

Organizational Suspension and Employee Alienation in the Manufacturing Industry in South-South Region Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study investigated the relationship between organizational suspension and employee alienation in the manufacturing industries in Nigeria's South-South region. The study also explored whether organizations should eliminate suspension as a punitive measure due to the negative reactions of victims to the punishment. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Taro Yamane's formula was applied to ascertain the sample size at a 95 percent significant level of all the 1,134 employees in the South-South manufacturing companies, which resulted in providing a total of 284 employees in the South-South Nigeria manufacturing companies as the sample size. The study made use of both primary and secondary data collection methods, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and journal publications with reports. The study adopted the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Based on the findings, we conclude that a significant relationship exists between suspension and employee alienation, indicating that suspension can contribute to employee alienation. It is therefore recommended that management first exhaust every disciplinary measure against the erring employee before applying suspension as a punitive measure.*

Keywords: *Suspension, employee alienation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement*

INTRODUCTION

Employee alienation, according to Merve (2014), is a set of working conditions that isolate employees from work and work activities. It reflects a position in which an employee does not care much about their job; they expend little energy and work for extrinsic rewards (Mohan, 2013). When an employee is not able to express himself or herself at work due to a loss of control over the product and process of his or her labour, employee alienation occurs. Workers may feel alienated as a result of the lack of autonomy and control in the workplace. If the work environment cannot satisfy the needs of individual autonomy, responsibility, and achievement of the workers, it will create a state of alienation. People often feel alienated and angry when they receive exclusive, different, or unfair treatment due to their group membership.

Suspension is temporary, not allowing an employee to carry out his or her duties for a particular period of time (like some days, weeks, or months). Suspension is supposed to be a disciplinary tool used to correct employees to adhere to rules and regulations of the organization but it is been used as a punitive measure to punish staff members who

violate/disobey the organization rules and regulation. The organization also uses suspension as a deterrent to prevent employees from violating its rules and policies. With the accent on positive organizational phenomena, there has been a tendency to minimize the importance and contributions of negative behaviours, including discipline, negative sanctions, penalties, aversive control, and correction (Bergen & Bondow, 2012).

Because of the aggressive and punishable nature of suspension as a punitive measure, there have been calls from management researchers to eliminate punitive measures from organization because of victims' negative reactions to the administered punishment (Noon, 2001). We were unable to locate any study that examined the connection between suspension and employee alienation. There is also no study proven to show that suspension causes employee alienation. It is on the basis of this lacuna that this study will be carried out from an empirical point of view.

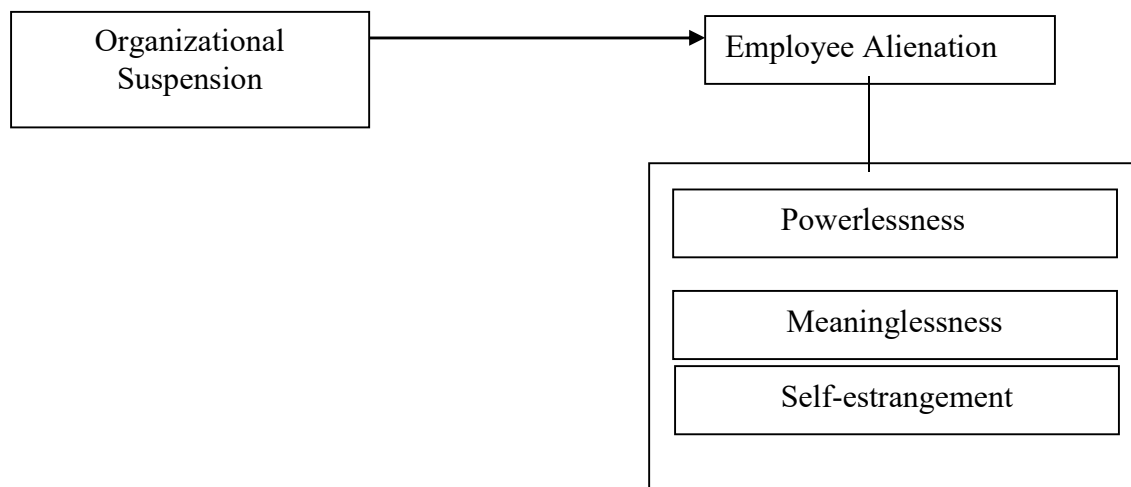


Figure 1: Conceptual frame work of the relationship between Organizational Suspension and Employee Alienation

Source: Desk Research, 2022

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between organizational Suspension and employee alienation in the manufacturing industries in the South-South region of Nigeria which includes:

- 1) To determine relationship between suspension and powerlessness of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria.
- 2) To determine relationship between suspension and meaninglessness of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria.
- 3) To determine relationship between suspension and self-estrangement of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria

On the bases of the above purpose of the study, three researchable questions were posed which are:

- 1) What is the relationship between suspension and powerlessness of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria?
- 2) What is the relationship between suspension and meaninglessness of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria?
- 3) What is the relationship between suspension and self-estrangement of employees in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

DETERRENCE THEORY

Onwudiwe, Odo, and Onyeozili (2004) trace the deterrence theory of punishment to the early works of classical philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588–1678), Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794), and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Collectively, these theorists voiced their opposition to the legal policies that had dominated European thought for over a millennium, as well as the spiritualistic explanations of crime that underpinned them. The theory of deterrence relies on three individual components: severity, certainty, and celerity. It is believed that a rationally calculating human being is more likely to desist from criminal acts when the punishment is more severe. Therefore, criminal law must emphasize penalties to encourage citizens to obey the law in order to prevent crime. Punishment that is too severe is unjust, and a penalty that is not severe enough will not deter criminals from committing crimes (Onwudiwe *et al.*, 2004). Ensuring the presence of punishment upon the commission of a criminal act is the essence of certainty of punishment. Classical theorists like Beccaria maintain that individuals will abstain from future offenses if they are aware that their undesirable actions will result in punishment. The closer the application of punishment is to the offense's commission, the greater the likelihood that offenders will realize that crime does not pay (Onwudiwe *et al.*, 2004). Deterrence theorists believe that if punishment is severe, certain, and swift, a rational person will measure the gains and losses before engaging in crime and will be deterred from violating the law if the loss is greater than the gain. Classical philosophers thought that certainty was more effective in preventing crimes than the severity of punishment (Onwudiwe *et al.*, 2004).

According to Lee (2017), deterrence theory holds that criminal punishment is justified because punishment reduces or deters crime. Because the fear of punishment is considered a major incentive in deterring crime, deterrence theories are often associated with the idea of severe, disproportionate punishment.

SUSPENSION

Grogan (2007) defines suspension as a term in the employment context that refers to situations where an employer declines to accept an employee's services due to concerns that the employee's presence could jeopardize any investigation into alleged misconduct or endanger the wellbeing or safety services, without terminating the contract. Suspension is generally defined as disallowing a person to enter his or her workplace for a period of time as determined by the employer (Grigor, 2013).

Suspension is a period of time during which the employee is not allowed to work and will receive no compensation when it has been determined that the employee's performance of duty or personal conduct is unsatisfactory. Suspension can range from a few days to a week (Idris & Alegbeleye, 2015).

Grigor (2013) recommends suspending an employee during an investigation only when their presence on the workplace premises will negatively impact the investigation's outcome. The employee receives a written notice of suspension either prior to the disciplinary hearing or concurrently with it. There are no studies in this area, but Grigor (2013) did a study on suspension in the disciplinary process, in which he concluded that a great number of employers experience uncertainty as to whether and when to suspend. Baloyi-Ngoben and Odeku (2013) conducted a study on the practice of precautionary suspension in the workplace and its impact on employees' right to fair hearings. They both concluded that the unfair suspension of the employee by the employer should be prohibited.

In view of this, the study thus hypothesized that;

H₀₁: There is no significant association between suspension and powerlessness of employees in manufacturing industries in South-South region of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between suspension and meaninglessness of employees in manufacturing industries in South-South region of Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between suspension and self-estrangement of employees in manufacturing industries in South-South region of Nigeria.

EMPLOYEE ALIENATION

Ancient Greece first used the term alienation, referring to a person's separation from the body. Employee alienation has become an important topic in studying the sociological and psychological perspective of organizational effectiveness (Sazkaya, 2014).

According to O'Donohue and Nelson (2014), the term alienation originates from Karl Marx's work on the effects of the capitalist labor process on workers and is well described in a number of studies dating back many years. According to Marx, alienation is a condition in which the individual becomes isolated and cut off from the product of his or her work, having given up the desire for self-expression and control over his or her own fate at work. The individual adopts a role that deviates from their capabilities; we will revisit this crucial aspect later. Changes external to the individual arising from the industrialization process, such as the creation of large factories characterized by organizational hierarchies, job specialization and work supervision reliant on formal authority, and a shift in life focus from the home and community to the organization, are the genesis of this condition (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2014).

O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) further explained that Marx coined the term labour process to describe the interaction between labour and capital, in which employers (capital) acquire the right to control all aspects of labour for the purposes of organizing work for efficiency and minimizing costs so that a profit can be made. Because the labor process requires employees to relinquish the right to control their labor, alienation is an intrinsic part of the capitalist system and, therefore, unavoidable. According to Marx, the inequality inherent to the labour process causes workers to experience at least three forms of alienation (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2014); (a) alienation from the product of their labour (dispossessed of what they produce, which is owned by the capitalist); (b) alienation from oneself (only find extrinsic meaning in work and are separated from their true selves); and (c) alienation from others (the unique qualities of humankind are diminished and so workers are estranged from both their own humanity and others). These three forms of alienation are, in Marxian terms, an objective reality (that is, imposed as an external force)

under capitalism rather than a subjective state of mind (that is, resulting from factors internal to the individual). Hence, it matters not that people might report that they do not feel alienated, as it is an objective state of capitalism: subjectivity is not part of the analysis. To put it another way, O'Donohue & Nelson (2014) anchored Marx's concept of alienation and its causes in factors external to the individual.

MEASURES OF EMPLOYEE ALIENATION

According to Sarros, Tanewski, Winter, Santora and Densten (2002), the meaning and measurement of employee alienation are problematic and fraught with ambiguity. Studies have employed a variety of terms to measure aspects of employee alienation, including powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement.

According to Sarros et al. (2002), powerlessness refers to the expectation or probability that an individual's behavior cannot determine the outcomes or reinforcements they seek. It is the absence of control over events in a person's life and the inability for employees to control their work processes at the workplace (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011).

Meaninglessness: this is the employee's description of his or her integration into the work process (Sarros *et al.*, 2002). It exists when workers feel they contribute little to the overall production process and hence do not see the significance of their role in it. According to the Job Characteristics Model, employees experience meaninglessness at work when their jobs are narrow in scope. Employees may perceive their work contribution as meaningless if they perceive their job tasks as dull, boring, unchallenging, and distinct from other work activities (Sarros et al., 2002).

According to O'Donohue and Nelson (2014), self-estrangement is a term for feelings of detachment and no sense of identity or personal fulfillment. The effects of loneliness and isolation may culminate in estrangement with respect to both personal and social identities. The prison of estrangement prevents employees from relating to and being with other people in the world (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This is because its intention was to find out and gather relevant data from potential respondents in the research sample. The 862 registered manufacturing companies in Nigeria's south-south region are the target population for this research. Using the convenience sampling method, we selected 12 of the 862 manufacturing companies as representatives of the target population. We obtained the total number of staff workers (1,134) from the human resources managers and administrative officers in each of the 12 industries. Taro Yamane's formula was applied to ascertain the sample size at a 95 percent significant level of all the 1,134 employees in the South-South manufacturing companies, which resulted in providing a total of 284 employees in the South-South Nigeria manufacturing companies as the sample size. This research study made use of both primary and secondary data collection methods. The researcher used a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, journal publications, and reports. The study adopted the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) in order to create a valid and reliable stance for the research hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The test will be carried out using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover hypothesis (H_{01}) to hypothesis (H_{10}) which are bivariate and all stated in their null form. The 0.05 significance level is adopted as criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ($p < 0.05$).

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between suspension and powerlessness of employees in the Manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation Result for suspension and powerlessness
Correlations

			SUSPENSION	POWERLESSNESS
Spearman's rho	SUSPENSION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.987**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	POWERLESSNESS	Correlation Coefficient	.987**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	225	225

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 Data Output, 2022

From the result in table 5, it is shows a strong positive and significant relationship exists between suspension and powerlessness. The *rho* value 0.987 indicates a strong and significant relationship, it is also significant at $p.0.000 < 0.05$.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Suspension and Meaninglessness of employees in the manufacturing industry of South-South Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation Result for Suspension and Meaninglessness
Correlations

			SUSPENSION	MEANINGLESSNESS
Spearman's rho	SUSPENSION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.970**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	MEANINGLESSNESS	Correlation Coefficient	.970**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	225	225

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 Data Output, 2022

The results shown in table 6 above, with *rho* value of 0.970, means that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between suspension and meaninglessness. The association is significant at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ significance level.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between Suspension and Self estrangement of employees in the Manufacturing Industry of South-South Nigeria.

Table 7: Correlation Result for Suspension and Self estrangement
Correlations

			SUSPENSION	SELF ESTRANGEMENT
Spearman's rho	SUSPENSION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.986**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	SELF ESTRANGEMENT	Correlation Coefficient	.986**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	225	225

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 Data Output, 2022

The results shown in table 7 above, with a *rho* value of 0.986, means that there is a strong positive and significant relationship exist between Suspension and Self estrangement. The association is significant at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ significance level.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed a strong and significant relationship exists between suspension and powerlessness, as the rho value of 0.987 and $p 0.000 < 0.05$ indicate a positive relationship, meaning that there is a significant relationship between suspension and powerlessness in the manufacturing industry of the South-South region of Nigeria.

A strong positive and significant relationship exists between suspension and meaninglessness, as the rho values of 0.970 and $0.000 > 0.05$ indicate a significant relationship, meaning that there is a significant relationship between suspension and meaninglessness in the manufacturing industry of the South-South region of Nigeria.

A positive and significant relationship exists between suspension and self-estrangement, as the rho value of 0.986 $p 0.000 < 0.05$ indicates a positive and significant association between suspension and self-estrangement in the manufacturing industry of the South-South region of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, we conclude that a significant relationship exists between suspension and employee alienation, indicating that suspension can contribute to employee alienation. Therefore, we recommend that management first implement all disciplinary measures on the offending employee before imposing suspension as a punitive step. The organization should provide details and a proper explanation for suspending the offending employees. The management of an organization should not stop using suspension as a punitive measure; rather, it should be a proactive measure against offending employees. Management should implement an effective and equitable reward management system for employees to ensure motivation. To foster a sense of belonging, the organization should allow employees to participate in decision-making that affects them.

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