

**LABOUR INTEGRATION AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN RIVERS STATE****Dr. Nworgu, Kelechi Godson & Dr. Collins Okechukwu Amadi***Email: nworgugodson10@gmail.com, otukiri63@gmail.com***Department Of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria****ABSTRACT**

*Several companies in manufacturing admit that it is pivotal to consider labour integration and management of human specialties in firms to stimulate productivity. The paper investigates labour integration and industrial productivity of the manufacturing sector in Rivers State. The objectives that guide this study are, to explore how the workers integration process is attributable to productivity in manufacturing companies in Rivers State, and to ascertain the ways labour integration process increases productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State. The diffusion theory is adopted in this study, and the descriptive survey design is also applied to enable the study to elicit data purposively from 200 respondents in two manufacturing companies selected for this study. The retrieved data were analyzed in percentage and presented in tables. The findings of this paper reveal that workers integration in manufacturing companies is attributable to organization productivity, and labour integration increases productivity in organizations. Therefore, in line with the findings, the paper recommends that employers should provide workers the opportunity to be more integrated technologically in the organization to ensure regular productivity, and that management in organizations should include the productive workforce into a more lucrative remuneration in relation to entitlements accruable to key stakeholders of the organizations.*

***Keywords: labour integration, industrial, productivity, manufacturing sector***

**INTRODUCTION**

Achieving productivity in manufacturing sector may lie within the purview of labour integration. This connotes that the integration of labour force in manufacturing organizations can be viewed as the most essential asset that can stimulate productivity (Nnadozie and Ugwu, 2016). Meanwhile, the conscientious attempts that can improve organization productivity may be linked to the effort of assembling skillful, technologically inclined and committed employees into the organization to attain its core goal. Most manufacturing companies admit that it is vital to consider labour integration and managing of a firm's human specialties to stimulate productivity. Generally, in manufacturing firms, the workplace is highly involved in the utilization of machines, computers, tools, chemicals, gadgets, and several dangerous equipment and materials during the manufacturing processes, which increases productivity as well as revenue for the company. Massive use of these machines, tools, computers by integrated employees in most manufacturing firms, can result to massive production of the products (Mwangi and Waiganjo, 2017).

The workplace as provided by most companies in the manufacturing sector is basically expected to employ essential labour force that can meet the demands of consumers of the potential products of the firms into the market for consumption. Therefore, achieving improved productivity in manufacturing firms in Nigeria may need the integration and input of a sizeable employees (Wachter and Yorio, 2014). Scholars recognize the importance of labour integration for responsible business practices and productivity in manufacturing workplaces (Shore et. al., 2018). In addition, such recognition broadens the acceptance of labour integration in various manufacturing companies' workforce (Moeller and Maley, 2018). It is really challenging to integrate employees into the workforce of an organization. However, it can also be more frustrating not to take critical steps in the overall integration of employees into the receiving organizations.

Labour integration have been on the practice in some organizations (Saeed et. al., 2012). In recent times, some changes took place within different companies, and that shows vividly the pivotal role that human resources have to play in initiating a more solid product competitiveness as well as quality assurance that enable organizations pursue and achieve key objectives in globalized markets that are more difficult and challenging (Reis, 2010). The manufacturing organizations that face market challenges adopts definite strategies to meet the consumer demands (Cooper-Thomas and Wilson, 2011). Therefore, companies have begun to give recognition to human resources requirements, since they appear critical in discharging roles of labour integration for employee adaptation to company's goals. Hence, it is the most major element of products competitiveness among companies (Gomes et. al., 2008).

The vision of labour integration and effectiveness of human resource practices in manufacturing companies are seen to be essential for business productivity. Among other practices and roles of the human resources in recent times, is the integration of incoming employees in the companies (Marcellos, 2012). This is because labour integration has long been gaining employers interest as the strategy, and cost that entails productivity in organizations (Hsiung and Hsieh, 2003). Furthermore, all manufacturing organizations want to see their new employees adapt to the firm's workplace and to produce without any hesitation or wasting of time during the workers integration process. This might be the case of certain manufacturing firms in Nigeria, which may have downplayed the necessity of integrating new individuals. More so, these companies may not have effectively followed the different stages of the process of integrating its new workers. This pitfall might be due to the perception of organizations that view labour integration as a cost-effective venture than a critical investment approach.

Organizations believe that the integration process is often time slow and may appear to be cumbersome, a waste of company's time. Meanwhile, organizations usually hire, train and engage new employees to fill up vacancies with the aim of integrating the workers effectively, efficiently, adequately, and by on-the-job training to allow the new workers to become productive on their roles. Furthermore, some organizations have currently changed their perception regarding the effective integrating of fresh workers, while some of the companies have adequately invested higher in the integration process of new workers. Increased productivity has forced most companies to engage in the integration processes of fresh employees. The manufacturing sector seem to have largely invested in the process of integrating their new workers.

Existing research shows that there have been repeated calls for scholars to explore the challenges and opportunities encapsuled in labour integration (Kornberger et. al., 2018), previous research indicates that there are particular challenges to the integration of workers in manufacturing companies. The initial challenge is the adoption of effective strategies for workforce or labour integration. This notion requires an in-depth understanding and cognizance of the distinctive nature of labour integration (Szkudlarek et. al., 2019). On the other hand, employees are forced to move from their skill work role to a different work area, and their acceptance into a new work area is not based on the match between their skills and the needs of the organization, but mainly on the goal of the organization (Kaabel, 2018). Integration of employees was found to increase workers engagement (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler, & Saks, 2014). Furthermore, Allen and Shanock (2012) also found that workers integration contributed to increase in organizational success (Krasman, 2015). Against these backdrops, the study seeks to investigate workers integration and how its efficiency can promote increase in industrial productivity among manufacturing companies in Nigeria.

**Objectives of this study are to:**

1. Explore how the workers integration process is attributable to productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

2. Ascertain the ways labour integration process increases productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

1. How can workers integration process in organization attribute to productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State?
2. What ways can labour integration process increase productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Workers Integration and Productivity**

Integration refers to the quality of actions existing among employees that is needed to achieve unity of work efforts as required by employers and management (Teixeira et. al., 2012). Hence, workers integration connotes the plans for a series of work actions that can permit the new worker to gain autonomy in his job roles. It is where the new employed workers can begin to manage their skills at work (Reis, 2010). Worker's integration is the process that concerns the assimilation and induction of employees into the workplace, the adaptation and involvement into the workplace demands and the collective work practices in which workers fulfill work roles, the acceptance, suitability and sustainability of their personality traits to the work group. Integration enables the workers to adapt easily to their professional work standards as well as to work life patterns, assimilation of work behaviours, workplace rules and conduct, specific allegiance to the company and to the workers disciplinary positions. Successful companies will ensure that these processes are taken and treated as a critical aspect and allocate enough resources to them, such as finance, human control, energy and time according to (Florea, 2014).

Therefore, through workers integration process at the workplace, values and work behaviours are being relayed and inculcated by the new employees. The vital purpose of integration is to persuade employees to adopt and adapt to certain attitudes, work cultures, beliefs, through crucial examples and organization pressures, and positive reinforcement for ideal work behaviour or getting the awareness of inappropriate workplace behaviour (Reis, 2010). In addition, organizational structure can be assimilated, and more understanding will be derived on how responsibility, roles and power are being allocated within the firm, and how work procedures are planned and executed by organization workforce (Teixeira et. al., 2012).

A good company structure provides better work requirement for the effective integration and adaptation of the new workers. Therefore, workers integration allows the employees to familiarize themselves with the new workplace and work conditions, facilitates the provision of accommodation to the new employees, creates a sense of belonging and the atmosphere of safety and privacy, as to make the newly employed individuals to have strong confidence in their skill and ability to become productive at the work environment (Florea, 2014). The engagement of new employees in a firm is crucial for the company as well as their employees. The new workers integration process can be carried out in a free, fair, clear, purposeful, and objective way to enable the company to have more satisfactory productivity through the newly employed and integrated individuals. As the new workers integration process is properly handled, the firm stand the chance of becoming productive through the successful workers integration process.

The implementation of workers integration programme in organizations can engender more stronger, efficient, effective and flexible workforce. Integration programmes has been a major matter in most firms. However, despite the increasing awareness and importance of employees' integration, several organizations are yet to properly key into this practice through their human resource departments. A strong and stable focus on integrating of new workers can be viewed to be cost effective for certain organizations. Those companies that choose to avoid spending money to ensure the integrating of new workers through continuous training of fresh employees are not going to be able

to compete with the ones that spend in terms of productivity. (Pike, 2014) argued that an employee that is fit within the work environment is positively related to turnover.

A critical aspect of new employees' adjustment at specific levels includes to have confidence, courage and individual mastery over work situations. To attain this position, effective orientation and training programmes can enable new workers to understand organizational pattern and work behaviour within the workplace. These programmes help in ensuring the facilitation of the process since it can assist the new employees as well as human resource practitioners. However, it hangs on the support received from colleagues and supervisors. The new integrated employees are an integral part of the productivity of organizations (Lockwood and Tai, 2006). Unsuccessful integration in workplace results in work dissatisfaction, and other negative socio-psychological climate within the organization, which can reduce work efforts, efficiency, effectiveness and on the contrary, while successful integration brings mutual benefits to the employee and employees alongside (Câmara, 2012).

It is beneficial for organizations ascertain appropriate ways for integrating new employees. However, research suggests that strategies that are more formal, collective, sequential as well as supportive can enhance new employees' loyalty and minimize turnover (Lockwood and Tai, 2006). Furthermore, it is very crucial for the new employees to assimilate the fundamental organization patterns, culture as well as values in existence within the company. This allows new workers to connect and key in with the wider intentions of the company to have a better stand to fit in the firm as a worker. This element also ensures clear productivity expectations, organizational norms, and thoughts and behaviour of individuals (Pike, 2014).

### **Ways of Labour Integration and Increase in Productivity**

#### **Supervisors' support and productivity.**

One of the ways of labour integration is through supervisors' support. This support induces and shapes social exchange and inter-relationship between employees and companies (Gong et. al., 2010). Meanwhile, the effectiveness and productivity of employees can be highlighted through the contingent effect and significance of supervisor's support. It has been postulated that supervisors' support can significantly adjust employee's effectiveness and productivity in manufacturing companies (Sekhar et. al., 2018). Furthermore, supervisors can as well assess how employees in manufacturing industries or workplace may influence productivity and provide a clearer understanding of how labour integration can change the nature of work as well as employee behaviour at workplace. The different roles of supervisors are organizational and social in nature. There is the supervisor-employee role, which is perceived to be the most critical role on issues of employees' integration, with strategic and highest potential to improve employee and organization productivity, as well as meeting the changes in the working environment (Ulrich, 2016). On this perspective, supervisors usually act as the agent of continuous change in communicating and integrating employees, developing a work culture that influence employee productivity at all levels, and can eventually enhance organizational capacity for organizations changes and increased productivity (Ulrich, 2016).

#### **Soft skill and technical skills training programmes**

Another way of labour integration is through the soft skill and technical skills training. According to Maniscalco (2010) soft skills are a cluster of habits, qualities, attitudes, personality traits, and social exchanges that individuals possess and are crucial for daily living as much as they are essential for work. For Lorenz (2009), soft skills are the qualities that make individuals good employees as well as a dedicated co-worker. More so, Gibbons and Lange (2000) describes soft skills as being related with essential skills, vital competencies as well as individual skills. In addition, soft skills entail the non-cognitive capabilities that are peculiar to individuals which are essential for social links and exchange at the work location. An individual may have the ability to collaborate with a co-worker from other units or internalize a new working behaviour quickly. For Zedeck and Goldstein (2000),

in their postulation argued that soft skills also deal with problem-solving skills, communication skills, personal qualities as well as work related ethics.

Improving employee technical skills and providing technical trainings are other factors that maximize productivity in manufacturing companies (Nielsen, 2013). In addition, Euske and Lebens (2006) asserts that productivity of employees or organizations is not only financially dependent, but also non-financially dependent, which ensure the attainment of organization goals. Productivity is an element of skills and motivation to carry out work roles. Therefore, a higher productivity is attainable when management in organizations provide training for skilled employees to reach companies goals (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2007). Hence, employee uncertainty during the process of integration may have negative outcomes (Diduc, 2022). But the socialization and task integration that match each workers skills to work roles can facilitate work coordination (Kroon et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the overall impact of employee integration is to reduce employee uncertainty and increase organizational productivity

### **Interpersonal conflict resolution**

Conflict at workplace is inevitable. The interaction between two or more employees, or group of workers within organizations can largely result to conflict due to differences of individual feelings, interest, perception, goal, ideas, values, that is in opposition with others. However, Shetach (2012) asserts that conflict is a part of social or organizational life and can be found everywhere. Therefore, the immense social and work interaction differences that is common in an organization can be responsible for conflict events, however, its management can reflect on the productivity level of each worker (Afful-Broni, 2012). According to Nistorescu (2019) conflict can prevent an individual from achieving the desired goal of an organization. More so, conflict can lead to dangerous workplace situations in future which can affect organizational productivity and effectiveness.

Effective conflict resolution enhances organizational productivity through workers dedication, commitment, and work absorption. It can as well boosts morale, stimulate employees, and result to organizational productivity. Zheng, Yang and McLean (2010), argued that productivity determines organizational policy objectives or the extent that organizational objectives are derived. Productivity can be a replicate of the general performance of a company due to its broader comparison to different variables of company's performance. In addition, the ability of organizations to perform any role with the maximal ranges of input and output can also determine the level of productivity for a firm (Amin and Shila, 2015).

### **Theoretical Review**

The theory adopted in this study is the diffusion theory propounded by Rogers (1962). Diffusion theory is related to the social learning process in organizations, where new employees are integrated into the cultures of an organization. The premise of this theory is that learning process may be either rational, voluntary or coercive in nature (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Diffusion theory have treated change in organization as a rational process, and have also been more concerned with the objects, instruments or values of change more than the process itself (Bomberg, 2007). Rogers (1992) classified this diffusion theory process as an innovation that is communicated through certain channels over a period of time to the members of a social system (Rogers, 1983). Diffusion theory have over the years been fruitful in history for the explanation of variation in policy innovation adoption in several organization for productivity, and political systems through the examination of the national and organizational systems' characteristics as well as various diffusion processes (Volden, 2006).

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study elicited data purposively by the use of structured questionnaires in four Likert format of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree. The questionnaires were administered to 200 respondents in CWAY Food and Beverages Nigeria Company Limited, and La Sien Bottling Company

Limited in Port Harcourt, Rivers State being the selected manufacturing companies. The descriptive survey design was adopted to enable the collection of data from primary and secondary sources.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The retrieved data were presented in percentages as shown in tables below

Table 1: Summary of responses on the exploration of how workers integration process is attributable to productivity in the manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Variables	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly agree	78	39
Agree	64	32
Strongly disagree	32	16
Disagree	26	13
Total	200	100

Source: Nworgu and Amadi, (2024)

Table 1 reveals that 78 (39%) and 64 (32%) respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that workers integration process is attributable to productivity in the selected manufacturing companies. Whereas, 32 (16%) and 26 (13%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively that workers integration is attributable to productivity in the manufacturing companies. However, since a greater percentage agrees to the stated opinion, the research retains that workers integration is attributable to productivity in the selected manufacturing companies.

Table 2: Summary of responses on the ways labour integration process increase productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Variables	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly agree	84	42
Agree	63	31.5
Strongly disagree	32	16
Disagree	21	10.5
Total	200	100

Source: Nworgu and Amadi, (2024)

Table 2 shows that 84 (42%) and 63 (31.5%) strongly agree and agree respectively that the ways of labour integration process increase productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers States. However, 32 (16%) and 21 (10.5%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively that ways of labour integration increase productivity in the selected manufacturing companies in Rivers State. Since more respondents agree to the given opinion, the study retains that the ways of labour integration increase productivity in the selected manufacturing companies.

**CONCLUSION**

Integration process in companies has been found to have the capacity of enabling workers to understand companies work culture and enhance organization productivity. Furthermore, it also shows that employee’s integration at workplace can increase organizational productivity. This is because integrating new employees can create the opportunity for individuals at workplace to know work requirement and regulations the organization expect of them after receiving induction and participating in training programmes organized by the companies for new workers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In line with the findings, the following recommendations are provided

1. Employers should provide workers the opportunity to be more integrated technologically though offering effective training programmes in the organization to ensure regular productivity.

2. Management in organizations should include the productive workforce into a more lucrative remuneration in relation to entitlements accruable to key stakeholders of the organizations.

## REFERENCES

- Câmara, A. (2012), The role of organizational culture in the integration and socialization of the organization's members. *Journal of Applied Scientific Interdisciplinary*, 6 (4), pp. 80-97.
- Allen, D. G. & Shanock, L. R. (2013). Perceived organizational support and embeddedness as key mechanisms connecting socialization tactics to commitment and turnover among new employees. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 34, pp. 350-369.
- Amin, M. E. (2005). *Social science research: Conception, methodology and analysis*. Kampala: Makerere University Printery.
- Cooper-Thomas, H., and Wilson, M. (2011), Influences on newcomers' adjustment tactic use. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 19 (4), pp. 388-404.
- Cooper-Thomas, H., Van Vianen, A. and Anderson, N. (2004), Changes in person organization fit: The impact of socialization tactics on perceived and actual P-O fit. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 13 (1), pp. 52-78.
- Diduc, S. (2022). Integration team members' approaches to uncertainty management in M&A. *European Management Journal*, 40(6), pp. 917-931.
- Dolowitz, D. & Marsh, D. (1996) 'Who learns from whom?', *Political Studies* 44(2), pp. 343-57.
- Florea, N. (2014), Good practices of integration for new employees in Romanian organizations. *Buletin Stiintific*, 37 (1), pp. 13-23.
- Gomes, J., Cunha, M., Rego, A., Cunha, R., Cabral-Cardoso, C. & Marques, C. (2008), *Handbook of Personnel Management and Human Capital*. (1st ed.). Lisbon: Edições Sílabo, Lda.
- Griffis, H. (2018), "State of remote work 2018 report: what it's like to be a remote worker in 2018 featured on buffer [blog post].
- Hsiung, T. & Hsieh, A. (2003), Newcomer socialization: The role of job standardization. *Public Personnel Management*, 32 (4), pp. 579-589.
- Kaabel, A. (2018). *Losing humanitarian capital: Exploring micro and macro determinants of refugee labour market integration* (Doctoral dissertation). Christian-Albrechts Universität zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany.
- Koschmann, M. A., Kuhn, T. R. & Pfarrer, M. D. (2012). A communicative framework of value in cross-sector partnerships. *Academy of Management Review*, 37, pp. 332- 354.
- Krasman, M. (2015). Three must-have onboarding elements for new and relocated employees. *Employment Relations Today*, 42(2), pp. 9-14.

- Kroon, D., Noorderhaven, N., Corley, K. & Vaara, E. (2022). Hard and soft integration: towards a dynamic model of post-acquisition integration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 59, pp. 1132- 1161.
- Lockwood, N. & Tai, B. (2006). Organizational entry: onboarding, orientation and socialization. *Society for Human Resource Management*.
- Marcellos, R. (2012), Integration and organizational socialization. *Maiêutica*, pp.155-158.
- Moeller, M. & Maley, J.F. (2018). MNC considerations in identifying and managing LGB expatriate stigmatization: LGB expatriate stigmatization. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20, pp. 325–342.
- Mwangi, J. & Waiganjo, E. (2017). Influence of occupational health and safety on employees' performance in the flower industry in Kenya: A case study of Penta Flowers Limited, Thika Sub-County. *The Strategic Journal of Business and Change Management*, 4(3), pp. 191-208.
- Nielsen, M. S. (2013). Understanding employee engagement in a public service context.
- Nnadozie, N. & Ugwu, K. (2016). Evaluating occupational health and safety management in selected plastic Manufacturing organisations in Awka Metropolis Nigeria. *Management Studies and Economic Systems*, 3(1), pp. 23-33.
- Pike, K. (2014). New employee onboarding programs and person-organization fit: an examination of socialization tactics. *Schmidt Labor Research Center Seminar Series*.
- Reis, F. (2010). *Recruitment, Selection, and Integration*. (1st ed.). Lisbon: Editora RH, Lda.
- Rogers, E. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd edn, New York and London: The Free Press.
- Saeed, T., Mansor, N., Siddique, S., Anis-Ul-Haq, M. & Ishaq, H. (2012). Organizational socialization: individual and organizational consequences. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 4 (3), pp. 96-101.
- Sekhar, C., Patwardhan, M. & Vyas, V. (2018). "Linking work engagement to job performance through flexible human resource management", *Journal of Advance in Management Research*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 72-87.
- Shetach, A. (2012). Dilemmas of ethics committees' effectiveness: A management and team theory contribution. *Clinical Ethics*, 7(2), pp. 94-100.
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N. & Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28, pp. 176–189.
- Szkudlarek, B., Nardon, L., Osland, J., Adler, N. & Lee, E.S. (2019). When context matters: What happens to international theory when researchers study refugees. *Academy of Management Perspectives*.

- Teixeira, R., Koufteros, X. & Peng, X. (2012). Organizational structure, integration, and manufacturing performance: a conceptual model and propositioning. *Journal operations and supply chain management*, 5 (1), pp. 69-81.
- Ulrich, D. (2016). "HR at a crossroads", *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 54 (2), pp. 148-164.
- Volden, C. (2006). 'States as policy laboratories: emulating success in the children's health insurance program', *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2), pp. 294–312.
- Wachter, J. K. & Yorio, P. L. (2014). A system of safety management practices and worker engagement for reducing and preventing accidents: An empirical and theoretical investigation. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 68, pp. 117- 130.
- Zheng W., Yang B. & McLean G. (2010). Linking organizational culture, structure, strategy, and organizational effectiveness: Mediating role of knowledge management. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(7).