



Impact of effective human resource management on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos State

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Abstract

The inability of management of SMEs in Nigeria to identify and harness variables of human resource management has often been the cause of poor performance. This study was carried out to explore the relationship between effective HRM on SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study was analysed quantitatively based on primary data from 93 SMEs. Variables of HRM (selective hiring, attitude and behavior, training and development, cohesive teamwork, performance appraisal, structured human resource planning and reward and incentive system) were correlated with the variables of SMEs performance (profit level, market value performance, employees' satisfaction, customers' satisfaction, environmental performance and corporate social responsibility) through Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient was 0.939 which showed a very strong and positive correlation between the variables of HRM and SMEs performances. In view of this, it is recommended that future studies that would capture other performance variables and correlate them with the variables of HRM for more elaborate research outcome should be conducted.

Keywords: Human Resources Management, Performance, Small and medium enterprises

1. Introduction

The performance of small and medium scale enterprises has imperatively become of great interest to a number of stakeholders due to its contribution at improving standard of living. In view of this, performance of business establishments in recent times has drawn the attention of intensive research efforts from management of businesses and the academia (Muogbo, 2013). As revealed in the study of Lee et al. (2010), organizational performances often trend downwards due to poor access to finance, infrastructural gap, and inconsistencies with government policies. In the same vein, Subramaniam (2011) identified poor flexibility policies of business organizations, general scarcity of skilled labour due to poor training arrangements, poor human resources management

strategies and zero succession plan as some laxities clogging high performances of business organizations. Moamer and Ehlwaj (2016) contends that a number of small and medium enterprises only realize and react to unexpected changes and upheavals instead of prior anticipation and preparation on the best solutions to tackle them. This according to Eniola (2015) often results to crisis management. However, owners of small and medium scale businesses are increasingly becoming aware of the relevance of appropriate system for attracting and managing human resources of business organizations (Muogbo, 2013).

Some practical challenges of effective human resources management clogging SMEs performance in Nigeria include issues related to change management. As business makes progress, its internal processes, structures and strategies change



(Adeyeye, 2009). In such scenario, not all employees are comfortable embracing necessary change that enhances performance. Other practical issues are poor staffing strategy, employees' poor attitude to work, poor staff training and development, unmotivated cohesive teamwork, poor performance appraisal strategy, poor structured human resources planning strategy and poor reward and incentive system.

Human resource is the most invaluable asset of every organization. It is made up of the labour force of an organization under permanent, part-time, contract, or any other form of employment. Due to the importance and the uniqueness of human nature, the human resource element demands a special management style to achieve desired results. To Acquah (2004), human resource management are the activities, policies, and practices adopted by an organization to ensure effective performance of its human resource elements. The author further stated that human resource management endeavors to attract, identify and employ and retain skilled, competent, knowledgeable labor force in organizations to achieve organizational goals. In a business organization such as a small and medium scale organization, the human resource constitutes the junior and senior employees, managers, and owners of the organization. Yakubu and Alasan (2011) noted that the human resource of every organization is responsible for drafting the strategic plans, executing and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies.

On the other hand, Okeke (2009) defined small and medium scale businesses as businesses that are either private or jointly owned and their equity cannot be traded in the stock market and the owners are the major source of its funding. Small and medium scale enterprises are classified based on the size of their workforce and the monetary value of their assets. According to the Small Scale and Medium Enterprise

Development Agency of Nigeria (2012) and Eniola (2015), the size of the labour force for micro-enterprises ranges from 10 to 49 with an asset value of N5-N50 million while a medium enterprise has an estimated 50 to 199 employees in its workforce and total asset value that ranges from N50,000,000.00 to N500,000,000.00.

It is important to state that the performance of every enterprise depends on the competence, skills, commitment, and capability of human resources to the operations of the firm, and for desired level of human resource performance to be achieved; there is need for effective human resource management. To this end, Chin, Fahmi, and Kabiru (2020) identified that irrespective of the importance of human resource management to effective utilization of the workforce and the performance of an organization, currently, there is still lack of knowledge on the impact of human resource management in the performance of SMEs. Therefore, this study will contribute to knowledge gap by evaluating the relationship between effective human resource management on the performance of some selected SMEs in Lagos state, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

The activities of human resource management of any organization are usually considered informal and can be difficult to be formally practiced (Hooi and Ngui 2014). This made Chin, et al., (2020) suggest that leaders of business organizations should evaluate the prevailing conditions of business environments and adopt suitable human resource management practices that guarantee higher performance and take note of the adverse effects of poor human resources management practices on the implementation of the strategic plans and performance of the business organizations. Yao and Chang (2017) have earlier opined that effective human resource management practices are paramount due to the dependence of business operations on the



proficiency of employees. According to Cassell et al., (2002), Cruz et al., (2011) and Newman and Sheikh (2014) human resource management is saddled with the responsibility of attracting, training, developing, motivating, and retaining employees with the sole aim of achieving firms' objectives. Zheng et al., (2009) in addition to the above, added rewards and provision of incentives as the core functions of the human resource management. Chin, et al., (2020)' literature findings have revealed that the performance of SMEs depends on the capability of the human resource to add value through quality goods and services.

Based on these studies, the deducible conceptual meaning is that human resources management variables such as proper staffing, training and development, employees' motivation and retention, good reward and incentive system have positive relationship with the performances of SMEs if properly harnessed.

2.1 Review of Empirical Studies

The study of Grigore (2007) on impact of human resources practices on the performances of small companies in Belgium. The variables employed to capture human resource management practices in the study include selective hiring, performance appraisal, behavior and attitudes, training and development, compensation, human relation planning, employment security and teamwork. The study's finding revealed strong positive effect of human resources management intensity on profitability, productivity and innovation capacity of small companies. In a similar order, Moamer and Elhwaij (2016) researched human resource management practices on performances of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Malaysia and established that HR practices have significant positive effects on operational performances of firms. The study employed training and development, selective hiring, behavior and attitude as explanatory variables of human resources

management practices. Muogbo (2013) examined the impact of strategic human resources management on SMEs using some selected paint manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria as case study. The study discovered that strong positive relationship exists between strategic human resources management and organizational performance. This implies that for positive competitive organisational performance to be achieved among firms in the study area requires good strategic human resources policies.

Gray and Shasky (2007) employed multiple regression analysis to analyse the impact of strategic human resources management practices of selected government agencies in achieving goals and objectives of the agencies. The study captured strategic HRM with variables such as internal career ladder, formal training system, result oriented performance appraisal, employment security, employee voice and performance-based compensation and revealed employing these variables foster the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. The study by Adeyeye (2009a) on the relationship between human capital development practices and effectiveness of some selected organizations in the Nigerian banking industry revealed the existence of moderate correlation between the variables of human capital development and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Adeyeye (2009b) investigated organizational sizes and human resources management practices of big and small universities. Big universities were hypothesized to have more than 1000 academic and administrative staff and less for small universities. The study established that human resources management practices of both small and big universities do not differ but are similar and identical. Theoretically, Barney (1991)'s 'resource-based view theory' states that an SME can tackle the changes in the business environment and perform better when it owns the relevant human and material

resources that cannot be easily replicated. Studies have identified that the availability of relevant resources is paramount to achieving a firm's objective. Ainuddin et al., (2007) stated that owning the relevant resources by recruiting, selecting, and staffing the enterprise with competent workforce is sine qua non for higher performance. Brander and Lewis (1986) also submitted that the quality, size of human and material resources of a business firm determines the pace of its growth, performance, and expansion.

According to the effectuation theory, the leadership/ management of a business organization is an indispensable element of a successful business outfit. This is because the managers and the employees of the SMEs are the most invaluable asset that initiate plans and execute the strategies of the organization. Analyzing the effectuation theory, Ajani et al. (2018) opined that the theory holds that the human resource of a business organization must be able to provide solutions to the business challenges, adopt an action-oriented approach to the business strategic plans and be free from practices that do not produce the desired results. Saravasthy (2001) stated that such effective actions change the business outlook of SMEs and improve productivity, profitability, and general performance of the business organization. Based on the two theories reviewed, the study is anchored on them. For example, the Barney (1991)'s 'resource-based view theory was able to identify human resource management variables such as proper staffing and change management which are positively correlated with enhanced business performance. Similarly, the effectuation theory states that effective human resources management has positive relationship with improved performance. Hence, the two theories are applicable to this study.

In line with variables identified in the literature, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₀: Effective human resource management does not have significant relationship on the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

H₁: Effective human resource management does have significant relationship on the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out on some selected small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos Nigeria. Lagos is Nigeria's major commercial city located in the southwest part of the country which the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria Report (SMEDAN) (2017) identified as the state with largest SMEs business in the country. According to SMEDAN Report (2017), the current official SMEs in Lagos State are 11,663 in number. The survey design was used to collect data from selected SMEs which fall within sole proprietorship, family-owned businesses, partnership businesses, co-operatives, and limited liability companies. The questionnaires were administered on managers and employees of the sampled SMEs in Lagos State. As a result of large number of the study's population of 11,663 SMEs, random sampling method was employed to reduce tendencies for biasness. The sample size was determined with the aid of the formula expressed in Moamer and Elhwaj (2016) as given below:

$$n = p(1-p) [Z_{\alpha/2} \div B]^2$$

Where:

n = number of needed sample size

Z_{α/2} = confidence level set at 1.96

P = p-value set at 0.5

B = error tolerance set at 0.10

Therefore:

$$n = 0.5(1 - 0.5) [1.96 / 0.10]^2$$

$$n = 0.5(0.5) [19.6]^2$$

$$n = 0.25(384.16)$$

n = 96.04, the needed sample size is 96 SMEs; hence the study resorted to the figure for analysis

The method for data collection was quantitative which gave the researcher the privilege to source for relevant primary data from respondents. The collected data was possible through the instrument of questionnaire designed on a 5-point likert scale adopted in line with that of Muogbo (2013). Hence, respondents' opinions were scaled and represented as strongly Agree (5) Agree (4) Undecided (3) Disagree (2) and strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was either sent by mail or self-administered to the participant on a face-to-face condition. The quantitative research method accorded the researcher the opportunity to use mathematical figures, symbols, numerals, and tables to present the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. While effective human resource management was considered the independent variable in this study, performances of SMEs was considered the dependent variables. The reliability and validity of this study is anchored on the appropriateness of the study's design,

methods, samples and careful and consistent conduct of the study.

The descriptive data collected was organized and analysed with the help of tables and frequencies while the hypothesis was tested with the aid of Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. The benchmark for testing the significance of the hypothesis was at 5% level of significance. Once the values of the variables are below 0.05, they were considered to have overall significance and vice versa. The study complied with the research ethics of informed consent which demands that the participant to the study would be provided with every information relevant for his/her participation in the study and is at liberty to participate without being compelled to do so. The ethics demand that the research holds the responses of the respondents with the utmost confidentiality and that their identities are treated with anonymity. The secondary sources of data such as journals, books, and articles used for this study were also referenced in line with research ethics.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Firm-Characteristics of Selected SMEs (N=93)

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Type of SMEs		
One man business	34	37%
Partnership business	21	23%
Family business	14	15%
Limited Liability Company	6	6%
Co-operatives	18	19%
Industry of SMEs		
Manufacturing	19	20%
Trading	41	44%
Service	33	36%
Net-Worth of SMEs		
Less than N10 million	18	19%
N10 – N100 million	40	43%
Above N100 million	35	38%
Size of Workforce		
Less than 10 employees	20	22%
10-50 employees	42	45%
Above 50 employees	31	33%
Years of Active Operation		



Below 10 years	31	33%
10-20 years	43	46%
Above 20 years	19	20.7%

Source: Field Survey (2022)

From a total of 96 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 93 copies were responded to and returned which gives a 96.875% response rate. The following analyses captured the demographic report of the sampled population: Table 1 above, captures the features of SMEs selected for this study. The table contained the type of SMEs, the industrial classification, the net worth of the firms, the size of the labour force under each SMEs type, and the years the SMEs have operated.

The findings from the survey revealed that one-man business or sole proprietorship is the most common SME in the areas surveyed at 37% followed by partnership business at 23%. The implication of the above is that more than half of the businesses in the study population are managed by sole proprietors who bear the brunt of risks in the businesses.

Based on the industrial classification of the businesses, trading businesses constitute most of the SMEs in the area. This is statistically captured by 44% of the business representing 41 SMEs, while the service sector ranks second at 36% representing 33 SMEs and the manufacturing sector has 20% which represents 19 SMEs. The implication of the above result is that trading businesses have the largest participatory rate in the study.

In the area of the net worth of the businesses, 43% of the businesses representing 40 firms have estimated net worth of 10 to 100 million naira; followed by 38% of the businesses that has 100 million naira and above representing 35 firms; while 18 firms representing 19% of the total population have net worth that falls below 10 million naira. The implication of the above is that SMEs with net worth ranging from 10 to 100 million naira had the highest participatory rate.

On the size of the workers, it was reported that 45% of the SMEs have 10 to 50 staff in their workforce representing 42 SMEs; 22% have less than 10 employees representing 20 SMEs and 33% have above 50 employees representing 31 SMEs. This implies that SMEs with workforce capacity ranging from 10 to 50 employees have the highest participatory rate.

It was also revealed that 46% of the SMEs have 10 to 20 years of business operation experience representing 43 SMEs; 33.3% of the businesses have operated for less than 20 years which represents 31 SMEs while 20.7% have operated above 20 years representing 19 SMEs. The implication of the above result is that SMEs with 10 to 20 years of operating experience have the highest participatory rate.

Table 2: Effective human resources management practices

S/n	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	Selective hiring mechanism	3.15	0.97	Agreed
2.	Maintenance of impressive attitude and behavior	3.02	0.95	Agreed
3.	Staff training and development	3.04	0.91	Agreed
4.	Cohesive teamwork	3.16	1.11	Agreed
5.	Performance appraisal strategy	3.07	1.06	Agreed
6.	Structured human resource planning	3.17	0.93	Agreed
7.	Good reward and incentive system	3.14	1.13	Agreed

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Based on the outcome of the survey, the table above presented the mean score and the standard deviation of variables of human resources management identified in the study. The benchmark for decision making was set at 3.0 for the mean values while the standard deviation was set at 1.5. Any of the variables above the 3.0 benchmark was regarded to have positive and significant impact while any of the standard deviation above the 1.5 benchmark was regarded not to have wide deviation from the mean. Hence, no outlier exists among the variables of HRM. Observing from the table, item 1 (selective hiring mechanism) has a mean value of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.97; item 2 (attitude and behaviour) has a mean value of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 0.95; item 3 (training and development) has a

mean value of 3.04 with a standard deviation of 0.91; item 4 (cohesive teamwork) has a mean value of 3.16 with standard deviation of 1.11; item 5 (performance appraisal) has a mean value of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.06; item 6 (structured human resource planning) has a mean value of 3.17 and a standard deviation value of 0.93 and lastly item 7 (reward and incentive system) has a mean value of 3.14 with a standard deviation value of 1.13. All these variables have mean and standard deviation values greater than the benchmarks at 3.0 and 1.5 respectively. Hence, the variables were positively significant in explaining human resources management and none of the variables had wide deviation from the mean.

Table 3: Performances of SMEs

S/n	SMEs performances	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	High profit level	3.23	0.97	Agreed
2.	Improved revenue growth rate	3.14	1.18	Agreed
3.	Improved market value performance	3.04	1.11	Agreed
4.	Enhanced employees' satisfaction	3.15	1.12	Agreed
5.	Enhanced customers' satisfaction	3.07	0.96	Agreed
6.	Improved environmental performance	3.03	0.93	Agreed
7.	Enhanced corporate social responsibility	3.05	1.03	Agreed

Source: *Field Survey (2022)*

From the table above, item 1 (high profit level) has a mean value of 3,23 with standard deviation of 0.97; item 2 (revenue growth) has a mean value of 3.14 and standard deviation of 1.18; item 3 (market value performance) has a mean value of 3.04 with standard deviation of 1.11; item 4 (employees satisfaction) has a mean value of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 1.12; item 5 (customers satisfaction) has a mean value of 3.07 with a standard deviation of 0.96; item 6 (environmental performance) has a mean value of 3.03 with a standard deviation of 0.93 and lastly, item 7 (corporate social responsibility) has a mean value of 3.05 and a standard deviation value

of 1.03. All these variables have mean and standard deviation values greater than the benchmarks at 3.0 and 1.5 respectively. Hence, the variables were positively significant in explaining performances of SMEs and none of the variables had wide deviation from the mean.

Test of hypothesis

H₀: Effective human resource management does not have significant relationship with the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

H₀: Effective human resource management does have significant relationship with the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

Table 4: Spearman Rank Correlations

			HRM	PERF
Spearman's rho	HRM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.036
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.939
		N	7	7
	PERF	Correlation Coefficient	-.036	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.939	.
		N	7	7

Source: SPSS Version 21.0

From the table above, the result revealed the existence of strong positive correlation between effective human resources management and performances of SMEs in Lagos State. This is evident in the correlation statistics of 0.939 shown in the table. In view of this, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, it can be concluded that effective human resource management have significant relationship with the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

4. Discussion

A number of studies have established that for businesses to achieve position of competitive advantage and improved performance over rivals requires optimization of human elements' potentials in businesses. The finding from the study revealed a positive relationship between effective human resource management and performance of SMEs in the study area. All the variables employed to explore effective human resources management portrayed positive and significant character. These variables include selective hiring mechanism, attitude and behavior, training and development, cohesive teamwork, performance appraisal, structured human resource planning and reward and incentive system. The result revealed absence of outliers through the standard deviation values that showed no wide deviation from the mean. The implication of the finding is that these variables are significant in explaining effective human resources management. Therefore, if these variables are carefully employed by the management

of SMEs in handling human resources in their various firms, would invariably ensure all round performance. This result is synonymous with the submission of Muogbo (2013) who captured HRM with structured planning mechanism, sales growth strategy and differentiation strategy. His finding established strong positive correlation between HRM and SMEs performances in Anambra State. In the same vein, Moamer and Elhwaj (2016) captured HRM with variables such as human relation planning, training and development and selective hiring as significant variables of HRM. The study submitted the existence of positive relationship between HRM and performances of SMEs in Malaysia. The above results are testaments to the relevance of effective HRM in the performance of organizations. In line with Abdulkadir (2009), a well-articulated HRM is the fulcrum of business growth.

As revealed in table 3 above, some variables were used to capture the performance of SMEs. Such variables include profit level, revenue growth, market value performance, employees' satisfaction, customers' satisfaction, environmental performance and corporate social responsibility. According to the SPSS output, all the variables were satisfactory in providing explanation to the variable of SMEs performance. The result also revealed that there is no outlier among the variables as there was absence of wide deviation from the mean as shown by the standard deviation. The performance of businesses is not limited to the indicator of



profit level alone but other variables captured in the analysis. This study's variables are quite dissimilar with variables used to capture performance in Lee et al. (2010) which include dependable and short delivery, efficiency, volume flexibility, development of fast new product with low cost, quality, cost and delivery. However, despite the differences in the variables both studies found the variables of performances to have positive relationship with human resources management.

The test of hypothesis by Spearman rank correlation, showed a correlation coefficient of 0.939. This is a very strong and positive relationship. The decision to adjudge the result positive and significant is guided by Nwaogo (2015) who proposed that any correlation coefficient with the magnitude of 0.80 and above is considered to have a very strong correlation. Based on the result, the variables of human resources management have strong and positive impact on the variables of SMEs performances. If the variables of human resources management as captured in this study are adopted among SMEs in Lagos State, it will lead to very strong and high-level performance. Hence, it can be concluded that effective human resource management have significant impact on the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Lagos State.

In summary, due to the invaluable contribution of the human resource elements to the performance of SMEs, the study found out that organizational performance cannot be achieved when there is ineffective human resource management that will oversee the recruitment, selection, training, motivation, and deployment of staff to appropriate units. Therefore, human resource management effectiveness is very crucial for achieving enhanced organizational performance. Based on this, the study held that the SMEs' practices and policies should be guided with the theory of resource-based view which advocates the availability of

quality workforce, and materials that will be used to improve the performance of organizations. Resource-based theory and effectuation theory are guides to managers to implement policies that transform the operations, and improve the competitive performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the finding drawn from the secondary and primary sources of data, this study affirms that effective human resource management is paramount for improving the performance of SMEs. Therefore, the study recommends that all SMEs should engage more in human resources practices that will enhance performance in all areas. Due to importance of HRM in sustaining the implementation of business strategies, this study recommends future studies that would capture other performance variables and correlate them with the variables of HRM for more elaborate research outcome. Similarly, it is posited that this topic be explored qualitatively to examine subjective opinions of people relative to the topic under consideration.

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