**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STAFF HARMONY**

**(A STUDY OF EXXON MOBIL NIGERIA UNLIMITED, IBENO)**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

Awareness of public relations is growing all over the world including the developing countries like Nigeria.

This rapid and progressive development in the globalizing world has lent relative high acceptance to public relations as an autonomous management function. Public relations is everything that is calculated to improve mutual understanding between an organization all with whom it comes into contact, both internal and external publics.

Public relations has different definitions. The institute of public relations (IPR) defines it as a “planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics”. Yet, Webster New International Dictionary, defines public relations as “the promotion of report and goodwill between a person, firm, or institution and other persons, though the distribution of interpretative material, the development of neighbourly interchange and the assessment of public relations”.

A veteran public relations practitioner of Saint Francisco, Dr. Red Harlow tried to solve the problem of having too many definitions of public relations when he put together 472 different definitions of public relations practice into a working definition as follows;

Public relations is a distractive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics, involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion, defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management keep abreast of an effective utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends, and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

Suffice it to say that, employee relations is a vital foundation of modern public relations. It involves among other things a two-way flow of communication between the management and employees in the organization. This is normally called employee communication. It also involves working with industrial relations and personnel department to ensure staff or employees harmony in the organization by ensuring good employee motivation practices.

Exxon Mobil which came to be in 1999 brought together three major companies in Nigeria – Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EEPNL), Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc (MON) and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPN). The three companies have notable histories, proven experience and strong records of development of Nigeria’s oil and gas industry as well as support for the communities in which they operate.

Exxon Mobil by it’s guiding principles is expected to be committed to its employees whose exceptional quality is a valuable competitive edge. It hires and retain the most qualified people available and maximize their opportunities for success through training, development, maintaining a safe work environment, enriched by diversity and characterized by open communication, trust and fair treatment.

It is therefore based on the guiding principles of Exxon Mobil, that this study sought to assess public relations practice and staff harmony in Exxon Mobil Unlimited, Ibeno, AkwaIbom State Nigeria.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

All organizations, whether profit or non-profit, deal with people of different shades of life. The activities of such organizations are bound to affect those who have stakes or interest in the organization.

Image, industrial harmony and goodwill are the basic foundation of every public relations practice, especially in a corporate organization as Exxon Mobil Nigeria, that it known for its perfect public relations activities for its staff. This company is continually relating with its staff to bring out the best in them thereby promoting good management-employee relations and establishing industrial harmony.

Effective public relations using truth and full information (communication) remains the only Panacea to enhance industrial relations in any organization. It is in the light of this that public relations department of corperate organizations are continuously working to identify problems that are likely to emanate and management is quickly notified for appropriate actions. If good will, understanding and harmony are cardinal points in the relationship between an organization and its

publics especially the staff, it therefore stands to reason that, any organization which neglects communication and public relations as an important component of corporate strategy in its management does so at its own perm.

For this reason, this study is undertaken with a view to assessing the level of application of public relations by corporate organizations in establishing and maintaining staff harmony, with focus on Exxon Mobil Nigeria Unlimited, Ibeno.

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The following were the objectives raised for the study

1. To assess the effectiveness of public relations practice of Exxon Mobil in creating staff harmony.
2. To examine public relations strategies used by Exxon Mobil in establishing staff harmony.
3. To ascertain how these public relations practice ensure staff harmony.
4. To find out whether Exxon Mobil public relations practice is acceptable to its staff.

**1.4 Research Questions**

1. How effective is Exxon Mobil public relations practice in creating staff harmony?

2. What public relations strategies does Exxon Mobil used in establishing staff harmony?

3. How has these public relations strategies worked in ensuring staff harmony?

4. Are Exxon Mobil public relations practice acceptable to its staff?

**1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study centered on the assessment of Exxon Mobil public relations practice and it effectiveness in creating and maintaining staff or workers harmony. The study was however limited to the administrative staff of Exxon Mobil in Ibeno operational base Qua Iboe Terminal, Ibeno Local Government Area.

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study is intended to assess the effectiveness of public relations practice by Exxon Mobil in establishing staff harmony. The study will be useful to other organizations who are practicing public relations. The study will reveal the intricacies of public relations practice as well as identifying issues that could help to establish and maintain cordial staff / management relationship. The study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the area of public relations.

It will serve as a resource material in academic community. That is, it will serve as a reference point for further studies.

**1.7 Limitations of the Study**

A study like this was confronted with lots of constraints. In a company like Exxon Mobil that security is paramount as it’s safety, entry into the premises was most times met with strict restrictions by the security force until a good explanation was given with prove.

It took days to meet, distribute and retrieve the questionnaire. Sometimes it felt frustrating. A lots of money was required for transport and sorting of materials.

Most times, actual snobbing by the staff (respondents) was not only annoying by insulting. Yet, the research bore it all and pulled through successfully.

**1.8 Definition of Terms**

**Harmony:** A peaceful and mutual co-existence amongst people

**Public:** All those people or persons an organization comes into contact, both internally and externally.

**Public Relations:** A planned deliberate and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.

**Staff:** These are employees of an organization.

**Staff Harmony:** Cordial relationship that exist among and between staff and the management of an organization.