

MENTORING AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF ENI COMPANIES OPERATING IN OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA**¹Godwin Olai Ph.D. Mnim, Mcai and ²Dr. Florence O. Iroanwusi****¹Department of Management, ²Department of Employment and Human Resource Management, ^{1&2}Faculty of Management Sciences IAUE, PHC***Email; olai.godwin@iaue.edu.ng, olaimbas@gmail.com, florenceokoh16@gmail.com***ABSTRACT**

The study focused on mentoring and employee performance of Eni Companies operating in Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria. The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted, specifically, the explanatory design. The research philosophical stance of the study was positivism, whereby epistemological position was considered. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The Population of the study consist of two thousand, five hundred and thirty (2,530) employees of the study companies (Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited -NAOC, Agip Energy and Natural Resources Limited - AENR, and Nigeria Agip Explorations Limited - NAE) as presently constituted. Through the application of Taro Yemane's formula the sample size was determined to be three hundred and forty five (345), and judgmental sampling technique was used to select the target respondents. The analysis for this study was based on valid three hundred and twenty one (321) questionnaire well filled and returned. Similarly, simple regression technique was the inferential or parametric statistics used in testing the 4 hypotheses stated in the study, The major findings based on the analyses revealed that employee mentoring positively and significantly influence waste minimization, cost minimization, on-time delivery and output quality. In view of these findings, the study concludes that mentoring is a veritable means of achieving employee performance in terms of waste minimization, cost minimization, on-time delivery and output quality. Therefore, the study recommends that organizations should commit resources in educating the employees, invest in employee mentoring programmes; and empower employees in order to enhance employee performance on assigned jobs.

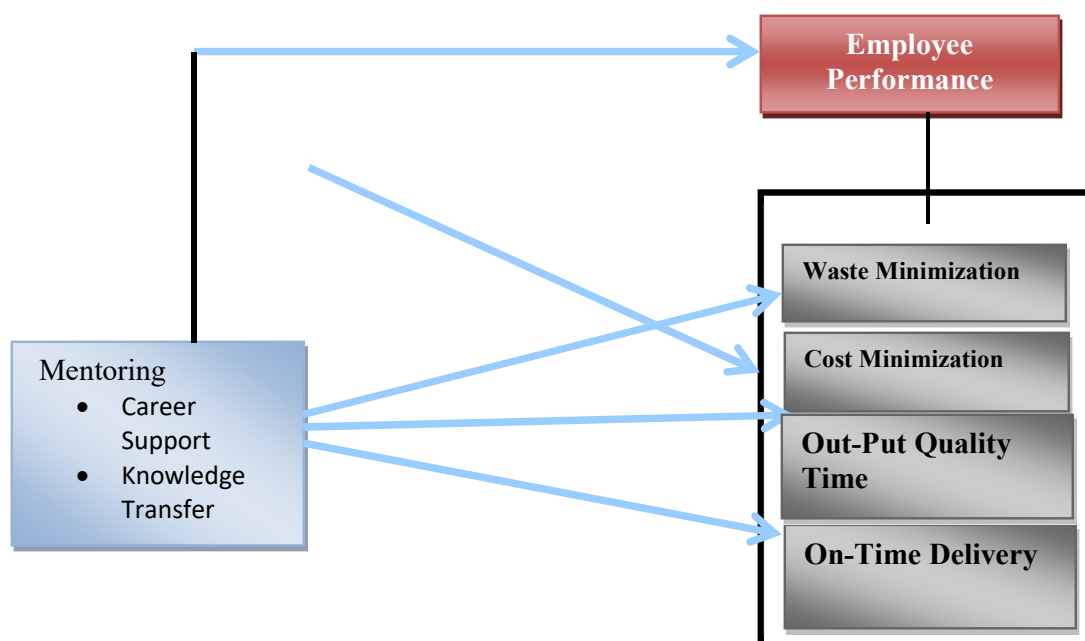
Keywords: Mentoring, Employee Performance, waste Minimization, Quality out-put**INTRODUCTION**

Mentoring is a human capital development approach or strategy. It is utilized in this study as a dimension of human capital development, given its growing application in the building of relationship between more experienced and less experienced employees. The employee mentoring approach is gaining popularity in facilitating both employee and management development in the organization (Russel, 2004). Employee mentoring has been observed as a systemic and deliberate solution applied for knowledge sharing and intellectual abilities improvement to enhance the performance of employees at work (Lisa, 2011). Employee mentoring is considered by Adeyemi (2013), as a human capital development technique needed for preparing future skilled employees and is also used to strengthen individual employees' capabilities, intelligence, build organisations knowledge, and sustain the organization competitive advantage.

Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2015) posited that whether an organization is public or private; profit or non-profit; two distinguishable resources are very prominent; the human and material resources. They continued by arguing that out of the two resources, the human resource drives all other organizational processes and can be better improved through mentorship. Because of the positive impact mentorship has on less experienced employees in the performance of their assigned tasks, Bilesanmi (2011) referred to it as a tailor-made advice and incentive that a more experienced staff, in an innovative way can offer less experienced employees in a plethora of ways, and on a range of competencies. Mentoring therefore can be suggested to mean a programme designed by firms to

develop and improve the skills, knowledge and intellectual capacity of employees to make them fit enough to perform assigned jobs in the organization. In ordinary sense, mentoring is a means by which two people with the goal of professional and personal development relate formally or informally for the purpose of knowledge, self-confidence and other benefits to be transferred from the most experienced to the less experienced one (Colky & Young, 2006). The "mentor" is usually an experienced individual who shares knowledge, experience, and advice with a less experienced person, or "mentee." It is expected that firms in the Oil and Gas industry should invest heavily in the development of their human capital as a means of improving both the employees and firms' performance in order to effectively and efficiently drive the sustainability and/or survival process of the industry in the very long run. Sadly, recent and growing trend and practice in some multinational oil and gas companies in Nigeria, especially Eni companies operating in Nigeria oil and gas industry reveals that management has not done enough in the development of human capital, rather has concentrated more of their investment and budgetary allocations in the procurement of state-of-the-art equipment and juicy pay at the expense of educating, mentoring and empowering or upgrading the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies and attributes of the most valuable and strategic asset of their organizations which supposedly will man the so-called modern equipment. The above inadequacy has necessitated the connection between the employees and management with a view to resolving the circumstances leading to poor optimization of employees' performance and/or employees' disappointment with their jobs which may foster underperformance or deviant work behaviour. It is on the basis of the above that this research has centered on human capital development and employees' performance. It is also instructive to state that upgrading employees' abilities in their occupations, enhancing their insight, aptitudes, capacities and different attributes is crucial for optimizing employees' performance and that of the firm (Chigozie, Aga & Onyia, 2018). Conversely, where the development of human capital is not properly structured or put in place, chances are very high that both employee and organizational performance may nose dive. Recently, it has been observed, that the oil and gas industry in Nigeria has witnessed a few disappointments and troubles, Eni companies in Nigeria inclusive. These disappointments and troubles seem to be attributed to the absence of satisfactory human capital development. Possibly, this can be seen from the context that while many graduates exist in Eni companies in Nigeria, the companies still lack competent hands to man some of their specialized and technical operations.

Operational Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses

- HO₁:** Employee mentoring does not significantly influence waste minimization of Eni Companies operating in Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria
- HO₂:** Employee mentoring does not significantly influence cost minimization of Eni Companies operating in Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria
- HO₃:** Employee mentoring does not significantly influence on-time delivery of Eni Companies operating in Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria
- HO₄:** Employee mentoring does not significantly influence output quality of Eni Companies operating in Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria

Concept of Mentoring

Nowadays, the practice of employee mentoring is gaining appreciable momentum such that firms are beginning to increasingly utilize mentoring as a means of improving the performance of employees (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2007). Considering the unpredictable and competitive nature of today's business environment, employee mentoring should be seen as a key factor to be recognized in the 21st century workplace. This is so required because there are incessant cases of changes in the business environment, which involves consistent decline in business fortunes leading to large number of older and experienced employees been downsized, increase in the use of technology, and global competition. In recent times, a large proportion of the experienced employees have been asked to leave the firms, especially in the hydrocarbon industry (oil and gas). Majority of the remaining employees will be retiring in few years' time (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2008). When these employees retire, they go home with their wealth of knowledge and experience developed in their firms over the years, whereas these knowledge and experience will be needed by firms for growth and sustainability, increase in profit margin, and to sustain employee performance levels. This mass exodus will have negative effect on firms because the experienced employees who believe and understand the organizations vision, mission, external and internal personal networks, skills and historical context would have been gone (Peterson & Hicks, 2010). Therefore, the need to transfer this knowledge to the next generation of employees, managers and others cannot be over-emphasized should there be need to sustain competitive advantage through employee performance. Against this backdrop, it is crystal clear that employee mentoring is needed to proactively address the issue of exit of experienced and knowledgeable employees that will occur.

Mentoring centers on helping individuals acquire the skills necessary to perform their jobs optimally and also better their career (Zachary, 2012). The employee who is the mentee sets the agenda based on the development needs that are required, and the superior in this case the mentor provides information and guidance to help them achieve their desired goals (Thomas, 2011).

Undoubtedly, mentoring employees requires a consistent involvement and management support to make it a part of the management practice. Several approaches abound to make mentoring a management practice for improving employees' performance. These approaches may include: delegation, performance feedback, motivating employee performance, mentoring employee growth, focusing on employee performance, setting meaningful goals, assessing employee performance, aid in career development, deliver training and reinforce good performance (Horvath, Wasko & Bradley, 2008). Other approaches as identified by Nyamori (2015) include:

i. Mentorship Content

This focuses on identifying ahead of time the type of mentoring programs that will be feasible for an organization and its employees. Some organizations may provide their high potential employees with a mentor; while others may consider supplementing this with a coach (internal or external) or ensure the employees' line manager is providing robust mentoring support to them (Murray, 2006). Other firms may consider a sponsor and an external mentor. The combinations are several and the best approach to mentoring employees depends on organizational context, culture and commitment to these tools (DeLong, Gabarro and Lees, 2008).

ii. Awareness

Several literature exist on mentoring in recent times, therefore, it will be out of place for any organization planning mentoring not to access these literature. Researchers such as Douglas (2007) and Long (2007) have provided relevant materials on mentoring. Douglas (2007) has performed a meta-analysis on past studies and makes several recommendations about possible programs available on mentoring. Concerning the awareness of the negative effect in the early stages of planning mentoring programme, Long (2007) argues that mentoring precipitates employee satisfaction and positive outcomes. He further warns that there can be negative side to mentoring, however, it is believed that this can be reduced owing to the awareness of potential problems created ab initio.

iii. Support for the Program

Obviously, it is a known fact that the task of organizing the framework for mentoring program rests on human resource practitioners, however, its origination has to be contained in the strategic plan of the firm, meaning it must have top management support. Identifying and initiating the need for mentoring as well as ensuring the availability of fund for mentorship begins from the overall strategic plan. Depending on the size of the organization structure involved, the objectives of the mentoring program may also be determined at this stage (Horvath, Wasko & Bradley, 2008). Majority of the studies reviewed, indicated that mentoring practice did not have the total support of top management (Lisa, 2011). For a mentoring program to be effective employees need to have the understanding that top management is solidly in support of the program. Middle level managers and supervisors cannot effectively navigate through with the mentoring programme if employees are aware that top management does not fully support the programme. In fact, feedback loops to senior levels during the implementation of the program seem to be beneficial (Murray, 2006). During the short, medium and long term planning of firms work programme, it is expected that the responsible unit of the firm makes it clear that there will be need for mentoring, the financial requirement and the level of transparency concerning the nature of the mentoring program, how personnel will be selected, expectations of participants and the appraisal requirements (Ritchie & Genoni, 2012).

Concept of Employee Performance

In the context of this of study, employee performance was conceptualized as the criterion or dependent variable. The said variable was reviewed from the standpoint of behaviors that are very necessary or relevant to the attainment of the firm's goals (Awan & Sarfraz, 2013). This suggests that employees' performance should always be continually assessed in order to fix problems of deficiencies as and when necessary. The concept of employee performance principally implies employee's work achievement resulting from required effort expended on an assigned tasks which is associated with getting a meaningful job, engaged profile, and compassionate colleagues and employers around (Hellriegel, Jackson, & Slocum, 1999; Karakas, 2010).

Several organizations interpret performance of their staff to be a way of appraising employee effectiveness. Boateng (2012) posits that performance measurement is a means by which an accomplished task is determined and special recognition given. Therefore for performance to be ascertained, realistic targets have to be set and required efforts have to be expended within a specified time frame for its accomplishment. Performance measurement is therefore a system of rating the performance of employees whether as a group or individual. There are several indicators used by different organizations to measure performance of their employees. Some of these include; output quality, quantity of work output, resource utilizations, and/or cost effectiveness of the work. Zeb-Obipi (2015) in his work "corporate productivity performance: a harmonist framework" measured performance with indicators such as time minimization, cost minimization, and waste minimization. All these are measures or indicators to determine the level of employee performance against a set of standards within the performance appraisal process.

However, this study is not intended to investigate performance measures or appraisal. From the studies so far, it has become essential for firms to strategize in order to optimize employee performance. Firms according to Hilson and Banchirigah (2009) should be structured to achieve employee performance. The firm with the intention to optimize employee performance needs to be responsive to the business context and the methods of meeting societal expectations. The firm should strike a balance between the inherent needs of business they are in and what helps flourish the key traits of the employee to meet firms' goal. To fully utilize human resource practices to achieve organizational survival and sustainability, effective employee performance management system needs to be put in place. The performance-driven objective of firms should be in synergy with the organizational policies so that the entire process moves away from being event-driven to become more strategic and people-oriented (Mone & London, 2018; Jena & Pradhan, 2017; London, 2003).

One major concern that have been agitating the minds of many researchers, organizational behaviour experts and human resource practitioners is why no consensus approach or strategy to achieving employee performance and why do some organizations perform better than others? Preliminary studies suggested that juicy and mouth watery incentives and remuneration schemes can motivate employees toward meaningful job participation (Friedman & Sunder, 1994; Roth, 1995; Sprinkle, 2000).

Other studies have sufficient evidences to argue that the performance of employees does not have a strong positive relationship with financial offers, as there are other variables that interplay to make employees perform optimally (Gupta & Shaw, 2014; Bonner, Hastie, Young, Hesford & Gigone 2001; Camerer & Hogarth, 1999). The inability to strike a consensus results from the dynamic nature of work itself and the advancement in the knowledge of workers in post-globalization has defied the familiar views of individual work performance (Frese & Fay, 2001; Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). The twist here is, if monetary incentives do not propel employees to perform better, then what are the other associated factors that can influence employee to perform at best. This question is another feat this study is designed to actualize or intends to answer.

Again, Brumbach (1988) viewed performance as meaning both behaviour and results. Behaviours he said emanate from the performer and transform the performance from abstraction to action. Behaviours (work behaviours) he opined are not just instruments for results. Behaviours are also outcomes in their own right – the product of mental and physical efforts applied to tasks, and can be judged apart from results. This definition concludes that when managing employee and team performance, both inputs (behaviours) and outputs (results) should be considered. This is what is referred to as the so-called 'mixed model' of performance management which covers competency levels and achievements as well as objective setting and review (Hartle, 1995).

Employee Mentoring and Employee performance

After reviewing the works of other researchers, Avery (2008), pointed out that in the recent past four decades, the relevance of mentoring on employee performance has become a subject of interest among scholars and professionals working in the area of mentoring. The above assertion merits the support of this study in the sense that Eni group of companies in oil and gas industry in Nigeria, develop employees skills through 'hands on', which poses stress, intervention, and control of operations and interactions among team members at all levels in the organization. Mullins (1998) attributed the relevance of employee mentoring to the fact that there is a common believe that mentorship can positively influence the performance of employees. It has also been observed that mentoring is an indispensable criteria which will more positively impact on companies in the near future, given that proper preparation of subordinates' for improved performance is critical to all organizations (He, Wang, Mei & Lian, 2010). Sequel to the laudable contributions of mentorship to workers development, researchers have come to agree that mentorship plays a significant role in achieving organizational goals, and in improving performance of subordinates. Available evidences show that a positive association exist between mentoring and employee performance. The very

common one is that which relates to nowadays intensive, dynamic markets feature innovation based competition, price performance, rivalry, decreasing returns, and the creative destruction of existing competence, researchers and professionals believe that effective mentorship can upgrade or improve the employees of organisations to face or cope with these new challenges (Avery 2008). To appreciate the influence of mentorship on employees' performance, Avery (2008) maintains that researchers believe that leaders, especially transformational leaders by default are mentors with the motive to improve the performance of their employees; to such leaders, effective mentorship is a veritable tool for the development and sustenance of competitive advantage which will enhance the improvement of organizational performance. Mehra, Smith, Dixon and Robertson (2006) are of the view that whenever firms are in dire need of an effective approach to outperform their rivalries, they resort to effective mentorship as an approach. The reason being that qualified mentors are believed to be useful in modelling collective norms, assisting teams cope with their environments and coordinating collective actions. This shows that mentoring can help improve the knowledge, skills, abilities and capacity of employees to perform.

Admittedly, mentoring is recognized as a strategy for human resource management, yet not much is known on how it improves employees' performance. As an aspect of strategic human resource management, mentoring is a laudable addition to the dimensions of human capital development (HCD) because it serves as a change mechanism for individual employees (Thurston, D'Abate & Eddy, 2012). Numerous studies have demonstrated the relevance of mentoring to both the employee and the firm. Again, the business world tend to rely on mentoring as a proven technique for the development of in-house talent. In recent times, mentoring is experiencing resurgence because business leaders not only recognize the importance in transferring knowledge among employees, but also see it as a means by which more experienced employees who are leaving the organizations replace themselves (Nkomo, Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2018). In the study carried out by Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2015) on the effects of mentoring on employees' performance in family business. It was found that mentoring had positive effects on employees' performance. Thus the study concluded that performances among employees are based on the degree of mentorship program put in place in the organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted the explanatory research design

Population of the Study

The population of this study is 2,530 employees, which is comprised of managers, senior matriculated staff, and senior third party staff in all the departments/divisions of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria as currently constituted. The gotten population was gotten from the HR departments of the study companies.

Population Distribution of the Study

S/N	Eni Companies in Oil & Gas in Nigeria	Population
	Nigeria Agip Oil Company Ltd (NAOC)	2, 024
	Nigeria Agip Exploration Ltd (NAE)	344
	Agip Energy & Natural Resources Ltd (AENR)	162
	Total	2,530

Source: https://www.eni.com/en_NG/who-we-are/eni-in-nigeria.page

Sample size and Technique

The sample size was determine using Taro Yemini formula, while the judgmental samplinf technique was used to distribute the questionnaire

Sample Proportion for each of the Companies

S/N	Eni Companies in Oil & Gas in Nigeria	Population	Sample Size
1	Nigeria Agip Oil Company Ltd (NAOC)	2, 024	276
	Nigeria Agip Exploration Ltd (NAE)	344	47
2	Agip Energy & Natural Resources Ltd (AENR)	162	22
3	Total	2,530	345

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Methods of Data Analysis

Simple regression technique was the inferential or parametric statistics used in testing the 3 hypotheses stated in the study,

Results**Ho1: Employee mentoring does not significantly influence Waste Minimization**

Table 1 Model Summary: showing the strength and direction of the influence of employee mentoring on waste minimization.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.727 ^a	.529	.528	3.082

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Mentoring
b. Dependent Variable: Waste Minimization

Result of SPSS analysis on table 1 reveals that, the regression coefficient (R) is 0.727, which means that employee mentoring has a strong, positive influence on waste minimization. Again, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.529; indicating that 52.9% of the changes in the dependent variable (waste minimization) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 47.1% are due to factors other than employee mentoring.

Ho2: Employee mentoring does not significantly influence Cost Minimization

Table 2 Model Summary: showing the strength and direction of the influence of employee mentoring on cost minimization.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.630 ^a	.396	.395	3.169

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Mentoring
b. Dependent Variable: Cost Minimization

The result of data analysis on table 2 reveals that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.630, which means that employee mentoring has a strong, positive influence on cost minimization. Again, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.396; indicating that 39.6% of the changes in the dependent

variable (cost minimization) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 60.4% are due to factors other than employee mentoring.

Ho3: Employee mentoring does not significantly influence On-time Delivery

Table 3 Model Summary: showing the strength and direction of the influence of employee mentoring on on-time delivery.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.303 ^a	.092	.089	3.684
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Mentoring				
b. Dependent Variable: On-time Delivery				

The result of data analysis on table 3 indicates that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.303, which means that employee mentoring has a weak, positive influence on on-time delivery. Again, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.092; indicating that 9.2% of the changes in the dependent variable (on-time delivery) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 90.8% are due to external variables outside employee mentoring.

Ho4: Employee mentoring does not significantly influence Output quality

Table 4: Model Summary: showing the strength and direction of the influence of employee mentoring on output quality.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.553 ^a	.306	.303	3.255
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Mentoring				
b. Dependent Variable: Output Quality				

The result of SPSS analysis on table 4 specified that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.553, which means that employee mentoring has a moderate, positive influence on output quality. Again, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.306; indicating that 30.6% of the changes in the dependent variable (output quality) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 69.4% are due to external variables outside employee mentoring.

Influence of employee mentoring on employee performance

Results of the analysis indicated that employee mentoring has a strong, positively statistically significant influence on waste minimization evident in the regression coefficient (R) of 0.727 with a probability value of 0.000 less than critical value of 0.05. Again, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.529; indicating that 52.9% of the changes in the dependent variable (waste minimization) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 47.1% are due to factors other than employee mentoring. Again, the regression coefficient has a constant value of 6.646, while the slope for employee mentoring is 0.656; implying that waste minimization can be predicted by employee mentoring, and that any 1% increase in employee mentoring will result in 0.656 increase in waste minimization.

Equally, the analysis on the influence of employee mentoring on cost minimization disclosed a regression coefficient (R) of 0.630; with a probability value of 0.000 less than critical value of 0.05, indicating that employee mentoring has a strong, positively statistically significant influence on cost minimization. Moreover, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.396; indicating that 39.6% of the changes in the dependent variable (cost minimization) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 60.4% are due to factors other than employee mentoring. The regression coefficient has a constant value of 9.024, while the slope for employee

mentoring is 0.516; implying that cost minimization can be predicted by employee mentoring, and that any 1% increase in employee mentoring is capable of inducing a 0.959 increase in cost minimization. Furthermore, the result of the analyses on the relationship between employee mentoring and on-time delivery found that employee mentoring has a weak, positively statistically significant influence on on-time delivery illustrated by the regression coefficient (R) of 0.303; with a probability value of 0.000 less than critical value of 0.05. In the same vein, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.092; indicating that 9.2% of the variations in the dependent variable (on-time delivery) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 90.8% are due to external variables outside employee mentoring. It was also found that, the regression coefficient has a constant value of 13.638, while the slope for employee mentoring is 0.235. Implying that on-time delivery can be predicted by employee mentoring, and that any 1% increase in employee mentoring has the potential to result in 0.235 increase in on-time delivery. The hypothesis tested to define the influence of employee mentoring on output quality found that employee mentoring has a moderate, positively statistically significant influence on output quality evident by the regression coefficient (R) of 0.553; with a probability value of 0.000 less than critical value of 0.05. Then, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.306; indicating that 30.6% of the variations in the dependent variable (output quality) are attributable to the independent variable (employee mentoring), while the remaining 69.4% are traceable to factors outside employee mentoring. Also, the regression coefficient has a constant value of 9.999, while the slope for employee mentoring is 0.434. This implies that output quality can be predicted by employee mentoring, and that any 1% increase in employee mentoring will attract 0.434 increase in output quality. Hence, null hypotheses nine, ten, eleven and twelve (H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} , and H_{04}) were all rejected, while the alternate hypotheses accepted. The results of tested hypotheses nine to twelve empirically unravels that employee mentoring has a positively significant influence on employee performance of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria. The findings of the study holds the view that if Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria, puts a formal structure in place to ensure and sustain leadership, innovative, knowledge transfer and talent development mentorship programmes for their less experienced workforce by the more experienced ones, as the older and more experienced employees retire or exit the companies, they would have formally transferred knowledge, operational information, skills and visions of the companies to the younger employees, and the information, skills and other operational core values of the companies transferred to the new or less experienced employees will enable them improve their performance or perform optimally.

CONCLUSIONS

This research reviewed several extant literature on human capital development and employees' performance with specific emphasis on the dimensions of the predictor variables and the measures of criterion variables. Findings of the study which were based on the hypotheses tested, and the empirical review of earlier works on similar research effort indicate that human capital development has positive significant influence on employee performance. To this end, the study specifically concludes that;

Human capital development when made a strategic option for building workers knowledge, skills, abilities, competence and required work behaviour will be a veritable means of achieving employee performance in terms of waste minimization, cost minimization, on-time delivery and output quality in Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria, and by extension other hydrocarbon industry players.

Education significantly influences employee performance of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria. That is, committing resources to periodically upgrade the educational level of employees will enhance their performance level, especially when employees are required to adapt to new processes, technologies, methods and changes that may be needed at work places.

Employee empowerment significantly influences employee performance of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria. In addition, empowering employees to perform their assigned jobs is fundamental to quality delivery, because quality is assumed to begin with people who are experienced and knowledgeable on the job they do.

Employee mentoring significantly influences employee performance of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is to the extent that investment in employee mentoring programmes is very strategic to the development of the human element necessary to take over as the older and more experienced employees exit the organization, which will in turn result in the enhancement of efficiency in resource utilization as well as service and quality delivery.

Organizational support significantly moderates the influence of human capital development on employee performance of Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is evident in table 4, where the output analysis of the SPSS indicated that organizational support strengthens the degree to which human capital development influences the performance of employees by 1.3%. The combined dimensions of human capital development significantly influences each of the measures of employee performance.

The study provided firm indications to show that the 'development of human capital' in Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria, is capable of influencing employee performance which is reflected in waste minimization, cost minimization, on-time delivery and output quality;

A deliberate plan by Eni companies operating in oil and gas industry in Nigeria, to put in place some developmental strategies such as continuous education, employee empowerment, mentorship programmes and other related programmes will go a long way in upgrading employees' knowledge, skills and abilities for better performance which will in turn lead to the overall achievement of objectives and sustainability initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of the reviewed literature, as well as the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses applied in the study; which led to the overall conclusion that a positive and significant relationship exist between human capital development and employees' performance. The following recommendation are hereby made:

1. Firms should put in place various mentorship programmes and feedback mechanisms as a means of ensuring that experienced employees who are leaving the organizations pass on to the younger employees all the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to carry on with the operations of the firms as they exit. That is, giving younger employees career support and psychosocial support.
2. The top management of various Eni companies in Nigeria oil and gas industry, and other stakeholders involved in the development of human capital should actively play their various key roles at the right time to ensure that individuals or employees are properly equipped in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, ability and attitude (Cognitive, Psychomotor and Affective Domains of Learning) to enable employees perform optimally by coping with the challenges faced by oil and gas companies in Nigeria.
3. Firms should put in place various mentorship programmes and feedback mechanisms as a means of ensuring that experienced employees who are leaving the organizations pass on to the younger employees all the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to carry on with the operations of the firms as they exit. That is, giving younger employees career support and psychosocial support.
4. The top management of various Eni companies in Nigeria oil and gas industry, and other stakeholders involved in the development of human capital should actively play their various key roles at the right time to ensure that individuals or employees are properly equipped in terms of

knowledge, skills, experience, ability and attitude (Cognitive, Psychomotor and Affective Domains of Learning) to enable employees perform optimally by coping with the challenges faced by oil and gas companies in Nigeria.

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