

MEDIATING EFFECT OF ETHICAL CLIMATE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of ethical climates (ECs) on HRM practices and organizational performance (OP), specifically in educational sector administration in Nigeria. Scanty of literature attempted to discover mechanism through which HRM practices affect OP, however, still there are needs for more empirical studies to clear the assumptions in the literature. This study proposed ethical climates (ECs) as potential mediator on the relationship between HRM practices and OP. A survey method was carried out, and data were collected from some selected educational ministries, parastatals, board and agencies in Nigeria. A total of 216 questionnaires were administered, of which 181 returned and usable for the data using PLS SEM 2.0v. Based on the findings, HRM practices were found positively related to organisational performance. The study also argued that ethical climates mediate the hypothesized relationship between HRM practices and OP. The study also suggested for future research.

Keywords: HRM practices, Ethical climates, Organisational performance, Educational sector.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an empirical investigation of the mediating effect of ECs on the relationship between HRM practice and (OP) in Nigerian educational sector administration. OP can be critically described as a function of the organization capability to possess, improve, and use physical goals and objectives with an acceptable disbursement of a resource while ensuring sustainability over a long period, and good performance in an organization always means the work done efficiently and effectively and remains much relevant to the authorities (Ali, 2011; Moullin, 2007). Similarly, OP can be described as the process in which organizational success is measured with respects to the significance it creates and deliver to internal and external forces (Antony & Bhattacharyya, 2010).

However in Nigeria, performance in educational sector administration is unbelievable, in which the sector performance became very unfortunate considering other countries more specifically continental counterpart, for instance Algeria, Egypt, S/Africa are all a head of Nigeria interms of performance and satisfaction with the quality of education in their respective land (WorldBank., 2010). Nigeria serve as the most populous country in the continent and the third country interms economic growth after S/Africa and Egypt respectively (WorldBank., 2010), despites the fact that education is the back born of any country economy, but in Nigeria,

performance in educational sector administration is very unfortunate, hence, there is need for more investigation.

Literature established that several factors were considered to determined OP for instance, quality management practices (Appiah-Fening, Pesakovic, & Amaria, 2008; Fening, 2012; Phan, Abdallah, & Matsui, 2011), organizational learning (Barba-Aragón, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Sanz-Valle, 2014; Garcia-Morales *et al.*, 2012; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011; López, Peón, & Ordás, 2005; Tippins & Sohi, 2003), organizational support among others.

In general, all these previous studies assist us to realize the factors that have impact on OP, however, literature had shows that studies on the link between HRM practices and OP particularly in public sector organisation are scanty (Prowse & Prowse, 2010, 2016). Even if there are some, the essential reasons (why and how) through which HRM practices effect performance in an organization still not clearly discussed in the literature. Remarkably, Resource Based View (RBV) emphasized that, internal resources are considered to be the best factors leads to competitive advantage. In line with this argument, HRM practices can be consider as internal factors that have great influence on performance as well as creating competitive advantage between the competing organisation. However, this empirical analysis will employ ethical climates (ECs) to serve as intervening variable between HRM practices and OP as endorsed by previous literature (Arulrajah, 2015; Manroop, Singh, & Ezzedeen, 2014) and also confirm the assertion of RBV, as stated by Barney, (2001), Reed and DeFillippi (1990) and Wright and McMahan (1992). Thus, considering ECs as intervening variable would have significant policy implications on OP, specifically in Nigerian educational sector administration.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

HRM practices and OP

Some previous studies discussed HRM practices differently, others considered individual dimensions of the practices while, some examined the influence of bundles practices. This study considered examining the power of bundles practices on OP which is an empirical investigation. HRM as an essential function in organizations involves everybody within the system (Bhattacharya, Gibson, & Doty, 2005; Delery & Doty, 1996), HRM as a machinery used to signify part of organizations activities that concern with development and management of individuals through the practices (Wall & Wood, 2005). In other words, HRM practices as the organizational functional practices that lead to OP and success (Wood, 1999). These practices work independently and complement one another in a way to be able to ensure performance of both organization and employees. In addition, HRM practices regarded as an organization's activities engaged in utilizing the pool of human resource and ensuring the resources are properly utilized towards achieving organizational goals and objectives (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Above all, based on the Resource Based View (RBV) perspective, HRM practices are considered the best way of utilizing vital internal resources that influence OP (Sabiu, Mei, & Joarder, 2016b).

A quite number of empirical studies were conducted on the relationship between HRM practices and OP. Recently, study conducted by Ribeiro and Gomes (2016) in European context specifically in Portugal private multinational company, a qualitative approach employed with 257 sample, the study conducted an interview to investigate the influence of HRM practices on OP, which the result explained, proper utilization of HRM practices create organizational effectiveness. Again, one study by Yen, Wang, and Kao (2016) conducted in Asian context with five Chinese firms, investigating the impact of high performance work practices (HPWpractices) and OP, result shown that some dimensions of HPPW practices are significantly related to OP this includes; performance appraisal, training and education, attractive rewards, morality and teamwork.

In summary, majority of the above literature reviewed concentrated in private, banking and manufacturing sectors (Chahal, Jyoti, & Rani, 2016; DeGeest, Follmer, & Lanivich, 2016; Fu, Flood, Bosak, Morris, & O'Regan, 2015; Mufti, Parvaiz, Wahab, & Durrani, 2015; Obeidat, Mitchell, & Bray, 2016; Ribeiro & Gomes, 2016; Yen et al., 2016) with little in public sector (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2016), however, majority of these studies were conducted in America Asia, European context there by neglecting sub-Saharan African countries particularly Nigeria. Again, most of the studies used first generation analysis techniques for instance, SPSS while there are second generation soft wares like Smart Partial Least Structural equation modelling (PLS SEM) used for running either normal or complex model, reflective or formative model and address any short fall of first generation techniques.

Despite the literature reviewed in Asian, American and European context, however studies of this nature are still lacking in African context public sector organization, more particularly Nigerian educational sector administration. Therefore, the following hypothesis were developed: -

H1: There is significant relationship between HRM practices and OP

Mediating effect of ethical climates on the relationship between HRM practices and OP

According to Victor and Cullen (1987), (1988) ECs regarded as sharing opinions of what ethically correct behavior is and how ethical issues should effectively and efficiently manage. ECs indicates how an organization responds to ethical issues. Literature stressed that ECs determines right or wrong of what individuals trust and shapes their ethical decision making and conduct (Lopez, Rechner, & Olson-Buchanan, 2005). In related argument, Schluter *et al.* (2008) stated that ECs signifies the organization's practices, policies, and procedures on ethical issues, and it influences individual attitudes and behavior and serves as an orientation for employee behavior. In this regards, ECs play a significant role in enhancing OP. It is important that, organizations set ethical values for its employees alongside providing an enable atmosphere that encourages ethical behavior, trust, commitment, capable leadership, and creates workforce value to improve OP (Hijal-Moghrabi, Sabharwal, & Berman, 2015)

However, literature revealed that challenges facing educational sector administration are compounded with unethical values among the employees and the system in general which need to be addressed and achieve performance for both employees and organizations. Therefore, neglecting of ethical values that suit organization bring about low performance as well as low productivity, meanwhile, ethical values are imperative component for sustaining effective performance and encourage competitive advantage (Trust, 2015). Similarly, its discovered about the growing concern and the occurrence of unethical behaviors within the public sector organization more particularly in educational sector administration, in this regards, there are several issues that generate a lots of unethical challenges such as mismanagement, abuses, scandals, poor service delivery, lack of performance, and corruption.

Prior empirical studies shown that ECs associated to OP. For example, Recently, Sabiu, Mei and Joarder (2016) conducted an empirical investigation on the effect of ECs on OP in African context particularly Nigeria, using 181 sample department in some selected department in ministries of education. The results shown that ECs positively related to OP. In related manner, Hijal-Moghrabi *et al.* (2015) carried out study in Western context USA in particular 1,695 sample were used in quantitative analysis, the result indicates that ECs is significantly related to OP.

However, all these studies fail to test the predictive power of ECs as mediator on the relationship between HRM practices and OP in an empirical approach using PLS-SEM or any other second generation analysis techniques that can run and test the relationship concurrently. Therefore, this study will examine the mediating effect of ECs on HRM practices and OP in an empirical analysis which is yet to be explore in the literature. Hence, the study hypothesizes that:

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H2: There is significant relationship between ECs and OP

H3: There is significant relationship between HRM practices and ECs

In general, from the above reviewed studies, literature revealed that ECs has been used as mediating variable with highly significant impact. In line with this argument, this study will test the power of ECs to mediate the link between HRM practices and OP, specifically in Nigerian educational sector administration. Therefore, mediating hypothesis will be developed as follows:

H4: ECs mediates the relationship between HRM practices and OP

METHODOLOGY

The study used quantitative approach using primary data through questionnaire design, focus on Nigerian educational sector administration performance, data were collected from some selected ministries of education, agencies, boards and parastatals in North western Nigeria using 181 sample. Study instrument were adapted from previous studies; HRM Practices (Ahmad, Schroeder, & Sinha, 2003; Delaney & Huselid,1996; Pfeffer,1998; Terpstra & Rozell, 1993), ECs (Victor & Cullen, 1987; 1988) and OP (Brewer & Selden, 2000). In addition, the analysis was conducted using PLS SEM 2.0.

Research Model

The model involving HRM practices, ethical climates and organizational performance was examined using two-step approach such as measurement model and structural model (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014).

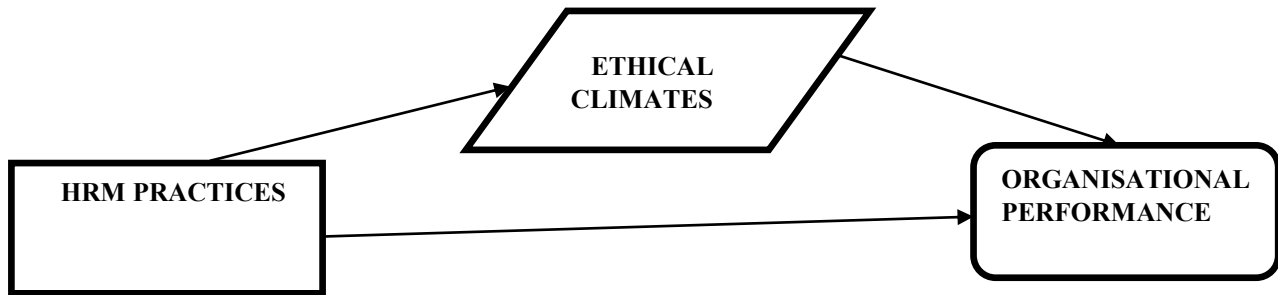


Figure 1: Research Framework

Measurement Model

Involves assessment of indicators loadings, internal consistency reliability using composite reliability, convergent validity of (AVE) average variance extracted, as well as discriminant validity using s-square root of AVE, establishing the goodness of measures. Thus, to achieve the measurement model criterion, five (5) items were deleted from the dependent variable are OP1, OP2, OP4, OP8, and OP9 as it did not satisfy the minimum requirements (Chin, 1998; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010; Hair *et al.*, 2014) and the deletion applied to all other variables. In this regards, instruments adapted in this study found reliable, since all the adapted items meet the threshold of 0.4 and above, and all the indicators loading ranges from 0.66 to 0.79 are suitable for further analysis. Similarly, Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) recommended that composite reliability value ranges from 0.70 is accepted, while this study obtained values of 0.84 to 0.87 which considered suitable. However, to determine the convergence validity using AVE. AVE values in this study ranges from 0.51 to 0.52 which is above the minimum benchmark of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Lastly, discriminant validity was also achieved; the calculated square root of the AVE ranging from 0.71 to 0.72 higher than the loadings of other constructs and cross-loadings (inter-correlations of the construct with the other constructs in the model) indicating satisfactory discriminant validity (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 present the indicators loading, composite reliability, cronbach alpha and AVE while Table 2 present discriminant validity. Equally, measurement model of the study was shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Factor loading, CR, Cronb Alp, and AVE

Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE
HRP10	0.68	0.88	0.84	0.51
HRP11	0.74			
HRP14	0.67			
HRP15	0.78			
HRP16	0.69			
HRP17	0.67			
HRP26	0.74			
EC21	0.72	0.84	0.77	0.52
EC22	0.72			
EC25	0.74			
EC5	0.65			
EC9	0.77			
OP10	0.75	0.84	0.76	0.51
OP3	0.66			
OP5	0.68			
OP6	0.67			
OP7	0.79			

Table 2
Discriminant Validity

Constructs	ECs	HRP	OP
ECs	0.72		
HRP	0.58	0.71	
OP	0.60	0.58	0.71



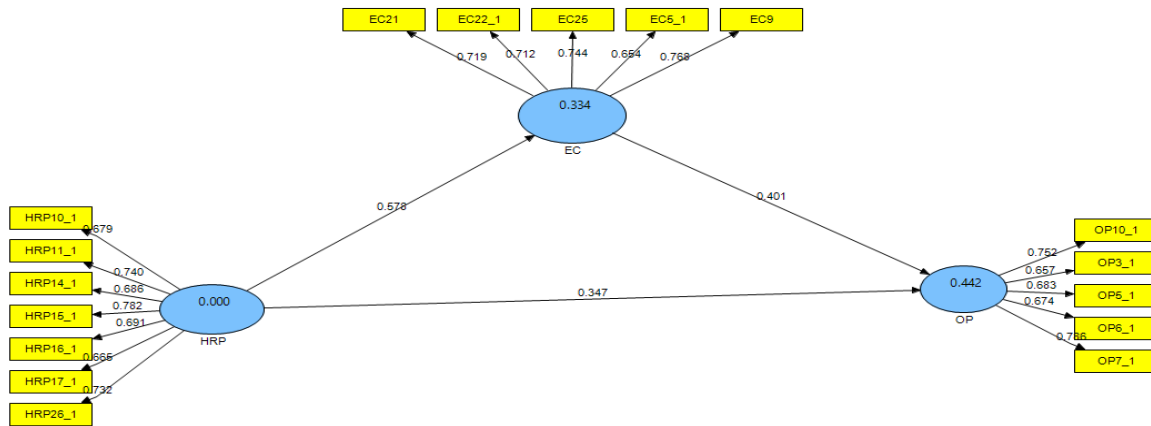


Figure 2: Measurement model

Structural Model

Table 3: Hypotheses for direct relationship and indirect relationship (ECs->OP and HRP->ECs)

Hypotheses	Beta	STD Error	T-Statistics	P-value	Decision
HRP -> OP	0.34	0.08	4.24***	0.00	Supported
ECs -> OP	0.40	0.08	5.25***	0.00	Supported
HRP -> ECs	0.58	0.05	11.25***	0.00	Supported

***P<0.001, **P<0.01, *P<0.05

Testing the Mediating effects of Ethical climates

In testing the mediating effects of ethical climates on the relationship between HRM practices and OP, the study used PLS in estimating the indirect effects among the variables (HRM practices, ECs and OP) at 0.00 level of significance. Table 4 presents the mediation hypothesis of the

Table 4: Mediation Hypotheses

HYPOTHESIS	BETA	STD Error	T-STA	P-VALUE	DECISION
HRP->HRP*EC->OP	0.32	0.07	4.67***	0.00	SUPPORTED

Therefore, it can be concluded that ethical climates partially mediate the relationship between HRM practices and OP. Variance Accounted For (VAF), for mediation is categorized as: (a) if the VAF is less than 20% no mediation, (b) if the mediation is 20% to 80% is regarded as partial mediation while, (c) when it is 80% and the above it is called full mediation (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Hair *et al.*, 2011) Thus, the VAF of the mediating effect is less than 80% which is 40% and both



direct and indirect hypotheses are significant. Figure 3 demonstrated the inner model of mediating effects of ECs on the relationship between HRM practices and OP. Table 5 presents magnitude of mediating effect VAF of this study.

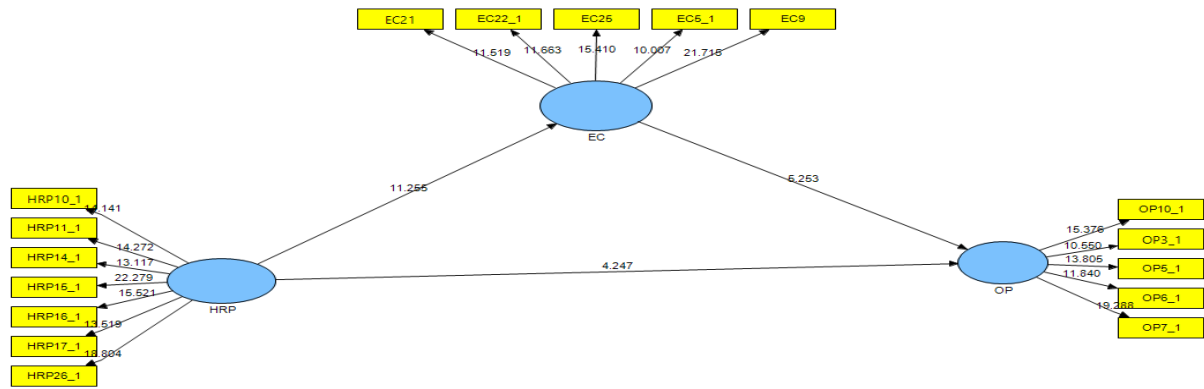


Figure 3: Structural model (Indirect effect)

Table 5

Assessment of the Magnitude of Mediating Effect: VAF

Hypothesis	Relationship	Indirect	Direct	Total	VAF	Mediation
H4	HRP->ECs->OP	0.23	0.40	0.58	40%	Partial

Coefficient of Determination for Mediating Relationships (R^2)

Another criteria used for assessing structural model is coefficient of determination (R^2) of endogenous construct (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Hair *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). According to Chin (1998); Hair *et al.* (2011); Hair *et al.* (2014) and Hair *et al.* (2016) R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 shows substantial, medium and small R^2 values respectively. Similarly, Falk and Miller (1992) suggest an R^2 value of .10 as a minimum acceptable level. Hence, this study R^2 value of all the endogenous constructs (ECs and OP) are small with (0.33) and (0.44) values respectively. Table 6 presents the R^2 values of the endogenous constructs.

Table 6: Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables

Latent Variables	Variance Explained (R^2)
Organizational Performance	33%
Ethical Climates	44%



Assessment of Effect Size (f^2)

Having evaluated the coefficient of determination of the endogenous latent variables R^2 (ECs and OP), the next criterion assesses the effect size (f^2) as recommended by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013). Cohen (1988) describes f^2 values of 0.35, 0.15 and 0.02 as having large, moderate, small effects respectively. However, Chin, Marcolin, and Newted (2003), highlighted that, smallest strength of f^2 of exogenous variables on endogenous variables should be considered with an effect. The effect size in this study is small, medium and large having the values of 0.13, 0.18 and 0.50 which are considered suitable. Hence, the effect size for exogenous variable could be evaluated using the formula below (Cohen, 1988; Selya, Rose, Dierker, Hedeker, & Mermelstein, 2012). (See Table 7)

$$\text{Effect size: } f^2 = \frac{R^2 \text{ included} - R^2 \text{ Excluded}}{1 - R^2 \text{ Included}}$$

Table 7: Assessment of the Effect Size for Mediating Relationships: F-Square

Constructs	R^2 Included	R^2 Excluded	f -squared	Effect Size
HRP-OP	0.44	0.37	0.13	Small
ECs-OP	0.44	0.34	0.18	Medium
HRP-ECs	0.33	0.00	0.50	Large

Predictive Relevance of the Model

The study assessed predictive relevance of the model through running the blindfolding method in Smart PLS 2.0, result was checked using cross validated redundancy and communality. The relevance values of this model both the dependent variable and mediating variable is 0.17 and 0.22 as shown in Figure 4 and Table 8. The model predictive relevance values in this study is suitable as recommended by Geisser (1974) and Stone (1974), model with Q^2 above zero has predictive relevance. Similarly, Chin (1998) stated that model predictive relevance can be considered small, medium and large, if the values are 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 respectively. Therefore, based on stone 1974, and the model has medium predictive relevance. Table 8 and Figure 4 presents the result of the model predictive relevance.

Table 8: Model Predictive relevance Q^2

Total	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
ECs	905	749.14	0.17
OP	905	704.50	0.22

DISCUSSION

This study examined the mediating effect of ECs on the relationship between HRM practices and OP. Statistically, result revealed that all the study hypotheses were found significantly supported. Firstly, H1, HRM practices and OP relationship is significant ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 4.24$, $p = 0.00$). This result is consistent with the findings of some previous studies which established the positive



significant relationship between HRM practices and OP (Chahal *et al.*, 2016; DeGeest *et al.*, 2016; Fu *et al.*, 2015; Mufti *et al.*, 2015; Obeidat *et al.*, 2016; Ribeiro & Gomes, 2016; Yen *et al.*, 2016). Though, HRM practices considered as internal resources where by organizations needs to strategies their plans appropriately in utilizing the resources. Subsequently, it is implies that if Nigerian educational sector administration comprehensively implements the HRM practices, it will massively contribute to effective OP. In this regards, maximum level of OP depends on the higher level of HRM practices. Likewise, second hypothesis supported the argument that ECs relates to OP ($\beta = 0.40$, $t = 5.25$, P-Value = 0.00), hence the H2 were statistically supported. This result supported the findings of some previous empirical studies (Hijal-Moghrabi *et al.*, 2015; Sabiu *et al.*, 2016a) its indicates that, ECs as an essential factor help in improving performance of any organization. Therefore, Nigerian educational sector administration may have considered given emphasis on ECs to predict performance of the sector. Similarly, hypothesis 3, the relationship between HRM practices and ECs ($\beta = 0.58$, $t = 11.25$, P-Value = 0.00), thus, H3 is supported. Finding confirmed the argument of some prior literature (Arulrajah, 2015; Manroop *et al.*, 2014), the ability of human resource management system to effect ethical behaviour of personnel within the organization is highly dependent on the effective functions of the system itself (Foote, 2001) In this regards, the role of human resource system in promoting ECs and ethical behaviors in organizations is inevitable (Caldwell, Truong, Linh, & Tuan, 2011). Therefore, Nigerian educational sector administration needs to be more concern in dealings with employee ethical behavior to promote organizational ethical system, in return achieve performance.

Lastly, the mediating hypothesis is also supported ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 4.67$, P-Value = 0.00), hence, ECs mediate the relationship between HRM practices and OP. In related argument, RBV theory highlighted that HRM practices can create and sustain competitive advantage in organization through resources that are deeply woven in an organizational history ethics and culture (Manroop *et al.*, 2014). Again, theory postulates that success is determined by the organization's resources controls and the uniqueness of these resources (HRM practices and ECs) (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). Therefore, Nigerian educational sector administration can appropriately utilize the postulation of the RBV theory in respect of internal resources that can leads to competitive advantage in organization as well as the validation of this assumption in conducting an empirical investigation and finally confirmed that resources can influence performance and competitive advantage through resources that in historical setting like ethics and culture.

CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the existing knowledge by way of establishing a holistic approach to examining the link of bundles HRM practices and OP in Nigerian educational sector administration. The study contributes by extending the existing literature between HRM practices and OP relationships empirically. In the same manner, a lot of studies established that there is a link between HRM practices and OP without proving why and how those links exist;



this paper contributes to knowledge by confirming the literature on why and how those links exist through the influence of mediator (ECs) which yet to be explored in the academic literature. This study is among the few studies that examine the mediating effect of ECs on the relationship between HRM practices and OP.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Fundamentally, the results of this study will help the policy makers/stakeholders and policy implementation committee in Nigerian educational sector administration ministries, boards, parastatals as well as the agencies in making proper decisions regarding implementation of HRM practices that can create ethics within the system and among the employees towards achieving the organizational success and competitive advantage.
2. Again, the study recommends the use of large sample, other country educational sector administration can also conduct a similar study using individual practices or bundles to replicate the result of this study.
3. Lastly, future research can use smart PLS or any other second generation analysis technique in order to re-confirm the model.

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