinder the smooth implementation of HR strategies. These challenges arise due to various reasons such as disagreements between management and employees, differences in organizational culture, lack of effective communication, and so on (Ogunode, et al 2021).. Frequent industrial actions and conflicts can have a significant impact on the success of HR strategies. They can lead to disruptions in work, decreased employee morale, and ultimately affect the overall productivity of the organization. As a result, it is important for organizations to address these challenges effectively.

One of the ways to tackle this issue is by utilizing effective conflict resolution techniques (Ogunode, & Jegede, 2020). HR managers should be trained in conflict resolution and mediation to handle such situations effectively. They should also ensure that there are proper channels for employees to voice their grievances and concerns, and that these are addressed in a timely and fair manner. Another approach is to promote open communication and transparency within the organization. This can help in fostering a positive work environment and minimizing misunderstandings and conflicts. Additionally, organizations can also focus on establishing a strong and inclusive organizational culture to promote collaboration and reduce the likelihood of industrial actions. Nigeria's tertiary institutions are frequently disrupted by strikes from staff unions (like ASUU, NASU, or SSANU) and protests from students. These conflicts, often fueled by poor funding or unmet agreements, undermine trust and make it difficult to sustain human relation strategies.

iv. Inadequate Funding

Many Nigerian tertiary institutions suffer from chronic underfunding. This limits resources for welfare services, staff motivation, training, and infrastructure—all of which are necessary for promoting positive human relations. When staff and students feel neglected, mistrust grows. Inadequate funding poses a considerable challenge to the successful implementation of Human Resource Management strategies. Without sufficient financial resources, organizations may struggle to attract and retain top talent, offer competitive compensation packages, and invest in employee development programs (Ogunode, Kasimu, & Sambo, (2023).. This shortage of funds can also hinder the adoption and utilization of technology and tools, limiting the effectiveness of HR processes and procedures. Inadequate funding can also lead to a lack of resources for recruitment and training, hindering the development of a skilled and diverse workforce. Additionally, it may be difficult to implement changes and improvements to HR strategies without the necessary financial support.

v. Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

While diversity can be a strength, it also poses challenges when not managed properly. Misunderstandings or perceived favoritism based on ethnicity, religion, or social background can weaken relationships and fuel conflict. Cultural and ethnic diversity presents a significant challenge in the implementation of Human Relations Management strategies. In a diverse workplace, various cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values can create conflicts and misunderstandings among employees, affecting their overall productivity and job satisfaction. This challenge requires HR managers to develop effective strategies that promote inclusion and appreciation of diversity among employees. One of the key challenges in managing cultural and ethnic diversity is ensuring equitable treatment of all employees. HR managers have to be aware of the different cultural norms and practices and develop policies and procedures that consider

them. This can include providing cultural sensitivity training and setting up diversity and inclusion programs to promote mutual understanding and respect among employees. Another challenge is addressing language barriers. In a diverse workplace, employees may speak different languages, making communication difficult (Ogunode, Edinoh, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2023). This can affect the flow of information and create misunderstandings among employees. HR managers can overcome this challenge by providing language training or hiring multilingual staff members to act as translators. Cultural and ethnic diversity can also create challenges in decision-making processes. Different cultural backgrounds can lead to varied perspectives and opinions, making it difficult to reach a consensus. HR managers can overcome this challenge by creating diverse teams and encouraging open communication and active listening to ensure all voices are heard and considered.

vi.   Bureaucracy and Administrative Bottlenecks

Slow decision-making, rigid structures, and excessive bureaucracy discourage open dialogue and quick resolution of grievances. This makes staff and students feel ignored and undervalued. Bureaucracy and administrative bottlenecks are major challenges that hinder the implementation of human relation management strategies. These obstacles are characterized by rigid and complex bureaucratic processes, excessive red tape, and slow decision making (Anaehobi, & Agim, 2019). This can significantly delay the implementation of effective human relation management strategies, which in turn, can negatively impact the overall success of an organization. Bureaucracy creates a hierarchical structure that can result in power imbalances, making it difficult for new strategies to be implemented and accepted (Echono, 2023; Ogunode, 2023). This often leads to delays in decision making and implementation as multiple levels of approval are required. Additionally, bureaucratic processes are often time-consuming, which can cause frustration and burnout among employees. Administrative bottlenecks, such as inefficient communication channels and lack of coordination among different departments, can also impede the successful implementation of human relation management strategies (Etuk,2001). These bottlenecks can result in miscommunication, delays, and confusion, which can hinder the smooth execution of strategies.

vii.   Resistance to Change

Some staff or administrators may resist new approaches to human relation management because they are comfortable with traditional methods of control. This resistance can hinder efforts to build more participatory and people-centered systems. Resistance to change is a major challenge in the implementation of human relation management strategies. This resistance can occur at both individual and organizational levels, and can hinder the success of the overall strategy. There are several factors that contribute to resistance to change, including fear of the unknown, lack of trust, and perceived loss of control. These factors can make it difficult for individuals and organizations

to embrace and adopt new HR management strategies (Akinyemi, 2013). However, it is important to address this challenge and find ways to overcome it in order to successfully implement these strategies and achieve their intended goals. One possible approach to overcoming resistance to change is through effective communication and education. This can involve clearly explaining the reasons behind the change and how it will benefit both the individuals and the organization as a whole. It is also important to address any concerns or misconceptions that individuals may have about the change. By providing information and addressing concerns, individuals may become more open to embracing the new HR management strategies (Ogunode, & Jegede, 2020). Another strategy that can help overcome resistance to change is involving individuals in the decision-making process. This can give them a sense of ownership and control over the change, which can help reduce feelings of resistance. By involving employees in the decision-making process, organizations can also gain valuable insights and suggestions on how to make the change more successful. In addition, organizations can also provide training and support to help individuals adapt to the new HR management strategies (Kabadayi, 2016; Kumar & Siddika. 2017).

viii.   Lack of Training and Awareness

Lack of Training and Awareness is a challenge that hinders the successful implementation of Human Resource Management strategies. This is because without proper training and awareness, employees may not fully understand the importance and benefits of these strategies. They may also not have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement them. Without adequate training and awareness, employees may not know how to properly use the tools and techniques provided by Human Resource Management strategies. This can lead to inefficiencies and mistakes, ultimately affecting the success of the strategies. Lack of training and awareness can also lead to resistance from employees. If they do not understand the purpose and value of the strategies, they may be hesitant to adopt them and may even actively resist them. This can create significant challenges and obstacles for their implementation (Ogunode, & Ade, 2023). Without proper training and awareness, employees may not be able to effectively communicate and collaborate with each other. This can hinder teamwork and coordination, which are essential for the success of Human Resource Management strategies. Not all administrators, staff, or student leaders are trained in interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, or emotional intelligence (Abdulaziz, Olokooba, & Iyekolo, 2020). Without adequate training, even well-intended policies may fail to improve relationships within the institution.

ix.   Political Interference

The implementation of Human Relation Management strategies in academic institutions is often hindered by Political Interference. This challenge can arise from various factors such as external pressure from government agencies, internal power struggles among department heads, and conflicting agendas among stakeholders (Uko, Umosen, & Caleb, 2015). These political

interferences can significantly impact the successful implementation of HRM strategies, leading to issues such as biased decision-making, lack of support from key players, and a decrease in employee morale. To overcome this challenge, it is important for academic institutions to have strong leadership and governance structures in place to handle political influences effectively (Ogunode, Jegede & Musa, 2021).. Additionally, open communication channels and transparency can help address any conflicts and ensure all stakeholders are aligned with the HRM strategies. Furthermore, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process can help identify and address any potential barriers caused by political interference. In some cases, political influence in the appointment of administrators or student union leadership fuels favoritism and divides the institutional community. This weakens trust in management decisions and reduces the credibility of human relation strategies.

Conclusion

Human resources remain the backbone of any educational system, and in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, effective human resource management is crucial for institutional growth, academic excellence, and national development. This chapter has examined how strategic HR practices—such as effective communication, participatory decision-making, conflict resolution and mediation, recognition and motivation, teamwork and collaboration, training and capacity building, welfare and support systems and equity and fairness —play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education delivered in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education.

However, challenges such as poor Communication Structures, leadership and management style, frequent Industrial actions and conflicts, inadequate funding, cultural and ethnic diversity, bureaucracy and administrative bottlenecks, resistance to change, lack of training and awareness and political interference continue to undermine HR efforts in many institutions. For Nigeria's tertiary sector to thrive, human resources must be managed not only as an administrative function but as a strategic tool for achieving long-term goals.

Revise Questions References

1) What is human relation management?

2) Outline five human relation management strategies

3) List five challenges facing the implementation of human relation management strategies

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