

Performance Management System in Nigerian Higher Educational Institutions: Proffering a Double Mediation Model

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Abstract

The most important upbeat facet for any organization in the present day regardless of motive, is Human Resource. This is conceivably so because, it is the starting place of achieving competitive plus. The management of this valuable resource in higher educational institutions (HEI's) in Nigeria remains even more tasking and challenging than managing other material resources such as finance, technology and etc. To be able to effectively manage human resource, adequate, appropriate and sound human resource management practices need not to only be institutionalized but also interceded. This paper proffered a model that captures this relationship and ensures effective performance management system in Nigerian HEI's.

Keywords: Performance Management System, Human resource management practices, employee behaviours, ICT adoption, Nigeria.

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Introduction

It was observed that several researches on human resource management practices used different sets of practices under different names. Pfeffer sighted in Prasad (2005) recognized sixteen (16) sets of human resource management practices and later reduced them to seven (7) which according to him symbolize the best set of human resource management practices. These seven practices are: Security of employment, selective hiring, team work, high reward dependent on organizational performance, broad training, cut in status difference and finally, information sharing.

Also, Akrani (2009) highlighted on six (6) practices as the best set of practices. These according to him are procurement, development, compensation, integration, maintenance and separation. In fact scholars believe there is no universality in the number of human resource management practices, as some merged them into four and named them human resource management polices (see Katou, 2012). Regardless of the number of the human resource management practices, it is argued that the practices have a sort of synergic partnership among them hence could as well be called strategies instead of practices (see Dyer & Holder, 1988; Dyer & Kochan, 1994).

This paper however followed the argument of Akrani (2009) that it is more unique and comprehensive because in some studies like Katou (2012) for example, Recruitment and selection are used as separate practices, but in Akrani's (2009), they all are part of one single practice, i.e procurement practices and on top of these, the researcher is interested in seeing how individual practice relate to performance management system as well as holistically how all the practices relate to performance management system.

Conceptual Framework

To be able to establish clearly how the variables relate to one another, the need to develop the research frame work is also very crucial. This is perhaps very important because it indicates the direction of relationship among the variables and it provides a foundation for hypotheses development.

This framework was modified from the model of Katou (2012) who used recruitment, training compensation and involvement (HR policies) to investigate the reverse causality between human resource policies and organizational performance in small firms using employee attitude and behavior as the mediators. This study however added two variables of maintenance and separation (Akrani, 2009) and substituted employee attitude with information and communication technology adoption to suit the study.

This study's framework and that of Katou (2012) are different because Katou is looking at it from organizational performance angle and this study views it from the point of view of employee performance management system. More so, Katou (2012) segregated employee attitude and behavior and used them as separate intervening variables, but this study considers that there is no much difference between the two as evidenced in various literatures (see Shah & Irani, 2010). This study also added information and communication technology adoption as another mediating variable.

The dependent variable for this study is the Performance Management System. This as far as this study is concerned, refers to a procedure of managing organization employees throughout their stay in the organization by setting a

particular target to them (the employees) and ensuring that they meet the target within the stipulated expectation of the organization and in conformity to organizational rules and regulations. The study measures Performance Management System both in terms of productivity and organization's ability to retain their employees. In previous researches, Performance Management System was measured from different perspectives by different researchers such as quality output (Ward, 2005), transparency (Hood & Heald, 2006), accountability (Broadbent & Laughlin, 2003), a performance measurement (Ferraira & Otley, 2009) and managerial control (Berry, Broadbent & Ferraira & Otley, 2005). But this study measures performance management system using the indices provided by Pradhan and Chaudhury (2012) of organizational objective, individual objective, performance development and employee satisfaction. This is perhaps because they are more comprehensive and elaborate.

The independent variable of this study are the human resource management practices which comprise of: procurement (recruitment, selection and placement); training and development (education and training); Compensation (salary and wage); integration (career planning and employee engagement); maintenance (welfare and motivation); separation (succession planning). The measure of these variables however was adapted from previous studies (Bernthal & Wellins, 2001; Catano et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2011; Manu, 2004; Niazi, 2011; Thang & Buyens, 2008; Decramer et al., 2008; Kobozeva, 2007; Owusu-Acheaw, 2008; Okereke & Daniel, 2010; Brown, 2009; Hedum, 2010; Naidu, 2008).

The mediating variables are information and communication technology adoption and employee behavior. Information and communication technology adoption is an attempt to transform for the better the practices of human resource management in reducing cost and making it efficient, reliable and timely.

There is a growing disputation regarding information and communication technology adoption as expert's view varies. While some researchers believe that information and communication technology adoption offers strategic opportunities to human resource professionals and organizations (Ruel *et al.*, 2004) others accuse information and communication technology adoption for the absence of strategic changes and other group of researchers establish that information and communication technology adoption is capable of creating strategic value for organizations (Marler, 2009). Whichever perspective one looks at this disputations, it remains clear that there is an improvement brought to fore as a result of information and communication technology adoption. This study however adapts the two measurement constructs for measuring information and communication technology adoption as provided in Katou (2012) i.e. Dynamic environment and environment capability fit.

The second mediator is the employee behavior. It is often argued that the behaviors of employees at work matter a lot in proper management of their performance (Cascio, 2006). Angadi and Naik (2011) pointed out that employee behavior is more of organizational phenomena than attitudinal issue as such their level of thinking (positive or negative) determines their motivation and commitment towards organizational objectives. It is also asserted that employee behavior is a significant factor to organizational successful attainment of objectives or failure (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Regardless of the nature of employees or their

responsibilities in an organization, effective performance management needs to make sure that their behaviors do not disrupt organizational focus.

The framework of this study shows that the human resource management practices are related to Performance Management System through information and communication technology adoption and employee behaviors as the mediating variables. This relationship is evidenced in the resource based view. This could be so because of the utilization of organizational internal capabilities / resources through vibrant potentials of information and communication technology adoption and employee behaviors which are strong determinants of Performance Management System. Employee behavior is measured with three items of actual absences, labor turnover, and disputes adopted from Katou (2012).

3.3 Related Theories of the Study

One of the reasons why theories are used in quantitative researches is to help in understanding the research phenomenon, to present very clearly the logical relationships among the study variables as well as explaining what effect variables have among them, i.e. which variable influences which and how though there are substitute theories for explaining different issues in different situations. On the basis of this however, the researcher delved in the literature to be able to identify appropriate theories for this study. Based on what was obtained in the literature, the researcher finds out that resource based view is the most appropriate theory to use. Resource based view was elaborately discussed below.

The Resource Based View (RBV)

The RBV became popular through management studies and applications especially in the aspects of operations management, organization studies, strategic management and marketing (Acedo *et al.*, 2006). Since then it has become one of the most important paradigms of understanding effectively the strategies of organizations and their competitive advantage (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). RBV gives a comprehensive explanation about a firm and a strategic approach of the firm. The theory conceptualizes that a firm is a collection of resources that are utilized to have an edge over counterparts. It could be argued that firms (organizations) differ in various respects mainly due to the fact that they have different resources and employed different strategies in the utilization of those resources (Bani-Hani & AlHawary, 2009). But, from the market perspective, organizations are more or less homogeneous and competitions only occur through market situations. Hence the challenge lies in the individual ability of the firm to effectively identify attractive markets to favorably compete their rivals (Powell & Thomas & Mc Gee, 2004).

One of the greatest challenge faced by organizations as Levitt (1960) postulated, is the narrow confinement of their opportunities which invariably affects their capabilities to re discover other additional available opportunities. RBV if adopted would approach the confinement of opportunity challenge from the inside out by focusing on what resources organizations have and those resources could be utilized in different ways. Organizations resources refer to everything that is inside the organization ranging from assets, capabilities, strategies, processes, knowledge, employees, organization attributes and information (Barney, 1986). In a checklist drawn by Barney (1991), four key issues were itemized as key characteristics of

organizational internal resources these are: Value, rareness, imitable and non substitutable.

Fahy and Smithee (2000) hold the opinion that for organizations to achieve a competitive advantage, they have to develop their internal resources and utilize them adequately. Also as much as the resources of an organization need to be vigorous with the environment, they also need to change with time, which perhaps is the central argument of the RBV i.e. in terms of dynamic capability. The dynamic capability according to Powell *et al.* (2004), centers on how the resources ably change to maintain their market value.

Diverse academic works have used and are still using RBV as an underlying theory upon which they build their arguments (Najib & Kiminami, 2011; Newbert, 2007). Newbert (2007) has postulated that, there are series of empirical studies that were built on the teachings of RBV with different approaches they include: resource heterogeneity approach (Deephouse, 2000), organizing approach (Wiklund & Shepherd 2003), conceptual level approach (King & Zeithaml, 2001) and Dynamic capabilities approach (Zhu & Kraemer, 2002).

This research is also not an exception, it is built on Resource-based View (RBV) which explains that the added value that people can contribute to an organization is emphasized by human capital theory. RBV has viewed human capital as sensitive; it regards people as assets and stresses that investment by organizations in people will generate worthwhile returns. The conception of competitive advantage was coined by Ankili (1999) who asserts that competitive advantage is born out of the organizations' ability to create value.

Towards the end of the 20th century, management has learn to accept that people ahead of any other resource in an organization are the significant differentiators and all other resources apart from people depend on them to generate value (Caliskan, 2010; Khavul, Bruton & Wood, 2009). It could as well be deduced from the RBV that human resource management practices can contribute to sustained competitive advantage through facilitating the development of opportunities that are unique to an organization i.e. Performance Management System (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Again, the sustained superior performance and the edge that many organizations have, is their unique ability to manage human resource practices (Caliskan, 2010).

The RBV in the opinion of Offstein *et al.* (2005) from a strategic perspective suggests that resource advantage of valuable knowledge, unique skill sets, and decision-making capability result in an organization's competitive advantage. The RBV was initially anticipated to move from an organizational product perspective to a resource perspective to better elucidate strategic management. Previous researches such as Erdil and Gunsel (2009) pointed out that pressure is persistently mounted on human resource professionals in organizations who are expected to become very much at alert, quick to respond, efficient, effective, cautious and timely in making strategic contributions to the Performance Management System in their organizations. Lepak *et al.* (2005) added that designing and integrating best human resource management practices with effective Performance Management System is one of the best ways of ensuring quality and creation of value and sustaining organizational development. From another dimension, the idea of best human resource management practices in an organization has become recently a very hot issue among academics who argued that despite the fact that strict implementation of

human resource management practices is associated to effective Performance Management System. It has been recommended that there should be a universally accepted set of best human resource management practices that can ensure effective Performance Management System (Lau & Ngo, 2004). Similarly, Erdil and Gunsul (2009) further stressed that due to the permeation of external and internal forces, a lot of eventualities arise which questioned the identification of best human resource management practice.

This study focuses on the relationship between human resource management practices and performance management system among academics in HEI's in Nigeria using information and communication technology adoption and employee behavior as the mediators. Human resource management practices and employee behaviors being the intangible resources and the ICT adoption being the capability (see Fahy, 2000). The human resource management practices will be positioned in the perspective of the RBV and evaluate how organizations can implement them through the mediating roles of ICT and employee behaviors.

The RBV was chosen as an underpinning theory because it offers a theoretical connection between Performance Management System and human resource management (Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2001). Furthermore the RBV has become the most popular theory in the field of human resource management research (McMahan, Virick & Wright, 1999) and indeed the most predominant (Morris, Snell & Wright, 2006). The basic assumption here is that human resource management efficiency leads to a higher performance, has been the topic of many previous studies (Purcell & Kinnie, 2007).

As Wright, Dunford and Snell (2001) explained, RBV proffers a convincing explanation for why human resource management practices lead to competitive advantage. Though external issues such as the labor market, competition within the organization and culture were said to have influence the use of human resource management practices (Brewster, 2004), internal resources instead of the external circumstances are key elements and prerequisites to Performance Management System and organizational success (Friedmann, Holtbrügge & Puck, 2008). According to Barney (1991), to achieve competitive advantage an organizational resource should possess some certain features these are: (1) valuable and profitable for the organization (2) exceptional among a firm's potential and competitors, (3) imperfectly imitable, (4) non-substitutable. But the likes of Hoopes *et al.* (2003) argued that exceptionality is very central if it cannot be claimed that of these characteristics, only value and inimitability are crucial and "that rareness is important only if a resource is valuable and, exists only if the resource cannot be reproduced by competitors". Consequent upon this assertion regarding value uniqueness and ability to reproduce the uniqueness by competitors, human resource management practices in this study are referred to that uniqueness which will lead to a competitive advantage (Performance Management System). This is supported in the argument of Friedmann, Holtbrügge and Puck (2008) who pointed out that human resource management practices can lead to competitive advantage if and only if the following characteristic are exhibited in their implementation: i) the organization possess a exceptional and valuable workforce (set of employees) better than their competitors ii) apply human resource management practices that are distinct and cannot be reproduced by other competitors.

In the opinion of Emma (2011) ICT adoption has also been linked to adding value to human resource management practices in terms of playing a key role in organizational strategy as well as an increase in service delivery. Hence the role of ICT as a tool for redeploying human resource management practices from the mere transactional exercise to a comprehensive value added function is justified. Again within the structure of RBV, ICT adoption can be said to be an internal resource utilized for additional competitive strength. Aurélie and Fallery (2010) have connected web based human resource management e-HRM (i.e. HR practices through technology adoption) to recruitment practices which they say is a unique set of organizational distinct resource. Peretti (2004) further added that web based human resource management is an aspect of competence management which is a source of a strategic competitive advantage.

Also, the RBV has exposed the centrality of employees and positioned them at the nerve centre of human resource management in organizations. This is evident in the discussion of the essentiality of identifying, merging and utilizing organizational resources, capabilities and efforts for a unique and strategic competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). This perhaps indicates a sort of synergy to human capital (capabilities, attributes and behaviors) that is very integral and represent the rare and unimitable resource (Powell *et al.*, 2004) that an organization possesses. Huselid (1995) established that investing in human resource management activities as it affects compensation, staffing employee maintenance and engagement, slashed turnover rate and results in greater productivity which is an indication of a distinct competitive advantage (Stiles & Kulvisaechana, 2009).

RBV's failure to appreciate the fact that resources need to complement one another to be able to attain a sustained competitive advantage and since human resource management practices are interwoven and interdependent as pointed out by Schuler and Jackson (1987) and Dyer (1984), this study uses the complementarity theory to compliment the weakness of RBV.

Complimentarity theory

Complimentarity theory postulates that the coordination of individual resource or activity in an organization leads to increased organizational performance. This perhaps is true in the sense that the resources are mutually complementing one another and becomes stronger as a result of the synergy among them i.e. mutually beneficial. For instance, from the point of view of human resource management practices, ICT adoption will ensure effective performance management system which is the sustained competitive advantage. In a similar dimension, it has been buttressed that separate resources hardly fit adequately to yield performance hence collaboration with other resources to achieve mutual benefit becomes very imperative (Choi *et al.*, 2008). It has been argued that the secret of complimentarity is that the synergy in the mutual contribution of resources guarantees higher opportunities than a single entity resource practice. Technology acceptance model (TAM) too was used as a supporting theory because of ICT adoption. TAM is highlighted in the following section.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

This study uses TAM as a supportive theory because one of the contributions of this study (ICT adoption) lies in the very crux of technology adoption. This perhaps is so because human resource management departments around the globe are striving hard to catch up with the adoption of technology system or innovations

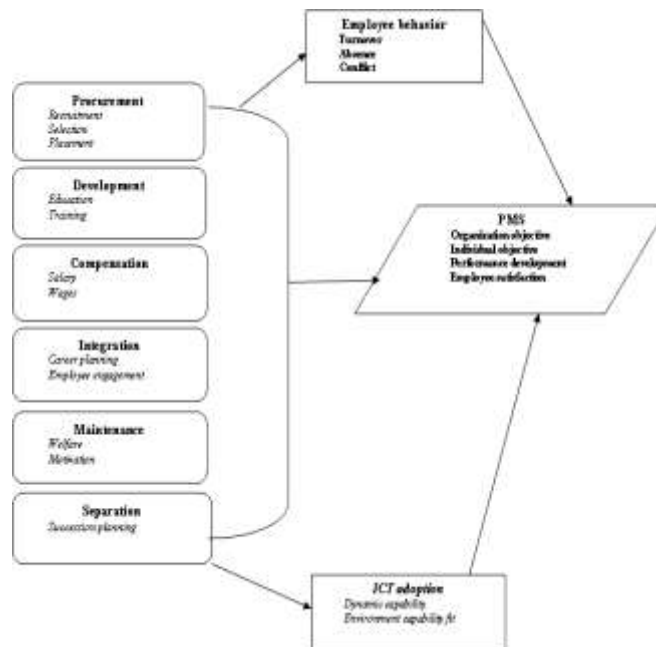
(Allen *et al.*, 2007). Again, TAM has an enormous empirical support through series of applications and validations by scholars (Schaup *et al.*, 2010; Lee, 2010). Similarly, it has been buttressed that TAM is very powerful and sophisticated in predicting and measuring user acceptance and its robust nature makes it simple and applicable to different situations (Venkatesh, 2000). The choice of theories in this study is not enough to justify how fit they are, hence the level of compatibility among the theories needs to be explained.

Compatibility among the theories

Human resource management practices have been explained as powerful organizational resources that ensure a sustained competitive advantage considering the fact that the activities in the practices represent the entire employee transition i.e. from recruitment to separation. It has also been pointed out that one of the most influential sources of competitive advantage is the human capital which is largely influenced by the human resource management practices (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Interestingly also, it has been widely supported by numerous scholars that the influential power of all HRM practices affects more the human capital which in turn brings about sustained competitive advantage (Lepak & Snell, 2001). Though RBV has recognized human resource management practices as the intangible resources in an organization, the theory only consider individual practice as the resource not holistically thus isolation of resources. This is where the complimentarity theory fits in to ensuring collaboration and synergy among the resources to yield greater competitive advantage.

From the aspect of dynamic capability, ICT adoption has been proven as an effective medium of enhancing organizational capability irrespective of the organizational motive. Organizations need dynamic capabilities to be able to manage resources and influence their performances for the better. According to Teece (1997) to be able to ensure attainment of a dynamic capability, three processes are involved, first, by coordinating and integrating the organizational resources, this perhaps requires a blender between the tangible and intangible resources such as technology and organizational structure, processes and even group relations within the organization furthermore, even the internal and external resources of an organization need to be coordinated. Secondly, experimenting and learning for continuous knowledge improvement should also be taken into consideration in every organization. No wonder some scholars argued that capabilities are born out of knowledge. (Ramayah *et al.*, 2004; Schroeder, 2004). Thirdly, rapid environmental transformation is considered as the final process which will integrate all the resources together, transform them and ensure effective co ordination of information which perhaps could best be done through ICT adoption.

The Double Mediation Model



Conclusion

The central idea of this paper was to offer a theoretical model that examines the relationship between human resource management practices and performance management system of university lecturers in Nigeria. The basis for examining the connection between HRM practices and PMS through employee behavior and ICT adoption is to express how important human element was, is and will be if considered and paid attention to in pursuant and accomplishment of goal. More so, to further emphasize that adoption and acceptance of technology is paramount to successful employee performance management in organizations any where any time.

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