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Employee relations strategies and its effects on employees' performance in the higher institutes of commerce and management (HICM) of The University of Bamenda

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Abstract

The main aim of this article was to examine employee relations Strategy and its effect on Employees' performance in the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management. To accomplish this task, the mixed research approaches were used. The techniques used in analyzing qualitative data was Thematic Content Analysis while the descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data with the SPSS software version 23.0. A sample of 100 respondents were selected in this study using the random sampling technique. Both primary and the secondary data was used. After analyzing the data, the results show that the workers relation techniques have a positive effect on employees' performance. A unit increase in the workers relation techniques will increase the performance of employees by 0.856, significant at 1 percent. After testing our hypothesis, it can be concluded that, employee relations strategy has a great effect on employees' performance in The Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management. At the end, it was recommended that All staff of the university should be treated equally to avoid situations where some staff members feel left out, Effective communication should be encouraged at the level of central administration down to the faculty level and Promotions and end of year awards to meritorious workers be regularly done. Irrespective of the above results, this research still has a lot of limits coming from the methodology, time, respondents and geographical location.

Keywords: Employee relations strategy, employees and performance

Introduction

Employee relation strategies has a influence in employees' performance in an Organizational. Looking at Obaide, (2022) ^[12], workers performance is largely affected by the types of relationship that exists between the workers and employer, hence it is essential for managers to build sustainable relationship with their workers.

The University of Bamenda play an increasingly vital role in economic and social development as the lone state university in the North West Region of Cameroon. It is made up of schools and faculties. However, the HICM, been one of the schools of the University, is encountering challenges with it human resources performances such as, late coming, absenteeism and non-respect of datelines among others. Due to the challenges, it is rare for most of this institution to meet up with its objectives on time. Base on that background, this article aims to examine the influence of employee relations strategies on employee's performance in the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management and to provide answers to these questions.

- 1) What is the influence of employee relations strategies in employee's performance?
- 2) What is the effect of equity on employee performance in the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management?
- 3) What is the effect of effective communication on worker's performance in the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management?
- 4) What is the influence of promotion as an employee relations strategy on employee performance?

Literature Review

A) Theoretical Review

Different theories have been used to underpin studies on employee relation strategy which

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includes but not limited to social reciprocity theory, universality theory and contingency theory.

Social Reciprocity Theory

This theory had been postulated Kahneman and Thaler in 1986. according to them it refers to the principles of fairness. This has been supported by Armin *et al.* in 1998, that reward or punishment should be directly proportional. it is a social exchange theory that brings about obligations to give back.

The universalistic theory by Dewar and Werbel, 1979 ^[19]

Universality theory holds that, there are certain Human resources Strategy practices that had been tested and it produce same result in different organization.

Such strategic practices should be adopted by other organization to produce higher organizational performance. This view had been supported by Pfeffer (1995) ^[20] and Osterman (1994) ^[21].

B) Conceptual review

The study has two main concepts; Employee relations strategies and employee performance.

Employee relation strategies

Employee relations strategy can be seen as a plan of action to create an environment that will meet the needs of both employees and employers.

According to Rose (2008) ^[14] Employees relations strategy can be seen as normalizer of the employment relationship in time of crisis (Worlu *et al.* 2016) ^[18] it deals with the nexus between the worker and manager with the intention of improving their output. (Gennard and Judge, 2002) ^[7].

Equity

Equity has a great influence in employees' performance in

an organization as it established and sustain better working environment. Equity promotes growth and motivate employee performance (Stecher and Rosse, 2007) ^[15]. Inequity will led to dissatisfaction, displeasure and disillusionment which can give rise to low involvement and commitment. (Albrecht, 2010; Hicks and Caroline, 2007) ^[12, 9].

Effective communication

Communication increasing public accountability and transparency in an organization as it improves commitment and performance of workers, communication is a light to the employee as it shows him what they are supposed to know and when (Naliaka 2020) ^[11].

Promotion

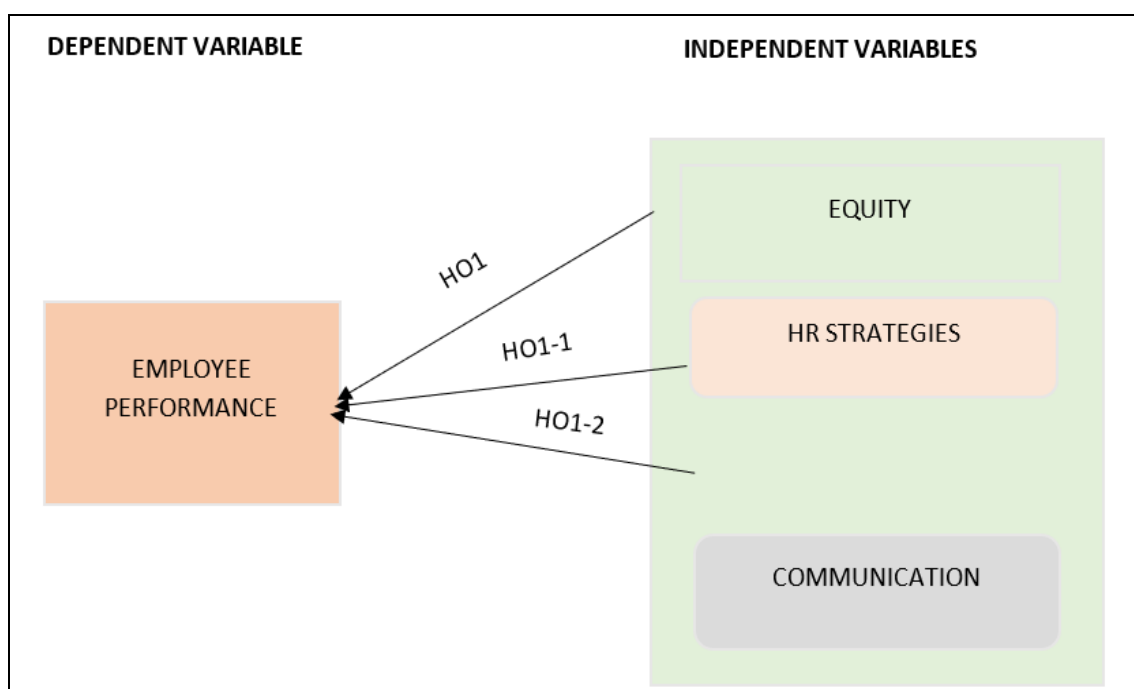
Promotion is an important strategy as it enhances job satisfaction and increased performance. Chan and Mak, (2012) ^[5], holds that workers feel motivated when they promoted this has also been supported by Redmond (2013) ^[13].

The Employees Performance:

The art of the workman to achieved it objectives in speed, efficiencies, and consistency in an organization is what is known as Performance. According to Al-Salami (2005), there exist two main factors that influence employee's performance in an organization namely Technical and Human factors the exist other factors such as;

1. Incentives
2. Leadership
3. Employee Training and Development Programs.
4. Motivation
5. Work Place Environment

Conceptual Framework



Author source, 2023

C) Empirical Review

Muma *et al.*, (2021) ^[10] concluded that employee relations strategies influenced retention of employees in universities in Kenya and recommended that other employee relations strategies including providing communication channel for employees to channel their grievances towards top management, employee voice to give employee value and employee participation in the affairs for the company. This is likely to boost the employees' morale and motivate them to perform their job tasks with zeal thus increasing their productivity and hence enabling the universities in Kenya to achieve their mandate and more enormous competitive advantage.

Looking at Obaide (2022) ^[12], concluded that employee welfare and having in place conflict resolution mechanism are critical factors in job satisfaction and recommends that hotels in Keffi should ensure adequate and timely rewards in terms of salaries, allowances and other incentive are given to their staff and management of the hotels should also ensure at all times that conflict resolution mechanisms are not compromised.

Worlu *et al.*, (2016) ^[18] in their studied the effects of employee relations strategy on job performance in Lagos State University, Southwest, Nigeria. The came out with a model that was developed and tested using One hundred and thirty-six (136) copies of valid questionnaire, The outcome of the analysis reveals that equity, promotion, mentoring and recognition have positive influence on employees' performance.

According to A study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2010) ^[17], it shows that organization that relied on effective communication realize up to 47% higher returns. It therefore guides organizations to set out their goals so that employees understand where they fit in.

D) Research gap

Most studies carried out on employee relations strategies are not done in Cameroon like that of Obaide (2022) ^[12] that was done in Kenya. Equally other studies carried out in the domain of employee relations strategy used structural equations models to test hypotheses while this study is going to use linear regression. This study is therefore going to cover a geographical and time gap given that, this study is first to be done in 2023.

Methodology

This article adopted a mixed methods and descriptive statistics research design. This design was used because data had to collected from the employees of the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management through a survey questionnaire and the hypothesis will be tested using linear regression analysis. For this study, we consider a sample size of 100 persons both male and female ranging from 20yrs to 50yrs and above. They are all active staffs of HICM. The sample technique used was random sampling. The Data collected will be analyze using both statistical and descriptive methods (Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences, SPSS 23.0) to produce valid results that can be generalized. The correlation method is used since there are two variables and the variables will be measured based on the following hypothesis:

Ho1: Employee Relations Strategy has no significant effect on employee performance.

Ho1-1: Equity strategies have no effect on employee's

performance

Ho1-2: communication has no significant effects on employee performance

Ho1-3: Management challenges to effective Employee Relations Strategy is not a function of poor performance.

Definition of Variables

Yt = Employee performance (dependent variable)

X1t = equity (independent variable)

X1-1t Employee Relations Strategy (independent variable)

X1-2t = communication (independent variable)

X1-3t = Challenges to Employee Relations Strategy (independent variable)

Econometric Specification and Model Specification

This section brings to light econometrics analysis use to establish the relationship between the various Employee Relations Strategy attributes on employee's performance. The model can be specified as follows;

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1t} + \beta_2 X_{2t} + \beta_3 X_{3t} + \mu_t \quad \text{for population}$$

$$\gamma = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \quad \text{for sample}$$

Where, Yt = Employee Performance (dependent variable), X1t = Equity (independent variable), X2t = Employee Relations Strategy (independent variable), X3t = Challenges to Employee Relations Strategy (independent variable), β_1 , β_2 and β_3 = coefficient of the independent variables and μ = Error term or stochastic term.

Statistical Tools

Mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the level of Employee Relations Strategy and to determine which aspects they expressed Very Strong, Strong, Moderate, Weak, and Very Weak Employee Relations Strategy in the workplace.

Data analysis and presentation of results

The analysis will be done using the simple descriptive statistics. In this respect, frequencies, percentages and tables will be used. The analysis will begin with demographic information. Thereafter, analysis of questionnaires will be done objectively.

4.1 Analysis of Demographic Data

This section shows a clear distribution of the sample by respondent's gender, age, level of education and longevity in the organization.

Table 1: Distribution According to Gender

		Sex			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Female	18	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The findings show that 40 percent of the respondents were males while a majority of 60 percent were females.

Table 2: Distribution According to Age Range

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 20	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	20-29	7	23.3	23.3	26.7
	30-39	2	6.7	6.7	33.3
	40-49	16	53.3	53.3	86.7
	Above 50	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

Table 4.2 shows that 3.3 percent of the respondents were of age group below 20 years, 23.3 percent were of the age group 20 to 29 years, 6.7 percent were of age group 30 to 39, 53.3 percent of the respondents were of age group 40 to

49, and 13.3 percent of the respondents were of age 50 years plus. This shows a majority of the respondents were of age 40 to 49 years old.

Table 3: Distribution According to Level of Education

	Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Advanced level	8	26.7	27.6	27.6
	HND	4	13.3	13.8	41.4
	Bachelor's Degree Level	3	10.0	10.3	51.7
	Master's Degree	5	16.7	17.2	69.0
	PhD	9	30.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The findings reveal that 27.6 percent were advanced level holders, 13.8 percent were HND holders, 10.3 percent were bachelor degree holders, 17.2 percent were Master degree holders, 31.0 percent were PhD holders. The results show that PhD holders constituted a majority of the sampled respondents.

Table 4: Distribution According to Longevity in Service

	Longevity	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 2 years	16	53.3	53.3	53.3
	2-5 years	10	33.3	33.3	86.7
	More than 10 years	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The longevity of the respondents show that 53.3 percent were less than 2 years in the institution, 33.3 were between 2 to 5 years in the institution, and 13.3 percent were more than 10 years old in the institution.

Table 6: Main research objective: Descriptive Statistics for the impact of Employee Relations Strategy on Employees' performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Placement of strategies and plans have greatly improved the performance of the institution	30	2.00	5.00	3.9667	.92786
Developing a strategy and maintaining it was easy	30	1.00	5.00	4.2000	1.15669
Strategies enacted upon where effective in sustaining the institution	30	1.00	5.00	4.2000	1.15669
Top management coordinates with all levels in Employee Relations Strategy	30	1.00	5.00	4.0333	1.12903
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The results show that the average of those who indicated that Placement of strategies and plans have greatly improved the performance of the institution is 3.9, the average of those who indicated that developing a strategy and maintaining it was easy is 4.2, the average of those who indicated that Strategies enacted upon where effective in sustaining the institution is 4.2, the average of those who indicated that Top management coordinates with all levels

Table 5: Distribution According to Position Occupied in the Institution

	Position	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Administrative Staff	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Teaching Staff	14	46.7	46.7	60.0
	Support Staff	8	26.7	26.7	86.7
	Other Employee	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The findings for the position of staff show that 13.3 percent were administrative staff, 46.7 percent were teaching staff, 26.7 percent were support staff, and 13.3 percent were other employees of the institution.

Analysis of Data According to Objectives

Here, analysis and interpretation of data will be done objectively

in a crisis situation is 4.0. We see that some of the average values are greater than 4 showing that some respondents strongly agreed on the statements made while a considerable share agreed given that some average values are less than 4.

Specific research objective one: Examine Equity as a strategy and its effects on employee performance

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Equity Strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Equity strategies are put in place prior to the occurrence of a crisis	30	1.00	5.00	3.1333	1.65536
Equity Strategies are developed/enacted during the crisis scenario only	30	1.00	5.00	3.8333	1.08543
There is use of more than one equity strategy	30	1.00	5.00	3.5000	1.10641
All levels are involved in the development of an equity strategic plan	30	1.00	5.00	3.9333	1.25762
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

We note from the table that the average of those who indicate that Equity strategies are put in place prior to the occurrence of a crisis is 3.1, the average of those who indicated that Strategies are developed/enacted during the crisis scenario only is 3.8, the average of those who indicated that There is use of more than one equity strategy is 3.5, and the average of those who indicated that All levels are involved in the development of an equity strategic plan

is 3.9. The results show that all average values are greater than 3 indicating that a considerable share of the respondents agreed with the statements made on equity strategies before the recruitment.

Specific research objective three: Analyze the management challenges to effective crisis management strategy on performance

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Management challenges to effective Employee Relations Strategy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Proactive measures where difficult to incorporate	30	2.00	5.00	4.2667	.86834
Control mechanisms where easy to adopt	30	2.00	5.00	4.1667	.91287
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

Statistics suggest that the average of those who indicated that Proactive measures where difficult to incorporate is 4.2, the average of those who indicated that control mechanisms

where easy to adopt is 4.1. This shows that a majority of the respondents agreed on the statements made.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees performance remained unaffected by the Employee Relations Strategy	30	1.00	5.00	3.9333	1.17248
Strategies put in place brought about techniques that improved the quality of service	30	2.00	5.00	4.1333	1.07425
The institution has witnessed substantial employee growth and development despite the crisis situation	30	1.00	5.00	4.2333	1.04000
Employee Relations Strategies where effective in curbing the effects on employee performance as an organizational performance during a crisis situation	30	1.00	5.00	4.1000	1.21343
Valid N (list wise)	30				

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The average of those who indicated that Employees performance remained unaffected by the Employee Relations Strategy is 3.9, the average of those who indicated that Strategies put in place brought about techniques that improved the quality of service is 4.1, the average of those who indicated that The institution has witnessed substantial

growth despite the crisis situation is 4.2, the average of those who indicated that Employee Relations Strategies where effective in curbing the effects on employee performance as a function of organizational performance during a crisis situation is 4.1.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for constructed variables by sum of scores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EP	16.4000	3.99655	30
ERS	14.4000	3.47007	30
EQ	17.9333	4.71193	30
COM	16.2667	3.25823	30
MC	12.4667	2.35962	30

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS 23.0)

The average sum of score for employee performance (EP) is 14.4, the average sum of score for Employee Relations strategies (ERS) is 14.4, the average sum of score for Equity (EQ) is 17.9, the average sum of score for effective

Communication management is 16.2, and the average sum of score for management challenges is 12.4. The average score for Equity is highest indicating the stronger power of equity compared to communication management.

Table 11: Correlations

		EP	CMS	CS	ECM	MC
EP	Pearson Correlation	1	.732**	-.798**	.820**	-.795**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
ERS	Pearson Correlation	.732**	1	.885**	.661**	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
EQ	Pearson Correlation	-.798**	.885**	1	.715**	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
COM	Pearson Correlation	.820**	.661**	.715**	1	.741**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
MC	Pearson Correlation	-.795**	.709**	.788**	.741**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	30	30	30	30	30

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficients show that ERS has a correlation of 0.732 showing that there is a strong positive relationship between ERS and EP (employee performance), EQ has a correlation coefficient of -0.798 showing that the EQ has a strong negative significant at 1 percent relationship with employee performance, COM has a correlation of 0.820 showing that there is a 1 percent significant strong positive relationship between COM and employee performance, and management challenges has a correlation coefficient of -0.795 indicating that there is a 1 percent significant negative relationship between crisis management challenges with employee performance.

Table 12: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.885 ^a	.783	.748	2.00542	2.009

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS)

a. Predictors: (Constant), EQ, COM, MC, ERS

b. Dependent Variable: EP

The adjusted R square of 0.748 indicates that 74.8 percent of variations in employee performance is as a result of the different explanatory variables included in the model of the study. The Durbin-Watson statistics of 2009^[17] indicates no traces of the problem of autocorrelation in the regression model estimated.

Table 13: ANOVA^a

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	362.657	4	90.664	22.544	.000 ^b
	Residual	100.543	25	4.022		
	Total	463.200	29			

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS)

a. Dependent Variable: EP

b. Predictors: (Constant), MC, ERS, COM, EQ

The F statistics of 22.544 with a p value of 0.000 indicates that the model of ERS and employee performance estimated is significant globally at 1 percent and therefore 99 percent reliable for some policy recommendations.

Table 14: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.897	2.193		-.865	.395		
	ERS	.856	.232	.048	4.240	.000	.215	1.660
	EQ	-.225	.197	-.265	-3.140	.000	.161	1.230
	COM	.516	.180	.421	2.867	.008	.403	1.484
	MC	-.406	.281	-.240	-1.444	.161	.315	1.175

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS)

a. Dependent Variable: EP

The regression results show that the crisis management strategies have a positive effect on the performance of employees. A unit increase in the ERS will increase the performance of employees by 0.856, significant at 1 percent. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that ERS significantly affects the performance of employees. The EQ has a negative effect on the performance of employees. A unit increase in the EQ will decrease the performance of employees by 0.225, significant at 1 percent. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that EQ significantly affects the performance of employees. Effective EQ have a positive effect on the performance of employees. A unit increase in COM will increase the

performance of employees by 0.516, significant at 1 percent. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that COM significantly affects the performance of employees. The COM have a negative effect on the performance of employees. A unit increase in the crisis management challenges will decrease the performance of employees by 0.406, insignificant. We therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that COM do not significantly affects the performance of employees. All the collinearity statistics, that is the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test statistics are less than 2.5 showing that their average value is less than 2.5 indicating the absence of collinearity issues in the regression model.

Table 15: Residuals Statisticsa

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	9.2096	21.2578	16.4000	3.53630	30
Residual	-3.75660	7.19553	.00000	1.86199	30
Std. Predicted Value	-2.033	1.374	.000	1.000	30
Std. Residual	-1.873	3.588	.000	.928	30

Source: Fieldwork, 2023 (calculated values SPSS)

Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary of Findings

Summary of findings of this study will be based on the research objectives as analyzed above.

- With respect to the main research objective “to determine the Effects of Employee Relations Strategies on employee performance” the findings from the analysis in part four above reveal that equity affects employee performance significantly in the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management with a correlation coefficient of 0.820 showing that there is a 1 percent significant strong positive relationship between equity and employee performance.
- The first specific objective “to examine Equity and its effects on employee performance of the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management”, the findings show that equity have significant positive effects on employee’s performance in the HICM, with a correlation coefficient of 0.732 showing that there is a strong positive relationship between equity and employees’ performance
- Considering the secondly specific objective “to examine ways in which effective communication can avoid and/or make productive” it is observed from the findings that, an increase in factors surrounding effective communication have significant negative effects on the performance of the staffs of HICM as it has a correlation coefficient of -0.798.
- The last specific objective “to analyze the management challenges to effective ERS on performance” results from the findings equally indicate that challenges faced by management have a negative impact on the performance of the employees of the Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management

General conclusion

After testing our hypothesis, it can be concluded that, employee relations strategy has a great effect on employees’ performance in The Higher Institutes of Commerce and Management.

Recommendations

From the results of this study, it is recommended that;

1. All staff of the university should be treated equally to avoid situations where some staff members feel left out
2. Effective communication should be encouraged at the level of central administration down to the faculty level since this will soften the hearts of disgruntled workers who sometimes do not even hear from the university authorities.
3. Promotions and end of year awards to meritorious workers be regularly done since this will make many employees remain since there is hope of group in the University.

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