INTRODUCTION

The notion on the incompetence and lack of training and skills of the front-line managers is a never ending debate. Regardless of the devolution of Human Resource Management in various organizations, where front line-managers dive into the responsibility of staffing, training, recruitment etc. and having to manage their daily responsibility, the question of the effectiveness Front Line Mangers' role in performance management calls for concern. Front-line managers being the closest to organizational members, can positively or negatively affect the work attitudes of organizational members and they can increase the engagement levels or decrease the engagement levels of employee members. Purcell (2008) notes that front-line managers are at a better position dealing with people management issues as they communicate with them daily. This implies that front-line managers wield power on enhancing the performance levels of employees therefore the importance of their role cannot be misplaced. However, the ability to effectively carry out this responsibility is faulted with overwhelming flaws, ranging from the lack of trust, heavy work load and criticisms from superior managers. With this as the focus, this paper, therefore discusses critically the importance of the role front-line managers play in bringing an effective performance management system to life.

The inclination of employees towards the influence of front-line managers is natural, as front-line managers serve as the first and immediate point of contact amongst employees, this inclination, encourages feedback, whilst building motivation and engagement. In light of the above expression, Christensen et al (2019) establishes that in initiating projects, line managers are at a more advantage deriving willful cooperation from employees. However, the contention of line managers lacking skill and training in people management faults their effort towards organizational efficiency as Renwick (2013) states that front line managers lack confidence, credibility and sufficient training to implement effective performance management systems. Liu (2017) defines front line managers carry out those performing management activities at the grass-root level. Similarly, Liang et al (2007) define front line management as the important link between higher management and organizational members. Pulakos (2004) defines an effective performance management system as that which rests on performance appraisal and the development employees' skills and effectiveness to align with organizational goals. Micheal (2012) defines performance management systems as an important factor in assessing whether can utilize its talents effectively. Therefore, the subject of this discourse lies on the effectiveness of managers at the grass root level to ensure the development and management of employees' skills to achieve organizational goals. Almulaiki (2023) notes that the effective performance of organizational

members, is a vital factor that leads to the success of organizations and this is engineered by line managers. Sahoo and Mishra (2012) note that organizations who perform highly require performance management systems that are functional to promote competencies and optimal organizational growth. This is made possible being that line managers play the middle men role between employees and managers and therefore there is a tendency that the front-line managers role cannot be ignored. Lee et al (2021) adds that performance management is targeted towards ensuring that employees work towards achieving organizational goals which is dependent on whoever communicates the objectives of the organizations to the employees. In view of this, Lee et al (2021) citing Talor (2013) establishes that front line managers are the key players in performance management systems who may have to struggle between developing and motivating the skills of their subordinates and evaluating their performances. Cafferkey et al (2019) establishes that the leadership push of the front-line managers can produce positive outcomes in effective performance management. However, the effectiveness of front-line managers has been rather in doubt as the notion that line managers lack, credibility and training to ensure high levels of performance management. Townsend and Keller (2015) Identifies that the front-line management is flawed by the lack of skill and low educational levels to manage people for effective performance management. In contrast to the above expression, Mantarova and Toskov (2019) firmly states that the front- line manager

show performance in management in the skill of engagement. The ability to engage, while aligning team members with organizational goals, is a great forte of line managers. This is notable because being the closest, they are able to motivate team members thereby creating individuals that are dedicated and committed in achieving the objectives and goals of the organization. Mantarova and Toskov (2019) further adds that organizations with high engagement levels, have higher productivity and experience organizational effectiveness. Front line managers may lack the necessary skill; however, Omolawal (2021) notes that they are best at understanding the individual strength and weaknesses of employees, with this, they are able to assign fulfilling job roles. When this is done, the motivation of employees is boosted which fosters a positive work attitude. Coherently, Kombaris (2015) adds that employees who are motivated, show productiveness and cooperation, while non-motivated employees show unproductiveness and are resistant to change. However, Townsend and Keller (2015) argue that there may be a loop hole in front-line managers identifying the ability of team members, as the issue of bias on the part of the front-line managers may set in. reiterating their point, they add that front-line managers may assign favorable job roles to team members of their preference regardless of having the right skill to do the job, this can in a way discourage the effort of other team members thereby faulting their effectiveness in achieving high levels of efficiency in performance management. Front line managers can achieve effective

performance management in the area of promoting bi-directional communication which uses the tool of feedback. Kumar and Nirmala (2013) notes that employees who are provided with feedback as to the effectiveness of work, are encouraged to do better, while those who perform poorly will see the need to increase their efforts for organizational goals to be achieved. This shows the role of front-line managers in achieving high performance management systems cannot be ignored as they are in constant communication with employee members. Bucata and Rizescy (2017) note that bi-directional communication can build effective performance management system by encouraging good interpersonal relationships and leveraging on the tool of feedback and when team members see leaders as approachable, they are able to ask questions, share ideas and opinions. This bi-directional communication affords team members to be expressive, feel valued and collaborate effectively with one another. Hartati (2020) notes that employees who feel like an integral part of the organization, naturally input their best towards achieving organizational goals and objectives, resulting in high performance levels. In a differing opinion, Lee et al (2020) establishes that giving team members the leverage of bi-directional communication and interpersonal relationships, may breed contempt as team members may get familiar with front-line managers, flouting orders and showing disrespect, therefore this decreases high levels of performance management in employees. Line managers can achieve effective performance

management systems by leveraging on the tool of recognition and reward systems. notes that reward system is a measure set up by organizations to encourage employees or organizational members who have effectively achieved organizational objectives. Front Line managers are in the best position to recognize hardworking employees and recommending them for a promotion, salary increase or the provision of incentives. Gungor (2011) Citing Barber and Bretz (2000) notes that reward management systems can motivate employees who perform optimally, thereby resulting in high levels of performance and this can come in areas of salary increment, bonuses, promotion, incentives etc. Omolawal and Bawalla (2017) also adds that an increased salary, recognition, bonuses are motivation factors that can encourage employees to work hard. However, the issue lies in having front line managers who are unbiased and may use reward systems to punish employees who do not agree to their self-centered demands which are outside organizational goals. The leadership style of a front-line manager can downplay on the effectiveness of front-line managers bringing effective performance management to life. Townsend et al (2022) citing Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) note that job commitment and job achievement can be affected by the leadership styles of front-line managers. Front line managers, lacking training in Human Relations Management may use ideas from the classical theory, which is profit oriented and management centered, allowing managers to do the thinking while the employees do the work. This

approach towards leadership can limit employees from sharing ideas as to how organizations can improve, in the long run stalling the active engagement of employees in the organization and decreasing high performance levels. In view of this Islam and Bhattachar (2019) encourages front line managers to use the "middle of the road (5.5)" management style on the Blake and Mouton Managerial grid. This management style gives a compromised style of management which shows concern for people and concern for production. This balances the needs of workers with organizational goals and objectives. This approach to management gives a concern for people and a concern for production. The implementation of this managerial grid by front line managers will achieve high levels of performance management system. Barrott-pugh and Soutar (2022) suggests that front-line managers are trained on the human relations and human resources approach to management, which allows for employee engagement and the perception of employees as a plethora of resources that can be tapped from. The role of front-line managers in effective performance management systems can be influenced by the way front line managers influence the attitudes of employees towards committing to the goals of the organization. In view of this, Fu et al (2019) adds that front line managers shape the perceptions of employees towards the organization and the responsibilities they perform.   Purcell (2008) notes that this attitude influence can lead to organizational members developing discretionary behaviors, where they work beyond their job roles or

responsibilities. This can include working extra hours, going extra miles to ensure that tasks are completed and sometimes using their finances to perform organizational tasks. These outlined tasks can only be carried out by employees who are motivated and having motivated employees translates to effective performance management systems. However, McDermont (2016) notes that attitude influence can also come in the negative even from front-line managers, as some front-line managers may play autocratic and dominating roles birthing negative work attitudes such as rumor mongering, laziness, tardiness, rudeness and other attitudes that conflicts with organizational goals. Low educational levels, lack of exposure to Human Resource responsibilities and sometimes the selfish desire of some front-line managers can deliberately pass false and erroneous information to organizational members. This is made even easier and possible as they are the closest to organizational members who have some level of trust on the judgement of front-line managers. Buhasayen et al (2021) totes that cases as this can cause a revolt or cause organizational members to resist any change senior level management may likely introduce causing a decrease in performance management. In a contrasting opinion, Ronningstad (2018) however establishes that front-line managers can aid a peaceful change transition process, as they are active in ensuring that organizational members accept the change brought by superior managers. In achieving effective performance management systems, front-line managers play the role of good listeners. This is

effective because, employees are drawn to managers who listen to whatever grievance and complaints they have, although Teague and Roche (2011) cautions that in the areas of grievances and conflicts front line managers should exhibit fairness and truth so some employees do not feel cheated. The role of the front-line manager in achieving high performance levels cannot be misplaced because they are the closest to employees who interpret the goals and objectives of superiors and their influence can undoubtedly foster positive or negative work attitudes. Regardless of this effectiveness, there still lies a laxity in training thereby in achieving effective performance management systems from line management, there is need for superior managers to treat front line managers fairly. In view of this Purcell (2008) establishes that when front line managers are managed by "good" people, there is a tendency for that influence to rub off on employees' members and vice versa for when they are managed by "bad" people. This will go a long way towards improving the front-line managers' role in enhancing higher performance management levels. More so, the aspect of lack of training and credibility can be taken into consideration as the training of line managers on Human Resource Functions can boost the Front-line managers role in improving effective performance management system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the underlying discussion, it can be said that line managers have been effective in establishing performance levels such as their ability to foster positive work attitudes, engage employees effectively, identify the strength and weaknesses of employees so as apportion roles, tasks and responsibilities accordingly etc. However, the following adjustments or considerations can be made to ensure high effective performance management systems. Front line managers should develop excellent leadership skills that enables them treat employees fairly, while motivating and maintaining an approachable personality so that employees can conveniently share their opinions on matters involving the goals and objectives of the organization. This will go a long way to encourage employs to display discretionary behavior, where they work "beyond contract". This however should be done with

caution so front-line managers are not disrespected neither are they treated with contempt. Front line managers should show fairness and be unbiased in their relationship with employees. In the same vein, front line managers should encourage employees to focus on superordinate goals of the organization. This implies that employees should put aside their personal goals and focus on advancing organizational goals. Furthermore, managers can train front-line managers on the implementation of Human Relations practices so they are well armed. Conclusively, managers should endeavor to listen to the ideas and concerns of front-line managers because they play the middle men role in achieving effectiveness in performance management systems.

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