

The Function of Human Resource Management in Fostering Industrial Peace Within Organizations in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in fostering industrial peace in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. A quantitative research design was adopted, involving a population of 10,368 academic and non-academic staff across eight universities. Using the Yamane formula, a sample of 385 respondents was selected, and data was collected through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics, while Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships between HRM practices and industrial peace. The findings reveal significant positive relationships between all HRM practices and industrial peace, particularly employee relations and voice mechanisms ($r = 0.674$), compensation and benefits ($r = 0.627$), performance management ($r = 0.525$), training and development ($r = 0.496$), and recruitment and selection ($r = 0.423$). The results suggest that industrial peace is achieved through deliberate and strategic HRM practices rather than occurring by chance. The study recommends that university management prioritize fair compensation systems, strengthen communication channels, invest in employee development, and ensure merit-based recruitment processes. These measures are essential for promoting stability, improving productivity, and enhancing institutional performance.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, industrial peace, performance management, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The workplace comprises individuals with diverse values, beliefs, and behavioural orientations. Employees are central to organizational success, as they contribute directly to productivity, growth, and overall performance (Femi et al., 2019). Effective collaboration between employees and management which is commonly referred to as industrial harmony; hence, it is therefore essential for organizational efficiency and sustainability (Ahmed & Popoola, 2021). However, industrial conflict is often inevitable due to inherent differences in interests, particularly regarding wages, working conditions, and employment policies.

Industrial harmony refers to a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between management and employees, characterized by trust, respect, and shared commitment to organizational goals. It reflects a structured work environment in which both parties work collaboratively to enhance productivity and performance. Similarly, industrial relations encompass the day-to-day interactions between employers and employees, including mechanisms for managing conflicts and regulating workplace practices (Ramprakash & Harini, 2022). A well-functioning industrial relations system is therefore critical for achieving industrial peace, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria.

In the context of Nigerian public universities, industrial harmony remains a significant challenge. Persistent conflicts between university management and staff unions have negatively affected

institutional productivity and the broader socio-economic development of the country. Frequent strikes and disputes disrupt academic calendars, hinder research activities, and reduce the quality of graduates, thereby limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to national development. Recent experiences in Nigerian tertiary institutions highlight the severity of this issue. Prolonged strike actions have led to extended academic disruptions, reduced research output, and declining stakeholder confidence in the higher education system (Nwafor et al., 2023). These challenges are often linked to ineffective human resource management (HRM) practices, particularly in areas such as communication, employee relations, and compensation.

Recently, public educational institutions in Nigeria have faced discord, instability, and various types of industrial conflict. A significant factor contributing to industrial disharmony in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been attributed to ineffective communication, leading to diminished productivity. Reduced productivity within an organization can lead to conflict between management and employees. Fejoh et al. (2021) confirm that many higher education institutions in Nigeria face conflicts due to inadequate communication between the administration and the students. Higher education institutions, similar to other contemporary organizations, experience conflicts and conflicting goals, as well as reactions to matters related to employee welfare, which can be significant sources of disagreement. If not managed properly, this may result in broader industrial actions later on and could be counterproductive, potentially causing inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or mental strain in reaching defined organizational goals and objectives.

The aforementioned outlines the higher education framework in Nigeria. The administration of every higher education institution must engage with no fewer than three unions (one representing academic personnel and the other two for both senior and junior non-teaching employees). For universities, a fourth union for technologists is incorporated. These unions constantly clash with the management of these tertiary institutions because of the differing demands of each union. This has been a significant reason for industrial unrest in Nigeria's public tertiary institutions. Insufficient and/or unsuccessful communication has also been pointed out as another reason for industrial disharmony. When the administration of these public tertiary institutions neglects to foster timely, effective, and sufficient communication, conflicts are bound to arise. To support this, Salunkhe et al. (2024) suggest that many educational institutions, particularly in Nigeria, neglect the importance of effective communication in their administration, which has significantly contributed to conflicts in higher education. In this manner, poor and insufficient communication within a higher education environment can foster misunderstanding, suspicion, distrust, rumours, and ultimately lead to conflict or crisis.

A notable example is the 2020 nationwide strike by ASUU, which lasted for several months and resulted in the closure of public universities across Nigeria. The strike stemmed from the government's failure to implement previously agreed conditions, highlighting persistent gaps in policy execution and stakeholder engagement. It is noteworthy that the union has been pursuing this same agreement since 2009, resulting in eleven years during which the problem has remained unresolved. The harm inflicted on these educational institutions is undeniably significant, as many students were unable to return to their respective schools for various reasons. Key factors include the appealing nature of cybercrime in Nigeria, particularly among the youth, the decline of significant sponsors of these students due to the harsh impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the waning confidence and interest in the Nigerian tertiary education system among students (Nwafor et al., 2023). Such recurring disputes have raised serious concerns about the sustainability and effectiveness of Nigeria's higher education system (Adamu et al., 2024).

Despite the importance of industrial peace, achieving it remains difficult in Nigeria's public universities, particularly in the North-Central region where industrial conflicts are frequent. These challenges suggest underlying weaknesses in HRM practices, especially in managing employee relations, ensuring fair compensation, and facilitating effective communication.

Hence, this study aims to examine the role of HRM in promoting industrial harmony and fairness in public universities situated in Nigeria's North Central region, which includes institutions such as the University of Ilorin, the University of Jos, and the Federal University of Lafia, among others.

The main objective of this study is to determine the effect of HRM practices on industrial peace in Nigerian public universities. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the key functions of HRM practices in Nigerian public universities.
2. Examine the relationship between HRM practices and industrial peace in Nigerian public universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Industrial Peace

Industrial peace signifies a condition of harmonious interactions between employers and workers, marked by a lack of disruptive conflicts like strikes, lockouts, and other forms of labor unrest, while promoting collaboration, mutual respect, and effective teamwork within organizations (Batan et al., 2024). Historically, the idea has transformed from signifying only the lack of violence (negative peace) to including the existence of factors that foster lasting positive peace, such as equity, justice, and institutional resilience (Tuffuor, 2023). This expanded perspective corresponds with Galtung (1964) definition of peace, which differentiates between negative peace (lack of direct violence) and positive peace (existence of social justice and fairness) (Ercoşkun, 2021). In industrial relations, positive peace signifies equitable labor practices, participatory decision-making, and effective conflict resolution systems that tackle fundamental structural tensions (Batan et al., 2024).

Similarly, industrial harmony is a favorable and interactive notion encompassing a range of meanings commonly associated with the industrial relations framework. According to Danraka (2021), organizational peace is a condition evaluated by the lack of strikes, absence of distrust within the workforce, harmonious interactions between management and unions, and a favorable view from employees regarding their roles as contributors in the organization. Industrial harmony is a condition of relative peace and friendliness marked by trust, shared goals, and a lack of discontent in organizational relationships. It results from compassionate interaction and positive labour-management engagement rooted in effective industrial relations practices to foster a sense of belonging for employees within organizations. In this context, industrial harmony can change individuals within organizations by fostering democracy, political awareness, activity, social and public spirit, cooperation, and a concern for the common good, while also minimizing organizational dysfunctions (Longe, 2024).

The importance of industrial harmony in achieving organizational success cannot be neglected. Positive relationships in the workplace result in increased employee satisfaction, subsequently boosting productivity and efficiency. Workers who feel safe in their workplace are more driven to excel and make positive contributions to their organization (Abun & Basilio, 2023). Additionally, industrial harmony can lower turnover rates, since content employees are less inclined to look for jobs elsewhere, thus saving organizations expenses tied to hiring and training (Girigiri & Badom 2021). Also, companies marked by industrial harmony are more capable of adjusting to market changes, as a united workforce is more adaptable and cooperative when confronting challenges (Jonah et al., 2025).

This indicates that industrial harmony flourishes solely in an environment of mutual understanding and effective cooperation between labor and management, where workplace issues are resolved amicably in an acceptable manner and consistently within organizations. As stated by Ndubuisi-Okolo et al. (2022), industrial harmony refers to a condition of organizational stability, wherein management and staff collaborate seamlessly and fully cooperate to accomplish their shared objectives. Also, its focus in the workplace is on maintaining balance in labor relations and fostering a supportive organizational atmosphere that encourages dedication and commitment to achieve the intended goals and objectives. It is also viewed as a situation where employees and management collaborate to fulfill the company's vision and mission while fostering a high degree of employee satisfaction within organizations (Longe, 2024). Implicatively, industrial harmony involves work environments where the

engaged stakeholders within the organization willingly and obediently collaborate to achieve corporate objectives.

Furthermore, multiple elements play a role in achieving industrial harmony in organizations. Effective communication is a key component, as it enables understanding and clarity between management and staff. When communication lines are accessible, employees observe their worth and are more motivated to express their worries and recommendations, promoting a feeling of inclusion and involvement (Fejoh et al., 2021). Moreover, just treatment and fair practices are essential for building trust between employers and their workers. When workers sense fairness in policies and practices, they are more likely to back organizational goals (Obalade & Mtembu, 2023). Besides, the significance of leadership should not be overlooked; leaders exhibiting empathy and dedication to employee well-being frequently foster loyalty and collaboration within their teams (Zanabazar et al., 2023).

Industrial harmony is an essential requirement for national productivity, economic advancement, and sustainable progress. It goes beyond just the lack of strikes and lockouts (negative peace) to include a situation of harmonious interactions between employers and employees, marked by mutual respect, trust, efficient communication, and established conflict resolution processes. In Nigeria, a country known for its historically unstable industrial relations environment, attaining and maintaining this harmony has been challenging. The Nigerian landscape is characterized by regular and disruptive industrial actions, especially in the public sector (e.g., education, healthcare, and petroleum), which have hampered economic activities and hindered development (Ezinne et al., 2024). This analysis consolidates the existing research on the condition of industrial harmony in Nigeria, exploring its core foundations, the ongoing obstacles that weaken it, and the possible routes to achieving a more stable industrial relations framework.

Industrial tranquility in the Nigerian university system signifies a condition of cooperative interactions among university administration, academic staff unions, and the federal government, marked by the lack of disruptive disputes and the existence of efficient conflict resolution strategies. The Nigerian university system has faced ongoing instability because of repeated industrial actions, especially by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which have significantly interrupted academic activities and diminished educational quality (Adamu et al., 2024).

Human Resource Management (HRM)

Human resource management encompasses activities related to attracting employees to organizations via recruitment and retaining them alongside other managerial functions, including orientation, training and development, performance evaluation, reward systems, and motivation. Additionally, human resource management encompasses the choices and activities aimed at efficiently managing the workforce and applying methods that motivate them to voluntarily continue their tenure in the organization (Mark, 2024). Anyadike (2013) described human resource management as the processes encompassing recruitment, selection, employee training, development, and appropriate financial and non-financial incentives to build a motivated workforce that aids in achieving both immediate and long-term goals of the organization. According to Tende and Alagah (2017), human resource management is the strategic approach that includes all organizational efforts to recognize both specific and general employee needs, acquire talent through recruitment, enhance their skills via training, and encourage them to stay with the organization. Samson (2025) agreed with this perspective and added that human resource management fundamentally recognizes that employees are regarded as assets needing sufficient investment through appropriate training and development to maintain their relevance within the organizational context

The function of HRM in promoting employee relations is vital. HRM acts as a link between management and staff, promoting dialogue and resolving issues that might occur. Through the establishment of policies that encourage equitable treatment and inclusivity, HRM fosters a cooperative work atmosphere where employees perceive themselves as appreciated and respected. Additionally, HR professionals are essential in resolving conflicts and facilitating negotiations,

assisting in mediating disagreements and maintaining a harmonious work environment. Through initiatives like training and development programs, HRM enables employees to improve their skills and contribute more effectively to the organization (Uvais, 2012).

Nevertheless, Human Resource Management (HRM) is a component of an organization. As a vital organizational role, it impacts industrial relations to promote the development of industrial peace. In this context, HRM is perceived as a collection of activities employed by organizations to oversee their personnel (Sora et al., 2021). Longe (2024) states that organizations are currently emphasizing effective HRM practices as a strategic method to create transparent, adaptable, and compassionate management. These traits act as catalysts for the development of industrial harmony in work environments. Creating and executing policies and procedures that promote fairness, equity, and participation are essential for attaining industrial harmony. HRM is more equipped to provide these needs as a part of its objectives in the workplace. The essential policies and procedures that foster workplace harmony encompass the recruitment and selection policy, grievance handling system, conflict resolution and mediation policy, work-life balance programs, health and safety policy, as well as communication and collaboration strategies. The methods of problem-solving truly aid in maintaining a manageable level of conflict in workplace relationships within organizations, allowing for positive interactions among members to achieve industrial harmony via efficient collective bargaining practices at work

HRM in Nigeria

HRM policies and practices are applied within an economic, social, political, and legal framework. Thus, a substantial grasp of historical and cultural contexts is crucial for comprehending the processes, philosophies, and challenges of national HRM models (Hofstede, 1991). Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, with an approximate population of 180 million people. Nigeria's demographic and skilled workforce make it one of the most attractive countries for overseas investment in Africa. As foreign and local companies increasingly engage in Nigeria, it will be crucial for them to cultivate skills and utilize local knowledge. Grasping human resource management (HRM) and, crucially, the elements that affect HRM in Nigeria will be vital for business operations in Nigeria and, consequently, their achievements. Therefore, completing tasks is intertwined with local customs, traditions, and the wider cultural setting (Bem et al., 2022).

The idea of HRM was brought into Nigerian literature in 1940 during the colonial era; it evolved with industrialization and commercialization, ultimately resulting in wage employment. Since then, there has been considerable growth of HR in Nigeria, which in recent times has been characterized by a lack of professionalism and expertise. Numerous factors have been identified as the challenges facing HRM practices in Nigeria. Cultural diversity in Nigeria has influenced HRM practices throughout the nation. Nigeria shows a significant reliance on culture, language, religion, gender, and educational qualifications as factors for assessing job prospects. This indicates that an average Nigerian's chance of obtaining employment relies on the factors mentioned earlier.

Nigeria, as highlighted by Fajana et al. (2011), is one of the African countries grappling with an excess of labor and a lack of skilled individuals. Attracting, developing, leveraging, and retaining exceptional talent became a challenge. This is the reason it was argued that the quest for high performance has driven the need for effective management. HRM in Nigeria is viewed as 'still developing,' and significant scholarly research remains essential in this area. A significant challenge facing HRM practices in Nigeria is the lack of local and comprehensive HRM models, which is the reason most principles and practices seen in Nigerian workplaces are adopted from other countries. HRM practices in Nigeria showcase a mixture of strategies influenced by Western approaches, illustrating the effect of cultural and institutional elements on these practices. To put it differently, there is a combination of transplanted and indigenous HRM practices. As noted by Azolukwam and Perkins (2009), understanding individuals' socialization in conjunction with the economic, historical, political, and social contexts can enable organizations to capitalize on the chance to adapt HRM practices from the cultures of parent countries to developing regions such as Nigeria

Nonetheless, many organizations suffer from inadequate funding for research and development in human resource management. Nigeria's democracy has enhanced the implementation of HRM, setting a cap on the number of foreign workers it permits. Nigeria's economy allows for the importation of advanced technologies to enhance HRM, yet training progresses at a slow pace, hence the continued encouragement of hiring expatriates for these positions. In Nigeria, innovative management techniques and expertise are being adopted in the functioning of organizations, all aimed at creating a cost-efficient system. HRM practices in Nigeria are closely linked to those seen in other countries. However, due to the distinct social and cultural characteristics of Nigeria, HRM in the country offers avenues for further investigation. Strong employer-employee connections are crucial for the steady and enduring development of both the Nigerian economy and the global economy as a whole. Several other elements have impacted HRM practices in Nigeria, especially the lack of internal personnel to complete all necessary duties. Moreover, the complexity of the modern business landscape stemming from deregulation, globalization, and technological advancements has exceeded the ability of numerous companies to implement special projects without expanding their personnel (Fajana et al., 2011)

Furthermore, numerous organizations in Nigeria are presently offering continuous education and training to help their employees acquire essential skills and progress their careers within a truly global and cooperative setting. Recently, Nigerian companies are adopting different HR strategies inspired by global firms. For instance, there has been a notable increase in the volume of contract or temporary employment, with a substantial number of these jobs being delegated to consultants, resulting in a decrease in the payroll employees (Medun, 2024). This indicates that organizations are allocating fewer resources for greater workloads while concurrently weakening their employees' emotional connection, dedication, and loyalty.

Additionally, in Nigeria, management exerts significant organizational authority, and their role involves effectively supervising the workforce and ensuring it closely aligns with established goals and objectives. The management and the Nigerian government seek to establish coherent HR policies that closely align with the overall business strategy. For example, in the oil industry (the most organized and well-paying job sector), the Nigerian government has consistently labored for the last 50 years to improve the participation of local employees in the oil sector. Regulation 26 of the Petroleum and Drilling Act of 1969 represents one of the early efforts by the government to enhance the participation of Nigerian oil workers in the industry. In Nigeria, recruitment is carried out selectively, and employees receive training to acquire essential skills. However, due to the intricate nature of oil industry operations, there is a substantial need for skilled expatriate services, leading to a sustained high rate of expatriate employment. This is also because numerous oil companies are multinationals, with parent companies located in highly developed and advanced countries (Oni et al, 2024).

In several organizations in Nigeria, performance evaluation serves as a dialogue process and provides direction to generally enhance the individual for peak performance. Employees are allowed to perform a self-evaluation based on the assignments and projects they engaged in during the assessment period. The performance evaluation system is expected to be a fair process encompassing assessments of skills, technical proficiency, and the employee's capacity to deliver quality service. However, the appraiser's deficiency in skills and understanding has made specific tools and standards for assessing employee performance ineffective. That assessment system and procedure might not accurately represent what is expected. The demand for a proficient performance appraisal system has driven Nigerian firms to recruit expatriates as trainers for positions that require specialized abilities and expertise that local employees cannot fulfil. These managers assess performance and recommend promotions when suitable.

Moreover, in Nigeria, the wages and extra benefits in organizations are established via collective bargaining between labor unions and employers or groups of employees. In some private firms, the base salaries are usually higher than those in the public sector. In Nigeria, the data indicates that pay scales depend on job analysis and assessment to ensure equity, with increases based on merit or

performance. The higher the risk, time necessary, skills needed, and experience required, the greater the compensation. This explains why high-risk occupations offer the highest salaries in Nigeria. In government-owned public sector organizations, salary modifications may arise from annual merit reviews, promotions, personal special adjustments, or overall adjustments. General adjustments take place when the Government requires a universal salary increase in both the public and private sectors.

In recent years, many organizations in Nigeria are emphasizing the significance of educating their workforce. Training is expected to cultivate enthusiasm for creating new ideas, benefiting both workers and management. Managers, supervisors, and HR teams are responsible for ensuring that employees obtain adequate training. Some organizations in Nigeria presently provide their employees with education and training subsidies for job-related skills, while other organizations have changed their pay systems to include educational and training allowance within employees' salaries. The challenge in this scenario is that this kind of training needs to be pertinent to the position and proven to benefit both the company and the workers. This could hinder employees from acquiring extra skills that are not connected to their job roles. Nevertheless, numerous organizations in Nigeria are aware of the need and significance of training, and they create suitable training programs to meet recognized demands. This will ensure that they have the right mix of talented, competent, and valuable people to contribute successfully and be knowledgeable in diverse fields.

Another facet of HRM practices that needs more enhancement and development is occupational health and safety. There are no reliable official statistics concerning the number of deaths and injuries in organizations in Nigeria. This is because numerous organizations are reluctant to share their experiences with others out of fear of being held accountable for inadequately handling health safety matters and not providing enough compensation to victims. Another concern is that workers in Nigeria frequently lack awareness of their entitlement to a safe working environment free from occupational hazards and to fair compensation if accidents or dangers affect them mentally and physically.

Most organizations in Nigeria have a significant union presence, especially in the public sector. Employees unite to protect and promote their interests, while employers do likewise. Until March 2005, the Nigerian Government backed compulsory union membership at work, resulting in an estimated 60 percent unionization rate. For instance, the employees are categorized by their occupation: white-collar workers belong to the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN), whereas production laborers are affiliated with the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG). Specific industry-based trade unions affiliate with different national unions, such as the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC), respectively. High participation in unions has only been absent in private organizations. In some private organizations, employers and employees come together on shared platforms to tackle issues, discuss recognized challenges, and develop strategies for enhancing their working relationship.

The Impact of Human Resource Management on Industrial Peace within Organizations

Industrial harmony is not just the lack of visible disputes, like strikes or lockouts; it is the existence of a constructive and collaborative workplace where management and workers work together towards shared organizational objectives (Budd & Bhave, 2019). In the current unpredictable business landscape, preserving this harmony is crucial for stability, creativity, and a competitive edge. The administration of human resources is central to this undertaking.

Traditionally, industrial relations tended to be confrontational, characterized as a "them against us" relationship between management and workers. Nonetheless, the transition of HRM from solely an administrative role to a strategic ally has transformed this connection. Contemporary HRM asserts that employees are essential assets instead of expenses to be reduced. This change in philosophy supports the theory that successful HRM practices are essential for avoiding conflicts, addressing complaints, and fostering a base of shared respect and trust (Boxall & Purcell 2022).

Key Functions of Human Resource Management in Nigeria

This examination delves into the vast body of literature regarding the roles of HRM and the connection between HRM and industrial harmony. The influence of fundamental HRM practices on industrial harmony has consistently associated particular HRM practices with the environment of industrial relations.

Recruitment and Selection

A core role of HRM in Nigeria is recruitment and selection, encompassing the identification of organizational needs, sourcing potential candidates, and choosing individuals who possess the required skills and qualifications. A PwC (2021) report indicates that recruitment methods in Nigerian firms are becoming more data-focused, as companies utilize digital tools and HR software to enhance hiring efficiency. Nonetheless, a lack of skilled workers continues to be a major issue, especially in technical areas.

Choosing employees who possess the necessary skills and align well with the organizational culture can proactively promote harmony. Organizations that focus on attitudes regarding teamwork and conflict management during hiring are more apt to create a unified workforce. Additionally, transparent and merit-focused hiring diminishes feelings of favoritism and discrimination, which often lead to grievances (Kramar, 2022).

Training and Development

HR departments in Nigeria oversee the ongoing training and advancement of staff members. A KPMG (2023) survey reveals that 72% of companies in Nigeria invest in programs for employee development, which encompasses mentorship, leadership training, and workshops for technical skills. Training aids employees in adjusting to technological shifts, boosts efficiency, and supports organizational development. Nevertheless, the success of these initiatives may be compromised by insufficient resources and poor funding.

Training initiatives centered on soft skills—like communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution—provide both managers and employees with the resources to address disputes before they intensify. Investing in employee development demonstrates organizational commitment, fostering loyalty and minimizing us-versus-them mentalities (Jiang et al., 2012).

Performance Management

HRM is essential in establishing performance benchmarks, assessing employee performance, and executing performance evaluation systems. In Nigeria, performance management is more frequently being connected with strategic business objectives. Kenku and Ogunkuade (2024) emphasize that Nigerian organizations are increasingly implementing structured performance review systems that encompass regular feedback, goal setting, and performance-related incentives to enhance employee productivity.

An equitable, clear, and thoroughly communicated performance evaluation system is essential. Systems viewed as unfair, partial, or harsh are a major source of discord and skepticism. Contemporary, progressive systems that emphasize development and coaching, instead of just evaluation, have a more beneficial impact on workplace harmony (Pulakos et al., 2023).

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation management is key to HRM operations, guaranteeing that employees receive equitable pay. HR experts in Nigeria oversee salary frameworks, benefits offerings, and compensation strategies to stay competitive in the job market. The report by Kenku and Ogunkuade (2024) indicates that

organizations are reassessing their pay frameworks due to increasing inflation and economic difficulties. This function also includes guaranteeing adherence to legal obligations like the national minimum wage.

The allocation of rewards is likely the most conventional cause of industrial discord. Fair, open, and competitive pay structures are essential for sustaining harmony. Methods such as profit-sharing and gain-sharing can directly connect employee interests with company results, nurturing a feeling of collaboration. Maintaining both internal and external equity is essential to avoid perceptions of exploitation (Gerhart and Fang, 2015).

Employee Relations and Voice Mechanisms

HR departments in Nigeria manage labor relations, addressing trade unions, resolving conflicts, and conducting collective bargaining. Trade unions like the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) are vital in discussing wages, working conditions, and employee well-being. The HR role includes handling workplace conflicts and guaranteeing adherence to labor regulations and organizational policies (Kenku and Ogunkuade, 2024).

This is the most straightforward HRM role affecting industrial harmony. Effective HRM creates strong systems for employee "voice"—the capacity to influence decisions that impact them. These encompass (i) structured, equitable, and prompt grievance resolution processes that act as a pressure release for employee issues, stopping them from developing and culminating in significant conflicts, (ii) consistent, transparent communication via surveys, town halls, and team discussions ensures management is aware of employee feelings and allows employees to feel acknowledged; and (iii) initiatives like quality circles, suggestion programs, and self-directed teams provide employees with a feeling of ownership and authority, minimizing opposition to change and promoting collaboration (Wilkinson et al., 2018).

Theories Underpinning

Multiple theoretical frameworks offer a perspective for comprehending the HRM-industrial peace connection:

Industrial Relations Theory (Dunlop, 1958)

This theory suggests that industrial harmony is sustained by an equilibrium of power among employers, employees, and regulatory agencies. In Nigerian universities, HRM acts as a bridge between university administration and unions (such as ASUU, NASU, SSANU), guaranteeing adherence to labor laws and collective bargaining agreements (Fajana et al., 2011)

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

This is the most significant theory in this field. SET suggests that relationships develop into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments over time when involved parties follow specific exchange rules, including reciprocity (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). When companies commit resources to their workforce via just HR practices (such as fair compensation, development, acknowledgment), workers respond with increased dedication, allegiance, and lower likelihood of discord (Uvais, 2012). The violation of this psychological contract, frequently observed in Nigeria due to unpaid wages or unfair treatment, is a major factor driving industrial conflict.

The Harvard Model of HRM

This model highlights the interests of various stakeholders. It suggests that HRM policies are affected by contextual factors (e.g., labor market conditions, laws) and the interests of stakeholders (e.g., shareholders, management, workers, government). The lasting impacts encompass personal wellness, organizational efficiency, and societal health (Beer et al., 1984). In Nigeria, successful HRM needs to

reconcile the profit-driven goals of management with the welfare needs of employees and unions in a complicated legal and economic landscape.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

Alasan and Eyanuku (2020) claim that the HRM matching model posits that human resource systems and

organizational structure must be aligned with the organizational strategy and further elaborated that there exists a human resource cycle comprising five general processes or functions present in all organizations: selection, appraisal, rewards, development, and employee relations. They think that the functioning of an organizational system is a complicated relationship that includes these five performance criteria that need to be adhered to: effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and productivity. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study

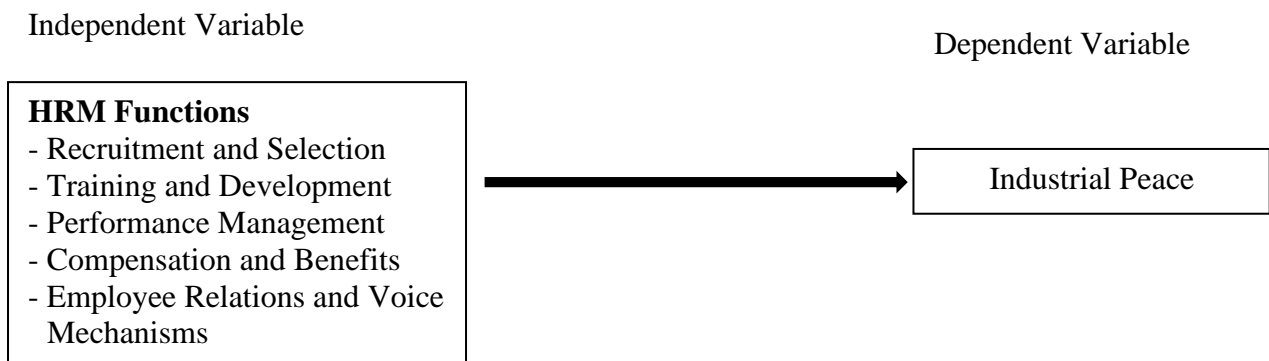


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between recruitment and selection and industrial peace.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between training and development and industrial peace.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between performance management and industrial peace.
- H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between compensation and benefits and industrial peace.
- H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between employee relations and voice mechanisms and industrial peace.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative descriptive survey design. This approach is appropriate for collecting data from a representative sample of a population to examine relationships among variables and generalize findings to the broader population. The design was considered suitable because it allows for systematic data collection from a large group of respondents where a full census is impractical. The study was conducted in North-Central Nigeria, covering public universities located within the region. The area includes the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) and the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau. These institutions were selected due to the prevalence of industrial relations challenges within the region.

The target population comprised 10,368 teaching and non-teaching staff from eight public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This population was obtained from the official registry departments of the respective universities. A sample size of 385 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula, which is appropriate for large populations. This sample size ensures adequate representation and statistical reliability.

A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, proportionate stratified sampling was used to allocate respondents based on the staff size of each university. This ensured that all institutions were fairly represented. Second, simple random sampling was applied to select respondents within each stratum, giving all individuals an equal chance of participation and minimizing selection bias.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled Human Resource Management and Public Universities Management Questionnaire (HRMPUMQ). The instrument consisted of closed-ended items designed to measure HRM practices and industrial peace using a Likert-type scale. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in statistics and research methodology from the Federal University of Technology Minna. Their feedback led to the revision and refinement of ambiguous and irrelevant items, thereby improving the clarity and relevance of the instrument.

Data was collected through direct administration of the questionnaire to selected respondents across the participating universities. This approach enhanced response accuracy and improved the return rate. Out of the 385 questionnaires distributed, 379 were successfully retrieved and used for analysis. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' perceptions, with values assigned as follows: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to address the research questions. A decision threshold of 3.00 was applied to interpret the mean scores.

To test the study hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships between HRM practices and industrial peace. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. The use of correlation analysis is appropriate for identifying the strength and direction of relationships between variables in quantitative studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Demographic Results

The characteristics of the respondent's profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' demographics

| S/N | Classification | Category | Frequency | % |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| 1 | Gender | Male | 227 | 59.9 |
| | | Female | 152 | 40.1 |
| 2 | Age | ≤ 20 Years | 38 | 10.0 |
| | | 21–30 Years | 38 | 10.0 |
| | | 31–40 Years | 114 | 30.1 |
| | | 41–50 Years | 114 | 30.1 |
| | | 50 Years and above | 57 | 19.8 |
| 3 | Employment Status | Permanent | 303 | 79.9 |
| | | Sabbatical | 76 | 20.1 |
| 4 | Qualification | ND/NCE | 38 | 10.0 |
| | | HND/Degree | 76 | 20.1 |
| | | Masters | 114 | 30.1 |
| | | PhD | 151 | 39.8 |
| 5 | Job Classification | Teaching Staff | 190 | 51.1 |
| | | Non-Teaching Staff | 189 | 49.9 |
| 6 | Working Experience | Less than 11 years | 38 | 10.0 |
| | | 11–20 years | 114 | 30.1 |
| | | 21–30 years | 114 | 30.1 |
| | | 31–40 years | 76 | 20.1 |
| | | 41 years and above | 37 | 9.8 |

Based on the demographic data of the respondents, the first category is gender, where males represented 227 (59%) of those surveyed, while females accounted for 152 (40.1%). The higher number of males may be attributed to their role as the head of households in African societies; however, the study still maintains a balanced gender representation, which will enhance the research outcomes. Regarding the ages of the respondents, individuals aged 20 or younger made up 38 (10%) of the participants, those between 21 to 30 years also constituted 38 (10%), those aged 31 to 40 accounted for 114 (30.1%), participants aged 41 to 50 were 114 (30.1%), and individuals aged 51 and above represented 57 (19.8%). The higher proportion of respondents over 30 years indicates that they possess adult perspectives, which will provide valuable insights for the study. Concerning employment status, permanent staff represented 303 (79.9%), while those on sabbatical accounted for 38 (21.1%). Although there were more permanent staff, those on sabbatical are still affiliated with their home institutions, ensuring that all respondents are part of public universities. In terms of qualifications, individuals holding a National Diploma (ND) or equivalent Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) constituted 38 (10%), those with Higher National Diploma (HND) or an equivalent degree accounted for 76 (20.1%), master’s degree holders made up 114 (30.1%), and PhD holders represented 151 (39.8%). This suggests that a greater number of respondents from senior staff categories are involved in the study, which will enhance the research findings. When looking at job classifications, teaching staff made up 190 (51.1%), while non-teaching staff constituted 189 (49.9%). This indicates an equal distribution of job types, which will minimize bias in the study. Examining work experience, respondents with less than 11 years of experience represented 38 (10.0%), those with 11 to 20 years accounted for 114 (30.1%), individuals with 21 to 30 years also constituted 114 (30.1%), participants with 31 to 40 years made up 76 (20.1%), and those with 41 years or more represented 37 (9.8%). This indicates that a significant portion of respondents possess over 20 years of work experience, which is sufficient for providing reliable information.

Results of the Key Functions of Human Resource Management Practices

The results of the key functions of HRM practices are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Key functions of human resource management practices

| HRM Practices | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Ranking |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|----------------|---------|
| Training and Development | 379 | 3.84 | 0.984 | 1 |
| Employee Relation and Voice Mechanism | 379 | 3.59 | 1.010 | 2 |
| Recruitment and Selection | 379 | 3.56 | 1.038 | 3 |
| Compensation and Benefits | 379 | 3.55 | 1.041 | 4 |
| Performance Management | 379 | 3.07 | 1.360 | 5 |
| Average Mean | 3.52 | | | |

The mean score for Training and Development, a crucial function of HRM practices, is 3.84, surpassing the 3.00 mark and ranking first among the various practices. This indicates that Training and Development is the most prevalent HRM practice in many organizations. Following this is Employee Relation and Voice Mechanism, which has a mean score of 3.59. Ranking third is Recruitment and Selection with a mean score of 3.56, while Compensation and Benefits and Performance Management hold the fourth and fifth positions, with mean scores of 3.55 and 3.07, respectively. The overall average mean score stands at 3.52, which is above the 3.00 threshold, suggesting that these human resource management functions are essential for organizations to ensure industrial peace. This aligns with the findings of Alasan and Eyanuku (2020), who described a human resource cycle comprising five fundamental processes or functions performed in all organizations: selection, appraisal, rewards, development, and employee relations. They argue that effective performance in an organizational system is a complex interplay of these five criteria that must be adhered to: effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and productivity.

Results of the Correlation between HRM practices and Industrial Peace

The results of the correlation between HRM Practices and industrial peace are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation of HRM and industrial peace

| HRM Practices and Industrial Peace | | Recruitment and Selection | Training and Development | Performance Management | Compensation and Benefits | Employee Relation and Voice Mechanism | Industrial Peace |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Recruitment and Selection | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .595* | .493* | .820** | .707** | .423** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |
| Training and Development | Pearson Correlation | .595** | 1 | .469* | .685** | .692** | .496** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |
| Performance Management | Pearson Correlation | .493** | .469* | 1 | .585** | .613** | .525** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |
| Compensation and Benefits | Pearson Correlation | .820** | .685* | .585* | 1 | .843** | .627** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |
| Employee Relation and Voice Mechanism | Pearson Correlation | .707** | .692* | .613* | .843** | 1 | .674** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |
| Industrial Peace | Pearson Correlation | .423** | .496* | .525* | .627** | .674** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 | 379 |

Recruitment and Selection and Industrial Peace

The results of the data analysis indicate a substantial level of $p < 0.05$ (i.e. 0.000), with $r = 0.423^{**}$. This signifies a significant connection between recruitment and selection and workplace harmony. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected. This implies that a significant moderate positive relationship exists between recruitment and selection and industrial peace.

The hypothesis examination showed that recruitment and selection positively relate to industrial peace in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The results of the bivariate analysis indicate that recruitment and selection are linked to industrial peace. This suggests that enhancements in recruitment and selection processes at public universities in North-Central Nigeria led to harmonious relations in these institutions. Hence, the positive association indicates that as effective recruitment and selection improve, the hiring of employees will rely on merit, thereby diminishing perceptions of favoritism and discrimination, which often lead to grievances in public universities. This aligns with the findings of (Kramar, 2022), who argue that a recruitment process that is transparent and based on merit minimizes feelings of favoritism and discrimination, which are frequent causes of complaints.

Training and Development and Industrial Peace

The results of the data analysis demonstrate a notable p-value of less than 0.05 (specifically 0.000), with $r = 0.496^{**}$. This suggests a significant connection between training and development and workplace harmony. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is dismissed. This indicates that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between training and development and industrial harmony.

The hypothesis testing outcomes indicated a positive association between training and development and industrial harmony in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The findings from the bivariate analysis show that training and development are associated with industrial harmony. This suggests that training employees in skills like communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution will enhance the understanding of both managers and employees to resolve disputes before they escalate. This aligns with previous research by Jiang et al. (2012), which claims that organizational training programs emphasizing soft skills—like communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution—provide both managers and employees with the resources needed to address conflicts before they intensify.

Performance Management and Industrial Peace

The results of the data analysis indicate a notable p value of less than 0.05 (specifically 0.000), with $r = 0.525^{**}$. This suggests a significant connection between performance management and workplace harmony. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is dismissed. This indicates that there exists a significant moderate positive relationship between performance management and workplace harmony.

The hypothesis testing showed a positive relationship between performance management and industrial harmony at public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The outcomes of the bivariate analysis suggest that performance management is connected to industrial harmony. This correlation indicates that improving performance management may result in a just, clear, and effectively communicated performance evaluation system, fostering industrial harmony in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This suggests that maintaining performance management in public universities in North-Central Nigeria contributes positively to industrial harmony. This aligns with the results of Pulakos et al. (2023) that a just, clear, and effectively communicated performance evaluation system fosters greater industrial harmony.

Compensation and Benefits and Industrial Peace

The results of the data analysis indicate a notable p value of less than 0.05 (specifically 0.000), with $r = 0.627^{**}$. This signifies a substantial connection between compensation and benefits and workplace harmony. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is dismissed. This indicates a significantly strong positive relationship between compensation and benefits and workplace harmony.

The hypothesis testing showed a positive relationship between compensation and benefits and industrial harmony at public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The findings suggest that compensation and benefits are associated with industrial harmony. This connection implies that suitable remuneration and benefits will foster fair, clear, and competitive pay structures, thereby improving the maintenance of peace in public universities. This suggests that just, equal, clear, and competitive pay in public universities in North-Central Nigeria enhances industrial harmony. This aligns with Gerhart and Fang (2015), whose research found that fair, clear, and competitive compensation systems are essential for sustaining peace. Strategies such as profit-sharing and gain-sharing can closely align employee goals with company success, promoting a feeling of collaboration. Maintaining both internal and external equity is essential to avoiding perceptions of being taken advantage of.

Employee Relation and Voice Mechanism and Industrial Peace

The results of the data analysis indicate a notable level of $p < 0.05$ (i.e., 0.000), with $r = 0.674^{**}$. This shows a significant connection between employee relations, voice mechanisms, and industrial harmony. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is discarded. This indicates that a significant and robust positive relationship exists between employee relations, voice mechanisms, and industrial harmony.

The hypothesis testing validated a positive relationship between employee relations, voice mechanisms, and industrial harmony in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The findings show that employee relations and voice mechanisms are connected to workplace harmony. This connection implies that maintaining employee relations and voice systems can foster strong processes for employee input and the opportunity to influence decisions impacting them in public universities. This suggests that industrial peace does not involve stifling disagreement but rather establishing a framework for dialogue. When workers feel acknowledged and represented, their confidence in the management grows, making them more inclined to pursue solutions through conversation rather than strikes. This aligns with the previous research by Wilkinson et al. (2018) that highlights how effective HRM creates strong systems for employee "voice"—the capacity to contribute to decisions that impact them.

CONCLUSION

This research clearly demonstrates that Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a crucial role in fostering industrial harmony in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Quantitative analysis shows that essential HRM practices are strongly associated with lower conflict levels and improved harmony.

The findings indicate that Employee Relations and Voice Mechanisms, a significant HRM practice, exhibited the highest correlation, highlighting dialogue as the key element in preserving industrial harmony. Compensation and Benefits, along with Training and Development, were also very important, meeting essential needs for fairness and advancement. Ultimately, Recruitment and Selection, along with Performance Management, strengthened peace by establishing a basis of merit-based principles and equity. Consequently, industrial peace is not a coincidence but is intentionally developed through strategic, fair, and communicative HRM practices. Investing in these particular functions is thus not an administrative expense, but a strategic necessity for stability and efficiency within the university system.

Nevertheless, to attain lasting peace, university leaders and governmental organizations need to:

1. Focus on Funding for Compensation: Guarantee prompt and fair pay
2. Formalize Dialogue: Enhance and honor employee voice channels and collective bargaining contracts
3. Invest in Individuals: Dedicate resources for ongoing education and growth
4. Maintain Meritocracy: Protect the honesty of hiring and advancement procedures.

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