

# Nexus Between Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Commitment in Selected Private Universities in South West, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in private universities in South West, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the nexus between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and employees' commitment in selected private universities in South West, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study population frame is 3,261 (three thousand two hundred and sixty-one) involving all academic staff members from the selected private universities. The Taro Yamane formula was used to statistically determine the sample size, which was 356 (three hundred and fifty-six). The study used primary data and collected responses from respondents in the selected private universities in South West, Nigeria through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics employed for data analysis were frequency counts, simple percentages, bar charts, mean scores, and standard deviations, while the inferential statistics utilized was the multiple linear regression with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 23. The findings of the study revealed that, HRM strategies have a substantial impact on employee commitment at a number of private universities in South West, Nigeria ( $\beta=1.001$ ;  $t = 27.947$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The study concluded that the adoption of HRM practices such as employee evaluation and pension benefits has improved organizational performance in private universities in South West Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that to allow for increased organizational commitment, the variables of HRM practices namely training and development programmes, employee evaluation and pension benefits needs to be employed by universities and it should be modelled in such a way that the employers can make use of it for their universities operations.*

**Keywords—** HRM Practices, Employee Commitment, Private Universities, South-West, Nigeria.

## I. INTRODUCTION

An employee is the most valuable asset to any given organization, the increasing interest in human resources is due to the assumption that employees and the way they are managed is critical to the success of an organization and can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Omolo & Otengah, 2013). A human Resource Management (HRM) practice is the key component that drives and spurs the creation of competitive values in any given organization when strategically implemented. The survival of business organizations especially universities

will for many years to come depend largely on the quality of its human resource and how they manage the universities (Nkeobuna & Ugoani, 2020). Universities as social systems require the competence to maintain the structures, technology and the environment in which they operate. University has to adopt ways of gaining and maintaining their competitive advantage, a university's important source of competitive advantage is the employees (Barney, 1991). Human resource management practices plays a vital role in attaining a sustainable competitive advantage as it opts for the finest recruits with

the precise expertise and capabilities that can notably equal the organization's expectation. This involves coming up with HRM policies and practices that meet an organization's needs and support in the attainment of sustained competitive advantage (Hundley, 2008).

According to Eneh and Awara (2016) Human resource management (HRM) practices is staring at an incredible opportunity to increase organizational performance. Businei (2013) stated that the way an organization manages employee can influence its performance in particular HRM practices such as resourcing practices, job design, employee participation, promotion, empowerment, team-based production systems, extensive employee training and development, performance appraisal as well as compensation are widely believed to improve the performance of organizations.

According to Kipkebut (2010) institutions of higher learning can adopt various HRM practices to enhance employee's skills as well as motivate them to work harder towards achieving the set targets. Institutions of higher learning can improve the quality of current employees by providing comprehensive training and development activities. Considerable evidence suggests that investments in training produce beneficial organizational outcomes (Munjuri, 2011). The effectiveness of skilled employees may be limited if they are not motivated to perform their jobs. Organizations can implement merit pay or incentive compensation systems that provide rewards to employees for meeting specific goals.

The establishment of private universities in the country attempts to provide equitable access to higher education institutions in places with limited access. Hence, Omomia, and Babalola (2014) argued that the idea of private higher education in Nigeria is a process of education deregulation towards aiding higher education institutions to become self-managed through privatization. Furthermore, demographic changes and transitions contributed to the need for private higher education in the country just like the scenario of many South-East Asian countries (Salihu, 2020).

The major challenges in the development of private higher education in Nigeria include lack of awareness and orientation, inadequate human resources, and cost of operation (Ajadi, 2010). Furthermore, the Nigerian tertiary education system is faced with serious challenges such as inadequate qualified lecturers, inadequate classrooms, epileptic power supply for laboratory analysis, inadequate funding, non-accessibility of tertiary education fund for lecturers to attend conferences and workshops (Ogbu & Udensi, 2017). The truth remains that lecturers have been leaving the shores of Nigeria to other countries for greener

pastures since the employers are not taking good care of them in their own country (Chitsaz-Isfahani & Boustani, 2014).

Nevertheless, public and private universities are making significant effort to keep their employees to avoid low productivity (Khan, Aslam, & Lodhi, 2011). Therefore, the need for the improvement of employees' commitment and effective performance in private universities has calls for appropriate human resource practices. Employee commitment has been defined as the degree to which the employee feels devoted to their organization (Akintayo, 2010). Also Ongori (2007) described employee commitment as an effective response to the whole organization and the degree of attachment or loyalty employees feel towards the organization. Employees are the organization's major resource and organizational performance mostly depends on the employees (Enis, 2017). From the above, this study is interested in human resource management practices (compensation practices, promotion practices, performance appraisal practices and training and development) and commitment of employees of selected private universities in South West, Nigeria.

## **II. CONCEPT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

Universities all over the world are set up to meet certain predetermined goals and objectives. Such goals and objectives cannot be achieved without the input of employees (Wilkinson, Redman & Dundon, 2017). Human resource management practices involves training, performance appraisal, reward management, labour relations, collective bargaining, compensation, promotion and safe work environment (Hrm practice, 2019). The human resource management (HRM) practices have its focus and aim on how to improve the working conditions of employees and maintain them in the organization in order to achieve organizational performance and enhance the level of employee engagement (Nel & Linde, 2019).

Adequate human resource management has a great impact on the organization, it will result in the achievement of organizational goals, objectives, good performance and high productivity in an organization. Furthermore, Ramazan and Fatih (2015) defined human resource management practices as a strategic and compatible approach to management of an organization's most valuable assets, the people working there who one by one and jointly contribute to the accomplishment of its objectives. Okechukwu, Udochukwu and Eze (2016) posited that a poor human resource management has a great impact on the organization or institution, human resource plays a necessary and valuable role in

administrative functions within the organization or institution, also human resource manages payroll, benefit, recruiting and selecting, training and developing, human resource act as a link between staff and management.

Principal among human resource management practices are compensation practices, promotion practices, performance appraisal practices and training and development. According to Bhattacharya & Sengupta (2014) compensation is the remuneration received by an employee in return for his/her contribution to the organization. It is an important aspect of human resource management that enables organizations to motivate their employees and enhance overall organizational effectiveness, performance and commitment. Adequate compensation packages also serve the need for attracting and retaining the best employees. Tessema and Soeters (2006) described compensation as a “critical component of the employment relationship which includes direct payments and indirect payments in the form of employee benefits and incentives used to motivate employees to strive for higher levels of productivity”. Appropriate compensation management tends to motivate employees to remain loyal to the organization and in turn, the organizational performance increases. Higher compensation packages tend to retain employees because such employees are more satisfied, committed and loyal (Chiu, Luk & Tang, 2002). Tettey (2006) further stated that salary dissatisfaction is one of the key factors that affects employee commitment and these prompts their decision to stay or intent to leave.

Business organizations world-wide use promotions to assign employees to a higher-level job position where they can best contribute to the organizations. Promoted employees may experience an increase in earnings and may receive opportunities to acquire new capabilities while organizations are able to retain valuable employees (Cobb-Clark & Dunlop, 1999). Promotion always goes with a salary increase; either it is done within a grade or to the higher grade. A continuous process, which is based on the length of service and professional ‘competency’ is adopted at the time of promotion to higher step in the job within a grade promotion. Tessema and Soeters (2006) found a positive correlation between promotion practices and employee performance. According to Sikula (2018) technically a promotion is a move from one position to another that involves both wages and status increases. Mustafa (2007) asserts that the most attractive reward perceived by the staff is promotion that will improve the staff objective and performance.

Lawrence (2014) viewed performance appraisal as a system that assesses the production of workers, to bring

out their skills and their short falls in order to advance their productivity. There are a lot of controversies surrounding performance appraisal such as better understanding of the role it plays in the institution. The problem raised by this submission is: what is expected and what needs to be done to meet those expectations and also clear understanding of employee’s strengths and weaknesses so as to develop himself/herself into a better performance in future (Affandidan & Matore, 2018)

Training and development are important elements of human resource management practices (Mohammadnoor, AL-Qudah & Osman, 2014). Training is a marshaled activity that aims to impart instructions or information to improve the performance, knowledge, or skills of the trainee, while development refers to the activities that help individuals attain new knowledge or skills that are necessary for employee personal growth (Rehman, Mohamed, & Ayoup, 2019). All-inclusive training and development programmes help trainees to focus on the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are necessary to achieve goals and to generate competitive advantages for an organization and found that training and development has a significant effect on organizational performance (Rehman, Mohamed, & Ayoup, 2019). Human resource management practices do not directly involved in generating fund for the organization, hence little attention is been paid to the employee training and development in the organization as a result of this. Meanwhile, human resource are the pivot on which the organization survives.

It is necessary that employee’s commitment in organization requires continuous training and development of their high performers for potential new positions recognize their knowledge gaps and implement initiatives to boost their competencies and certify their retention (Gold, 2016). Prabhu, Abdullah & Ahmed (2020) have found that employee training has a positive effect on organizational performance, they concluded that a major impact on the execution of an activity, or improvement in performance (Cooke, Schuler and Varma, 2020). Frey and Osterlob (2004) also stressed that maintaining highly motivated employees is a strategic move to keep committed employees to work hard and ultimately contributing their optimal capability towards achieving the organization’s goals. Academics can perform better only if the management creates a good working condition. Academics are the source of all developments in the institutions.

### **III. EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT**

The substantial volume of research on the link between HRM practices and employee commitment in the last two

decades generally finds a positive relationship between the extent of HRM practices used and employee commitment (Armstrong, 2014). In Africa, there is a rising war for talent especially between the public and the private sector and as organization gear up for growth, the demand for skills needed to support such ambitions has increased, and is being matched by greater mobility in the labour market hence a challenge in enhancing organization commitment (Storey, 2014). Public sector administration in sub-Saharan Africa is ingrained with a myriad of problems of the logical perception between worker dissatisfaction and demonization of job standards affecting the commitment of employees (Abugre, 2014).

Committed employees develop a bond with an organization, which creates better organizational performance. If that emotional connection to their career, relationships with other employees and the organization are present, they perform better and serve the organization better (Andrew, 2017; Yildirim, Acar, Baykaktar & Akova, 2015). This implies to an extent that the success of an organization is a function of employee commitment. Today's competitive business environment has made it even more pertinent for organizations to maintain a highly committed workforce. This is because committed employees pull together in one direction to improve their performance at both the individual and team levels (Andrew, 2017). Thus, committed employees are capable of improving the fortunes of the organization through their improved work behaviour. Nevertheless, much of the research in this area has been conducted in developed countries, to the neglect of developing countries (Udu & Ameh, 2016).

Reetta (2018) sees commitment as a psychological state that binds an employee to an organization thereby reducing the problem of employee turnover and as a mind-set that takes different forms and binds an individual to a course of action that is of importance to a particular target. It is therefore, important to note that all these definitions take into cognizance employees' loyalty and affection. However, employees are committed when they perceived fairness in their psychological contract.

Employees reciprocate their employer, based on the extent to which they perceive obligations to them have been fulfilled (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). The more the employer fulfils obligations and meets expectations, the more employees feel secure and satisfied, and consequently obligated to reciprocate. Indeed, employee commitment is a crucial factor in achieving organizational success (Ogeniyi, Adeyemi & Olaoye, 2017; Nasiri, 2017). Individuals with low levels of commitment will put in little effort to work. They do not put their hearts into the work

and mission of the organization. They seem to be more concerned with personal success than with the success of the organization as a whole. Employees who are less committed are also more likely to look at themselves as outsiders and not as long – term members of the organization (Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Zheng, Sharan & Wei, 2010). As such, an attractive job offer elsewhere is very likely to result in their departure. In contrast, employees with high commitment to an organization see themselves as an integral part of the organization. Anything that threatens the organization is an imminent danger to them as well. Such employees become creatively involved in the organization's mission and values, and constantly think about ways to do their jobs better (Andrea, 2017). In essence, committed employees work for the organization as if the organization belongs to them. Ajadi (2010) opined that committed employees are those who are morally bounded and are not likely to terminate their appointment with the organization prematurely.

Different scholars have examined the effects of employee commitment on organization performance in different organizations. This also leads to different views on the construct of employee commitment. Employee commitment according to Meyer and Allen (1984) is a tri-dimensional construct which has three components; affective, continuance and normative commitment. It is therefore on the premise that each of the components will be discussed and examined in relation to its effect on organizational performance. Meyer and Allen (1984) defined affective commitment as “positive feelings of identification with, attachment to and involvement in the work organization”. This shows the extent to which the individual identifies with the organization (identification, involvement, and emotional attachment), organizational members who are committed to an organization on the basis of this commitment, continue working for the organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) indicated that affective commitment is influenced by factors such as job challenge, role clarity, goal clarity, and goal difficulty, receptiveness by management, peer cohesion, equity, personal importance, feedback, participation and dependability. As a consequence of positive feelings perceived by the connection with the organization, employees possess high degrees of affective commitment wish to remain with their organization (Newman & Sheikh, 2012). The high levels of effort exerted by employees with high levels of affective commitment would lead to higher levels of performance and effectiveness of both the individual and the organizational levels (Sharma & Bajpai, 2010). This is supported by (Beck & Wilson, 2000; Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Radosavljevic, Cilerdzic & Dragic, 2017). Therefore, this

study examined nexus between human resource management practices and employee commitment in selected private Universities in South West, Nigeria

#### IV. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Onwuka and Onwuchekwa (2018) studied the influence of compensation policy on employee commitment of selected pharmaceutical companies in Anambra state. In their study, primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaire, and the data was analyzed by use of Pearson product correlation. The findings of their study revealed that pay for performance policy was the popular compensation. Their study also established that the compensation policy influences employee commitment owing to the level of relationship established between the variables and this led to enhanced performance, trust in management and strong relationship in the organization. Moreover, the cash rewards were reflective of individual skills and effort which included allowances for extra duties and responsibilities. The employees' compensation included pension schemes; personal security through illness, health or accident insurance covers; safety in work environment, financial assistance for loans, purchase of organizational products and work life.

Kipkebut (2010) also explored human resources management practices and organizational commitment on higher educational institutions. He found out that HRM practices were more important than demographic characteristics in influencing organizational commitment. He further established that private universities had more superior HRM practices than public universities. He recommended that there was need for both qualitative and quantitative data for research to reveal pertinent issues of human resources management that enhance performance in higher institutions of learning.

Balatbat, Lin and Carmichael (2010) considered the impact of human resources management practices on turnover, productivity and corporate financial performance. The results based on a national sample of nearly one thousand firms indicated that these practices have an economically and statistically significant impact on both intermediate employee outcomes and short- and long-term measures of corporate financial performance.

Ogunayo (2021) examined human resource management practices and small and medium scale business in Nigeria. The study adopted survey design through the collection of primary data with the use of structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 5,200 employees of national, state and unit SMEs located across Lagos State, Nigeria. The sample frame from which employees of SMEs from the five geo-political zones in Lagos State (Badagry,

Mainland, Epe, Island, and Ikorodu) were selected regardless of their location in the State. The study considered all participating SMEs in Lagos State. Senior and junior staff of participating SMEs were selected within the framework and a total of one thousand five hundred (1500) respondents were used. The results of the findings revealed that human resource recruitment and selection practices have significant effects on employees in SMEs in Lagos State. Also, there is a weak positive relationship between motivation, remuneration and business success commitment in the SMEs in Lagos State. The result shows that as motivation and remuneration increases the performance of employee in an organization.

Maina, Namusonge, and Milgo, (2017) assessed how employee commitment was influenced by human resources management practice in Kenya. From the findings, compensation and reward system, resourcing, development of workers through training were some of the human resources management practices that influenced employee commitment positively. The study noted that organizations can use resource strategy of employees to get more competent and suitable workforce that is effective and efficient in realizing overall organizational objectives which are expressed in its vision and mission statements. From the findings, training of employees enhances employee motivation.

#### V. METHODOLOGY

The research design used survey research that involves using questionnaire. The entire academic staff of the selected private universities in South West, Nigeria of the study constitute the population used for the study was 3,261 from Nigerian University System Statistical Digest, 2018. The questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was constructed on a Five point Likert Scale. The Cronbach alpha test was used to test the reliability of the research instrument. A major reliability test was carried out using test-retest method and also the researcher utilized Cronbach alpha test (Cronbach, 1951) to investigate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher with help of two trained researcher assistance to administer questionnaire and all the classes of lecturers in the selected private universities in South West, Nigeria was taking care of in this study. Out of the 356 Copies of questionnaire administered, 334 copies of questionnaire returned for the analysis, which represented 93.8% of the total. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the data were subjected to multiple regression method of analysis to examine the effect of

HRM practices (Independent variable) on employee commitment (Dependent variable).

## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 Descriptive analysis of Employee Commitment

S/N	Items	Responses (n) (%)					Mean	SD
		SA	A	UD	D	SD		
1	I have emotional attachment to the university	117 (35.0)	68 (20.3)	63 (18.7)	51 (15.3)	35 (10.5)	3.58	1.38
2	I have no intention to leave the university in the nearest future	132 (39.5)	71 (21.3)	64 (19.2)	31 (9.3)	36 (10.8)	3.73	1.36
3	My personal goal aligns with the university goal	126 (37.7)	95 (28.4)	54 (16.2)	25 (7.5)	34 (10.2)	3.80	1.30
4	I use my personal resources for the university when it's not readily available	131 (39.2)	83 (24.9)	58 (17.4)	39 (5.7)	23 (6.8)	3.81	1.27
5	I speak positively about the university to other people/ outsiders	123 (36.8)	81 (24.3)	60 (18)	36 (10.8)	34 (10.2)	3.71	1.34
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.73</b>	<b>1.33</b>

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 1 presents results of descriptive statistics on employee commitment. The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that 35% of the respondents strongly agree that they have emotional attachment to the university, 20.3% agree, 18.7% were undecided, 15.3% disagree, and 10.5% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents agree that they have emotional attachment to the university (mean = 3.58, standard deviation = 1.38). Further, 39.5% of the respondents strongly agree that they have no intention to leave the university in the nearest future. 21.3% agree, 19.2% were undecided, 9.3% disagree and 10.8% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents were further in agreement that they have no intention to leave the university in the nearest future (mean = 3.73, standard deviation = 1.36).

Further, findings revealed that 37.7% of the respondents strongly agree that their personal goal aligns with the university goal. 28.4% of the respondents agree, 16.2% were undecided, 7.5% disagree and 10.2% of the respondents strongly disagree. On average, the respondents agree that their personal goal aligns with the university goal (mean = 3.80, standard deviation = 1.30). Also, findings revealed that 39.2% of the respondents

strongly agree that they use their personal resources for the university when it's not readily available. 24.9% agree, 17.4% were undecided, 5.7% disagree and 6.8% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents agree that they use their personal resources for the university when it's not readily available (mean = 3.81, standard deviation = 1.27). The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that 36.8% of the respondents strongly agree that they use their personal resources for the university when it's not readily available, 24.3% agree, 18% were undecided, 10.8% disagree, and 10.2% of the respondents strongly disagree. On average, the respondents agree that there is time constraint in carrying out their research (mean = 3.71, standard deviation = 1.34). The overall mean score of responses was 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.33 which indicates that the respondents agree with the statements on employee commitment in the selected private universities.

### Test of Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: Human resource management practices has no significant effect on employee commitment of selected private Universities in South West, Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Analysis on Relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Commitment

Variables	Coefficient	Std-Error	T-Stat	P-value
Constant	-0.053	0.138	-0.383	0.702
HRM	1.001	0.036	27.947	0.000
R-Square	0.695			
Adjusted R-Square	0.695			

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 2 revealed that human resource management practices have positive effect on employee commitment. This shows that human resource management practices have the potential to advance employee commitment. This situation was corroborated by the coefficient of human resource management practices with the value 1.001. This imply that 1% increase in human resource management practices will cause an increase of 100% in employee commitment. The reason for the behaviour of the variable was that human resource management practices in terms of training and development of staff create a better performance and conducive atmosphere and subsequently made employee to see reason with the management of the

selected private universities under review such that they decided to stay on their job through perceived commitment and getting prompt promotion. However, in this study Table 4.19 revealed that the predictor variable of human resource management practices adopted by the universities predicts employee commitment with ( $\beta = 0.834$ ;  $t = 27.947$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. It is also worthy to note that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) shows that human resource management practices account for 69.5% in the total variation on employee commitment in the universities considered in South West, Nigeria.

Table 3 ANOVA for Employee Commitment

Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Stat	P-value
Regression	199.735	199.735	781.049	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	87.459	0.256		

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

From Table 3, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (199.735) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.256), yielding  $F = 781.049$ . In the fifth hypothesis, the independent variable (human resource management practices) was found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable (employee commitment). Therefore, there is an effect of human resource management practices on employee retention at  $F_{(1,342)} = 781.049$ . Table 4.19.1 shows that the test of human resource management practices on employee commitment is significant at 0.000 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

## VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding revealed that there exists a statistically significant relationship between human resource management practices and employee commitment in the selected private universities. This is in consonance with the findings of other researchers across varying industries and geographical spread. Researchers such as Kipkebut (2010)

found out that HRM practices were more important than demographic characteristics in influencing organizational commitment. Onwuka and Onwuchekwa (2018) established that the compensation policy influences employee commitment owing to the level of relationship established between the variables and this led to enhanced performance, trust in management and strong relationship in the organization. Odunayo (2021) stated that there is a weak positive relationship between motivation, remuneration and business success commitment in the SMEs in Lagos State. However, the result shows that as motivation and remuneration increases so do business successes in the SMEs. Rizal et al (2014) revealed that compensation significantly affect employees' motivation and their commitment to the organization, but does not have significant effect on employee performance. Maina, Namusonge and Milgo (2017) further revealed that compensation and reward system, resourcing, development of workers through training were some of the human resources management practices that influenced employee commitment positively and all these are in consonance

with the findings of the study. The finding reveals that human resource management practices (compensation, promotion, performance appraisal, training and development) exists a statistically significant relationship between human resource management practices and employee commitment which agrees with resource-based view theory which states that an organization must have valuable, rare, inimitable, committed and non-substitutable resources to have a sustainable competitive advantage. The resource-based view theory states that commitment and competitive advantage comes from the internal resources that are owned by the organization

### VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established a positive relationship between HRM practices and performance of the selected private universities. The result also showed that the independent variable established a positive relationship with the dependent variables. The study concluded that the adoption of HRM practices such as entertaining programmes, repositioning benefits, educational fees assistance has improved establishment performance in private universities in South West Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that to allow for increased organizational performance, the variables of HRM practices namely employee retention needs to be employed by universities and it should be modelled in such a way that the employers can employ it for their university procedure.

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