



RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND EMPLOYEE'S EFFICIENT PERFORMANCE IN THE MARITIME SECTOR IN NIGERIA: THE REFERRAL OPTION

Edih, O. University, Onoriode, O. Humphrey and Faghawari N.David

¹Nigeria Maritime University, Dept. of Marine Economics and Finance, Okerenkoko, Nigeria

²Delta State University of Science and Technology, Dept of Business Administration, Ozoro, Nigeria

³ Nigeria Maritime University, Dept of Ports Management Okerenkoko, Nigeria

oweilade123uni@gmail.com

Abstract: Global business dynamics, especially in the maritime affairs are compelling managers of firms to consider appropriate recruitment strategies that will produce effective and efficient work-force. It has been observed that creativity and innovations in service delivery and increased competitors have heightened competition in the maritime business environment. Therefore, strategic human resource management is required in hunting for qualified and competent personnel that is mostly sought after in the industry. This study examined recruitment strategies and employee's efficient performance in the Maritime Sector in Nigeria: the referral option. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of referral recruitment on employee's efficiency. The study generated primary data through questionnaires distributed to 300 respondents. Data were analysed using multiple regressions analyses. It was found that, referral recruitment had positive and significant effect on employee's efficiency. The study concludes that referral improves worker's loyalty, dedication to duties and overall performance. It is therefore, recommended that referral strategy be adopted by stevedores firms since it leads to improved productivity, revenues and overall organisational performance.

Keywords: recruitment strategies, referral option, employee's performance, maritime sector, Nigeria

1.Introduction

The effect of globalisation, whether positive or negative on persons, cultures, organisations, independent states and the world generally is colossal and far reaching (Edih, Onoriode & Nnafili,2020). Hitherto ways of doing things have been altered knowingly or unknowingly. The maritime sector as part of world's economics is not left out. The consequences of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have facilitated service delivery and shipping contracts in maritime business. Due to the need to meet up with the current business dynamics and realities, to overcome inevitable challenges, it is therefore necessary to recruit a special breed of workforce, competent enough to shoulder modern tasks and responsibilities in shipping trade and management of ports across maritime nations.

This amounts to a call for the application of the appropriate recruitment strategies.

Recruitment exercise is basically the function of the human resource department in an organisation (Eromafuru, 2016). It is management policy(as initiative of the Human resource department) that determines the appropriate recruitment strategy desirable for employing workers into an organisation. It has been observed that competent work-force enhances the performance of an organization (Uzuegbu, Arya & Uche, 2012). However, it is very difficult and costly to gather and recruit such persons with the required skills and experience. That's why, recruitment and selection processes are paramount in the procurement of staff for an organisation. In order to sustain and improve the core competencies of an organisation over competitors in an industry, potential

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employees have to undergo relevant selection process (Opayemi & Oyesola, 2012). On this basis, applicants can be contacted through job advert, referral, host community approach, employment agency and lots of possible strategies (Edih, 2021). Referral is a recruitment mechanism that allows reputable employees of an organisation to recommend candidates for employment. It is one of the internal sources of recruitment available to an organisation. The belief is that insiders (employees) know the strengths, weaknesses, culture, people, vision, mission and objectives of the organisation (Ricardson, 2018). Referral is also seen as external recruitment strategy because recommended candidates come from outside the organisation (Eromafuru, 2016). Based on these submissions (Ricardson, 2018 ; Eromafuru, 2016), referral is an hybrid recruitment strategy. Referral recruitment is word of mouth advertisement that attracts low cost per hire.

Human resource is an invaluable asset in every organization whether public or private sector. The incontrovertible significance of employees to the survival of any organisation was emphasized in Omisore and Okofu (2016). It portrays that recruitment and selection of staff in public and private organisations were central or cardinal to the existence and sustainability of firms or companies (the basic ingredient of human resource based theory). This study opines that, the human resource implements the short, medium and long-term goals of the organisation. Modern creativity, innovations and competence in information and communication technologies (ICTs) are embedded in human capability and/ or capacity. More so, organisational objectives can only be achieved through effective co-ordination of the human resource. Therefore, the nature and composition of the human capital is very key to the success of modern corporate entities.

Boxall and Purcell (2008) buttressed the need for an effective recruitment and selection strategies , since both seek to address five solid questions such as, whom to recruit, where to recruit, what recruitment sources to use,

when to recruit and what message to communicate. Som (2008) addressed the intricate relationship between innovative and creative recruitment policy of employees and organisational performance. According to Gudsorf (2008), recruitment represents the process of attracting individuals or group of persons on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, to apply for jobs with an organization. However, it is not appropriate to ask applicants irrelevant questions in the application forms. Asking candidates to complete application forms with questions on gender, race, national origin, education dates, and disabilities, past salary levels, age, drivers` license, and citizenship were not appropriate. This may not enhance the needed competence for selecting candidates.

The strong desire for competent workforce, and promotion of the competitive advantage (core competencies) of an organization are dependent on the implementation of a strategic recruitment plan. Based on this, a strategic human resource management has become inevitable. Edih (2021) contends that, circumventing the recruitment process (a notable challenge in public sector recruitment) may hamper organisational performance. Several studies have been carried out on recruitment process and employees performance in hospitality industry (Edih, 2021), in public sector (Omisore & Okufor, 2016), referral options in Bangladesh's factory (Heath, 2011). The effect of recruitment procedures on stevedores firms (maritime organisations) is a gap to study.

The maritime sector, being a specialised, sophisticated venture, highly capital intensive and international trade is regulated by shipping laws such as Cabotage Act, 2003, Carriage of Goods Act, 1971, Merchant Shipping Act, 1979, Maritime Convention Act, 1911, to mention a few and these inform the nature and composition of workers as well as their remuneration. Hence, this study seeks to examine recruitment strategies and employee's performance in the maritime sector in Nigeria : the referral option. The null hypothesis states that referral recruitment does not affect worker's efficiency in the



maritime sector in Nigeria. It is believed that the recommendations at the completion of the study would afford government and the private sector (stevedores firms) to make appropriate recruitment decisions that are beneficial to the maritime sector.

2. 0 Literature Review

Recruitment strategies

It involves the different methods, procedures or approaches adopted by an organisation to inform, attract, screen and select applicants for employment into the vacant positions. These strategies include, job advertisement, referral, selection interview, host community approach, private recruitment agencies (Edih, 2021). Referral recruitment strategy is one of the recruitment strategies found in human resource management literature. Referral is based on the unqualified recommendation(s) of reputable employees of an organisation. The referred candidates are deemed to have attained the essential job characteristics and have passed the necessary tests required for the job. The cutting-edge required by the organisation to compete favourably with others, particularly in the maritime industry lies on the workforce. The highly competitive environment heightened by innovations and technologies necessitate companies to recruit sophisticated and diversified workforce to appropriate these innovations.

In this regard, employees of an organisation are given the trusted privilege to refer qualified candidates for job openings. The trust is to recommend the candidate who meets the job specifications. Studies have shown that the complementary roles of referrals impacted on organisational performance. The studies of (Van, 2013 ; Breaugh, 2009) demonstrated that business organisations can benefit from involving their current employees in the recruitment of new staff. However, researchers have cautioned that, negative referrals are detrimental to organisational effectiveness. Considering these speculations or permutations, efforts should be geared towards promoting positive referrals to encourage employees to apply for job vacancies (Van,

2013). It has also been proven by studies that, employees recruited through employment referrals show higher job satisfaction, better job performance, and reduces turnover rates. This informal approach is adjudged better than the formal recruitment method such as job advertising, private recruitment agencies, host community recruitment model and others. Additionally, recruitment sources have differential effects on pre-hire outcomes such as organizational attractiveness, application decisions and numbers of quality applicants. (Van, 2013, 2012).

Some economists/scholars have argued that hiring through referrals are designs for incentives to workers (Prendergest & Cornice, 2010 ; Oyer & Scott, 2011). It was also pointed out that employee referral programmes differ in some respects. In some cases, referred workers attract special consideration in the selection process while existing employees receive financial bonus for the referred candidates being hired (Stephen, Cogwill & Housman, 2013). The study disentangled the impact of selection and treatment on referrals in their study. In terms of selection, referrals may lead to recruiting better workers for the job while in terms of treatment impact, referred workers will receive satisfaction, mentoring or coaching from their referring workers. This will boost the social network and team spirit among workers. The multiplier effect of these positively connected factors such as social network, job satisfaction, team spirit, mentoring and high level of commitment will enhance overall productivity of organisations.

On the other hand, qualitative assessment of employee referral programs to an organisation, according to Stephen et al, (2013), referred workers perform better due to selection strategy. It was pointed out that referred workers had a better expectation on the job. Heath (2011) also argued that referrals reduces moral hazards and overcome limited liability constraints in Bangladeshi garment factories. It has been shown by qualitative interviews that referred workers enhance productivity because of mentoring from their referring workers who serves as friends. However, there is a



contrasting report from using explicit data on work friendship and referrals. It was discovered that the relationship between referred workers and performance was very different from more friends at work and performance (Stephen et al, 2013). It contended that more friends at work may breed laxity and breach code of organizational conduct if undermined.

The fears on employee referred programme were allayed by the suggestion of Yakubovich and Luo(2006) that, referred workers identify with the goals of the organisation and are loyal and committed. This means, they will not abuse it by referring family members and friends who are incompetent. In addition, candidates referred by the firm's current workers do not have automatic ticket. They also pass through the selection process. They may possess more appropriate observable and non-observable job characteristics and deeper understanding of the job requirements which will endear them to the recruiting organisations. Estimations have shown that investments in the social capital of their employees in form of bonuses for successful referral delivered huge economic returns (Yakubovich & Lup, 2006). Since organizational performance is largely dependent on the capacity and competencies of its staff, the need to employ employees through referral is germane.

Employee's Efficiency/Performance

Worker's efficiency is a necessary tool for organisational success. Efficiency is dependent on several factors such as training, commitment, technology, welfare and good working conditions. Worker's efficiency and organisational performance are inseparable in this context of global competition. Oxford dictionary defines organisational performance as the sum total of outcomes of employees in an organisation which may be termed as excellent, good, or poor performance for a given period. Experience has shown that some organisations do not have retention plan, no training and other motivational policies, hence no job security for their staff. This reveals the bane of poor planning and absence of standard recruitment strategies in these organisations.

Undermining due diligence and certain critical criteria in the resourcing process for casual employment approaches have increased the numbers of staff turn-over in organizations. These are identified hindrances to workers effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. A possible cause of failure of some organisations. Hence, the need to understand and harness the principles embedded in some theories of motivation (such as Herzberg two factor theory) to boost morale and capabilities of workers.

As per recruitment or selection in the public sector, it is beclouded with the woes of corruption, nepotism and political factors and has been labeled as mere fantasy. Omisore and Okofu (2016) adjudged that, public service recruitment and selection systems and practices were beset with extra-institutional factors which had altered the demands for meritocracy and competence. More so, the Federal Character Principle of recruitment into the Federal civil service enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a political ideology devoid of merit and professionalism.

Generally, Worker's efficiency and productivity are affected by both external and internal factors. The external factors which influence the organization's decisions are uncontrollable and that the business organization only has to adapt to the dictates of these influential environmental and legal factors. The internal factors are within managerial control, the ability to formulate best strategies, stimulate employee's behaviour and allocate the scarce resources to meet customer's needs and compete against all odds.

Maritime Sector in Nigeria

Maritime affair is a global business that affects both national and world economies. It is anchored on ports and shipping operations which are veritable (investments) facilities that provide employments for the people and generate revenues to a nation (Edih, Igemohia & Fagawari, 2022; Peretomode, 2014). World maritime business is regulated by international laws (ie shipping laws and treaties). In Nigeria, maritime administration is under the



supervision and control of two sister bodies established by federal legislation and they are, Nigeria Ports Authority, NPA and Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, NIMASA.

The Nigerian maritime sector is supported by eight ports and terminals (Lagos complex port, Tin can port, Port Harcourt old port, Warri port, Sapele port, Koko port, and others) established by the Federal government. The activities in the ports and shipping operations are carried out by maritime personnel that have specialty in maritime services. With the increasing demands and competitors in the maritime business across maritime nations of the world, the demand for competent hands has also increased in recent times. In order to meet up with the yearnings and vision for the maritime sector, the federal government of Nigeria made some trade concessions with the private sector to enhance the operational efficiency and improve revenue base of the sector. Omoke, et al (2019) agreed that ports and shipping operations connect countries of the world while Osadume and Edih (2020) contended that, the maritime sector (shipping activities- gross tonnage) affect the GDP of Nigeria.

It has been observed that Nigeria is naturally endowed with coastal ecosystem favourable to maritime business and therefore should be harnessed to boost economic activities and create employments for the growing population (Okerefe, 2018). We have equally seen that the maritime sector is confronted with myriads of challenges such as lack of ports infrastructure and logistics performance (Benson & Adekemi, 2018), lack of capital, poor incentives for investors and poor integrated transport system (Ekpo, 2021), incessant interference by the government and sea pirates (Edih, et al., 2022), among others.

Human Resource Based Theory

This basic import of human resource based theory is that the highest value or premium is placed on the human factor in an organisation. It emphasizes the paramount occupation of the human resource as the manager of other resources of the organisation and therefore, some

motivation and welfare packages such as training, improved remuneration, bonuses, working conditions be entrenched as a major organisational policy. It is also observed that workers performance is determined by the amount of motivation given to them. Consequently, improved morale of employees has direct positive impact on overall productivity. Therefore, emphasis or measures on productivity (Classical management theory) without corresponding reference to workers welfare (Neo-classical management theory) would not mean well for the organisation and its employees. There has to be a marriage between the classical and neo-classical management ideologies to achieve the desired and target organisational objectives and goals.

Signaling Theory

Applicants must be informed on existing vacancies and qualifications required for such jobs before the seemingly qualified candidates can therefore apply. This is one of the subjects addressed by signalling theory. According to literature, signaling theory was propounded by Michael Spence in 1973. It is an important model useful for the description of behaviours of two or more parties, the individuals and organisation when both have access to different information. It is obvious that, the sender will choose the means of communicating (signaling) the information and the receiver will choose how to interpret the signal (Brian et al, 2011). Signaling theory is anchored on the following assumptions including; individuals have different innate level of productivity; additional education incurs additional cost which affect high or low productivity of workers; there is asymmetric information with respect to worker's productivity and schooling levels can be observed without incurring a cost.

The model is basically concerned with the reduction of information asymmetry between two parties. The findings from Spence in 1973 seminal work on labour markets demonstrated how a job applicant might engage in behaviours to reduce information asymmetry that hinders selection ability of prospective employees (Brian et al, 2011). This buttresses the need for recruiting



organisations to send out the right message that will attract appropriate pool of applicants for the vacant opportunities.

Empirical Studies

Edih (2021) stated that, referral recruitment produces qualified and loyal workers who are dedicated to the vision of an organisation. They are committed toward maintaining the trust reposed in them by their referrals and would try to surpass their expectations by being productive. In that study it was found that candidates were referred in hospitality industry especially where there are vacant jobs in the hotels.

The study carried out by (Stephen et al, 2013) contended that employee referrals are common means of employing new workers by firms. They demonstrated that workers employed through referrals perform better than non-referral workers. The study argued that referred workers achieve higher profits per worker and the difference is driven by referrals from high productive workers.

Topa (2012) posited that there are on-line job platforms in the United States for employee referral. It was recorded by the Career Builder Online Platform that 60% of firms have an employee referral program and about 50% of workers reported being referred to their job by a friend or family member. The study done by Vijaya, (2012) confirms that employee referral has the highest conversion rate, offer rate and offer acceptance rate as a recruitment source in an organization. The scheme encourages existing employees to select and recruit suitable candidates from their social networks. He posits that requests for employee referrals should be specific indicating mandatory qualifications. The need to measure the effectiveness of employee referral program was also stressed. Effectiveness of the referral programme should be measured by weighing the cost of employee referral with other recruitment channels, performance and retention, employee attitudes, and the percentage of new employees hired.

According to Uzuegbu, Arua and Uche (2012), organisations consider recruitment variables such as educational qualifications, work experience, nationality,

local issues, age, membership of professional bodies, etc. The study agreed that through the selection process competent employees are recruited into the organisation. This finding is supported by Opayemi and Oyesola (2013), that employee's performance are enhanced by selection interviews and tests. It has been discovered that worker's recognition by management influences performance (Hafiza, Shah and Zaman, 2011).

3.0. Methods

In this study, 300 sets of questionnaires were distributed to staff of Port Harcourt Old Port and Warri Constellation Ports that are the supervision of Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA. The study adopted multiple regressions analyses to test the hypothesis. Multiple regression technique allows two or more variables in an analysis and tests their separate impact on the dependent variable. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 14.0 was the analysis tool and the results from the analysis were subjected to validation criteria to determine the reliability of the estimates. The statistical tests carried out were; Coefficient of Correlation (R), Coefficient of Determination (R²), t-distribution (t-test) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA/F-ratio). Primary data were generated from the field through structured questionnaire. However, two hundred and eighty sets of questionnaire (280) were returned. This implies that (93.3%) sets of questionnaire were returned and used for the study. In this regard, fifty percent (50%) data collection was acceptable for research analysis (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

3.1 Model Specification

This work is modeled after the study of Edih (2022) with moderate modifications as follows;

$$EmEff = f(Ref, Scr, Lode)$$

$$EmEff = a + Ref(B_1) + Scr(B_2) + Lode(B_3) + e \quad (1)$$

Where;

EmEff is employee's efficiency

Ref is referred candidate's mindset or/behaviour

Scr is screening/selection process

Lode is candidate's loyalty/dedication to work



B_1 - B_3 is coefficients

E is stochastic error

A prior expectation is a positively significant correlation between referrals and employee’s efficient performance.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Squares	Adj.R square	Standard error
1	0.7551a	0.5702	0.5651	0.1883728

Table 2: Coefficient of all the Explanatory Variables

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std error	Beta		
(constant)	.8106	.1884		4.30	0.000
Refemploy	.1895086	.0480	.2842	5.92	0.000
Screen dimen	.1724621	.0464	.2639	5.69	0.000
Loyal dimen	.2087285	.0504	.3081	6.11	0.000

Table 3: Significance of the Model to Nigeria Ports Authority, NPA using ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	106.7347	3	35.5782	150.8829	0.000
Residual	80.4213	341	0.2358		
Total	187.156	344			

Source: Analysis from field survey, 2021.

Discussion

The results above showed the contribution of each facet of referral recruitment to worker’s efficient performance. As indicated in the multiple regressions results **Table 2**, referral employee's behaviour had significant and positive effect on workers efficient performance (Coef. = 0.284, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), screening/selection procedure dimension of referral strategy had a significant and positive effect on workers efficiency (Coef. = 0.263, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and loyalty dimension of referral strategy showed a significant and positive effect on workers efficiency (Coef. = 0.308, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Since the P-values are less than 0.05(5%) level of significance for referral recruitment and the coefficient values for it's sub- variables are positive, we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant and

4.0 Result and Discussion

Results

positive effect of referral recruitment on workers efficiency in the maritime sector and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that referral recruitment has a significant and positive effect on worker's efficient performance in the maritime sector. As indicated in **Table 1**, Adj. R-Squared of the models is 0.565 implying that 56.5% change in the dependent variable (employee's efficient performance) was brought about by the independent variable (referral recruitment).

These findings are corroborated by (Vijaya, 2012) whose study indicated that the quality of applicants generated by employee referral were appropriately better than other recruitment source. Stephen et al, (2013) study confirmed that referred workers are more efficient than non-referred employees. Also, Topa (2012) proved that over 50% workers are referred in online job platforms in the United



States of America. It thus implies that, candidates are referred for employment based on known credentials by referring employees because capable and competent staffs are assets to organisational success. Therefore, to attain a high level of success in an organization, trusted and experienced staff should be given the privilege to recommend candidates for employment.

5. Conclusion

This study examined recruitment strategies and Employee's efficient performance in the maritime sector in Nigeria: the referral option. The study found that referral recruitment positively affects employee's efficient performance and overall productivity of the organisation. The three tested measurement criteria (sub variables) of referral recruitment (mindset of referral employees, selection procedure and loyalty, dedication to duties) significantly improve worker's efficient performance as well as organisational performance.

The paper expects that the following recommendations will be useful in making recruitment decisions in the maritime sector;

1. Organisations, especially in the maritime sector, are urged to adopt referral recruitment as a strategy for recruiting competent employees as it leads to improved employee's efficient performance and organisational growth.
2. Referral is appropriate for business organizations such as stevedores firms because it is cost effective and efficient. It is also a win-win recruitment strategy for profit-making business organisations.
3. Employees with credible track records should be given the opportunity to refer applicants for possible employment and such would be employees should not be given automatic employment but , undergo the rigour of selection/interview process.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire distributed

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	U	D	SD
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1.	NPA (Organization) applies referral recruitment method	
2.	Trusted employees are given the privilege to refer candidates	
3.	Referred candidates pass through the screening process	
4.	It is only successful candidates that are employed	
5.	Referred employees perform better	
6.	Referred candidates are loyal and committed to work	
7.	They are more efficient and enthusiastic at work	
8	I am a referral candidate	
9	Referral option considers qualifications and experience	
	Referral option is cost effective than other strategies	

SA (5) – Strongly Agreed; A(4) –Agreed; U(3) – Undecided; D(2) – Disagreed; SD(1) – Strongly Disagreed