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Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance in Nigerian Private Universities: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employee performance in Nigerian private universities, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of job satisfaction. The growing competitiveness of private higher education institutions in South-West Nigeria has heightened the need for effective HRM systems capable of enhancing staff commitment, productivity, and institutional effectiveness. However, evidence suggests that HRM practices in many private universities have not consistently translated into improved employee performance, partly due to inadequate attention to employee satisfaction. Drawing on the Resource-Based View and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, this study conceptualizes HRM practices as strategic organizational resources that influence employee performance through job satisfaction. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data were collected from academic and non-academic staff of selected private universities in South-West Nigeria using structured questionnaires. HRM practices (recruitment and selection, compensation and rewards, training and development, and employee relations) were treated as independent variables, job satisfaction as the mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. Data were analyzed using regression and mediation analysis. Findings reveal that HRM practices significantly and positively influence job satisfaction and employee performance. Job satisfaction also exerts a significant positive effect on employee performance and partially mediates the relationship between HRM practices and performance. The results underscore the critical role of employee-centered HRM systems in improving staff outcomes in private universities. The study concludes that strengthening HRM practices that enhance job satisfaction particularly fair compensation, professional development, and supportive employee relations can significantly improve employee performance in Nigerian private universities. The study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to higher education HRM literature in developing economies and provides policy insights for university administrators seeking to enhance institutional performance through strategic human resource management.

KEYWORDS: Human resource management practices; job satisfaction; employee performance; private universities; Nigeria; higher education HRM

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices play a pivotal role in shaping employee behaviour, fostering organizational commitment, and driving performance, particularly within knowledge-intensive environments such as universities. Over recent decades, universities have transitioned from traditional bureaucratic institutions to more performance-oriented entities, especially in the private sector where competition for students, faculty, and funding is intense. This transformation necessitates a strategic focus on HRM practices to enhance employee performance and institutional effectiveness (Osibanjo et al., 2023; Ogueyungbo & Agboola, 2022). The strategic integration of HRM within organizational operations has therefore become a critical determinant of institutional growth, innovation, and academic excellence. In contemporary organizations, human capital is widely recognized as a strategic asset whose effective management enhances competitive advantage and organizational sustainability (Akinyele et al., 2024; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Becker & Huselid, 2022).

In the context of higher education, particularly private universities in South-West Nigeria, HRM extends beyond administrative functions to serve as a strategic partner in achieving teaching, research, and community service mandates. The proliferation of private universities following the liberalization of Nigeria's education sector in 1999 has intensified competition in quality

assurance, service delivery, and institutional reputation. Universities such as Covenant University, Babcock University, Afe Babalola University, and Bowen University have contributed significantly to educational development, yet concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of their human resource management systems (Ogunyemi & Fajana, 2022). As self-sustaining institutions, private universities rely heavily on efficient HRM to attract, develop, and retain competent staff whose performance drives institutional outcomes (Akinyemi & Abiodun, 2022; Onah & Anikwe, 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of HRM practices in enhancing employee outcomes, evidence suggests that HRM frameworks in many Nigerian private universities remain inconsistent or poorly implemented (Igbinedion & Essien, 2023). Institutions often adopt modern HRM practices such as performance appraisal, training and development, compensation systems, and structured recruitment; however, these practices do not always translate into improved employee performance or institutional productivity (Ajayi & Oyetade, 2022). Persistent challenges including high staff turnover, low research output, weak teaching effectiveness, and limited organizational commitment indicate a disconnect between HRM investments and performance outcomes. This gap may be influenced by contextual factors such as inadequate funding, leadership challenges, bureaucratic HR processes, and institutional constraints within the Nigerian academic environment (Obiekwe & Edeh, 2023).

A critical mechanism through which HRM practices influence performance is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction reflects employees' emotional and cognitive evaluation of their work conditions and significantly shapes motivation, commitment, and productivity. In academic settings, satisfied staff are more likely to deliver quality teaching, engage in research, mentor students, and contribute to institutional development. However, in many Nigerian private universities, staff frequently report dissatisfaction arising from poor remuneration, job insecurity, heavy workloads, and limited professional development opportunities (Adeoye et al., 2022). Such dissatisfaction often manifests in absenteeism, low morale, reduced productivity, and turnover. Although global literature consistently links job satisfaction with higher performance (Mafini, 2020), empirical evidence within the socio-economic and institutional realities of Nigerian private universities remains limited.

Furthermore, organizational culture influences how HRM practices are perceived and implemented and shapes employees' responses to these practices. A supportive and participatory culture enhances the effectiveness of HRM policies and aligns them with employee behaviour and institutional goals (Yusuf & Arogundade, 2022). However, the extent to which HRM practices influence job satisfaction and, subsequently, employee performance within Nigerian private universities is insufficiently understood. This lack of context-specific empirical evidence creates a significant knowledge gap in the higher education HRM literature in Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the relationships among HRM practices, job satisfaction, and employee performance in private universities in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (i) What is the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance in private universities in South-West Nigeria? and (ii) What is the relationship between HRM practices and job satisfaction in private universities in South-West Nigeria? In line with these questions, the objectives of the study are to assess the empirical link between job satisfaction and employee performance in private universities in South-West Nigeria and to examine the relationship between HRM practices and job satisfaction in private universities.

To achieve these objectives, the study tests the following null hypotheses: H_{o2}: Job satisfaction does not significantly influence employee performance in private universities in South-West Nigeria; and H_{o3}: HRM practices do not significantly influence job satisfaction in private universities in South-West Nigeria. By providing empirical evidence on these relationships, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how HRM practices and job satisfaction interact to shape employee performance within the unique institutional context of Nigerian private universities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Human Resources Management Practices

Human Resources Management (HRM) practices constitute a critical framework through which organizations manage their workforce to achieve strategic objectives, enhance employee performance, and foster organizational competitiveness. Within the context of private universities in South West Nigeria, understanding HRM practices is essential, particularly as these institutions navigate challenges related to job satisfaction, organizational culture, and employee performance. HRM practices encompass a range of activities including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and employee relations, all of which collectively influence employee attitudes and behaviors (Martinson & DeLeon, 2017; Benchmarking - HR Practices, 2020).

The strategic alignment of HRM practices with organizational goals is a key determinant of their effectiveness. Martinson and DeLeon (2017) emphasize the importance of horizontal and vertical alignment in HR practices to facilitate the realization of strategic organizational objectives. Horizontal alignment ensures coherence among various HR practices, while vertical alignment connects these practices to the overall strategic vision of the organization. This alignment is particularly relevant in private universities where the balance between academic excellence and administrative efficiency must be maintained. For instance, integrated HR practices that continuous support professional development can enhance faculty performance and institutional reputation. Similarly, Maheshwari and Vohra (2015) highlight that critical HR practices during organizational change, such as transparent communication and participative decision-making, significantly impact employee perception and commitment, thereby sustaining performance levels amidst change.

Job satisfaction has been identified as both an outcome and a mediator of HRM practices. Nisar et al. (2017) provide empirical evidence demonstrating that effective HR practices positively influence employee loyalty and commitment through the mediating role of job satisfaction. This relationship is particularly salient in the academic environment of private universities, where faculty and staff satisfaction directly correlates with their engagement and productivity. Enhancing job satisfaction through tailored HR practices, such as recognition programs and equitable compensation, can therefore lead to improved employee loyalty and reduced turnover intentions. In a similar vein, Huo and Boxall (2017) argue that employee responses to HR practices are strongly mediated by their instrumental work values, suggesting that job satisfaction is contingent upon the alignment between HR practices and employees' personal and professional values. This insight underscores the necessity for private universities to customize HRM approaches to the diverse values and expectations of their workforce to optimize satisfaction and performance.

Knowledge-based HR practices have emerged as pivotal in fostering innovation and adaptability within organizations. Al-Tal and Emeagwali (2019) explore the relationship between knowledge-based HR practices and innovation in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), revealing that practices such as continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and intellectual capital development significantly contribute to organizational innovation. Transposing these findings to private universities, knowledge-based HR practices can stimulate academic innovation, enhance research output, and support the adoption of emerging pedagogical techniques. This is particularly important in the competitive landscape of higher education in South West Nigeria, where universities must continuously innovate to attract and retain high-caliber staff and students. Bodla and Yu Ning-Tang (2017) further corroborate this perspective by demonstrating that transformative HR practices, including empowering leadership and adaptive training programs, bolster employee task performance by enhancing their adaptivity. This adaptability is crucial in academic settings faced with rapid technological advancements and evolving educational paradigms.

Component of Human Resource Management Practices

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are a set of organizational activities aimed at effectively managing human capital to optimize productivity, innovation, and competitive advantage. In Nigerian Universities both public and private—HRM has evolved from routine administrative tasks to strategic frameworks that influence institutional performance, academic excellence, staff motivation, and institutional sustainability. Historically, HRM in Nigerian higher education was narrowly focused on personnel management functions such as recruitment, record-keeping, and payroll. However, globalization, digitalization, changing workforce expectations, and regulatory shifts have necessitated a broader and more strategic approach to HRM. Universities now face increasing pressure to attract, develop, and retain competent academic and non-academic staff amidst limited resources and stiff competition. As such, understanding the components of HRM practices as they are currently implemented in Nigerian universities, as well as identifying emerging trends, is essential to reforming tertiary education for national development. The major HRM components traditionally practiced in Nigerian universities include:

Recruitment and Selection Practices

Recruitment and selection practices are pivotal human resource management (HRM) functions that significantly influence employee performance and satisfaction within organizations, including universities. In the context of private universities in South West Nigeria, these practices are particularly critical given the competitive educational environment and the unique organizational cultures that shape employee experiences. The effectiveness of recruitment and selection processes directly impacts not only the quality of academic and administrative staff but also the broader organizational outcomes, including employee job satisfaction and performance. This section critically examines recruitment and selection practices in universities through the lens of job satisfaction and organizational culture, drawing on contemporary empirical studies and theoretical insights.

Recruitment and selection in universities are strategic processes designed to attract and identify candidates who not only possess the requisite skills and qualifications but also align with the institution's values and culture. The alignment of individual and organizational values is crucial for fostering job satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee performance (J, 2014; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Job satisfaction, as established in the literature, is a mediator between HRM practices and

employee performance outcomes. For example, J (2014) highlights that recruitment strategies that emphasize cultural fit and employee engagement contribute significantly to job satisfaction and subsequent performance. Similarly, Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) argue that selecting employees whose personal values resonate with the organizational culture mitigates turnover intentions and promotes sustained performance. Therefore, recruitment and selection processes in private universities must be designed to ensure congruence between candidates' attributes and the organizational culture to optimize employee outcomes.

Organizational culture profoundly influences recruitment and selection practices in universities by shaping the criteria, procedures, and expectations used during these processes. A strong, positive organizational culture that values inclusivity, innovation, and academic excellence, as often seen in private universities, tends to attract and retain high-performing employees (Yücel, 2021; Pancasila, Haryono, & Sulistyo, 2020). Yücel (2021) asserts that transformational leadership, often embedded in progressive organizational cultures, enhances recruitment strategies by promoting a vision that attracts motivated and committed employees. This leadership style fosters an environment where recruitment and selection are not merely procedural but strategic activities that align with long-term institutional goals. Pancasila et al. (2020) further demonstrate that organizational culture, mediated by leadership and work motivation, significantly impacts employee satisfaction during recruitment, which in turn enhances employee performance. Hence, recruitment and selection practices in private universities must be integrative, reflecting and reinforcing the underlying organizational culture to maximize positive employee attitudes and behaviors.

Compensation and Reward Systems

Compensation and reward systems stand as pivotal components within human resource management practices that significantly influence employee satisfaction and performance, particularly in the context of private universities in South West Nigeria. The intricate relationship between compensation, employee motivation, organizational culture, and performance has been widely acknowledged in the literature, underscoring the necessity for institutions to develop equitable and effective reward mechanisms that align with their strategic goals and cultural values.

The role of compensation in fostering job satisfaction and enhancing employee performance is underscored by empirical research that highlights its direct impact on motivation. Chien et al. (2020) establish that appropriate financial incentives serve as crucial motivators that directly improve employee output by satisfying fundamental economic needs and reinforcing a sense of fairness within the workplace. Their study in the hospitality sector illustrates that when employees perceive their compensation as commensurate with their effort and contribution, it results in heightened work engagement and better performance outcomes. This correlation is likely transferrable to academic institutions where faculty and administrative staff expect compensation systems that recognize their professional contributions and foster sustained commitment.

Employee Relations and Welfare Practices

Employee relations and welfare practices constitute a pivotal component of human resources management (HRM) that significantly influences both organizational culture and employee performance. In the context of private universities in South West Nigeria, understanding the intricate dynamics of these practices is essential to appreciate their effect on job satisfaction and overall employee productivity. Employee relations encompass the strategies and systems put in place to maintain and enhance the employer-employee relationship, while welfare practices refer to the organizational efforts to safeguard employee well-being, both of which directly impact job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The literature indicates that positive employee relations foster an environment conducive to open communication, trust, and mutual respect, which are foundational elements for job satisfaction. Eliyana, Ma'arif, and Muzakki (2019) emphasize that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are heavily influenced by leadership styles that promote transformational leadership, which inherently strengthens employee relations. This leadership approach is often characterized by supportive and participative management, which translates into effective employee relations strategies and contributes to higher employee performance. Furthermore, Kuswati (2020) demonstrates that organizational culture, which is deeply entwined with employee relations, significantly influences employee performance. A culture that emphasizes collaboration, recognition, and inclusive communication enhances employee morale and satisfaction, thereby promoting superior performance outcomes.

Employee welfare practices, encompassing health benefits, work-life balance initiatives, and psychosocial support systems, play a crucial role in fostering job satisfaction and enhancing employee performance. Bataineh (2019) highlights that work-life balance and happiness at work are critical determinants of employee performance, suggesting that welfare practices that prioritize these aspects can directly augment employee productivity. In private universities, where faculty and staff often experience high workloads and stress, welfare programs aimed at mitigating these challenges can improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions. Similarly, Cooper et al. (2019) argue that well-being-oriented HRM practices, particularly those that

foster a positive social climate and resilience, are instrumental in promoting employee performance. Their study in the Chinese banking sector reveals that welfare practices that support psychological well-being and social support networks within organizations translate to enhanced employee engagement and performance, findings which can be extrapolated to the educational sector, including private universities in Nigeria.

Moreover, the integration of employee relations and welfare practices within the broader framework of organizational culture is critical for optimizing human resources management outcomes. Kuswati (2020) asserts that motivation, a key driver of employee performance, is significantly affected by organizational culture and related HRM practices, including welfare provisions. A strong, positive organizational culture that values employee welfare and nurtures healthy employee relations generates higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn propels enhanced performance. Nurdiansyah et al. (2020) further support this argument by demonstrating the positive relationship between job satisfaction, motivation, and employee performance, indicating that welfare practices that bolster job satisfaction are central to achieving optimal performance levels.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Resource Based View Theory

The Resourced Based Theory was developed by Jay Barney in 1991. The theory states that a firm derives a sustained competitive advantage from internal resources and capabilities. According to this theory, for such resources to give a business competitive edge in the market place, such resources must be valuable, rare, not capable of being imitated and not substitutable. The theory shifts attention from external factors to internal strengths, identifying the need for firms to leverage on unique assets like human capital, organizational culture, and proprietary technologies. In recent times, RBT has developed to capture concepts like dynamic capabilities, which enable firms to adjust and restructure its resources in order to react to the changes in business environments, guaranteeing sustained significance and performance (Akilo, et al., 2023).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory posits that an organization's sustainable competitive advantage is derived primarily from the valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources it controls (Pradhan & Jena, 2017; Kareem & Hussein, 2019). Within the context of human resource management (HRM) practices, this theory underscores the critical role human capital plays as a strategic asset that can enhance organizational performance. Specifically, RBV emphasizes that employees, through their skills, knowledge, and attitudes, constitute unique resources that are instrumental in shaping organizational outcomes, including those related to job satisfaction, organizational culture, and overall employee performance (Zhang et al., 2018; Kawiana et al., 2018). Hence, in private universities in South West Nigeria, understanding how HRM practices leverage these human resources is central to fostering an environment conducive to high performance and institutional sustainability.

Fundamentally, RBV theory implicates that effective HRM practices must focus on nurturing and developing internal human capital to transform it into a source of competitive advantage (Kareem & Hussein, 2019; Ali, Mahmood, & Mehreen, 2019). This aligns closely with the thematic concern of the study regarding the effect of job satisfaction and organizational culture on HRM practices and employee performance. For instance, job satisfaction, conceptualized within RBV as an intrinsic motivator linked to employee well-being and commitment, can be seen as a resource that positively influences employees' discretionary effort and productivity (Pradhan & Jena, 2017; Kawiana et al., 2018). Similarly, organizational culture embodies shared values, norms, and practices that shape employee behaviors and attitudes, which can be cultivated to create a knowledge-rich and collaborative environment, reinforcing unique internal capabilities (Zhang et al., 2018; Yunita & Saputra, 2019). Therefore, the RBV framework provides a theoretical lens to explore how these intangible resources interact with HRM practices to enhance employee performance, particularly in the competitive and resource-constrained environment of private universities in Nigeria.

Moreover, the RBV theory stresses the mediating role of HRM practices as mechanisms through which organizations develop and deploy their human resources effectively (Ali et al., 2019; Arif et al., 2019). In this regard, HRM systems—such as recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and discipline function as strategic tools that shape employee capabilities and motivations, which in turn impact performance outcomes (Zhang et al., 2018; Kareem & Hussein, 2019). For instance, performance appraisal systems embedded within a supportive organizational culture can foster feedback-oriented behaviors, enhancing job satisfaction and individual performance (Kawiana et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2019). Thus, from the RBV perspective, the synergy between job satisfaction, organizational culture, and HRM practices generates valuable human capital that is difficult for competitors to replicate, ultimately driving superior employee performance in private universities.

This theory is relevant to the relevance to the study in the sense that in the private universities in Nigeria, it highlights the strategic importance of HRM practices such as training and development, promotion, performance management, job design, employee engagement, and compensation and benefits as key resources that can improve employee performance. These HRM

practices, when efficiently applied, helps to develop human capital that cannot be easily imitated by other universities, thus enhancing a competitive edge. For example, research have shown that strategic HRM practice have positive effects on employee performance in Nigerian universities, stressing the role of HRM in assisting a university to achieve success. Moreover, studies showed that HRM practices considerably affect employee retention and performance in private universities in Nigeria (Nkeobuna, et al., 2020).

Another way in which RBV theory is relevant to this study is that HRM practices such as compensation and benefits, employee engagement, performance management, job design, promotion and training and development can be viewed as strategic devices that help to increase the value of human capital. For instance, through training & development and job design, the skills of employees are enhanced, compensation & benefits and engagement keep employees motivated while performance management and promotion assist in increasing the productivity of employees. The theory also views motivation and job satisfaction as the outcomes of HRM practices and also serve as path through which HRM affects the performance of employees. Stated in a different way, HRM practices create psychological conditions such as increase in motivation and job performance of employees. Motivated and satisfied employees on the other hand, increases the performance of employees (Nkeobuna, et al.,2020). The theory is also relevant to this study as it supports the role of organisational support and leadership style in increasing the effectiveness of HRM practices, thus leading to higher employee performance. For instance, organisational support helps to integrate and utilise HRM practices while leadership style, especially transformational leadership style has influence on the way HR policies are communicated, implemented and adopted. Transformational leadership, for example may strengthen the effects of training or promotion policies.

Finally, the RBV progressive theory that fosters innovation and flexibility. The theory stresses the importance of dynamic capabilities-that is the ability of a firm to restructure and adapt assets to dynamic business environment. The theory provides organization with framework for continuous innovation. This adaptability is necessary for maintain relevance in the face of rapid technological development and changes in market demands. In relation to this, Teece (2017) argues that a firm that develops dynamic capabilities have the capacity to continuously innovate and adapt its resource base, therefore, sustaining a sustainable competitive advantage. This strength makes RBV to continue to be relevant in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

Also, RBV theory has been criticised for over stressing internal resources, this can result in ignoring the significance of external variables. RBV places substantial attention on internal assets, ignoring the importance of market dynamics, industry competition and opportunities and threat that exist in the external environment (Amit & Schoemaker, 2013). Opponents are of the view that when the business environment is dynamic and competitive, resources alone may not deliver competitive advantage. For instance, a firm operating in an increasingly changing industries must also put into consideration how external forces, like as technological advancements or regulatory changes, affect their performance. Focusing only on internal resources may reduce the capacity of firms to adjust or respond to external factors (Teece, 2017).

Moreover, another criticism of RBV is being too firm-centric and neglecting the significance of networks and collaborations in acquiring resources and competitive edge. The theory seems to view a firm as an isolated entity that depend majorly on internal resources for competition, but ignores the role of inter-firm relationships and strategic alliances. In today's globalized and interconnected business environment, firms usually depend on networks, partnerships, and collaborations in order to gain access to complementary resources (Dyer & Singh, 1998). These external relationships, which RBV ignores, can play a vital role in enhancing innovation and gaining access to key resources that a firm cannot possess internally.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory propounded by a psychologist and motivational scholar called Frederick Herzberg in 1959. The theory is of the view that different factors affect employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction and these factors are termed motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators according to this theory include achievement, recognition and opportunities for growth and these factors are intrinsic in nature and makes employees to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation. On the other hand, hygiene factors like salary, working conditions and firms polices are extrinsic factors that need to be available to prevent dissatisfaction, they do not directly influence job satisfaction. Based on this, an improvement in hygiene factors only helps in reducing job dissatisfaction, while improvement in motivating factors results in increase in employee engagement and performance (Alvi et al., 2021). The theory is still relevant in modern organizational settings, particularly in gaining insights into how job design and management practices affect employee motivation and retention (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, provides a foundational framework for understanding the dynamics of job satisfaction and its influence on employee performance, particularly within the context of human resource management practices and organizational culture. This theory postulates that job satisfaction and

dissatisfaction arise from two distinct sets of factors: motivators (intrinsic factors) and hygiene factors (extrinsic factors). Motivators, such as achievement, recognition, and the nature of the work itself, lead to higher job satisfaction and enhanced performance. Conversely, hygiene factors, including salary, company policies, and working conditions, primarily prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily motivate employees to perform better (Kumari & Singh, 2018; Ek & Mukuru, 2018).

The relevance of Herzberg's theory in the context of private universities in South West Nigeria is underscored by the complex interplay between organizational culture, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Kumari and Singh (2018) emphasize that organizational culture significantly influences employee motivation by shaping the work environment and the availability of both hygiene and motivator factors. A positive organizational culture that supports employee recognition, provides meaningful work, and ensures adequate working conditions can effectively enhance job satisfaction, aligning with Herzberg's premise that motivators drive employees to higher performance levels. Furthermore, Ek and Mukuru (2018) reinforce this argument by demonstrating that motivation, rooted in intrinsic job factors, substantially impacts employee performance in educational institutions, thereby highlighting the importance of addressing both motivational and hygiene needs in human resource management practices.

Herzberg suggested that the presence of motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition) results in satisfaction while the absence of hygiene factors (e.g., salary, supervision) lead to dissatisfaction. The implication of this separation is that the prevention of dissatisfaction does not necessarily lead to satisfaction, thus challenging earlier theories such as Maslow's hierarchy which proposed a more linear movement (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

The second key assumption of the theory is that motivational factors are intrinsic in nature and are needed for achieving true satisfaction. These factors are factors relating to the work itself and which provides opportunities for personal growth, responsibility and recognition. Herzberg opined that motivation only be realised by job enrichment- by adding meaningful tasks and autonomy (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). This assumption recognises the critical role of job design in management strategies, signifying that improvement in salary alone will not bring about job satisfaction.

The third assumption identifies hygiene factors as extrinsic to the job and, although they do not enhance satisfaction, there absence can result in dissatisfaction. Such factors include working conditions, company policies, interpersonal relationships, and job security. Herzberg laid emphasis on preserving satisfactory hygiene standards in order to prevent employee dissatisfaction but that does not adequately bring about improved performance or engagement (Alshmemri et al., 2017). The implication of this is that business organisations must advance beyond the provision of basic conditions and focus attention on intrinsic motivators to increase employee performance.

Herzberg assumed that the only way true motivation can be achieved is through job enrichment, which means adding responsibilities that give employees more autonomy, purpose, and recognition. Herzberg contend that an employee needs to feel that his work is meaningful and that he is contributing to the firm success for him to be truly satisfied. This assumption has resulted in the development of modern HRM practices such as job redesign, participative management, and employee empowerment, which remain essential to motivation strategies today (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015).

Herzberg Two factor theory is relevant to the study of HRM practices and employee performance in private universities in South West in Nigeria as the theory assists in differentiating between motivators (Intrinsic factors like achievement and recognition) and hygiene factors (extrinsic factors like salary and working conditions). In the context of private universities in Nigeria, HRM practices such as compensation and benefits, training and development, promotion, employee engagement, job design affects job performance of employees. For example, studies revealed that increment in salary and promotion opportunities can enhance employee performance significantly. The theory is also relevant to this study because it helps in classifying the HRM practices into motivators and hygiene factors. For instance, compensation and benefits in classified as a hygiene factor, employee engagement, job design, promotion and training are categorized as motivators while performance management can be viewed as a motivator and at the same time a hygiene factor. The theory also shows that job satisfaction is the outcome of hygiene factors (compensation and benefits) while factors HRM practices such as promotion, training, among others increases employee motivation. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is also helps to incorporate the role of moderating variables (organisational support and leadership styles) in influencing the effectiveness of HRM practices, thereby increasing or reducing both satisfaction and motivation.

The strengths of the study have been identifying. One of the major strengths of the theory is that it clearly states the difference between the factors that lead to job satisfaction (motivators) and those that can bring about dissatisfaction (hygiene factors). This distinction assists firms to understand that enhancing elements such as salary and work condition may help in preventing dissatisfaction but may not certainly result in higher employee motivation. Rather, motivators like recognition,

achievement, and responsibility are vital for improving job satisfaction (Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, & Maude, 2017). With this, firms can adopt a more targeted method to employee motivation.

Finally, Herzberg's theory has meaningfully affected job design values and organizational psychology. Concepts such as job enrichment, job enlargement, and empowerment are entrenched in the theory's central ideas (Lee & Raschke, 2016). By applying these values, organizations can design roles that are not only effective but also psychologically rewarding. This results in a more engaged and productive employees, improving both employee well-being and organizational performance.

Another major limitation of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory lies in oversimplifying the complex nature of human motivation. It assumes a distinctive separation between factors that cause satisfaction and those that leads dissatisfaction, still in practice, the same factor (e.g., salary or job security) can affect both satisfaction and dissatisfaction contingent on the setting (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2015). Contemporary motivation theories, like self-determination theory, submit that motivation occurs on a continuum and is affected by a variety of interconnected factors, making Herzberg's binary model less inclusive for providing explanation about employee behaviour in changing work environments.

Practically, applying of Herzberg's theory can be challenging for businesses. While firms are encouraged to improve employee motivation through job enrichment, it usually demands substantial changes in job design, management style, and organizational structure. These alterations can consume a lot of time, be expensive and difficult to maintain, mostly in large or rigid organizations (Yusoff, Tan, & Idris, 2023). Furthermore, there is no clear-cut way of differentiating between hygiene factors and motivators in real-world situations, which confounds efforts to design efficient motivation tactics based only on the theory.

In summary, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides a robust conceptual lens through which the effect of job satisfaction and organizational culture on human resource management practices and employee performance can be critically examined in private universities in South West Nigeria. The theory's emphasis on the dual roles of motivators and hygiene factors aligns with empirical evidence that organizational culture and job satisfaction are pivotal in shaping employee performance outcomes (Kumari & Singh, 2018; Soomro et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2019). Effective HRM practices must therefore strive to minimize dissatisfaction by addressing hygiene factors while simultaneously enhancing motivation through intrinsic job factors. This balanced approach is essential for fostering an environment conducive to high employee performance and sustainable organizational success in the competitive higher education sector.

Empirical Review

Mohammadi and Karupiah (2020) conducted a comparative study to assess the Quality of Work Life (QWL) and academic staff performance in both public and private universities in Malaysia. The researchers adopted a quantitative research design using a descriptive survey method. The study employed stratified random sampling to select a total sample of 420 academic staff across 6 universities (3 public and 3 private). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured constructs of job satisfaction and employee performance. The researchers applied Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis for data analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$) between job satisfaction and employee performance. Specifically, higher job satisfaction led to improvements in teaching effectiveness, research output, and institutional commitment. Recommendations from the study emphasized the need for private universities to enhance job satisfaction by improving workplace conditions, offering competitive remuneration, and encouraging professional growth.

Dinibutun et al. (2020) explored the impact of organizational climate on faculty burnout and performance in state and private universities in Turkey. A comparative cross-sectional research design was utilized. The researchers used purposive sampling to select 386 faculty members from 5 universities. Data were gathered through a standardized questionnaire consisting of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and organizational climate scales. Analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS. The study found that a supportive organizational climate significantly reduces burnout ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < 0.01$) and enhances job satisfaction and performance ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). Notably, private universities with a positive work culture recorded better faculty outcomes. Recommendations called for enhancing university climate by involving faculty in decision-making, offering psychosocial support, and encouraging transparent leadership.

Cahyono et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between service quality, university image, and student satisfaction in private universities in Indonesia, emphasizing the indirect role of faculty job satisfaction. A mixed-method research design was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The sample size was 520 undergraduate students, selected through systematic random sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using path analysis, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Results showed that faculty job satisfaction significantly improved service quality, which positively influenced university image and student satisfaction (indirect effect = 0.49, $p < 0.05$). The study recommended that universities prioritize faculty satisfaction to enhance institutional reputation and student engagement.

Akgül (2020) conducted an evaluative study on website accessibility and quality performance in Turkish universities, indirectly associating these indicators with staff satisfaction and motivation. The study employed a quantitative content analysis design. A total of 120 university websites (60 private, 60 public) were selected using stratified sampling. Using automated accessibility evaluation tools (e.g., WAVE, Lighthouse), the researcher analyzed website structure, usability, and content quality. Findings indicated that universities with high-performing websites were often those with better internal quality assurance systems, including higher employee satisfaction and organizational efficiency. While job satisfaction was not directly measured, the study emphasized the interconnectedness of employee motivation and service quality in higher education. Recommendations include investment in ICT infrastructure and continuous training for staff to maintain high service standards.

Rahman et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative case study exploring medium of instruction ideologies in public and private universities in Bangladesh, focusing on the impact of organizational culture on job satisfaction. Using a phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 24 academic staff (12 from public, 12 from private institutions). Thematic analysis revealed that management style and organizational norms significantly affected faculty job satisfaction and performance. Private universities that allowed autonomy and academic freedom reported higher satisfaction, while rigid institutional cultures led to dissatisfaction. The researchers recommended adopting context-sensitive HR practices that respect employee autonomy and align with institutional culture to boost performance.

Zulfiker et al. (2020) utilized machine learning algorithms to predict student performance, identifying academic staff satisfaction and performance as key predictors. The study adopted a quantitative predictive research design using secondary data from student records and faculty evaluations across eight private universities. They applied Random Forest and Support Vector Machine (SVM) models to analyze over 15,000 student records. Results indicated that faculty engagement and job satisfaction were significant predictors of student GPA and retention rates. The study recommended that private universities optimize faculty welfare programs and enhance HR policies to indirectly boost student success through better staff performance.

Asiegbu and Isa (2024) conducted a study to investigate the effect of compensation on employees' job performance (EJP) in Ministry of Education in Adamawa State. The specific objectives of the study were to determine the extent to which compensation packages influence EJP and the degree to which salary and bonus affect EJP. In order to achieve these objectives, the study utilized correlational design, targeting 1,540 employees in all the 21 Local Government Area in the state. However, data was collected from 1,232 staff. The respondents were selected through proportional stratified sampling while PPMC was employed in data analysis. Findings revealed that a strong positive correlation existed between compensation packages and EJP. Similarly, the association between salary and EJP was positive and significant at 0.05 level of significance. This study provided specific insights to the link between compensation and EP by concentrating on the Ministry of Education in Adamawa State. However, the use of PPMC in estimating relationship limits the use of findings for making policy.

Ogbonnaya, et al. (2024) sought to determine the influence of compensation on EP among private universities in North-Central, Nigeria. Drawing from Herzberg two-factor theory and adopting descriptive survey design, the study targeted all the 1903 employees, out of which 1312 were selected as sample. The selection of sampling units was done through simple random sampling and collection of data was done through the use of a structured questionnaire. To ensure that the questionnaire was valid and reliable, pilot study was conducted. Both descriptive and regression analyses were used to analyze data. Findings showed that the effects of competitive salaries, indirect compensation and non-financial compensation on EP were positive and statistically significant. By utilizing large sample size and covering universities in North Central, Nigeria, the study adds to existing studies, as majority of empirical studies failed to capture the area. However, findings cannot be applied to private universities in other regions or countries. This represents a limitation that will be addressed by the present study and subsequent ones.

3. METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study includes both academic and non-teaching staff of the six selected private universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The staff population consists of employees across various cadres, including junior and senior administrative officers, lecturers, professors, and support staff. The estimated staff population in each university will be obtained from the Registry Departments of the selected institutions (2025) as follows:

Table 1 Population of Academic and Non- Teaching Staff of Universities

S/N	University	Academic Staff	Non-Teaching Staff	Total Staff
1	Ajayi Crowther University (ACU)	380	320	700
2	Elizade University	300	270	570
3	Chrisland University	240	220	460
4	ABUAD	520	430	950
5	Kings University	190	170	360
6	Anchor University	260	230	490
Total		**1,890**	**1** as Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo (ACU) – Oyo State, Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin – Ondo State, Chrisland University, Abeokuta – Ogun State, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD) – Ekiti State, Kings University, Odeomu – Osun State and Anchor University, Lagos – Lagos State.**,640**	**3,530**

Source: Registry Departments of Selected Universities (2026)

Thus, the overall population (N = 3,530) comprises a diverse mix of academic disciplines and administrative departments, allowing for a holistic analysis of HRM practices and their effect on performance outcomes.

The sample size for this study was 359. This sample size was adequate to provide reliable estimates of the relationships among the variables being studied. To ensure a representative and manageable sample from the total population of staff members across the six selected private universities, this study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. At first stage, purposive Sampling was used to select six private universities in Southwestern Nigeria based on criteria such as institutional size, diversity of staff, operational structure, and visible human resource management practices. At the second stage, stratified Sampling was used within each university, the population will be stratified into academic and non-teaching staff to ensure proportional representation across both categories. At the final stage, convenience sampling was applied for questionnaire administration, based on the availability and willingness of staff to participate. To determine an appropriate sample size, Taro Yamane's (1967) formula was employed:

$$n = \frac{N}{[1+N(e)^2]}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = total population (2,400)
- e= margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{3,530}{1+3,530(0.0025)} = \frac{3,530}{1+8.825} = \frac{3,530}{9.825} = 359.28$$

n = 359

Hence, the sample size was 359 respondents, deemed statistically adequate and logistically feasible for this research. The sample was proportionally allocated to each university based on the institution's total staff strength as follows:

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution was determined to be statistically adequate and representative.

S/N	University	Academic Staff	Non-Teaching Staff	Total Staff	Academic Staff Sample	Non-Teaching Staff Sample	Total Sample
1	Ajayi Crowther University (ACU)	380	320	700	39	32	71
2	Elizade University	300	270	570	31	27	58

3	Chrisland University	240	220	460	22	22	47
4	ABUAD	520	430	950	53	44	97
5	Kings University	190	170	360	20	17	37
6	Anchor University	260	230	490	26	23	49
	Total	**1,890**	**1,640**	**3,530**	**191**	**168**	**359**

Source: Author Survey Field (2025)

This method of proportional allocation ensures inclusiveness, accuracy, and the representativeness of various staff categories across the six universities, thereby enhancing the generalizability and validity of the study's findings. This proportional distribution ensures inclusivity and representativeness across institutions and staff categories.

Hypothesis was tested at a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$), and results was interpreted in light of existing literature and theoretical frameworks underpinning HRM and performance

These analytical techniques enabled hypothesis testing and robust interpretation of results in line with the study objectives.

To assess the empirical link between job satisfaction and employee performance in private universities in South-West Nigeria. This objective was achieved through correlation analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance. Additionally, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate the predictive effect of job satisfaction on employee performance. This dual approach provides both relational and predictive insights into the link between these two constructs.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
AGE	**18-25Yrs**	69	19.2	19.2	19.2
	26-35Yrs	124	34.5	34.5	53.8
	36-45Yrs	106	29.5	29.5	83.3
	46–55Yrs	49	13.6	13.6	96.9
	56Yrs and Above	11	3.1	3.1	100.0
	Total	**359**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
MARITAL STATUS	**Single**	58	16.2	16.2	16.2
	Married	238	66.3	66.3	82.5
	Divorced/ Separated	32	8.9	8.9	91.4
	Widowed	31	8.6	8.6	100.0
	Total	**359**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	**OND/NCE**	21	5.8	5.8	5.8
	B.Sc/B.Ed/B.A	84	23.4	23.4	29.2
	M.Sc/M.Ed/ M.A/MBA	86	24.0	24.0	53.2
	Ph.D	96	26.7	26.7	79.9
	Others	72	20.1	20.1	100.0
	Total	**359**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
ACADEMIC DESIGNATION/RANK	**GA**	17	4.7	4.7	4.7
	AL	60	16.7	16.7	21.4
	LII	42	11.7	11.7	33.1
	LI	70	19.5	19.5	52.6
	SL	78	21.7	21.7	74.4
	AP	29	8.1	8.1	82.5
	Prof	17	4.7	4.7	87.2

	N-Teaching	46	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	**359**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: Field Survey; 2026

The analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents reveals a relatively young and academically inclined group, largely drawn from the higher education sector. A closer look at the age distribution shows that the majority of participants fall within the 26 to 35 years (34.5%) and 36 to 45 years (29.5%) age brackets. Combined, these two categories account for over 64% of the sample, indicating that most respondents are in their early to mid-career stages. Additionally, 19.2% of the respondents are between 18 and 25 years, suggesting a fair representation of younger professionals or recent entrants into the academic workforce. Meanwhile, those aged 46 to 55 years constitute 13.6%, and only a small fraction (3.1%) are 56 years and above. This pattern highlights a predominantly youthful and active workforce.

Furthermore, the marital status distribution reflects a largely settled population, with 66.3% of respondents being married. This suggests that many of the participants may have established family lives, which could influence their perspectives on work-life balance and institutional commitment. In contrast, 16.2% of the respondents are single, while 8.9% are either divorced or separated. An additional 8.6% are widowed, indicating some diversity in personal circumstances.

Moreover, the educational qualifications of the respondents point to a highly educated sample. A significant portion of about 26.7% holds doctoral degrees (Ph.D), while another 24.0% possess master's degrees such as M.Sc, M.Ed, M.A, or MBA. First degree holders (B.Sc, B.Ed, B.A) make up 23.4%, and a smaller percentage (5.8%) hold OND or NCE qualifications. Interestingly, 20.1% of the respondents reported having other qualifications, possibly including professional certifications or international degrees. This distribution underscores the academic depth and intellectual capacity of the participants, indicating that their responses are grounded in a strong educational background.

In addition, the occupational distribution of respondents shows a broad representation across various academic ranks. Senior Lecturers account for the highest proportion at 21.7%, followed by Lecturer I (19.5%) and Assistant Lecturers (16.7%). Lecturer II and Associate Professors represent 11.7% and 8.1% of the sample respectively, while Professors and Graduate Assistants each constitute 4.7%. Notably, 12.8% of the respondents are non-teaching staff, reflecting a mix of academic and administrative perspectives. This diverse composition suggests that the study captures insights from a wide spectrum of institutional roles, enhancing the richness of the data.

Table 4: The Empirical Link between Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance in Private Universities in South-West Nigeria.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	D (%)	S D (%)	**Mean**	**St. Dev**	**Median**
I feel satisfied with the nature of my job responsibilities.	85 (23.7%)	111 (30.9%)	67 (18.7%)	52 (14.5%)	44 (12.3%)	3.39	1.320	4.00
My job provides me with a sense of accomplishment.	97 (27.0%)	98 (27.3%)	70 (19.5%)	56 (15.6%)	38 (10.6%)	3.45	1.319	4.00
I am satisfied with the opportunities for career growth in this university.	86 (24.0%)	106 (29.5%)	69 (19.2%)	63 (17.5%)	35 (9.7%)	3.40	1.289	4.00
The feedback I receive on my job performance is helpful and constructive.	96 (26.7%)	112 (31.2%)	52 (14.5%)	60 (16.7%)	39 (10.9%)	3.46	1.332	4.00
I am satisfied with the support and cooperation I receive from my colleagues.	86 (24.0%)	116 (32.3%)	68 (18.9%)	53 (14.8%)	36 (10.0%)	3.45	1.276	4.00
My salary and other financial benefits reflect the effort I put into my work.	95 (26.5%)	111 (30.9%)	64 (17.8%)	51 (14.2%)	38 (10.6%)	3.48	1.305	4.00
I am satisfied with the level of recognition I receive for my achievements.	86 (24.0%)	109 (30.4%)	83 (23.1%)	46 (12.8%)	35 (9.7%)	3.46	1.254	4.00

The working conditions and physical environment enhance my productivity.	93 (25.9%)	99 (27.6%)	75 (20.9%)	48 (13.4%)	44 (12.3%)	3.42	1.330	4.00
I am motivated to perform better when I am satisfied with my job.	81 (22.6%)	110 (30.6%)	80 (22.3%)	52 (14.5%)	36 (10.0%)	3.41	1.261	4.00
My satisfaction with my job positively influences my commitment to the university's goals.	92 (25.6%)	113 (31.5%)	64 (17.8%)	53 (14.8%)	37 (10.3%)	3.47	1.296	4.00
I feel more productive when I receive adequate training and professional development.	89 (24.8%)	98 (27.3%)	79 (22.0%)	59 (16.4%)	34 (9.5%)	3.42	1.281	4.00
There is a clear link between my job satisfaction and my level of performance.	76 (21.2%)	113 (31.5%)	79 (22.0%)	48 (13.4%)	43 (12.0%)	3.36	1.283	4.00
I often go beyond my official responsibilities when I am happy with my job.	90 (25.1%)	109 (30.4%)	67 (18.7%)	59 (16.4%)	34 (9.5%)	3.45	1.285	4.00
My performance has improved over time due to increased job satisfaction.	92 (25.6%)	89 (24.8%)	82 (22.8%)	62 (17.3%)	34 (9.5%)	3.40	1.292	4.00
I would recommend this university as a good place to work based on my satisfaction and performance.	87 (24.2%)	107 (29.8%)	79 (22.0%)	45 (12.5%)	41 (11.4%)	3.43	1.292	4.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results presented in Table 4.2.2 shows the empirical relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance in private universities across South-West Nigeria. From the analysis, the responses suggest a generally positive.

It was revealed from Table 4.2.2 that a large proportion of respondents indicated satisfaction with the nature of their job responsibilities, with more than half expressing agreement or strong agreement. Although the mean score of 3.39 suggests a generally positive perception, the relatively high standard deviation (1.320) reflects some divergence in views. Similarly, a sense of accomplishment derived from their work was affirmed by many, as evidenced by a slightly higher mean of 3.45, and a similar trend was observed in satisfaction with career growth opportunities (mean = 3.40). These findings imply that while intrinsic aspects of the job contribute to satisfaction, there remains room for enhancement, particularly in growth-related areas.

Feedback mechanisms also received moderately favourable ratings. Employees generally agreed that the feedback they received was helpful and constructive, with a mean of 3.46, suggesting that performance evaluations are contributing positively to job satisfaction and subsequent performance. Peer support also emerged as a key component of satisfaction, with 56.3% of respondents acknowledging the cooperation and assistance received from colleagues (mean = 3.45), indicating a healthy workplace social environment.

In terms of extrinsic rewards, the perception of fairness in salary and benefits was moderately strong (mean = 3.48), although a notable portion of the respondents remained neutral or expressed dissatisfaction. Recognition for achievements was also positively rated (mean = 3.46), reinforcing the role of acknowledgment in driving job satisfaction.

Physical working conditions and the environment were perceived to somewhat enhance productivity, with a mean score of 3.42. While most respondents were satisfied, the relatively high variability in responses points to inconsistencies in infrastructure or amenities across institutions.

A significant number of respondents confirmed that job satisfaction has a motivational effect on performance. The statement, "I am motivated to perform better when I am satisfied with my job," recorded a mean of 3.41, highlighting satisfaction as a driver of improved output. Similarly, satisfaction was seen to influence organizational commitment (mean = 3.47), affirming that content employees are more aligned with institutional goals.

Training and professional development were also recognized as influential to productivity, with a mean of 3.42. This indicates that while the provision of skill-enhancing opportunities is appreciated, more consistent or impactful offerings may be necessary to meet employee expectations.

When asked directly about the link between job satisfaction and performance, respondents generally agreed (mean = 3.36), albeit with a wider spread in opinions. However, many affirmed that job satisfaction encouraged them to go beyond their official duties (mean = 3.45), suggesting that satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit discretionary behavior that enhances overall organizational effectiveness. In addition, employees indicated that their performance has improved over time as a result of increased job satisfaction (mean = 3.40), although some variation in this response suggests that satisfaction alone may not fully account for improved outcomes. Finally, a high proportion of employees (mean = 3.43) expressed willingness to recommend their university as a good workplace.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis between Human Resources Management Practices and Employees Performance in Private Universities in South West Nigeria

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**standardized Coefficients**		**Sig.**	**VIF**
	Beta	**St. Error**	**Beta**	**t**		
(Constant)	1.023	.237		4.317	.000	
Recruitment and Selection	.104	.029	.155	3.562	.000	1.017
Employees involvement	.023	.028	.035	.801	.424	1.012
R –Square	.642					
Adjusted R Sq	.633					
F Stat	36.725					
Prob. F Stat	0.00					
Durbin Watson	2.981					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The result of the multiple regression analysis between human resource management practices and employee performance in private universities in South West Nigeria is presented in Table 4.5. In line with a priori expectations, the coefficient of compensation and reward is positive and statistically significant at the 5 percent level. Specifically, a unit increase in compensation and reward improves employee performance by 20.5 percent. Similarly, recruitment and selection is positively related to employee performance and is statistically significant at 5 percent level. The result shows that a unit increase in effective recruitment and selection improves emploayee performance by 10.4 percent.

Furthermore, training and development has a positive and significant relationship with employee performance in the study area. A unit increase in training and development raises employee performance by 22.7 percent. Likewise, the performance appraisal system is also positively signed and statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The result reveals that a unit improvement in the performance appraisal system increases employee performance by 24.3 percent.

However, the result showed that employee involvement is positively related to employee performance but not statistically significant at the 5 percent level. This suggests that although involvement appears to have a positive influence, its effect is not strong enough to be considered statistically meaningful. This may be due to the fact that decision-making processes in private universities are largely top-down, with limited room for active staff participation in institutional planning and governance.

The adjusted R-squared value for the model stood at 0.633, indicating that about 63 percent of the variations in employee performance are accounted for by variations in compensation and reward, recruitment and selection, employee involvement, training and development, and performance appraisal system, while the remaining 37 percent can be attributed to other factors outside the model. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.981 suggests no evidence of autocorrelation in the model residuals, affirming the reliability of the regression estimates.

In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range from 1.006 to 1.021 for all the explanatory variables. These values are well below the commonly accepted value of 10. This result implies that there is no multicollinearity problem among the HRM practices in the model. In other words, compensation and reward; recruitment and selection; employee involvement; training

and development, and performance appraisal system are not highly correlated with one another. The probability of F statistic which stood at 0.00 is highly significant and this implies that collectively, the linear combination of the independent variables used in this study are statistically significant in explaining employee performance among staffers of the selected private institutions in South west Nigeria.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of job satisfaction further indicates its critical role in driving performance. With a strong correlation coefficient of 0.782 and a significant regression coefficient, the results showed that satisfied employees perform better. This means that job satisfaction contributes directly to higher levels of motivation, commitment, and productivity. The implication of this is that institutions should prioritize policies that promote satisfaction, including welfare, supportive supervision, career advancement opportunities, and fair treatment. This finding is in consonance with Kaya and Seylan (2014), who reported that job satisfaction was positively linked with employee performance, and in agreement with Breaden and Goodman (2020), who found that satisfied staff exhibited greater teaching effectiveness. It also corroborates Ashraf (2019), who emphasized satisfaction as a key driver of employee productivity in the education sector.

The relationship between HRM practices and job satisfaction was also established. Compensation and reward, training, and appraisal all showed strong positive correlations with satisfaction, while recruitment and involvement were weak and insignificant. This means that while HRM systems that directly affect employees' welfare and career development significantly influence satisfaction, recruitment and involvement practices may not shape satisfaction levels in the same way. The implication of this is that HRM policies should place greater emphasis on reward, development, and appraisal as tools for building satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with Anabila, Narteh, and Tweneboah-Koduah (2019), who found that compensation and appraisal influenced satisfaction in Ghana, and in consonance with Banshal, Singh, and Mayr (2019), who emphasized training as a satisfaction driver in Indian institutions.

The mediation analysis further revealed that job satisfaction partially mediates the HRM–performance relationship. This means that while HRM practices directly improve performance, their effectiveness is enhanced when they also improve job satisfaction. The implication of this is that HRM practices should not only be technically sound but also employee-centered, ensuring that staff feel valued and supported. This finding corroborates Judge et al. (2001), whose happy–productive worker hypothesis emphasized satisfaction as a pathway to performance, and is in agreement with Farooq et al. (2019), who reported mediation effects of satisfaction in Malaysian firms.

CONCLUSION

The evidence indicates that well-structured HRM practices such as transparent recruitment processes, equitable compensation systems, continuous professional development, performance appraisal, and recognition mechanisms are foundational to enhancing academic and non-academic staff performance. This aligns with the broader strategic human resource management (SHRM) literature, which posits that organizations derive sustainable performance advantages when HR policies are aligned with institutional goals and employee expectations. In the context of private universities, where competitiveness, accreditation standards, and service quality are critical, effective HRM practices serve not only administrative purposes but also strategic imperatives.

A key contribution of this study lies in its identification of job satisfaction as both a direct determinant of performance and a partial mediator in the HRM–performance nexus. The mediating effect suggests that HRM practices do not automatically translate into enhanced performance; rather, their impact is contingent upon employees' psychological evaluation of their work environment. Employees who perceive fairness in promotion decisions, adequacy in training opportunities, clarity in performance expectations, and recognition of their contributions are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment, engagement, and productivity. This finding resonates with contemporary motivational theories and empirical studies that link job satisfaction to reduced turnover intentions, improved organizational citizenship behaviour, and increased task performance.

Importantly, the study highlights that job satisfaction in private universities is influenced not only by monetary rewards but also by intrinsic factors such as professional autonomy, collegial relationships, academic freedom, workload management, and opportunities for scholarly growth. In knowledge-driven institutions like universities, intellectual stimulation and recognition of academic achievements play a critical role in shaping employee attitudes. Therefore, HRM strategies that overlook these intrinsic dimensions risk undermining long-term institutional effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Given that job satisfaction emerged as a strong predictor of employee performance and a mediator of the HRM–performance relationship, management should prioritize policies that foster employee well-being. This includes creating a supportive work environment, recognizing employee contributions, and providing career growth opportunities. By aligning HRM practices with employee expectations, universities can sustain motivation and commitment.

ii. Although organizational culture directly contributed positively to performance, it was also found to weaken the impact of HRM practices when rigid or hierarchical. Universities should therefore work towards building flexible and supportive cultures that encourage participation, innovation, and shared values. A culture that empowers rather than constrains will amplify the effectiveness of HRM systems.

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