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## Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on the Performance of Public Sector in Nigeria

**Dr. Olusanya Olujide**

Senior Lecturer, College of Management and Administration,  
Poma International Business University, Ifangni, Republic of Benin, Nigeria

**Olarin Tope Olayonu**

Ph.D. Student, Public Administration & Management,  
Oxford University of Namibia, Namibia, Nigeria

**Florence Adetutu Justus-Oni**

Ph.D. Student, Department of Strategic Management,  
Oxford University of Namibia, Namibia, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*This study is an empirical review of the performance of strategic human resource management in Nigerian public sector. The study adopted a qualitative research method by using journals, textbooks, and online articles that are relevant to the field. The study identified that the components of (SHRM) individually and connectively impact on the performance of the public sector. It also identified that the new concept (SHRM) has not made significant impact as it should, owing to the dysfunctional state of its environment characterized by bureaucratic practices, nepotism, and animosity. These factors hinder the effective implementation of the concept in Nigeria's public sector and limit the progress and growth that should have been recorded through it. The study recommends that bottlenecks such as bureaucratic practices in the sector should be reviewed for SHRM to yield its desired fruits.*

**Keywords:** Strategic human resources management, performance, public sector

### **1. Introduction**

The effect of globalization and advanced technology has effected changes in the perception of customers and has occasioned the need for a review of various concepts and practices to ensure effective operations in line with best practices. To ensure improved performance, there is an urgent need for special attention on the human resource of organisations in line with contemporary challenges. The current human resource needs can be achieved through an effective strategic human resource management. Human resources have been identified as the most invaluable asset in an organisation. Fitz-enz (2000) noted that every other asset in an organisation plays a passive role in the operations, while the input of the human resource is required for other inputs to create or add value to the organisation. According to Ologunde, Monday & James-Unam (2015) the operations, survival, and performance of every organisation solely depend on its human resource capabilities and its ability to manage them effectively to ensure the effective performance of the organisation. To achieve the demands of the organisation in today's competitive environment, the authors noted that cost-reduction measures, unique and improved service delivery should be the concern of every organisation. Strategic human resource management is concerned with the skills, motivation, and commitment of the employees. This underpins the investment of an organisation in the planning of current and future human resource needs and the reason for organizing pieces of training for the employees to ensure that they perform optimally. In the words of Armstrong (2006), the recruitment, selection processes, employees training and development programs of an organisation is a function of the human resource, and the execution of the strategic plans of every organisation depends on the activities of its strategic human resource management.

Several works have been carried out in recent years on the concept of strategic human resource management. However, Kazmi and Ahmad (2001) summarized the definitions by classifying them based on their focal elements which include decision-based, strategy-base, content-base, and implementation-base approach. These approaches impact on the performance of an organisation in various ways. Whittington (2001) noted that the strategy-focus of the concept of SHRM guides the organisation in using its unique feature in positioning the current and future directions of the organisation to ensure a competitive performance. Mishra & Lama (2016) submitted that strategic human resource management enables an organisation to go into data mining which provides the needed insight and predictive measures for accurate and up-to-date decision making. According to the authors, the strategies of organisations are partly a function of the talents inherent in the human resource and it is incumbent on the HRM of the organisation to search out and employ the best talent for maximum performance. Earlier on, Torrington and Hall (1995) argued that there are elements that give birth to strategic components (functional and strategic aspects) of the HRM model which are called strategic human resources management.

The consideration of these elements and their aspects are classified as content-focused. The authors noted that blending the functional HRM elements with the strategies of the organisation will effectively transform to SHRM. Accordingly, Miles and Snow (1984) were of the view that implementation focus classification requires an effective combination of organisational strategies with the HRM in order to achieve SHRM. This means that appropriate HRM is required for the implementation of strategies

## 2. Research Methodology

This is an empirical study of recent and past literature relating strategic human resource management's impact on the performance of the Nigerian public sector. This means that empirical analysis was adopted as the methodology of this research work. The study employed a thematic review of the sections relating to the topic with their documented analysis to critically appraise the effect of strategic human resource management on the performance of the Nigerian public sector.

## 3. Literature Review

Historically, the role of human resource in an organisation occasioned the attention of various scholars and led to the emergence of the concept of strategic human resource management. According to Wright, Dunfort, and Snell (2001), the concept of strategic human resource management came into existence through the works of Devanna, Fombrun, and Tichy in 1984 when the authors examined the relationship between the human resource and the business strategy of an organisation. Research has also shown that the concept of human resources management has undergone changes in name and practice over the years. According to Schuler et al (2007) the transformation was formerly called personnel management, which developed to human resource management and currently metamorphosed into strategic human resource management. The transformation can be presented through the diagram below.

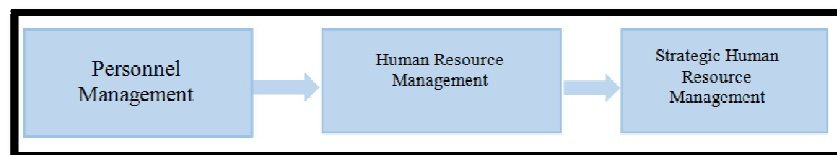


Figure 1: The Developmental Process of Strategic Human Resource Management

According to Schuler et al (2007), the concept of personnel management emphasizes the importance of people in an organisation and the need for them to be managed systematically. Human resource management, on the other hand, is an improvement in personnel management. It links the organisational need to the systematic management of human resource policies and practices in the organisation. As a result of the reflection of the needs to the strategies of the organisation, Schuler et al (2007) opined that the concept of human resource management metamorphosed into strategic human resources management

### 3.1. Nigeria Human Resource Management

The level of performance of Nigerian public sector workers today have called for a review of the human resource components of the system which puts forward the organisational strategies. According to Okafor (2016), the capacity of Nigerian public sector employees constitutes 62.4% males and 37.65 female, and this percentage is for employees with a minimum of bachelor's degree. According to the author, the Nigerian public sector is marred with unsafe working conditions with chances of an employee being selected based on favoritism and nepotism. In the words of Yaro (2014), the idea of selecting capable hands to work in the Nigerian public service is a mirage because of incompetent employees in the sector. Different scholars have also chronicled the factors that affect the Nigerian human resource and performance of the public sector. Tokumbo (1990) identified inefficient and ineffective management; Mamsar (1992) identified human weaknesses and malfunctioning of the institutions; Olowu (1999) identified leadership inability and faulty problem diagnosis; Briggs (2007) submitted poor employee selection policies; El-Rufai (2011) noted lack of political will to implement policies put in place to better the state of the sector and increase employee performance; Bayo (2012) submitted undemocratic attitudes of the leaders in the administration of public sector institutions. However, Obasanjo (2003) earlier opined that these defective practices have kept the Nigerian people waiting for the desired change to come, while the combined effects of inefficiency and corruption hinders the implementation process of the government policies.

## 4. Impact of SHRM on the Performance of the Sector

In the words of Wright and McMahan (1992), SHRM is a deliberate action of an organisation in the recruitment, selection and deployment of employees aimed at achieving the organisational objectives. From this definition Allen & Wright (2006), identified four components of strategic human resource management. It is worthy of note that these components impact individually and collectively on the performance of Nigeria's public sector through the SHRM. The components are as follows:

- The human resource: which plays an active role in the operations and the most invaluable source of competitive performance of an organisation
- The concept of activities: which involves the human resource policies, programs, and practices engaged by the employees to achieve the organisation's competitive performance.
- The planned pattern which involves the strategy put in place to achieve the organisational goal.

- Goal achievement which is the ultimate aim of the organisation.

The first three-component of SHRM (namely the human resource, the policies, and the pattern/strategies) contribute to achieving the organisational goal by having their respective impacts on the performance of public sector organisations. The individual impact of the components of the SHRM as identified by Allen and Wright (2006) and Yunlan (2017) are represented in the diagram and discussed below.

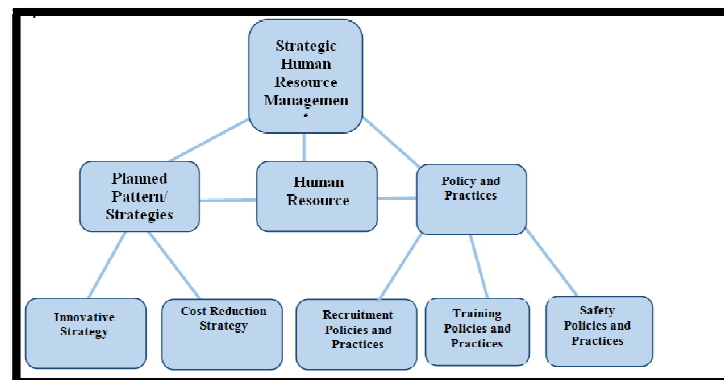


Figure 2: Diagram of Strategic Human Resource Component

#### 4.1. Human Resource Component of SHRM

The performance of every organisation depends on its human resource capabilities. According to Dike (2010), the strength, character, and competencies of human resource are the major determinants of the rise and fall of any organisation. Ekpe, Ekong & Ekpe (2013) noted that the low impact of human resource on the performance of the public sector was because of the incompetent employees that make up the human resource. The author opined that these low quality and incompetent employees led to the reason why Nigeria was ranked 157 out of 177 in the 2008 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index. In the views of the authors, strategic human resources management involves series of actions channeled to improving the skills, knowledge, and competences of the workers based on the contemporary precepts of human resources management so that the expected impact will be felt in the organisation. This means that for an organisation to be strategic in its activities, it must apply measures to optimize the performance of its workforce, create enabling work environment and apply all motivational measures to improve the commitment of the employees such as training and reward system (Shumen 2009). This calls for training and effective reward of the employees to ensure greater commitment in executing the strategic decisions of the organisation.

The strategic performance of every organisation through its human resource depends on factors such as job satisfaction and the degree of training obtained by the employees in the relevant areas. These play huge roles in the quality of service rendered. For instance, Ezeamama (2019) noted that job satisfaction is a reflection of the level of happiness an employee has while doing his work. It shows how the worker likes doing what he is employed to do. Researchers such as Rue and Byars (2005); Robbins and Judge (2009) were of the view that commitment to duty and positive behaviour in the organisation is a function of job satisfaction derived by an employee. The authors noted that the presence of job satisfaction enhances the active participation of an employee in the strategic decision of the organisation and that success-bound organisations consider the concept in their SHRM. However, Ghazzawi & Smith, (2009) noted that the deficiency of job satisfaction such as seen in the Nigerian public sector has led to a high rate of absenteeism, lack of effective performance and low commitment that have characterized the sector. On the other hand, Mourdoukoutas (2012) noted that effective performance of the human resource of some organisations has been hindered due to lack of training owing to the capital requirement of the program and the fear that employee's turnover might be recorded after the training. These factors play a huge role in strategic human resource management performance in the Nigerian public sector.

#### 4.2. Policy Component of the SHRM

Demo, et al., (2012) define HRM policies as an articulated proposal of an organisation, built-in line with some theoretical frameworks and practical constructions for guiding human relations to achieve the organisational goal. Frenkel, Restubog, and Bednal (2012) submitted that the views of the employees concerning the HRM policies of the organisation determine their efforts and commitment to duty. This means that the strategic human resources management policies serve as an influencing factor in the performance of the employees of the public sector in Nigeria and the policies should be designed and communicated to the employees in a way that both the policies and employees will be linked together to achieving the organisational goal. According to Stone, Stone-Romero & Lukaszewski (2007), designing the policy component of the SHRM in line with organisational culture and value ensures its effectiveness and acceptance in an organisation. Armstrong (2009) argued that the employees' attitude to work, expected reward, and organisational values are influenced by the strategic policies of human resource management.

There are various human resource policies and practices that impact on the SHRM performance in Nigerian public sector. In the words of Ahmad and Schroeder (2003), human resource policies and practices in the areas of employee training, rewards, job security, decentralization of authority and teamwork are the positive influencers of Nigerian public sector performance which leadsto quality service delivery, cost reduction, and improved commitment. In the like manner, Sang (2005) argued that Nigeria's policies on staffing, training, employee's participation in decision making and job

security programs positively influence the performance of the sector when adequately implemented. But Okafor (2016) identified the following as practices responsible for the increasing low performance of the human resources of the Nigerian public sector. These are:

#### 4.2.1. Recruitment Policies and Practices

Fajana et al (2011) noted that the selection of applicants in the public sector is based on religious, cultural, gender and the level of education attained by the applicants. These manifestations occur in the face of public sector policies that are drawn based on merit principles and objectivity with quality frameworks drawn to guide the recruitment process (Richards 2011). In addition to this, Aijala (2001) earlier noted that concerted efforts are put in place by the government in the recruitment process to ensure openness, transparency and participatory leadership. The efforts are to ensure the effective operation and performance of the employees and the organisations that make up the public sector.

Despite the measures put in place through policies and programs, the actual practice is different from the policies thereby hindering the performance of the sector through its strategic human resource management. Cole and Kelly (2011) opined that poor-quality recruitment decisions in the country lead to poor performance, absenteeism, high cost of operations among other issues that contribute to the poor performance of the public sector. In the words of Okeke-Uzodike & Subban (2015) poor implementation of the recruitment policies has left Nigeria as a ghost of itself in terms of performance and ineffectiveness of its strategic human resource management.

#### 4.2.2. Training Policies and Practices

As a way of combating the challenges of globalization and technological advancement, organisations engage in training of their employees to acquire the needed skills and competencies that enable improved operations. Oni-Ojo et al (2014) noted that the major reason for employee training and development is to increase the ability, knowledge, and skills of the employee for effective service delivery. Osabiya (2015) noted that the Civil Service Reform of 1998 gave a framework for employee training and development due to its importance to the performance of the sector. However, in Nigeria's public sector, training policies and practices have not yielded the expected result thereby showcasing the weakness of the strategic human resource management of the sector. It was observed that when the public sector tries in conducting training for its staff, the services of the trained staff are poorly utilized and the skills acquired gradually dwindle and die away contributing to the underperformance of the public sector (Obisi 2001). This underutilization can be attributed to the bureaucratic nature of the Nigerian public sector administration which hinders the effective implementation of strategic policies and programs.

#### 4.2.3. Safety Policies and Practices.

Another policy issue that impacts on the strategic human resource performance on Nigeria public sector is workers' safety policies. Hughes and Ferett (2005) defined employees' safety at the workplace as the shield on the body and soul of the employees from the adverse effects of materials, processes, and environment of the workplace. Olatubi and Olatubi (2017) noted that employ safety entails an employee's mental, emotional, physical and emotional wellbeing. The safety policies of the Nigerian public sector have made an adverse impact on the performance of strategic human resource management. According to Koehn and Data (2003), the safety of employees in Nigerian organisations is at stake owing to the state of design, layout, and planning of the environment which increases the chances of critical incident, errors, and failure to take precautionary measures.

#### *4.3. The strategy of the SHRM*

The strategy component of the SHRM as identified by Allen and Wright (2006) impacts on the performance of SHRM in Nigerian public sector. In the words of Yunlan (2017), strategy is one of the elements of the SHRM. The author noted that the SHRM strategy includes cost-saving, and innovative strategy. According to Porter (1996), a strategy is a pattern of operation adopted by an organisation which makes it different from other organisations. Markides (1999) noted that an organisation adopts a strategy which it can boast of its ownership. The strategic human resource management of the Nigerian public sector adopts a strategy to ensure effectiveness in their operations. The cost-saving, and innovative strategies of SHRM noted by Yunlan (2017) and their impact on Nigerian public sector can be analyzed as follows:

#### 4.3.1. Cost-Saving Strategy

The SHRM apply the strategic measure to improve the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria through activities that reduce the cost of operation. According to Grant (2008), when the organisations of the public sector engage in hiring competent and most qualified employees to fill sensitive positions, it minimizes the cost of operations, the chances of work errors, and man-hour loss associated with lack of knowledge and the required skills to carry out a task. In the works of Huselid (2005) training and retraining of the workforce of various organisations in the public sector will improve the performance of the sector by increasing the competencies of the employees thereby reducing the cost of operation, and employee turnover occasioned by dissatisfaction.

Though an organisation can engage in employee outsourcing in some occasions where it is more cost-effective to do so because of its significant advantages (Jiang, Frazier, and Prater 2016), but employee training serves as a cost-saving strategy through its contribution to equipping the internal employees of the organisation, saving the cost to be incurred when external employees are hired on a temporary basis to address an urgent need in the organisation. According to Revenio (2016) employee training as a cost-saving strategy does not only improve the skills of the employees by ensuring a greater commitment to their duty and improve the performance of the public sector. In the words of Flamholtz and

Randle (2000) training and selection of competent hands during the recruitment process increase the chances of developing a self-managed team which leads to the growth of organisations. According to the authors, self-managed teams allows both managers and middle managers to make a decision relating to the organisation within the sphere of their authorities. The team can be increased when the organisation's size increases thereby enabling effective management of the employees, sharing of ideas, higher commitment and team spirit that increases the performance of the organisation.

#### 4.3.2. Innovative Strategy

Innovation is the major strategic element of SHRM of every organisation. According to De Meyer & Garg (2005), innovation is the introduction of an up-to-date method of doing things or a more favourable combination of old ways of operations aimed at creating more value through the product/service offer. Keeley et al (2013) and Trott (2008) noted that the SHRM of the organisation carries out their innovative activities through organisational structure, the model of operation, customer service and in their method of managing the organisation. Riza et al (2015) argued that it is the main strategic tool for improved performance of the organisation in today's competitive environment. This means that innovation is a strategic tool for organisational performance in today's world and its benefits are reaped when the innovative strategies of the SHRM are adopted and implemented in public sector organisations.

However, in Nigeria, the innovative practices of the strategic human resource management of the public sector makes little or no impact because of the bureaucratic nature of the system. According to Maduabum (2014), this bureaucracy increases the chances of resistance of the system to innovative ideas. This manifests when the senior officers hide under the cloak of bureaucracy to hinder the implementation of innovations especially when the idea is generated by a subordinate staff (Fatile and Adejuwon 2017). The authors noted that the impact of bureaucracy has contributed to the dysfunctional state of Nigerian public sector by rendering the innovative strategies of the SHRM ineffective. In addition to the adverse impact of bureaucracy, the authors noted that the level of animosity in the sector hinders cooperation and teamwork in the implementation of innovative ideas which leads to the obvious underperformance of the sector.

### **5. Findings**

From the above, it can be deduced that the components of Strategic Human Resource Management identified by Allen & Wright (2006) and its elements as noted by Yunlan (2017), play huge impact collectively and individually in the performance of strategic human resource management in Nigerian public sector. The individual impact of the components of SHRM would have contributed in no small measure to the positive performance of the Nigerian public sector if they are well implemented and if all the bottlenecks within the system were not present. This study also identified that government has put in place measures to increase the performance of the sector through various strategic policies such as the merit principle in the recruitment processes, federal character and affirmative actions to curtail the challenges associated with the recruitment process and organizing training programs for its employees. But as noted by Okeke-Uzodike & Subban (2015), poor implementation of the measures put in place to ensure effective service delivery has made the policies only exist without physical effects that will better the lots of the people and the economy. This has led to the obvious underperformance of the sector and renders the strategic human resource management of the sector ineffective.

### **6. Conclusion**

For an organisation to function effectively and perform competitively in line with the current demands of the environment, adoption of the most recent practices such as strategic human resource management is necessary. Through this study, it was identified that there is the existence of strategic human resource management even when little is known about it because of the little impact it has made in the sector which is not far from what human resource management has been doing. But the improved features of the concept make it necessary that all the elements and components of it should be adopted and utilized effectively because of their respective and collective impacts to the public sector. When this is done the full benefit of the concept will be seen because the performance of the public sector will improve significantly in line with developed countries of the world.

### **7. Recommendation**

This study in line with Windapo and Oladipo (2012) affirms that management commitment is necessary to ensure compliance with the stated regulations, policies and programs. This will ensure that people are attracted to an organisation, motivated to impact positively on the organisation, trained and retained to achieve the current and future goals of the organisation (Collins & Clark 2003). This study also recommends that the Nigerian public sector should intensify efforts in the implementing the elements of the SHRM and differentiating the practice from the old personnel management and the human resource management that is gradually giving way for this new and improved concept that thinks and plans for the current and future state of the organisations under the public sector. Also, the study recommends that the culture of bureaucracy that constitutes hindrance and impedes the development of the nation by not giving way for a free flow of innovative ideas and practices should be jettisoned through an overhaul of the entire structure and system of operation. This will enable a better manifestation of the activities of the strategic human resource management.

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