



Organizational Demotion and Employee Alienation in the Manufacturing Companies in South-South Region Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study investigated the relationship between organizational demotion and employee alienation in manufacturing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. The study also investigated if organizational demotion can cause employee alienation. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design, generating data from 284 employees in South-South Nigerian manufacturing companies as the sample size. The study made use of both primary and secondary data collection methods. The researcher made use of questionnaires, 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. The study's findings proved that there is a significant relationship between demotion and employee alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement), meaning that demoting an employee will cause employee alienation. It is therefore recommended that before demoting erring employees, disciplinary measures should first be applied on erring employee before apply demotion as a punitive measure. Demotion as a punitive measure should not be stopped.*

Keywords: *Demotion, powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, work alienation has had serious consequences for employees' attitudes towards their jobs, and this has had a negative impact on employee performance (Higgwe & Gabriel, 2019). Organizations that lack employee autonomy in task selection and do not allow enough participation in decision-making are likely to cause a high degree of work alienation (Adnan & Seyfettin, 2010). However, existentialists regard alienation as a central construct in their psychology, pointing to a separation of the individual from the real or deeper self due to factors

of conformity and pressures found, for example, in organizations. This perspective views alienation as a personal identity crisis, characterized by a tension between the inner or 'true' self and the demands of modern organizational life (Saxena, 2013).

Demotion refers to the process of moving an employee to a lower position or lowering their grade. According to Noon (2001), there have been moves for demotion as an aggressive punitive measure to be cancelled from the organization. Also, no study has been done showing the existence of any significant relationship between organisational demotion and employee alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement). Furthermore, no study has proven that organizational demotion can cause employee alienation. It is on the basis of this lacuna that this study is done from an empirical point of view.

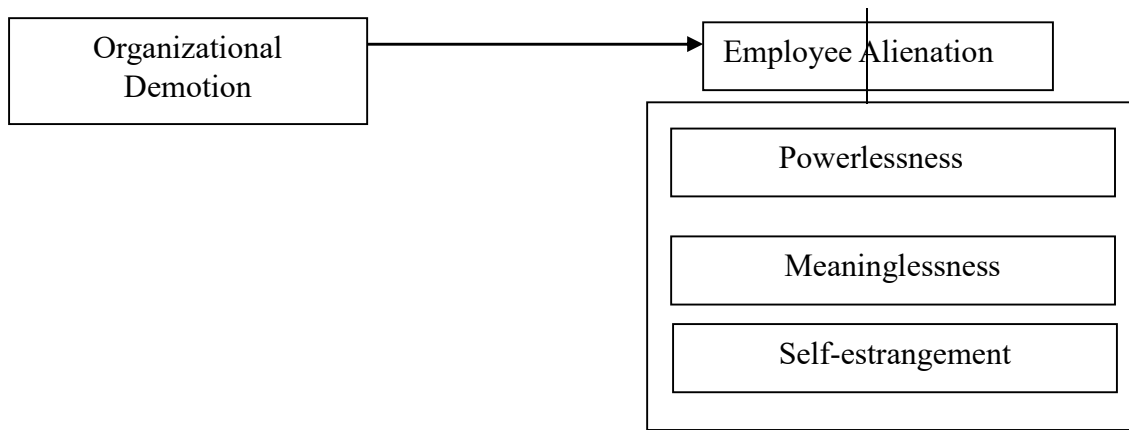


Figure 1: Conceptual frame work of the relationship between Organizational Demotion and Employee Alienation

Source: Desk Research, 2022

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

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

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

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

LITERATURE REVIEW

REINFORCEMENT THEORY

B.F. Skinner proposed the reinforcement theory. The reinforcement theory, one of the oldest theories of motivation, describes behavior and how individuals act. Today, the world of psychology teaches this theory, also known as behaviorism or operant conditioning. This theory is all about an individual's behaviour as a function of its consequences (Amutan, 2014). The theory of reinforcement elucidates the process by which individuals acquire behavior and learn how to act, which is precisely why organizations implement punishment. According to Amutan (2014), the reinforcement theory of motivation emphasizes each person's state of mind, i.e., emotion and feeling. Reinforcement theory generally focuses on changes that occur in each person when he or she goes through some actions or acts of behavior.

The reinforcement theory was developed by behaviorist Skinner as a way to explain behavior and why we do what we do. The theory posits that an individual's behavior is a function of its consequences. The theory relies on the law of effect, which states that an individual's actions with favorable outcomes typically repeat, while actions with unfavorable outcomes typically do not. Reinforcement theory. Numerous fields of study, such as animal training, child rearing, and workplace motivation, have utilized reinforcement theory. It focuses on observable behavior rather than needs theories that focus on personal states. Reinforcement theory is a form of operant conditioning and focuses on the environmental factors that contribute to shaping behavior. Reinforcement theory asserts that stimuli shape behaviours (Troussas, Krouska, & Virvou, 2017). According to Amutan (2014), reinforcement theory includes four approaches: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction, and punishment.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOTION

Demotion implies a downward movement. In an organizational context, it means the transfer of an employee to a less important position or to a position with a lower occupational status (Josten & Scholk, 2010). Employers and employees alike have long regarded demotion as a kind of failure, something one should only turn to as a last resort. People assumed that moving downward would lead to despair and depression. Demotion is the reduction of an employee's rank and salary (Hennekam, Mckenna, Richardson, & Ananthram, 2019). The economic climate and unemployment rates are also likely to influence whether organizations demote employees or terminate their employment altogether. Demographic factors may also influence decisions about who is demoted; the chance of being demoted decreases with age but is higher for individuals with lower levels of education (Hennekam, Mckenna, Richardson, & Ananthram, 2019).

Demotion is defined as a reassignment from one position to another at a lower pay grade or salary range (Human Resources Administrative Manual, 2008). A demotion can also be defined as a reassignment of duties to a lower level of pay or responsibility, even if there is no change in the employee's job title or position. If a disciplinary action eliminates, abolishes, or reorganises work,

or if a classified employee is unable to perform the work satisfactorily, involuntary demotions may occur (Human Resources Administrative Manual, 2008).

Josten and Schalk (2010) did a study on the effects of demotion on older and younger employees. The data they used came from a biannual panel study among employees working in health care or social services. In the data set, there were 45 cases of demotion among older employees (aged 45 or over), and 62 cases among younger employees. Their study's main conclusion was that employees who are to experience a demotion are more exhausted and less satisfied with the content of their job prior to the move..

In view of this, the study thus hypothesized that;

H₀₁: There is no significance relationship between demotion and powerlessness of employees in manufacturing companies in South-South region of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significance relationship between demotion and meaninglessness of employees in manufacturing companies in South-South region of Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significance relationship between demotion and self-estrangement of employees in manufacturing companies in South-South region of Nigeria.

EMPLOYEE ALIENATION

According to Ceylan and Sulu (2011), employee alienation refers to a situation where an employee may not be capable of fulfilling his or her social needs. Alienation lowers workers' motivation, psychologically separates them from work, and acts to reduce work involvement. An alienated worker who is unable to satisfy their salient needs and expectations from work has a form of gap between perceptions of an objective work situation and their specific interests, such as values, ideals, and desires. They see their jobs as instrumental, avoid autonomy, responsibility, and higher status, and engage in non-work pursuits. They do not care about personal participation in work processes; their goal is to earn money.

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.

Employees who lack job autonomy and participation have limited freedom to exert control over work activities within the prescribed task domain (Sarros et al., 2002). According to Sarros et al. (2002), powerlessness also 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 is when an individual lacks a sense of how their own work contributes to the whole. The existentialist associates meaningfulness with feelings of autonomy, creativity, and, above all, individual choice to shape a meaningful world (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2014). Meaninglessness 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 meaningfulness 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 (Sarroset et al., 2002).

When an individual perceives the work process as alien and independent of their contributions, it can lead to self-estrangement. Aspects of the formal work system reinforce the importance of functional roles and responsibilities to the organisation; external rewards serve to limit the creative contributions of employees (Sarroset 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. The staff strength information came from the human resources managers and administrative officers in each of the 12 industries, which totals 1,134 staff workers. 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 questionnaires, 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 data were analyzed on their individual variables. The test was done using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover hypothesis (H_{01}) to hypothesis (H_{010}) 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 ($p < 0.05$).

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Demotion and Powerlessness of employees in the manufacturing companies of South-South Nigeria.

Table 1: Correlation Result for Demotion and Powerlessness

			Correlations	
			DEMOTION	POWERLESSNESS
Spearman's rho	DEMOTION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.965**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	POWERLESSNESS	Correlation Coefficient	.965**	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 1, it is shows a positive and significant relationship exists between Demotion and Powerlessness. The *rho* value 0.965 indicates a significant association, it is also significant at $p.0.000 < 0.05$.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Demotion and Meaninglessness of employees in the manufacturing companies of South-South Nigeria.

Table 2: Correlation Result for Demotion and Meaninglessness

			Correlations	
			DEMOTION	MEANINGLESSNESS
Spearman's rho	DEMOTION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.969**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	MEANINGLESSNESS	Correlation Coefficient	.969**	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 2 above, with *rho* value of 0.969, means that there is positive relationship between Demotion and Meaninglessness. The association is not significant at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ significance level.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between Demotion and Self-estrangement of employees in the manufacturing companies of South-South Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlation Result for Demotion and Self estrangement

			Correlations	
			DEMOTION	SELF ESTRANGEMENT
Spearman's rho	DEMOTION	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.980**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	SELF ESTRANGEMENT	Correlation Coefficient	.980**	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 3 above, with a rho value of 0.980, means that a positive and significant relationship exist between Demotion 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 positive and significant relationship exist between demotion and powerlessness as the rho value of 0.965 and $P = 0.000 < 0.05$ significant in the manufacturing companies of South-South region in Nigeria.

A positive and significant relationship exist between demotion and meaningfulness as the rho value of 0.969 and $P = 0.000 > 0.05$ significant level revealed a positive and significant relationship between demotion and meaningfulness in the manufacturing companies of South-South region in Nigeria.

A positive and significant relationship exist between demotion and self-estrangement as the rho value of 0.980 and $P = 0.000 < 0.05$ revealed a significant relationship between demotion and self-estrangement in the manufacturing companies of South-South region in Nigeria.

From the findings, all the null hypotheses were rejected whereas the alternate hypotheses were accepted.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In view of the findings, it is concluded that there is significant relationship between demotion and employee alienation meaning demoting an employee will cause employee alienation. It is therefore recommended that before demoting erring employees, disciplinary measures should first be applied on erring employee before apply demotion as a punitive measure. Demotion as a punitive measure should not be stopped, rather it should be one the action done by management of an organization on offending employees. Before demoting an employee, proper investigations should be done first. Effective communication should be encouraged by management of manufacturing companies, this is in order to enhance interrelationship between management

and employees. On recruitment, management of manufacturing companies should ensure that competent applicants are recruited and placed in the right positions, this is in order to ensure performance. Training of employees should be done regularly; this is in order for employees to improve on their existing knowledge as well as acquire new ones.

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