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Nexus Between Human Relations Governance and Organisational Productivity in Nigeria's Agro-Industrial Sector

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Abstract: Human relations governance has long been recognised as a critical determinant of organisational performance, with the quality of employee relations systems, leadership structures, and participative management practices fundamentally shaping workforce motivation, commitment, and productivity across industrial sectors. In the agro-industrial context, effective human relations governance carries particular developmental significance, given the sector's central role in employment generation, food security, and economic growth in developing economies like Nigeria. Despite this importance, many agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria continue to struggle with persistent productivity deficits rooted in weak governance frameworks, inadequate career development systems, poor employee welfare provisions, and limited participative decision-making structures. This study therefore, examines the relationship between human relations governance and organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector through a systematic literature review. A total of 1,306 records were identified across Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, of which 24 studies met the inclusion criteria of being published between 2010 and 2025 and focused on human relations management, organisational governance, and employee performance. The review finds that career development opportunities, employee welfare initiatives, workplace social cohesion, and participative decision-making each positively and significantly influence organisational productivity. The study recommends among others that agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria should strengthen career development programmes by establishing structured training frameworks, clear promotion pathways, and competency development systems that equip employees with the skills needed to improve their performance and sustain long-term organisational productivity growth.

Keywords: *Human Relations Governance, Organisational Productivity, Human Relations Theory, Agro-Industrial Sector, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The relationship between human relations governance and organisational productivity has occupied a central place in management scholarship for decades, evolving from early industrial-era concerns about worker efficiency to a more sophisticated understanding of how governance structures, employee relations systems, and participative management practices collectively shape organisational performance [1], [2]. Across the world, organisations have increasingly recognised that productivity is not simply a function of technology or capital investment but is fundamentally shaped by how institutions govern their human resources, manage workplace relationships, and structure employee participation in organisational decision-making [3], [4]. Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman [5] demonstrated early on that employee motivation, and by extension organisational productivity, is deeply tied to the quality of workplace governance and the extent to which organisations invest in the wellbeing, development, and meaningful participation of their workforce. The International Labour Organization [6] reinforces this position at a global level, consistently linking labour productivity gains to governance environments that prioritise fair employee relations, workforce development, and participative management structures. Becker and Huselid [7] provide compelling empirical evidence that high-performance work systems grounded in sound human relations

governance generate measurable productivity gains, while Delery and Doty [8] argue that the strategic alignment of human resource governance practices with organisational goals is among the most reliable predictors of sustained organisational performance. As Mullins and Christy [9] observe, organisations that fail to invest in robust human relations governance frameworks consistently underperform relative to their peers, regardless of the sector in which they operate or the sophistication of the technology they deploy.

In Africa, the governance challenges facing organisations are particularly acute, and their consequences for productivity in key economic sectors including agro-industry are well documented. Budhwar and Debrah [10] argue that human resource management in developing economies is characterised by a complex interplay of institutional weakness, cultural dynamics, and governance deficits that make it difficult for organisations to implement the kind of systematic employee relations frameworks that drive productivity in more developed contexts. The African Development Bank [11] identifies the agro-industrial sector as central to Africa's economic transformation agenda, noting that its contribution to employment, food security, and industrial development makes the productivity performance of agro-industrial organisations a matter of continental strategic importance. Hamann [12] argues that the governance of agro-industrial systems in sub-Saharan Africa has been particularly inadequate, characterised by weak institutional frameworks, poor labour relations management, and limited investment in workforce development that collectively constrain the sector's productivity potential. The Food and Agriculture Organization [13] further highlights that Africa's agro-industrial sector consistently underperforms relative to its resource endowments, a gap that governance scholars like Jackson, Schuler and Jiang [14] attribute in significant part to the failure of organisations to adopt human relations governance practices that motivate employees, build workplace cohesion, and create the conditions for sustained productivity improvement. Wright and McMahan [15] reinforce this by arguing that human capital development, which depends critically on effective governance of employee relations, is the primary driver of organisational productivity in labour-intensive sectors like agro-industry, making human relations governance not a peripheral management concern but a strategic imperative for African organisations seeking to improve their performance.

Within Nigeria, these continental challenges are sharply magnified by the specific institutional and governance realities of the country's agro-industrial sector. The World Bank [16] confirms that agriculture and agro-industry remain central to Nigeria's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employing a large proportion of the national workforce, yet the sector continues to be plagued by persistent productivity deficits that weaken its contribution to national development. The National Bureau of Statistics [17] documents significant labour productivity gaps within Nigerian agro-industrial organisations, gaps that scholars like Anyadike [18] trace to systemic weaknesses in human resource governance, including poor career development frameworks, inadequate employee welfare policies, and limited mechanisms for worker participation in organisational decision-making. Kuye and Sulaimon [19] identify the failure to involve employees meaningfully in decision-making as a particularly damaging governance deficit in Nigerian agro-industrial organisations, finding that its absence directly undermines employee commitment and performance. Many agro-industrial organisations therefore struggle with productivity challenges rooted not in resource scarcity but in the absence of integrated human relations governance frameworks that align employee motivation, development, and participation with organisational goals [20], [21]. This study therefore pursues four specific objectives: to examine how career development opportunities, influence organisational productivity; to evaluate the role of employee welfare and workplace social cohesion in enhancing organisational productivity; and to analyse the influence of participative decision-making on organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

a. Human Relations Governance

Human relations governance refers to the structured application of management principles, leadership practices, and institutional frameworks through which organisations regulate employee behaviour, shape workplace relationships, and align workforce conduct with organisational objectives [9], [1]. At its core, it encompasses the governance structures

through which organisations manage the employment relationship, including recruitment, performance management, conflict resolution, and employee participation systems that collectively determine the quality of the working environment [3], [22]. Likert [2] argued that governance structures within organisations are the primary determinant of employee motivation and commitment, a position later reinforced by McGregor's [1] Theory X and Theory Y framework, which demonstrated that the assumptions managers hold about employees fundamentally shape the governance practices they adopt and the productivity outcomes they achieve. Johnstone, Rodriguez and Wilkinson [23] extend this by arguing that human relations governance is not merely an administrative function but a strategic organisational capability that directly shapes employee behaviour, organisational culture, and long-term performance. Taylor (2014) further contends that effective human relations governance requires coherent leadership systems, clear communication channels, and institutional mechanisms that ensure employees feel valued, fairly treated, and meaningfully engaged in the organisational processes that govern their working lives [24].

b. Organisational Productivity

Organisational productivity refers to the efficiency with which an organisation converts its inputs, including human capital, technology, and financial resources, into outputs that generate value and advance its strategic objectives [4], [7]. In organisational studies, productivity is understood not merely as a measure of output volume but as a multidimensional construct that encompasses workforce performance, operational efficiency, employee engagement, and the quality of products or services delivered relative to the resources consumed in their production [3], [6]. Delery and Doty [8] argue that productivity in industrial organisations is fundamentally shaped by the alignment between human resource governance practices and organisational strategy, finding that organisations which achieve this alignment consistently outperform those that treat workforce management as a secondary operational concern. In the agro-industrial context specifically, the Food and Agriculture Organization [13] and the World Bank [16] both identify workforce productivity as the critical bottleneck constraining sectoral performance, particularly in developing economies where human capital deficits and weak governance frameworks combine to suppress output well below productive potential. Pfeffer [25] adds a governance dimension to this argument, demonstrating that management practices which undermine employee health, motivation, and commitment generate measurable and sustained productivity losses that no amount of capital investment or technological upgrade can fully compensate for [15].

3. Linkage Between the Variables

a. Career Development Opportunities and Organisational Productivity

The relationship between career development opportunities and organisational productivity is one of the most consistently supported findings in the human resource management literature, with evidence demonstrating that investment in employee development generates returns in skills, competence, commitment, and performance that far exceed the costs of training and development programmes [26], [27]. Wright and McMahan [15] argue that human capital development through structured career growth pathways is among the most powerful drivers of organisational productivity, because it simultaneously improves the technical competence of the workforce and strengthens the psychological contract between employees and organisations in ways that generate sustained commitment and reduced turnover. Jackson, Schuler and Jiang [14] provide empirical support for this argument, finding that organisations with systematic career development frameworks achieve significantly higher levels of employee engagement and output quality than those that rely on informal or ad hoc approaches to workforce development. In the Nigerian agro-industrial context, Anyadike [18] identifies the absence of structured career development programmes as a major governance deficit that suppresses employee productivity and undermines organisational performance, a finding echoed by Mursiti et al. [28], who demonstrate in the agroindustry context that competency mapping and deliberate human resource development strategies produce measurable improvements in workforce productivity and organisational competitiveness [29], [24].

b. Employee Welfare Initiatives and Organisational Productivity

Employee welfare initiatives occupy a central position in the human relations governance literature as drivers of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and productivity, with scholars consistently demonstrating that organisations which invest in the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of their workforce outperform those that treat welfare as a peripheral management concern [30], [25]. Meyer and Allen [31] establish a direct link between welfare provision and organisational commitment, arguing that employees who perceive their organisation as genuinely invested in their wellbeing develop stronger affective commitment that translates into higher levels of discretionary effort and sustained productivity. Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman [5] identified welfare and working conditions as fundamental hygiene factors whose absence generates employee dissatisfaction and productivity loss, a finding that retains its empirical validity across decades of subsequent research in both developed and developing country contexts [3]. In the Nigerian agro-industrial sector, the National Bureau of Statistics [17] and the International Labour Organization [6] both highlight inadequate welfare provision as a significant governance failure that contributes to high employee turnover, low morale, and depressed productivity, particularly in rural agro-processing facilities where working conditions are often poor and welfare frameworks are largely absent. Akinbobola and Akinagbe [32] reinforce this in the Nigerian agricultural context, finding that welfare and social support mechanisms within agro-industrial organisations significantly influence employee retention and performance outcomes [33].

c. Workplace Social Cohesion and Organisational Productivity

Workplace social cohesion, defined as the degree of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose among members of an organisational workforce, is increasingly recognised in management literature as a critical determinant of team performance and overall organisational productivity [9], [34]. Blau [35] established through social exchange theory that the quality of interpersonal relationships within organisations generates reciprocal obligations that shape employee behaviour, with high-cohesion workplaces producing stronger cooperative norms, more effective knowledge sharing, and higher collective performance than fragmented or distrustful work environments. Becker and Huselid [7] provide empirical evidence that high-performance work systems, which are grounded in team cohesion and collaborative governance structures, generate productivity gains that are both larger and more durable than those produced by individually focused management approaches, because they harness the collective capacity of the workforce rather than relying on isolated individual effort. In agro-industrial organisations specifically, Kareem et al. [33] find that socio-cultural factors and workplace cohesion significantly influence the performance of agro-allied enterprises in Nigeria, demonstrating that organisations with stronger internal social capital achieve better coordination, lower conflict rates, and higher output quality. Sakariyau, Mustapha and Zubairu [36] further argue that social cohesion within agribusiness clusters and organisations in Nigeria functions as a catalyst for productivity and socioeconomic growth, making its cultivation through deliberate governance practices a strategic organisational priority [37], [23].

d. Participative Decision-Making and Organisational Productivity

Participative decision-making, which involves the systematic inclusion of employees in the decisions that affect their work and organisational direction, is strongly supported in the literature as a governance practice that improves organisational productivity by enhancing employee motivation, generating higher quality decisions, and strengthening workforce commitment to implementation [19], [2]. Chukwuemeka [38] finds in the Nigerian public sector context that employee participation in decision-making processes produces significant improvements in organisational performance, generating a sense of ownership and accountability among workers that translates into higher effort and more effective problem-solving. Ezeanolue and Ezeanyim [39] extend this finding to manufacturing firms in southeastern Nigeria, demonstrating that participative governance structures are positively and significantly associated with productivity outcomes, particularly in organisations where employees possess specialised technical knowledge that management cannot effectively harness without structured participation mechanisms. Ijeoma [40] reinforces this by finding that in Nigerian government-owned enterprises, the

absence of participative decision-making structures generates employee alienation and disengagement that directly suppresses organisational performance. Odunlami and Eniola [41] further confirm the productivity benefits of worker participation in Nigerian organisational contexts, while McGregor [1] and Northouse [42] both argue theoretically that participative leadership is not merely a welfare-oriented governance choice but a strategically rational one, because organisations that engage employees in decisions consistently achieve better outcomes than those that rely exclusively on top-down management approaches [29], [3].

4. Theoretical Framework: Human Relations Theory

This study is anchored in Human Relations Theory, originally developed by Elton Mayo through the landmark Hawthorne Studies conducted between 1924 and 1932, which demonstrated that social relationships, group dynamics, and managerial attention to employee wellbeing are more powerful determinants of workplace productivity than purely physical or economic working conditions [9], [1]. Mayo's foundational insight was that employees are not simply economic units motivated by wages alone but social beings whose productivity is profoundly shaped by the quality of their interpersonal relationships, the governance practices of their organisations, and the degree to which they feel recognised, included, and valued within the workplace [5]. Building on the theoretical foundation, Nwosu [43] maintained that, when organizations showcase their human relations technique by allowing workers undergo training and development programmes, interact and cooperate freely with their fellow workers and management in the workplace, they see their work as significant to them and are motivated to be more productive as well as aspiring for higher and more intrinsic psychological knowledge of self-esteem and self-actualization, which will involve pure knowledge, creativity, independence and life satisfaction which in turn results into high quality work, increased productivity and cordial workers-management relationship in the organization. Blau [35] reinforces this by showing that trust-based workplace relationships, which are a direct product of human relations governance quality, generate cooperative norms that enhance collective performance well beyond what individual incentive structures alone can achieve.

Linking Human Relations Theory directly to the variables of this study, human relations governance practices encompassing career development, employee welfare, workplace social cohesion, and participative decision-making each operate through the same theoretical mechanism: they shape employee behaviour by generating positive social exchanges that translate into organisational commitment and productivity. The theory therefore provides both the normative and analytical logic for the study's central argument that human relations governance determines employee behaviour, and employee behaviour in turn determines organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector. In addition, using Human Relations Theory, it becomes clear that organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector is deeply rooted in how employees are treated and engaged. Human relations governance through career development, welfare, social cohesion, and participation, transforms the workforce into a motivated, committed, and productive asset. In a sector vital to national food security and economic development, prioritizing human relations is not optional, it is a strategic necessity for sustainable productivity. In Nigeria's agro-industrial sector which covers activities from large-scale farming to food processing and distribution, productivity depends not only on capital and technology but also on how people are managed. The Human Relations Theory emphasizes that employees are social beings whose motivation, satisfaction, and performance are shaped by interpersonal relationships, recognition, and participation.

5. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review design to critically examine the relationship between human relations governance and organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector. Unlike narrative reviews, a systematic literature review follows a transparent, replicable, and structured process of identifying, screening, and synthesising existing scholarly evidence, making it the most appropriate design for generating reliable and comprehensive insights from the available body of literature [3]. The review process is documented using the PRISMA framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, which provides a clear and auditable record of how studies were identified, screened,

assessed for eligibility, and ultimately included in the final review.

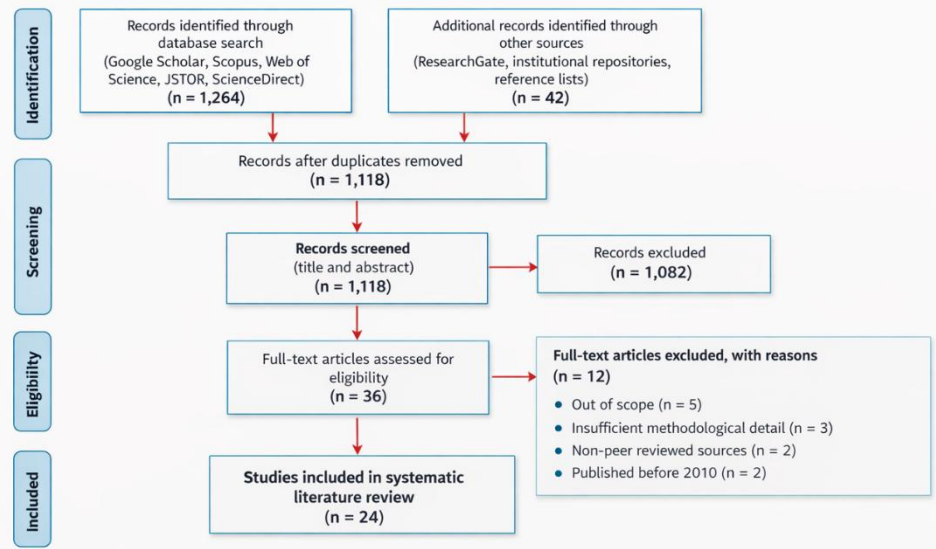


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart of the Study

a. Research Design

The systematic literature review approach was selected because it provides a rigorous and reproducible methodology for synthesising evidence across multiple studies, minimising the risk of selection bias that commonly affects less structured review approaches [9]. This design is particularly suited to the present study because the existing literature on human relations governance and agro-industrial productivity is dispersed across multiple disciplines and contexts, requiring a structured search and synthesis process to draw meaningful and generalisable conclusions. The systematic approach ensures that the findings of this review reflect the full breadth of available evidence rather than a selective or unrepresentative sample of the literature.

b. Search Strategy

Literature for this review was sourced from five major academic databases, namely Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, supplemented by additional records identified through institutional repositories and reference list searches. As shown in Figure 1, the initial database search yielded 1,264 records, with an additional 42 records identified through other sources, producing a combined total of 1,306 records before deduplication. Search terms used included combinations of "human relations governance," "organisational productivity," "employee welfare," "career development," "participative decision-making," "agro-industrial organisations," and "Nigeria," applied systematically across all five databases to ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature.

c. Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included in this review based on clearly defined criteria designed to ensure relevance, methodological quality, and contextual applicability, as summarised in Table 1. Only studies published between 2010 and 2025 were considered, ensuring the review reflects contemporary evidence on human relations governance and organisational productivity. Studies were required to focus specifically on human relations management, organisational governance, or employee performance within industrial or agro-industrial organisational contexts. Both empirical and conceptual studies were included provided they offered substantive analytical engagement with the study's core variables, and studies from both Nigerian and comparable developing economy contexts were considered to ensure sufficient contextual breadth.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication period	2010–2025	Before 2010

Study focus	Human relations, organisational governance, employee performance	Unrelated disciplines
Source type	Peer-reviewed journals, books, institutional reports	Non-peer-reviewed materials
Relevance	Industrial/agro-industrial organisations	Studies lacking empirical or conceptual relevance
Methodology	Empirical or conceptual studies	Studies with insufficient methodological detail
Context	Nigeria and comparable developing economies	Out-of-scope geographical contexts

d. Exclusion Criteria

As documented in Figure 1, a total of 1,082 records were excluded at the title and abstract screening stage for failing to meet the study's inclusion criteria, leaving 36 full-text articles assessed for eligibility. Of these, 12 were subsequently excluded for specific reasons: five were deemed out of scope, three lacked sufficient methodological detail, two were sourced from non-peer reviewed outlets, and two were published before the 2010 threshold. Studies drawn from disciplines with no direct relevance to human relations governance or organisational productivity, such as purely technical agronomy or macroeconomic studies, were also excluded regardless of their methodological quality, as they could not contribute meaningfully to the study's analytical objectives.

e. Data Analysis

Data from the 24 studies retained for final inclusion, as shown in Figure 1, were analysed using thematic analysis and narrative synthesis. Thematic analysis involved the systematic identification of recurring patterns, arguments, and findings across the included studies, organised around the study's four key variables: career development, employee welfare, workplace social cohesion, and participative decision-making [30], [3]. Narrative synthesis was then employed to integrate and critically interpret these thematic findings, identifying areas of convergence, contradiction, and gap in the literature. This combination of analytical techniques enabled the study to construct a coherent, evidence-based argument about how human relations governance shapes organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector.

6. Findings and Discussion

a. Human Relations Governance Practices in Organisations

The systematic review of the literature reveals that human relations governance practices are a foundational determinant of organisational performance, with evidence consistently demonstrating that the quality of governance structures, leadership systems, and employee relations frameworks directly shapes workforce behaviour and productivity outcomes across industrial contexts. Mullins and Christy [9] argue that human relations governance is not simply a soft management preference but a strategic organisational capability, because institutions that govern their human resources effectively create the motivational and relational conditions necessary for sustained high performance. Johnstone, Rodriguez and Wilkinson [23] reinforce this by demonstrating that governance structures which systematically invest in employee relations, conflict resolution, and participative management produce measurable and durable productivity gains that cannot be replicated through capital investment or technological upgrade alone. Boxall, Purcell and Wright [3] further establish that the architecture of human relations governance, encompassing how organisations structure authority, manage conflict, and engage employees in workplace decisions, is among the most powerful predictors of organisational performance across industrial sectors. Taylor [29] contends that effective human relations governance requires coherent leadership systems, clear communication channels, and institutional mechanisms that ensure employees feel valued, fairly treated, and meaningfully engaged in the organisational processes that govern their working lives, while Storey et al. [22] and Ulrich et al. [24] argue that organisations which fail to treat human relations governance as a strategic priority consistently underperform relative to

competitors that do.

However, the review equally reveals that human relations governance practices in developing country organisational contexts, and particularly in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector, remain critically underdeveloped, exposing a governance deficit that directly suppresses organisational productivity. Budhwar and Debrah [10] argue that human resource governance in developing economies is characterised by institutional weakness, cultural complexity, and limited management capacity that make it difficult for organisations to implement the systematic employee relations frameworks that drive performance in more developed contexts. Anyadike [18] traces this governance deficit in Nigerian public and industrial organisations to a combination of poor leadership systems, weak policy frameworks, and limited investment in human capital development, finding that these governance failures generate high employee disengagement, elevated turnover, and depressed organisational output. Felix, Joseph and Victor [20] identify similar governance weaknesses in Nigeria's agro-allied industrial sector, arguing that the absence of coherent human relations governance frameworks is among the most significant constraints on the sector's productivity performance. Ikuemonisan [21] reinforces this by finding that Nigerian agribusiness organisations consistently struggle with productivity challenges rooted in governance failures rather than resource scarcity, a pattern that Storey et al. [22] and Ulrich et al. [24] attribute to the failure of organisations to treat human relations governance as a strategic priority rather than a peripheral administrative function.

b. Career Development Opportunities and Organisational Productivity in Nigeria's Agro-Industrial Sector

The review finds strong and consistent evidence that career development opportunities have a significant positive effect on organisational productivity, operating through multiple pathways that include enhanced workforce competence, stronger employee commitment, and reduced turnover that collectively generate sustained improvements in organisational output and performance quality. Chagelishvili, Surmanidze and Patsatsia [26] demonstrate that structured career development programmes are among the most effective human relations governance investments an organisation can make, because they simultaneously address two of the most persistent productivity constraints, namely skills gaps and employee disengagement, by creating clear pathways for professional growth that motivate workers to invest their full capabilities in organisational goals. Wright and McMahan [15] argue that human capital development through career growth frameworks is the primary driver of organisational productivity in labour-intensive sectors, because it builds the technical and relational competencies that enable employees to perform at higher levels over time. Cascio and Boudreau [27] provide empirical support for this argument at the global level, finding that organisations with systematic talent development and career management frameworks consistently outperform competitors in terms of both workforce productivity and long-term organisational competitiveness. Jackson, Schuler and Jiang [14] further demonstrate that the strategic alignment of career development practices with organisational goals is a critical governance decision, because misaligned development programmes generate training costs without productivity returns, while well-aligned programmes produce compounding performance gains that strengthen organisational capacity over time [3], [29].

In the Nigerian agro-industrial context, the evidence points to a significant and damaging gap between the career development frameworks that the productivity literature recommends and the governance realities that most organisations in the sector actually exhibit. Anyadike [18] finds that Nigerian public and industrial organisations consistently underinvest in structured career development, relying instead on informal and unsystematic approaches to workforce development that fail to generate the competence improvements or motivational benefits that formal career frameworks produce. Mursiti et al. [28] demonstrate in the agroindustry context that competency mapping and deliberate human resource development strategies produce measurable improvements in workforce productivity and organisational competitiveness, providing direct evidence that the career development gap in Nigerian agro-industrial organisations is not merely a theoretical concern but a practical productivity cost with quantifiable consequences. The African Development Bank [11] identifies workforce skills development as a critical determinant of agro-industrial productivity across the continent, noting that

organisations which invest in systematic career development frameworks achieve stronger output growth and better-quality outcomes than those that neglect this dimension of human relations governance. Oluwafemi [44] reinforces this in the Nigerian agro-allied industry context, arguing that supply chain performance and organisational productivity in the sector are significantly constrained by human capital deficits that better career development governance could address, a finding that aligns with the broader international evidence on the productivity returns to workforce investment [29], [24].

c. Employee Welfare Initiatives and Organisational Productivity in Nigeria's Agro-Industrial Sector

The review establishes a robust and well-evidenced relationship between employee welfare initiatives and organisational productivity, with the literature consistently demonstrating that organisations which invest deliberately in the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of their workforce generate higher levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and sustained productivity than those that treat welfare as a peripheral management responsibility. Guest [30] argues that employee wellbeing is not merely a humanitarian governance concern but a strategic productivity driver, because the quality of an employee's physical and psychological work experience directly determines their capacity and willingness to contribute discretionary effort that translates into measurable output gains. Pfeffer [25] provides striking empirical evidence for this argument, demonstrating that management practices which neglect employee welfare generate quantifiable productivity losses through elevated absenteeism, increased turnover, and reduced workforce engagement, losses that consistently exceed the costs of the welfare investments that would have prevented them. Boxall, Purcell and Wright [3] establish the theoretical mechanism through which welfare policies generate productivity gains, showing that employees who perceive genuine organisational investment in their wellbeing develop strong affective commitment that motivates sustained high performance, while those who feel neglected or exploited respond with disengagement and minimal effort. Mullins and Christy [9] further argue that welfare governance is a defining dimension of the employment relationship, and that organisations which fail to meet employees' basic welfare expectations undermine the foundational trust upon which productive workplace relationships depend, generating governance costs that manifest directly in reduced organisational output [23], [34].

The application of this evidence to Nigeria's agro-industrial sector reveals a deeply concerning governance picture, with the review finding that welfare policy frameworks in the sector are inadequate, inconsistently applied, and insufficiently prioritised by management, generating productivity costs that weaken the sector's contribution to national development. The National Bureau of Statistics [17] and the International Labour Organization [6] both document significant welfare deficits in Nigerian agro-industrial organisations, including inadequate occupational health provisions, poor working conditions, and limited social protection frameworks that generate high employee turnover and depressed workforce productivity. Akinbobola and Akinagbe [32] find in the Nigerian agricultural institution's context that welfare and social support mechanisms significantly influence employee retention and performance outcomes, demonstrating that organisations which invest in structured welfare programmes achieve stronger workforce stability and higher productivity than those that rely on purely transactional employment relationships. Kareem et al. [33] extend this finding to agro-allied manufacturing firms in Nigeria, demonstrating that socio-cultural welfare considerations and employee support systems are significant predictors of enterprise performance, particularly in rural and peri-urban agro-industrial contexts where workers face acute socioeconomic vulnerabilities that welfare governance can directly address. The overall finding of this section is therefore clear: welfare policy is not a discretionary governance investment in the agro-industrial context but a productivity imperative, and its systematic neglect in Nigerian organisations represents a significant and addressable constraint on sectoral performance [25], [30], [9].

d. Workplace Social Cohesion/Participative Decision Making and Organisational Productivity in Nigeria's Agro-Industrial Sector

The review finds compelling and mutually reinforcing evidence that workplace social cohesion and participative decision-making governance structures each independently

contribute to organisational productivity, and that their combined effect, when deliberately cultivated through coherent human relations governance frameworks, generates productivity outcomes that exceed what either dimension can produce in isolation. Cropanzano and Mitchell [34] demonstrate that social exchange dynamics within organisations are fundamentally shaped by governance practices, meaning that management decisions about participation, recognition, and fairness directly determine the quality of workplace social relationships and the productivity outcomes they generate. Mullins and Christy [9] argue that team cohesion and collaborative governance structures produce more durable productivity gains than individually focused management approaches, because they harness collective workforce capacity through social mechanisms that individual incentive structures cannot replicate. Sakariyau, Mustapha and Zubairu [36] apply this argument to the Nigerian agribusiness context, finding that social cohesion within agribusiness clusters and organisations functions as a significant catalyst for productivity and socioeconomic growth, demonstrating that the cultivation of workplace social capital through deliberate governance practices generates returns that extend beyond individual organisational performance to broader sectoral development outcomes. Mirakyan [37] reinforces this by arguing that organisational behaviour governance frameworks that prioritise collaborative relationships and inclusive management practices generate stronger and more sustainable productivity outcomes than those built around hierarchical control, a finding that carries direct implications for how agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria design and implement their human relations governance systems [3], [23].

The evidence on participative decision-making reinforces and deepens this picture, with the Nigerian organisational literature specifically providing strong support for the argument that employee involvement in decision processes generates productivity improvements that are both empirically robust and practically significant for agro-industrial governance reform. Kuye and Sulaimon [19] find that employee involvement in decision-making significantly improves firm performance in Nigerian manufacturing organisations, demonstrating a direct and measurable productivity return to participative governance that challenges the prevalence of top-down management approaches in the sector. Chukwuemeka [38] and Ezeanolue and Ezeanyim [39] both confirm this finding in Nigerian public and manufacturing contexts respectively, with the latter specifically demonstrating that participative governance structures are positively and significantly associated with productivity outcomes in organisations where employees possess specialised technical knowledge that management cannot effectively deploy without structured participation mechanisms. Ijeoma [40] adds that the absence of participative decision-making governance in Nigerian organisations generates employee alienation that directly suppresses performance, while Odunlami and Eniola [41] confirm the productivity benefits of worker participation in Lagos and Ogun State organisational contexts, extending the evidence base beyond manufacturing to broader institutional settings. The combined evidence on social cohesion and participative governance therefore makes a compelling and unambiguous case that the adoption of these human relations governance practices is an urgent productivity priority for agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria, requiring deliberate management commitment, structural governance reform, and sustained institutional investment to realise their full potential [29], [3], [22].

7. Conclusion

This study has examined the relationship between human relations governance and organisational productivity in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector, drawing on a systematic review of existing literature to assess how career development practices, employee welfare policies, workplace social cohesion, and participative decision-making governance structures collectively shape organisational performance. The evidence reviewed consistently demonstrates that human relations governance is not a peripheral management concern but a strategic organisational imperative, with the quality of employee relations frameworks, leadership systems, and participative governance structures directly determining the motivation, commitment, and productivity of the workforce. Employee relations practices emerge from this review as particularly powerful drivers of organisational efficiency, operating through motivational, relational, and competence-building pathways that translate governance quality into measurable productivity outcomes across industrial contexts. In Nigeria's agro-industrial sector

specifically, the review exposes a significant and consequential governance deficit, characterised by weak career development frameworks, inadequate welfare policies, limited workplace cohesion, and insufficient employee participation in decision-making, that collectively suppress the sector's productivity well below its potential. The findings of this study therefore carry clear and urgent implications for governance reform in Nigeria's agro-industrial organisations, underscoring the need for deliberate, sustained, and strategically coherent investment in human relations governance structures that place employee development, welfare, and participation at the centre of organisational management practice.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this systematic review, the following recommendations are offered to management, policymakers, and governance practitioners in Nigeria's agro-industrial sector.

1. Agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria should strengthen career development programmes by establishing structured training frameworks, clear promotion pathways, and competency development systems that equip employees with the skills needed to improve their performance and sustain long-term organisational productivity growth.
2. Organisations in Nigeria should implement comprehensive employee welfare policies that address occupational health, working conditions, and social protection needs of the workforce, recognising that genuine investment in employee wellbeing generates measurable returns in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and sustained workplace productivity.
3. Management in agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria should deliberately encourage participative decision-making structures by creating formal channels through which employees contribute to organisational decisions, harnessing workforce knowledge, strengthening employee ownership of outcomes, and generating the motivational conditions that drive higher organisational performance.
4. Agro-industrial organisations in Nigeria should actively promote workplace social cohesion and conflict management systems by investing in team-building frameworks, collaborative governance structures, and transparent dispute resolution mechanisms that build organisational trust, reduce workplace friction, and create the conditions for sustained collective productivity improvement.

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