An Evaluation of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) Practices in Nigerian Universities: The Impact of Ownership Type and Age

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Abstract

This study examines empirically, the influence of ownership-type and age on the adoption of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices that have been shown to contribute to organizational effectiveness. The study also hypothesized that there is no significant difference between the level of strategic HRM practices adopted by government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria. A multi-respondent survey of 29 government-owned universities and 15 private universities in Nigeria was undertaken and data collected was subjected to regression analysis and one way analysis of variance as well as descriptive statistics in pursuance of the stated objectives of determining whether ownership-type and age influence the adoption of strategic HRM practices in Nigerian universities and if any significant difference exist between the level of strategic HRM practices adopted by government-owned universities and private universities. Results indicate an impressive moderate adoption of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian university system and that the extent of this adoption is mostly a function of whether the university is government-owned or run by private investors. Results also show that there is indeed a significant difference between the level of strategic HRM alignment, training and development, career planning system and employee participation of government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria. The study, therefore, recommends amongst others that universities should improve its integration of HRM practices into their overall operations and strategies and that private universities should be encouraged to adequately plan for the career development of its employees as well as giving them adequate opportunities to participate in taking strategic as well as tactical decisions affecting their work environment.

Keywords: Strategic HRM, Ownership-type, Age, Government-owned universities, Private universities

Introduction

Universities are established with the sole objective of advancing the propagation and dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of humanity with a view to producing middle and high level manpower for the rapid growth and development of nations. Of the varied factors contributing to the attainment of the above objectives, human resource is the most critical. Universities must attract, develop, motivate and maintain an energetic workforce to support the attainment of their mission and vision with a view to gaining competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is simply defined as anything that gives an organization an edge over its competitors. The unique talents among employees, including flexibility, innovation, superior performance, high productivity and personal customer service are ways employees provide a critical ingredient in developing an organization's competitive position (Porter, 1985).

How well universities perform their mission and accomplishes their vision and goals of effective service delivery is of paramount concern. Improving administrative capacity and especially, those aspects dealing with human resource offers the most challenge for improving the effectiveness of the Nigerian University System. Human Resource Management (HRM) enhances employee productivity and the ability of universities to achieve their mission (Adeyeye, 2009). Integrating the use of HR practices into the strategic planning process would enable universities to better achieve their goals and objectives.

Prior studies (see for example, Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Singh, 2004; Katou and Budhwar, 2006; Dimba and K' Obonyo, 2009; Abdulkadir, 2010) have generally addressed the relationship between SHRM practices and performance in big private sector organizations. How public sector organizations, most especially the Nigerian Universities respond to SHRM practices is still a subject of intellectual ferment in the literature. This study is therefore, a part of this process by evaluating strategic HRM practices in the Nigeria University System.

Statement of the Problem

Organizational performance has been the focus of intensive research efforts in recent times. How well an organization implements its policies and programs and accomplishes its strategic intent in terms of its mission and vision is of paramount concern. Managers and administrators in both private and public organizations are becoming increasingly aware that a critical source of competitive advantage does not often come from indigenous product and services, best public relations strategy or state-of-the-art technology but from having an appropriate system of attracting and managing the organization's human resources.

Despite the large bulk of literature on SHRM produced since the late 1990s, there is very little solid evidence on the ways in which various types of HRM strategies and practices are shaped in practice in Nigerian universities and how their synergistic effects can impact on the attainment of set goals and objectives. Prior studies (see, Jules et al., 2001, Adeyeye, 2009b and Oladipo & Abdulkadir, 2010) have generally addressed the relationship between SHRM practices and performance in some selected public organizations, there is still a dearth of empirical studies that will explain the impact of some mediating factors affecting the adoption of SHRM practices in educational settings such as the university. This study fills the existing gap in the study by examining the impact of ownership type and age on the adoption of SHRM practices in an academic setting.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to determine whether the adoption of strategic HRM practices by Nigerian universities is influenced by ownership type and age. The specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate the extent to which strategic HRM is practiced by Nigerian universities;
2. Examine whether there is a significant difference between the levels of strategic HRM practices of government-owned and private universities in Nigeria;

3. Examine the degree of relationship between ownership type and different strategic HRM practices;
4. Examine the degree of relationship between age of the universities and the different strategic HRM practices.

Research Hypotheses

In order to provide answers to the basic research questions raised above, the following hypotheses which are stated in their null form were tested:

Hypothesis One

Strategic HRM is not practiced by Nigerian universities.

Hypothesis Two

The adoption of strategic HRM practices by Nigerian universities is not influenced by ownership type and age.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between the level of strategic HRM practices adopted by government-owned universities and private universities.

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant relationship between ownership type and the different strategic HRM practices.

Hypothesis Five

There is no significant relationship between age of the universities and the different strategic HRM practices.

Scope of the Study

Though, the broad objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of ownership type and age on the adoption of strategic HRM practices of Nigerian universities, only universities located within the following geo-political zones were considered: North West, North central, North East, and South West. The justification for this is twofold. Firstly, about 67 percent of universities in Nigeria are actually located within these regions. Secondly, the ease of questionnaire administration and expected response facilitated by the social network and relationships built over the years.

Literature Review
The Nature of Strategic Human Resource Management

Walker (1992) defines strategic HRM as 'the means of aligning the management of human resource with the strategic content of the business and human resource strategy so that the latter supports the accomplishment of the former and, indeed, helps to define it. Strategic HRM is also about horizontal integration, which aims to ensure that the different elements of the HR strategy fit together and are mutually supportive.

Brewster and Larson (1992) define SHRM "as the extent to which HRM is considered during the formulation and implementation of corporate /business strategies". Strategic HRM has also been

defined as "the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals" (Wright and McMahan, 1999). Implicit in this definition, is that the ultimate goal of strategic HRM is to contribute to organizational performance (i.e. the achievement of the organization's goals), however that performance is defined. HR deployments as captured in the above definition reflect the central assumptions behind the (positive) conceptualization of what HRM is and does: namely, that it responds accurately and effectively to the organization's environment and complements other organizational systems and contingencies. Budhwar (2000) defines strategic HRM as a concept that views human resources as assets for investment, and the management of human resources as strategic rather than reactive, prescriptive and administrative. Strategic HRM involves designing and implementing a set of proactive HR policies/practices that ensures that an organization's human capital contributes to the achievements of its corporate objectives (David, Chin and Victor, 2002). Strategic Human Resource Management also implies a managerial orientation that ensures that human resources are employed in a manner conducive to the attainment of organizational goals and mission (Gomez-Mejia, Balking and Cardy, 2005).

Strategic HRM is essentially an integrated process that aims to achieve 'strategic fit'. A strategic HRM approach produces HR strategies that are integrated vertically with the business strategy and are ideally an integral part of that strategy, contributing to the business planning process as it happens. Strategic HRM, therefore, focuses on several issues including the fit between human resource management practices and organizational strategic goals, the integration of human resource management in the organizational strategic management, the involvement of human resource function in senior management teams, the devolvement of human resource practices to line managers and taking of strategic approach to employee selection, compensation, performance appraisal and the value that is added to the organizational performance by HRM.

Strategic Human Resource Management Practices
Integration of HRM with Corporate Strategies and Management

Integration of HRM refers to the involvement of HRM in the formulation and implementation of organizational strategies and the alignment of HRM with the strategic needs of an organization (Schuler and Jackson, 1999). Buyens and De Vos (1999) argue that in order for HR to be a strategic partner, HR managers should be involved in strategic decision making alongside other senior managers, providing greater opportunity to align HR goals, strategies, philosophies and practices with corporate objectives and the implementation of business strategy. This involvement would include the membership of HR managers in the most senior management teams in the organization. This would provide an opportunity for HRM to represent its concerns and influence business strategy from the outset of decision making. The chances of integration and value creation may be further increased if the senior HR manager and the CEO have an opportunity to establish a relationship. In this role, HR managers need to have knowledge of core markets, competitors, costs, profit indicators and stakeholders to be considered equal business partners (Chaddie, 2001). The involvement of senior HR manager in a firm's senior management team provides an important channel for interactive information flow and communication.

To achieve strategic integration and alignment of HRM with business strategies, a documented HRM strategy would also be useful (Budhwar, 2000; Teo, 2002) as it can make more concrete the role and authority of HR managers in corporate decision making and increase capacity to cope with externalities such as a tight labour market (Cunningham and Deborah, 1995). A documented HRM strategy helps the organization to develop an HRM vision and objectives and to monitor performance. Some empirical evidence from previous research indicates that the full impact of HR practices on organizational performance occurs when HR practices are strategically congruent and consistent with each other (Khatri, 1999).

Delegation of HR Practices to Line Managers

To make HR managers more available for participation in strategic decision-making process, Budhwar and Khatri (2001) argued that the responsibility of routine execution and administration of HR practices should be delegated to line managers as they have direct and frequent contact with employees.

However, for the benefit of devolvement to be realized, line managers will need to possess appropriate skills to execute HR practices competently and effectively to a benchmarked standard advocated by HR managers (Hall and Torrington, 1998). This means that the senior HR manager needs to be a strategic partner with line managers, providing training, resources, incentive and a communication channel to ensure these HR practices are carried out in accordance with HRM policy (Teo, 2002).

Selection System

A rigorous, valid and sophisticated selection system helps in identifying a right candidate with potential to perform. A rigorous selection system generates a sense of elitism, creates high expectations of performance, and signals a message of importance of the people to the organization (Pfeffer, 1994). The mismatch between the person and the job can hamper performance levels, whereas a sophisticated selection system can ensure a better fit between the person's abilities and the organization's requirement. Also, selection has been found to be positively related to firm performance (Terpsra and Rozell, 1993).

Training and Development System

Organizations can develop and enhance the quality of the current employees by providing comprehensive training and development. Indeed, research indicates that investments in training employees in problem-solving, teamwork and interpersonal relations result in beneficial firm level outcomes (Barak et al., 1999).

Performance Appraisal System

Organizations can monitor the development of desired employee attitudes and behaviours through the use of the appraisal mechanisms. This appraisal-based information could be used for changing the selection and training practices to select and develop employees with the desired behaviours and attitudes. However, the effectiveness of skilled employees will be limited unless they are motivated to perform their jobs.

Compensation System

Firms can affect the motivation of employees in several ways. They can use performance-based compensation to provide rewards to employees for achieving the specific goals and objectives of the firm. A substantial body of work has provided evidence that incentive-based compensation has an impact on firm performance (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1998).

Career Planning System

A well-functioning career planning system may also encourage employees to take more responsibility for their own development, including the development of the skills viewed as critical in the company. A well-planned career development system along with internal advancement opportunities based on merit, results in high motivation among employees, which has an impact on firm performance Milkovich and Boudreau (1998).

Employee Participation

The concept of treating employees as the most important asset of an organization is an underlying assumption of HRM. As such, facilitating and enhancing greater employee influence and participation is obviously basic to successful HR practice in organizations. Studies have shown that employee participation is positively related to performance, satisfaction, and productivity of an employee (e.g. Verma, 1995).

Past Empirical Studies on Strategic HRM

In a comparative study of strategic HRM practices among American-owned, Taiwan-owned and Japanese-owned firms, Huang (1998) examines the strategic level of HRM at 315 Taiwanese business firms. Using the General Linear Model (GLM) and Scheffe multi-range test as methods of statistical analysis, the findings indicate that American-owned businesses were discovered to engage in strategic human resource management (SHRM) more frequently than Japanese- or Taiwan-owned enterprises. A positive relationship was also found between the amount of capital resources available to firms and the extent to which they practiced SHRM. Huang also reported that firms engaging in SHRM received a higher rating than other firms on the indices of organizational morale, financial performance, and overall performance.

Using a sample of banks, Richard and Johnson (2001) examined the impact of strategic HRM effectiveness (ratings of how effective a variety of HR practices were performed) on a number of performance variables. With the aid of multiple regression analysis, they found that strategic HRM effectiveness was directly related to employee turnover and the relationship between these measures and return on equity was stronger among banks with higher capital intensity (greater investments in branches).

Also, based on the questionnaire responses by heads of human resource departments in 191 companies in Singapore, David et al. (2002) examine the relationship between strategic HRM and organizational financial and human resource performance in Singapore. Using descriptive statistics and regression analysis model to analyze the data, the results indicate that with the exception of team-based work and performance-based pay, all the other strategic HRM components have a positive impact on the financial performance of a firm. Results also show that all the strategic HRM variables have a positive impact on HR performance.

Singh (2004) investigated the relationship between six HRM practices and firm level performance in India. 359 firms were drawn from firms listed in the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) database. Of these 359 firms, 82 responded positively to the survey. Using regression and correlation analysis to analyze the data, findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between the two HR practices, namely, training and compensation, and perceived organizational and market performance of firms.

In their comparative study of 137 large manufacturing firms, Budhwar and Boyne (2004) differentiates the HR practices in public sector and private sector companies in India. Their findings suggest that against the established notion, the gap between the Indian private and public sector HRM practices (structure of HR department, role of HR in corporate change, recruitment and selection, pay and benefits, training and development, employee relations and key HRM strategies) is not very significant but in a few functional areas (compensation, training and development), private-sector firms have adopted a more rational approach than their public sector counterparts.

Green et al., (2006) reported that organizations that vertically aligned and horizontally integrated HR function and practices performed better and produced more committed and satisfied HR function employees who exhibited improved individual and organizational performance. Tessember and Soeters (2006) examined how, when and to what extent HR practices affect performance in Eritrea, Africa's youngest and poorest country. They reported that successful implementation of HR practices could enhance individual and civil service organization of Eritrea, but the economic and political

environment within which HR practices operate are not conducive. Their study tried to shed some light on the HRM-performance debate within the context of a developing country.

In another study, Gray and Shasky (2007) also using multiple regression analysis examined the impact of strategic HRM practices on the performance of State Governments agencies. The results shows that when organizations employ such personnel practices as internal career ladders, formal training systems, results-oriented performance appraisal, employment security, employee voice and performance-based compensation, they are more able to achieve their organizational goals and objectives.

Using a stratified random sampling by industry, Kai et al. (2007) surveyed 231 firms listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASE). Using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, results indicate that strategic integration and devolvement of HRM were practiced to a moderate extent in the firms sampled, and that the degree of alignment of HRM with business objectives and strategies had a positive relationship with perceived firm financial performance.

Som (2008) sampled 69 Indian companies with a view to examining the impact of innovative SHRM practices on firm performance. Using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, results indicate innovative recruitment and compensation practices have a positive significant relationship with firm performance. Their results also show that recruitment, role of the HR department and compensation practices seem to be significantly changing within the Indian firms in the context of Indian economic liberalization. The synergy between innovative HRM practices was not found to be significant in enhancing performance during the liberalization process.

Dimba and K'Obonyo (2009) investigated the nature of the effect of SHRM practices on organizational performance. The study seeks to determine whether the effect of human resource management practices on organizational performance is direct or indirect through employee motivation, and whether employee cultural orientations moderate the relationship between strategic human resource practices and employee motivation. 50 multinational manufacturing companies in Kenya were sampled. One HR manager, 2 line managers and 3 employees from each organization were chosen for the survey. The study adopted the measures developed by Hofstede and Huslid. Using regression analysis, the results indicate that all the variables of SHRM practices, except recruitment and selection were positive and significantly correlated with performance; relationship between SHRM practices and firm motivation did not depend on employee cultural orientations when cultural values were considered; motivation mediated the relationship between SHRM practices and firm performance and motivation affected firm performance.

Okpara and Pamela (2008) examined the extent to which organizations in Nigeria use various HRM practice and the perceived challenges and prospects of these practices. Data were collected from 253 managers in 12 selected companies in 10 cities. The findings reveal that HRM practices, such as training, recruitment, compensation, performance appraisal and reward systems are still in place and that issues of tribalism, AIDS, training and development and corruption are some of the challenges facing HRM in Nigeria.

Inyang (2008) noted that despite the centrality of HRM in organization life, as people-management activity and its evident impact on enterprise performance and competitiveness, many organizations in Nigeria are yet to integrate the human resource management function with enterprise management, with the resulting gulf existing between the two. The study argued for the bridging of this gap, which is reflected in the non-involvement of HR practitioner in central organizational decision-making processes, inappropriate placement, the relegation of HR function to a second fiddle position, the slim promotional prospects opened to the HR professionals and the problem of status identify for HRM. He proposes a paradigm shift that will mean defining new roles and future challenges for the 21st century human resource manager.

In another study, Adeyeye (2009a) investigated the relationship between human capital development practices and some dimensions of organizational effectiveness in the Nigerian banking industries. Data were generated by means of two sets of questions administered to some ten (10)

selected banks in Lagos, Nigeria. He found a moderate correlation between human capital development and organizational effectiveness.

Adeyeye (2009b) examined the relationship between size of the organization and HRM practices that have been shown to contribute to organizational performance. The study hypothesized that big universities operationalized as having greater than 1000 academic and administrative staff can be differentiated from small universities, defined as employing less than 1000 academic and administrative staff in their use of HRM practices. He found that contrary to prior research findings, size did not correlate with the usage of HRM best practices. Both big and small universities used similar and identical HRM practices.

Noor (2010) examined the effects of HRM practices on personnel performance of some selected Jordan Public Academic Libraries. Using Al-Hussein bin Talal Library as a case study, findings revealed that there is a relationship between HRM practices and some HRM practices (i.e. career planning, selection, training & development and performance appraisal)

Historical Perspectives of the Nigerian University System

The foundation of the Nigerian University System was laid on 8th of January, 1948, when 104 former students of Yaba Higher College with 13 Instructors were moved to Ibadan to form the nucleus of the University College, Ibadan (UCI). Between 1948 and 1962, the college underwent different development phases: formation, expansion and drive towards maturity and independence, as it ended its tutelage or affiliation with the University of London in 1962. In 1960, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was established followed by the establishment of three Ashby Universities (Ife, Lagos and ABU – Zaria) in 1962. The Midwest Institute of Technology founded in 1970, became the University of Benin in 1972; thereby bringing the number of Nigerian Universities to six (6). These six universities are usually referred to as the first generation of Nigerian Universities (Ojo, 2006).

In 1975, the federal military government established seven (7) new universities, fondly referred to as the Second Generation Universities, sited in Calabar, Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port Harcourt and Kano. Also in 1975, the Government took over all state-owned Universities (Ife, Lagos, UNN, Benin and ABU – Zaria) thereby ending the participation of state Governments in University ownership and control for the rest of the military rule before the advent of the second republic in 1979. This take-over by the Federal Government (perhaps because of the oil boom) was short sighted and was definitely an unnecessary acceptance of additional financial responsibility (Ojo, 2006).

The third generation of Nigerian universities were established between 1980 and 1983. They were mostly universities of technology and they include: Abeokuta, Bauchi, Akure, Minna, Yola, Makurdi and Owerri. These seven Universities were all established by the federal Government. Also, emerging during the period as part of the third generation Universities were some state and private universities. Thus, by December 2009, there were 27 Federal Universities, 36 State Universities and 41 Private Universities.

Methodology
Population

Oyesiku (2005) described the population of any work as the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. It therefore follows that unless the total population is explicitly defined before the actual work, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the adequacy of the selected sample.

Consequently, the population of this study is made up of totality of universities operating in Nigeria. According to the data made available by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the number of universities operating in Nigeria as at 31st November, 2010 is 104.

Sample Size and Data Collection Procedure

The size of the population under consideration in many studies makes it impracticable to survey the whole population (Oyesiku, 2005). Instead, researchers settle for a sample. The sample size of this study was computed to be 82. This was arrived at by the usage of the following formula as suggested by Guilford and Flruchter (1973) for estimating sample size:

Where: N is the size of the population, α is alpha = 0.05.

$$\frac{N}{1+\propto^2 N}$$

Because the study's population can conveniently be divided into two homogenous strata i.e. government owned universities and private universities, stratified sampling technique was adopted in selecting the required number of universities from the study's population. The overall sample size reflected the proportion of each stratum in the population. The proportion is computed as follows:

Number of government owned universities   63
Number of private universities   41
Total   104

Government owned universities $\frac{63}{104} \times 100 = 61\%$

Private universities $\frac{41}{104} \times 100 = 39\%$

Hence, the number of government owned and private universities sampled are:
Government owned universities = 61% ×82 = 50
Private universities = 39% ×82 = 32

Out of the 63 government owned universities, 27 (42%) are federal and 36(57%) are state. Hence, in selecting the number of government owned universities for the study, the above proportion was taken into consideration.

The study made use of primary sources of data collection which was obtained through the use of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into section A and B. Section A consists of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents, while section B consist of questions that are carefully drawn and capable of eliciting the required information from the respondents.

The unit of analysis in this study is the university and multi-rater (multi respondents) response approach was adopted. Gerhart et al. (2000) contended that SHRM effects based on single respondent surveys were significantly undermined by the presence of measurement error in the SHRM measures. To minimize this error, at least two questionnaires were sent to at least one academic staff and one non teaching staff from each university. The scores of the respondents from each university were aggregated and average to derive a single score for each of the strategic HRM practices.

Only senior lecturers and above and their equivalents (i.e. principal assistant registrars and above) from the non teaching staff were surveyed.

The Study Model

The general model of this research work is stated below:

   SHRM Practices = f{Age, Ownership type}   (1)
   Equation 1 was further expanded as follows:
   {SHRA, LMD, SS, PAS, TDS, CS, CPS, EP} = f{Age, OT}   (2)
   Where:
   SHRA = strategic HRM alignment with overall government objectives and strategies.
   LMD = Line management devolvement.
   SS = Selection system.
   PAS = Performance appraisal system.

TDS = Training and Development System.
CS = Compensation system.
CPS = Career planning system.
EP = Employee Participation
Age = Age of the universities.
OT = ownership type (Government-owned or Private-owned).
The model was quantitatively captured and tested using the following multiple regression model:

$$SHRMP = B_0 + \beta_1 Age + \beta_2 OT + e \tag{3}$$

Where:
SHRMP = Strategic human resource management practices as given in left hand side of equation 2. It represents a composite index of all the practices for each university.
B_0 = Constant or intercept term.
β_1, and β_2 are the coefficients of age of the universities and ownership type respectively.
e = error term.

Definitions and Measurement of Variables

Dependent Variables
The dependent variables in this study are the strategic HRM practices. It is measured by the following eight (8) practices: strategic HRM alignment with the university objectives and strategies, line management devolvement, selection system, performance appraisal system, training and development system, compensation system, career planning system and employee participation.

For the purpose of estimating the impact of ownership type and age on the adoption of strategic HRM practices by Nigerian universities, the scores on strategic HRM practices of each university are aggregated and converted to a single score with maximum score being 100%.

The detailed measurement of each of the eight practices is discussed below:

'Strategic HRM alignment' with the universities objectives and strategies were measured by nine (9) items, each rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *1 ' not at all' to 5 'to a great extent'*. A sample item is *'HRM strategy is formulated based on our university's vision and mission'*.

The 'Line management devolvement' variable is measured by asking respondents to indicate the involvement of line managers (i.e. academic staff) in the execution of five HR practices chosen on the basis of findings from previous research (e.g. Budhwar, 2000). Items are worded to emphasize the involvement of line managers in execution of the following HR practices: 'recruits new people', 'selects applicants', 'trains employees', 'executes performance assessments' and designs job roles'. An index is constructed by adding the five HR practices. Universities that indicate the involvement of line managers in one HR practice scored a 1, two practices a 2, and so on, up to 5. The range of the line management devolvement index is thus 0 to 5.

'Selection system' is measured by an instrument having 5 items each rated on a 5-point scale. The respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree' the importance their universities attach to the usage of selection tools and tests. A sample item is *'the selection system followed in our university is highly scientific and rigorous'*.

'Performance appraisal' is measured through an 8-item scale. The respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which performance is evaluated on the basis of quantifiable results and usage of performance appraisal data. In other words, they are to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree' their agreement with some performance appraisal system in their universities. A sample item is *'performance of the employees is measured on the basis of objective quantifiable results'*.

'Compensation' system is measured through a scale having 5 items. The respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree to 5 'strongly agree' the extent to which compensation is linked to the performance and qualification of both the academic and non academic staff in their

universities. A sample item is *'our university provides a clear explanation of remuneration policy and how it is to be implemented '*.

'Training and development' variable is measured by an instrument having 7 items, each rated on a 5-point scale. The respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree to 5 'strongly agree' the extent to which training and development needs in their universities are identified and met. A sample item is *'employees in each job will normally go through training programs every year'*.

'Career planning system' variable is measured by an instrument having 7 items, each rated on a 5-point scale. The respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree to 5 'strongly agree' the clarity and usage of career planning system in their universities. A sample item is *'our university provides clear career path information to employees'*.

'Employee participation' is measured through a 3-item scale. The respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'strongly disagree to 5 'strongly agree' the extent to which superiors allow employees to participate in operations decisions as well as the opportunity given to suggest improvements in the way things are done. A sample item is *'employees in this university are provided opportunity to suggest improvements in the ways things are done'*.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study are age of the universities and ownership type. Age is measured by simply taking the total number of years the university has been in existence as a single figure for each university in estimating the model. On the other hand, ownership type is measured by a set of dummy variables (government-owned universities are coded 1, while private universities are coded 0). This is consistent with measurement of ownership type in prior studies (see for example, David et al. 2002; Law et al. 2003; Wei and Lau, 2008; Ngo et al. 2008).

Analytical Procedures

Data collected is subjected to four main types of analysis. In order to gain perspectives into the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, frequency distribution of responses is calculated while descriptive statistics is employed in determining the extent of strategic HRM practices in the universities under scrutiny. Correlation analysis is employed to show the interrelationships among the identified strategic HRM practices and between each of the practices and the independent variables (i.e. ownership type and age) while regression is used to determine the predictive powers of ownership type and age of the universities on the adoption of strategic HRM practices as well as highlighting and identifying the importance of each or group of variables on the dependent variable. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is another analytical procedure used in examining whether there is a significance difference between the levels of strategic HRM practices of government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria.

Results and Discussions

Of the 164 questionnaires distributed to 50 government-owned universities and 32 private universities, a total of 88 completed and usable questionnaires from 29 government-owned universities and 15 private universities representing a response rate of about 54 percent are returned.

To address issues of possible common method variance, Cronbach Alpha reliability test is conducted for all the measures. Reliabilities are checked and they fall between 0.63 and 0.79, which is satisfactory for study that is exploratory in nature (Nunnally, 1978). The overall Cronbach alpha of the eight scales used in this study is 0.75. This indicates the reliability of the scales is reasonably high thus, depicting high internal consistency among the measurement items.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (80 percent) possess educational qualification higher than first degree or its equivalent. Of this percentage 51 respondents or 73 percent possess a doctorate degree.

25 percent of the respondents are in the professorial cadre and 18 percent are registrars and deputy registrars. Senior lecturers constitute about 33 percent of the respondents. This is an indication that the respondents are highly rated employees who should know more about the human resource management practices of their respective universities.

Table 1:   Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N = 88)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Level of Education		
B.Sc or its equivalent	18	20
Master Degree	19	22
Doctorate Degree	51	58
Total	**88**	**100**
Rank		
Professors/Readers	22	25
Senior Lecturers	29	33
Registrars/Deputy Registrars	16	18
Principal Assistant Registrars	21	24
Total	**88**	**100**
Years of Service		
1 – 3 years	9	10
4 – 5 years	24	28
More than 5 years	55	62
Total	**88**	**100**
Sex		
Male	60	68
Female	28	32
Total	**88**	**100**
Age of Respondents		
Less than 35 years	6	7
35 – 40 years	14	16
41 – 45 years	37	42
More than 45 years	31	35
Total	**88**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2010

About 90 percent of the respondents have put in at least 4 years of service and majority of whom (68 percent) are males. About 93 percent of the respondents are at least 35 years old.

In general, the study gives a favourable picture concerning the level of education of the respondents. A substantial proportion of the respondents have at least a first degree. This is an indication that the respondents are composed of highly educated people as expected in any university setting. Majority of the respondents have put in at least four years of service. This is also an indication that the respondents have actually spent enough time in the service to know how strategic the management of the universities is.

Test of Hypotheses
Hypothesis One: Strategic HRM is not Practiced by Nigerian Universities

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables. The mean score of the strategic HRM alignment with the overall universities' goals and objective is 30.68 out of a possible maximum score of 45, suggesting a moderate (68.2%) extent of strategic HRM alignment with the overall universities' objectives.

Devolvement of human resource practices to line officers has a mean score of 4.66 out of a possible maximum score of 5 in five HR practices, indicating a high involvement (93.32%) of line officers in the execution of human resource management practices.

Table 2:   Descriptive Statistics of the Measurement Variables

Measurement Variables	No. of items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strategic HRM alignment	9	30.66	4.56
Line Management Devolvement	5	4.66	0.57
Selection System	5	18.64	2.08
Training and Development	7	19.82	3.58
Performance appraisal system	8	27.93	2.32
Compensation System	4	13.73	1.78
Career Planning System	7	23.30	5.79
Employee Participation	3	12.45	2.20
SHRM Index	8	68.73	7.18
Age		16.89	13.47
Ownership Type		0.66	0.48

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

Employee selection system records a mean score of 18.64 (74.56%) out of possible maximum score of 25. The result indicates a high fit between the prospective employee's abilities and qualifications and the organization's requirements. Training and development on the other hand, has a mean score of 19.82 (56.6%) out of a possible maximum score of 35 depicting a moderate level of employees' participation in training and development programs.

The mean score of performance appraisal system is 27.93 (70%) out of a possible maximum score of 40. Results reveal that personnel appraisal system currently being practiced is impressive enough to allow the universities to be able to monitor the development of desired employee attitudes and behavious through the use of the appraisal mechanism. Compensation system has a mean score of 13.73 (68.7%) out of a possible maximum score of 20 depicting a moderate fit between perceived compensation system in the Nigerian university system and the overall industry policy on compensation of workers.

The mean scores of career planning system and employee participation are found to be 23.30 (66.6%) and 12.45 (83.0%) out of a possible maximum scores of 35 and 15 respectively. The result indicates a moderate level of effective career planning system and a impressive employee participation within the Nigerian university system.

Strategic HRM index (a composite measure of the overall strategic HRM practices) has a mean score of 68.73 (68.73%) out of possible maximum score of 100 depicting an impressive adoption and implementation of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian university system thus providing support for the alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis Two: ***The adoption of strategic HRM practices by Nigerian universities is not influenced by ownership type and age***

As shown in Table 2, there is a strong positive relationship between strategic HRM practices and ownership type and age with a multiple correlation (R) of 0.84. The adjusted R^2 of 0.69 implies that 69% of the variations in the adoption of strategic HRM practices are adequately explained by ownership type and age.

The results also indicate that both age and ownership type actually influences the adoption of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian university system with coefficient of 0.056 and 1.561 respectively. However, ownership type has the greatest influence on the adoption of these practices because it is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the model is useful in explaining ownership type and age as factors influencing the adoption of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian University system.

Table 3:   Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient	t-values	Significance
Age	0.056	3.704	0.01
Ownership Type	1.561	5.306	0.000
F	48.42		0.000
R	0.84		
R^2	0.70		
Adjusted R^2	0.69		
N	44		

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference between the level of strategic HRM practices adopted by government-owned universities and private universities.*

In testing whether a significant difference exists between the level of strategic HRM practices adopted by government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria, one way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is adopted. We observed the difference under two headings: controlling for ownership type and controlling for age.

Table 4a: One way ANOVA of SHRM practices while controlling for Ownership Type

Practices	Between Group Mean Square	F- Value	Significance
Strategic HRM Alignment	319.79	23.327	0.000
Line Mgt. Devolvement	0.36	1.12	0.296
Selection System	18.54	4.65	0.037
Compensation System	10.30	3.42	0.071
Training and Devpt. System	430.95	151.34	0.000
Performance Appraisal System	1.64	0.30	0.587
Career Planning System	921.19	74.41	0.000
Employee Participation	108.94	45.77	0.000

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

As shown in Table 3a, while controlling for ownership type, results indicate that there is significant difference between strategic human resource management alignment with universities' goals and objectives of government-owned universities and private universities. Similar results hold for training and development system, career planning system and employee participation. On the other hand, results show that there is no significant difference between line management devolvement, selection system, compensation system and performance appraisal system of government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria. This may not be unconnected with the fact that it is a common practice for new universities to adopt the existing practices of older universities since most of their pioneer staff would normally come from these later universities. Besides, some of these practices can be said to be dictated by industry minimum standards.

Table 4b: One way ANOVA of SHRM Index while controlling for Ownership Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	1335.587	1	1335.587	63.806	0.000
Within Groups	879.140	42	20.932		
Total	**2214.727**	**43**			

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

Taking a collective look at the practices as indicated by strategic HRM index (a composite measure of the practices) result shows that there is a significance difference between the level of

strategic HRM practices of government-owned universities and private universities, thus, providing support for the alternative hypothesis (see Table 3b).

As shown in Table 4a and 4b, controlling for age, results indicate that there is no significant difference between the level of strategic HRM practices of government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria as non of the practices are significant, thus, reiterating or strengthening our earlier finding that the influence of age on the adoption of strategic HRM practices in Nigerian universities in not significant.

Table 5a: One way ANOVA of SHRM practices while controlling for Age

Practices	Between Group Mean Square	F- Value	Significance
Strategic HRM Alignment	34.54	2.72	0.011
Line Mgt. Devolvement	0.20	0.51	0.919
Selection System	4.27	0.98	0.504
Compensation System	0.99	0.22	0.999
Training and Devpt. System	17.30	1.71	0.107
Performance Appraisal System	5.62	1.08	0.419
Career Planning System	38.07	1.24	0.305
Employee Participation	7.12	2.03	0.051

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

Table 5b: One way ANOVA of SHRM Index while controlling for Ownership Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	1421.848	16	88.866	3.026	0.005
Within Groups	792.879	27	29.366		
Total	**2214.727**	**43**			

Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

Hypothesis Four: *There is no relationship between ownership type and the different strategic HRM practices*

As Table 5 depicted, strategic human resource management alignment with overall universities' goals and objectives has a significant moderate positive relationship with ownership type with a correlation of 0.60. Similarly, training and development and career planning system also have a significant strong positive relationship with ownership type with correlation of 0.89 and 0.80 respectively. Employee participation is also found to have a significant positive relationship with ownership type with a correlation of 0.72. The relationship between selection system and ownership type is significant, though, weak with a correlation of 0.32.

Table 6: Correlation Table of the Measurement Variables

Practices	Ownership Type	Age
Strategic HRM Alignment	0.60**	0.67**
Line Mgt. Devolvement	0.16	0.20
Selection System	0.32*	035*
Compensation System	- 0.27	-0.06
Training and Devpt. System	0.89*	0.59**
Performance Appraisal System	-0.08	0.33*
Career Planning System	0.80**	0.54**
Employee Participation	0.72**	0.61**

**. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*
*. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*
Source: Author's Computations using SPSS, 2010

The relationships between line management devolvement, compensation system and performance appraisal system with ownership type are not found to be significant. In fact, compensation system and performance appraisal system exhibited weak negative relationships with ownership type with correlations of -0.27 and -0.08 respectively.

      Hypothesis Five: *There is no relationship between age and the different strategic HRM practices*
As shown in Table 5, strategic human resource management alignment with the universities' overall goals and objectives and training and development have a significant moderate relationship with age with correlation of 0.67 and 0.59 respectively. Career planning system and employee participation are also found to have a significant moderate relationship with age with correlations of 0.54 and 0.61 respectively.

      The relationships between line management devolvement and compensation system with age are not found to be significant. In fact, compensation system exhibited a very weak negative relationship with age with correlation of -0.06.

Discussions

The results of this study suggest that HRM is moderately integrated into the universities' operations and strategies. They also indicate that academic staff are highly involved in recruiting, selecting, training, executing performance appraisals and designing job roles most especially as they affects the teaching and technical staff.

      Our findings also suggest that employee selection system as currently practiced in the Nigerian university system ensures that there is a fit between the prospective employee's abilities and qualifications and the universities requirements. Similarly, performance appraisal system as currently practiced is effective enough to allow the universities to monitor the development of desired employee attitudes and behaviour. This is not unconnected with the rigid and thorough promotion criteria and procedures in the university system. Employees are also given enough opportunity to participate in decision making process. This could be attributed to the committee system of running universities.

      The adoption of strategic HRM practices by universities in Nigeria is greatly influenced by ownership type. The strategic HRM practice a university adopts is a function of whether the university is government-owned or run by private investors.

      Strategic HRM alignment, training and development, career planning system and employee participation of government-owned universities are found to be significantly different with that of privately-owned universities in Nigeria. These results are not surprising, because private universities do not have access to adequate funds to expend on training and development activities unlike the government-owned universities that have direct intervention from Federal Government education Trust Fund (ETF). Private universities' proprietor orientations which are mostly religion inclined also gives little opportunity for staff to participate in taking key strategic as well as operational decisions.

      Ownership type and age are significantly related to most of the strategic HRM practices tested in this study. Surprisingly, however, both ownership type and age exhibited a negative relationship with compensation system. This implies that neither ownership type nor age determines the compensation system practiced in the Nigerian university system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results obtained from this study indicate an impressive moderate adoption of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian university system and that the extent of this adoption is mostly a function of whether the university is government-owned or run by private investors. Our results also show that there is indeed a significant difference between the level of strategic HRM alignment, training and development, career planning system and employee participation of government-owned universities and private universities in Nigeria. The study, to this extent, has provided evidence that enable us to

appreciate the dynamics and extent of the influence of ownership-type and age on the adoption of strategic HRM practices in the Nigerian university system. Be that as it may, questions need to be asked about the generalizability of these results to other tertiary institutions or to business organizations. Would these results, for instance, hold for polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria or would it be different for large corporate organizations? Can these results be attributed to other factors other than ownership type and age? These are questions that can be resolved under different settings.

The study, therefore, recommends among others that: universities should improve their integration of HRM practices into their overall operations and strategies; universities most especially the private-owned universities should provide more funds for staff training development. Private universities should be encourage to adequately plan for the career development of its employees as well as giving them adequate opportunities to participate in taking strategic as well as tactical decisions affecting their work environment; They should also be encourage to formulate and document their respective human resource strategies and policies. Finally, the study should be replicated in polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria to see if the findings would hold.

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