

Decision-Making Strategies as Correlates with Human Resources Management Practices in Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined decision making Strategies as correlates with human resources management practices in public universities in North Central Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The researcher adopted the correlational research design. The sample size of this study comprised 346 university administrative stakeholders drawn from the population of 1717 in 18 public universities in North Central Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was used for the study. The researcher designed a questionnaire titled “Decision Making Strategies and Human

Resource Management Practices Questionnaire (DMSHRMPQ) to obtain relevant information from the respondents. The instrument was validated by five experts, three experts from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, and two experts from Guidance and Counselling in Joseph Saruwan Tarka University, Makurdi. Chronbach Alfa ccoefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.80 for section A and 0.83 for section B, which showed that the instrument was reliable. A total of 346 copies of the instrument were administered. Data were analyzed using the Pearson

Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). The findings from the study, among others, revealed that there is a low positive but statistically significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff performance appraisal in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The study recommended that University administrators should focus their strategic decision-making efforts on areas of staff recruitment and selection, training and interrelation among others.

Key words: *Decision making and human resources management practices.*

Introduction

Decision making is the process of selecting the best course of action from available options to achieve a specific goal or objective. It involves identifying problems, gathering information, evaluating alternatives and choosing a solution. It is a process of selecting a logical choice from the available options, weighing the positive and negatives of each option and considering all the alternatives (Business Dictionary Online, 2018). It is an indispensable component of the management process and in itself, a managerial function and an organizational process that determines the success or otherwise of an organization. The need for improved performance of staff, promotion of higher standards, promotion of accountability and transparency in public universities in Nigeria, and the study area in

particular calls for decision-making strategies in human resources management practices. Decision-making is the backbone of any successful educational organization particularly public universities. Universities as institutions of higher learning are tasked with the responsibilities of cultivating the minds that will shape the future of the nation. The universities as knowledge-based organizations have a strong focus on the quality of their staff, their academic staff specifically make the center of attention as they are responsible for teaching and research. Universities need staff that are well trained and motivated to do the work of conducting research and training for the growth and development of the nation.

Decision making strategies on the other hand entails the application of stipulated strategies or approaches in making logical choices on how best to perform an action. It involves or has to do with applying an approach or approaches to selecting a logical choice in order to arrive at a logical choice (Cherry, 2018). The task of management according to Boddewyn (2018) has some generalized form in all organizations; this implies that, administration has sets of universal holds regardless of what is administered. These universal holds are the elements of decision making, programming, communicating, controlling and appraising. Each of these elements has its own set of activities that all revolve around the overall

objectives of organizations. However, decision making is the principal activity that guides actions when applied to specific programs. The task of attaining organizational goals depends on how far the decision makers embark on relevant strategies, to make decisions which provides a base for activities in the organization. Decision making strategies leads to effective human resources management practices which could lead to improved performance of universities in North Central Nigeria.

Human resources management is a strategic and integrated approach of managing an organizations human capital, aimed at achieving organizational effectiveness, employees' well-being and sustainability. Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are very critical to the efficient and effective management of organizations especially in the universities; this is because the practices play a central role in linking staff capability with performance thereby contributing significantly to their success and effectiveness (Emmanuel, 2020). It involves the systematic and strategic implementation of policies, procedures and programs aimed at acquiring, developing, maintaining and retaining an organizations human capital to achieve organizational goals. Prioritizing effective human resources management practices in universities creates a positive work environment and drive innovation that leads to

the achievement of their mission and goals (Olusegun, 2020). Human resource management practices entail, decision making by relevant persons in universities such as Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Bursars, Deans of Faculties, Directors and Heads of Departments to make informed decision in handling issues that relate to the management of universities. Human resource management practices in the universities practically involves staff recruitment, selection, staff compensation and benefits, staff promotion, staff training and development, staff inter-relations, human resource planning, health safety and wellbeing, talent management and retention and performance appraisal (Johnston 2018). However, this study focuses on staff recruitment, staff training and staff interrelation. Staff recruitment entails the practice of recruiting and selecting staff in an organization. Maicibi (2017) attests that recruitment and selection is a process or strategies put up to attract and hire potential job applicants in sufficient quality and quantity so that the organization can select the most appropriate person(s) to fill its job needs. Staff training is one of the human resource management practices that is crucial for the evolvement of organizational commitment of the staff. This is because staff constitutes the most valuable resources in an organization. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to

invest in programs like training and development to improve the competency and job performance of staff (Kadiresan, Selamat, Selladurai, Ramendran & Mahamed, 2015). Staff interrelation entails the relationship shared among employees and their employers, or supervisors, as no organization can run effectively without people; there is a need to communicate and work with others to get jobs done.

Statement of the Problem

The decision-making strategies employed by university administrators can significantly influence the effectiveness of human resources management practices. By adopting effective decision-making strategies, public universities in Nigeria can improve their human resources management (HRM) practices, enhance organizational or institutional performance, and achieve their goals.

Despite the importance of decision-making strategies in human resources management practices, some public universities in the study area still seem to lack the prerequisite decision-making strategies and human resources management skills in the area of staff recruitment, training and development, staff interrelations among others. These perhaps might be as a result of poor correlation or relationship between decision making strategies and human resources management (HRM) practices in these institutions which

could thus translates into low staff morale, decrease productivity and ultimately affecting the overall quality of education and research in these institutions and universities. It is against this background that the researcher examined decision making strategies as correlates with staff recruitment, Staff training, staff interrelations, among others, in public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the relationship that exists between decision-making strategies and human resources management practices in public universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- I. Determine the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North Central Nigeria.
- II. determine the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North Central Nigeria.
- III. ascertain the relationship between decision making strategies and staff interrelationship in public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff

recruitment in public universities in North Central Nigeria?

2. What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North Central Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff interrelationships in public universities in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between decision making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North Central Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between decision making strategies and staff training in public universities in North Central Nigeria.
3. There is no significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff interrelationship in public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories; they include the rational choice theory by Gary Becker 1976 and the Universalistic theory by Pfeffer 1994.

Rational Choice Theory by Becker 1976

Rational choice theory, propounded by

Gary Becker 1976 also referred to as choice theory or rational action theory, is a framework for understanding and often formally modelling social and economic behavior. Rational choice theory assumes that all people try to actively maximize their advantage in any situation and therefore consistently try to minimize their losses. The theory is based on the idea that all humans base their decisions on rational calculations, act with rationality when choosing, and aim to increase either pleasure or profit. Rational choice theory also stipulates that all complex social phenomena are driven by individual human actions. The basic premise of rational choice theory is that aggregate social behavior results from the behavior of individual actors, each of whom is making their individual decisions. The rational choice theory three assumptions include: (1) Individuals have selfish preferences, (2) They maximize their own utility, and (3) They act independently based on full information. Rational decision-making theory is relevant or can be applied in a university system as follows: Faculty recruitment and retention, which involves faculty members considering the costs (workloads, stress) and benefits (salary, research opportunities, work-life balance), among others. This will enable them to decide whether to join or stay at the university. The theory thus relates to this study as the researcher sees the various steps in the decision-making strategies as prone to

correlate with human resources management towards successful goal achievement in any university. The rational choice theory provides valuable insights into an ideal strategy to make decisions in any university.

The Universalistic Theory by Pfeffer and Huselid 1995

The universalistic theory emerged in the 1990s, a time of significant organizational change and restructuring. The theory propounded or developed by Jeffrey Pfeffer 1994 and Mark Huselid 1995 has its roots in the field of Human Resources Management (HRM) and organizational behavior.

The universalistic theory assumes that people are the pre-eminent organizational resources and the key to achieving outstanding performance. The theory advocates for sixteen specific Human Resources Management practices, such as employment security, selectivity in recruiting, high wages, incentive pay, employee ownership, information sharing, participation and empowerment, teams and job-redesign, training and skills development, cross-utilization and cross-training, symbolic egalitarianism, wage compression, promotion from within, long-term perspective, measurement of practices, and overarching philosophy. Pfeffer argued that there is a generality of progressive human resources management practices and organizational performance linkage. This theory is relevant to this study and can be

applied in the university system in the area of talent acquisition and management, which has to do with attracting and retaining top faculty members and staff talent, which is crucial for universities, among others.

Decision-Making Strategies as a Correlate with Human Resources Management Practices in Public Universities

Decision-making is an indispensable component of the management process necessary at every point for implementing any given human resource management practice. According to Maicibi (2017), decision-making strategies are needed by human resources management or managers in choosing the preeminent alternatives through their various practices for the achievement of organizational goals. Be it the task of staff recruitment, staff compensation and benefits, staff promotion, staff training and development, staff inter-relations and performance appraisal, decision making is required all the way to complement the process of each practice and the accompanying outcome.

Universities as knowledge-based organizations have a strong focus on the quality of their staff. Their academic staff specifically, make the center of attention as they are responsible for teaching and research. Another important prerequisite to a successful university are their services, which highly depend on the quality of the administration and

management. The quality of management and academia will depend on the quality of human resources management and functions (Mayer, 2020). The major objective of university education in Nigeria is to coordinate and enhance the development and utilization of manpower (human resources). Human Resources Management practices are critical to the realization of these objectives; the universities need to attract, develop, and maintain an energetic workforce to support their goals and strategies (Ogueji, 2022). Singh and Kassa (2016) established that an organization performs better when human resources management practices such as; analyzing work and designing jobs, determining how many staff with specific knowledge and skills are needed (human resource planning), attracting potential staff (recruiting), choosing staff (selection), teaching staff how to perform their jobs and preparing them for the future (training and development), evaluating their performance (performance management), rewarding employees (compensation), and creating a positive work environment (employee relations), are managed well.

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in North Central Nigeria. The population of the study is 1508 respondents (Portal of all Universities National University Commission). The respondents were chosen in order to ensure that those chosen for the study were sufficiently knowledgeable about the variables under study and could supply information on the research instruments. The sample of the study consists of 346 administrative stakeholders in public universities. A well-structured questionnaire was developed for data collection. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the opinions of the respondents. The researcher used the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient in analyzing the data collected.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data on decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria were collected and analyzed as presented in the table.

Table 1: Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Recruitment in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision-Making Strategies	Staff Recruitment
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.278
	N	329	329
Staff Recruitment	Pearson Correlation	0.278	1
	N	329	329

The result presented in Table 1 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.278 between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This indicates a low positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that as decision-making strategies improve, there is a slight corresponding improvement in staff recruitment practices. However, the strength of the relationship is weak, meaning that while there is some degree

of association, it is not strong or highly predictive.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data on decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria were collected and analyzed as presented in the table.

Table 2: Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Training in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision-Making Strategies	Staff Training
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.397
	N	329	329
Staff Training	Pearson Correlation	0.397	1
	N	329	329

The result presented in Table 2 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.397 between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that improved decision-making strategies are reasonably associated with better staff training initiatives. While not a strong correlation, the value is close to the threshold for a moderate relationship, implying that the way decisions are made in these universities can have a meaningful influence on the

planning, organization, and implementation of staff training programs. [Nevertheless, it is important to note that other factors may also have contributed to staff training outcomes.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria? To answer this research question, data on decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria were collected and analyzed as presented in Table 1

Table 3: Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Inter-Relations in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision-Making Strategies	Staff Inter- Relations
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.312
	N	329	329
Staff Inter- Relations	Pearson Correlation	0.312	1
	N	329	329

The result presented in Table 3 reveals a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.312 between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This indicates a low to moderate positive relationship, suggesting that more inclusive

and effective decision-making strategies are associated with improved interpersonal relationships among staff. Although the correlation is not strong, it signifies that decision-making processes may play a role in fostering better communication, collaboration, and mutual respect among university staff.

However, decision-making likely also contributes to the quality of staff inter-relations.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Decision-making strategies have no significant relationship with staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Significance of Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Recruitment in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision-Making Strategies	Staff Recruitment
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.278
	P-value (Sig. (2-tailed))		.000**
	N	329	329
Staff Recruitment	Pearson Correlation	0.278	1
	P-value(Sig.(2-tailed))	.000**	
	N	329	329

P<0.05

The result in Table 4 indicates a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.278 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This means that the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria is statistically significant, despite the correlation being low and positive. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that decision-making strategies have no

significant relationship with staff recruitment, is rejected. This suggests that decision-making strategies play a meaningful, though limited, role in influencing staff recruitment practices in these institutions.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 2: Decision-making strategies have no significant relationship with staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 5: Significance of Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Training in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision-Making Strategies	Staff Training
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.397
	P-value (Sig. (2-tailed))		.000**
	N	329	329
Staff Training	Pearson Correlation	0.397	1
	P-value(Sig.(2-tailed))	.000**	
	N	329	329

P<0.05

The result in Table 8 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.397 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that decision-making strategies have no significant relationship with staff training, is rejected. This implies that effective decision-making strategies contribute meaningfully to the planning and execution of staff training programs within these institutions.

Hypothesis 3: Decision-making strategies have no significant relationship with staff inter-relations in public universities in North-

Central Nigeria.

Table 6: Significance of Relationship between Decision-Making Strategies and Staff Inter-Relations in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria Using PPMC

		Decision Making Strategies	Staff Inter- Relations
Decision-Making Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	0.312
	P-value (Sig. (2-tailed))		.000**
	N	329	329
Staff Inter- Relations	Pearson Correlation	0.312	1
	P-value (Sig. (2-tailed))	.000**	
	N	329	329

P<0.05

The result in Table 6 presents a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.312 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the critical value of 0.05. This indicates a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that decision-making strategies have no significant relationship with staff inter-relations, is rejected. This suggests that effective decision-making processes are significantly associated with improved interpersonal relationships and collaboration among staff

in these institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings of the study going by result reported on research question one shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.278 between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria, revealed that the relationship between decision-making strategies and staff recruitment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria is statistically significant, despite the relationship being low and positive. This suggests that decision-making strategies play a meaningful, though limited,

role in influencing staff recruitment practices in these institutions. This finding aligns with several empirical studies that have established connections between organizational decision-making processes and recruitment outcomes. Kanu's (2015) research on small and medium enterprises in Sierra Leone's construction industry demonstrated a significant relationship between recruitment and selection practices and organizational profits, suggesting that systematic approaches to recruitment decision-making lead to better employee selection and subsequent performance outcomes.

The second finding of the study going by the result presented on research question two shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.397 between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This means that there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This implies that effective decision-making strategies contribute meaningfully to the planning and execution of staff training programs within these institutions. This finding is strongly supported by numerous

empirical studies that have demonstrated the critical importance of strategic decision-making in training and development programs. Ombui, Kagiri & Omoke's (2014) study of research institutes in Kenya revealed a highly significant correlation between employee performance and training and development, emphasizing that strategic human resource management practices, including decision-making about training programs, can significantly influence workforce quality.

The third finding of the study according to the result presented on research question three revealed a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.312 between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. That is, there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This suggests that effective decision-making processes are significantly associated with improved interpersonal relationships and collaboration among staff in these institutions. This finding aligns well with empirical studies that have established connections between organizational decision-making processes and workplace

relationships. Gittel and Douglass's (2019) study on private universities in Kenya found that industrial relations, employment practices, and employee communication significantly correlated with organizational performance, suggesting that strategic decision-making about relationship management has measurable organizational impacts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that decision-making strategies play a significant role in shaping various aspects of human resource management practices in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Although the strength of the relationships varies, with staff recruitment, training, and inter-relations showing moderate positive correlations and exhibiting low but significant positive correlations, the overall implication is that effective decision-making contributes meaningfully to enhancing human resources practices within these institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

1. Public universities in North-Central Nigeria should develop and implement comprehensive decision-

making frameworks for staff recruitment.

2. Universities should leverage the moderate positive relationship between decision-making strategies and staff training by investing in comprehensive strategic planning frameworks for training and development programs.
3. University management should recognize and capitalize on the moderate positive relationship between decision-making strategies and staff inter-relations by developing comprehensive policies and procedures that promote positive workplace relationships.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge establishing the significant role that decision-making strategies play in shaping human resource management practices in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. It has provided valuable insights into the specific dimensions of human resources HR practices such as recruitment, compensation, promotion, training, inter-relations, and performance appraisal that are positively influenced by strategic and participatory decision-making. By highlighting the strength and nature of

these relationships, the study offers a data-driven foundation for policy-makers, university administrators, and scholars to better understand and improve administrative effectiveness and staff development in higher education institutions. Moreover, it adds to the limited body of literature on administrative decision-making in the Nigerian university context, opening new avenues for comparative and longitudinal research.

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