

Assessment of Employees' Satisfaction with Human Resource Management Practices in Selected Public Universities in Southeast Nigeria

By

Chukwujekwu Charles Onwuka, Tochukwu Emmanuel Madu & George Igboanugo Nweke

Abstract

Human resource practices remain cardinal factor towards the productivity of employees, as well as the overall performance of organisations. Yet, the feeling of employees in many public organisations remains unclear due to scanty empirical researches in that regard. This study was therefore positioned to assess employees' satisfaction with Human Resource Management Practices (HRMPs) in selected public universities within the Southeast Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The sample size for the study was 205 non-academic employees comprising of 83 males and 122 females, who were selected for the study through self-sampling technique. Data for the study were collected through questionnaire administration which measured seven dimensions of human resource management practices. Data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package version 26. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics including frequency count and simple percentage, and data analysed were presented using tables and charts. Findings of the study showed that in the overall, majority employees in the two selected public universities were dissatisfied with HRMPs in their organisations. However, in specific dimensions, it was found that the respondents expressed dissatisfaction in the HRMPs of: providing security to employees, hiring employees, managing effective teams, and training of employees in relevant skills; while they only expressed fair level of satisfaction on fair and performance-based compensation, creation of a flat and egalitarian organisation and making information easily accessible to employees. The study therefore recommended, among other things, the need for the establishment of regulatory framework that would guide human resource management practices in the public tertiary institutions.

Keywords: employees, satisfaction, human resource, practices

Introduction

Human resource management practices remain cardinal factor towards the productivity of employees, as well as the overall performance of organisations. This is considering the view that human resource management takes into account all aspects of the working relationships that could influence the satisfaction and overall welfare of employees, and enhance their commitment to organisational goals. Human resource management practices connote the process of attracting, motivating, and retaining employees to ensure the survival of the organization (Chong, Ngolob & Palaoang, 2020). Such practices may include: provision of security to employees, hiring the right employees, management of effective teams, fair and performance-based compensation, training in relevant skills, creating a flat and egalitarian organisation and making information easily accessible to those who need it (Vulpen, n.d).

An important thing to highlight is the fact that employees' level of satisfaction with human resource management practices within organisations could either promote their job satisfaction which would invariably increase their motivation and job morale, or constrain these aspects. This fact has been recognised by different organisations across the globe; consequently, various organisations are prioritising the human resource unit of their organisations, so as to influence positive job satisfaction level among their employees. In human resource management, there are two schools of thought that recognise how employees should be managed. The first school of thought is 'best fit' while the second school is 'best practices'. For the former, human resource policies of any organisation should align with the business strategy of the organisation, while the later assumes that there is a set of universal human resource management practices that lead to optimal organisational performance (Van-Vulpen, n.d).

Human resource management practices literature has appeared severally within the extant management literature and quite a number of scholars have highlighted that a relationship exists between human resource management practices and other employees' work behaviour such as employees' performance (Lim & Ahmad, 2021; Shaukat, Ashraf & Ghafoor, 2015), employees' engagement (Ferdian, Azis, Prasetyo & Darmawan, 2020), job satisfaction (Cherif, 2020), sustainable organisational performance (Rasool, Samma, Wang, Zhao & Zhang, 2019), organisational commitment (Al-Aali, 2021), among other important variables. However, there appears to be scanty empirical literature on employees' satisfaction with human relations practices, particularly within the context of public universities in Southeast Nigeria.

This gap in empirical research could becloud the understanding about the activities of the human resource departments and the working conditions of employees in the public tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly within the Southeast zone of the nation. Consequently, this present study aims to fill this gap in empirical research on the theme of this present study.

Research Question

1. What is the employees' satisfaction with human resource management practices in the selected public tertiary institutions within the Southeast Nigeria?

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted among 205 non-academic staff (Males = 83, Females = 122) in two selected public universities within the Southeast zone of Nigeria, who aged between a minimum age of 24 years to a maximum age of 59 years, with a mean age of 35.9 years. All the respondents completed the secondary school level of education which is an indication that all respondent could read and write basically. The respondents included in this study included non-academic staff from three different cadres: junior, intermediate and senior level staff. The respondents were selected through self-selection sampling technique in which respondents participated in the survey on their own accord. Specifically, the respondents were invited to participate in the study through Google Form data collection tool (A web-based data collection tool).

Materials

In this study, an online survey questionnaire was developed based on existing literature on the study variables. The questionnaire was titled 'Employee Satisfaction with Human Resource Management Practices (ESWHMRP)' which was used to measure the satisfaction of non-academic staff regarding the human relation practices in public universities within Southeast Nigeria. It consisted of two parts – the first part dealing with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second part contained seven items which were designed to obtain data on the employees' satisfaction with human resource management practices. Items for the socio-demographic variables were designed on multiple response formats, while items for the substantive issues were designed on 5-point response options ranging

from '1' – completely dissatisfied to '5' – very satisfied. An example of the question is 'How satisfied are you with human resource management practices of your organisation in terms of providing security to employees?' with response option of 5 – very satisfied, 4 – somewhat satisfied, 3 – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 2 – dissatisfied, and 1 – completely dissatisfied. To ensure validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to content and face validity, in which a draft of the questionnaire was submitted to two experts who vetted the instruments to ensure that its contents actually measured the intended purpose, as well as made necessary corrections in terms of wordings and overall fit of the instruments before the final copy was uploaded on the web.

Procedure

The instrument was administered to the respondents through different social media groups for the non-academic staff of the selected universities, through the help of the groups' administrators. While conducting the research, the researcher had to inquire from few non-academic staffs regarding their social media groups and how to connect to the groups' administrators. After the information was obtained, the research got acquainted with the groups' administrators and expressed the research intention as well as seeking their help in uploading the survey link to their various groups. In all, three different social media groups including Whatsapp, Telegram and Facebook were identified and used for data collection. Through the help of the groups' administrators, as well as the letter contained in the introductory part of the online-questionnaire, the respondents were made to understand that the research was purely for academic purpose, confidentiality of their responses were guaranteed and that the response time for the questionnaire was approximately five minutes. Considering the fact that the research was online-based, the questionnaire was customised in such a way that could not allow multiple entry, which means that each respondent was allowed to complete the survey only once. A timeline of two weeks was set for the data collection process, after which any other entry was discarded. Thus, only data entries or responses obtained within the set timeline were used for data analysis. At the end of data timeline, only 205 data entries were obtained and used for data analysis. Data obtained from the study were initially contained in Excel document format; however the researcher applied data transformation in which the data contained in the original Excel format were transformed to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software package version 26, which was used in processing all the relevant data for the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study involved descriptive analysis of the responses gathered from the survey. First the socio-demographic variable was analysed using frequency count and simple percentage and presented in a composite table. Thereafter, the research question was equally answered using descriptive analysis applied on each of the seven items that measured employees' satisfaction with human resource management practices.

Results

Table 1.

Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Socio-Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	83	40.5
Female	122	59.5
Total	205	100.0
Age Distribution		
24 - 29 Years	35	17.1
30 - 35 Years	38	18.5
36 - 41 Years	71	34.6
42 - 47 Years	27	13.2
48 - 53 Years	25	12.2
54 - 59 Years	9	4.4
Total	205	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	53	25.9
Married	115	56.1
Separated	7	3.4
Divorced	12	5.9
Widowed	18	8.8
Total	205	100.0
Level of Educational Attainment		
Secondary School	36	17.6
Tertiary (Diploma)	98	47.8
Tertiary (Bachelors)	55	26.8
Tertiary (Post-graduate)	16	7.8
Total	205	100.0
Official Rank		
Junior Staff	96	46.8
Intermediate	79	38.5
Senior	30	14.6
Total	205	100.0

Table 1 contains results of data analysis in relation to the respondents' socio-demographic variables. From the gender dimension, result of the analysis showed that higher proportion (59.5%) of female non-academic employees participated in the study compared to lower proportion (48.0%) of male employees. The respondents aged between the minimum ages of 24 years to the maximum age of 59 years, with those aged between 36 – 41 years constituting the highest proportion (34.6%) of the respondents within the sample. This implies that the majority of the respondents individuals within their mid-adult ages. This could also explain why more than half proportion (56.1%) of the respondents were married, compared to about a quarter proportion (25.9%) of those who were single.

Data equally showed that all the respondents completed at least the secondary school level. However, nearly half proportion (47.8%) of them attained up to the tertiary (Diploma) level of education. These data imply that the respondents were literate enough to understand the contents of the questionnaire and to respond effectively to the questions. With regards to the respondents' ranks, the majority (46.8%) of them were within the junior level, another significant (38.5%) of them were within their intermediate level, while the least proportion (14.6%) of them were at the senior level.

Employees' Satisfaction with Human Resource Management Practices

Table 2.

Respondents' Satisfaction with Provision of Security to Employees

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Completely Dissatisfied	66	32.2
Dissatisfied	46	22.4
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	56	27.3
Somewhat Satisfied	24	11.7
Very Satisfied	13	6.3
Total	205	100.0

Table contained in table 2 showed that majority (32.2%) of the respondents expressed complete dissatisfaction with the HRMPs regarding the provision of security to employees. However, about a quarter proportions (27.3%) of them were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied in this regard.

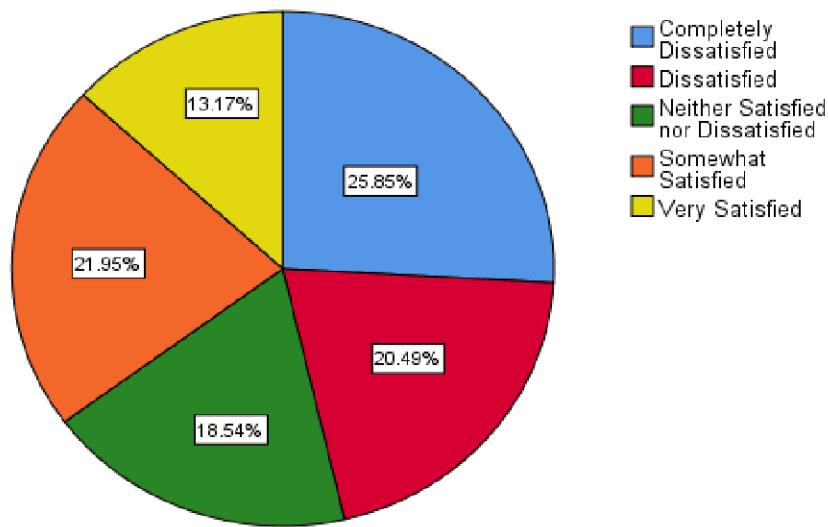


Figure 1. Respondents' Satisfaction with HRMP of hiring employees

Data contained in figure 1 provide clear evidence that the largest proportion (25.6%) of the respondents were equally completely dissatisfied with the human resource management practices in terms of hiring employees. This could imply that the human resource management practices in terms of hiring employees in the public Universities within the Southeast Nigeria is less optimal.



Figure 2. Respondents' Satisfaction with HRMP practice of Managing Effective Teams

Figure 2 clearly showed that more than half (53.2%) of the respondents were completely dissatisfied with the human resource management practice of managing effective teams for the employees. This was followed by approximately 21.0% of the respondents who ticked the

option ‘dissatisfied’. These suggest that the human resource management practice of managing effective employees’ teams in the selected public Universities fall below average.

Table 3.

Respondents’ Satisfaction with HRMP of Fair and performance-based compensation

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Completely Dissatisfied	32	15.6
Dissatisfied	45	22.0
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	48	23.4
Somewhat Satisfied	55	26.8
Very Satisfied	25	12.2
Total	205	100.0

Table 3 shows that the highest proportion (26.8%) of the respondents ticked the option ‘somewhat satisfied’. This implies that the respondents were fairly satisfied with the human resource management practices in terms of fair and performance-based compensation for the employees.

Table 4.

Respondents’ Satisfaction with HRMP regarding Training of Employees in Relevant Skills

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Completely Dissatisfied	141	68.8
Dissatisfied	39	19.0
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	10	4.9
Somewhat Satisfied	11	5.4
Very Satisfied	4	2.0
Total	205	100.0

Data contained in table 4 showed that a very large proportion (68.8%) of the respondents expressed complete dissatisfaction with the human resource management practices in terms of training employees in relevant skills. This implies that the human resource practices in the public Universities in the Southeast Nigeria do not take appropriate steps to train their employees in relevant skills that facilitate their job performance.

Table 5.

Respondents' Satisfaction with HRMP regarding Creation of a Flat and Egalitarian organisation

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Completely Dissatisfied	12	5.9
Dissatisfied	19	9.3
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	58	28.3
Somewhat Satisfied	61	29.8
Very Satisfied	55	26.8
Total	205	100.0

In table 5, it could be seen that the highest proportions (29.8%) of the respondents expressed a fair level of satisfaction regarding the human resource management practices of their organisation in terms of creating a flat and egalitarian organisation. This finding implies that the human resource units of public Universities in the Southeast Nigeria are effective in the practice of creating a democratic atmosphere that enhances employees' workability.

Table 6.

Respondents' Satisfaction with HRMP in terms of making Information Easily Accessible

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Completely Dissatisfied	18	8.8
Dissatisfied	24	11.7
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	54	26.3
Somewhat Satisfied	58	28.3
Very Satisfied	51	24.9
Total	205	100.0

In table 6, it is also clear that the highest proportion (28.3%) of the respondents chose the response option 'somewhat satisfied', which implies that they were fairly satisfied with the human resource management practice in their organisations, in terms of making information easily accessible for the employees. This equally translates to the view that employees in public Universities within the Southeast Nigeria do not find it difficult accessing information relevant to their workability because the human resource units of their organisations are effective in that regard.

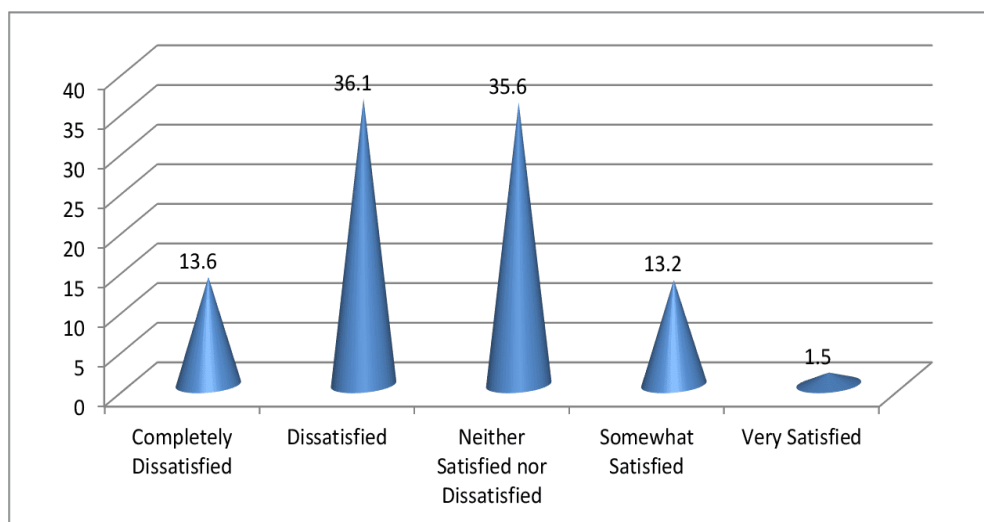


Figure 3: Respondents' overall level of Satisfaction with Human Resource Management Practices

Figure 3 shows that in the overall analysis, the largest proportion (36.1%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the human resource management practices in their organisations. However, it is equally observed that another significant proportion (35.6%) of the respondents was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the human resource management practices. These findings translate to the view that the human resource management practices within the public universities in the Southeast of Nigeria are not quite impressive.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The importance of human resource management practices towards the productivity of employees, as well as the overall performance of organisations cannot be overemphasised. Thus, this present study was positioned to investigate the satisfaction of non-academic staff of public universities in the Southeast of Nigeria, towards human resource management practices in their organisations. This study has succeeded in describing the satisfaction of employees towards human resources management practices within public universities particularly in the Southeast of Nigeria, which contributes to the extant empirical researches on organisational management and practices. Conducting this study was considered important step in establishing what goes on in terms of human resource management in public universities, which is very crucial for the employee productivity and overall positive working conditions. Judging

from the analysis conducted on the overall data on the measures of employees' satisfaction with the human resource management practices, it is concluded that non-academic employees of public universities in the Southeast of Nigeria are dissatisfied with the human resource management practices within their organisations. This has serious implications for the sustainability of productive working environment particularly within the academic environment; as such dissatisfaction could produce negative work behaviours that could jeopardise the overall productivity in the university environment.

With appropriate regulatory policy frameworks for the universities' human resource management, the working conditions of employees particularly the non-academic staff of public Universities would be improved, which would ultimately improve their workability, organisational commitment and overall productivity. Without a policy directed human resource management within the public universities, it would be impossible to establish positive human resource management practices that could translate the working environment into a pleasant experience for the employees. Consequently, the productivity of the employees would be marred and poor organisational productivity could be the long term effect of it. Against this backdrop, the following are recommended for way forward:

1. There is need for the National Universities Commission to establish a regulatory framework that would guide human resource management practices in the public tertiary institutions. This would ensure that human resource managers become compliance with recommended practices, as well as consciously and actively involved in providing the atmosphere that could engender positive human resource management practices.
2. There is need for the management of public universities to ensure that officers appointed for the office of human resource manager are competent and qualified to discharge the expected responsibilities.

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Author Information: Dr Chukwujekwu Charles Onwuka is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Email: cc.onwuka@coou.edu.ng.



Dr Tochukwu Emmanuel Madu is a lecturer in the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Email: emmanuel.madu@gmail.com



George Igboanugo Nweke is affiliated to the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. *Email:* gi.nweke@coou.edu.ng