Conceptual Description of the Key Attributes of Human Resource Management Practices in a Developing Economy

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ABSTRACT

Human resource management practices are implemented to build an organisation supportive of cooperation and interaction, promote human and social development, and encourage career growth. There is evidence that studies have been conducted in diverse fields to identify the elements that contribute to the success or failure of the application of human resource management practices (HRMPs). However, the key attributes of HRMPs as critical factors for successful human resources (HR) performance and productivity are unknown in the Nigerian construction industry. Based on this, the paper reviewed the literature on existing conceptual models of HRMPs frameworks. Through the detailed review of the journal, conference papers, and academic thesis, fifteen (15) HRMPs attributes were identified. However, the top elements were determined by assessing the level of influence of the attributes on a five-point Likert scale through mean ranking. The top six (6) factors were training and development, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, rewards, communication, and emotional intelligence. The study recommended that HR should acquire more knowledge beyond their current job to optimize performance. Most suitable applicants should be allowed to fill existing vacancies. There should be an evaluation of employees' performance that brings about rewards. Finally, workers' state of mind that balances their responses brings about a sound communication system. The developed model indicates the practical implications of the HRM system for the construction industry. Therefore, combining these factors enhances effective HR performance and productivity in the industry.

Keywords: Human resource management practices, Construction industry, Training and development, Communication, Emotional intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Human resource management practices (HRMPs) are means through which workers' skills, attitudes, and behaviour are influenced and shaped to achieve success in an organisation (Hayton, 2005; Placide, Gwaya and Wanyona, 2019). Over the years, scholars have researched different HRMPs by

investigating their influence on project, employee, and firm performances (Hassan, 2016; Jouda, Ahmad and Dahleez., 2016; Abuazoom, Hanafi and Ahmad., 2017; Naveed, Adnan, Ullah and Sohail, 2017). Investigations show a significant effect of HRM practices on performance (Chieng, Arokiasamy and Kassim., 2019). Though no study has revealed the best practice for a particular organisation, there are only indications of a positive link between HRMPs and performance (Kokkaew and Koompai, 2012). This may be the reason for the application of varied HRMPs across organisation and countries. Similarly, Chieng et al. (2019) reveal that implementing bundles of HRM practices brings about a significant effect. Bundles of HRMPs are referred to as multiple practices against individual HRMPs utilized by organisation to enhance workers' performance both individually and collectively. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is a difference between HRM practices utilized by one organisation and another and one country to another. This implies that different practices have been used across the globe. Thus, it is paramount for the management team to holistically examine HRM practices before deciding on the best practice for their organisation. Furthermore, previous studies in the field of HRMPs show differences across individual HRM practices utilized, and there has been an emphasis on the need to examine and use HRMPs that influence performance. For instance, Kokkaew and Koompai (2012) study of HRMPs in the Thai construction industry highlights six independent activities in their model as HRMPs influencing the company's performance. These include HRM strategy, team management, communication, leadership role, motivation, and ethical treatment of employees. Also, the study carried out by Placide et al. (2019) in the construction industry in Rwanda portrayed recruitment and selection, reward system, job design, training and development, and performance management as HRMPs utilized. Nevertheless, different practices have been identified as a research focus; still, there has been no holistic analysis of the best practices driving HR in the Nigerian construction industry. Therefore, successful HRMPs implementation would influence the performance and productivity of HR by bringing together relevant stakeholders in the industry. Based on this, practitioners in the industry must rethink and understand the key attributes that are highly influential for the effective implementation of HRMPs in the Nigerian construction industry. Therefore, this is done by reviewing the literature on existing HRMPs conceptual models followed by administration of questionnaire to determine and solicit experts' views on HRMPs attributes, and at the same time ranking them to ascertain the perceived key attributes of HRMPs in the Nigerian construction industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a two-stage research design approach: the literature review and questionnaire technique. The literature review was utilized to identify HRMPs determinants. The detailed review identified fifteen (15) factors, while the questionnaire approach helped determine the key attributes of HRMPs by ranking. The study area is Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State is regarded as Nigeria's commercial nerve center, where large volume

of construction activities is carried out. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the professionals such as engineers, builders, quantity surveyors, architects, project managers, and HR in the built environment through an online google form. A total of 85 targeted professionals in contracting firms, consulting firms, government agencies, consortium, and academia were purposefully selected. The questionnaire comprises two parts. Part A is on respondents' demographic information with respect to gender, current profession, educational level, years of work experience in the industry, and professional affiliation. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy was carried out to test the adequacy of the sample size. This gave a value of 0.826. Respondents were required to express the level of influence of the fifteen (15) identified factors on a 5-point Likert scale: 1-very low influence, 2-low influence, 3-average influence, 4-high influence, and 5-very high influence. The respondents were asked to answer questions based on their experience in the industry and their involvement in HR selection and management. International Business Machines Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 27 was utilized to analyse the data collected.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Background Information

Gender, level of education, current profession, years of work experience in the construction industry, and professional affiliation were the specific demographic characteristics of respondents analysed in this section (Table 1). Gender analysis in this study showed that 76.47% of the respondents are males and 23.53% are females. The finding is in line with the work of Babalola and Ojo (2016) that revealed that the number of men in construction works is more than women. Also, analysis of respondents' current profession revealed that the majority (47.1%) of respondents are Engineers, while Quantity Surveyors followed, making up 16.5%, HR came next, followed by Project managers, Architect and Builders completing the list at 11.8%, 9.4%, 8.2%, and 7.1% respectively. Further, the analysis indicates that 35.29% of the respondents make up the respondents working in a government agency. At the same time, those in construction, consulting, contracting, academic, and consortium firms consist of 23.53%, 17.65%, 11.76%, 7.06%, and 4.71%, respectively. Moreover, respondents' membership to their recognised professional bodies were captured. Respondents were mostly drawn from The Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), while The Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors followed (NIQS), Society for Human Resource Management came next, followed by The Chartered Institute of Project Managers of Nigeria (CIPMN), The Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), and The Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB). Analysis of respondents' level of education revealed that 41.2% of the respondents have bachelor's degrees, followed by 29.4% of the respondents with a master's degree, while HND holders followed, making up 12%. PGD came next, followed by Ph.D., and OND completed the list at 9.4%, 6.0%, and 2.4%. Thus, suggesting that the respondents are educated. The analysis further revealed that the number of respondents' years of work

Table 1. Respondents' background information.

Characteristics	Features	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	76.4
	Female	20	23.53
	N	85	100
Current profession	Engineer	40	47.1
	Quantity surveyor	14	16.5
	Human resource	10	11.8
	Project manager	8	9.4
	Architect	7	8.2
	Builder	6	7.1
	N	85	100
Type of organisation	Government	30	35.29
	Construction	20	23.53
	Consulting	15	17.65
	Contracting	10	11.76
	Academic	6	7.06
	Consortium	4	4.71
	N	85	100
Level of education	Bachelor	35	41.2
	Masters	25	29.4
	HND	10	12.0
	PGD	8	9.4
	Doctoral	5	6.0
	OND	2	2.4
	N	85	100
Years of work experience	Less than 5 years	12	14.1
	6–10 years	20	23.5
	11–15 years	30	35.3
	16–20 years	16	18.8
	Above 20 years	7	8.2
	N	85	100

experience in the construction industry indicates that those above ten years made up 62.3%. In comparison, below ten years formed 37.7% of the total respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Key Attributes of Human Resource Management Practices

The objective identifies the key elements of HRMPs by indicating the level of influence of the attributes to the implementation of HRMPs on a five-point Likert scale. Based on this objective, the experts recognized fifteen (15) determinants. However, six (6) were ranked out of these elements with a high mean score between 4.20 and 4.50. From Table 2, training and development was ranked first with a mean score of 4.50 and a standard deviation of 1.76. At the same time, recruitment and selection followed, making up a mean score of 4.37 and standard deviation of 1.35, performance appraisal came next,

Table 2. Key elements of human resource management practices by ranking.

Elements	N	($\bar{x}$)	(σx)	(R)
Training and development	85	4.50	1.76	1
Recruitment and selection	85	4.37	1.35	2
Performance appraisal	85	4.36	1.40	3
Rewards	85	4.34	1.45	4
Communication	85	4.24	1.36	5
Emotional intelligence	85	4.20	1.30	6
Job security	85	4.17	1.35	7
Teamwork	85	4.14	1.11	8
Performance management	85	4.10	1.28	9
Information sharing	85	4.07	1.52	10
Promotion	85	4.00	1.76	11
Job design	85	3.80	1.84	12
Work flexibility	85	3.67	0.91	13
Equal opportunity and non-discrimination	85	3.57	1.29	14
Quality work	85	3.54	1.30	15

N = number of respondents; $\bar{x}$ = Mean, σx = Standard deviation, R = $\bar{x}$ ranking

followed by rewards, communication, and emotional intelligence completing the list at mean score and standard deviation of (4.36, 1.40), (4.34, 1.45), (4.24, 1.36), and (4.20, 1.30) respectively.

Training and Development

Training and development are imperative for improved workers' skills, knowledge, and required capacity to develop human and perceived organisational performance. Training and development are subsystems within the broad spectrum of the personnel function and are topical issues in the 21st century to gain competitive advantage (Naveed et al., 2017). Therefore, it is not surprising that training and development were ranked the most significant among the listed attributes of effective HRMPs. Elnaga and Imran (2013) recognise training as a bridge between the current performance and the standard desired performance. Amin, Ismail, Rasid and Selemani (2014) and Kadiresan, Selamat, Selladurai, Ramendran and Mohamed (2015) perceived training as an orderly process that guides worker's behaviour and attitudes in line with organisational objectives that brings about employees' development and performance. On the other hand, Akpan (2009) established that development is the process whereby an employee grows on the job, through the acquisition of experiences that results from the exercise of varied and tested responsibilities. Therefore, implementation of training and development will ensure employees' skills and competence development, enhance workers' growth within the organisation for future human resource needs, reduce learning time on appointment, transfer, or promotion. Also, it will ensure competence and improved quality and meet the challenges of global competition and social change (Amin et al., 2014, Kadiresan et al., 2015).

Recruitment and Selection

In terms of decision making, recruitment and selection (RNS) are the best tools of HRM that help identify the best and right persons with innovative abilities for the right job (Aman, Noreen, Khan, Ali and Yasin, 2018). Osemeke (2012) informs that RNS of HR in a firm is an important business because both the organisation success and service delivery efficiency depend on the quality of recruited workforce into the organisation. Accordingly, Shen and Edward (2004) posit that recruitment is the process of filling the offered work positions in sufficient numbers and qualities of the job applicants and meeting the expectations and requirements of the organisation. Likewise, Amin et al., 2014 added that it is the process of locating and attracting individuals with the primary aim of filling organisational job vacancies. Similarly, recruitment involves attracting enough individuals with the right profile such as qualifications, experiences, skills, and other attributes to indicate their interest in working for the organisation (Ameh and Daniel, 2017). On the other hand, selection is the process of collecting applicants' information, pruning, and choosing the most suitable among them that fit with relevant qualifications to fill existing vacancies in an organisation (Hussaih and Rehman, 2013; Amin et al., 2014). The purpose of selection is to identify humans who can fulfill an organization's requirements from the chosen applicants. Therefore, managers need to understand the selection procedures. In this way, they can be highly involved in the process from the beginning since they have adequate information upon which to base their decisions because the process affects both the employees and organisational performance. Additionally, Amin et al. (2014) opined that to maximize competitive advantage and avoid problems such as high turnovers, low productivity, high rate of absenteeism, and employee stress, organisation should assess and recruit the workforce through recruitment methods that bring about efficient and effective candidates. Such procedures include among others, newspaper advertisements, interviews, network bulletins, technical skills/practices, posters, personal connections, referrals, word-of-mouth recommendations, choosing from staff relations, physical ability, psychological and psychometric tests (Amin et al., 2014; Ling, Ning, Chang and Zhang., 2018). Furthermore, Jalil, Shaikh and Alam (2014) suggested recruitment procedures, employment and equal opportunities, justice and fair treatment for all applicants, and proper selection devices to increase the chances of choosing the right person to fill the firm's positions.

Performance Appraisal

According to Jouda et al. (2016) performance appraisal is imperative in ensuring maximum utilization of employee's skills, knowledge, and interests. It is not a daily routine in an organisation, but a key determinant of organisational success and competitive advantage that increases employee motivation and self-esteem (Abuazoom et al., 2017). Similarly, studies had shown that the successful implementation of HRMPs is rooted in identifying employee performance level in terms of weakness and strength (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006; Ebiasuode, Onuoha and Nwede., 2017). Therefore, it is vital

that through the performance appraisal system, a committed and motivated employee is produced, communication challenges resolved, timely feedback to the employee that increases productivity is assured, employee's growth, development, and promotion are considered (Hassan, 2016; Abuazoom et al., 2017). Kelly, Ang, Chong and Hu (2008) posit that fairness and charity of the system should be considered, resulting in employees' satisfaction, improved performance, motivation, and positive perception of performance bonuses. Furthermore, employee skill, knowledge, and attitude should be developed to improve the organisation process both in the jobs and tasks (Tanveer, Shaukat, Alvi and Munir., 2011). Hassan (2016) advocates for transparent performance evaluation that motivates employees to achieve firms' objectives to ensure that employees work harder. Further, Mayer and Davis (1999) as cited in Abuazoom et al. (2017), added that the system should give room for reactions from HR to build trust and performance as issues beyond the control of employees should not be included as a criterion for appraisal.

Rewards

Rewards (RWDS) is another factor identified to achieve effective HRMPs but presented differently by many scholars. Some scholars refer to it as rewards and benefits management, reward system, reward and recognition system, reward strategy, reward management, flexible reward as well as reward and compensation among others (Arulrajah, Opatha and Nawaratne, 2015; Aktar and Pangil, 2018; Alzyoud, 2018; Aman et al., 2018; Jashari & Kutllovci, 2020; Zainon, Ismail, Ahmad, Shafi, Misman, Nawi and Kadir, 2020). Thus, these terms were differently mentioned instead of rewards. The implementation of reward systems (processes, practices, and procedures) in any organisation activities is crucial for its long-term survival (Boohene and Asuinura, 2011), hence, its importance in HRM activities is necessary and cannot be overlooked. To corroborate this, Jashari and Kutllovci (2020) affirmed that the reward system helps pull talented workforces who are effective at work, thereby motivating and keeping those who are fitted with the firm. Hsieh and Chen (2011) and Aktar and Pangil (2018) opined that reward is an important resource offered by organisation and perceived by employees as valuable in terms of cash, non-cash, work experience, career opportunities, that motivate them to accomplish organisational goals. Furthermore, studies have acknowledged the influence of rewards, a HRMPs, on the workforce in an organisation. Boohene and Asuinura (2001) informed that rewarding worker fairly, equitably, and consistently based on their contribution to the organisation helps achieve organisational strategic goals. Ling and Nusurdin (2010) mentioned that favourable reward practice encourages workers to think out of the box, which initiates them to become creative and innovative. This argument aligns with Aman et al. (2018) study that rewards motivate employees to take risks that promote their innovative abilities. Thus, when workers are faced with complex tasks, they find a solution, thereby increasing their ability to think and increasing their innovation. Similarly, Hsieh and Chen (2011) informed that an excellent rewarding system attracts, retains, and motivates employees to perform their best and stay with the organisation.

Accordingly, rewards affect employees' behaviour that keeps them engaged at work (Aktar and Pangil, 2018).

Communication

It is evident in existing human resource management practices literature that one of the essential attributes of HRMPs is communication (Chukwuka, 2015; Cesario and Magalhaes, 2016; Alzyoud, 2018). Communication is a tool that serves as every organization's life wire and social glue involving information sharing, thereby increasing organizational behaviour (Chukwuka, 2015). This is evident among workers; to express goals, policies, procedures, and mission of an organisation to its employees, to channel its resources (human and materials) appropriately to the best optimal manner for efficiency and effectiveness, to plan, organise, direct, supervise, control, and appraise both human and materials in the organisation, to link employees together to achieve organisational goals and objectives, to communicate fairly, openly, and transparently to promotion and demotion criteria employed by management on employees, and through appropriate communication methods, training and development become easier. Therefore, an understanding of individual HR is crucial as the performance and strength of the workforce are associated with the level of communication that improves emotional relationships among a diverse workforce (Chen, Okumus, Hua & Nusair., 2011; Alzyoud, 2018). Studies by Chukwuka (2015), Cesario and Magalhaes (2016), and Alzyoud (2018) have recognised communication as a major medium through which information and events are adequately disseminated in an organisation to project workforce by the managers, which impacts the implementation of HRMPs.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) combines the concept of both "emotion" and "intelligence." EI is referred to as the ability to boost oneself and continue regardless of hindrances; dealing with compulsion and dissatisfaction; managing individual mindsets and keeping sufferings from influencing the capability of thinking, sympathizing, and being optimistic" (Suleman, Hussain, Syed, Parveen, Lodhi and Mahmoods., 2019:2). It plays the role of ensuring the success of human resource activities within the organisation, especially the construction industry, by examining human behaviour through their achievement, fulfillment, well-being, and modification (Ngwenya et al., 2019). Also, it has been found that EI necessitates project participation among professionals, stressing that organising various professionals: clients, architects, contractors, sub-contractors, quantity surveyors, engineers, suppliers together in a better way through good interaction brings about the achievement of organisational goals (Saini and Soni, 2016). Additionally, it predicts job attitudes and behaviour in employment contexts (Feyerabend, Herd and Choi, 2018). EI facilitates communication in cross-border relationships by enhancing the clarity, frequency, and richness of the information exchanged (Leonidou, Aykol, Fotiadis, Zeriti and Christodoulides, 2019). Mischung, Smithwick, Sullwan & Perrenoud, (2015) emphasized
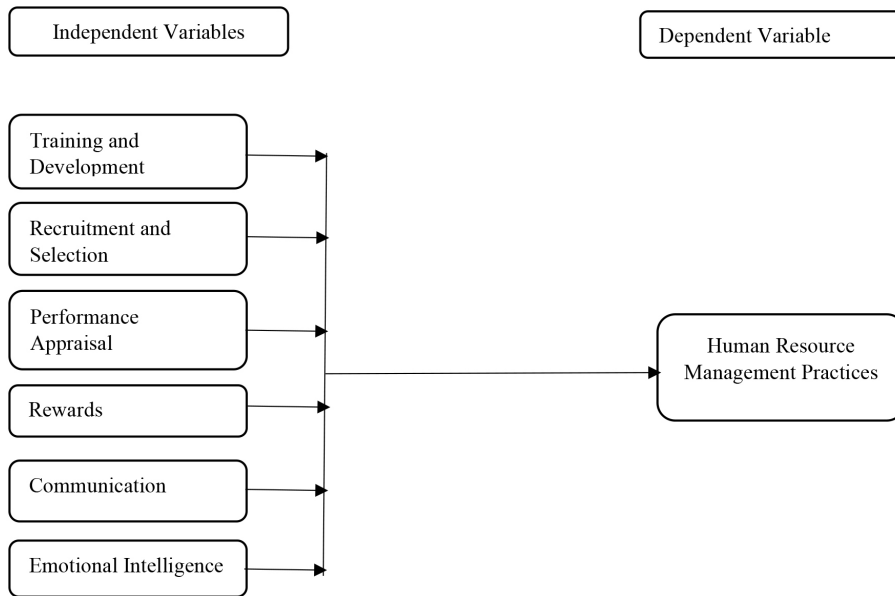
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of key elements of human resource management practices.

team performance in construction management (CM) programs through the enormous benefits of EI.

Human Resource Management Practices Framework (HRMPsF)

The conceptual framework outlined the components of the independent variables known as the causal factors, the immediate effect, which is the dependent variable (Figure 1). According to Lithner (2008) and Kivunja (2018), the conceptual framework is based on an argument that the variables under investigation, and any anticipated relationships among them, will be appropriate and useful under a given situation. In this study, both the independent and the dependent are the variables. The influence and effect of the dependent variable are established by the independent variables, namely training and development, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, rewards, communication, and emotional intelligence. The dependent variable is the variable under observation and measured and depends on the independent variables. Thus, this study finds the influence of the independent variables on HRMPs for the Nigerian construction industry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A whole lot of attributes are associated with HRMPs. The study has established the elements that influence HRMPs thereafter conducting a literature review and questionnaire technique to determine the key elements of HRMPs by ranking on existing conceptual models of HRMPs frameworks. These elements informed the conceptual framework for the Nigerian construction industry. As ranked by professionals and HR in the built environment, these

factors include training and development, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, rewards, communication, and emotional intelligence. This study shows that HRMPs impact HR performance and productivity. Based on this, the study recommends that more knowledge should be acquired by HR beyond their current job to optimize performance. Additionally, most suitable applicants should be allowed to fill existing vacancies. Also, there should be an evaluation of employees' performance that brings about rewards. Finally, workers' state of mind that balances their responses brings about a sound communication system. In conclusion, the present study advocate for HRMPs framework implementation in the Nigerian construction industry.

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