Motivational Factors, Consequences and Management of Workplace Romances in Manufacturing Companies in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper specifically examined the motivational factors, consequences and management of workplace romances in manufacturing companies in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study population comprised of employees who are involved in workplace romances and human resource/personnel managers. The study adopted multi-stage sampling approach, snowball and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaire and oral interviews. The data collected through questionnaire were analysed using descriptive techniques such as frequency counts and percentages while the data obtained through oral interviews were content analysed. The results of the study show that majority of the respondents engaged in hierarchical type of workplace romances. Respondents were also found to be in workplace romances principally to ensure financial security and support as well as satisfying their task and career related needs. Majority of the human resource/personnel managers however perceived workplace romances in negative light as it was seen capable of lowering productivity of those involved, damaging company public image and causing workplace violence. Despite these, no measure was found in most of the companies sampled for managing these potential risks. In view of these, the study recommends regular sensitization of employees through workshop/seminar on the risks of workplace romances. Also, manufacturing companies without any workplace romance policy should formulate one that will effectively regulate employees behavior without infringing on their rights.

Keywords: Career-related needs, Employees, Manufacturing companies, Ogun state, Work environment and Workplace romances

Introduction

Workplace romance is a widespread phenomenon in work organization in recent years. This is so due to the changes that have occurred in the workplace and in society during the past century in which people are spending increasingly more time at work, more women are entering the workforce, rising in divorce rate and relaxation of sexual mores (Pierce, Aguinis & Adams, 2000; Wilson, Filosa & Fennel, 2003; Lickey, Berry & Whelan-Berry, 2009). With these, workplace thus provides an ideal context for attraction and romance due to the constant closeness of co-workers, the increased time spent together, the sense of teamwork, and individual isolated from their problems at home and with their families (Lickey *et al*, 2009; Verhoef & Terblanche, 2015).

Conceptually, workplace romances have many definitions. For instance, Lickey *et al* (2009) defined it as a mutually desired relationship that includes physical attraction between two members of the same organization. Further, Mainiero (1986); and Riach and Wilson (2007) also see workplace romances as relationship between two people working together, mutually attracted and that attraction is made known to others, resulting in some form of change of behavior. To Barratt

and Nordstrom (2011), workplace romance is a consensual relationship involving sexual intimacy. From these definitions it can be deduced that workplace romance is a mutually attracted and consensual relationship involving sexual intimacy. The mutual attraction help separates workplace romance from sexual harassment. Likewise, the sexual intimate component also helps to creates specific distinction between workplace romance and workplace friendship.

The motivations for participating in romantic relationship in work environment are many. These include job related, egotistical and love (Quinn, 1977). Dallard (1987) further explored and refined these motives and argues that the job motive, for instance, seeks advancements, security, power, financial rewards, lighter workloads or more time off. Other motivational factors for workplace romances include physical attraction, intellectual attraction, shared energy levels, increased self-esteem from success as a team of two, etc (Pierce, 1998; Cleverland, Stockdale & Murphy, 2000; and Cole, 2009), and organizational climate (Mano & Gabriel, 2006). Mano and Gabriel (2006) further argue that workplace romances are more likely to emerge in hot climate where work arrangements foster contact outside work and where organizational policies do not punish those who participate in a workplace romance.

Workplace romances are of different types but most common ones are first, a relationship between a male with higher organizational status than his female partner, and second, passionate and companionate relations (Dillard, Hale & Segrin, 1994). Other types of workplace romances include lateral workplace romance (relationship between people of equal level), hierarchical workplace romance (relationship between two people of different level), and extramarital workplace romances (relationship between two members of an organization who are married to people other than their coworker) (Lickey *et al*, 2009; and Barrett & Nordstrom, 2011). Each of these relationships can however occur as heterosexual or homosexual and each type equally have potential risks and benefits for work organization (Lickey *et al*, 2009).

With regards to the potential risks and benefits of workplace romances, Pierce, Byrne & Aguinis (1996) argue that workplace romance is negatively associated with employees level of job performance, work motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, Cole (2009) discovered that workplace romance can run professional relationships, create confusion and scorn among workers, and self-doubt and lost of objectivity on the part of the couple, as well as generating competition and conflict. Other researchers such as Lickey *et al* (2009) however found workplace romance to be beneficial to workers and organizations. The benefits of workplace romances to organizations, according to these researchers, are in the areas of increased productivity, loyalty and commitment to organization. To the workers, workplace romance was found to increase the motivation and mental energy of the involved parties, thereby making them work harder and longer.

Managerial interventions for managing potential risks and benefits of workplace romances are many. These interventions include counseling, reprimanding, termination of appointment or transfer of those involved to another department within organization, removal of those involved from supervisory position, demotion suspension of those involved from work, signing of consensual relationship agreement (also known as love contract) that stipulate terms and conditions of the romance, support the relationship by allowing common vacations or ignoring the relationship totally (Schaefer & Tudor, 2001; Pierce & Aguinist 2009; and the Society for Human Resources Management, 2013). It is against the foregoing that this study is conceived to examine the motivational factors, consequences and management of workplace romances. It is believed that the study will provide necessary information that may be useful to industrial policymakers on the implications of workplace romances in manufacturing organizational setting. In addition, the study

will be useful to employer in designing strategies for dealing with the risks of workplace romances in work environment. Finally, findings from the study may also be useful for further studies relating to motivational factors, consequences and management of romantic relationship in other sectors workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Although studies (Pierce, 1998; Powell & Foley, 1998; Quinn, 1977, Schaefer & Tudor, 2001; Mano & Gabriel, 2006) have been conducted on workplace romances in work organization, but these studies are foreign and their findings may not be adequate to explain in totality the situation in Nigeria given the differences in socio-cultural environment of the various countries. In Nigeria, studies (Mbah & Abeh, 2019; and Omolawal & Okewole, 2019) have also been conducted on romantic relationship among employees in workplace. However, these studies only focused on universities (Omolawal & Okewole, 2019) and commercial banks (Mbah & Abeh, 2019). None of the studies focused on manufacturing organization. This however calls for more studies. This present study is thus aimed to make a contribution on this important subject. This will however be done with particular reference to manufacturing organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria. Manufacturing organizations comprises of companies that uses raw materials, parts and components to make a finished good.

Research Questions:

Sequel to the foregoing issues in the statement of the problem, the following research questions are deemed vital for this study:

i.   What are the reasons for engaging in workplace romantic relationship?
ii.   What are the consequences of the romantic relationship in manufacturing workplace?
iii.   How are the workplace romances managed in manufacturing companies in Ogun State?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the reasons for engaging in workplace romantic relationship, consequences of the romantic relationship in manufacturing workplace and how workplace romances are managed in manufacturing companies in Ogun State. While the specific objectives are:

i.   To ascertain the reasons for engaging in workplace romantic relationship.
ii.   To determine the consequences of the romantic relationship in manufacturing workplace.
iii.   To find out how workplace romances are managed in manufacturing companies in Ogun State.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted Byrne and Wiliam (1973) interpersonal attraction theory of romantic relationship as well as Pierce and Aguinis (2009) Legal-centric and Schaefer and Tudor (2001) liberal approaches of managing workplace romances. Interpersonal attraction theory explains the conditions that lead people to like and love each other. Attraction, according to the theory, is a two-way process, involving not only the person who is attracted but also the attractor. The theory presented four main factors contributing to the formation of romantic relationship between two people. These factors are physical proximity (how close people live to each other), physical attractiveness (how beautiful and popular a person is), similarity in attitudes and personality (in

terms of interest/outlooks, psychological characteristics such as intelligence and physical attributes), and rewards (desired consequences). In relating the theory to this study, the formation of workplace romances is a function of those factors highlighted in the theory. The factors influence individual desire to establish and maintain romantic relationship with people and also influence the way people communicate with each other.

With regards to the management of workplace romances, Pierce and Aguinis (2009) legal-centric approach suggested that organization should established strict policies for regulating, prohibiting or punishing workplace romances. The Schaefer and Tudor (2001) liberal approach, on the other hand, contends that employers cannot regulate employees love relationships or their personal lives. In line with this, the employer could choose to either take no action or take positive action such as engaging in open discussion or counseling. In all, these approaches give opportunity to examine the measures being used by manufacturing companies in managing potential risks and benefits of workplace romances in their work environment.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Ogun State, Nigeria, between January and February, 2020. Ogun state is one of the states in the South West of Nigeria. The state is located between latitude 6^0N and 8^0N and longitude $2^1/2^0$E and 5^0 E. It is bordered by Oyo and Osun states to the north, Lagos state to the south, Ondo state to the east and the Republic of Benin to the west (Ogun State Bureau of Land and Survey, 2011). According to the 2006 National census, Ogun state has a population of 3,728,098 with male and female population of 1,847,243 and 1,880,855 respectively (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2009). Ogun state was chosen for this study because it is one of the states that have significant number of manufacturing companies in Nigeria.

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design. The designed is considered appropriate since the study focused on different manufacturing companies in the study area. The study population comprised of employees who are involved in workplace romances and human resource/personnel managers. With regards to sample size and sampling technique, the study used multi-stage sampling approach. First, all the five (5) categories of the manufacturing companies in the study area were selected using purposive sampling technique. These categories are food, beverage and technology; chemical and pharmaceuticals; domestic and industrial plastic, rubber and form; basic metal, iron and steel and fabrication metal products; and pulp, paper and paper products, printing and publishing.

Second, one company each was randomly selected from each of the categories using the ballot method. The selected companies are Multi-Trex Investment Limited, Ode-Remo, Ogun state (representing food, beverages and technology category), Eko Supreme Resources Limited, Agbara, Ogun state (representing chemical and pharmaceuticals category), Geepee Industries Limited, Sango-Ota, Ogun state (representing domestic and industrial plastic, rubber and form category), Midland Galvanising Products Limited, Abeokuta, Ogun state (representing basic metal, iron, steel and fabrication metal products category), and VeeVee Industries Limited, Sango-Ota, Ogun state (representing pulp, paper and paper products, printing and publishing category). All the companies selected cut across the three senatorial districts of the Ogun state.

Third, snowball sampling technique was used to find and chose twenty (20) respondents in the selected companies. In addition, a total of five (5) human resource/personnel managers were also chosen across the selected companies using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaire and oral interviews. However, before the administration of the

questionnaire and the conduct of the interviews, all the participants were briefed that (i) their participation in the study was voluntary (ii) their responses were anonymous and would not be furnished to anyone other than the researcher conducting the study, and (iii) their responses would be used solely for research purposes. The data thereafter collected through questionnaire were analysed using descriptive techniques such as frequency counts and percentages while the data obtained through oral interview were content analysed.

Results of the study

Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

The discussions on the socio-demographic profile here focused on that of the employees who are involved in the act of workplace romances only. The information on the background characteristics of the human resource/personnel managers was not obtained in order to preserve their anonymity.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	10	50.0
	Female	10	50.0
	Total	20	100.0
Age (in years)	Less than 20 years	00	0.0
	20 - 29 years	03	15.0
	30 - 39 years	06	30.0
	40 - 49 years	08	40.0
	50 years and above	03	15.0
	Total	20	100.0
Educational Level	Secondary/Technical Sch. Cert	08	40.0
	Tertiary certificate	12	60.0
	Total	20	100.0
Years of Working Experience	Less than 5 years	01	05.0
	5-10 years	06	30.0
	11-15 years	08	40.0
	16-20 years	02	10.0
	More than 20	03	15.0
	Total	20	100.0
Respondents' Job Status	Manager	05	25.0
	Supervisor	02	10.0
	Accountant	05	25.0
	Engineer	02	10.0
	Marketers	03	15.0
	Others	03	15.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table I above shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. From the table half (50.0%) of the respondents were male while the remaining half (50.0%) were female. These equal percentages could be attributed to the fact that only male and their female partners that are involved in workplace romances are the ones used in this study. The age of the respondents shows that 40.0 percent were between age 40-49 years, about 30.0 percent were between age 30-39 years, 15.0 percent were between age 20-29 years and age 50 years and above respectively. This finding

indicates that all the respondents are adult. Adults are always like to engage in romantic adventurism. As regards the educational levels of the respondents, majority (60.0%) have tertiary education certificate while the remaining 40.0 percent have secondary/technical school certificate. This finding suggests that most of the respondents are highly literate.

Respondents years of working experience shows that most (40.0%) of the respondents have between 11-15 years of working experience, about 30 percent have between 5-10 years of working experience, 15.0 percent have more than 20 years of working experience, 10.0 percent have between 16-20 years of working experience while the remaining 5.0 percent have less than 5 years of working experience. This finding indicates that majority of the respondents have acquired necessary knowledge needed to excel in their various workplace. With regards to respondent's job status, most (25.0%) were accountants, and managers respectively, about 15.0 percent were marketers and others categories of staff such as production assistant, and purchasing and supply officers, while the remaining 10.0 percent were supervisors and engineers respectively.

Reasons for engaging in workplace romances by the respondents

Before finding out the reasons respondents engaged in workplace romances, efforts were first of all made to get information from them on the forms of work place romances they engaged in. The result of the enquiries is presented in the table 2 below:

Table 2: Forms of workplace romances

Forms of workplace romances	Frequency	Percent %
Lateral workplace romance (relationship between two people at equal level)	08	40.0
Hierarchical workplace romance (relationship between two people of different level)	12	60.0
Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 shows that majority (60.0%) of the respondents engaged in hierarchical form of workplace romance while the remaining 40.0 percent engaged in lateral workplace romance. Efforts were also made to find out from the respondents on the length/duration of their romantic workplace relationships. The results of the enquiries revealed that many of the respondents have been in workplace relationship for the past seven (7) years, some five (5) years while the least was four (4) months.

With regards to the reasons respondents engaged in workplace romances, the results of the enquiries made is presented in table 3 below:

Table 3: Reasons for engaging in workplace romances

Reasons as given by the respondents	Frequency	Percent %
To ensure financial security and support	07	35.0
To satisfy my emotional (affection, attention) and sexual needs	02	10.0
To satisfy my task-related needs (lighter work load, more time off, etc)	04	20.0
To satisfy my career-related needs (regular promotion, opportunity to develop ones skills and intellect in the job)	04	20.0
To ensure job security and stability	03	15.0
Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From table 3 above, 35.0 percent of the respondents were involved in workplace romances to ensure financial security and supports, 20.0 percent participated in workplace romances to satisfy their task-related needs, 20.0 percent participated in workplace romances to satisfy their career-related needs, 15.0 percent engaged in workplace romances to ensure job security and stability while the remaining 10.0 percent involved in workplace romances to satisfy their emotional and sexual needs. This entails that employees' involvement in workplace romances are function of many factors.

Consequences of workplace romances

Efforts were first of all made to find out through oral interviews from the human resource/personnel managers of the selected companies on how their companies used to know that their employees are engaging in workplace romances and their view about its consequences generally. The results of the enquiries show that companies used to be aware of workplace romances among their employees through anonymous report, office gossips or direct reports to managers of those involved.

With regards to their views about the consequences of workplace romances, the results of the enquiries made is presented in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Consequences of workplace romances as perceived by the respondents

Consequences of workplace romances	Frequency	Percent %
Lowering productivity of those involved	04	20.0
Damaging companies public image	05	25.0
Causing workplace violence	03	15.0
Increasing job satisfaction	03	15.0
Increasing job involvement and loyalty	02	10.0
Leaking of company's confidential information by those involved in romance	03	15.0
Total	20^x	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2020

^{X}= Multiple responses

Table 4 above revealed that 25.0% of the respondents see workplace romances as damaging company public image, 20.0% perceived it as lowering productivity of those involved, 15.0% believed it causes workplace violence, 15.0% thought it increases job satisfaction, 10.0% see it increasing job involvement and loyalty while the remaining 15.0% believed it aids the leaking of company confidential information by those involved in romances. These finding indicates mixed results as the consequences of workplace romances at a point were perceived negatively by the

respondents and at another point were seen in positive light. However, those who viewed it negatively are more than those who perceived it positively.

Management of workplace romances

With regards to the management of workplace romances, efforts were first of all made to find out from the respondents on whether their companies have any policy to address workplace romances. The results of the enquiries made were presented in the Table 5 below:

Table 5: Availability of policy to address workplace romances

Availability of policy to address workplace romances	Frequency	Percent %
No verbal/written policy	03	60.0
There is verbal/written policy	02	40.0
Total	05	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 5 above shows that majority (60.0%) of the respondents answered in the negative while the remaining 40.0 percent answered in the affirmative. Further enquiries were made from those that answered in the affirmative on the forms of measures put in place by their companies to address workplace romances. The results of the enquiries were presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Measures used for managing workplace romances

Measures used for managing workplace romances	Frequency	Percent %
Counseling	02	22.2
Reprimanding	02	22.2
Suspension of those involved	01	11.1
Demotion of those involved	02	22.2
Termination of appointment of those involved	02	22.2
Total	09^x	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2020

^{X}=Multiple responses

Table 6 above revealed measures been used to manage workplace romances. The measures discovered include counseling (22.2%), reprimanding (22.2%), demotion of those involved (22.2%), termination of appointment of those involved (22.2%) and suspension of those involved (11.1%). These measures are however positive and punitive in nature. Respondents were also asked as to how those caught in the workplace romances acts in the past reacted to the use of any of those punitive measures on them. The results of the enquiries revealed that many accepted the decision of their company while others rejected their company's decision and either left their workplace, took legal action or appealed.

Discussion of findings

This study investigates reasons, consequences and management of workplace romances in manufacturing workplace in Ogun State. With regards to the reasons respondents engaged in workplace romances, this study discovered the need to: ensure financial security and supports, satisfy their task and career related needs, ensure job security and stability, and satisfy their emotional and sexual needs as the reasons for engaging in workplace romances. This entails that the employees engaged in workplace romances for different reasons ranging from those unique to job to personal factors. All in all, these findings support that of Dallard (1987).

As regards the consequences of workplace romances, this study found mixed results. In some cases, negative results were found as it was perceived to be lowering productivity of those involved, damaging company's public image as well as causing workplace violence. At another cases workplace romance was seen in positive light of increasing job satisfaction on the parts of the participants as well as increasing job involvement and organizational commitment/loyalty. However, those who see workplace romances in negative light are more than those who perceived it positively. By and large, these findings suggest that consequences of workplace romances are not a fixed phenomenon. This however is in congruent with the findings of Pierce *et al* (1996); Cole (2009); and Lickey *et al* (2009).

With regards to the management of workplace romances, this study discovered no measure in most of the companies sampled. However, in few of the companies that have workplace romance policy both positive and punitive measures were found. The positive measure discovered is counseling while the punitive measures found include reprimanding, suspension, demotion and termination of appointment of those involved. By and large, managing workplace romances in work environment is important in order to handle its risks and benefits. Some of the workplace romance management measures found in this study are consistent with the ones highlighted by Schaefer & Tudor (2001); Pierce and Aguinist (2009); and the Society for Human Resources Management (2013).

Conclusion

This study specifically examined motivational factors, consequences and management of workplace romances in manufacturing companies in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results of the study show that majority of the respondents were engaging in hierarchical type of workplace romances. Respondents' were also found to be in workplace romances principally to ensure financial security and support as well as satisfying their task and career related needs. Majority of the human resource/personnel managers however perceived workplace romances in negative light as it was seen lowering productivity of those involved, damaging company public image and causing workplace violence. Despite these, no measure was found in most of the companies sampled for managing these risks. In view of these findings, the study concludes that workplace romance is unhealthy in work environment. Therefore, management of manufacturing companies are expected to take step to handle both the risks and benefits associated with the relationship.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study the following recommendations are made:

i.   Management of manufacturing companies in the study area should handle workplace romances positively through organization of workshop/seminar for workers on the risks of romantic relationship in work environment, and not seen it as employees problem. Any company that considers workplace romance as workers problem should be ready to face its negative consequences which are detrimental to manufacturing organizational growth and development.

ii.   Manufacturing company in the study area without any policy on workplace romances should formulate one that will effectively regulate employees behavior away from workplace romances without infringing on their rights.

iii. Management of manufacturing company in the study area should establish Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to defuse and manage situation of interpersonal conflict/violence associated with workplace romances in work environment.

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