

EFFECT OF HIGH INVOLVEMENT HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON RESILIENCE OF OIL AND GAS FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of high involvement human resource practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria. In carrying out this research, two specific objectives were stated, two research questions and hypotheses were formulated. A cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of five (5) oil and gas firms domiciled in South-South, Nigeria. A census method was adopted and as such accordingly, represented the sample for the study. Ninety-eight (98) copies of questionnaire were distributed to senior and middle managers drawn from the five (5) oil and gas firms. Ninety-two (92) copies were retrieved and analysed. Structural Equation Modelling was used for analysis of hypotheses. The findings revealed that the dimensions of high involvement human resource practices such as fair reward practices and competence development practices have significant effect on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria. It was then concluded that high involvement human resource practices statistically and significantly relate to resilience of oil and gas firms in the study area. Consequently, employees are able to have a shared purpose and knowledge, critical to increasing the organisation's capacity to respond and recover quickly in difficult situations. The study therefore recommended among others, the assertion that a resilient workforce is a resilient organisation, hence the need for management to adopt a holistic approach towards employees' development.

KEYWORDS: High Involvement Human Resource Practices, Resilience, Fair Reward Practices, Competence Development Practices.

Introduction

The concept of resilience emerged from the necessity for organisations to stay vigilant against potential threats that could jeopardize their existence. Hence organisations should take proactive measures, known as anticipatory measures, to safeguard themselves. As Seville, Brunson, Dantas, Le Masurier., Wilkinson and Vargo (2008) noted, resilience is an organization's ability to survive, and potentially even thrive, in times of crisis. This was affirmed in Umoh (2009) who asserts that social organisations have to absorb environmental disturbances of all kinds in the process of achieving goals or objectives. He contends that the regulatory capacity of a subsystem is limited to its variety or complexity. The regulator must generate higher variety than that of the situation being regulated, otherwise it is impossible to bring and keep the situation within the space of desirable states. The concept of a system being viable can be seen in the context of how resilient it is. How proactive are managers of organisations in dealing with crisis, how prepared are they, is a measure of their viability

(Jaja and Amah, 2014). In achieving resilience therefore, organisations must pay serious attention to the issue of high involvement human resource practices.

HIHR practices emphasises employee involvement in decision-making processes, training and development, open communication, performance management, and rewards and recognition (Lepak and Snell, 1999). By implementing these practices, organisations can create a more engaged and committed workforce, with employees who are more adaptable, innovative, and willing to take ownership of their work. The link between organisational resilience and HIHRM practices is rooted in the notion that a resilient organisation requires a resilient workforce. In order for an organisation to adapt and respond to unexpected disruptions, it needs employees who are skilled, knowledgeable, and motivated. HIHR practices can help to build this type of workforce by fostering employee development, empowerment, and engagement (Luthans and Vogelgesang, 2022).

High-involvement HR systems are becoming increasingly popular in modern organisations, as they can help to improve employee engagement, job satisfaction, and performance. As Lawler and Mohrman (2003) noted, high-involvement HR systems are characterized by a focus on teamwork, fair reward practices, competence development, employee empowerment, and collaboration between management and staff.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of high involvement HR practices indicates that it is a set of distinct but interrelated practices geared towards improving organisational effectiveness and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage through the selection, development, retaining, and motivation of employees who possess superior abilities and who are willing to apply them. Batt (2002) explicitly pointed out that high-involvement HRM systems included a set of HRM practices that aimed at advancing employee skills, enhancing employee incentives and improving employee participation.

Many researchers have demonstrated that high involvement human resource practices such as fair reward practices and competence development have engendered organisational outcomes. According to Gupta and Sharma (2018), the importance of HIHR practice lies in its ability to create a flexible and dynamic environment where employees feel empowered, engaged, valued and are encouraged to take initiative and contribute to the overall performance of the organisation. This can help to ensure that the organisation is able to cope with and adapt to changing business conditions. .

Mcshane and Von Glinow (2018) affirmed that in today's dynamic business operational environments, the viability and sustainability of any organisation is no longer dependent on the numerical strength of its workforce but rather on how skilled, knowledgeable, motivated and committed they are. This commitment is often bolstered by the provision of rewards and developmental opportunities as well as meaningful relationships with supervisors, colleagues and customers.

Thus, one of the biggest challenges organisations are faced today is not only the uncertainties in their highly competitive business world but also, how to develop a system of organisational practices that would improve employee's abilities to exploit existing market realities and explore new opportunities.

Since 1958 when petroleum was discovered in commercial quantities, the oil and gas industry has been a source of employment, supplying tens of thousands of jobs. It accounts for 95% of foreign exchange earnings, 80% of GDP and 65% of total government revenue (Aminu, 2016). The situation is such that once the sector is in trouble; the entire national economy is threatened.

Notwithstanding the huge revenue being generated by this sector, it has experienced series of production interruptions associated with workers' dissatisfaction which stems from a perceived neglect of their well-being. These prevalent well-being issues ranged from casualization of labour, disparity in the terms and conditions of work of expatriate and Nigerian workers, the non-implementation of the collective agreement, the lack of industry stipulated uniformity and standards in the scope of the agreement, the influx of expatriates into the oil sector resulting in the wrongful termination of Nigerian workers, the marginalization of Nigerian directors/management staff and their replacement by expatriate workers, threats of redundancy, victimization and intimidation of union members, opposition to trade unionism and discriminatory wages (Rasak, Ake, Asamu, and Ganiyu, 2019; Akinwale, 2008; Ogbeifun, 2004; Fajana, 1991).

Furthermore, are challenges of low manifestation of adaptability, situation awareness, and agility, which have negatively impacted on its overall performance and competitiveness. The low adaptability in the industry can be seen in its slow response to changes in the global market, including the decline in oil prices and increased competition from other countries. The inability of the industry to adapt to these changes has led to decreased productivity, reduced profitability, and job losses.

Low situation awareness has been evident in the industry's inability to identify and respond to potential safety and security risks. This has resulted in numerous incidents of oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and other security-related incidents, which have negatively impacted the industry's performance. According to a report by the Nigeria Natural Resource Charter (NNRC), Nigeria lost an estimated \$41.9 billion to crude oil theft and pipeline vandalism between 2009 and 2018 (NNRC, 2019). This figure is staggering and highlights the extent of the problem facing the industry. The report also notes that the losses incurred as a result of security incidents have affected the government's revenue, the industry's profitability, and the overall reputation of Nigeria's oil and gas sector. The inability of the industry to identify and respond to potential safety and security risks has been a significant contributor to these incidents. Also some oil pipelines in Nigeria are old and outdated, making them vulnerable to vandalism and sabotage (Osemeke, Olorunfemi and Ikporukpo, 2020).

In addition, the low agility of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria has been highlighted by Akanbi and Adejumo (2020) who observed that the oil and gas industry in Nigeria has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused a significant reduction in the demand for oil and gas, supply chain disruptions, and operational challenges. The authors note that the industry's response to the pandemic has been slow and inadequate, with limited measures put in place to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the industry. For instance, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), reduced its crude oil production target in April 2020 by 188,000 barrels per day due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Oladipo, 2020). However,

the industry's response has been slow and inadequate, leading to increased costs, reduced profitability, and job losses.

Thus, it is against this premise that the implementation of high involvement human resource practices became necessary if organisation must achieve and sustain resilience. Conversely, considering previous research attempts on the study of resilience, there appears to be a dearth of studies on how high involvement human resource practices predict resilience. A conceptual gap exists in those previous empirical efforts which examined predictor variables (such as management development, organisational citizenship behaviour etc.) that are different from the current study focus. Therefore, given this identified knowledge gap, this study's point of departure from earlier research seeks to empirically fill this void by examining the effect of high involvement human resource practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of high involvement human resource practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria.

To achieve this aim, the specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. assess the influence of fair reward practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. identify the influence of competence development on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the influence of fair reward practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the influence of competence development practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria?

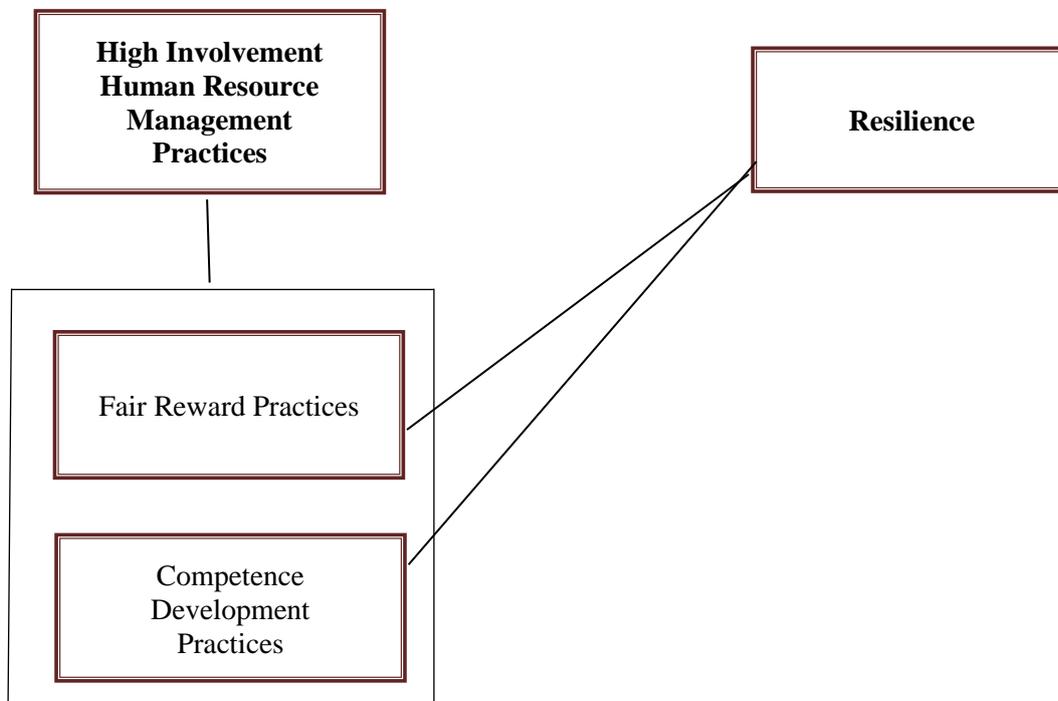
Hypotheses

H₀₁: Fair reward practices has no significant influence on resilience of oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Competence development practices has no significant influence on resilience of oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework



Conceptual framework of the relationship between high involvement human resource practices and resilience of oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Source: Dimensions-Yang (2012); Liu (2018); Maden, C. (2015); Wang (2020).

Concept of High Involvement Human Resource Practices

The high involvement model was presented by Lawler (1986), who proposed four organisational practices (information sharing, empowerment, rewards, and competence development) as core HRM practices for high involvement that may influence employees' job-related attitudes. This model is regarded as a backbone for contemporary strategic HRM (McMahan et al., 1998). Recognition is one of the underlying dimensions of rewards, and rewards being a complicated process cannot be completely understood without recognition (Milkovich and Newman, 1998). As a consequence, studies suggested five HRM practices namely recognition, empowerment, information sharing, fair rewards, and competence development, and related these distinct practices to employees' different positive work-related behaviours and attitudes (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Paré and Tremblay, 2007; Maden, 2015). These practices have been named most of the time as "high involvement" HRM practices (Paré and Tremblay, 2007; Maden, 2015; Kilroy et al., 2017).

However, the common and basic purpose is to develop a system of organisational practices to provide organisational members with necessary skills, autonomy, and motivation (Wood, 1999). HIHR practices consist of HR practices employed by organisations that view human resources as a strategic asset and have a strong effect on shaping the skills and behaviour of human resources for better performance at the workplace (Guthrie, 2001; Vazquez-Bustelo, Avella, 2019). HIHR practices are a key mechanism for the development of employee abilities and motivation to perform multiple and diverse tasks. High-involvement HR practices consist of a set of comprehensive practices that work in harmony to create an organisational context that improves employees' ability to exploit existing market realities and explore new opportunities (Fu et al., 2015; Garaus et al., 2015; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Kang and Snell, 2009; Patel et al., 2013, Úbeda-García et al., 2017).

High-involvement HR practices is considered one of the most important contemporary management approaches. These practices have become high value-added parts of organizations (Lawler, 2003) as they are concerned with gathering intelligence, ideas, and motivation of employees (Prieto and Santana (2012). One of the most comprehensive definitions of high involvement HR practices indicates that it is a set of distinct but interrelated practices geared towards improving organisational effectiveness and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage through the selection, development, retaining, and motivation of employees who possess superior abilities and who are willing to apply their abilities in their work-related activities (Way, 2002).

Fair Reward Practices

Fair rewards practice refers to 'the perceived fairness of various job outcomes, including compensation conditions, performance evaluations, and job assignments' (Guy and Michel, 2007). Such HR practices are likely to signal to employees that the organisation treats them fairly (Allen, Shore, and Griffeth, 2003; Gould, 2007). When employees perceived equity signals from organisations, they may reciprocate by exhibiting behaviours beneficial to the organisation (Folger and Konovsky, 1989; Kerman and Hanges, 2002). Browning, Edgar, Gray and Garrett (2009) indicated that service firms with fair rewards practice can generate competitive advantage.

Redmond (2013) explains that fair rewards are related to distributive justice based on the equity theory. Individuals compare their input such as education and efforts with their output ratio such as salary and benefits. Adams (1963) endorses that the perception of fair rewards leads employees to adjust their work quantity and quality. Kahn (1990) argues that rewards are given to individuals for the struggle and efforts they invest in their work and hence may influence meaningfulness. Similarly, Saks (2006) asserts that employees become willing to absorb in their work when they have an expectation of fair return against their investment.

Fair rewards develop good feelings in employees and as a result, employees also tend to be fair in their task performance and respond with such behaviours that are valuable (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004). For example, employees may reciprocate with a high engagement level when they receive adequate rewards and recognition for their efforts (Maden, 2015). It implies that organisations by being fairer and transparent in their rewards practices, motivate and influence employees to invest their efforts and energies in their work. In fact, fair

rewards may affect the decision making of employees to embrace the behaviour defined in the competency model of the organisation (Redmond, 2013). Thus, it can be concluded that organisations through their fair rewards practices may instigate work related flow which in turn impacts positively on the resilience of the organisation.

Competence Development

Competence development practices are used to enhance the productivity of individuals and convey a message to them that the firm is eager to invest in them. Such an investment may develop positive employees' attributions and a moral commitment of employees to pay back through their efforts (Tzafrir, 2005). These practices are a major component of HIHR practices, as it is critical that employees have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to consider and discuss options in order to make accurate decisions related to their work (Konrad, 2006). A study by Shuck et al. (2014) has revealed that cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement can be increased by the employees' participation in human resource development practices like learning opportunities, leadership development initiatives, and mentoring programs. These practices are regarded as one of the important factors to increase motivation, interest in learning and exploring new things, performance, productivity, innovative capability, and to gain a competitive edge (Eilström and Kock, 2008; Muñoz Castellanos and Salinero Muñoz, 2011). Studies have also identified that organisations fostering learning and competence development practices promote employee health and well-being (Karasek and Theorell, 1990).

More importantly, competence development practices provide contentment, prepare employees to meet the high challenges of their job, and a possibility to attain a better fit with their desired self-images due to the disclosure of alternative roles (Rana, 2015). Therefore, these practices may play a key role in achieving the challenges of skills balance that ultimately may activate work-related flow. Thus, employees may easily understand and follow the guidelines of organisations regarding competence development practices in an environment having a strong HRM system.

Concept of Resilience

According to Klein et al (2003), resilience can be traced back to the Latin word "resilire" which means "to jump back". It is the capability to respond quickly to unforeseen changes, even chaotic interruptions to business processes, and also the ability to bounce back, then forward, with speed, determination, precision and the proper support (Tamunomiebi and Lawrence, 2020). Weick, Sulcliffe and Obstfeld (1999) averred that resilience is the maintenance of positive adjustment under severe challenging conditions or situations. It is also the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still remain the same function, structure, identity and feedback (Walker, 2004). This means that despite severe challenges threatening the very existence and life of an organisation or a system, it possesses the ability to survive, adapt, and bounce back from its crisis and disturbances, to thrive and enhance its core capabilities.

Traditionally, resilience is viewed as those qualities that enable an individual, community or organisation to cope with, adapt to and recover from a disaster event (Buckle et al., 2000; Horne, 1997; Mallak, 1998; Pelling and Uitto, 2001; Riolli and Savicki, 2003). It is the capacity of a system to absorb change (generally conceptualised in the form of sudden shocks) and still retain its essential functionality (Walker et al., 2006). The concept of resilience has evolved through its application to numerous scientific disciplines. It has been discussed in relation to; climate change and linked to vulnerability (Timmerman, 1981); in terms of proactive and reactive organisational resilience of society as a whole (Dovers and Handmer, 1992); as it relates to both ecological and social systems (Adger, 2000); and natural hazards (Blaikie et al, 1994) to name but a few. Resilience is not a static condition of an organisation and may vary over time, depending on the nature and consequences of a particular crisis.

Resilience therefore, extends to several fields and covers both knowledge of the environment, level of preparation, anticipation of perturbations, adaptation, control, recovery- ability and survival, among others. According to Stephenson (2017), resilience is highly needed for organisations to effectively respond to disruptions as well as positively adapt in the face of challenging conditions, leveraging opportunities and delivering sustainable performance improvement. Thus, managers need to prepare against bad events as well as adapt to change, or their organisations will pay the penalty.

Theoretical Framework

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

According to Pavlou and El Sawy, (2011), the dynamic capabilities view originates from Schumpeter's innovation-based competition where competitive advantage is based on the creative destruction of existing resources and novel recombination into new operational capabilities. Schumpeter's contribution to theoretical development of dynamic capability was the recognition of the need to reconfigure resources in order to effectively respond to environmental dynamism. Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) developed the notion of dynamic capabilities as the capacity of the firms to renew competencies so as to achieve congruence with the changing business environment by adapting, integrating, and reconfiguring internal and external organisational skills, resources, and functional competencies.

The dynamic capabilities theory suggests that in order to compete successfully in their markets, firms need two types of capabilities: 'Ordinary' capabilities allow organisations to operate their chosen lines of business efficiently and effectively, while 'dynamic capabilities' help them to upgrade their ordinary capabilities, or to create new ones (Winter, 2003). The six DCs functions is to renew, recombine, redeploy, replicate, retrench, and retiring the resources/capabilities (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003). In other words, DCs is not just to create resources, it can also be used to eliminate resources when situation arise. Empirical researches suggest that the use of DCs is better under rapidly changing environment (Wu, 2010). The firm who possesses DCs is capable of meeting the change that is necessary to build competitive advantage. Dynamic Capability is the key for sustained success under rapid change (Nelson and Winter, 2002). Different DCs exists between firms because each firm is facing different environments and strategic importance of change (Zollo and Winter, 2002).

Augier and Teece (2009) concluded that dynamic capabilities have a tripartite structure: the capability to sense opportunities; the capacity to seize opportunities and the capacity to manage threats through combination, recombination and reconfiguration of assets inside and outside the enterprise's boundaries.

Dynamic capabilities theory is highly relevant to understanding the relationship between high involvement human resource practices and organisational resilience. The theory asserts that organisations can build sustainable competitive advantages by developing unique and dynamic capabilities that allow them to adapt to changing environments, respond to challenges, and exploit new opportunities. High involvement human resource practices are designed to increase employee involvement, empowerment, and development, and have been linked to improved organisational performance and innovation. By empowering employees and fostering a culture of learning and development, organisations can enhance their dynamic capabilities and increase their resilience. HIHR practices can also help organisations build a more adaptable and flexible workforce, which is essential in today's rapidly changing business environment. When employees are given more autonomy and decision-making power, they can respond more quickly and effectively to changes in the market, technology, or customer needs. Furthermore, HIHR practices can also facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, which are critical components of dynamic capabilities. By promoting knowledge transfer across different levels and functions of the organisation, it can enhance their ability to innovate, respond to new challenges, and develop new capabilities. Overall, dynamic capabilities theory provides a useful framework for understanding how HIHR practices can help organisations build their resilience and adaptability. By investing in HIHR practices, organisations can develop the necessary resources, capabilities, and organisational structure to thrive in a rapidly changing business environment.

Empirical Review

AlAgry (2021) stressed that high involvement human resource practices can help to ensure that the organisation is resilient to external shocks and capable of adapting to changing conditions. Through his study on 'high involvement human resource practices and their impact on organizational ambidexterity: The mediating role of employees' ambidextrous behaviors', drawing on the ability-motivation-opportunity framework, the researcher opines that employees' ambidextrous behaviours can mediate between high-involvement HR practices and organizational ambidexterity. With high involvement practices, resilience is improved and sustained. Burnard and Bhamra (2011) examined organisational resilience: development of a conceptual framework for organizational responses. They concluded that organisations that strive to enhance resilience will be better prepared to overcome high impact-low probability events and environmental discontinuities. Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013) examined organisational resilience of community sport clubs impacted by natural disasters in Queensland, Australia. Their findings revealed that organisational resilience has a significant positive influence on overall recovery of the sport clubs from the impact of natural disasters with higher levels of robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity.

Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey. The population of this study consists of five (5) registered oil and gas firms domiciled in South-South Nigeria. A census method was adopted and as such represents the sample for the study. Ninety-two (92) copies of questionnaire were retrieved and analysed. Structural Equation Modelling was used for analysis of hypotheses. The source of data collection was through primary source. The method of data collection was the structured questionnaire. The data collection was within the context of the research questions and hypotheses. The face, content and construct validity were used to ascertain the validity of instrument. A reliability benchmark of 0.07 was used to ascertain the reliability of instrument Nunnally (1978) model.

Results

The path relationship analysis presented in figure 4.11 indicate that there are positive and significant paths between fair reward practices and resilience ($\beta = 0.416, t = 4.629, p = 0.000$), competence development practices and resilience ($\beta = 0.684, t = 10.020, p = 0.000$). Therefore, H₀₁ and H₀₂ were not supported. Hence,

There is a significant relationship between fair reward practices and resilience.

There is a significant relationship between competence development practices and resilience.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4.60: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Null Hypotheses	Path (β)	Coefficient	T Statistics (t)	P Values (p)	Predictive Accuracy R ²	Decision on Hypotheses
H ₀₁	0.416 (Moderate)	4.629 (Significant)	0.000 (Accepted)	0.173 (Weak)	Not Supported	
H ₀₂	0.684 (Strong)	10.020 (Significant)	0.000 (Accepted)	0.468 (Moderate)	Not Supported	

Source: Smart PLS 4.0 output on Research Data, 2023

Discussion of Findings

The result of the tested H₀₁ revealed that there is a significant relationship between fair reward practices and resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria, (where (β) was 0.416, $t=4.629, p<0.005$) given the p-value of 0.000 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Furthermore, the predictive accuracy (r^2) was 0.173. This conforms with the work of Bayraktar, Karacy, araci and Calisir 2018, who showed that the composite elements of high involvement human resource practices are positively related to employees’ perceptions regarding fair reward practices of the firm which affects how they respond to the organisation’s need to be resilient.

The outcome of the second hypothesis, H02 showed that competence development practices relates significantly with resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria (where β was 0.684, $t=10.020$, $p<0.005$). The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. An increase in competence development practices will thus result in high increase in resilience. Furthermore, the predictive accuracy between fair reward practices and resilience was 0.468. This finding agrees with that of Pare and Tremblay (2007) who asserted that competence development practices are significantly and positively related to affective commitment which affects how organisations adapt to environmental changes.

Therefore, by delegating responsibility and decision making to the employees and providing them with the requited skills and expertise, organisations can efficiently and effectively overcome the turbulent environment and adapt to any changes. Ultimately, this leads to an organisation that is responsive and better prepared for any situation or forces.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered;

- i. To maximise high involvement human resource practices benefits, organisations should explicitly integrate employee empowerment programmes into existing systems and policies. This approach would enhance in them, a greater sense of commitment, ownership and responsibilities in their roles and thus ability to respond to challenges.
- ii. Management should encourage quick response to environmental changes by enhancing their employees' capability to detect, monitor and respond to volatile environment through continuous improvement and learning and as such will help enhance the firm's situation awareness.
- iii. Management must recognize and incorporate high involvement human resource practice as a strategic aspect of the organisation's policy and as a useful management approach that emphasises the involvement of employees as a key expediency of practice to enrich their skills, knowledge and motivation that are aligned with organisational goals.

Contributions to Knowledge

The findings in this study provide a comprehensive overview and in-depth analysis of the effect of high involvement human resource practices on resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria.

This research has contributed to the wealth of knowledge through its empirical result which has provided an evidence of how high involvement human resource practices relates with organisational resilience of oil and gas firms in South-South, Nigeria.

This study has also proffered a model in analysing the relationship between the studied variables and also, recommendations that will be useful to policy makers in enhancing firm's resilience.

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