HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING AND COMPETITIVENESS OF INDIGENOUS OIL AND GAS COMPANIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between human resource planning and competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study consisted of the thirty-three (33) registered and functional indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Because the population was small, the researcher used a census sampling technique to examine all 33 indigenous oil and gas companies in Rivers State. However, 165 managers from 33 indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria participated in the study as respondents. The research instrument was validated by supervisors' vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between human resource planning and competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, the study concludes human resource planning positively enhance competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. The study recommends that management of indigenous oil and gas companies should align their human resource planning with their overall business strategy. By identifying key business objectives and future workforce requirements, companies can develop HR plans that address specific talent needs and support long-term organizational goals.

Keyword: Human Resource Planning Strategies, Competitiveness, Technology Capability, Product Innovation

INTRODUCTION

The business environment is associated with enormous changes. What is relevant today becomes moribund and obsolete tomorrow. White (2013) captures it thus "the business environment is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous". The activities of various business organizations are affected by identifiable internal and external issues (Wechie & Harry, 2018). Therefore, firms and their operations are in a constant flux, because firms that decide to be docile in the very volatile business environment could easily be muscled out of business. Globalization in no small way contributes to these changes, as what happens in other countries could have an impact on what happens in another country. Hence, firms that have elongated their operational life are always on the lookout for changes so as to respond appropriately. Strategic managers are having trouble coming up with strategies to outsmart their rivals in order to overcome the hazards associated with global competitiveness among enterprises (Kharub, Patle & Sharma, 2017). Competency, strategic knowledge-based training, and strategic management have become more crucial as a result of strategic competitiveness, and many disciplines, including economics, industry, finance, and marketing, have long recognized their significance (Teece, 2000). Organizations can increase their operations and market share by being more competitive (Hossain, Kabir & Mahbub, 2017; Bagshaw, 2019).

Yeh, Lai, and Ho (2006) established that the oriented factor of organizational competitiveness lies in the ability of the management in the organization to actually identify the full potential of entrepreneurial intellectual assets with regard to implementing strategic and tactical decisions to satisfy customers" value. Ifikhar et al. (2015) observed that taking important decisions with respect to cost effectiveness, improving quality of products to meet customer values and employee social status for the firm to stay in business. Improving productivity is crucial for the attainment of organizational competitiveness. Gaining competitive advantage will help entrepreneurs to stand the chance of productivity improvement, attain shareholders and customers value, profitability, quality of products, cost effectiveness and customer loyalty and satisfaction

(Iftikhar, et al., 2015). Competitiveness can be viewed at the individual, firm or country level (Barney, 2001). Organizations can improve their competitiveness by investing in the development and training of their employees. This involves providing regular training and development opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of employees, ensuring that they are equipped with the latest tools and techniques to perform their jobs effectively. This also includes creating a culture of continuous learning, encouraging employees to learn and grow both professionally and personally.

Employee resourcing strategies however set out what the organisations intends to do about its human resource planning, recruitment, selection, retention and how they should be integrated with organisational strategies (Armstrong, 2010; 2014). Evidently, human resource is a backbone and life-wire of any organisation that can be productively and strategically engaged for excellent job performance. Employee resourcing holds the key to success of any organization since it ensures that the right person fit to do the job is acquired in the organization, (Kavoo- Linge & Kiruri 2013). It is concerned with the procedures of obtaining and retaining a workforce with the necessary skills, competences, training, attitudes, knowledge, ethics and values, (Karemu, Kahara & Josee, 2014). This is because the organization only hires and retains the right manpower in order to increase its performance, (Majumber, 2012 and John, 2008). Boohene & Asuinura (2010) opines that employee resourcing procedures should ensure that Employee selection process employ evidence-based tools to determine the most qualified person fit for the job. It involves both the newly hired and those to be promoted or transferred. Abomeh (2013) and Gooderham et al (2008) contend that if clear resourcing procedure is followed based on practices, then the organization is bound to outperform other businesses in the same industry. The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between human resource planning and competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

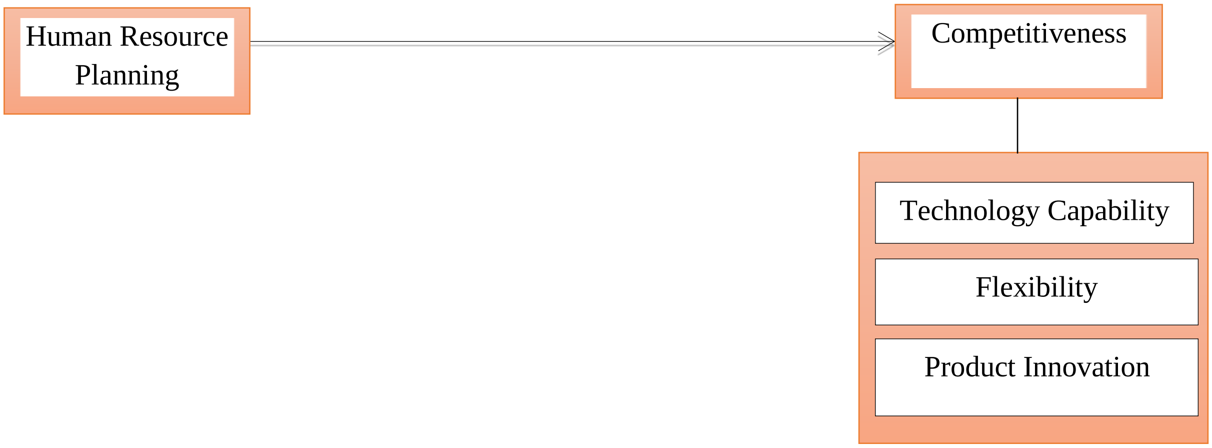

Figure 1: Relationship between human resource planning strategies and competitiveness.
Source: Desk Research (2023)

The following Research Questions were addressed in the study:

i. What is the relationship between human resource planning and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

ii. What is the relationship between human resource planning and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

iii. What is the relationship between human resource planning and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

According to Barney et al., (2011), the Resource-Based View theory best explains how organizations can obtain competitive advantage and improve performance. According to the RBV theory, organizational resources are the primary determinants of the organization's competitiveness and performance. (Shivaraj & Vijayakumara, 2015) The theory proposes that organizations must integrate their resources, which are the key capabilities they are certain to possess, for the sake of their internal operations and continued existence.

The Resource-Based View theory is based on two assumptions, according to Muhammad (2010), in order to illuminate the means of integrating organizational resources to gain a competitive advantage. First, the theory implies that organizations in a given business environment are unrelated in terms of their resources and the manner in which they integrate these resources. Second, the theory implies that the heterogeneity of firms may persist for an extended period of time as a result of the immobility of certain resources that differentiate the strategies of firms in a business environment.

The combination of physical, human, and organizational resources provides the organization with a competitive advantage, which is essential to its success or failure (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Madhani, 2010). According to Samaha, Palmatier, and Dant (2011), the Resource-Based View theory focuses primarily on the distinctiveness of a company's resources relative to those of its rivals. Employees (human resources) and skills are some of the resources that, according to RBV, enable organizations to generate unique products and outperform rivals despite being in the same market and having the same market share.

Competitors can replicate the organization's other resources, but the organization's talents and human resources are unique. Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen, and Moeyaert (2009) add that the resources of the firm and the uniqueness of the resources do not necessarily affect the performance of the organization. Rather, other factors, such as the managerial strategies injected on the resources, contribute to the overall performance of the organization. According to Berny (2008), for organizational resources to have an impact on a company's competitiveness and performance, they must be valuable and scarce.

Therefore, a company's human resources are one of its strategic resources that, if well-developed through a deliberate human resource planning program, can distinguish it from its competitors' human resources and provide advantages for the organization's well-being and survival in a dynamic business environment. According to Conner (1991), the presence of unique inputs and capabilities will distinguish the performance of businesses, thereby granting them a competitive edge. However, environmental conditions such as uncertainty, volatility, hostility, the number of relevant components in the environment, and the interpersonal relationships between these components increase the perceived complexity of managing and planning for the organization's human resources (Liedke et al., 2019).

Conceptual Review

Human Resource Planning

Human resource planning is a process through which organizations anticipate future manpower requirements, thereby evaluating the employee requisite, for future need and attempts to provide sufficient employee required to perform toward the realization of organizational goals and objectives (Satope, 2014; Song, Zhao, Arend & Im, 2015). However, strategic human resource planning starts with a business review and optimal utilization of organization's existing human resource and their potential to meet an organization's current and future needs. As noted by Maina and Kwasira (2015) human resource planning involves organization's determination to have the right persons with prerequisite skills and capabilities to carry out any tasks that may be assigned in helping the organization achieve its objectives in record time. In a related development, Gilbart, DeWinne and Sels (2015) affirm that human resource planning is a process which anticipated future manpower requirement and ensures sufficient pool of candidates with right skills and experience needed are made available.

It is important while carrying out human resource planning, to consider the scope of the activity in order to forecast correctly. Human resource planning also involves making an inventory of current human resources in order to determine the human resource status, for example, the current size and kind of the human resources as well as work scope (Randall, 2000). Lunenburg (2017) agreed that, human resource planning consists of various activities which include; continuous environmental scanning and reviewing of corporate strategies, objectives, and policies, forecasting human resource requirements, making an inventory of present human resources and assessing the extent to which these resources are employed optimally; anticipating human resource problems by projecting present resources into the future and comparing them with the forecasts of requirements to determine their adequacy, and planning the necessary programs of requirements, selection, training and development, utilization, transfer, promotion, motivation, and compensation to ensure that future human resource requirements are properly met.

According to Ayandibu and Kaseeram (2019), human resource planning is the most important activity for any organization because it identifies areas of need and functions as the foundation for all human resource management activities. Karia, Omari, Mwanaongoro, and Ondieki (2016) listed the human resource management activities associated with human resource planning as job analysis, recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, rewards, and promotion. Undoubtedly, accurate forecasting and anticipation of the organization's future requirements and direction will be necessary for a thorough analysis of these activities.

When conducting human resource planning, it is essential to consider the scope of the activity in order to make accurate projections. Human resource planning also entails compiling an inventory of current human resources in order to ascertain the human resource status, such as the current quantity and type of human resources as well as the scope of the work (Randall, 2000). Lunenburg (2017) concurred that human resource planning entails a variety of activities, such as: continuous environmental scanning and review of corporate strategies, objectives, and policies; forecasting human resource requirements; making an inventory of present human resources and assessing the extent to which these resources are optimally utilized; anticipating human resource problems by projecting present resources into the future and comparing them with feasibilities; and evaluating the effectiveness of human resource management.

Organizational Competitiveness

Competitiveness has also been described and understood as an attribute of a company expressed in terms of its operational effectiveness, and efficiency (Kuźmiński, Jalowiec, Maśloch, Wojtaszek & Miciuła, 2020). As for Ambastha and Momaya (2004), competitiveness is the ability of a company to design, manufacture and sell better products and services than those offered by competitors, taking into account price and non-price quality criteria in the assessment. Lisowska (2013) views the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises as the ability to take quick and adequate actions to manage resources efficiently. In the case of business competitiveness, we can define it as the ability of organizations to produce goods or services with a favorable quality price ratio that guarantees good profitability while achieving customer preference over other competitors. The competitiveness of an enterprise should be understood as a proper feature of the enterprise, playing an important role in formulating the enterprise's development strategy (Ungerman, Dedkova & Gurinova, 2018; Kuźmiński et al., 2020). Competitiveness describes the extent to which the organization is aggressive in driving for its own success and goals (Jiang, Chai, Shao & Feng, 2018).

Competitiveness is considered as a relative factor and as earlier noted, is more severe in some contexts than others. Lee and Walsh (2016) affirmed that service industries are some of the most competitive; this is reflected in their advancing of technologies and processes that in most cases can be disruptive and unsettling. Competitiveness is evidently a decisive factor for survival in the business world. To achieve it requires setting priorities, which can be defined as a set of options of varying importance that a firm needs to have to compete in the market over a determined time frame (Santos, Pires & Gonçalves, 1999). Organizational competitiveness is about how companies compete in the business environment where it operates. In other words, a competitive strategy means defining how an organization plans to create and maintain a competitive edge to outsmart its competitors. Competitive strategy represents the direction of business strategies that focuses on the external business environment which relates to competitors and customers (Dadzie, Winston & Dadzie, 2012; Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2015). Strategic competitiveness is a company's long-term action plan aim at gaining competitive advantage over competitors after assessing their weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats in the same industry and comparing them to once company (Farooq et al., 2018).

Measures of Competitiveness

Technology Capability

In global markets, organizations' competitive advantages stem from their ability to create and disseminate technological innovations and develop new technologies faster than their competitors (Guan & Ma, 2003). According to Caloghirou, Kastelli, and Tsakanikas (2004), technology is a vital resource that provides sustainable competitive advantages. It is the focal point of competition on the global market. (Lall, 1990). Global patterns of competition, growth, and commerce are determined by the diffusion, assimilation, and development of new technologies. Access to new technology influences the capacity of firms in developing nations to develop indigenous technological capabilities and compete on global markets (Lall, 1990). Therefore, technological capability (TC) has attracted the interest of not only academicians but also business managers and government officials (Lall, 1990; Miyazaki, 1995; Kim, 1997). The strategic role that technological capabilities play in determining a company's, an industry's, or even a nation's competitive advantage cannot be neglected. Bergerk, Tell, Berggren, and Watson (2008) and Coombs and Bierly III (2006) consider TC to be the system of activities, tangible systems, skills and knowledge bases, managerial systems of education and reward, and values that give an organization a competitive advantage. Typically, a business is able to operate, maintain, adapt, and integrate the transferred technology. Activities and strategies are the two primary dimensions of TC (Bergerk, Tell, Berggren, & Watson, 2008).

Flexibility

The ability of an organization to respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges presented by the competitive environment (Sanchez, 1995; Nandakumar, Jharkharia, and Nair, 2014) depends on the increasing uncertainty in the business environment and the need for organizations to build flexibility into their systems in order to deal with the dynamic business environment. Flexible organizations require agility and adaptability to change and innovate; strength and resilience to assure the stability and longevity of competitive advantage (Rahrami, 1992). The business environment has become more dynamic and competitive than ever before, and businesses are constantly required to adapt to environmental changes

(Grewal & Tanshuhaj, 2001; Young-Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999). The ability of a company to rapidly identify major changes in the competitive landscape, reallocate resources to new courses of action, and reconfigure existing organizational routines that support these actions, determines whether a company can create competitive advantage faster than its rivals (Shimizu & Hitt, 2004; Nadkami & Narayanan, 2007; Gelhard & Delft, 2015).

Strategic flexibility is an essential dynamic capability (Eisenhardt et al., 2010; Teece et al., 1997). In an era characterized by globalization, computerization, information technology, and changing purchasing patterns, organizations operate in a dynamic environment. Maintaining competitive advantages has become difficult, and there is little to no long-term stability. Therefore, organizations must be flexible and act more intelligently with their environment; high firm performance results from not only having timely and necessary information about changing markets, but also understanding the implications or actions that are necessary as a result of this knowledge and acting accordingly (Javalgi, Whipple, Ghosh, & Young, 2005).

Product Innovation

Innovativeness is the tendency to pursue creativity and experimentation. Some innovations build on existing skills to create incremental improvements, while more radical innovations require brand-new skills and may make existing skills obsolete. Either way, innovativeness is aimed at developing new products, services, and processes. Those organizations that are successful in their innovation efforts tend to enjoy stronger performance than those that do not (Certo, Moss & Short, 2009). Innovation is the mechanism through which valuable new products, processes, and organisational knowledge are developed; being the foundation of intellectual capital is considered central to the organisational capabilities to perform optimally. Ramadani and Gerguri (2011) defined innovation as a process of transforming new ideas and new knowledge into new products and services. Wang (2011) on the other hand see innovation in the developing country context as the process by which firms master and implements the design and production of goods and services that are new to them irrespective of whether they are new to their competitors, their customers or the world.

Innovation is the mechanism through which valuable new products, processes, and organizational knowledge are developed, being the foundation of intellectual capital is considered central to the organizational capabilities to perform optimally. Ramadani and Gerguri (2011) defined innovation as a process of transforming new ideas and new knowledge into new products and services. Wang (2011) on the other hand see innovation in the developing country context as the process by which firms master and implements the design and production of goods and services that are new to them irrespective of whether they are new to their competitors, their customers or the world. Kusiak (2007) posit that the way organizations develop value through new products, processes, and organizational systems needed to respond to changing markets, technologies and modes of competition as an innovation device. Through value creation it enhances the organization's success, maintains its sustainable competitive advantages, and is critical in determining the long-term survival of organizations (Abereijo, Ilori, Taiwo & Adegbite, 2007; Baark, Antonio, Lo & Sharif, 2011).

Empirical Review

Human Resource Planning and Competitiveness

Okonkwo, Okafor and Essell (2022) examined the effect of manpower planning on organizational performance in the Brewery industry in South-East, Nigeria. The literature review section touched on all the four main sections of the review which include conceptual review, theoretical framework, theoretical exposition and empirical review. The study adopted descriptive survey design and used summary and descriptive statistics as well as regression analysis as the main tools of analysis. All tests were conducted at 0.05 level of significance. Preliminary results indicated that FStatistic of 18.029 is statistical significant and as such, the model was considered valid for predictions. The regression coefficient showed that 61.7 percent relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables. The coefficient of determination also showed that 52.9 percent variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the regressors. Major findings are that manpower planning in the area of forecasting to anticipate employees number and skills/expertise level have significant positive effect on organizational performance. It was concluded that human resource planning is very essential for optimal performance in the brewery industry.

From the foregoing discourse, the study hypothesized thus:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study consisted of the thirty-three (33) registered and functional indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Because the population was small, the researcher used a census sampling technique to examine all 33 indigenous oil and gas companies in Rivers State. However, 165 managers from 33 indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria participated in the study as respondents. The research instrument was validated by supervisors' vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Correlations matrix for human resource planning strategies and measures of competitiveness

			Human Resource Planning	Technology Capability	Flexibility	Product Innovation
Spearman's rho	Human Resource Planning Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.807**	.742**	.896**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	151	151	151	151
	Technology Capability	Correlation Coefficient	.807**	1.000	.950**	.910**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	151	151	151	151
	Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	.42**	.950**	1.000	.913**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	151	151	151	151
	Product Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.896**	.910**	.913**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	151	151	151	151

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

RQ 1: What is the relationship between human resource planning and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 1 was used to answer research question 1. Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.807 on the relationship between human resource planning strategies and technology capability. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in technology capability was as a result of the adoption of human resource planning strategies. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between human resource planning strategies and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

RQ 2: What is the relationship between human resource planning and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.742 on the relationship between human resource planning and flexibility. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in flexibility was as a result of the adoption of human resource planning strategies. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between human resource planning strategies and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

RQ 3: What is the relationship between human resource planning and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.896 on the relationship between human resource planning strategies and product innovation. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in product innovation was as a result of the adoption of human resource planning strategies. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between human resource planning strategies and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Therefore, to enable us accept or reject hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 as well as generalize our findings to the study population the p- value was used as shown below:

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria

Similarly displayed in the table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig-calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and technology capability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Also displayed in the table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig-calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and flexibility of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Also displayed in the table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig-calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between human resource planning strategies and product innovation of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding showed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between human resource planning and competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. This finding corroborates the finding of Okonkwo, Okafor and Essell (2022) examined the effect of human resource planning on organizational performance of selected breweries in the South-East, Nigeria and found that manpower planning in the area of forecasting to anticipate employee number and skills/expertise level have significant positive effect on organizational performance. Anya, Umoh and Worlu (2017) evaluated the effect of human resource planning on organizational performance in the oil and gas industries located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria and found significant positive relationship exists between human resource planning and organizational performance in the sector.

Furthermore, the current finding agrees with Olusanya, Awotungase and Ohadebere (2012) who examined the impact of effective human resource planning on firm's productivity by using Sterling Bank, Nigeria, PLC as the study area and found from the analysis of data that effective human resources planning has positive and strong correlation with organizational productivity. It was concluded that human resource planning is a necessary and sufficient condition for improving and sustaining productivity in the service industry such as banking. Also, Nwichi and Chukwuka (2017) examined manpower planning as a veritable tool for enhancing performance in the public sector organizations and found that effective regulatory capability on the part of government for necessary enforcement of manpower policies, will improve performance in the sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that human resource planning strategies positively enhance competitiveness of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. This highlights the critical importance of aligning HR planning with the unique context and requirements of the oil and gas industry in the South-South region. By understanding the local culture, workforce dynamics, and industry trends, companies can tailor their HR planning to attract, develop, and retain the right talent.

The study recommends that management of indigenous oil and gas companies should align their human resource planning with their overall business strategy. By identifying key business objectives and future workforce requirements, companies can develop HR plans that address specific talent needs and support long-term organizational goals.

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