

UPSCALLING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF MANUFACTURING FIRMS THROUGH THE STRATEGIC INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

Solomon UDIH,

*Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, mariojohnson2@gmail.com*

&

A. Anthony KIFORDU,

*Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, anthony.kifordu@yahoo.com*

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of industrial relations management practices on the performance of manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, it evaluated the effects of employer-employee relations, labour relations and group relations on firm performance. To achieve the study's objectives, four research questions were raised and four hypotheses were formulated. Relevant literature was reviewed to provide theoretical and empirical grounding. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 385 employees drawn from four selected manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 191 respondents was selected. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were answered using simple percentages and mean scores, while hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis via SPSS version 25 at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed significant relationships between each dimension of industrial relations management (employer-employee relations, labour relations, group relations, and public relations) and the performance of manufacturing firms. The study concluded that sound industrial relations management practices foster employee satisfaction, enhance productivity, support policy development, and create a work environment that promotes motivation, morale, and positive attitudes. These practices also ensure fair compensation and improve management's decision-making capabilities regarding labour and production costs. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by empirically establishing the multidimensional impact of industrial relations management practices on firm performance within the manufacturing sector in South-South Nigeria—a region with limited prior focus in industrial relations research. The study provides practical insights for managers and policymakers on how specific aspects of industrial relations can drive organizational performance. It also enriches the literature by integrating multiple facets of industrial relations (employer-employee labour and group relations) into a unified performance framework for manufacturing firms.

Keywords: Upscalling, Organizational Performance, Manufacturing Firms, Industrial Relations, Management Practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Industrial Relations arises from the relationships between employees or labour, union & organization management and employers' associations, government and institutions. According to Frank & Jeffry, 2020, the three main parties in industrial relations are: (1) State/Government - "which is a regulator and peacemaker, sets the legal framework within which other actors conduct or relate with each other in industrial relations practice". (2) Labour/trade Unions "which represent the interest of employees. The trade unions are much interested in economic and noneconomic issues like power-sharing both in the workplace and in the larger society. The unions like the other actors have great responsibilities for good industrial relations and to ensure that the mass power in their hand is channeled to a constructive end". (3) Employers-Associations-"by which the employers are represented by their industrial employer & associations", Employer & associations protect their members against excessive demands from powerful unions, negotiate on behalf of their members and render advisory and managerial assistance as the case may be. The role of the employers and the unions often determines the course of events in industrial relations (Ademola, 2021).

Industrial relations management is an organisation's strategic scheme designed to help administer and coordinate business function. The goal is to help organisations manage their workforce in the most efficient and effective manner, in order to achieve set objectives. For this reason, organizations need industrial relations management practice to succeed and achieve organizational goal. Industrial relations management practice includes labour relation, Employer-employee relation, group relation and public relation among others (Ugo & Awulikam, 2020), which is the focus of this study. Industrial relations arise due to interactions between different persons/parties. These parties according to Sholokvu & Uteri, 2016) are: supervisors, workers trade unions, employers' associations. Interactive process takes place between, supervisors and industrial workers, supervisors and group/team members, management and trade union leaders, employers' federations and workers' unions.

Employee-Employer relation is a broad term that incorporates many issues from collective bargaining, negotiations, employment legislation to more recent considerations such as work life balance, equal opportunities and managing diversity (Armstrong & Stephens, 2016; Works. Osibanjo Ogunnaike Salau & Ighinoba, 2016). It comprises the practice or initiatives for ensuring that Employees are happy and are productive. Akinbode, Sokefun, Ogunrinade and

Ebeloku (2023) reveal, labour relation is more than a static interpretation of contract between an employee and an employer. Employee role in organization has grown over time”; thus, labor relations become a way to jive, to self-development and to obtain recognition. Employers realize that to keep motivated and committed people in an organization, it needs more than a salary. Nunung, Raden, Mohammad and Erna (2017) report, “Group relation is a relationship between groups and their thrmation takes different dimensions in relation to the interplay of several factors in their environment When a good dynamic exists within a group to work toward a common goal, each individual member will perform effectively and achieve goals set by the group”. Nwanmuoh, Chi, Oghuka, Ifediora, Charles and Godwin (2023) say, Public relation is a vital pan of any business’ communications and reputation-building strategy This is about relationships and reputation which involve gaining trust among publics an organisation tries to reach”.

The act of managing and maintaining positive industrial relations within and outside an organization is known as industrial relations management. Qnyeiugbe Aghara. Olohi and Chidiogo (2018) is of the view, “The management of industrial relations play a crucial role in promoting an harmonious work environment by addressing employee concerns, handling labor disputes. and ensuring compliance with labor laws and regulations”. Sholokwu and Olori (2016), reveals, ‘Industrial relations managers work closely with human resource teams and senior management to develop effective employee engagement strategies and foster a productive and motivated workforce”, Expertise in labor relations and conflict resolution contributes to a cohesive and well-functioning organization (Arugu & Wosu, 2020; Ahmad S. & Shahntd, 2021).

Industrial relations system of a firm is influenced by different factors, According to Mirza (2022), these are: “institutional factors, economic factors, social factors, technological factors, psychological factors, political factors, enterprise-related factors and global factors”, which determine the texture of industrial relations in any setting, in fact they act interact, and reinforce one another in the course of developing industrial relations. Understanding industrial relations is important for human resources professionals and managers, as it allows positive workplace development relationships. Knowing how to manage these relations effectively can provide companies with methods that foster productivity and success (Abushawish, 2020; Nwunkwo, Nkechi & Adanso, 2023),

Employers do not only hire workers but also start a new relationship. Thus managing relationship becomes a salient factor which determines performance and productivity at workplace. The goal of every organization is to make profit and maximize productivity and the type of relations built in the organization can affect organizational goals either positively or negatively. While strong employee-employer relationship drives high performance, employee's happiness and increase productivity; weak relation leads to poor performance, creates unhealthy tensions and conflicts, leads to inefficiency and unproductivity (Adeleke, Jianguo & Uchechi, 2015).

There are various reasons industrial relations management practice is relevant for businesses. According to Sannel (2018). These reasons include employee development, higher engagement levels and reduced workplace conflict. Ana-Maria and Aria (2017) argued. 'Industrial relations are important for employee development because it provides them with the resources they require to be successful in their positions. These resources might include training materials, administrative support or individual meetings; offering employees the ability to continually develop within company might also help increase productivity levels because they can seek ways to develop skills or volunteer for new responsibilities, Firms experience higher employee engagement levels after implementing effective industrial relations because employees who believe their company invests in them may possess more motivation to meet goals. This also help lower firms turnover rates because team members who are engaged may be less likely to seek jobs elsewhere. Higher engagement levels that stem from positive industrial relations are 'also beneficial for increasing company output, which may allow organisational growth in its market and eventually expand. Transparent and positive relations between employers and employees are also important as they help lessen the amount of workplace conflict, If policies, rules and values are communicated clearly, firms experience fewer instances of miscommunication and there may be less conflict if a problem arises (Lievcns, 2017; Mazici & Gölgeli, 2017). Base on the aforementioned, the seminar work examined industrial relations management practice and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria.

The Problem

Industrial relations are of great importance in industrial life. These relations have great bearing on the economic, social and political spheres of a firm. In an organisation, if relations between labour and management are cordial, there will be industrial peace and interests of both parties

will be safeguarded. However, organisations where industrial relations are strained, face lot of problems. The atmosphere of such organisations is always surcharged with industrial unrest leading either to strikes or lockouts. Organisations which ignore the importance of industrial relations face high cost of production, adverse effect on efficiency. low-grade production, negligence in the execution of work, absenteeism among the workers, high rate of labour turnover to mention hut a few.

Poor industrial relations can affects major parties such as: (1) effect on workers: - “include loss of wages, physical injury or death on account of violence during labour unrest, excesses by employers, economic losses, bitterness in relations, adverse effect on career”. (2) Effect on employers / industrialists: - “include less production, less profit, had effect on organisation, bad effect on human relations, damage to machines and equipment adverse effect on development of companies and burden of fixed expenses”. (3) Effect on government:- “include loss of revenue, lack of order in society, blame by different panics”. Other effects include. (a) effect on consumers such as rise in prices, scarcity of goods and bad effect on quality of goods (h) Adverse effect on international trade such as fall in exports and rise in imports, hindrance in economic development of the country and uncertainty in economy.

Almost all sections of the society suffer loss in one way or the other due to poor industrial relations management. In order to maintain peace in industrial units, it is of utmost importance that employers and workers should endeavour to establish cordial human relations and properly manage b stakeholders. Perhaps the main cause of poor industrial relations results from inefficiency and labour unrest: which is a mental laziness on the part of both management and labour, Management is not sufficiently concerned to ascertain the causes of inefficiency and unrest following the laissez-faire policy, until it is faced with strikes and more serious unrest. Even with regard to methods of work, management does not bother to devise the best method but leaves it mainly to the subordinates to work it out for themselves. Contempt on the part of the employers towards the workers is another major cause. Thus, the reasons for this study to evaluate industrial Relations Management Practice and Manufacturing Firms Performance in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of employer-employee relation on manufacturing firms’ performance in South-South Nigeria?

- ii. What is the effect of labour relation on manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria?
- iii. What is the effect of group relation on manufacturing firm's performance in South-South Nigeria?

Objectives

- i. evaluate the effect of employer-employee relation on manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria.
- ii. assess the effect of labour relation on manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria
- iii. determine the effect of group relation on manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between employer-employee relation and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₂: The labour relations has no significant relationship with manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria

H₀₃: The group relation and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria has no significant relationship

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Industrial Relation

Industrial Relation is one of the problems that can jeopardize firms' success, The term "industrial Relations (IR)" is also known as a "labour Management Relations" or "industrial relations", The term, "Industrial Relations" comprises of two terms (Emuchay, 2018): (1). industry - refers to "Any productive activity in which an individual or a group of individuals is engaged". (2.) Relations - it means "the relationships that exist within the industry between the employer and his workmen", Adagbabiri and Okolie (2017) the term industrial relations refers to "the whole field of relationship that exists because of necessary collaboration in

employment process of modern industry”. Industrial relations are nothing but “Employment Relationship” in an industrial setting. According to Osah *et al.* (2017), industrial relations includes all “the laws, titles, regulation, and agreements awards of court, customs, traditions, as well as policy framework laid by the government”. Oguwa, (2022) define industrial relations as the management of relationship between employer and employees with ultimate objectivity of achieving optimum level of productivity in terms of goods and services. Spector (2018) argued that competition forced industrial relations to perform a strategic role as a business partner instead of adopting industrial relations practices only to take disciplinary actions and advocating employees. Industrial relations managers exercise their expertise to provide guidelines to the line managers on how to improve performance and behavior of the employees and provide assistance to the business managers in resolving employee grievances, disputes and legal matters. Thus, Industrial Relation invokes a study of conditions of work, mainly the level of wages, security of employment, social conflict, and cultural interactions legal aspects of disputes under laws etc. International Labour Organization (ILO) in Fatile and Adekanbi (2017) reveals, ‘industrial relations deal with either the relationship between the state and employers and workers organizations or the relation between the occupational organizations themselves’. According to Spector (2018), ‘industrial relation is a relationship between management and employees or among employees and their organization that characterizes and grows out of employment’. According to Kormene, Seth and Ojiabo (2017), Industrial relations is concerned with the systems and procedures used by unions and employers to determine the reward for effort and other conditions of employment, to protect the interests of the employed and their employers and to regulate the ways in which employers treat their employees’, Thus, Industrial relations refer the relationship that exists between the employer and employees in the day-to-day working of an organization (Solanki, 2022).

Industrial Relation Management

Employees cannot work together without positive relationships with their colleagues and leadership team, Proper relationship management helps build effective teams where everyone respects each other, collaborates, listens to new ideas, and works together seamlessly. To maintain positive employee relations. Raimi and Adias (2018) revealed that organizations must first view employees as stakeholders and contributors in an organisation. Adopting this perspective encourages management and executives to seek employee feedback, value their input, and consider the employee experience when making business decisions.

Industrial Relations Management is of a paramount importance to ensure a healthy and cooperative work environment, minimizing labor disputes and conflicts, fostering positive employee relations, boost morale, productivity, and employee loyalty, leading to higher retention rates and reduced turnover (Ugbudian. 2017). Expertise in labor law and regulations ensures legal compliance mitigating potential legal risks for organization. Additionally, effective employee engagement strategies developed by Industrial Relations Management practice positively impact organizational culture, fostering a motivated and engaged workforce essential for achieving long-term business success.

Industrial relations management involves (Adejuwon, 2020): (1) Managing relationships with unions & ensuring that the Company's treatment of employees is consistent with its core business values and objectives. (2) Handling complaints, managing grievance procedures, and facilitating counseling in conjunction with other stakeholders. (3) Investigating and resolving complex or critical industrial relations issues in a timely and effective manner. (4) Collating and analyzing employee feedback across all levels on a regular basis and revising people programs and policies to generate more positive outcomes. (5) Participating in and/or leading projects focused on continuous improvement.

The major parties in industrial relations according to Armstrong (2019) include: employer, employees and state/government that plays significant roles in successful management of industrial relation. Industrial relations management practice involves: Employer-employee relations, labour relations, group relations and public relations among.

The bargaining power : The employers is weakened in comparison to that of trade unions, though they have high bargaining power when compared to that of employees. So, they form into associations to equate their bargaining power with trade union, and these associations protect the employer by putting pressure on government and trade union. Workers play a crucial role in industrial relation. Worker as a whole includes his working age, Educational background, Social and family background, Psychological traits, Talents, Skills, Culture, Attitude towards others work. Workers form into their associations called "Trade Unions" to get their problems solved. The trade unions work for workers economic interest through collective bargaining by bringing the pressure on the management through economic and political strategies. Government plays a balancing role in industrial relations. Government has its influence on industrial relations through industrial relations policy, Labour policy, Labour law implementation, Acting as a mediator in the process of conciliation and adjudication.

Government regulates the behaviour of both the employer association and workers organizations (Solaki, 2022; Uzoh 2017).

Manufacturing Firm

A manufacturing business is defined as a business that uses components, additional parts, or raw materials to make a finished good (Devon & Aaron, 2023). The product is then either sold directly to other industries, consumers, or to a store that consumers shop at to obtain an item. Many of the products that consumers buy and utilize are the result of manufacturing. They undergo the process of design and assembly before arriving in stores for purchase. According to Devon and Aaron (2023), manufacturing is defined as the conversion of raw materials into finished commodities through the use of tools, labor, and machinery. Raw materials include items such as wood, stone, and ore. They become finished goods including lumber, pillars, or steel for construction. In this study, four manufacturing firm were used selected from the South-South region of Nigeria namely: (1) Brightway Glove located at 3 High Tension Road, Ekorokoro Community, Aleto, Eleme, Port Harcourt Rivers State Nigeria (2) Life Flour Mill Sapele, Delta State (3) Glosa Roofing Benin City, Edo State and (4) Senalux Paint of 6, Banusha, Kpansia, Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is defined as how well a firm executes her duties and responsibilities. Many companies assess their employees' performance on an annual or quarterly basis to define certain areas that need improvement and to encourage further success in areas that are meeting or exceeding expectations (Vatan, Ardali & Shahin, 2022) in order to determine the overall organizational performance. Performance is a critical factor in organizational success, helping to also improve overall productivity, profitability, and employee morale. By assessing organizational performance regularly, companies can identify areas that need improvement, provide support and training to employees, and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals (Vatan *et al*, 2022).

Conceptual Framework

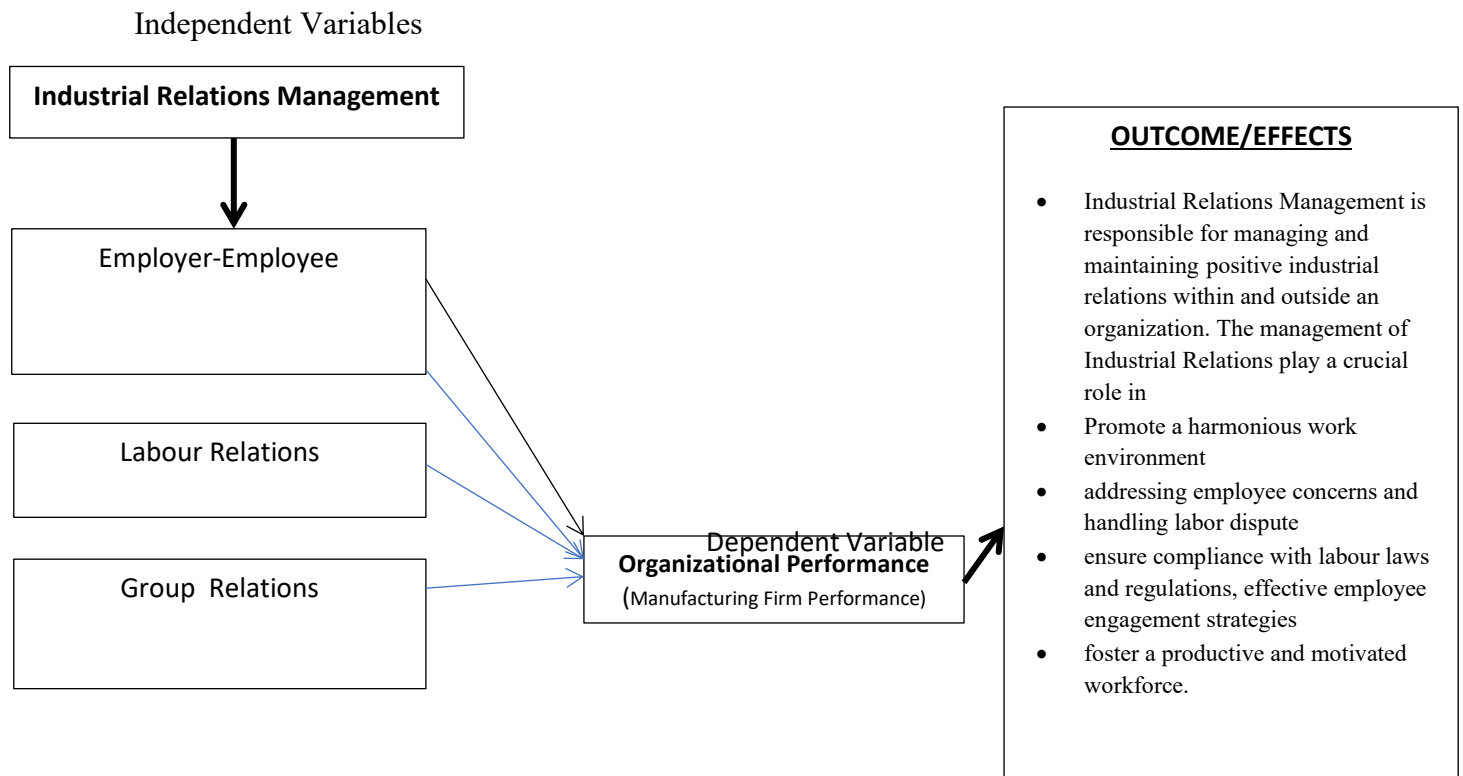


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Industrial Relations and Manufacturing Firm Performance
Source: Researcher (2024)

Fig. 1 shows that, the independent variables: employer-employee relations, labour relations, group relations and public relations have significant impacts on manufacturing firms' performance (dependent variable). These impacts are beneficiary to both employers and employees. Organisations that implement good industrial relations maintain positive industrial relations within and outside an organization, promote a harmonious work environment, addressing employee concerns and handling labor dispute, ensure compliance with labor laws and regulations, effective employee engagement strategies, foster a productive and motivated workforce and contributes to a cohesive and well-functioning organization.

Effect of Employer-employee relation on Organisational Performance

Employees are among organization's most important resources and coined as most valuable assets. The nature and amount of work performed by them have a direct impact on the productivity of an organization. So, maintaining healthy employee relations in an organization

is a pre-requisite for organizational growth and success (Abushawish, 2020). In most countries, manufacturing firms form core of the economy. For these businesses to be successful, the frontline employees play an important role to ensure that the set objective of organization is achieved effectively by maximizing the use of the available limited resources to maximize revenue which depends on employees' attitude toward the organization (Kyasimiire, 2021; Onyango, 2019). The greater their attitudes towards their work, the greater their work will be. Employees' job performance has been defined as how employees fulfill their job duties and execute their required tasks which in-turn affects organizational performance (Oguwa, 2022).

However, employee attitude is significantly influenced by the kind of relationship that employees have with employer. It is the responsibility of management and entire organization to ensure that there is a conducive environment to cultivate positive attitude in the employees. It has been reported that the relationship employees have with their employer (Oguwa, 2022), and their attitude affects the performance of the organization. If the relationship is positive, it fosters a positive attitude among the employees, and in turn they are motivated in their duties. This leads to overall organizational improvement in its efforts to achieve set goals (Spector, 2018; Worlu *et al.*, 2016).

Employer-employee relationship ensure that employees are happy and are productive, offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation, and all types of problem solving and dispute resolution. It involves handling the pay-work bargain, dealing with employment practices, terms and conditions of employment, issues arising from employment, providing employees with a voice and communicating with employees (Frank & Jeffrey, 2020). It also contributes to satisfactory productivity, increase in employee morale and motivation (Ahmad & Shahzad, 2021)

Effect of Labour relation on Organisational Performance

Labor relation is a term use to define the process between employers and employees, management and unions in order to make decisions. The decisions taken refer to wages, working conditions, hours of work, and safety at work, security and grievances (Ana-Maria & Ana, 2017). Wages and benefits received by employees for their work represent the compensation or "the price paid by employers for their workers' services". Wage and salary are considered as most important and difficult collective bargaining issue. In the employment relationships, the collective bargaining process has several implication at individual levels, for

the employers, as a determinant of production and labor costs, among employers on the competition market, between employers and employees as a distribution of added value, for employees, as a key factor for their income and sustainability on a dynamic labor market, among employees, expressing the solidarity through the ‘wage floors’ applying to different group of workers at a given bargaining level (Emuchay, 2018).

Parties could negotiate the total package of wage and benefits in individual terms or in collective terms. The aim of labor relations is that, employee must be paid for their work, and employers must receive qualitative work. Also, the negotiations reflect the interest of all the parties involved such as managers, employees through their representatives and government (Akinbode *et al*, 2023).

Effect of Group Relation on Organisational Performance

Groups abound in all human settings and their formation takes different dimensions in relation to the interplay of several factors in their environment. The term, group according to Adeleke (2015), is used for two or more individuals who come together and interact with each other in order to accomplish a certain goal. The group concept is defined diversely in the social psychology and sociology (Monique & Michael, 2015).

When good dynamic exists within a group working toward a common goal, each individual member will perform effectively and achieve goals set by the group. Poor group dynamics can adversely affect performance, leading to a negative outcome on the common goal (Arugu & Wosu, 2020). Group relations can have a significant impact on an organization, both positive and negative. Positively it can (1) increased productivity (2) improved decision-making (3) increased innovation and (4) improved morale (Adeleke, 2015; Williamson, 2016; Arugu & Wosu, 2020).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Pluralist Theory of industrial relations, developed by Dunlop (1958), emphasizes that workplace conflict is inevitable because organizations consist of multiple interest groups with differing objectives. According to the theory, the industrial relations system functions as a social subsystem influenced by technology, the economy, and political power. It comprises three main actors: management, employees, and government agencies. Since management and

workers naturally pursue different goals, disagreements over authority, tasks, and rewards are unavoidable.

Rather than viewing conflict as destructive, the pluralist perspective considers it a healthy process through which employees express grievances and management is prompted to find better ways of addressing issues. In the context of this study, the theory suggests that acknowledging competing interests and resolving conflicts collectively can create a more peaceful and productive environment, enabling both employers and employees to achieve their objectives effectively.

Empirical Review

Sholokwu and Olori (2016) investigated management practices and industrial harmony in oil and gas firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between Management Practices and Industrial Harmony in the Oil and Gas Firms in Rivers State. Sample size of 343 were derived using Taro Yamane formula to from the population of 2400 respondents that consist of managers and employees in twelve oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Descriptive survey method of research was adopted and data were collected through questionnaire. The demographic data were analyzed using simple percentage and Mean score were used in the analysis of items on the questionnaire The Speannans Rank Conelatron statistical method was used to test the seven hypotheses at 0.01 level of significance which was facilitated by Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The results revealed a significant relationship between Management practice and Industrial harmony. It was also found that organizational culture significantly moderates the relationship between managerial practices and industrial harmony in Oil and Gas Companies in Rivers State. Therefore, the study concludes that Management practice affects Industrial harmony in Oil and Gas Companies in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that Oil and Gas Companies should embark on good management practices by implementing collective agreement, reducing casualisation of staff and to develop a promotion policy, to fewer incidences of strike and grievances to attain industrial harmony. However, this research is not exhaustive; hence, it suggests that future research should be carried out on the effect of Staff casualisation practices on industrial harmony in manufacturing firms in Rivers state.

Aria-Maria and Aria (2017) examined the labor relations through the role of trade unions, collective bargaining, wages and benefits across the European Union. We conclude that labor

relations have a direct influence on the labor market, designing the lines for taking decisions in organizations, but also, by governments. Our argumentation explains the relationship between employers and employees through legal rights (established by the law), negotiation process, collective bargaining, 'actors' in this process, wage and benefits, social and security protection.

Samwel (2018) examined the effect of employee relations on employee performance and organizational performance and at the same time identify various employee relations practices used by small organizations in Tanzania. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and used a stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 387 respondents from selected small organizations in Tanzania. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis and the results presented using tables. The findings of the study show that small organizations in Tanzania are aware of the benefits of maintaining good employee relations and correct remedial actions taken to minimize poor employee relations in the organization. The findings further indicate a positive significant relationship between employee relations and employee performance as well as between employee relations and organization performance. Moreover, the findings reveal the use of unfair labour practices in small organizations in Tanzania. The study recommends that small organizations in Tanzania should focus more on implementing fair labour practices and building effective and sustainable employee relations that will ensure their growth and survival.

Nwankwo *et al.* (2023) examined the effect of industrial relations practices on the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to: determine effect of career development practice on organizational market share in Nigeria public sector and examine effect of work-life balance practice on organizational total quality in Nigeria public sector. The research design was descriptive survey methods. The sample size of 399 respondents was drawn from 503 staff of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED) in River State Nigeria. Research questions of the study were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated were tested using single regression analysis. The empirical result showed that career development practice has positive and significant effect organizational market share in Nigeria public sector (t - Statistics (8.887) > P -value (0.000) and work-life balance practice has positive and significant effect organizational total quality in Nigeria public sector (t - statistics (6.446) > P -value (0.000)). The study concludes that industrial

relations practice has positive and significant effect on the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria. The study recommends that management of Nigeria public sector should establish relationship that is characterized by a concern for equity and justice and this will require the communication of sufficient information about changes and developments. Employees should be treated fairly and honestly.

Arugu and Wosu (2020) investigated Trade Unions and Industrial Relations Best Practices; Emerging Trends in Workers Welfare and Productivity. A Survey-based descriptive research design was used. The study adopted total quality Management theory (TQM) and was carried on senior employees working in two selected public institutions such as Michael Imodu National Institute of Labour Studies (MINILS) and National Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) in Nigeria. To achieve this, a sample of 675 union members were selected and distributed same number of copies of questionnaire out of which 642 were received upon which the data analyses were based. In addition to the questionnaire survey, a total of 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 6 In- Depth interviews (IDI) were conducted to complement the use of the questionnaire, while secondary data were consulted by review of empirical literature. After a detailed analysis, the study found that though the deployment of technology In industrial setting increased productivity and opened a window for more employment opportunities in some cases, at the same time, anti-union/unfair labour practices and obsolete policies, including trends such as outsourcing and contract staffing adversely affected industrial relations best practices, workers welfare and in some cases ushered people Out of mainstream company employment, replacing them with cheap labour. The study therefore recommends that there is need for key players to forge common ground to deal with issues that affect work conditions to ensure Free and fair industrial relations climate that will guarantee decent and productive work in Nigeria.

Akinbode *et al.* (2023) examined labour practices and plastic manufacturing firms' image in Nigeria. To achieve the objective of the study, a survey was conducted among two hundred and thirty-eight (238) employees of selected plastic manufacturing firms in Nigeria. It was revealed in the processed data that there is significant relationship between unfair labour practices and plastic manufacturing firms' image in Nigeria. Specifically, the study discovered that female employees' were exposed to unfair labour practices in plastic manufacturing firms than male employees' and this have really affected the image of plastic manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Similarly, employees with low retention tendencies were found to have experienced

more unfair labour practices which have earned the firms negative image than those with high retention tendencies. The study concluded that unfair labour practices have contributed significantly the battered image of the Nigerian plastic manufacturing firms. It was recommended that urgent steps must be taken to reposition the Nigerian plastic manufacturing firms to earn positive image and make it more employees' friendly in order to enhance the productivity level of the industry in Nigeria

4. TOOLS AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine industrial relations management practices and the performance of manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it facilitated the systematic collection of data through a structured questionnaire. The study population comprised 385 employees drawn from four randomly selected manufacturing firms: Brightway Glove, Port Harcourt (145 employees); Life Flow Mill, Sapele (59 employees); Glosa Roofing, Benin City (96 employees); and Senalux Paint, Yenagoa (85 employees). These firms were chosen to ensure a manageable scope for data collection while still enabling generalization of findings. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 191 respondents was selected.

Data were obtained primarily through a structured questionnaire divided into two sections (A and B). Section A collected demographic information, while Section B focused on industrial relations practices and firm performance. Items were measured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. This scale allowed for the quantification of respondents' perceptions and supported effective statistical analysis. To ensure reliability, the instrument was subjected to a test-retest procedure, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained was 0.82, indicating good internal consistency. Content validity was further established through expert review by academics and industry practitioners. Out of 191 questionnaires distributed, 180 were returned, representing a response rate of 94 percent. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Simple percentages and means were used to address the research questions, while multiple regression analysis in SPSS version 25 was employed to test the study's hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

The model of multiple regressions is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_n X_n$$

$$MP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ER + \beta_2 LR + \beta_3 GR$$

MP = Manufacturing Firm's Performance → Dependent Variable

ER = Employer-Employee Relations

LR = Labour Relations

GR = Group Relations

β_0 = The value of MP when all the independent variables are equal to zero.

$\beta_1 \beta_2 \beta_3$ = The estimated regression coefficients. Each regression coefficient represents the change in MP relative to a one-unit change in the respective independent variables

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION

The number of questionnaire distributed was 191 copies, but 180 copies were retrieved which was used for data analysis. The research questions were answered using simple percentage and mean. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regressions in SPSS 25 at a significant level of 0.05.

Demographical Data of Respondents

Table 1: Demographical Data of Respondents by Sex

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	85	47
Female	95	53
Total	180	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 show that, 85(47%) of the respondents were male while 95(53) of the respondents were female,

Table 2: Demographical Data of Respondents by Age

Variable(years)	Frequency	Percentage %
Below 26	20	11
26-30	30	17
31-35	80	44
Above 35	50	28
Total	180	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 show that, 20(11%) of the respondents were below 26 years, 30(17%) of the respondents were between 26-30 years, 80(44%) of the respondents were between 31-35 years while 50(28%) of the respondents were above 35 years.

Table.3: Demographical Data of Respondents by Education

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
FSLC	30	17
NCE/OND	50	28
HND/BSC	80	44
POSTGRADUATE	20	11
Total	180	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 3 indicated that 30(17) of the total respondents were FSLC holder, 50(28%) respondents were NCE/OND holder, 80(44%) of the total respondents were HND/B.Sc. holder while 20(11%) of the total respondents were M.Sc/ Ph.D holder.

Answering of Research Questions'

Research Question 1

What is the effect of Employer-employee relations on Manufacturing Firms Performance in South-South Nigeria?

Table 4: Percentage and Mean Responses of Respondents to item 1-4

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
1	Ensure employees happiness and productivity	78 (43%)	58 (32%)	34 (19%)	10 (6%)	3.13	29.46	Accepted
2	Offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation, and all types of problem solving and dispute resolution	88 (49%)	78 (43%)	0 (0%)	14 (8%)	3.33	44.44	Accepted
3	Increase in employee morale and motivation	76 (42%)	68 (38%)	20 (11%)	16 (9%)	3.13	31.39	Accepted
4	Ensure that there is a conducive environment and conditions that cultivate positive attitude in the employees	70 (39%)	90 (50%)	16 (9%)	4 (2%)	3.26	41.52	Accepted
Grand Total						3.21	36.70	Accepted

Field survey (2025)

Table 4 shows the means response of the respondents to items 1-4 as 3.13, 3.33, 3.13 and 3.26 respectively; with a grand mean and standard deviation of 3.21 ± 36.70 . This implies that, employer-employee relations ensure employees happiness and productivity; offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation; increase in employee morale and motivation; and establish work environment that cultivates positive attitude in the employees.

Research Question 2

What is the effect of labour relations on Manufacturing Firma Performance in South-South Nigeria?

Table 5: Percentage and Mean Responses of Respondents to items 5-8

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
5	Ensure employees are paid for their work	84 (47%)	70 (39%)	2 (1%)	24 (13%)	3.19	38.45	Accepted
6	Ensure employers receive qualitative work	68 (38%)	54 (30%)	38 (21%)	20 (11%)	2.94	20.69	Accepted
7	Helps management to make proper decisions	70 (39%)	72 (40%)	18 (10%)	20 (11%)	3.07	30.04	Accepted
8	Determinant of production and labour costs	86 (48%)	80 (44%)	4 (2%)	10 (6%)	3.34	44.02	Accepted
Grand Total						3..14	33.30	Accepted

Field survey (2025)

Table 5 shows the means response of the respondents to items 5 - 8 as 119, 2.94, 3.07 and 3.34 respectively, with a grand mean and standard deviation of $3.14 \pm 36.33.30$. This implies that, labour relations ensure employees are paid for their wart ensure employers receive qualitative work; helps management to make proper decisions and determinant of production and labor costs.

Research Question Three:

What is the effect of group relations on Manufacturing Firms Performance in South-South Nigeria?

Table 6: Percentage and Mean Responses of Respondents to item 9-12

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
9	Increased productivity	72 (40%)	58 (32%)	10 (6%)	40 (22%)	2.90	26.76	Accepted
10	Improved decision-making	65 (36%)	75 (42%)	20 (11%)	20 (11%)	3.03	29.15	Accepted
11	Increased innovation	98 (54%)	50 (28%)	14 (8%)	18 (10%)	3.27	38.83	Accepted

12	Improved morale	70 (39%)	82 (46%)	15 (8%)	13 (7%)	3.16	36.14	Accepted
Grand Total						3..09	32.72	Accepted

Field survey (2025)

Table 6 shows the means response of the respondents to items 9- 12 as: 2.90, 3.03, 3.27 and 3.16 respectively; with a grand mean and standard deviation of 3.09±32.72. This implies that, group relations increased productivity, improved decision-making, increased innovation and improve moral.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses are tested using multiple regressions in SPSS 25.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X^1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_n X_n$$

$$MP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ER + \beta_2 LR + \beta_3 GR$$

MP = Manufacturing Firm's Performance → Dependent Variable

ER = Employer-Employee Relations

LR = Labour Relations

GR Group Relations

OUTPUT OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSTS IN SPSS 25

Table 8: Variables Entered /Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PR, LR, ER, GR ^b		

a. Dependent Variable: MP

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 9: Model Summar^{9a}

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin – Watson
1	.960 ^a	.921	.919	.09942	.253

a. Predictors: (Constant), PR, LR, ER, GR

b. Dependent Variable: MP

The R value of 0.960 in the Model Summary Table (Table 9) represents the Pearson correlation. This implies that there is a strong and positive correlation across the variables since the value of $r(0.960)$ tends to 1.

The R Square (r^2) value of 0.921 (Table 9) is known as the coefficient of determination, It shows the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. This implies that 92% of the variation in Manufacturing Firms' Performance can be explained by employer-employee relations, labour relations, group relations and public relations.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	20.114	4	5.028	508.750	.000 ^b
Residual	1.730	175	.010		
Total	21.843	179			

a. Dependent Variable: MP

b. Predictors: (Constant), PR, LR, ER, GR

The value of Sig (0.00) in Table 10 indicates that, the independent variables (ER, LR, OR and PR) combined has a statistically significant association with the dependent variable (MP).

Table 11: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.574	.152		-3.786	.000		
ER	.119	.070	.153	1.700	.011	.056	17.907
LR	.104	.068	-.139	-1.528	.021	.055	18.254
GR	.324	.115	.313	2.828	.004	.037	27.043

a. Dependent Variable: MP

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between employer-employee relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria

The Sig-value (0.011) of Employer-Employee Relations (ER) in Table 11, indicates that, there is a significant association of employer-employee relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South Nigeria since the Sig-value (0.011) is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states, “There is no significant relationship between employer-employee relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria”, is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between employer-employee relations and manufacturing firms’ performance in South-South, Nigeria

For every additional effort to improve Employer-Employee Relations (ER), Manufacturing Firms' Performance is expected to increase by coefficient of 0.119 (Table 11) assuming other independent variables remain constant.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant relationship between labour relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria

The Sig-value (0.021) of Labour Relations in Table 11, indicates that there is a significant association of labour relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South Nigeria since the Sig-value (0.021) is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states, "There is no significant relationship between labour relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria", is rejected. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between labour relations and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South, Nigeria

For every additional effort to improve Labour Relations (LR), Manufacturing Firms' Performance is expected to increase by coefficient of 0.104 (table 11) assuming other independent variables remain constant.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant relationship between group relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria

The Sig-value (0.004) of Group Relations (GR) in Table 11, indicates that there is a significant association of group relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South Nigeria since the Sig-value (0.004) is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states, "There is no significant relationship between group relations and manufacturing firms performance in South-South, Nigeria", is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between group relations and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South, Nigeria

For every additional effort to improve Group Relations (GR), Manufacturing Firms' Performance is expected to increase by coefficient of 0.324 (Table 11) assuming other independent variables remain constant.

The estimated regression equation for the model base on the analysis can be written as:

$$MP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ER + \beta_2 LR + \beta_3 GR$$

Therefore,

$$MP = 0.574 + 119ER + 104LR + 324GR + 815PR$$

6. FINDINGS

The findings of the test of hypothesis' I and the answer to research question 1 (Table 4) reveals, "There is a significant relationship between employer-employee relations and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria". Employer-employee relations ensure employees happiness, productivity, and offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation. Increase employee morale, motivation and establish work environment that cultivates positive attitude in the employees. This finding 9lççals sent scholars such as Frank and Jeffrey (2020) and Ahmad and Shahzad (2021), ilx mesh. "Employer-employee relationship enable employees are happy and are productive, enhance employee recognition, policy development and interpretation, and all types of problem solving and dispute resolution".

The findings of the test of hypothesis 2 and the answer to research question 2 (Table 5) reveals, "There is a significant relationship between labour relations and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria", labour relations ensure employees are paid for their work and employers receive qualitative work. It helps management to make proper decisions, determinant of production and labor costs.. This finding supports Akinbode *et al.* (2023) who ascertain, "The aim of labor relations is that employees must be paid for their work, and the employers must receive qualitative work".

The findings of the test of hypothesis 3 and the answer to research question 3 (Fable 6) reveals, "There is a significant relationship between group relations and manufacturing firms' performance in South-South Nigeria". Group relations increased productivity, improved decision-making, increased innovation and improve moral. This finding supports the findings of Adeleke (2015); Williamson (2016); Arugu and Wosu (2020), who are of the view that group relations can have a significant impact on an organization, that it can increased productivity, improved decision-making, increased innovation and improved morale

The findings of the test of hypothesis 4 and the answer to research question 4 (Table 7) reveals,

7. CONCLUSION

Industrial relations management is an organisation's strategic scheme designed to help, administer and coordinate business functions regarding industrial relations. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that industrial relations management practice has a significant relationship with manufacturing firms' performance.

Industrial Relation Management Practice ensures employees happiness, productivity, offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation. Increase employee morale, motivation and establish work environment that cultivates positive attitude in the employees. It ensures employees are paid for their work and employers receive qualitative work. It helps management to make proper decisions and act as determinant of production and labour costs. It also increases productivity, improved decision-making, increased innovation and improves moral. Moreover, it increases brand credibility, sales and leads. It enhances positive brand image and cost-effectiveness.

Recommendation

- i. Manufacturing firms should uphold strong employer–employee relations to create a positive work environment that fosters employee satisfaction, commitment, and productivity.
- ii. Management should also strengthen labor relations by ensuring fair compensation for employees while securing high-quality performance for the organization.
- iii. In addition, sustaining effective group relations is essential for enhancing productivity, improving decision-making, stimulating innovation, and boosting employee morale.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Faculty of the Management Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka.

April 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

I am an MBA student of the above institution, carrying out a research work on Industrial Relations and management practice in manufacturing firms in South-South, Nigeria. This questionnaire is meant to obtain necessary data that will help me complete the work successfully. Your sincere response to the items in the questionnaire will greatly assist me to achieve the purpose of the research.

I would be grateful if my request meets your kind response. Be assured that all information given will be used confidentially for the research and academic purpose.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

Researcher

SECTION A: BIODATA

Supply the necessary information applicable to you by ticking (✓) in the spaces provided and fill necessary space.

1. Name.....

2. Sex: Male () Female ()

3. Marital Status: Married () Single () Widowed ()

4. Age: under 26 () 26-30 () 31-35 () 36 and above ()

5. Educational Qualification: PSLC/SSCE () OND/NCE () HND/BSc. ()

M.Sc/Ph.D ()

SECTION B

Instruction: Below are statements/items on Industrial Relations Management Practice. You are to tick (✓) against any of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree or None; in line with your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the statements.

Employer- Employee Relations

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	The employer – employee relations ensure employees happiness and productivity				
2	The employer-employee relations offer assistance in a variety of ways including employee recognition, policy development and interpretation, and all types of problem solving and dispute resolution				
3	The employer-employee relations increase in employee morale and motivation				
4	The employer-employee relations ensure that there is a conducive environment and conditions that cultivate positive attitude in the employees				

Labour Relations

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD
5	The labour relations ensure employees are paid for their work				
6	The labour relations ensure employee receive qualitative work				
7	The labour relations helps management to make proper decisions				
8	The labour relations determinant of production and labour costs				

Group Relations

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD
9	The group relations increase productivity				
10	The group relations improve decision-making				
11	The group relations increase innovation				
12	The group relations improved morale				

Public Relations

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD
13	The public relations increase brand credibility				
14	The public relations increase sales and leads				
15	The public relations increase positive brand image				
16	The public relations encourage cost-effectiveness				

Organizational Performance

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD
17	Organization performance helps to improve overall productivity, profitability, and employee morale				
18	Organization performance identifies areas that need improvement, provide support and training to employees, and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals				
19	Organization performance encourages further success in areas that are meeting or exceeding expectations				
20	Organization performance helps to also improve overall productivity them to increase organization's performance and productivity.				