# INVESTIGATING THE LINKAGE BETWEEN COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NIGERIA MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

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# DECLARATION

I, Celestine Ikechukwu Nwachukwu, do hereby certify for this thesis that:

(a)     Except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of myself alone.

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(c)     The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research.

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Celestine Ikechukwu Nwachukwu

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my most lovely, God-fearing and hardworking family, who have been veritable instruments of the Most Holy and Immortal God in seeing me through this journey.

# ABSTRACT

Despite the growth of studies in contextual strategic human resource management (SHRM) investigating the linkage of competitive strategy (CS) and human resource management practices (HRMp), there have been minimal studies on the phenomenon in emerging economies such as Nigeria. Notably, the applicability of western models of SHRM in Nigeria has shown a lot of difficulties over time due to the peculiarity of the Nigerian context. This study therefore addresses the key question of a context-specific model of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises (NMSEs).

Due to the dearth of literature on CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria, this study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed method (SEMM) which involved qualitative and quantitative methods. Exploratory interview was conducted with 10 managers and HR professionals in NMSEs and thematically analysed to contribute to the development of a questionnaire for data collection. Survey data was obtained from 323 top management and HR professionals in NMSEs and tested to achieve the aim of this study.

The outcome of this study established the adoption of business-level strategies and people management practices suited to the Nigerian context. This study also examined the linkage between CS and HRMp in NMSEs and identified the direction of the linkage; also the strengths of linkage which ranged from weak, moderate to strong which previous SHRM literature has not emphasised were identified.

In SHRM literature, four levels of linkages are associated with business level strategies and HRMp; however, this study found three levels of linkage in NMSEs, which are administrative, one-way and two-way linkages. In addition, contrary to previous SHRM literature suggesting only positive organisational outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage, this study found both positive and negative outcomes in NMSEs.

Furthermore, in this study, key contextual factors: culture, religion, language differences, ethnicity, Nigerian economy, currency value, corruption, governmental policies, labour union, family and personal relationships that impact on CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria were also identified. Most importantly, this study suggests a model of linking CS and HRMp signifying the context of practice in NMSEs. Therefore, this study contributes to the contextual approach to SHRM by providing key information on practice of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria, filling the gap created by the dearth of studies on CS-HRMp linkage in an emerging economy context such as Nigeria, and developing a management model of practice in NMSEs.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Adv. - Advertising

AU – African Union

AMO – Abilities, Motivation and Opportunities

B2B – Business-to-Business Relationship

CL – Cost Leadership

CS – Competitive Strategy

CS-HRMp – Competitive Strategy-Human Resource Management Practices

DC – Dynamic Capability

DFID – Department for International Development

DIFF – Differentiation

DV – Dependent Variable

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West Africa

Emp – Empowerment

ER – Employee Retention

GCR – Global Competitive Report

GCS – Generic Competitive Strategies

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HC – High Commitment

HI – High Involvement

HPWS –High Performance Work Systems

HR – Human Resources

HRM – Human Resource Management

HRMp – Human Resource Management Practices

HRMpol – Human Resource Management Policies

HRMpr – Human Resource Management Processes

HRMstr – Human Resource Management Strategy

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

ICP – Individual Career Path

IDAN – Institute of Development Administration of Nigeria

ILM – Internal Labour Market

IV – Independent Variable

LJMU – Liverpool John Moores University

MoITI – Ministry of Trade and Investment

NBS – National Bureau of Statistics

NBTE – National Board for Technical Training

NMNC – Nigeria Multinational Companies

NMSEs – Nigeria Medium Sized Enterprises

NYSC – National Youth Service Corps

OPEC – Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PE – Performance Evaluation

P.REL – Person Relationship

PSES/W – Practices Supporting Employee Social/Welfare

QUAL-QUAN – Qualitative-Quantitative

QuP – Quality of Products

RBV – Resource Based View

RO – Research Objectives

RP – Recruitment Practices

SEMM – Sequential Mixed Method

SHRM – Strategy Human Resource Management

SMEDAN – Small and Medium sized Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria

SMEs – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

S.S – Salary Structures

TA – Teamwork Approach

TP – Training Practices

TpM – Top Management

UK – United Kingdom

VBS – Value Based Strategy

# LIST OF ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR THE STUDY

SMEDAN – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Agency of Nigeria (Parastatal of the Ministry of Trade and Investment, Federal Republic of Nigeria).

**LIST OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

Nwachukwu, C.I, Akwei, C, and O'Brien, S (2015): Investigation of the Linkage between Competitive Strategy and Human Resource Management practices in Nigeria Medium-sized Enterprises. *BAM Conference*, Portsmouth.

**CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the aims, objectives, hypotheses and context of this research project. A discussion of the background of the study is undertaken to clearly situate this study within the purview of Strategic human resource management (SHRM) studies in the context of Medium-sized enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria. Following the overall background to the study, the research aim and objectives are outlined. The sections on problem and rationale present the issue of concern in this study and give an academic and practical justification for conducting this project. An outline of the thesis structure concludes this chapter.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the strategic involvement of employees in an organisation to achieve the goals and strategy of the organisation (Sahoo et al, 2011). The dynamics of SHRM involve an evaluation of HRM practices (Abang, 2009) and their strategic linkage with the organisation's competitive strategy (Vernon and Brewster, 2012; Gulati and Monica, 2016).

Earlier SHRM studies (Guest, 1987) focused on the role of SHRM on organisational performance (Guest, 1987) and SHRM theoretical perspectives. Gradually, the focus of SHRM has shifted to examining the linkage of competitive strategy with Human Resource Management (Becker and Huselid, 2010; Young et al, 2010; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013). Examination of the linkage between competitive strategy and HRM practices has been carried out in large organisations as

well as SMEs in the developed countries (Brand and Bax, 2002; Naismith, 2007; Razouk and Bayad, 2009; Bendickson et al, 2014; Crispin et al, 2016). However, in the developing countries, there is still a gap in the literature due to minimal studies on strategic integration of HRM practices with competitive strategy (Ragui and Gichuhi, 2013; Munteanu, 2014; Ugheoke, 2015). This study fills the gap in developing countries by focusing on Nigerian Medium-sized enterprises (NMSEs).

Research on integration of competitive strategy and HRM is an emerging area of management studies in Nigeria. Previous SHRM research in Nigeria focused on specific areas, namely public, education, manufacturing, and insurance sectors (Sani, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014; Badejo, 2015; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016), and investigates SHRM-Performance relationship. However, minimal focus has been given to the linkage of HRM practices with competitive strategy in Nigeria context.

The Nigerian context of businesses is very peculiar in an epistemological, conceptual, cultural and institutional sense. In order to understand how a Nigerian understands and makes sense of the world around, reference is made to how the Nigerian alludes to their network of social connections obtainable outside of the workplace, which has the family at its roots (Kamoche, 1997; Webster et al, 2006). Further, Nigerians interpret events in the workplace in the light of religious meaning (Adogame, 2010). Hence, spirituality and religious sentiments are often expressed in workplaces. This becomes more obvious in suggestions that God, either from a Muslim perspective, or a Christian or a traditional perspective, influences what decisions and events that take place in workplaces (Adogame, 2010; Adeleye et al, 2014). In addition, Nigerians evolve concepts and meaning in terms of their cultural worldview; this makes the conceptual appropriateness and meaningfulness of western management expressions difficult to apply in a culture informed by deeply rooted social relationships (Kamoche, 1993).

Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (2015) defines SMEs as enterprises that employ 10–199 employees and have an asset value of N5–500million. In the event of a conflict between the employment criteria and financial criteria, the employment criteria take precedence (NBS, 2015). The definition practically places most enterprises in Nigeria at the level of micro enterprises. In Nigeria, SMEs make up about 97% of businesses (MoITI, 2015). SMEs are recognized in Nigeria, like in most countries, as one non-negligible driving force of economic recovery and highest employers of labour (Katwalo and Medichie, 2008; Ihua, 2009). SMEs in Nigeria employ a total number of 59,741,211 people, representing 84.02% of the total Nigeria labour force, but contributes a mere 48.47% of total GDP (NBS, 2015). According to the Small and Medium-sized Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2013) and the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2015), the total number of SMEs in Nigeria is 17,284,671, with micro enterprises constituting 99.87%, small enterprises accounting for 0.12%, and medium-scale enterprises make up 0.01% of the total SMEs in Nigeria. Notably, there is a wide gap in gender ownership of SMEs in Nigeria, with male owners accounting for 77.25% and women accounting for 22.75%.

Although, in recent times, SME studies (Eniola and Ektebang, 2014; Okpara, 2015) in Nigeria has continued to increase identifying various factors impacting on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria, minimal studies have actually been particularly carried out on Medium-sized enterprises. The general approach to SME studies (Oboh, 2002; Wale-Awe, 2000; Adenikinju, 2005; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014; Okpara, 2015) in Nigeria has been to discuss the small and medium sized enterprises together which fails to present key factors specifically tied to the medium-sized sector. Recently though, few studies (Sani, 2011, 2012; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016) have delved into studies of medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria, and their findings point to some

specific difference in management and structure of small enterprises and medium sized enterprises. Studying manufacturing and insurance firms, (Sani, 2011, 2012) identified the existence of formal structures of competitive strategies and HRMp in medium-sized enterprises; in contrast to CS and HRMp which are largely informal in small businesses (Ugheoke, 2015). Besides, with developmental goals of Nigeria government, which seeks to utilize the SMEs sector to improve the country's GDP, the Medium-sized sector has become a feasible sector for that requires scholarly investigation. Based on the following key reasons, this study focuses on NMSEs as a case context of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria:  minimal studies on NMSEs sector, the general tendency to alloy the two sectors together in Nigeria management studies, the availability of relatively structures of competitive strategies and HRMp, the foundation laid by few studies in the sector and the gradual development of the sector.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A comprehensive literature review reveals that there has been a lot of research conducted focusing on the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM that attempts to explain the dynamics of the linkage and make suggestions on ways of enhancing the relationship between competitive strategy and HRM in organisations. However, most of these studies (Becker and Huselid, 1999; Ericksen and Dyer, 2005; Martin and Gollan, 2012; Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Paauwe et al, 2013; Gulati and Monica, 2016) were developed in western countries and followed the model of democracy of the context in which they were developed. Moreover, the factors considered in previous studies related to the European, American and Asian contexts.

In the Nigerian context, however, studies that focus on SHRM in Nigeria are few and still developing. Most studies in Nigeria (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009; Fajana, 2011) focus on traditional HR practices without reference to the benefits of adopting and applying SHRM practices in Nigerian firms and their integration with competitive strategy. Only recently did studies in SHRM practices in Nigeria begin to emerge. The initial studies in Nigeria were limited to exploring descriptively the impact of SHRM on organisational performance (Sani, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016). Research focusing on the integration and extent of the linkage between HRM practices and competitive strategy in Nigerian enterprises are few compared to developed economies. This implies that minimal consideration has been given in literature (Sani, 2011; Emeti, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014; Badejo, 2015) to the impact of Nigerian contextual and cultural factors in the integration of HRM practices and competitive strategy in organisations. This study fills this gap in the literature and research.

In recent times, SHRM studies have increasingly focused on the impact of specific context in people management practices (Kim, 2008; Dewettinck and Remue, 2011; Kaufman, 2015). This is due to the greater awareness of the specific differences between different contexts: culturally, institutionally and the understanding of key concepts of SHRM. This brings to the fore the need for a clearer development of studies in the linkage of competitive strategies and HRM in the Nigerian context. Nigeria, as an emerging economy and low competitive factor-driven economy is dotted with its own idiosyncrasies, worldviews, and ways of workforce management (GCR, 2015), which has implications for people management, competitive strategies and the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy (Fajana, 2011; Onodugo; 2012; Oyelere, 2014). Hence, there is a need to undertake further research in SHRM in Nigeria, and on the dynamics of linking HRM and competitive strategies in particular.

## 1.3 AIM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the linkage between HRM practices and competitive strategy in Nigerian Medium-sized enterprises; and suggests a model of SHRM linkage in Nigeria. This study achieves this aim by using the following outlined objectives.

**Research Objective (RO) 1. To identify the CS and HRMp used in NMSEs**

This objective seeks to identify the competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs. It determines the use of CS and HRMp in order to identify the types of competitive strategies and HRMp in NMSEs. Although prior literature (Wei, 2006; Abang, 2009) has established the key components of the linkage between CS and HRMp variables, this objective is important to the study because it forms the foundation for understanding the relationship and the extent between CS and HRMp variables in NMSEs. In addition, this objective identifies the context specific types of competitive strategies and HRMp that are used in the NMSEs. In order to achieve this objective, key related literatures will be reviewed to identify key themes used in literature to denote CS-HRMp linkage and develop conceptual framework. Based on field study, the qualitative data will be analysed to develop the quantitative research instrument and theoretical framework guiding the study. Finally, the quantitative data will be analysed using appropriate statistical tools to determine the competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs.

**RO 2. To measure the relationship between CS and HRMp used in NMSEs**

Based on quantitative data, this objective will measure the direction and strength of the relationship between competitive strategy variables and HRMp variables identified in NMSEs. Correlation tests will be used to determine and describe the direction of the linear relationship between competitive strategies and HRMp; and the coefficient will be used to understand and report the strength of the relationship.

**RO 3. To Establish the Nigerian Contextual Factors Moderating CS-HRMp Linkage in NMSEs**

This objective seeks to establish the key contextual factors that impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs. The impact of various contextual factors in CS-HRMp linkage is well supported in SHRM literature (Wei, 2001; Huang et al, 2006; Zoogah and Zoogah, 2014); and notably, different contexts have their specific peculiarities. This objective examines the context-specific factors that have a moderating influence on the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs First, the median test score will be used to determine the central score of the respondents affirming or rejecting the impact of contextual factors on CS-HRMp linkage in their organisations. Next, the factor analysis will be performed to gain useful insight into the inter correlation among the contextual factors using the correlation matrix table and measure the sampling adequacy to determine the factoring appropriateness among the contextual factors. Further, to establish the moderating influence of the contextual factors on the relationship between CS and HRMp, correlation tests is conducted between CS-HRMp and contextual factors. The correlation analysis will also be used to determine which contextual variable impacts most on the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, based on the correlation coefficient.

**RO 4. To determine the levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.**

SHRM literature suggests four levels of linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices namely; administrative, one-way, two-way and integrative linkages. These levels are determined based on the availability of key structural factors that facilitate CS-HRMp linkage in organisations and the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp variables. This objective intends to examine the levels of CS-HRMp linkage in the Nigerian context. With regard to this objective, the key criteria for determining the level of linkage are analysed using cross tabulation tests to group the different levels identifiable in NMSEs. Additionally, the result of second objective of this study which is also a key criterion for determining the levels of CS-HRMp linkage will be further examined by this objective.

**RO 5. To measure the outcomes of the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs**

This objective identifies the various organisational outcomes that are derived from the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs. With a view to establishing the outcome of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, spearman's correlation will be used to determine the relationship between CS-HRMp and organisational outcomes in NMSEs.

**RO 6. To suggest a model of linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs**

Following the findings of Objectives **1, 2, 3 4 and 5**, this study develops a model of linking HRM practices with competitive strategy in NMSEs. The table 1 below summarises the research objectives and hypotheses of this study.

**Table 1 Research Objectives and Research Hypotheses**

| Research Objectives | Research Hypotheses |
|---|---|
| RO 1 To identify the type of competitive strategies and practices used to managing human resources in NMSEs | H1<br><br>$H_0$ Competitive strategies are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises<br><br>$H_a$ Competitive strategies are used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises<br><br>H2<br><br>$H_0$ HRMp are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises<br><br>$H_a$ HRMp are used in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises |
| RO 2 To measure the relationship between competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs | H3<br><br>$H_0$ There is no positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs<br><br>$H_a$ There is positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs<br><br>H3b<br><br>$H_0$ There is no strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs<br><br>$H_a$ There is strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSES |
| RO 3 To establish the contextual moderating factors that impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs | H4<br><br>$H_0$ Nigeria contextual factors do not influence CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.<br><br>$H_a$ Nigeria contextual factors influence CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. |
| RO 4 To determine the levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. | H5<br><br>$H_0$ There is no administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.<br><br>$H_a$ There is administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.<br><br>H6<br><br>$H_0$ There is no one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs<br><br>$H_a$ There is one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs<br><br>H7<br><br>$H_0$ There is no two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.<br><br>$H_a$ There is two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs. |

| RO 5 To measure the outcomes of the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs | H8<br><br>$H_0$ The linkage of CS and HRMp is not positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs<br><br>$H_a$ The linkage of CS and HRMp is positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs |
|---|---|
| RO 6 To Develop a CS-HRMp model of linkage in NMSEs | |

The research hypotheses shown in Table 1 above were developed from a comprehensive literature review (Chapter, 2) and an analysis of exploratory semi-structured interviews (Chapter, 4) to the test the usage of competitive strategy, adoption of HRM practices to measure the relationship between HRM practices and competitive strategy in NMSEs, to establish the extent and outcome of the linkage, and the outcome of CS-HRMp linkage.

## 1.4 RATIONALE

Despite the wide acknowledgement in literature (Ugheoke, 2014, Badejo, 2015) of the peculiarity of the Nigerian context, which makes the transferability and applicability of western models difficult, SHRM studies in Nigeria have placed minimal emphasis on the importance of developing a context-specific model of practice in Nigeria context. This study therefore fills the gap of lack of contextual model of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria. SHRM models specify the business context and point to the ways of applying SHRM practices effectively in specific firms. Although previous models – Harvard Model, Warwick model (Devanna et al, 1984; Beer et al, 1984; Kamoche, 1996) – have been suggested and applied in some countries, the specific context of Nigeria has not been taken into consideration (Orga and Ogbo, 2012).

This study suggests a model of integration of HRM practices with competitive strategy in NMSEs that takes into consideration the distinctness of the Nigerian cultural and business context. The rationale for suggesting a model unique to the Nigerian society includes: epistemological and conceptual issues that are implicated in the adoption of foreign management practices in the African context (Kamoche, 1997; Webster et al, 2006; Kamoche et al, 2012). In order to understand how an African makes sense of the world around them, reference is made to how an African draws from their network of social relationships existing outside of the workplace, which has its core as the family, and translates this into the workplace (Kamoche, 1997; Webster et al, 2006). In addition, Africans have peculiar ways of acting and living that are meaningful in their cultural context, which makes the conceptual appropriateness and meaningfulness of western management expressions difficult to harmonise in a culture informed by deeply rooted social relationships (Kamoche, 1993).

This study focuses on medium sized enterprise sector as a part of the broad spectrum of SMEs which has been the key driver of the Nigeria government in the quest to improve the nation's GDP (SMEDAN, 2015). In Nigeria, SME studies (Onyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2012; SMEDAN, 2013) have increased in the past decade, coinciding with the federal government's initiatives to stimulate the SMEs' contribution to achieving 'Vision 2020' (Ministry of Trade and Investment, 2014). With an estimated 59,741,211 million employees and 97% of businesses in Nigeria, the SME sector is expected to contribute tremendously to the achievement of Vision 2020. Vision 2020 refers to the Nigeria governmental plan to achieve a high developmental stage by the year 2020. The sector, however, has not lived up to expectations. Identified as one of the major issues hampering the development of Nigerian SMEs is poor employee and

resource management (Onyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2012; Etuk et al, 2014; SMEDAN, 2015; Okonkowo and Obidike, 2016). This study therefore addresses the employee-related issue of Nigerian SMEs, looking at the integration of HRM practices with competitive strategy.

Furthermore, the Nigerian business environment, over the years, has been harsh for the survival and growth of SMEs. Some challenges include, the unwillingness of commercial banks to grant credits to SMEs, poor managerial skills of entrepreneurs, weak infrastructural facilities such as good road networks, electricity and water supply, ceaseless political conflicts and ethno-religious conflicts, multiple taxation and insecure foreign exchange, and corruption (IDAN, 2007; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Etuk et al, 2014; Barnabas et al, 2016). These challenges make the Nigerian business environment very different from western countries where previous models of integration of HRM practices and competitive strategy have been developed. This study therefore investigates CS-HRMp linkage from the perspective of Nigeria context using NMSEs as a case context.

## 1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Essentially, this study provides a contextual approach to the SHRM discipline in Nigeria which is aimed at engaging the problem of creating an effective workforce linked with the strategic contents of competitive strategies in NMSEs. As such, the problem of the lack of a CS-HRMp model signifying the context of NMSE practice is a concern of this study. Issues that this study unearths are used to develop a contextual model of CS-HRMp which would help in managerial decisions and practices impacting on constitution of CS and choice of HRMp in NMSEs. The value of this

study in NMSE management practices therefore is a provision of CS-HRMp model that contributes to effective linkage of human resource practices and competitive strategy in NMSEs. The model, as a management tool contributes to solving one of the more important issues hampering NMSEs' contribution to the achievement of the Nigerian government's economic development goals – 'Vision 2020' (Ihua, 2009).

Furthermore, this study is important, in that, it enriches theoretical information on CS-HRMp linkage from the emerging economy context such as Nigeria. Although African and Nigerian SHRM researchers have engaged vigorously in SHRM studies over the past decade, the focus has remained on testing the impact of SHRM theory adoption on organisational performance (Sani, 2011, Ugheoke, 2015); and in some rare cases, the identification of the applicability of western models of SHRM in the African context (K'Obonyo and Dimba, 2010). The dynamics of CS-HRMp linkage is yet to receive wide consideration in African and Nigerian SHRM literature. Therefore, this study engages a new horizon of SHRM studies in Nigeria. In addition, an examination of the factors that moderate the linkage in the case context is carried out which lends credence to the difference between an emerging economy context such as Nigeria and developed economies.

## 1.7 THESIS GUIDE

This study is organized into seven chapters; each chapter systematically fits into the development of the entire study. Due to the need to achieve further clarity of the structure of the thesis, Figure 1 below presents details showing how the chapters inter-relate with each other to achieve the aim and objectives of this study:

**Chapter one (Introduction)**

Background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives, justification of study, contributions, and graphical presentation of the thesis

**Chapter two (Literature Review)**

**Summary of Key Issues:** Competitive strategy; human resource management practices; strategic human resource management; linkages of competitive strategy and human resource management practices; previous models of CS-HRMp (building on other theoretical frameworks), levels of CS-HRMp linkage; outcome of CS-HRMp linkage; Nigerian context of CS-HRMp linkage, Nigerian medium-sized enterprises; conceptual map

**Chapter three (Research methodology and Methods)**

Research design; research philosophy; research approaches, methods, sequential exploratory method, qualitative phase, quantitative phase

**Chapter four (Qualitative Phase)**

Development and piloting of interview guide; collection of qualitative data via semi-structured interviews; analysis of interview data via thematic analysis; theoretical framework; development and piloting of questionnaire

**Chapter five (Quantitative Phase)**

The questionnaire details; reliability tests, normality and variance tests; demographic data, competitive strategies and human resource management practices in NMSEs; relationship between competitive strategies and human resource management practices in NMSEs; contextual factors impacting on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs; levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs; outcome of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

**Chapter six (Discussion of Quantitative Findings)**

Findings discussed in context of available CS-HRMp literature; discussions on objectives one to five – competitive strategy and human resource management practices, relationship between the competitive strategies and human resource management practices, the contextual factors, levels and outcome of the linkage; model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

**Chapter seven (Conclusion)**

Aim of the study; objectives of the study; research methods; summary of findings; contributions; key limitations; areas of further research; conclusion

**Figure 1 Thesis Structure**

Chapter one presents an overview of the study outlining the background to the study, the statement of the problem, aims and objectives, the justification of the study, contributions and study guide.

Chapter two undertakes a systematic literature review of the linkage of competitive strategy and human resource management practices. In addition, the literature review chapter presents a critical analysis of the theoretical background of the study examining previous CS-HRMp models to set the foundation for the development of this study. As such, key issues of CS, HRMp, linkage of CS and HRMp, the levels of CS-HRMp linkage, outcomes of CS-HRMp and the Nigerian context of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs are analysed critically.

Further, Chapter three presents the methodological options and methods available to this study while clearly setting out the choice of methodology and methods adopted for the achievement of its aims and objectives. The research philosophy, design, strategies, approaches, methods, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis tools are set out in this chapter.

Furthermore, the fourth chapter, based on the methods, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis tools outlined in the third chapter, presents the qualitative data collection and analysis, as well the theoretical framework.

The fifth chapter is the quantitative stage. This chapter presents quantitative data analysis and findings based on the key objectives of the study. Key areas of discussion in this chapter include the questionnaire details, normality, demographic data, competitive strategies and human resource management practices in NMSEs; relationship between competitive strategies and human resource management

practices in NMSEs; contextual factors impacting on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs; levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs; and outcome of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.

Chapter six discusses the findings of the study in the context of available CS-HRMp literature and the research objectives. Findings relating to objectives one to five – competitive strategy and human resource management practices, relationship between the competitive strategies and human resource management practices, the contextual factors, levels and outcome of the linkage – are outlined and discussed in this chapter. Ultimately, the model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs is presented in this chapter.

Finally, the conclusion chapter (Chapter seven) summarizes the research objectives and methods used in the study. In addition, this chapter summarizes the key findings and contributions of the study to theory and practice, implications of the study and outlines key limitations. Based on the limitations and findings of the study, areas of further study are suggested in this chapter.

## 1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the research background, the statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, and its rationale and contributions. The existing studies on linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in Nigeria are scarce and the full import of the linkage is yet to be deeply investigated. This is the gap that this study fills in the SHRM literature.

**CHAPTER TWO:  LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the key items for literature review in relation to the research aim and objectives. Key issues discussed in this chapter are: the definitional conception of SHRM is critically examined (Section 2.3), the key components of the linkage of competitive Strategy and Human Resource Management, namely human resource management practices (Section 2.1), and competitive strategy (Section 2.2). This chapter also presents a systematic literature review of the concept of CS-HRMp linkage (Section 2.4) and examines previous models of CS-HRMp linkages (Section, 2.5), outcome of CS-HRMp linkage (Section 2.6), and the Nigerian SHRM literature and context. (Section 2.7). The outcome of this chapter is a presentation of conceptual map of the study based on the systematic literature review, and the development of initial interview guide for the study's exploratory interviews.

**2.1 STRATEGY**

SHRM establishes a link between HRM and competitive strategy (Bird and Beecher, 1995). This implies a formulation of a clearly stated HR strategy, policies and practices, and a clearly stated competitive strategy (Hsieh and Chen, 2011; Gulati and Monica, 2016). From the outset, it is arguable that a single definition of strategy that satisfies all strategists is difficult to realize (Campbell et al, 2011; Kono, 2016). Mintzberg expressed the multiplicity of strategy definitions in proposing the 5 Ps of strategy, namely: plan, ploy, pattern, position and perspective. Plan implies that strategy is something set in place and monitored till the finish (Campbell, 2011); ploy refers to a

short-term "manoeuvre intended to outwit an opponent or competitor" (Mintzberg, 1987:14); pattern denotes a consistent mode of action (Jerônimo and Medeiros, 2013); position implies that strategy suggests a fit between organisation and environment (Johnson, et al, 2008); strategy is also understood from internal and external perspectives focusing on changing a group's worldviews (Johnson et al, 2008).

In line with Mintzberg, but giving a description that incorporates the widest and strictest sense of strategy, Grant (2010) suggests that strategy is a unifying theme that sums up all the organisational plans, actions and decisions in a coherent and direct manner. Strategy, therefore, is not just a statement or stipulation that has a serialized content. It involves all the facets of the business activities, from top management to bottom employees, which includes all organisational achievements and desired performance. In its widest reference, strategy is seen as a means of achieving a goal or objectives by any group or person (Johnson et al, 2008; Grant, 2010). Regarding the conception of strategy as a means by which to achieve organisational goals, it is important to note the holistic perspective, which emphasises that strategy should not be limited to just one single individualized action and decision but the whole network of actions and decisions employed to achieve a desired business goal.

One of the earliest definitions of strategy suggests a conception of strategy as "the determination of the long-run goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for the carrying out of these goals" (Chandler, 1967:13). Strategy in this sense, is merely a tool for attainment of goals over time, actions taken to attain the goals, and all decisions that are involved in the attainment of stated goals (Campbell et al, 2011). By using such phrases such as "long-run goals, courses of action, and allocation of resources", Chandler (1962: 15) gives no clear indication of the processes involved in strategic formulation, leading

to criticisms of his conception of strategy. Andrews (1971) is critical of Chandler (1962) when he suggests that strategy includes: pattern of objectives, purposes, policies and plans for achieving organisational goals. Andrew's (1971) definition outlines the need to develop strategic objectives, purposes, policies and plans in the formulation stage of organisational strategy. Further, a more recent perspective suggests an understanding of strategy from the viewpoint of external-internal organisational perception (Cassidy and Kreitner, 2011). The core aim of strategy is to understand why organisations perform differently and how performance is controlled to achieve an intended goal. Strategy therefore directs an organisation towards configuring its available competencies to a goal set over time (Mintzberg et al, 1998; Johnson et al, 2008). This is in line with one of the most prominent understanding of strategy in extant literature which considers strategy as decision, choice, and critical thinking directed towards a goal (Johnson et al, 2008; Chopyak, 2013).

Over the historical evolvement of the concept of strategy, some authors (Mintzberg, 2003; Grant, 2010) have described strategy as involving a 'fit' between the organisational activities and the goals of the organisation. 'Fit' essentially refers to both the internal and external factors and concerns of the organisation (Grant, 2010). In strategy literature (Grant, 2010; Mintzberg, 2003; Campbell et al, 2011; Prajogo, 2016), fit is commonly used to denote the need for all aspects of the organisation to fit into one another. Strategic fit, therefore, is not limited to the organisational activities but goes to the very core of the organisational design and structure. Mintzberg et al (2003) therefore identify three possible levels of fit: the first order fit, the second order fit, and the final order fit. The first order fit refers to the consistency of all activities with the overall organisational strategy; the second order organisational activities reinforce and shape the strategy; and the final order refers to the optimization of

organisational efforts to achieve the overall goals of the organisation. Although mostly desired, the first order fit could be difficult to achieve due to the organisation's ever-changing external environment.

With reference to strategic fit, SHRM is identified as a great facilitator in its achievement (Ayanda and Sani, 2011; Garcia-Carbonell et al, 2013; 2015). The argument for SHRM's role as a facilitator of strategic fit lies in the fact that human resources assure the formulation and implementation of organisational strategies. This certainly underscores the degree of importance that is attached to the relationship between strategy and human resource management (HRM).

Giving the complexity of conception surrounding strategies, historical development of the discipline has seen the rise of different schools whose focus on different aspects of strategy are viewed as really complementing each other. In addition, strategy could be conceived from the point of view of anticipating and planning actions to reflect anticipated outcomes or how it reacts to the perceived turbulence in the wider and operational environment, denoting the prescriptive and emergent approach to strategy formulation.

Strategy as a planned action is deliberately formed, logically presented and well formed in view of a goal. Prescriptively, strategy is seen as which anticipating and planning actions and behaviours to achieve clear outcomes (McGee, 2003; Lynch, 2006). This position implies an analysis of the external environment, competitive positions, market attractiveness, and changes in the market (Mintzberg and Lampel, 2012) to propose an organisation's strategy. The realisability of the deliberate strategy is best suited for a stable environment that is easily predictable. However, the external

environment is not as easily predicted as supposed in the light of constantly changing factors of organisational external environment.

In contrast to the prescriptive perspective, the emergent approach proposes strategy as part of a process that changes in the face of instability of the environment. Although it is often referred to as a messy (Mintzberg, 1987) or fluid approach, it still retains a consistency of action and a critical pattern that could adjust to different situations to achieve the organisation's goals. Emergent strategy is based on the dynamics of turbulence, change and discontinuity (Daniell, 2006). The two approaches offer insights into the nature of strategy as both prescriptive and emergent (Ibrahim et al, 2015), and strategy is best understood in the sense that both are part of the continuum which starts with a set goal and a plan for its achievement, while allowing for flexibility to the plan in the face of changes in situations regarding the organisation.

Extant literature (Lambrechts et al, 2008) shows that an organisation could be both reactive and proactive to its internal and external environments. In its proactivity, the organisation can adopt a deliberate plan towards achieving its objectives; reactively, emergent strategies are used to adapt to the changes to an environment. Organisational changes are influenced by the external or internal environment (Lambrechts et al, 2008). Strategy formulation approach, therefore, is essentially important in the process of CS-HRMp linkage. In this sense, the top management, HRMp professionals, line management and employees are particularly important in the development of emergent and prescriptive approach to strategy formulation. SHRM is concerned with the changes that occur in the internal and external environment of organisation in the manner of resignation, changes to labour market, need for downsizing, strategic change to required employee skills, and the process of formulating strategic contents of the organisations (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 2009).

Formulation of organisational strategy is made at three different levels, which reflects the three levels of strategy (Johnson et al, 2008). At the top level of corporate strategy is the business's portfolio which creates value for the business units. Corporate strategy is identified by Mintzberg et al (2003:70) as the "pattern of decisions in a company that delivers and reveals its objectives, purposes or goals, produces the principal policies and plans for achieving those goals and defines the range of businesses the company is to pursue, the kind of economic and human or organisation it tends to be and the nature of economic and non- economic contributions it intends to make to its shareholders, employees, customers and communities". Mintzberg et al (2003) clearly suggests that strategy influences the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. Decisions taken at the corporate level enhances the goals of business and defines the stakeholders or recipients of the business output. This is geared towards the company level. Hence, corporate-level strategy focuses on the overall strategic position of the organisation.

The business-level strategy, otherwise referred to in literature as business strategy or competitive strategy (Johnson et al, 2008), positions, anticipates and coordinates activities that ensure pole position in the market; the operational level focusing on processes of conducting businesses and creating a sustainable value chain (Johnson et al, 2008). This study is concerned with the business-level competitive strategies and the linkage with human resource management practices. The operational-level strategy supports the day-to-day operational affairs of the firm, constantly linking the operational activities with the overall firm's strategy (Campbell et al, 2011).

**2.1.1 Competitive Strategy**

Competitive strategy is specifically evolved in a particular industry or market (Grant, 2010). It is concerned with a particular business unit, industry or market (Grant, 2010) and considered as a set of integrated decisions and actions intended to gain competitive advantage (Liao, 2005). Competitive advantage is gained in "anything a firm does especially well, compared to rival firms" (David, 2004:8). Thus, competitive strategy aims at ensuring that a business unit competes in an industry to gain advantage over other competitors in the same market (Čater and Čater, 2009; Cusumano et al, 2015; Villan, 2016). Therefore, the strategic content of a business unit seeks ways not only to achieve competitive advantage but also ways of sustaining that competitive advantage over time (Johnson et al, 2008; De Melo, 2015; Bagnoli and Giachetti, 2015). The framework of competitive strategy focuses on ways of gaining competitive advantage over assess to market and customers, technological innovations, and resource availability (Sola and Couturier, 2013). As such, it is worthwhile to note that access to market and gaining advantage over competitors relies to an extent on the utilization of available resources and human resource competencies of an organisation.

Competitive strategy involves a critical analysis of the factors that affect a particular industry, both from the external environment, as usually emphasised by the strategist positioning school (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006), and from the internal environment, which is usually the concern of the resource-based school of strategy (Paiva et al, 2008). The aim of internal-external examination of organisational environment is to assess the nature of a firm's capabilities to thrive in a competitive environment (Campbell et al, 2011). Hence, competitive strategy is formulated and implemented to give a firm an edge over its competitors. In addition, competitive strategy involves decisions on how businesses should provide products and services

that give them an edge in a competitive industry; thus competitive strategy is often referred to as competitive strategy (Johnson et al, 2008).

In management studies, a number of factors have been identified to contribute to competitive advantage. One factor alone might not guarantee competitive advantage, but a combination of a number of strategies and factors works to ensure that a business unit achieves an edge over other competitors in the industry. Factors such as strategic leadership, market strategies and industry positioning, human resource competencies, relational capital, environmental innovation, E-business, technological advancement, infrastructure, capability differentials, natural resources, and access to financial resources (Madhi et al, 2015; Duserick and Huang, 2013; Murray et al, 2011; Memon et al, 2009; Cáter and Cáter, 2009) combine to give an organisation an edge over competitors. One of the earliest articulation of competitive strategy in management literature is Porter's three generic competitive strategies.

### 2.1.1.1 Porter's Generic Strategies

Following Porter's ground-breaking suggestion in relation to strategic management about the three basic competitive strategies, initial insights into the relationship between CS and HRMp began to emerge. Porter's (1985) three generic competitive strategies – cost leadership, differentiation, and focus – for a long period dominated discussions in this sense. Cost leadership ensures the production of goods and services at a lower cost than competitors in order to offer them at a lower price than others in the same market. Differentiation ensures that a firm drives its competitive advantage by the production of unique products and services that are highly differentiated from

other players in the same industry. Focus assures that product quality is delivered to a high standard due to the target of a particular product range or service.

The main relationship between HRMp and Porter's competitive strategies is conceived within the framework of HRM practices as a driver for the role behaviours required for the achievement of the three generic strategies (Schuler, 1987; Hsieh and Ming, 2011; Waiganjo et al, 2012). Schuler (1987), relating HRMp with Porter's triad of competitive strategies, identified a number of practices that suit and enhance the achievement of particular strategies in an organisation. Suggesting the philosophies of accumulation, utilization and facilitation, Schuler (1987) proposes a rigorous selection of employees on the basis of team working abilities, technical ability and personality potential, respectively. These three core philosophies could be combined to inform the choice and approach to HRM practices that contribute to the implementation of the three generic strategies. Focus strategy follows a combination of personality compatibility and team working ability of potential employees. Regarding cost leadership strategy, an organisation selects employees based on their technical ability. Higher technical ability involves a reduction of expenses on training and development required for less qualified employees. Finally, differentiation utilizes the accumulation philosophy of supplying the organisation with staff of high technical ability. The three competitive strategies, therefore, have implication for the practices and application of HRMp in organisations. There are a number of competitive strategies other than Porter's generic competitive strategies, however, essentially related to SHRM is resource based view and dynamic capabilities approach.

**2.1.1.2 Resource-Based View**

Prior to the early 1990s, human resources were considered as merely serving to apply the generic strategies pioneered by Porter (1985) and enforcing the implementation of the strategies. However, at the turn of the early 1990s, researchers (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Ulrich, 1991) began to emphasise the resource-based approach and the influence of the internal context on an organisation's competitive advantage. The Resource-based view regards organisational human resources as a vital force in harnessing and controlling the various factors that can influence competitive advantage (Ulrich, 1991; Grant, 1991; Hatch and Dyer, 2004). The fact that organisational resources that are rare, inimitable and non-substitutable enhance competitive advantage encourages the need for valuable interaction among the complex relationships between the human and non-human resources available to an organisation (Ulrich, 1991; Barney, 2001; Ates and Bititci, 2009). Moreover, emphasis on human resources and organisational competencies focused on the development, nurturing and maintenance of core competencies (Rivard et al, 2006; Laosirihongthong, et al, 2014) which were referred to as collective learning and improvement of an organisation's human resources (Lado et al, 1992). Hence, human resources started to occupy a prime position in the facilitation and implementation of competitive strategy, and perhaps its formulation also (Ulrich, 1991).

Regarding the constitution of human resources as a source of competitive advantage, two distinctive approaches have been advanced over the years, namely that human resources are a source of competitive advantage, and that the management of human resources is the source of competitive advantage (Schuler and Macmillan, 1984). The former approach argues that the human resources are the source of competitive advantage because the practices can be replicated in different firms and adopted over

a wide range of industries (Barney and Wright, 1998). The foundation for this argument lies in the definition of human resources from RBV perspective as inimitable, non-substitutable and unique. Although, the human resources and employees are unique, non-substitutable and unique, the practices are easily imitated, substituted by alternative systems and rarely unique. However, the second approach to human resources as source of competitive advantage suggests that the HR practices – which include the ability of HR managers to formulate and control the HR practices and the employees' corresponding response to the practices – give an organisation advantage over competitors (Schuler and Macmillan, 1984). Based on the need for development of capabilities and consistent programmes for increasing employees' skills, the second perspective insists that a system of HR practices that carry out the competitive strategy of a firm is required for the competitive advantage. A more critical approach to the issue, however, is to identify both aspects in a unified sense that recruiting the appropriate human resource and adopting the effective management practices of HR would serve to develop the human resource competencies in an organisation (Kamoche, 1997; Pertusa-Ortega, 2010; Bromiley and Rau, 2014). The critical approach takes a HR evolutionary bent which sees employees as resources with infinite capacity for development and a unique ability for consistent self-actualization.

From the resource-based view therefore, human resources are selected for their appropriateness to particular roles in an organisation, and after evaluation of the competencies for the position they apply for. Moreover, programmes tailored to the need of the organisation are made available to the human resources to encourage their self-development and to enhance the utilization of organisational core competencies (Alan, 2008). The core competencies of human resource management in the development of product lines, identification of market opportunities and managerial

outputs have a valuable impact on the state of any business unit (Alan, 2008). Furthermore, a system of knowledge management and knowledge transfer is put in place for the value maximization and learning processes which helps in the development of required competitive differential skills (Pee and Kankanhalli, 2009). In addition, further exposition of human resources to business networks for the regular flow of information in the firm is encouraged by the resource-based view perspective with a detailed consideration of the differences in employee behavioural dispositions. This would be acceptable as it strives to establish a fit between the available human resources and job requirements for a horizontal and vertical systematic impact.

Although the resource-based view offers a very insightful theory into the achievement of organisational goals by utilizing rare, valuable and inimitable resources and leveraging of core competencies, the theory has obvious limitations regarding its applicability in turbulent and more unstable emerging markets (Sallinen, 2002; Akwei, 2007), thus, giving rise to the tendency to relate the dynamic approach to capability reconfiguration to the achievement of competitive advantage. Recent studies (Wojcik, 2015) seek to integrate the two perspectives relating to competitive strategies in the discussion of linkage between human resource management and competitive strategies.

### 2.1.1.3 Dynamic Capability

In a very unstable and turbulent market such as the African market (Ernest and Young, 2015), the dynamic capability approach to competitive strategy offers a unique opportunity for the creation and reconfiguration of existing managerial and human resource capability development in the linkage of human resource management practices and competitive strategy. Although a number of definitions have been

offered for the term 'Dynamic Capability' over many years of studies in the discipline, the general issues emerging from the definitions emphasise the development of an organisation's existing resources, the ability to adapt to changes in the external environment, and the ability to achieve higher performance and sustain competitive advantage (Teece et al, 1997; Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Akwei, 2007; Teece, 2009; Schilke, 2014; Helfat and Peteraf, 2015). Dynamic capability harps on the reconfiguration of organisational resources to suit the ever-changing external environment (Teece, 2009). From one perspective it appears that the approach of dynamic capability engages more reactively with the events in the external environment, rather than adopting a proactive approach to the market forces and organisation's wider environmental factors. Basically, following the tenets of fundamental evolutionary theories, dynamic capability suggests that a firm could develop and renew its capabilities to suit the ever-changing structures of an organisation and factors of the market (Breznik and Lahovnik, 2014). Inherently, an organisation develops its own skills and abilities over time, which are deployed to adapt to the changing situations of events whilst still keeping to organisational goals and improving productivity.

Among the core areas of DC – managerial, marketing, technological, research and development, Innovation and Human Resource capability – human resource capability plays a central role in the development of an organisation's other capabilities (Teece, 2009; Breznik and Lahovnik, 2014). Of specific interest is the development and redeployment of human resource capabilities in order to adapt to the changes in the external environment and achieve organisational goals. With reference to human resources, it is known that workforce capabilities positively relate to organisational core competencies, and contribute to effectiveness of dynamic capabilities (Arend and

Bromiley, 2009; Kok and Ligthart, 2014; Barales-Molina et al, 2015). Although earlier studies (Barney and Wright, 1998) pointed out the power of human resources and managerial ability to influence the effectiveness of responding to changes in the external environment using the abilities and skills of the human resources, recent studies have suggested that the human resource features and human resource management practices should be given greater consideration in relation to their moderating impact on dynamic capabilities (Barales-Molina et al, 2015).

Relating to the link between the dynamic approach and competitive strategy in relation to human resource management practices, previous studies (Colbert, 2004) have suggested highly rigorous recruitment and training processes to obtain and sustain the best-qualified resources and achieve competitive advantage. Training practices (Wei and Lau, 2010; Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012) enable highly qualified workers to adapt to changes in the environment faster than less qualified ones. Extant literature (Barney and Wright, 1998; Beuglesdijk, 2008; Grenville, 2005; Newey and Zahra, 2009; Teece, 2014; Barales-Molina et al, 2015) suggests that certain factors relating to human resources that could enhance the effectiveness of dynamic capabilities include: strategic recruitment and training for strategic human resource management, professionalism, autonomy, flexibility, involvement, retention and high task frequency.

Competitive strategy is essential for achieving competitive advantage, which in itself includes: the resources and capabilities that an organisation possesses, the network of internal and external relationships available to an organisation and the strategic decisions which enable an organisation to achieve its goals in the market (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 2009). As such, organisational human resources and dynamic

ability contribute in no small measure to the achievement of competitive strategy. Competitive strategy and dynamic capabilities create a unique link between the need to achieve competitive advantage and management of organisational human resources (McGuire and Cross, 2003).

## 2.2 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Although it appears that the debate on the definition of human resource management (HRM) has gradually reduced over time (Bach, 2005), still an attempt to provide a comprehensive and widely accepted definition of human resource management poses problem due to the varying framework of understanding the functions of managing human resources (Farnharm, 2015). Various researchers (Armstrong, 2009, Torrington et al, 2002; Beardwell et al, 2004; Beer et al, 1984; Guest, 1987) have given various definitions in a number of studies. HRM is seen as a coherent approach to the different dimensions of harnessing employee abilities and skills, without compromising their wellbeing to achieve organisational objectives (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). The concern of HRM embraces varied employee dimensions in the achievement of organisational goals (Arshad et al, 2014). The scope of HRM is shown in a system of strategies, policies, processes and practices which harness and communicate effective employee engagement. Whereas the HRM strategy and policies effectively mark out the approach to HRM goals, the practices that are considered as effective means of communicating HRM strategies and goals of employees' required actions. Table 2 provides a key definitions of human resource management.

**Table 2 Key Definitions of Human Resource Management**

| Authors | Definitions |
|---|---|
| Beer et al (1984) | Management decisions that affect the nature of the relationship between the organisation and its employees |
| Guest (1987) | A set of policies designed to maximize organisational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of life |
| Storey, 1989 | A set of interrelated policies with an ideological and philosophical underpinning |
| Jackson and Schuler (1995:238) | "An umbrella term that encompasses (a) specific human resource management practices such as recruitment, selection and appraisal (b) formal human resource policies which direct and partially constrain the development of these policies (c) overarching human resource philosophies which specify the value that inform an organisation's policies and practices" |
| Greenwood (2002) | Involves the effective management of people to achieve organisational goals. |
| Panayotopoulou et al, 2003 | Organisational orientation towards management of employment |
| Boxall and Purcell (2003:1) | "All those activities associated with the management of employment relationship in the firm" |
| Price (2007:31) | "A philosophy of people management based on the belief that the human resources are uniquely vital to the business success" |
| Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) | Management of employment |
| Armstrong (2009:4) | "A strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in an organisation" |

| | |
|---|---|
| Beardwell and Claydon (2010) | The collection of policies used to organize work in the employment relationship; it centres on management of work and the management of people who undertake this work |
| Bal et al (2013) | Concerned with both the structure of work in a company and with all the related employment practices that are needed to carry out the work |
| Arshad et al (2014) | HRM embraces varied employee dimensions in the achievement of organisational goals |
| Weerakoon (2016) | A process of creating values utilizing such fundamental practices as recruitment and selection, training and development, incentives and appraisals, planning and orientation, retention and replacement |

The literature on the definition of human resource management as seen in Table 2 presents a number of essential factors that constitute human resource management theory. The significant factors are concerned with employee management (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014; Armstrong, 2016) which is anchored on philosophies, policies and practices (Beardwell and Claydon, 2010), carried out in an organisation to create value (Price, 2007), and to achieve organisational goals (Arshad et al, 2014). Although these factors emerge from the definitions to give a wide view of the human resource management theory, they clearly show the diversity and perhaps the controversy within the discipline regarding its definition. Whereas, for the most part, the definitions focus on the employees and the development of an acceptable relationship pattern in the management of the workforce, few studies have viewed HRM from the perspective of organisational orientation towards utilizing the capabilities of employees (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008). Still, some other definitions tend to

lay more emphasis on the activities and functions of HRM (Armstrong, 2009; Weerakoon, 2016). Some definitions seek to link HRM to strategic and coordinated actions that focus on development of required employees but fall short of mentioning the impact of external conditions on employees. In addition, the structure of work in itself has received higher emphasis in a few studies. HRM researchers (Beardwell and Claydon, 2007) have tried to resolve these controversies by providing increasing prominence for hard and soft approaches to HRM. These two distinct approaches depict the managerial process of application of HRM philosophy, policies and practices.

Soft HRM is linked with consciously influencing employees' skills and abilities to create secondary skills that would be useful to the organisation (Du Gay, 1996). In addition, the soft HRM approach seeks to exploit the employees' commitment, quality and flexibility in the eventual achievement of organisational goals; as such it appeals to the employees' behaviour (Beardwell and Clayton, 2007). The hard variant of HRM would implicate the need for human resources to be used to achieve organisational goals in similarity to the other organisational resources (Beardwell and Clayton, 2007). Haggerty and Wright (2009) argue that HRM should be seen more as significations sent to the employees by management regarding ways of carrying out their duties. For them, this would help rise above conceptual dichotomies existent in the area of human resource management. This, however, has an implication for HRM in regards to establishing a clear distinction between practices, policies and the process of HRM decision-making.

Earlier empirical research in HRM focused on the conception of employees as vital to organisational performance (Becker and Huselid, 2006; Paauwe and Boselie, 2005; Sani, 2012; Badejo, 2015; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016; Gulati and Monica, 2016); hence,

the relationship that is often established in literature regarding the impact of HRM on performance. The impact of HRM on organisational performance is conceived within the framework of the contribution of the human resource abilities, skills and capability to the achievement of organisational goals; this is clearly understood within the purview of employer-employee cooperation towards achieving the plans of an organisation. More recently, HRM has been understood beyond the conception of two-way employer-employee relationships, to a more holistic management of people within an organisation (Watson, 2010). What this conception of HRM implies is a movement from the micro-level focus on the individual to include also the organisational relationship to the employee (Greenwood, 2013).

Significantly, the definitions considered identified several levels of employee management portfolio, namely philosophy, strategy, policies, practices, processes and programmes (Jackson and Schuler, 1995). Although these levels are interlinked with each other, they denote a wide range of dissimilar aspects of the HR architecture. At the philosophy level, values are defined, examined and adopted to serve as an overall guide in identifying suitable strategies, policies, policies, practices, and policies (Itika, 2011). Value-informed policies are made and stipulated at the policy level to conduct the extent to which policies guiding practices could be effectuated. Human resource policy addresses detailed areas of managing employees by facilitating the process of making decisions regarding employees in an organisation (Itika, 2011). Further, at the practice level, valuable and well-guided communications are put in place to elicit acceptable behaviour and actions from employees to guarantee higher performance. More so, human resource practices form the final communication about the accepted manners of employee role behaviour in an organisation and designate the ultimate output of HR strategy and policies. (Theriou and Chatzoglu, 2014). Furthermore,

human resource processes involve the procedures by which key practices of managing employees are carried out in an organisation with appropriate consideration of the practices' context and their economic consequences (Amit and Belcourt, 1999). Based on analysis of definitions of HRM presented in the thesis, an emerging definition of HRM is provided as follows: adoption and application of several levels of employee management portfolio, namely philosophy, strategy, policies, practices, processes and programmes in harnessing employee abilities, skills and competencies in the achievement of organizational goals.

Lately, HRM studies have focused more on strategies and practices than on the policies and philosophies of HRM (Abang, 2009; Ugheoke, 2015). Whereas HR strategy is usually considered as the starting point in studies relating to competitive strategy, some contextual HRM and SHRM studies (Brand and Bax, 2002; Abang, 2009; Razouk and Bayad, 2009) have focused on the evaluation of employee management practices in organisations. Due to the high impact of contexts on a variety of HRMp, widely acknowledged in literature, the examination of practices without obvious reference to HR strategy could be understandable. With reference to the practices, authors have presented a systems approach to the application of sets of HRMp (Batt and Colvin, 2011; McClean and Collins, 2011).

### 2.2.1 HRM Systems

HRM systems emerge from the need to choose dynamic HRM practices that guarantee maximum organisational performance when linked with the strategic contents of an organisation. Based on a systems approach to organisational studies (Senge, 1990),

which conceives all aspects of an organisation as dynamic units that work together in a system, the HRM system is a collection of practices that form a bundle and/or are applied together to promote stability, knowledge sharing and HR culture (Scully et all, 2013). Although a HRM system could increase performance, it could also pose a problem to the organisational flexibility (Delery and Doty, 1996), and constitute an obstacle to organisational change (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005) if it is not well integrated with the strategic context of the organisation. Context, therefore, affects the choice of HRM system employed by an organisation. The emphasis on HRM system is a deliberate evaluation of organisational context, goal and strategy, and implementation of a collection of HRM practices, each individual HRM practice relating to the other, in order to effectively achieve an established organisational goal.

A review of HRM literature (Wei et al, 2011; Young et al, 2010) reveals a number of types of HRM systems. These include: High commitment (HC) HR system and internal labour market (ILM) HR system. Other HR systems identifiable in the literature (Macky and Boxall, 2007; Lepak et al, 2006) include High performance work system (HPWS) and High Involvement (HI) HRM system. HPWS, HI, and HC are basically different terminologies that depict similar features.

The HPWS proposes a bundle of HRM practices that ensures optimal employee performance in an organisation. It has been argued (Macky and Boxall, 2007) that the HPWS plays a significant role in the strategic achievement of business plans and improvement of organisational performance. Its greater impact is seen in maintaining high communication and commitment characteristic of involving employees in decision-making and strategy implementation (Young et al, 2010; Becker and Huselid, 2006). The HPWS involves mutual complementarities identified in bundling the HR structure, HR strategy, HR polices and HR practices, with the available human

resources, management style and firm culture (Boxall et al, 2007). This would imply a consideration of the internal and external contexts of the firm. So, contrary to a tendency to understand the HPWS as following a particularly theoretical perspective (universalistic, configurational, contingency, and contextual), it is a combination of these perspectives that ensures high employee performance resulting in high firm performance. High Performance Work Systems assume that a system of HR practices that are related to each other lead to an increase in organisational performance (Marler, 2012). It is noticeable that HPWSs cut across the contingency and the configurational perspectives by assuming basic HRM practices and implying that these practices work in clusters that relate to each other.

High involvement HR systems include practices like employee discretion, skill-based staffing, interpersonal relationship training, group-level incentives, and enhancement of employee abilities, motivation and opportunities (AMO) (McClean and Collins, 2011; Krausert, 2014; Jiang et al, 2012). High involvement and high commitment sets of HRM practices which involve the more committed participation of employees in the decision-making processes of the organisation and sustenance of employee commitment are summed up in the HPWS system of HRM. It is arguable that higher performance is achievable by a relationship of complementarity among the bundles of HRM practices. Instead of authoritative demand on employees' commitment, the high involvement system seeks to work with employees to win their commitment. By involving employees in decision-making, informal processes and socialization, they enhance employees' abilities, motivation and opportunities (Walton, 1985; Jiang et al, 2012).

Internal labour market (ILM) systems include practices as internal staffing, job security, above market-level reward, and benefits system (Shaw et al, 2009). The ILM

systems work effectually where there is a need for skills that could be acquired within the firm and the internal network of the organisation (Hom et al, 2009). The relationship of ILM systems to performance is seen in employee turnover costs. Recent research (Hamori and Kakarika, 2009) shows a considerable decline in the adoption of ILM systems.

Lin and Shih (2008) suggest the inclusion of an HRM system that considers the top management of a firm. Using the concept of 'Executive HRM system', they suggest a system that focuses on the organisational capabilities of a firm's management (Collins and Clark, 2003). An executive HRM system is a 'teamwork approach' (TA) which connects the top management (TMT) with the employees as a team that integrally works for the achievement of organisational goals (Lin and Shih, 2008).

The systems examined above, namely HPWS, HC, HL, ILM and TA, create a strong situation for increased organisational outcome (Chow et al, 2013; Garus et al, 2015). However, the adoption and application of HRM systems in an organisation involves a critical assessment of which system guarantees the required HRM outcome (Hauf and Hanson, 2014). This could present a difficulty for firms in the case of available resources, business context and uniqueness of their organisational competencies. Whereas empirical evidence (Ingvaldsen et al, 2014) shows that HPWS, HC and HL contribute to increased employee input, high employee satisfaction, and collaborative decision-making in a firm, thus enhancing organisational performance and outcome, ILM applies to a limited number of firms and only to certain employment opportunities as deemed fit by an organisation (Krausert, 2014). More empirical studies are yet to be carried out to prove the effectiveness of TA in firms. Influences on the choice of HRM system adopted by any firm come from a firm's business context, organisational context and HR theoretical perspective, which guide the choice of specific HR

practices. It is necessary, however, that the HRM system that any firm adopts be communicated to the line managers and employees in a distinct, consistent and instrumental manner for effective application (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). As such, implicated in the adoption and application of HRM systems are the issues of consistency and consensus.

Consistency implies that a set of HR system be visible, understandable, legitimate, and relevant to the organisational goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). This also implies a uniformity of practices among all employees and throughout the organisation. Consistency of HRM practices refers coherent and clear communication of the practices used to manage employees such that they are transferred from employer to employee in clear and stable terms over time. Consensus, on the other hand, involves an agreement by all the parties on the adoption and application of HR practices (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). The parties to decision-making within a SHRM organisation involve both the management and employees, without the exclusion of stakeholders. Consensus implies that agreement and fairness in practice is considered during the formulation and implementation of HRM practices.

### 2.2.2 Human Resource Management Practices

HRM practices have been viewed as a communication of modes of practice and action from an employer to an employee (Bowen and Ostroff. 2004). As modes of communication, HRM practices are developed within the organisation, consistent with the policies and philosophies of the organisation and implemented to elicit acceptable behaviour patterns that lead to business objectives (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Schuler and Jackson, 2014). In addition, HRM practices in a broad sense establish the

link between managing the employees, developing required competencies and generating organisational mechanisms that gain and sustain competitive advantage (Mineaeva, 2005). In this broad sense, they could be considered to relate to the philosophies, policies and processes that are implicated in the acquisition and management of employees. However, in a more specific sense, HRM practices are conceived to relate to decisions and actions that generate desired specific behaviours from employees of an organisation. The aim of HRM practices is to communicate an organisation's goals, control the employees' behaviour and encourage employees' involvement in the practices (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014; Ragui and Gichuhi, 2013). Even though sets of HRM practices are applied in different firms, few studies (Schuler and Jackson, 2014; Jackson et al, 2014) have identified the level of linkage of HRM practices with competitive strategy in NMSEs.

HRM practices are seen as effective if they carry out effectively the prescriptions of the firm's strategy and create valuable strategic resources that sustain organisational performance (Buller and McEvoy, 2012; Ozolina-Ozola, 2014; Antwi et al, 2016; Hassan, 2016). Therefore, the effectiveness of HRM practices lies in their ability to communicate the firm's goals, control the employees' behaviour and encourage employees' involvement in the practices. That HR practices elicit and reinforce appropriate behaviours (Jackson et al, 1989) suggests that they should take into account the individual differences that exist in employees' abilities and employ their skills to facilitate organisational performance.

The need to guarantee higher performance has led to HRM studies suggesting different specific HRM practices emanating from four distinct theoretical perspectives (Theriou and Chatzoglu, 2008; see also Section 2.4.1), namely the universality, contingent and configurational perspectives, and, most recently, the contextual perspective. The

universalistic perspective, often regarded as the best practice approach in literature (Pfeffer, 1998; Chatzoglu, 2014), proposes the traditional HR practices: employment security; selective hiring; team working; performance-related pay; training and development; egalitarianism; and information sharing (Pfeffer, 1998; Kaufman, 2011). The universalist perspective is linked with a High Performance work system (HPWS) approach that identifies a set of HRM practices that is tested to improve employee performance, given that variables remain constant (Lertxundi and Landeta, 2011). This implies that universalistic best practices could be dependent on a non-turbulent, fairly constant and predictable approach, irrespective of societal and organisational peculiarities. The downside to the approach is perceivably the negligence to acknowledge differences and distinctions between different contexts and different societies.

Although the Universalist perspective has had great influence on the practice of HRM and the choice of HRM practices, it still cannot account for flexibility of choice of practices, therefore giving rise to the contingent 'fit' perspective. Taking cognizance of the obvious unpredictability of the business environment, the contingency perspective considers SHRM practices as a set of practices that 'fit' strategically with specific organisational factors. Kaufman interprets the contingency perspective of SHRM practices in terms of the High Commitment HRM practices (Combs et al, 2006; McClean and Collins, 2011), which include: incentive compensation, training, employee participation, selectivity, and flexible work arrangements. Regarding contingent HRM practices, they require the development of internally consistent practices that fit the competitive strategies. Over and above the specific practices is the conviction that employee management practices reflect and relate to achieving flexibility to changes in the organisation. Therefore, practices reflect employees'

strategic preparation to adapt to situational changes and relate to the overall organisational strategies.

Suggesting that it is not appropriate to consider individual HRM practices independent of how they relate to each other in order to achieve the organisational goal, Lepak and Snell (1999) proposes a bundling of HRM practices at the formulation and implementation stages. That is, the configurational perspective, which advances the bundling of all HRM practices to uniquely interact with each other. The configurational perspective introduced the idea that SHRM practices should be conceived as a bundle of practices that enhance performance (Kaufman, 2011; Ruzic, 2015). Based on the structural contingency theoretical underpinning which holds that variables relate with each other in order to establish a pattern that leads to higher organisational outcomes, this approach emphasises appropriate consideration of each adopted HRM practice in relation to the other for the unified purpose of generating higher outcomes (Ketchen et al, 1997; Clinton and Guest, 2013). Following on from the perspective of structural linkage among the individual HRM practices, this perspective does not give a list of HRM practices but suggests the deliberate planning that links adopted HRM practices together to achieve organisational outcomes.

More recently, the contextual approach to HRM practices has emerged to emphasise the context of HRM practices and how the choice of HRM practices is influenced by specific cultural and organisational contexts (Martin-Alcazar, 2005; Dewenttinck and Remue, 2011; Jenkins and Delbridge, 2013; Naidu et al, 2014). The contextual perspective suggests the SHRM practices that reflect not only the developments of the internal environment but also the uniqueness of the external context. This approach suggests SHRM practices that take consideration of the cultural values and what is considered by a society as acceptable norms of action.

The list of HRM practices is unending and differs in structure and practices in accordance to individual firms. During the earliest years of the theoretical development of HRM practices, the best practices received greater prominence in HRM literature. However, the existence of best practice does not negate the possibility of organisations adopting other practices that suit their specific contexts and business environment (Buller and McEvoy, 2012). In the same line, although it seems consistent to practice that organisations adopt HRM practices tailored to the changing organisational situation, the adoption of best practices to complement best fit practices could be suggested (Kaufman, 2011). Furthermore, a strategic application of HRM practices implies a unique consideration of each practice in relation to other practices (Lepak and Snell, 1999). In recent times, the impact of people's culture and the external business context on the formulation of HRM practices cannot be over-emphasised. Therefore, contextually, the best practices, and the organisational context should also reflect the firm's external society, as well as the unique cultural and societal orientation of the employees.

Following on from the perspectives, organisations could face the downside of sticking to one perspective of HRM practices in all circumstances. A unique consideration of the best practice option (universalistic), the firm's changing features (contingency), the firm's cultural and external societal context (contextual), and the necessity of bundling the practices to engineer a viable relationship and connection with the competitive strategy (configurational) would establish an effective linkage to the competitive strategy for definitive organisational performance.

Historically, the discourse on how human resource management and the practices involved in it are linked with organisational strategy and business unit strategies has received more attention in recent HRM studies. The discussion of the strategic linkage

of the competitive strategies and HRM practices (Section 2.5) falls within the purview of strategic management studies.

## 2.3 STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SHRM)

SHRM studies emerged over three decades ago, differentiating a strategic approach to human resource management from the traditional HRM (Boxall, 2007). The strategic approach aims at placing HRM practices and HRM professionals as central to a firm's decision-making process. Devana and Fombrun (1984) specifically used the term 'strategic' to refer to the importance of positioning HRM at a strategic level in firm management. The need for businesses to achieve competitive advantage by utilizing the positive outcome of placing HRM and adopting HR strategies that reflect the organisational goals became the focus of SHRM studies in the early 2000s (Wright et al, 2001). The SHRM emphasis was on competitive advantage, so much so that other factors that affect competitive advantage seemed neglected. Although SHRM developed from the need to drive organisational competitive advantage (Wright et al, 2007; Nolan, 2002), the study of SHRM has evolved to focus more on competitive strategy (Delery and Doty, 1996), organisational performance (Wright and McMahan, 1992), and SHRM systems (Huang et al, 2006). Identifiably, one of the objectives of SHRM is to develop employee capability, and direct it towards achieving competitive advantage (Popescu and Popescu, 2012). It could therefore be said that, at its initial stage, SHRM over-emphasised the impact of HR practices on an organisation's competitive advantage to the minimal consideration of other factors that contribute to competitive advantage. In its widest sense, SHRM refers to linking employees with the organisation; however, in a stricter sense, it has been described as relating to the

linkage/integration of corporate and/or competitive strategies with HRM strategies. Within the purview of HRM architecture are the philosophies, policies and practices that constitute the HR architecture of an organisation (Schuler, 1992; Greer, 1995; Budhwar, 2000; Jackson and Schuler, 2007).

There have been various definitions advanced for SHRM over the years (Table 4) but there are differences in the emphasis on what SHRM means. An examination of the definitions reveals that they change slightly along the pattern of development of the discipline. Initial definitions of SHRM (Guest, 1987; Schuler and Walker, 1990) did not suggest a clear distinction between HRM and SHRM. Definitions advanced for SHRM in the 1990s (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Delery and Doty, 1996) laid emphasis on competitive advantage in order to show its concerns. Wright and McMahan (1992) and Delery and Doty (1996) present the foundation components of SHRM that are either revised or built upon by later definitions. Wright and McMahan identify four main components of SHRM: Human Resources (HR) as the means of competitive advantage; HR policies and practices as the instruments of competitive advantage; the objectives of HR policies and practices; and, finally, the need for consistency to achieve these goals. Wright and McMahan (1992) however did not mention the linkage between HRM and competitive strategy. Delery and Doty (1996) complemented Wright and McMahan's view by advancing the need to align human resource management (HRM) with competitive strategy in order to develop high-performance work systems (HPWSs) and argued that HPWSs enhance competitive advantage. SHRM in the 1990s therefore becomes a theory and practice of strategic usage of Human Resources to achieve competitive advantage.

Definitions proposed in the 2000s (Armstrong and Baron, 2002; Mello, 2006; Werbel and DeMarie, 2006; Boxall et al, 2007; Hall et al, 2009) seem to build upon the

preceding 1990s definitions (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Delery and Doty, 1996). However, while retaining the basic concerns of the preceding years, the stress slightly shifted from competitive advantage to the linkage of HRM to strategy. This change in emphasis is understandable when considered in the light of the late 1990s and early 2000s research (Porter, 1985; Whittington, 2001) in strategic management that highlighted other essential factors that enhance competitive advantage. The focus was placed on continuous alignment of HRM practices, policies, programmes, employees' skills, knowledge and abilities with the competitive strategy to support organisational goals. Critical to the definitional issue in SHRM studies is the need to effectively link HRM with competitive strategy. Concepts used in organisational studies and strategic management such as integration and adaptation were then introduced into the definition of SHRM to clearly highlight the need for the internal connection of Strategy with HRM in firms (Hall et al, 2009). The implication of these concepts to SHRM literature cannot be over-emphasised. It marked the beginning of a new understanding of HRM's integration with firms' competitive strategy, adoption of practices that suit the firms, and the use of HRM practices that are adjustable to their firms, and easier adoption by line managers and employees. Such terminologies as line manager, fit, adaptation, integration, strategic objectives, business goals, employee skills, abilities, capabilities and competencies featured prominently in SHRM definitions of this period to emphasise the linkage of HRM with Strategy. Although HRM was increasingly connected to competitive strategy definitions that specifically suggest its integration with competitive strategy to enhance performance, there is, however, minimal emphasis on the business context and its contribution to contextual SHRM studies in the definitions advanced in the 2000s.

More recently, researchers (Ijose, 2010; Hargis and Bradley, 2011; Hsieh and Chen, 2011, Caldwell et al, 2011; Sahoo et al, 2011; Uysal, 2013; Ugheoke et al, 2014) lay emphasis on the link between competitive strategy and HRM in defining SHRM. Researchers (Hsieh and Chen, 2011) added to the definition of SHRM, a focus on employee involvement in firm performance, on the human capital of an organisation, and the importance of HR strategy that adequately takes into consideration the business context and the employee contribution and links them to competitive strategy. Extant literature (Sahoo et al, 2011; Ayanda and Sani, 2011; Hsieh and Chan, 2013) shows that some researchers either evolve definitions by mildly adjusting the emphasis of earlier definitions or give a totally new direction to the understanding of SHRM; whereas others simply adopt definitions given by earlier authors. Table 3 below identifies key definitions of SHRM.

**Table 3 Definitions of Strategic Human Resource Management**

| Authors | SHRM Definitions |
|---|---|
| Guest (1987) | Set of practices designed to maximize organisational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work |
| Schuler and Walker (1990) | A set of processes and activities jointly shared by human resources and line managers to solve people-related business problems |
| Wright and Snell (1991) | Organisational systems designed to achieve sustainable competitive advantages through people |
| Wright and McMahan (1992) | The pattern of planned HR deployments and activities intended to enable a firm to achieve its goals |
| Brewster et al (1992) | The extent to which HRM is considered during the formulation and implementation of corporate/business strategies |
| Walker (1992) | The means of aligning the management of human resources with the strategic content of the business and human resource strategy so that the latter supports |

| | the accomplishment of the former and, indeed, helps to define it |
|---|---|
| Schuler (2000) | All those activities affecting the behaviour of individuals in their effort to formulate and implement the strategic needs of the business |
| Budhwar (2000) | A concept that views human resources as assets for investment, and the management of human resources as strategic rather than reactive, prescriptive and administrative |
| Armstrong and Baron (2002) | SHRM is the overall framework that determines the shape and delivery of individual strategies |
| Roos, Femstrom and Pike (2004) | Concerned with the decision ground about human resource practices, the composition and behaviours of the human resources, and the effectiveness of these decisions given various business strategies and/or competitive situations where the link to strategic management is significant |
| Wan-Jing and Huang (2005) | The degree of participation in core decision-making and partnership played by HRM departments, and the specificity and formality that HRM departments require in planning and implementation, all of which are designed to ensure that firm human capital contributes to achieving firm business goals |
| Ericksen and Dyer (2005) | Concerned with the contributions human resource strategies make to organisational effectiveness, and the ways in which these contributions are achieved |
| Gomez-Mejia, Balking and Cardy (2005) | A managerial orientation that ensures that human resources are employed in a manner conducive to the attainment of organisational goals and mission |
| Werbel and DeMarie (2005) | Focuses on aligning internally consistent human resource management practices to build employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities in an effort to support competitive strategies and achieve business objectives |
| Mello (2006) | Involves the collection of practices, programmes and policies that facilitate the strategic objectives of the organisation |
| Boxall et al, 2007 | A continuous effort to align a firm's Human Resource policies and practices with its business strategy |
| Ijose (2010) | Operationally, SHRM means tightly aligning traditional human resource management practices |

| | |
|---|---|
| | such as recruitment, selection, training and development and rewards to a company's strategy |
| Hargis and Bradley (2011) | The practice of strategic human resource management builds off the resource-based view of management and focuses on how businesses should structure, implement, and sequence their human resource management practices in an effort to build their human capital |
| Sahoo et al (2011) | Involves productive use of people in achieving an organisation's strategic business objectives, and fulfilment of individual employee needs |
| Sekiguchi, T, (2012) | A major research field that focuses on the impact of HRM practices on firms |
| Cascio (2015)

Gulati and Monica (2016) | The choice, alignment and integration of an organisation's HRM system so its human capital most effectively contributes to its strategic business objectives

An employee management approach that organises human resource capability towards achievement of competitive advantage using a range of cultural, structural and personnel management techniques |

Table 3 above does not effectively exhaust the definitions of SHRM, but, in order to avoid unwanted repetition, it is best to select the above few. An analysis of the definitions above gives an apt picture of what SHRM involves, how the linkage is effected, and why the discipline is important.

The following phrases define what SHRM involves: a set of designed practices (Guest 1987; Wright and Snell, 1991), a set of patterned HR deployments (Wright and McMahan, 1992); a set of processes and activities (Schuler and Walker, 1990), a framework of individual HR strategy (Armstrong, 2002); a view of human resources (Budhwar, 2000); a set of HR decisions (Roos, et al, 2004); a set of practices, programs and policies (Mello, 2006); productive usage of people (Sahoo et al, 2011); and a consideration of HRM activities (Brewster et al, 1992; Schuler, 1992). The above

phrases signify the first component of SHRM, namely Human Resource Management, as contained in the definitions of SHRM. Human Resource management is placed at a strategic position when the practices are approached and implemented as a set with the policies, practices and processes managed as a unit and as a single strategy.

'How' Human Resource Management becomes effective Strategic action is shown clearly in the usage of such phrases in Table 3: HRM considered during formulation and implementation of business strategies (Brewster et al, 1992); aligning the management of human resource with strategic contents of the business (Walker, 1992); degree of participation in core decision-making…played by HRM departments (Wan-Jing and Huang, 2005); …align firm's human resource policies and practices with the competitive strategy (Boxall, et al, 2007); and aligning traditional human resource management practices… to a company's strategy (Ijose, 2010). The above phrases aptly capture how the HRM is effectively placed at a strategic position, thus signifying the second important component of SHRM, namely competitive/company strategy. The SHRM process involves successfully linking and aligning a bundle or set of HRM practices, policies, programmes and strategies with the competitive strategy of an organisation or firm (Ijose, 2010).

Furthermore, the definitions of SHRM indicate the reasons for linking HRM practices, policies, programmes and strategies with a firm's competitive strategy. An insight is offered by the above definitions thus: to maximize organisational integration and employee commitment (Guest, 1987; Werbel and DeMarie, 2005; Sahoo et al, 2011); for competitive advantage (Wright and Snell, 1991; Delery and Doty, 1996); to solve people-related business problems' (Schuler and Walker, 1990); to ensure the firm's capital contributes to achieving firm business goals (Wan-Jing and Huang, 2005; Gomez-mejia et al, 2005; Werbel and DeMarie, 2005; Mello, 2006; Sahoo et al, 2011);

and 'firm performance (Sekiguchi, 2012). Based on the phrases above, the need to effectively integrate and align HRM with competitive strategy is informed by the need to achieve a firm's business goals through its human resources. This marks a fundamental shift from simply ensuring competitive advantage (Guest, 1987). Moreover, it supports the assumption that competitive advantage is achieved by a combination of a number of factors that include human resources (Kamoche, 1999). Definitions (Wan-Jing and Huang, 2005; Gomez-mejia et al, 2005; Werbel and DeMarie, 2005; Mello, 2006; Sahoo et al, 2011) emphasise the firm's objectives/goals in such a manner that buttresses the need to gear the integration of HRM practices and competitive strategy towards an established firm goal.

A conundrum is however noticeable in the reactive/proactive divide that could be identifiable in the definitions. Walker (1992) tends to present a reactive approach to the linkage between HRM and competitive strategy in his definitions; whereas other researchers (Budhwar, 2000) adopt a proactive approach. The reactive definition of SHRM limits HRM practices, programmes, policies and strategies to a subordinate position to competitive strategy. In other words, competitive strategy prescribes and dictates the nature of HR strategy (Budhwar, 2000). The proactive approach, which seems to have found favour with the recent SHRM researchers (Sahoo et al, 2011), approaches the investment in human resources and suggests the active involvement of employees in organisational decisions bordering on competitive strategy. The approaches are significations of the period or stage of the development of HRM literature. To assume either a reactive or proactive bent will create an imbalance in the relationship between HRM and competitive strategy. Therefore, a more balanced approach would be to maintain a constant evaluation of available human resources and

the principles of competitive strategy in a two-way consistent relationship where each constantly makes reference to the other.

Following an examination of the definitions in Table 3, it is pertinent that a definition of SHRM should include the key phrases Human Resource Management (HRM) and Competitive Strategy (CS) for the purpose of achieving a firm's set business goals; such that HRM and competitive strategy are mutually supportive and define each other. One core area highlighted by the definitions seen in Table 3 is the need to forge a clear relationship between HRM and Strategy (Arshad, et al, 2014) in organisations. More still, placing HRM in a strategic position with competitive strategies has been a source of discussion over decades of SHRM evolution (Kaufman, 2015).

Extant literature suggests that competitive strategy could be linked to the five contents of HR architecture discussed in Section 2.4, namely HRM strategy (HRMstr), HRM policies (HRMpol), HRM practices (HRMp), HRM processes (HRMpr) and HRM programmes (HRMprog) (Schuler, 1992; Aryee and Budhwar, 2002). These constitute the different forms of linkage between competitive strategy and a broad spectrum of HRM. Although it is assumed in some studies (Budhwar and Sparrow, 2002; Abang, 2009) that linkage of HRM and competitive strategy is primarily a linkage between HRMstr and strategic contents of an organisation, the linkages between competitive strategy and HRMpol, HRMp, HRMpr, and HRMprog are vital to the successful achievement of organisational goals. Hence, it is justifiable that organisations consider forging an effective linkage between all aspects of the HR architecture. Major extant literature (Schuler, 1987; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009; Jackson and Schuler, 2014) evaluating the key linkages between competitive strategies and HRM has investigated the phenomenon in the light of HRMstr and HRMp.

Further, the diversity seen in the development and the range of definitions of SHRM is buttressed by the variety of theoretical perspectives that underpin the discipline.

### 2.3.1 Theoretical Perspectives of Strategic Human Resource Management

Extant literature (Delery and Doty, 1996; Martin-Alcazar and Romero-Fernandez, 2005; Kaufman, 2011; Marler, 2012; Kaufman, 2015) shows key theoretical perspectives that have influenced researchers' approach to SHRM studies, namely: universalistic, configurational, contingency and contextual perspectives. These perspectives also account for the different approaches to SHRM practices, and researchers tend to adopt mainly one perspective over another. More recently, however, the tendency is growing among researchers to combine the principles of the different perspectives, which are: universalistic, contingency, configurational and contextual perspectives (Wan-Jing and Huang, 2005; Sahoo et al, 2011).

The universalistic perspective approaches the study of SHRM from a best practice perspective (Delery and Doty, 1996; Pfeffer, 1994). It implies a set of SHRM practices that relate to organisational performance regardless of the type of organisation and business context (Delery and Doty, 1996). The universalistic approach builds on the analysis of basic HR-related practices and how they influence organisational performance (Martin-Alcarez et al, 2005). The approach suggests a set of best practices that could be applied to all organisations and societies, and guarantees the same result (Pfeffer, 1994). This Universalistic approach has been criticized as too naive to understand the differences in organisational and cultural contexts, which could lead to the adoption of a HR practice that does not fall into the best practices formula (Wan-Jing and Huang, 2005). The approach fails to consider certain crucial

factors that affect the application of the best practices and which influence the adoption of other practices for different organisations.

The contingency perspective introduces the concept of 'fit' to the linearity of the universalistic perspective. The proponents of this perspective (Delery and Doty, 1996) argue that organisational factors and the business context affect the choice and adoption of HR-related practices. Contingency researchers (Schuler and Jackson, 1987) propose a fit between competitive strategy and HR strategy, as well as an organisation's external and internal environment (Jackson and Schuler, 1995). Although the contingency approach seems to be most widely adopted (Buller and McEvoy, 2012), thanks to the strategic management approach to 'fit theory', the perspective tends to over-emphasise HR strategy fit than employee fit, which is the focus of fit theory in SHRM.

Some researchers (Kaufman, 2011) propose a configurational approach to HRM practices. This approach suggests that all the internal aspects of a HR system can be combined to give a unitary application of HRM practices in an organisation. This approach differs from the contingency approach by proposing a HR system that not only emphasises the external environmental factors but also the coherence of bundles of HRM practices. This approach introduces one of the mainstays of SHRM, which is the internal relationship among the sets of HRM practices. However, the configurational approach emphasises the HRM system practice without giving consideration to HRM practices.

The contextual approach marks a shift from previous approaches to introduce a wider model that takes into consideration the existence of different geographical and societal settings of HRM application (Lazanova et al, 2008). Moving away from purely SHRM

practices and the internal-external context, this approach focuses on external environment and culture and how they affect the process of HR decision-making in firms (Huang et al, 2006). The argument of this approach is that context determines and is determined by HR strategy (Brewster, 1995). The contextualist perspective incorporates the specific differences that exist among societies, countries, cultures, and organisations. This view was given great impetus from institutional studies that unearthed the differences and similarities between organisations (Festing et al, 2012). The negative tendency of this perspective is to over-emphasise the cultural context to the neglect of basic universal principles.

Each of these perspectives contributes to enhancing the understanding of SHRM. Taken separately, the perspectives could present different pictures of SHRM, thus justifying the criticism of SHRM as having no particular theoretical framework. However, taken together the perspectives could serve to complement each other. Their complementarity has led to the emergence of an integrative application approach (Brewster, 1995; Marting-Alcarez et al, 2005; Crompton, 2009) that tends to integrate the different perspectives. Although the integrative approach has been used by some researchers (Crompton, 2009), and applied successfully (Fishwick, 2011), it still leaves room for more improvement in diverse cultural situations.

Notwithstanding the seeming debate over the theoretical underpinnings and definition of SHRM in literature, it is commonly accepted that the core concerns of SHRM comprise the linkage between HRM and competitive (and corporate) strategy, and the devolvement of HRM functions to line managers (Budhwar, 2002).

## 2.4 LINKAGES OF HRM PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

Linkage of HRM with competitive strategy is at the core of SHRM studies (Walker, 1992; Boxall et al, 2007). Otherwise referred to as 'Integration' in some studies (Budhwar and Aryee, 2008), linkage in SHRM implies the degree to which issues concerning HRM are regarded in the framing of an organisation's strategy, emphasizing strategic contents of business at the corporate, business and operational level; and the involvement of HR group and line managers in carrying out HR practices (Brewster et al, 1992; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008; Vernon and Brewster, 2012). Linkage of CS and HRMp is facilitated by a choice of appropriate HRMp and competitive strategy by an organisation which determines how people management practices are applied in organisations and provides necessary guidelines to the CS-HRMp alignment (Abang, 2009).

Previous studies (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013) show that linking competitive strategy with HRMp contributes to effective implementation of competitive strategy, achieving competitive strategy, nurturing the context of knowledge transfer, enhancing employee motivation, interpreting job design, creating employee satisfaction and high job commitment. CS-HRMp linkage provides an opportunity for organisations to consider a broader range of options to address organisational problems. Further, a strong linkage facilitates achievement of competitive advantage (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2004; Othman, 2009). At the core of evaluating the extent of integration of competitive strategy with HRM practices are: the nature of competitive strategy; options for HRMp; horizontal and vertical integration of strategy with HRMp and nature of CS facilitated by the HRM philosophies and strategies; relationship among the individual HRM practices; the

representation of the HR department in the process of the organisation's strategic decision-making process; the involvement of line managers in carrying out practices of HRM value; and the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp (Kandula, 2003; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008; Abang, 2009; Armstrong and Taylor, 2014; Paauwe and Boon, 2009).

Strategic linkage of competitive strategy and HRM could be considered in relation to the concept of 'fit'. This implies a deliberate and well-planned approach to placing HRM at a pivotal position to suit strategic contents of an organisation's external and internal activities. In HRM studies (Legnick-Hall and Legnick-Hall, 1988; Buller and McEvoy, 2012) the term has been used in four distinct ways. Fit between HRM and corporate strategy implies the adoption of organisational human resource policies and practices that suit the corporate strategy and which form an integral content of the organisation's plans (Dyer, 1985; Legnick-Hall and Legnick-Hall, 1998; Becker and Huselid. 1998). In addition, fit has been used to refer to the relationship between HRM and competitive strategy ensuring competitive advantage through the human resources. Consequently, HRM practices fit with the competitive strategy of an organisation (Wright, 1998). Further, fit is also used to refer to the position and role of human resource managers. In this case, fit implies that human resource professions participate with the top management of an organisation in the formulation of competitive strategy and human resource management practices (Baron and Kreps, 1999). In reference to the role and position of human resource managers, the line managers participate in the application of HRM practices; therefore, by necessity their position is linked with the competitive strategy implementation. Finally, fit in HRM also refers to the synergistic connection of sets of HRM practices whereby each practice or set of practices complements the other (Huselid et al, 1997).

In extant literature (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005; Legnick-Hall et al, 2009), the linkage between HRM and competitive strategy to achieve a coherent application of HR practices in an organisation is two-fold: vertical and horizontal integration. This has been suggested as a holistic and simultaneous connection of HRM with competitive and organisational strategies and bundling of individual HRM practices (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005).

### 2.4.1 Vertical and Horizontal Linkage

The nature of linkage of HRM with competitive strategy is a matter of divergent opinions. Ericksen and Dyer (2005) identify vertical and horizontal forms of linkage. The vertical linkage aligns HRM practices to core competitive strategy, whereas horizontal linkage aligns the constituents of competitive strategy to particular SHRM practices. The vertical connection of SHRM practices with the horizontal connection is facilitated by line managers (Schuler, 1992).

Vertical linkage involves a consistent alignment of HRM with the strategic contents of an organisation, ensuring that the human resource management mirrors the organisation's strategic decisions (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). It refers to the linkage of HRM with organisational strategy (Wright and Snell, 1991; Lengnick Hall et al, 2009). In addition, this type of linkage focuses on core competencies of an organisation to create competitive advantage, bearing in mind that organisational competencies could be seen as human resources established over time and creating distinctiveness between organisations (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Barney and Wright, 1998; Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). Determinants of vertical integration include the

nature of organisational strategy, HR department and line management involvement (Wei, 2006).

Horizontal linkage of SHRM connects the bundles or clusters of HRM practices with one another to forge an effective relationship such that they all work together to achieve the goal of the enterprise (Legnick Hall et al, 2009). On the horizontal level, the fit between specific human resource management practices and functions are aligned together to achieve desired organisational outcomes (Baird and Meshoulam, 1988). Horizontal linkage is concerned with the development of coherent HRM practices that emphasise the consistency of practices across all organisational facets and forge a unique relationship among individual HRM practices (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005). Factors that influence horizontal linkage comprise HRM strategy and policies, option of HRM practices, and investment in HRM (Wei, 2006). HRM strategy and policies direct the choices of HRM practices and their compatibility, one to the others. Option of HRM practices examines the choice of HRM practices that could be employed and what practices are considered suitable for the achievement of HRM goals. The investment in HRM refers to the budget and resources made available to the HRM department for the running of employee-related practices.

Instead of taking these approaches to the linkage separately, some researchers (Werbel and DeMarie, 2005) advocate that the two typologies of linking HRM practices to competitive strategy should be taken together to forge a coherent approach to the integration of HRM practices with Competitive strategy. Both types of linkage have their foundations on the concepts of fit, integration, complementarity and adaptation (Wright and Snell 1998; Azmi, 2010).

Further, CS-HRMp linkage involves the actions of key organisational actors involved in facilitating the linkage, the relationship between the contents of CS and HRMp, and the dynamic actions involved in the linkage of competitive strategies and HRMp (Sluijs and Kluytmans, 2013). These aspects correspond to the structural factors involved in CS-HRMp linkage, strength of the linkage and how the two major components of linkage are considered in each other's formulation. Whereas the structural factors have been discussed exhaustively in SHRM literature (Soliman and Spooner, 2000; Budhwar, 2002; Wei, 2006; Abang, 2009; Arshad et al, 2014), the strength of the relationship has received minimal emphasis in extant literature (Soliman and Spooner, 2000; Budhwar, 2002; Wei, 2006; Abang, 2009; Arshad et al, 2014). Unlike studies examining the linkage of CS-HRMp in organisations, researchers investigating the link between HRMp and performance, and/or organisational effectiveness have variously focused on the strength of the linkage (Twomey and Harris, 2000; Purcell and Kinnier, 2007; Sanders et al, 2008; Delmotte et al, 2012). Arguably, identifying the strength of the relationship, showing ranges of weak, moderate and strong relationship, could delineate the consideration of individual competitive strategies and individual HRMp linked integrally in an organisation. Using a scaling approach, HRM effectiveness based on strength of organisational climate offers an operative insight into the determination of strength between individual practices and strategies involved in CS-HRMp linkage.

## 2.4.2 Structural Factors in the Linkage of Human Resource Management Practices and Competitive Strategy

Linking HRM with competitive strategy would imply that the necessary structure for implementation is put in place. Identifiable in literature (Budhwar, 2002) is the

structure that includes Human Resource department/manager, line management, and strong investment in HRM through proper HR planning.

In contrast to the earliest models of SHRM (Fombrun et al, 1984; Beer et al, 1984) that tended to de-emphasise the role of the HR department in the functional strategic linkage due to the pervasive management perspective of their models, the HR department is considered a very critical structure required for adequate linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategy in the human resource department (Soliman and Spooner, 2000; Budhwar, 2002; Wei, 2006' Abang, 2009). For strategic linkage to come into effectuation, there is a need to craft required human resource practices, and identify the appropriate human resource strategy that guarantees optimal contribution of HRM practices to the achievement of organisational goals. The strategic role played by the human resources department includes the identification of gaps, possible opportunities for human resources, and utilizing available machineries to develop human resource competencies for the realization of intended goals. Therefore, HR department/professional plays an important role in CS-HRMp linkage. Key roles of HR department (and/or professional) are those of leveraging the flow of knowledge in an organisation, engaging in activities that engineer motivation in employees, and generally carrying out activities aimed at maximizing the abilities and skills of employees to achieve required organisational results.

The position and role of line management in facilitating human resource management practices is perhaps one of the most under-researched areas of strategic management studies (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). As a very potential role that contributes to implementing HRM practices, the role of line management in the structural organisation of an establishment cannot be over-emphasised. Notably, the role is often used to denote other job titles like supervisors, department head and shop managers,

to mention but a few (Townsend, 2014; Kilroy and Dundon, 2015). Although studies (Wall and Wood, 2005) on linkage of HRM practices with competitive strategy have often identified the role of the line managers in the application of SHRM practices, empirical studies illustrating the exact role of line management are scant. An important acknowledgement in most studies, however, is that, for the comprehensive linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices, the role of a human resource manager needs to be devolved to line management. Line management contributes to the adaptation and integration of competitive strategy, usually at the implementation stage, prepares employees for required flexibility for change, offers first-hand experience regarding the outcome of HRM practices and could be a source of feedback throughout the process of linkage (Budhwar, 2002; Perry and Kulik, 2008; Crawshaw and Game, 2015; Bainbridge, 2015). Though Oladipo and Sani (2011) noted that the devolvement of SHRM practices to line managers in Nigerian manufacturing industries is low, they failed to investigate the challenges to involving line managers in SHRM implementation.

Further, another important structural component required for the linkage of Human resource management and competitive strategy is the provision of strong investment in human resources through adequate human resource (HR) planning (Wei, 2006; Kleimer, 2007) Human resource planning in itself is necessary to facilitate the smooth formulation and implementation of Human resource practices. Various definitions have been advanced regarding the concept of HR planning. The meaning HR planning could be inferred as the 'process' (Bratton and Gold, 2007; Gilmore and Williams, 2013; Armstrong, 2009) that facilitates the appropriate identification of the Human resource needs of an organisation in the light of the organisational goals. This includes effectively accessing the skills needed by the organisation and what the organisation

intends to achieve. Extant literature (Bratton and Gold, 2007; Gilmore and Williams, 2013; Armstrong, 2009) identifies two variant types of HR planning, namely hard and soft HR planning. The hard HR planning seems to be concerned with the analysis of what kind of skills are needed in the organisation and the quantitative requirements (Bratton and Gold, 2007; Gilmore and Williams, 2013; Armstrong, 2009), whilst the soft HR planning is geared towards flexible and gradual redirection of employees towards the organisational goal (Bratton and Gold, 2007; Gilmore and Williams, 2013; Armstrong, 2009). These two processes could be adopted in the same organisation, although the suitability of simultaneous application of both types is subject to empirical evaluation. The contention is that both could be applied in an organisation at different stages of employee engagement. The hard HR planning could be quite advantageous at the stages of recruitment and selection whereas the soft HR planning could be quite fruitful when an employee has become a part of the organisation.

The structural factors discussed above have occupied centre stage in recent studies of the strategic linkage in SHRM (Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Kaufman, 2015). Although these factors might not have received as much emphasis in the past, they appeared in the earliest discussions of SHRM within the context of SHRM model development. HRM models specify the context of linkage of HRM and Competitive and/or organisational strategy. Based on the degree of interaction of these structural factors in the linkage of competitive strategies and human resource management practices, different levels of strategic linkage have been shown in the literature (Teo, 2000; Arshad et al, 2014).

**2.4.3 Levels of Linkage between Competitive Strategy and Human Resource Management Practices**

The linkage between HRM practices and the strategic contents of an organisation can be differentiated according to levels determined by the extent to which an organisation links HRM and competitive strategy (Teo, 2000; Buller and McEvoy, 2012). The levels of integration in SHRM include: administrative level, one-way strategic integration, two-way strategic integration, and integrative linkage (Teo, 2000), which follows Golden and Ramanujam's (1985) features of strategic integration framework.

At the administrative level of strategic integration of HRM practices with competitive strategy, minimal importance is given to the formulation and practice of HRM in an organisation. More or less, the identification of the linkage of HRM practices with competitive strategy receives little consideration in the formulation of strategy (Schuler and Walker, 1990). In some cases (Arshad et al, 2014), the HR role is played by other organisational figureheads like the finance/accounts department in an administrative linkage.

In a one-way approach, the linkage follows a reactive approach whereby HRM practices are tailored to the needs of implementing competitive strategy on a short-term basis (Teo, 2000; 2014). The one-way linkage limits the participation of HRM managers and HR department to concentrating on people management issues on a daily basis ((Miles and Snow, 1984). Further, the two-way level of linkage is categorised by a close rapport between HRMp and competitive strategy such that both mutually support each other and the outcome of one highlights the outcome of the other (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Budhwar, 2000). For organisations adopting two-way linkage, HRM is involved in the formulation and implementation of competitive strategy (Arshad et al, 2014).

Finally, the integrative linkage involves an active and multi-layered approach to connecting HRM and competitive strategy such that the organisation's top management, HRM department and the line managers are involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the organisation's competitive strategy and HRM contents (Teo, 2000; Buller and McEvoy, 2012).

The extent of strategic integration is determined by the degree to which the HR professional/department is involved in the process of strategic planning (Dowling and Fisher, 1997; Boxall and Purcell, 2007; Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). Although studies (Abang, 2009; Arshad et al, 2014) conducted in some countries regarding the dynamics of strategic linkage of HRM practices have shown evidence of linkage with competitive strategy, and subsequent improvement in organisational performance, Nigerian SHRM literature has placed minimal emphasis on exploring the extent of integration. Given that Nigerian SHRM literature has yet to investigate develop model of CS-HRMp linkage, this study therefore has looked at a number of models developed in the western context and identified five that will be useful for this study.

## 2.5 PREVIOUS MODELS OF LINKAGE BETWEEN COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

SHRM models have been suggested in recent years regarding the integration of HRM practices with organisational goals and strategies. Early models of SHRM – Matching model, Harvard model, Warwick model (Fombrun et al, 1987; Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990) – sought to establish the linkage of HRM practices with competitive strategy. More recent researches (Compton, 2009) have either reinterpreted earlier models in a contemporary context (Crompton, 2009), or suggested

models that take note of contemporary SHRM contexts (Paauwe, Guest and Wright Model and CELTESS model). The models examined in this work were chosen based on their ability to offer useful insight for the development of contextual CS-HRMp model in NMSEs. Specifically, they five models reviewed identified key components of CS-HRMp linkage, and presented some contextual perspectives and key outcomes of the linkage. In addition, the prominence they give to the institutional and external factors of an organisation serves to enrich the theoretical underpinning of this study.

**2.5.1 Devanna, Fombrun and Tichy Matching Model (1984)**

The Devanna, Fombrun and Tichy model lays the foundation of this study by outlining some contextual influences on the relationship between strategy and HRM. The model also establishes a relationship between strategy and HRM, although it is a one-way relationship approach to the CS-HRMp linkage. This model suggests the linkage of organisational goals and human resource management goals and lays emphasis on the contribution of employees to achieving the organisation's objectives (Naismith, 2007). The model is a reactive model, in that it suggests that human resource management practices be tailored to the organisational goals. Based on Chandler's (1962) idea of strategy as determining organisational structure and the contents of HRM, the matching model proposes a 'strategic fit' that links HRM and organisational structures to the strategic contents of the organisation. The outcome of this model is identified in the determination of Human resource role behaviours matching organisational structure (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Budhwar and Khatri; 2001). A great contribution of this model is the introduction of the stakeholders in terms of external forces that impact on the organisational strategic contents and human resource management structures (Kaufman, 2015). An organisation's stakeholders expect a

range of returns accruing from that organisation's actions and decisions relating to strategy and HRM.

However, whilst the model lists some of the factors that constitute SHRM, the relationship established among them is minimally established. The lack of relationship presents the model as simplistic (Kamoche, 1994), and the effort to address the complexity of linking HRM practices to competitive strategy is unclear. In addition, this model describes human resources as easily obtainable and highly exploitable. Figure 2 diagrammatically shows the matching model.
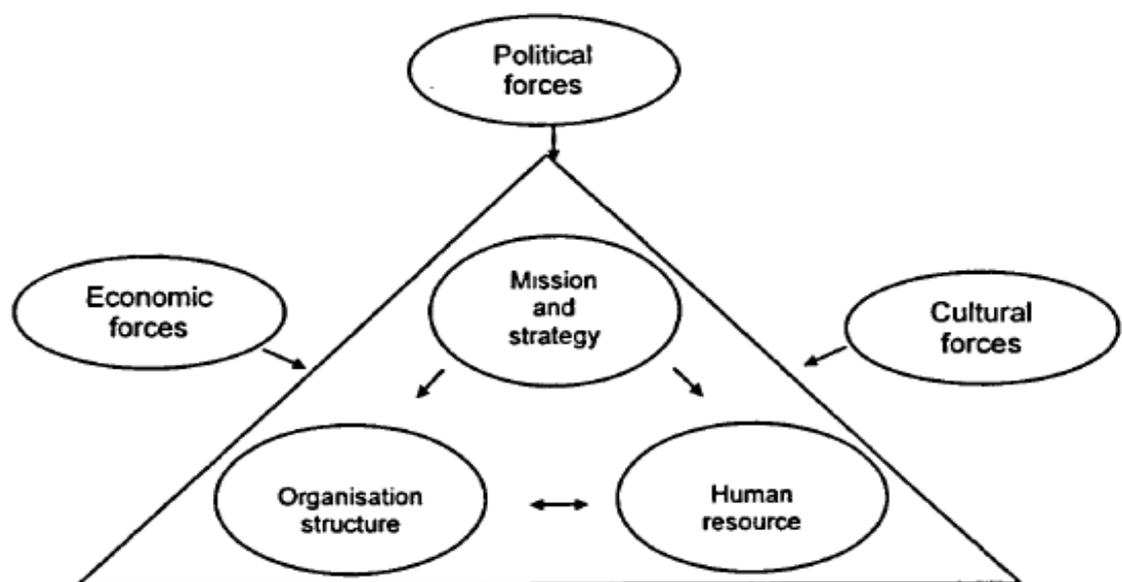
**Figure 2 The Matching Model**

**2.5.2 Harvard Model (Beer et al, 1984)**

Although the relationship between competitive strategy and HRM policies identified in this model is unclear, the model contributes to this study by presenting a relationship (one-way relationship) between competitive strategy and HRM practices. Perhaps one

of the most recognized model among the earliest models of SHRM (Naismith, 2007), the Harvard model incorporates an organisation's external and internal factors in presenting the link of SHRM practices to firm performance (Boxall, 1992). The model suggests that external factors such as stakeholder interests, government policies and trade unions, and internal factors such as workforce skills, competitive strategy and management capabilities be considered while HR practices are formulated.

However, even though the Harvard model suggests the list of stakeholders, there is no clear indication of the expected returns to the stakeholders and employees or to business performance. Focusing on the contribution of individual HRM practices and their ability to yield valued outcomes, the model suggests the long-term goal of HRM policies; hence, the preoccupation of the linkage is value creation (Beer et al, 2015). Even though this model is very popular, it has been criticized as unclear (Naismith, 2007). On the downside, the model fails to establish a concrete relationship between competitive strategy and HRM policies and practices. Again, the Harvard model has been criticized as fitting into the European model of democracy (Paauwe, 2004), which differs from the American model and African model of management procedures. The Harvard model is noted to have ignored the differences in modern cultural contexts. Based on empirical studies, Phua (2012) identified substantial differences between the situational factors identified in the model with what is in place in other parts of the world. Figure 3 presents the Harvard model.
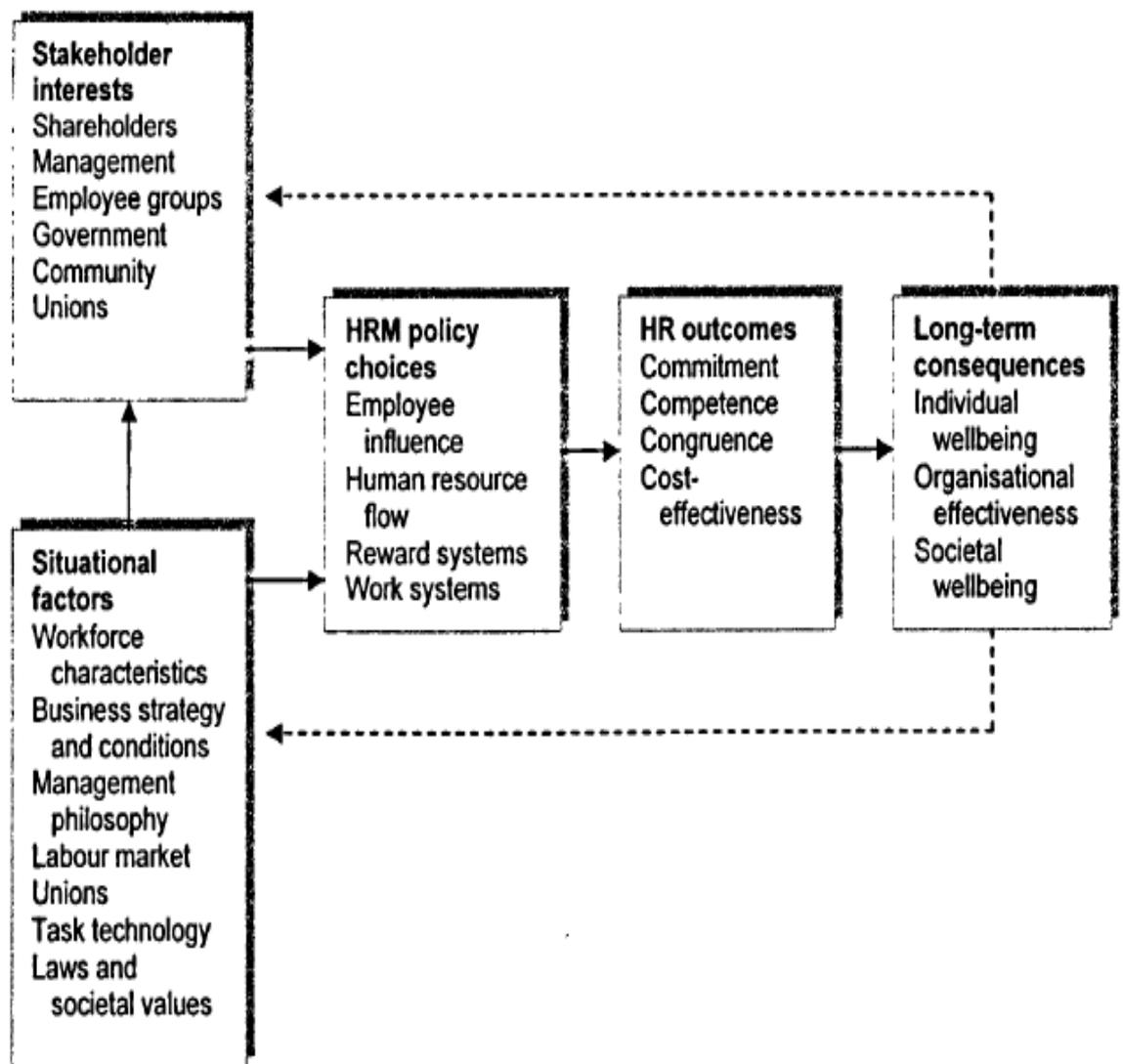
**Figure 3 The Harvard Model**

**2.5.3 Warwick Model (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998)**

The key contribution of the Warwick model to this study is the identification of the key components of linkage, competitive strategy (and/or CS) and HRM context, as well as in the impact of an outer context on the relationship between the components. The Warwick model, referred to in some studies (Budhwar and Khatri, 2001) as a contextual model of SHRM, examines the process of strategy formulation and effectively relates it to the HRM context of an organisation. Fundamental linkages in

an organisation are characterised by inner and external linkages (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998). The impact of outer external factors on the formulation of competitive strategy and the choice of HRM practices has received great attention in previous SHRM literature (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Cakar et al, 2003). Organisational structures and appropriate HRM contexts constitute the required environment for linkage to take place (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990; Livermore, 2003). In accordance with the perspective that structures influence the linkage of competitive strategies and situational factors with stakeholder interests, this model suggests that coherence of action, focus and appropriate direction of human resources would lead to improved performance (Emeti, 2012). The Warwick model is shown in Figure 4 below.
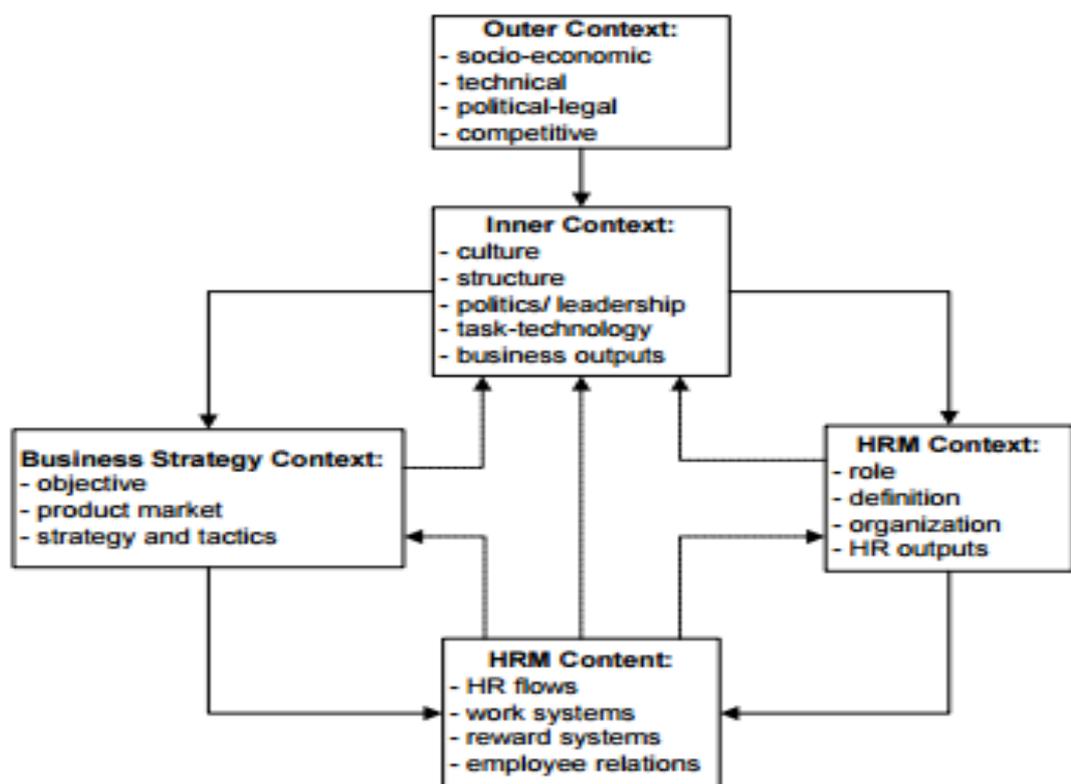


**Figure 4 The Warwick Model**

**2.5.4 Cascio and Boudreau Model (2012)**

Cascio and Boudreau (2012) propose a concise pyramid of competitive strategies and work practices which identifies the top-down and bottom-up relationship between strategies for competition in organisations and strategies for harnessing human resource competencies. Further, the model examines the relationship between internal-external influences on the design of plans for organisational competitiveness and work-related employee practices. However, although the model places great emphasis on HR strategy, HRMp is minimally discussed. In addition, although Strategy is deeply considered in the development of the model, questions of contextual influence on why and how the external constraints of dynamic environment impact on the relationship between competitive factors and work practices are only minimally addressed (Kaufman, 2015).

This model contributes to this study by reiterating the key components of linkage as the HR architecture (which includes HRMp), and how an organisation competes. Also, the model's identification of the external and dynamic environment points to previous literature (Hendry and Pettigrew) that has underlined the impact of context-based factors on CS-HRMp linkage. Figure 5 shows the Cascio and Boudreau model.

Execute Bottom Up

Plan Top Down

**Dynamic Environment**

Globalization, Labour Markets, Economic, political and Social Policy, Geopolitics, Technology, Climatic Change

How do we

compete?

What must we execute well?

**Effective Organizations**

Structure/Design, Culture, Sustainability, Leadership, Diversity, Social Responsibility

How do we delight our internal and

external customers?

What competencies, incentives and

work practices support high performance?

**Future HR**

HR function roles, Infrastructure, Professional competencies, Programs

HR METRICS

What measures assess the key drivers of individual,

team and organizational performance?

**Figure 5 The Cascio and Boudreau Model**

**2.5.5 Paauwe, Guest and Wright Model (2013)**

This model helped to develop the model of CS-HRMp linkage by identifying some specific outcomes of the relationship between overall strategy, HR strategy and HRMp. Although a one-way relationship between overall strategy and HR strategy, HR practices, it is important to this study that the relationship between strategy and HRMp is established.

Paauwe, Guest and Wright (2013) suggest a model of SHRM that focuses specifically on the linkage between HRM and organisational long-term success quantified in terms of organisational performance. The model adds a new focus to the linkage of human resource management practices (Beer et al, 2015), specifically by interpreting the HRM outcomes from a particular economic perspective. HRM therefore contributes to the general economic productivity by enhancing efficiency of resources. However, the focus on the economic impact of HRM practices has been criticised as rather negligent of other fundamental outcomes of linking competitive strategy with HRM, namely job satisfaction, commitment and competency development. Hence, the model presents a narrower perception of the purpose of linkage in SHRM studies than is evident in literature (Cascio and Boudreau, 2012). Paauwe et al's model is shown in Figure 6 below.
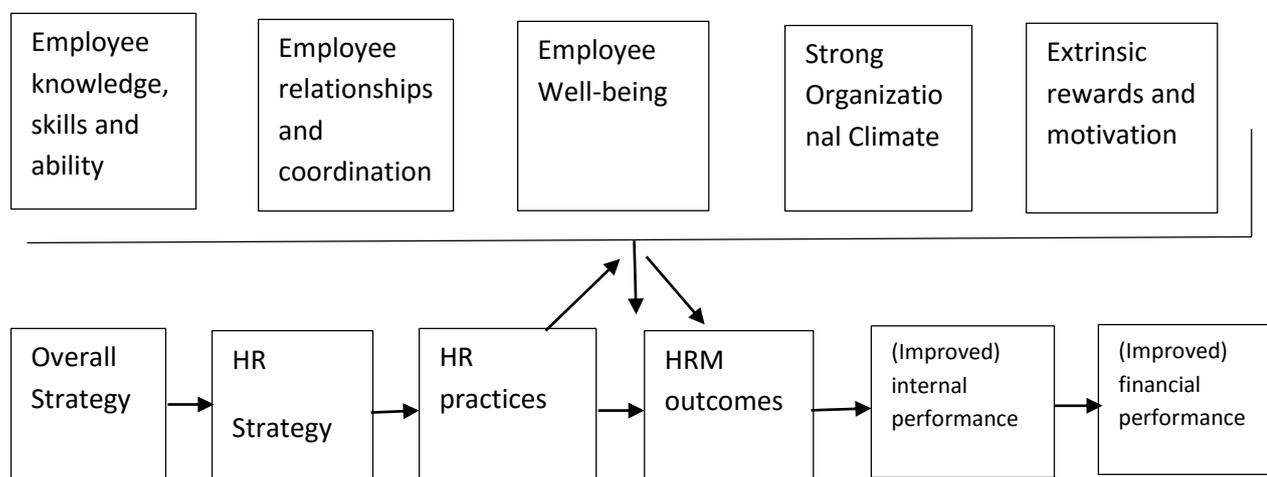


**Figure 6 The Paauwe, Guest and Wright Model**

**2.5.6 CELTESS Model (Emeti, 2012)**

The CELTESS model of SHRM in Nigeria identifies the impact of culture, economy, leadership styles, technology, structure of organisation, seniority, and environment

(CELTESS) on placing HRM at the strategic position in Nigerian businesses. Hence, the model suggests a comprehensive consideration of the above factors when discussing SHRM in Nigeria. Having examined the Nigerian condition, identified key societal issues and national culture, Emeti (2012 sought to develop an integrated model of SHRM. However, the model falls short in empirical, methodological and practical perspectives and places minimal emphasis on the place of competitive strategy in the formulation and implementation of SHRM practices. Emeti's integrated model is shown below.
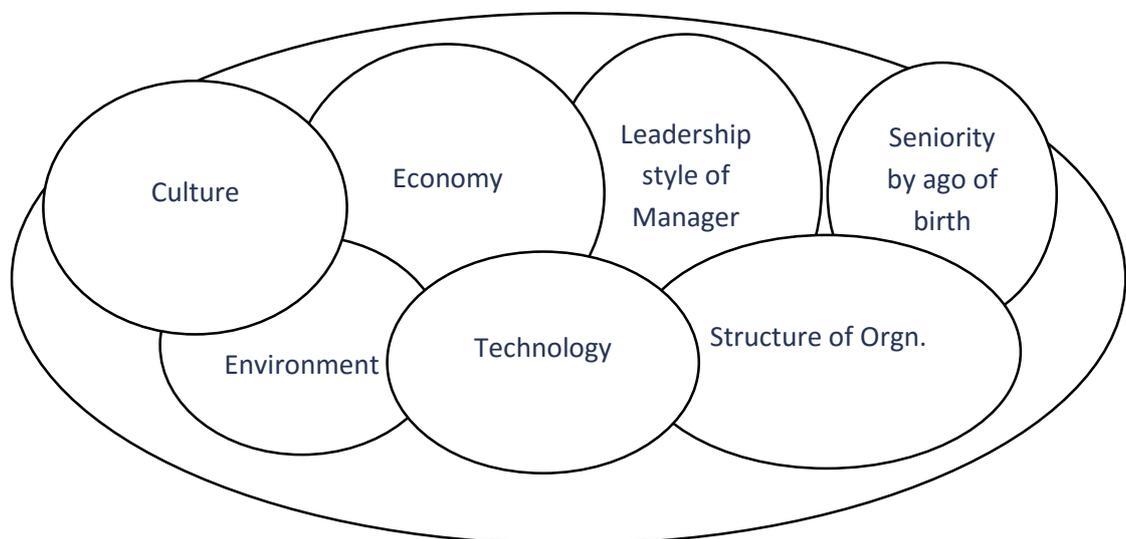
Figure 7 The CELTESS Model

### 2.5.7 LOS Model (Boswell et al, 2006)

Boswell et al (2006) suggested a linkage of HRM and strategy in their line of sight model (LOS). The line of sight approach emphasises the involvement of employees in crafting and understanding HRM and strategy adopted in organisations. Notably, Boswell et al (2006) suggested that the link between HRM and strategy should be defined from the point of view of how employees comprehend the practice of HRM

and the prescriptions of strategy. The central idea of LOS creates a presumed understanding that employees direct their actions towards the achievement of organisational goals within the framework of their conception and understanding of how the strategy is most appropriately realisable (Boswell et al,2006). The authors, Boswell et al (2006), presents a model, therefore, that proposes a relationship between strategy and employees which is created by adoption of appropriate HRM practices that leading to performance outcomes.  Although, the model significantly places employees at pivotal position in organisational analysis, and seeks to engage the relationship between human resources and strategy, it did not clearly identify key relationships between strategy and HRMp variables and how they relate to one another in organisation. Further, the model presents a blanket discussion of strategy which basically minimises the importance of identifying the types of strategic formulations that link with organisational human resources. Although the LOS model contributes to the development of CS-HRMp model in NMSEs by identifying the key structural importance of employee involvement in CS-HRMp linkage, it does not provide a contextual precedence to CS-HRMp model in NMSEs.
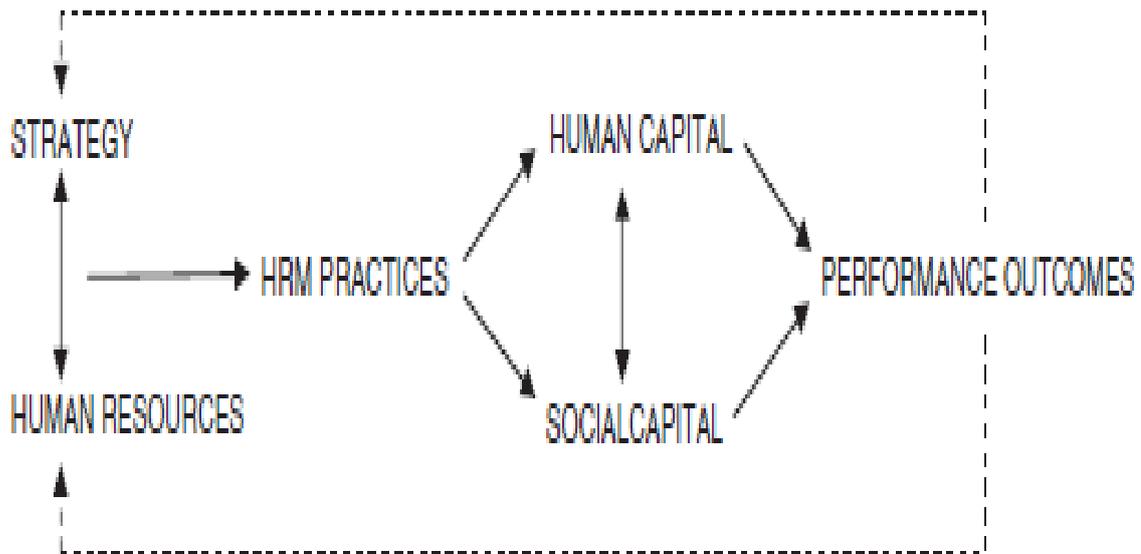
**Figure 8 The CELTESS Model**

**2.5.8 Multi-Level Model of SHRM (Buller and McEvoy, 2012)**

Recently, building on LOS, Buller and McEvoy (2012) sorted to exceed the over-emphasis on employee involvement in strategy-HRM analysis by introducing a multi-level approach to the study of strategy and HRM. The multi-level approach to linkage between strategy and HRM focuses not only on individual level analysis but goes further to organizational level of analysis. Building on LOS introduced by Boswell et al, (2006), Buller and McEvoy (2012) identifies the the three levels of organisational capabilities, group competencies and individual abilities as three interrelated levels that are formed by distinct HRM practices and organisational strategy. In contrast to Boswell et al, (2006), Buller and McEvoy did not limit their discussion to employees and their perception of strategy but extends the discourse by introducing the centrality of HRM practices in producing, and sustaining acceptable modes of organisational capabilities, group competencies and individual abilities. Despite the fact that the multi-level approach to strategy and HRM presented in the multi-level model provided

a new insight into a comprehensive approach to the impact of strategy and HRM relationship on organisational performance, the model made minimal emphasis on impacting contextual factors that are implicated formulation and implementation of multi-level relationship between CS and HRMp in organisations. Further, key strategy variables were not identified clearly and HRM practices discussed were limited to four basic HRMp. Finally, the relationship between strategy and HRM practices, as presented by Buller and McEvoy (2012) was discussed within the purview of their impact on organisational performance; hence, human and social capital were discussed with a view to identifying their contribution to performance in organisations.
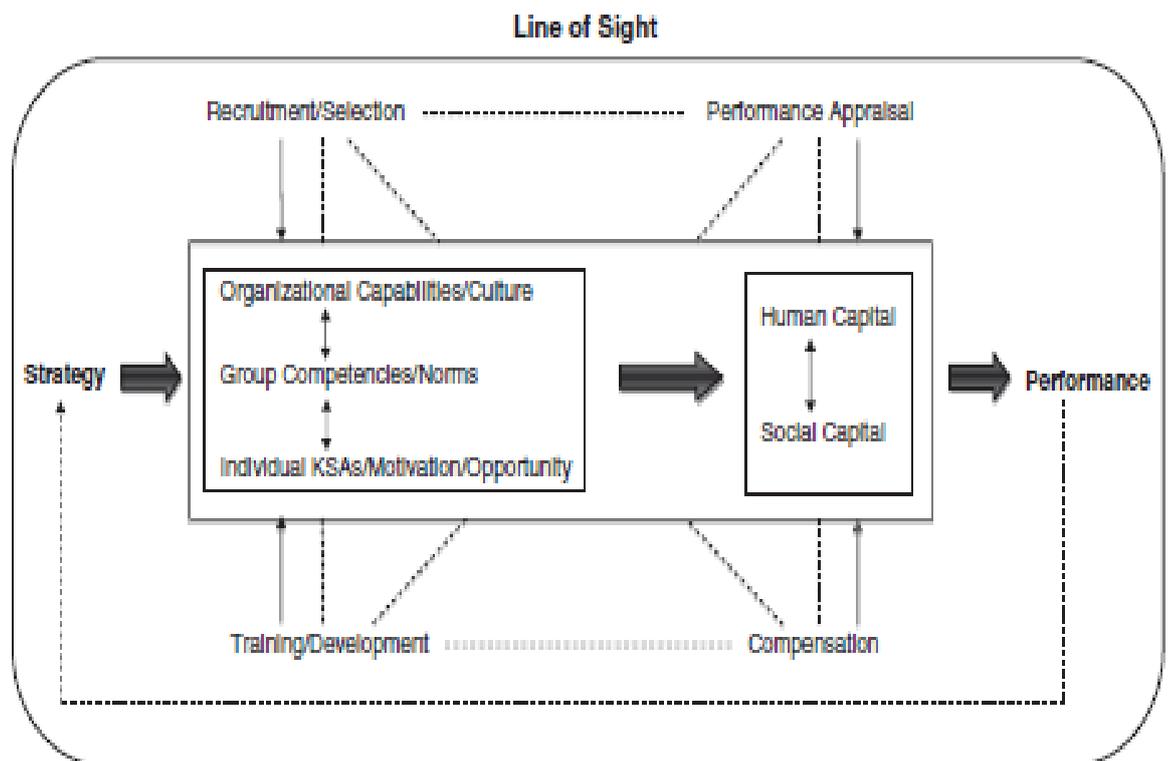


**Figure 9 The Multi-level Model**

Taken together, a critical analysis of the western models (Devanna et al, 1984; Beer et al, 1984; Fombrun et al, 1987) shows that some models focus on linkage of strategy

with HRM and identify the importance of the linkage, as well as the relationship among individual HRM practices. Further, some of the models highlight the influence of external and internal contexts of an organisation on the dynamics of the linkage is highlighted. However, even though the models identify the factors that impact on the linkage, there is limited emphasis on the impact of society's cultural value system on the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices. The role of specific cultural contexts on the dynamics of HRM-Competitive strategy integration is not clearly shown.

However, some recent western models (Paauwe et al, 2013) have introduced a shift from the emphasis on external context's influence on strategic integration to emphasise even further the internal context of integration. The factors identified in Paauwe et al (2013) do not show any link to external factors even though the model lists a variety of internal linkage factors. The implication of this shift is a fundamental de-emphasis of the impact of the external institutional and cultural factors that influence organisational decisions.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the Paauwe et al (2013) model, Wright et al (2015) acknowledge that it would be a difficult task for one model to present a comprehensive view of practice and theory regarding the strategic integration of HRM and competitive strategy that could be applied across all contexts. The models discussed in this work identify what is most relevant to the model of integrating competitive strategy and HRM. However, their applicability across institutions and cultures with the variety of factors ranging from one culture/institution to the other is largely debated (Budhwar and Khatri, 2001; Ayopong, 2010; Cascio, 2015; Kaufman, 2015). In addition, the models were developed contextually along the lines of the American and European model of business and societal context.

The Celtess model of SHRM in Nigeria though suggests an insight into the culture-society-specific factors in Nigeria, and gives prominence to the external and internal factors of the organisation with minimal emphasis on its strategic contents, HRM practices and competitive strategy. However, the research process leading to the suggestion of the model does not indicate the link between strategy and human resource management in Nigeria SMEs.

Given the factors aforementioned regarding earlier and later western models, and the Celtess model of SHRM, this study therefore fills the existing gap relating to the lack of a clear and applicable model that takes account of the peculiarity of the Nigerian context in crafting a link between HRM and competitive strategies in Nigerian SMEs. Regarding, the outcome of CS-HRMp linkage, some of the previous models of SHRM (Harvard model, Paauwe, Guest and Wright model) rightly point out the outcome of the linkage, namely long term-consequences of individual wellbeing, organisational effectiveness, societal wellbeing and business performance. This is indicative of the outcome of the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices.

## 2.6 OUTCOME OF THE LINKAGE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

Over the past years of research into SHRM, there has been debate on the impact of linking competitive strategies with HRM in achieving organisational goals. The extent of the impact has also been a point of debate for SHRM scholars (Darwin, 20012). Previous studies (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013) show that linking competitive strategy with HRM contributes to effective implementation of competitive strategy, achieving competitive

strategy, nurturing the context of knowledge transfer, enhancing employee motivation, interpreting job design, creating employee satisfaction and high job commitment. Integrating competitive strategy with HRM provides an opportunity for organisations to consider a broader range of options to address organisational problems. Moreover, a strong linkage facilitates achievement of competitive advantage (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2004; Othman, 2009).

Empirical studies (Mitchel et al, 2013; Kryscynksi and Ulrich, 2015) suggest the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM has an impact in improving business performance. Although it is clearly suggested that the linkage is not the only factor that contributes to increased performance (Bowen, 2004), it does indicate that effective and efficient human resource management practices could influence employee output, thereby contributing to general organisational performance. In addition, studies in the Slovak Republic (Fraticova and Rudy, 2012), India (Budwar, 2008), UK (Naismith, 2007), China (Ngo et al, 2008), Taiwan (Chang, 2015), Bangladesh (Huda et al, 2014) and Nigeria (Sani, 2011; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016) support the impact of integration and linkage of HRM practices in organisational performance. The above-mentioned studies have taken place in different contexts and different parts of the world. However, minimal investigation has been carried out in Nigeria regarding the linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategy, as well as the outcome of this linkage. This will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.7 LINKAGE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVE STRATEGY IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED FIRMS

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) research is an emerging area in Nigerian management studies (Adeyeye, 2009). Basically, the new interest in SHRM studies in Nigeria has been due to the spate of changes that have occurred in the Nigeria context in recent years and the perceived impact of SHRM studies in western countries. Although Nigeria SHRM studies are growing in number, researchers' specific areas of interest have been limited. The focus has been public and the education, the manufacturing, and insurance sectors (Ayanda, 2011; Jimoh, 2011; Sani, 2011), and the impact of SHRM practices on firm performance (Sani, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014). The earlier studies of SHRM in Nigeria contribute to the understanding of the importance of SHRM practices in the country. Many of them, however, tend to be more descriptive and focus on the SHRM-Performance relationship. Most of them relied basically on a structured instrument for data collection without actively exploring underlying significations. Fewer still, actually looked at the dynamics of linkage in the firms in Nigeria. Hence, the assumption is that linkage results in higher performance, without seeking to understand how the linkage takes place in firms, or the key places and extent of the linkage. Table 4 gives a view of the available literature on SHRM in Nigeria.

**Table 4 Key Nigeria SHRM Literature**

| Author (s) | Year of Publication | Publication | Article Title | Focus of Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Onyebu and Agbo | 2016 | International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention | Impact of Strategic Human resource Management on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Some Selected Local | The article investigates the level of performance achieved in the selected SMEs |

| | | | Government Areas in Abia State | that adopt the SHRM theory. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olusola, Unam, & Folasade, | 2015 | African Research Review | The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on Competitiveness of Small and Medium-scale Enterprises in the Nigerian Hospitality Industry | The focus of this study is to study impact of SHRM on competitiveness focusing on a particular organisation as a case study. The findings showed positive impact with fair practices in SME sector. |
| Ugheoke, Isa, & Noor | 2015 | Asian Social Science | Antecedents of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on Intangible Firm Performance: Analytical Investigation of SMEs | This study focuses on implication of SHRM practices on intangible performance in SMEs in Nigeria. The finding found positive relationship of the practices with performance. |
| Badejo | 2015 | European Journal of Business and Management | Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Employees' Career Development in Selected Commercial Banks in Lagos State, Nigeria | The focus of this investigation is on the effect of SHRM on employee career development which identified a positive impact. |
| Ahunanya | 2014 | Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences | Strategic Human and Financial Resources Management: Imperatives for Improvement of Military Secondary Schools in Nigeria | This study looks at two aspects of management – SHRM and SFRM – and their impact on effectiveness of military secondary schools in Nigeria. |
| Ugheoke, Isa, & Noor | 2014 | International Review of Management and Business Research | Assessing the Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on Tangible Performance: Evidence from Nigerian SMEs | The study focuses on the impact of SHRM on tangible SMEs performance. |

| Muogbo | 2013 | 2nd International Conference on Humanities, Economics and Geography (ICHEG'2013) June 17-18, 2013 London (UK) | The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on Nigeria Universities (A Study of Government-Owned and Private Universities in South East Nigeria) | The study focuses on the impact of SHRM on improving the effectiveness of Nigerian universities in the south-east zone of the country. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Muogbo | 2013 | Global Journal of Management and Business Studies | The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (A Study of some Selected Paint Manufacturing Firms in Anambra State Nigeria) | The focus of the study is to determine the contribution of SHRM in SMEs in Nigeria making recommendations on the adoption of SHRM in SMEs in Nigeria. |
| Akinyele, Worlu, Kumolu-Johnson, & Ahmadu | 2013 | International Business Information Management Association, IBIMA | Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on Corporate Performance of Selected Multinational Firms: Evidence from Cadbury and Nestle Nigeria | The focus of this study is to examine the impact of SHRM on performance of corporate organisations using Cadbury and Nestle as case study organisations. |
| Sani | 2012 | Business Intelligence Journal | Strategic Human Resource Management And Organisational Performance In The Nigerian Insurance Industry: The Impact Of Organisational Climate | Examines the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance in Nigerian insurance sector as well as whether SHRM's impact on organisational performance is based on the work climate. |
| Emeti | 2012 | The Nigerian Academic Forum | Towards an Integrated Model for strategic human resource management in Nigeria | Undertakes a critique of previous SHRM models and suggests a model taking note of contextual factors of Nigeria. |
| Okeudo, | 2012 | Asian Economic and Social Society | The Role of Strategic Human Resources Management in the | This study examines the import of strategic human resource |

| | | | Performance of Logistic Service Provider Firms: A Case Study of Owerri | management practices in logistic service-providing firms in Owerri of Nigeria. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ayanda, & Sani | 2011 | European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences | An Evaluation of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) Practices in Nigerian Universities: The Impact of Ownership Type and Age | This study looks at the influence of age and ownership type on adoption of SHRM practices in Nigerian universities. |
| Ojo | 2011 | EGE AKADEMİK BAKIŞ / EGE ACADEMIC REVIEW | Impact of Strategic Human Resource Practice on Corporate Performance in Selected Nigerian Banks | This study relates corporate performance to strategic human resource management practices in Nigerian banking sector. |

**Author's Compilation**

The table aptly captures the general tendency of SHRM studies in Nigeria. Whereas they focus on a case study approach, using a quantitative method, and emphasizing the impact of SHRM practices, minimal focus has been given to the integration of HRM practices with competitive Strategy in Nigeria. Furthermore, SHRM studies in Nigeria have been methodologically limited to quantitative studies which serve the purpose of measuring performance impact. In addition, the emphasis on institutional and cultural factors in the formulation and implementation of strategic human resource management practices is limited. More still, the specific outcomes of SHRM have rarely been mentioned. A step up is noticeable in Emeti (2012) who considered an integrated model of SHRM, although the model didn't not competitive strategy and HRMp variables, and so could hardly be called a model of C-HRMp linkage. The obvious gap in literature examining the linkage of competitive strategy with human resource management practices in Nigeria, and the extent of the linkage in Nigerian Medium-sized firms, is filled by this study. Further, the gap created by the lack of a

clear model that contextually situates the import of Nigerian culture, society and business context is filled by this study.

### 2.7.1 Nigeria Context of CS-HRMp Linkage

Specific contexts impact on the strategic formulation of HRM practices and their linkage with competitive strategies (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). The Nigerian context as a context of people management in a country of over 160 million people and experiencing very low labour productivity is a very peculiar context (Appendices III and IV).

The research context for this study focuses on Nigeria, often regarded as the most populated country in the African continent (Labour Congress, 2015). Formerly a British colony, Nigeria comprises 36 states divided into six geographical zones, namely North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West, and South South. Vitally positioned in west of Africa, Nigeria shares borders with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin republic. A very significant fact about Nigeria is the rich endowment of over 34 natural resources ranging from crude oil, coal and tin, to mention a few. Although Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups and languages, the most dominant tribes and languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. As an integral part of Africa, Nigeria commits to the regional economic policy of the West Africa (ECOWAS) and the security concerns of African Union (AU).

Very well endowed with rich natural resources and a very large population (Ucha, 2010), Nigeria still has one of the lowest GDP ratings among oil-exporting countries in the world (OPEC, 2015) one of the lowest life expectancies (World Bank, 2015), and about 100 million out of over 160 million people live on average of one dollar per

day (DFID, 2015). Poverty has been at the core of Nigeria's challenges to development and the percentage of people living in poverty has been shown as one of the highest in the world (Muuka and Ezumah, 2014; Appendix II). There is high dependency on revenue from crude oil for the government to carry out infrastructural developments. The degree of competitiveness in the market is relatively low (GCR). The Nigerian economy is driven by factor endowments and relies heavily on low-skilled labour.

The long history of military government did not help the labour arrangement and economic development. In a radical departure from its agriculture-based economy of the 1950s, Nigeria has placed the governmental plans at the beck and call of international crude oil market forces. Even with the oil windfall, high-level corruption has left the country's wealth concentrated in the hands of the few whilst leaving the majority of the population in abject poverty (Iyoha and Oyerinde, 2010; Egbon, 2014). This is the Nigerian context of business enterprises. The Nigerian economy has been predicted to be among the next 11 developing economies over time but this prediction has yet a long way to go. The fact of economic doldrums with attendant social stupor translates into the fabric of Nigerian organisations. This makes people management in Nigerian organisations an enormous task.

The Nigerian context of businesses is very peculiar and unique in an epistemological, conceptual, cultural and institutional sense; hence, the issue concerning the applicability of western models of SHRM in the Nigerian context has been a source of debate (Kamoche, 1997; Webster et al, 2006; Kamoche et al, 2012; Emeti, 2012). In order to understand how a Nigerian understands and makes sense of the world around, allusion is made to how a Nigerian draws from their network of social relationships existing outside of the workplace, which has its core as the family, and translates this into the workplace (Kamoche, 1997; Webster et al, 2006). Generally,

Nigerians interpret events in the workplace as linked with religious meaning (Adogame, 2010). Hence, spirituality and religious emotions are often expressed. This becomes obvious in allusions made to God, either from a Muslim perspective, or a Christian or a traditional perspective (Adogame, 2010) In addition, Nigerians evolve concepts and meaning in terms of their cultural worldview, which could make the conceptual appropriateness and meaningfulness of western management expressions difficult to harmonise in a culture informed by deeply rooted social relationships (Kamoche, 1993).

Furthermore, Nigerian political and economic systems, over the years, have been harsh for the survival and growth of SMEs. Some challenges include the unwillingness of commercial banks to grant credit to SMEs; poor managerial skills of entrepreneurs; weak infrastructural facilities like roads, electricity and water supply; ceaseless political conflicts and ethno-religious conflicts; multiple taxation and insecure foreign exchange; and corruption and unfavourable government policies (IDAN, 2007; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Etuk et al, 2014). Additionally, the threat of political changes and constant changes to government parastatals, coupled with chaotic legal stipulations influence Nigerian organisations' distinctive management approach (Ogwueluka, 2009).

With regard to the workplace and people management in Nigeria, it is well documented that socio-cultural diversity has a lot of influence on the choice of HRM practices and competitive strategies in the country (Fajana and Ige, 2007; Fajana, 2009; Owoyemi et al, 2011). Culture, language, religion and gender differences have been identified as institutional factors that are considered in the acquisition and utilization of required potential workers (Owoyemi et al, 2011). From a purely cultural perspective, Nigeria's power distance cannot be over-emphasised in work

organisations. At the foundation of Nigerian culture is deep-seated family orientation which is translated into workplace affiliations. Nigerians consider the family as of greatest value; hence, the basis of Nigeria's high-contact culture, friendship and love, is correlated with the extent of handshakes and copious greetings (Wayar, 2015).

The idea of seniority is rather well embedded in Nigerian culture, and respect for elders, respect for age and respect of status is so much demanded that in certain situations employees fear to express disagreement with the opinions of the top management (Owoyemi et al, 2011; Gartley et al, 1996). In the same line, the obvious masculinity of Nigerian culture dominates the locus of control and the dimensions of work; this has a lasting effect on the work models and approach to people management in Nigerian organisations (Adegboye, 2013).

Availability of skilled labour in Nigeria is an issue for Nigerian organisations. This is caused in part by the educational system, which is not only of perceived low quality (Owoyemi et al, 2011) but also delays the prompt supply of a strategic employment pool. Due to the educational structure, which is organized in a 6-3-3-4 system, Nigerian students graduate at an average age of 25-28 (NBS, 2015). Thus, a situation that sees older entrants into the job market is created (Owoyemi et al, 2011). As a result of the graduation age and lack of employment opportunities, the higher concentration of unemployed age groups consists of adults within the age range of 15-34 years (Appendix 4). In the same line, the educational system is riddled with incessant national action by the university academic staff unions, thereby orchestrating a high negative impact on student learning.

Another very peculiar issue relating to the Nigerian context of people management is the role and function of the labour union. Problems with Nigerian labour union

escalated during the early 1990s with abrogation of employee collective bargaining rights by the military government (Yehudah, 2006). However, with the introduction of a new government in 1997, the bargaining rights were restored. Still, there have been issues relating to the lack of a harmonised perception of collective bargaining rights and contracts by the major organisations that constitute the Nigerian Labour Union. Akeem (2014) identified the Nigerian Labour Union's struggle with the government's neo-liberal policies regarding businesses in Nigeria.

Conclusively, the above-discussed factors of the Nigerian context make people management approaches and policies peculiar, and they require the development of an appropriate model for Nigerian enterprises that takes these factors into consideration. Given the position of SMEs in the Nigerian economy, it is worthwhile making SMEs the focus of this study.

### 2.7.2 Nigeria Medium-Sized Enterprises

It is generally regarded that SMEs constitute a driving force for economic growth (Okpara, 2015) through generation of employment opportunities, reduction of poverty, stimulation of enterprise culture and creating drive for innovative ventures (Oboh, 2002; Wale-Awe, 2000; Adenikinju, 2005; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014; Okpara, 2015).

Differences exist in the definition of SMEs according to different countries or regional economic groups. Commonly, the definitions are based on the economy, employee figures and financial assets (Awa et al, 2015). Varied agencies in Nigeria proffer different definitions of SMEs, as shown in Table 5:

**Table 5 Differing Definitions of SMEs in Nigeria**

| Institution/Class | Asset Value (₦'m) | | | Annual Turnover y (₦'m) | | | No of Employees | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *MSE* | SSE | ME | *MSE* | SSE | ME | *MS* | SSE | ME |
| Fed. Min. of Industry | <200 | <50 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | <300 | <100 | <10 |
| Central Bank | <150 | <1 | n.a. | <150 | <1 | n.a. | <10 | <50 | n.a. |
| NERFUND | n.a. | <10 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| NASSI | n.a. | <40 | <1 | n.a. | <40 | n.a. | n.a. | 3 - | n.a. |
| NASME | <150 | <50 | <1 | <500 | <100 | <10 | <10 | <50 | <10 |

(World Bank, 2001; Aruwa, 2004)

In the light of disparities in the definition of SMEs in Nigeria, shown in Table 6 above, this study adopts the Nigerian Ministry of Industry's definition (see Table 6). The justification for adopting this method lies in the fact that the Ministry of Industry is the overall governmental ministry that oversees the development and funding of, and the government policies relating to SMEs in Nigeria. As such, policy formulation and implementation that affect Nigerian SMEs are made at national level by the Nigerian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (MoITI). The MoITI definition of SMEs has been adopted by Nigerian SME researchers (Ayanda and Sani, 2011; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014).

**Table 6 Working Definition of SMEs for this study**

| S/N | SIZE CATEGORY | EMPLOYMENT | ASSETS (=N= Million) (excl. land and buildings) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Micro Enterprise | Fewer than 10 | Less than 5 |
| 2 | Small Enterprises | 10-49 | 5 to less than 50 |
| 3 | Medium Enterprises | 50-199 | 50 to less than 500 |

Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2013)

MoITI defines SMEs as enterprises that employ 10–199 employees and have an asset value of 5–500 million naira. In the event of a conflict between the employment criteria and financial criteria, the employment criteria take precedence (NBS, 2015). To elaborate on this, the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) affirms that, if an enterprise has assets of N7 million and employs seven people, that enterprise will still be regarded as a micro enterprise. This practically places most enterprises in Nigeria at the level of micro enterprises. In Nigeria, SMEs make up about 97% of businesses (MoITI, 2015). Similarly, in Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda, SMEs contribute 20%, 74%, and 90.8% of the workforce, respectively.

SMEs are recognized in Nigeria, like in any other countries of the world, as one non-negligible driving force of economic recovery (Katwalo and Medichie, 2008; Ihua, 2009). SMEs in Nigeria employ a total number of 59,741,211 people, representing 84.02% of the total labour force, and their total contribution to GDP is about 48.47% (NBS, 2015). According to the Small and Medium-sized Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2013) and the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2015), the total number of SMEs in Nigeria is 17,284,671, with micro enterprises constituting 99.87%, small enterprises accounting for 0.12%, and medium-scale enterprises make up 0.01% of the total SMEs in Nigeria. Notably, there is a wide gap in gender ownership of SMEs in Nigeria, with male owners accounting for 77.25% and women accounting for 22.75%.

Pre-independence days Nigeria witnessed a seminal indication of the country's entrepreneurial spirit in the form of trade exchange with its colonial masters. However, SMEs in Nigeria started becoming an important sector for business ventures in the early 1970s (Osotimehin et al, 2012; Ayozie et al, 2013) due to the fall of the agricultural sector, the emergence of an oil boom in the country, and the government

indigenization decree of 1972. The 1972 decree made it possible to speed up industrialization and generate employment opportunities. Following the 1986 structural economic reforms in Nigeria, SMEs became an important concern of the government (Osotimehin, 2012). A number of SME-friendly policies were made and put in place to stimulate the growth of SMEs and minimize constraints. At the turn of the early 1980s, government policies were directed towards the establishment of agencies, groups and programmes such as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Youth Service Programme (NYSC). The implication of these bodies and programmes was to deliver enterprise-friendly knowledge to young adults and students. Further efforts to encourage SMEs in Nigeria saw the establishment of the Nigerian Bank of Industry in 2001 (Alawe, 2004). In 2003, the government created, after many failed policies and stunted growth of the sector, the Small and Medium Sized Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) to promote the development of the sector (SMEDAN, 2015).

However, despite the government efforts and the many policies put in place and agencies established, the sector has regrettably under-performed (Osotimehin, 2012), contributing a mere 46.54% GDP. The Nigerian SME sector has yet to reach efficient and vital status (Okpara, 2015). A complicating issue is the influx of multinationals into Nigeria which pose even higher competition for the SME sector. Major common characteristics of Nigerian SMEs across all sectors include: limited funding, concentration of decision-making process on key persons, high mortality rate, poor managerial skills, low level of research and development, over dependence on scarce resources, and poor access to international markets and family-based ventures. Nigerian SMEs seem to face myriad problems which are a spillover effect of the country's economic and political situation. Some of these problems include: poor

managerial skills, poor human capital management abilities, inconsistent governmental policies, undercapitalization, financial incapacity, poor-quality transport system, high cost of production and operation, corruption, insecurity, and infrastructural inadequacy (Oboh, 2002; Adenikinju, 2005; Osotimehin et al, 2012; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014; SMEDAN, 2015).

Given the obvious issue that management of human resources portends for SMEs in Nigeria, this study contributes to enhancing employee management practices by suggesting a model of linkage between HRM practices and competitive strategies in SMEs to maximise the potentials of SME employees.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter undertook a review of competitive strategy, HRM practices, the linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategy, and the Nigerian context of linking HRM practices and competitive strategy. A detailed analysis of the concept of strategy introduced the different levels of strategy in order to give a good and well-founded analysis for a more detailed understanding of competitive strategy. An examination of competitive strategy in relation to RBV and DC was undertaken to give a clearer perspective of the vital position of organisational human resources in relation to competitive strategy. Further, the literature review examined HRM practices, situating them within the purview of HRM as a discipline. Logically, the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM was given a detailed analysis within the framework of SHRM. SHRM studies in the Nigerian context were finally reviewed and situated within the general corpus of SHRM studies. The literature reviewed has provided valuable insights into the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy and underlined the gaps this

study fulfils. The emerging conceptual map from the literature review is shown in Figure 7 below.

**Competitive Strategy**

Differentiation; Low costing; Focus; Resource-Based Strategy; Dynamic Capability

**CS-HRMp Linkage**

(a) Nature of Competitive Strategies – Written

(b) Options for HRM Practices – Written

(d) Factors Impacting CS-HRMp linkage

Culture, economy, technology, structure, management, environment, Labour union, government/Politics, shareholders, workforce; seniority by age; leadership style; ownership type, structure of organization, employment quota system

**Outcome of CS-HRMp Linkage**

Commitment; Congruence; Competence; Organizational performance; Employee wellbeing; Societal Wellbeing; Organizational competitiveness; Employee commitment; Job satisfaction; Competitive advantage

**Extents of CS-HRMp Linkage**

**Administrative linkage**

*Top management only (TpM): No Human resource (HR) officer/manager

**One-Way linkage**

*TpM: HR officer/manager limited to strategy implementation

**Two-way linkage**

*TpM: HR officer/manager participates in strategy formulation and implementation

**Integrative linkage**

*TpM: HR department; line manager (departmental heads) devolvement; investment in HRM practices

**HRMp**

Universal HRM practices
Contingency HRM practices
Contextual HRM practices
Configurational HRM Practices

**Figure 10 Conceptual Map Emerging from the Literature**

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the overall methodology that guides the study. The research design for this study ensures that this study unearths effective, dependable and balanced results using appropriate methodological options that suit the aim and objectives of the study (Bryman, 2012). The overall research is guided by a positivist philosophical position, adopting a mixed method approach in two phases. Each phase has its own distinct strategies, approaches and techniques. The qualitative phase is based on the principles of case study design to explore the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs to develop quantitative research instrument and hypothesis; whereas the quantitative phase is a correlational design that tests the hypotheses. This chapter examines the different mixed method approaches and justifies the choice of a sequential mixed method. Further, the chapter explains the steps that are involved in undertaking the sequential mixed method approach for this study.

This chapter therefore, answers key questions on the philosophical orientation of the researcher, the overall research design, approaches, strategies, sampling techniques, methods, and analyses of research. In addition, key issues of validity, reliability and ethical consideration are also presented.

### 3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The philosophical orientation of the research states the underlining assumptions and guiding principles (Ayeni, 2012). This is to give a clearer perspective of what is

considered as the object and subject of knowledge in the research inquiry, as well as the primary process of achieving the aim of the research (Graham and Thomas, 2008). Research philosophy is regarded as the overall perspective that represents the researcher's worldview, which determines the process of research inquiry, collection, analysis and interpretation of research data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Schumann, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the importance of philosophical assumption becomes clearer when it informs the viewpoint of knowledge-claims and process of epistemic inquiry (Von der Gracht, 2008). In social research, philosophical orientation comprises three distinct assumptions: what counts as knowledge or truth, the process of getting to the truth, and the real worth of the process of getting to the truth 'in-itself'. These three assumptions are commonly referred to as ontology, epistemology and axiology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Foremost, ontology is the philosophical position that considers reality or truth-in-itself. This is to say that ontology is concerned with the study of reality in its nature and makes assumptions regarding what is to be considered as knowledge (Bryman, 2012). Although some literature (Easter-by Smith, 2012) outlines four basic ontological positions that influence social research, namely: realism, relativism, nominalism and internal realism, two positions that have gained prominence in social research are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism as an ontological position considers the truth, in other words, reality as existing outside of the social actor; as such, the nature of reality is not distorted or influenced by the actions of the subject of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In contrast, subjectivism suggests that the nature of reality is subject to the actions of the performer who actively constructs the existence of the phenomenon in question (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The way the nature of reality is

conceived has great influence on the process through which reality is investigated; hence the various epistemological positions.

The second aspect of philosophical orientation is epistemology. Epistemology as a branch of philosophy which investigates knowledge and the process of acquiring knowledge is also influential in social research. As a philosophical orientation in management studies, epistemology informs what a researcher considers important to the research project (Saunders et al, 2012). At the core of epistemological positions is the interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon under study. Based on the type of relationship that informs the manner in which the researcher handles the process of acquiring knowledge, some epistemological positions have been suggested over the years of social research: positivism, interpretivist, pragmatism, realism, empiricism, constructionism, hermeneutics, postmodernism, feminism, and structural theory. Although these epistemological positions have been adopted in management research, the most popular positions in management research are positivism/post-positivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), interpretivism/constructionism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), realism/critical realism (McNabb, 2008; Zachariadis et al, 2013), pragmatism (Creswell, 2007; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and social constructionism (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2009). Hence, Table 7 below is used to discuss these five epistemological positions.

Positivism is an epistemological position that considers knowledge as "statistically generalized to a population by numerical analysis of observations about an easily accessible reality" (Sobh and Perry, 2006:1195). Positivism as an approach to knowledge advocates the method from the natural sciences in management research (Gummesson, 2006; Koshy, 2010). Key issues of the positivist approach relate to the type of research, data collection processes, approaches to study, method of analysis,

relationship of the researcher and the research phenomenon, and the manner of handling the research results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al, 2012). Based on the method from the natural sciences, positivism aims at theory and hypotheses testing (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). With regard to the collection of data, positivism advocates for a structured system of data collection utilising systematically structured tools that yield objective data (Jankowicz, 2000). Further, the researcher exercises no influence on the subject, nor does the subject control the researcher (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In terms of the approaches to the study, the positivist researcher undertakes a deductive line of theory testing to achieve the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the method of analysis is aimed at explaining how and why things occur the way they do; hence, the methods of statistical analysis, measurements, and hypotheses testing and retesting are employed (Bryman, 2012). Finally, positivism also suggests that results of research inquiry are subject to reproducibility and generalisability over a wider population of samples (Creswell, 2007). The key features of positivism contrasts with those of interpretivism, which are discussed next.

Related to positivism is the post-positivist philosophical orientation which was advanced to solve the qualitative-quantitative debate; hence, the effort to bridge the qualitative-quantitative divide in social research necessitated a gradual movement from positivism to post-positivist philosophical orientation as an alternative philosophy to positivism (Clark, 1998). Regarding post positivist philosophy, the proponents (Tesch, 1990, Clark, 1998) suggest that the approach incorporates the methods of the sciences and qualitative paradigm; hence the nature of data includes both numerical and non-numerical interview data. In respect to post positivist philosophical approach, the research is not totally detached from the object of inquiry

which allows a personal constructivist approach to qualitative data as well as the detached examination of numerical data. Further, the truth of research phenomenon from the post positivist perspective indicates subjective interpretation of reality and statistical estimation of the truth claims. The post-positivist perspective acknowledges that reality is not fully understood using single method (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Similar to positivism, however, post-positivism acknowledges the generalisability of results and undertakes objective interpretation of reality (Ponterotto, 2002, 2016).

Interpretivism recognises the complexity of social phenomena and the impact of an individual's worldview on the outcome of social reality (Saunders et al, 2012). The interpretivist investigator approaches the subject of research from the point of view of what is meaningful to the people. What counts as meaningful to people includes their cultures, attitudes, beliefs, religion, and the emotional contents of their decisions (Denscombe, 2010). The interpretivist researcher's success lies in their ability to enter the world of the subject and interpret the social roles of the research subject in their particular circumstances (Bryman, 2012). Arguably, however, the result of the interpretivist research approach might not be generalisable in view of the unstable human emotional contents and the always-changing social order (Bryman, 2012).

Realism, in a number of ways, shares both the positivist and interpretivist approaches, holding that reality exists both independently of the individual and is made up of socially constructed beliefs that have an impact on the way an individual behaves (Zachariadis et al, 2013). Realism affirms that knowledge depends to a certain extent on the context of social phenomena; however, these social phenomena are testable. Evolved in the philosophical tenet of realism is a critical approach to realism which

sees knowledge as three-fold, namely: knowledge at the empirical level, which is a limited kind of knowledge; knowledge at the abstract level; and knowledge at the intuitive level, which exists independently of experience but could be inferred.

More recently, pragmatism has emerged in social research as a reaction to the dominance of positivist and interpretivist philosophies, and purports to give balance to more practical understanding of knowledge (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008). To mixed method researchers, pragmatism is a philosophical approach that explores the research questions independently of the methods, and seeks to use the methods at its disposal to analyse and investigate a particular phenomenon (Erthridge, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Collins et al, 2011; Onwuegbuzie and Malllette, 2011; Johnson et al, 2007). Table 7 presents the philosophical orientations discussed above.

**Table 7 Philosophical Orientations**

| Philosophical Orientation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Positivism | Positivists advocate the application of methods from the natural sciences to the study of social reality while emphasising the need for detachment of the researcher from the researched (Cauley, 1994). Post-positivism adopts a multiple constructive approach to reality as well as a monist approach (Cameron, 2009). |
| Post-positivism | In respect to post positivist philosophical approach, the research is not totally detached from the object of inquiry which allows a personal constructivist approach to qualitative data as well as the detached examination of numerical data (Tesch, 1990; Clarke, 1998). |
| Interpretivism | An epistemological approach that advocates the comprehensive grasp of the subjective condition and meaning of all social action (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). |
| Realism (Empirical and Critical Realism) | An epistemological position that purports to explain that the natural order and reality could be understood by use of an appropriate method – empirical realism – or by identifying an appropriate structure that |

| | |
|---|---|
| | generates natural order – critical realism (Zachariadis et al, 2013). |
| Pragmatism | An epistemological position that allows a research question to be answered regardless of its supposed philosophical presuppositions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). |

The third aspect of philosophical orientation is axiology. Axiology studies the ethical, aesthetical and religious dispositions of the researcher which contribute to the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). More importantly, axiology questions the values and principles of the researcher throughout the process of conducting a study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Although often overlooked in management research due to the plurality of religious positions, the apparent differences in value perspectives and ethical orientations, this philosophical branch still plays an important role in management research in the sense of ethical considerations. The import of axiology is noted particularly in consideration of research participants' values, the relationship between participants and the researcher, and the researcher's fundamental principles (Creswell, 2007).

### 3.1.1 Justification and selection

Following the discussion undertaken above, the phenomenon of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs is investigated in this study from the objective ontological perspective. The nature of the phenomenon is regarded as a reality that could be objectively known without the active construction of social actor performance. In addition, from the axiological perspective, the values and ethics guiding this study are predominantly those of LJMU's ethics code of research (Section 3.10), which provides guidelines to

researchers within the institution. In the same vein, this study adopts a positivist philosophical orientation and investigates CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs using a statistical analytic method from the natural sciences (Collins and Hussey, 2003). Notably, the majority of SHRM studies in Nigeria are based on a positivist approach of theory and hypotheses testing, focusing mainly on adapting research questionnaires to measure the impact of SHRM practices on specific sectors of their concern (Sani, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014, 2015).

First, the key concern of this study is to test hypotheses that contribute to explaining the practice of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, using the method of theory and hypotheses testing. Also this study made use of qualitative data to develop the data collection instrument used in collecting quantitative data. As such, the qualitative and the quantitative method are utilized in this study. Whereas the quantitative data is the main type of data used for the study, the qualitative data however contributes to the exploratory understanding of the research phenomenon. In this way, this study lends itself to post-positivist philosophical orientation.

Regarding the qualitative phase of the study, the semi-structured interview is used as the means of collecting qualitative data and subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. The semi-structured interview was adopted at the instrument development stage as part of the sequential exploratory design of the study (refer to Section 3.2), the rationale behind the interviews is that they are solely for instrument development and are not the main source of data for this study. Inductive approach to social reality construction was adopted to identify the key themes used in NMSEs regarding CS-HRMp linkage.

In regard to the quantitative phase, this study adopts a systematically structured questionnaire as the main data collection tool. Further, the researcher exercises no influence on the subject of study, nor controls the activities of the study's participants in the research questionnaire to create social reality. In terms of the approach, the main phase of this study utilises the deductive approach of hypotheses testing. Furthermore, the methods of statistical analysis, measurements, correlations, regressions and hypotheses testing are employed, which are positivist tools of analysis. The focus of the analysis is on conducting correlation analysis to determine the relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs, regression analysis to determine the outcomes of the linkage, cross-tabulation analysis to establish the levels of linkage, factor and descriptive analysis to examine the contextual factors and median tests, and literature review and interview data to establish the main CS and HRMp variables. Finally, positivism suggests that the results of management research are subject to reproducibility; this study achieves reproducible results, using the appropriate methods and methodology.

As such, the philosophical approach that is necessary and 'ad rem' to collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data which allows for probing of terms and concepts used in NMSEs in relation to CS-HRMp linkage, as well as offers an opportunity for generalisation of the results of the study in a detached manner for an accessible reality (Bryman, 2012) for this study is post-positivism (Collins and Hussey, 2003).

**3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design is a framework that ensures that the research problem or question is answered effectively by the evidence gathered (De Vaus, 2001). The research design includes a work plan, which necessarily follows from the design, and the method of gathering and analysis of data. Hence, the research design involves the entire process of collection and interpretation of data. Bryman (2012) suggests that qualitative, quantitative and mixed designs as key research designs in social sciences.

**3.2.1 Qualitative Research Design**

The qualitative research design uses words and interpretation of words and meaning as key source of research information (Sobh and Perry, 2006). The qualitative method progresses from using words to construct theories (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991), and the main research approach of qualitative design is inductive reasoning (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research aims at understanding the meaning of reality as it is ascribed by individuals (Creswell, 2007). The data therefore comes from the meanings ascribed by the individuals (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Due to the nature of qualitative research design, it has been considered in literature (Boje, 2001; Prasad and Prasad, 2002; Cassell et al, 2006) as effective in offering a research an opportunity for further probing of research phenomenon. The main tools used in the collection of qualitative data are semi-structured interviews, participant observation, ethnographic participant observation, focus groups, and field notes (Punch, 2014).

The qualitative method could be very important in the collection of first-hand data from the natural location of the phenomenon (Bryman, 2012), and this informs the strength of qualitative research which identifies not only the verbal expressions but

also the total social, cultural and behavioural imports of the respondents (Bernard, 2013). Although the qualitative method is a single method, and has basic features, there are different qualitative research approaches to the research designs, namely narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, case study, and ethnographic (Creswell, 2007), as shown in Table 8 below:

**Table 8 Qualitative Research designs**

| Qualitative Research Design | Focus |
|---|---|
| Action study | Strategy focuses on management of change and understanding of experience involving practitioners and researchers in close collaboration |
| Grounded Theory | Focuses on data collected by a series of observations and interviews following inductive method |
| Case Study Design | This entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a research case |
| Narrative | Focuses on collection of experiences of narrators, constructing the experiences into a narrative |
| Ethnography | Focuses on interpreting and describing social phenomenon through first-hand study |

Creswell (2007)

The objective of this study is not to generate theory by the collection of a series of observations nor a collection of narrative experiences; neither does it intend to observe the management changes involving experiential encounters between managers and researchers, nor a first-hand observation of social phenomenon. This study examines NMSEs as a case context of understanding CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria. The case context approach therefore fits the qualitative phase of this study. In contrast to some approaches to qualitative research which emphasise the methods used in case studies (Yin, 1994), this study emphasises the 'case' idea of case study design (Stake, 1998).

Hence, the principles of the case study approach regarding specific 'cases' serve to provide information required for the development of a quantitative research instrument. Regarding specific cases, the 'case' approach to case study emphasises that the context in consideration be: a complex unit, studied in its original conditions and current (Johansson, 2003). The case context of this study is further discussed in Section 3.2.3.

### 3.2.2 Quantitative Research Design

Usually referred to as the method of the natural sciences (Cassell, et al, 2006), quantitative design uses numerical data (Cassell et al, 2006) and statistical analysis to measure specific aspects of the object of study (King et al, 1994). Quantitative method adopts a process theory and hypotheses testing; as such it measures data based on formulated hypotheses or established theories (Creswell, 2007). It is most appropriate for an objective research problem and often employed to give support or confirmation to formulated theories (Trusty, 2011). The quantitative method has an explicit effect on the choice of research design in an academic research. The quantitative design places emphasis on the quantification of data collection and analysis, using deductive approach and informed mainly by the positivist or post-positivist philosophy (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, key tools for data collection in quantitative design are surveys, secondary data, structured interviews and questionnaires (Jankowicz, 1999).

Four main types of quantitative design are identified in literature (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2006) namely; correlational, descriptive, experimental and quasi-experimental or comparative designs. Quantitative correlational design utilizes statistical tests to measure variables under study to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables being tested (Gravetter and Wallnau,

2016). This is in contrast to experimental, descriptive and comparative designs. Table 9 presents a summary of quantitative research designs.

**Table 9 Quantitative Research Designs**

| Descriptive Quantitative Research Design | Experimental Quantitative Research Design | Comparative or Quasi-Experimental quantitative Research Design | Correlational Quantitative Research Designs Quantitative Research Design |
|---|---|---|---|
| Describes Relationship between variables | Examines relationship between causes and effect | Examines relationship between cause and effect | Identifies relationship between variables. Relationships are interpreted rather than described |
| Provides systematic description of issues. | Control over behaviour of variables | No control over behaviour of variables | Variables are not controlled |
| Does not begin with Hypotheses | Begins with hypotheses | Begins with hypotheses | Begins with hypotheses or theories |
| Systematic Sampling | Randomised Sampling | No randomised sampling | Random and Statistical sampling |

(Sousa et al, 2007 ; Barbie, 2010; Muijs, 2010)

Descriptive designs focus on providing a succinct and systematic description of the issues being studied (Sousa et al, 2007). The key concern of descriptive strategies is the establishment of the current status of the research case. Experimental designs impose control over data and variables being measured to establish the relationship between causes and effects of variables being measured (Rumrill, 2004; Ingham-Broomfield, 2014). In addition, the experimental researcher interferes in the process of research by manipulating variables to identify data behaviours to explain reasons for occurrences within data (Rumrill, 2004; Ingham-Broomfield, 2014). While sharing

the basic features of experimental designs, the comparative research design is used to explain the cause-effect relationships among variables (Rumrill, 2004; Cook and Cook, 2008). However, the comparative design differs in the sense that the researcher does not intervene to manipulate the behaviour of variables.

Compared to the other three types of design, the correlational design seeks to report the relationship between variables or among variables but does not go beyond that to explain the causes of the pattern of relationship between variables (Cook et al, 2008; Cook and Cook, 2008). The correlational design engages data in order to identify and report the basic observable features, bents and behaviour patterns of data (Cook et al, 2008; Gravetter and Wallnau, 2016). This study is to measure and report the direction and strength of the relationship between CS variables and HRMp variables, and between CS-HRMp linkage and organisational outcomes. In addition, based on the table above, correlational study begins with hypotheses or theories, adopts statistical sampling methods and exercises no control over the variables. This study uses statistical sampling (Section 3.6) to ensure that representative sample is chosen from the different regions of Nigeria, and applies random sampling approach to the sample size per region of the country. Further, the competitive and HRMp variables are not manipulated in order to explain their relationship. Hence, the design for the second phase of this study follows a correlational design to achieve the aim of the study (See also Section 3.2.3).

### 3.2.3 Research Design Used: Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method Design

Mixed method research involves a combination of the components of qualitative and quantitative research to study a research phenomenon, in a single study, and provide

answers to research questions (Kromrey et al, 2006; Kothari, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Mertens and Hesse-Biber, 2013). The design uses the qualitative and quantitative types of data, data collection and analysis techniques (Bryman, 2012). Although, mixed method design combines the two research designs, the reasons and manner of usage vary according to the various types of mixed method designs. Extant mixed method literature (Caracelli and Greene, 1997; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell and Clark, 2007) suggests a number of possible design approaches for mixed method research, as seen in Table 10.

**Table 10 Mixed Method Research Designs**

| Mixed Method Research Design | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Triangulation Design (Caracelli and Greene, 1997; Creswell and Clark, 2007) | Application of different methods that work towards a convergence in interpretation and analysis |
| Complementary Design (Caracelli and Greene, 1997; Sale et al, 2002) | Application of different methods to enhance the results that are derived from another method |
| Expansion Design (Caracelli and Greene, 1997) | Application of different methods to present results side-by-side in order to enlarge knowledge of the phenomenon being research |
| Sequential Mixed Method Design (Creswell and Clarke, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Ivankova et al, 2006) | Application of different methods in order to connect different types of data, quantitative method following qualitative method – Sequential explanatory design; Or qualitative method followed by quantitative method – Sequential Exploratory design |
| Embedded Design (Caracelli and Greene, 1997; Creswell and Clarke, 2007) | This design locates one type of data within a larger design by using other types of data. |
| Transformative Mixed Method Design (Caracelli and Greene, 1997) Also referred to as Conversion (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) | This design mixes the values of different methods to characterize different interests usually by means of conversion |

Triangulation design involves using more than one method, investigator, theories, and/or data in order to study a particular phenomenon in the same study. The design

uses a qualitative and quantitative perspective to the same study, with a convergence in interpretation and analysis. This is not suitable for this study because the objectives are not seeking a mutual validation of data. A complementary design involves the usage of one method to improve the result of the other. It implies augmenting the research outcome. This design does not suit this study either, because the objective is not to mutually complement the result of both methods but to use the qualitative method to develop the quantitative instrument and hypotheses. Regarding expansion design, the concern is on using results of one method to broaden insights offered by the other in such a way that they methods mutual highlight and support each other (Caracelli and Greene, 1997).

An embedded design combines more than one type of data in a study. This design localizes one type of data within a larger design by using other types of data (Creswell and Clarke, 2007). In transformative mixed method design, the outcome of one type of method is converted into another form of data to represent the values of the methods.

A sequential mixed method approach connects different types of data at different stages of the research, one starting from qualitative data, and the other from quantitative data. The sequential explanatory approach starts with quantitative data at the first stage, whereas the sequential exploratory design starts with the qualitative stage and flows into the quantitative stage as a second phase. This study does not adopt a sequential explanatory design because the objectives of this study and the existence of minimal literature focusing on the phenomenon of study in Nigeria makes a sequential exploratory design for this study appropriate. The sequential exploratory mixed method design for this study is appropriate for an exploratory investigation in an area where there is less available academic literature and studies (Johnson and Onwuebuzie, 2004).

Even though the adoption of mixed method in management research has received a lot of criticism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), it is increasingly being adopted in management research to shore up the weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods and build on their strengths (Bryman, 2012; Lund, 2012). Combination of methods or sources of data or theories or investigators eliminates bias and leads increased confidence in the validity of results (Creswell, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Using a mixed method therefore gives insight into the object of study from both qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby strengthening the conclusion derived from the research (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, the integration of the two methods has been seen a form of internal validity whereby both methods validate each other (Hesse-Biber, 2010). However, just like the choice of method for an academic study is not a haphazard affair, so also mixed method is used only when it is most appropriate and justifiable. In extant literature (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Onwuegbuzie and Mallette, 2011; Greene et al, 1989; Zachariadis et al, 2013), various reasons have been given for the adoption of a mixed method, which include: triangulation, instrument development, offset of the disadvantages of individual methods, mutual completion of methods, to answer different research questions, for explanation of the results from other methods, for background theoretical exploration of a new phenomenon, to ensure credibility of data and results, to illustrate the outcome of one method in another circumstance, and to accommodate diverse views and opinions. Based on Bryman (2008), Harrison and Reilly (2011), and Harrison (2013), the reasons for adoption of a mixed method design is summarised in Table 11.

**Table 11 Rationale for Adopting Mixed Method Designs**

| Reason | Description | Research Design |
|---|---|---|
| Triangulation | Combination of qualitative and quantitative data to corroborate each other | Convergent design |
| Offset | Combination to offset weaknesses and build on strengths | Convergent Design |
| Completeness | Combination to arrive at a holistic account of reality in study | Exploratory, Explanatory and Convergent |
| Process | Combination whereby quantitative method gives account of structures while qualitative method makes sense of the process of study | Exploratory or Explanatory |
| Diversity of Research Questions | Both answer different research questions suited for each method | Convergent |
| Explanation | One method explains the findings of the other | Explanatory |
| Unexpected Results | When unexpected results have to be understood and explained by the other | Explanatory or embedded |
| Instrument Development | Development of questionnaire and scaling of items by use of qualitative method | Exploratory |
| Sampling Purposes | One approach helps in sampling purposes of the other | Exploratory or Explanatory |
| Credibility Purposes | Combination to enhance credibility and validate each other | Exploratory, Explanatory or convergent |
| Context | Combination that facilitates the understanding of the other via broadening of relationships | Exploratory or explanatory |
| Illustration | This is where qualitative is used to present a clear meaning of quantitative findings | Explanatory |
| Utility | This reasons serves the purposes of the researcher; and it is the researcher who interprets the breadth of this usefulness | Exploratory, explanatory or convergent |
| Confirmation and Discovery Purposes | This involves a generation of research hypotheses from qualitative data and testing of same by quantitative tests | Exploratory |
| Issues of Diversity | Combines different perspectives and contexts, to uncover different meanings and approaches, in other to explain a variety of relationships | Convergent or Embedded |

Bryman (2008), Harrison and Reilly (2011), Harrison (2013)

This study seeks to have a clear understanding of the dynamics involved in integrating HRM practices with business practice in NMSEs, across the large the spectrum of Nigerian society. Due to the existence of minimal academic information on the dynamics of this process, it is appropriate to undertake a qualitative in-depth inquiry to determine the practices, the concepts and themes that would make up the items of the survey instrument, and still retain the peculiarity of the Nigeria context. Therefore, among the mixed method designs that combines qualitative and quantitative methods and reasons stated in Table 10 above, the sequential exploratory method is considered appropriate for this study.

The reason a mixed method approach is adopted in this study is for instrument development. This is to allow this study an opportunity for in-depth exploration by means of qualitative interviews to develop a valid and credible quantitative instrument to gather research information from NMSEs respondents. Adoption of sequential exploratory mixed method for instrument and hypotheses development offers this study an opportunity of identifying the themes, concepts and expressions used in NMSEs to depict the linkage of CS and HRMp because they have not been provided in previous SHRM literature in Nigeria. Following the identification of the key themes (See Chapter four), the findings are embedded in the research instrument to develop valid scales for gathering of quantitative data. This research is designed sequentially to include two distinct phases, as shown in Figure 8 (see also Appendix XI).

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Qualitative Phase          │
│                 ▼                    │
│  Piloting of Interview Guide; Semi-structured │
│  interview; Transcription; Analysis Using     │
│  Thematic Analysis                            │
│                                               │
│  (To identify the themes used by the Nigerian │
│  medium-sized firms in the linkage of HRM     │
│  practices and competitive strategy to develop │
│  the survey questionnaire instrument)         │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Quantitative Phase          │
│  Piloting of questionnaires; Reliability Tests; │
│  Distribution and Collection; Analysis (SPSS – │
│  non parametric tests)                         │
│                                                │
│  (To obtain questionnaire data from a wider    │
│  population regarding the linkage of HRM       │
│  practices and competitive strategy – sample   │
│  size 323)                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

**SEMM**

**Design**

**Figure 11 Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method Design (SEMM) for this study**

Summarily put, the quantitative phase which is the main phase of the study adopts a quantitative correlational design which establishes the relationship between CS and HRMp. Out of the four main types of quantitative design (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2006) namely; correlational, descriptive, experimental and quasi-experimental or comparative designs, the correlational design which utilizes statistical tests to measure variables under study to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables being tested (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2016) is used for the main phase of the study. This is because this study measures and reports the direction and

strength of the relationship between CS variables and HRMp variables, and between CS-HRMp linkage and organisational outcomes.

## 3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research strategy ensures that a researcher is able to answer the research question using appropriate processes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Notably, some researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) consider the strategy adopted for a piece of research as the key to establishing a connection between the overall Methodology and actual collection and analysis of research data. Due to the key position of the research question in conducting management research, the adopted strategy goes a long way to influence the outcome of a study. There are a number of research strategies, corresponding to qualitative and quantitative research that are adopted in management research, namely: case study, survey, experiment, archival, ethnography, action, ground theory, and narrative strategies (see also Table 11).

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Research Strategies

Key quantitative research strategies are: case study, action research, grounded theory, archival, narrative and ethnography. Whereas case study strategy is used for both quantitative and qualitative studies, the other strategies mentioned in this section are specifically used in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Case study focuses on extensive research on a particular phenomenon or a locality in its real-life observation (Bryman, 2012). The aim of case study is to arrive at a conclusion on a stated research problem by investigating a number of samples (Bryman,

2012). As such, case studies focus on the use of exploratory tools, pilot studies, descriptive resources, and precise questions (Saunders et al, 2012). Therefore, in its precision, a case study can adopt a quantitative approach; in its exploratory approach, it can adopt a qualitative method. Robson (1993) argues that, although case studies could be applied to any form of study, they are best applied to exploratory and descriptive research. If the aim of a study is to provide a detailed evaluation, investigation, and exploration of the research phenomenon, it is usually a case study approach that affords the researcher the opportunity to engage in such enterprise (Descombe, 2010). Case studies have been conceived from two distinct perspectives – from the case perspective (Yin, 2009) and from the instruments perspective (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The case perspective emphasises the context of research as the main constitutive element in a case study. The case context therefore takes primal position in the conduct of the study. The instruments perspective suggests the instrument used in carrying out the research investigation; in this sense, case study becomes not only a strategy but also a method of analysis.

Another research strategy used in qualitative studies is archival research (Saunders et al, 2012). Archival research engages the phenomenon of research based on using administrative records and documents from a principal source of data. The major concern of archival strategies is to develop a historical reconstruction of past events in order to give meaning to the present circumstances (Hakim, 2000). One of the key issues of archival strategy is that it does not go into detailed use of first-hand participants as key source of information for research and lacks further in-depth probing of the main actors in the study.

Further, ethnography adopts a study group approach in its various forms, which are realist, interpretive and critical forms (Cunliffe, 2010). Ethnography engages

participants in the study in their natural setting, either as a small group within a larger group or a part of a society. The key strength of an ethnography strategy is that it affords the researcher an opportunity to gain first-hand observation of the phenomenon being studied; hence, the researcher becomes involved both as an observer and perhaps as a participant (Cunliffe, 2010). Notably, ethnography makes a lot of demands on time scale, intensity, linguistic skills and participants.

Grounded theory is another strategy commonly used in management research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory is often used either as a research method, or a methodological approach, or as an outcome of a piece of research itself (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory analysis develops theories about social experiences from social interactions and through the process of rigorous data coding which presents an overall view of socially constructed phenomena. Grounded theory is therefore most suitable for theory development.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry analyses specific experiences of participants as complete stories rather than parts and pieces of wider data. A relatively recent strategy which is distinct from those already discussed above, narrative strategy "permits life-like accounts that focus on experience" (Pepper and Wildy, 2009:18). This strategy helps researchers to recreate the experiences of past events or historical facts by focusing on conversation with participants and reinterpreting experiences.

Action research is concerned with managing the collaboration of practitioners and researchers alike with a focus on management of change (Berg, 2004). An action research strategy identifies the active involvement of members of a group in the process of conducting a collaborative study that involves the group both as participants and primary source of information in the study (Greenwood and Levin, 2006). The main

focus of the action research strategy is to gather information that contributes to social change as a research agenda. Table 12 below summarises the qualitative research strategies.

**Table 12 Quantitative Research Strategies**

| Research Design | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Action Study | Strategy focuses on management of change involving practitioners and researchers in close collaboration |
| Grounded Theory | Focuses on data collected by a series of observations and interviews following the inductive method |
| Case Study Design | This entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case or multiple cases |
| Archival Study | Analyses records and administrative documents as principal sources of data |
| Narrative | Focuses on collection of experiences of narrators, constructing the experiences into a narrative |
| Ethnography | Focuses on interpreting and describing social phenomena through first-hand study |

### 3.3.2 Quantitative Research Strategies

Similar to qualitative research, there are a number of quantitative research strategies that are used in quantitative study, namely: survey, experimental strategy and case study. Case study has been discussed in Section 3.4.3 in relation to qualitative and quantitative approach; hence, this session focuses on survey and experimental strategies.

Survey strategy is adopted to gather data from a large sample population to answer research questions. Questions answered in a study using survey strategy are questions that answer "what, where and how much" in relation to the researched phenomenon (Saunders et al, 2012). As such, the strategy employs structured and standardised

instruments in achievement of its research goals. Aptly, this strategy facilitates the use of quantifiable and numerical data which establish key issues in relation to the research being carried out. Essentially, it is suggested that survey strategy is very effective in the collection of data that establishes relationships and allows generalisability (Fowler, 2014). Therefore, the main tool for carrying out a survey strategy is the structured questionnaire which presents clearly organised questions to participants, from which descriptive and inferential statistics are produced (Fowler, 2014).

Experimental strategy involves a controlled approach to the study of the natural sciences (Baxter and Jack, 2008) usually involving field and laboratory experiments. Often associated with the disciplines of experimental scientific inquiries, this strategy is increasingly adopted in management studies to study relationships between variables (Baxter and Jack, 2008) and control the behaviour of variables in a laboratory-style system. Experimental strategy is often limited by its explanatory, rather than exploratory, approach to research questions. Table 13 below presents a summary of the key research strategies used in management research.

**Table 13 Quantitative Research Strategies**

| Research Design | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Experimental Strategy | This design involves a manipulation of an independent variable in order to determine whether it does in fact have an influence on the dependent variable |
| Survey Strategy | Strategy involves structured collection of data from sample population |
| Case Study Design | This entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case or multiple cases |

### 3.3.3 Justification of Research Strategy

Based on the discussion of the key strategies, this study does not engage the variables of CS and HRMp in a controlled experiment in order to report the influence the variables have on one another. As such, the experimental strategy is not used. Due to the fact that this study investigates CS-HRMp using primary data, interviews, and not administrative and government documents to recreate history, the archival strategy is not considered appropriate. In the same vein, ethnography is not regarded as suitable for this study due to the time scale, limited resources, and the need to obtain data from a large sample population for generalisability of the study results. Furthermore, grounded theory is most appropriate for theory development; as such, it is not used for this study. Finally, narrative inquiry and action research are not adopted because the concern of this study is neither to study participant experiences to complete a narrative story nor emphasise collaboration of practitioners and researchers alike.

More than one strategy can be employed in a management study (Saunders et al, 2012) if the nature of the study and the research questions can be answered using multiple strategies. This study adopts two strategies: the case approach for the qualitative phase and the survey strategy for the main phase of the study. The case approach for the qualitative phase focuses on an individual case – NMSEs – in order to investigate the phenomenon of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria. The case approach, as earlier discussed, is one of the key approaches to case study in literature (Yin, 1994), where emphasis is laid on singling out a specific case for gathering information. The case approach is adopted to undertake an exploratory study which identifies the key themes used in NMSEs for CS-HRMp linkage. Moreover, the case context of NMSEs is used for this study (Section 1.2). This study asks: what types of CS and HRMp are used in NMSEs, how they are linked, and to what extent are they linked. Therefore, the case strategy is

considered well suited for the qualitative phase of this study to identify the themes used in NMSEs in regard to CS-HRMp linkage. Finally, the survey strategy is used in order to measure the relationship between CS and HRMp and establish the moderating contextual factors, levels and outcome of the linkage. For this study, the survey strategy uses the questionnaire tool to gather information from NMSEs over the wide spectrum of geo-political regions of Nigeria. The reason is to use statistical tools to analyse the information gathered and suggests a model generalisable in NMSEs over the wide regions of the country.

## 3.4 RESEARCH APPROACHES

The research design determines the choice of a distinct research approach to establish a connection between theory and research. The various approaches are: inductive deductive and abductive. Inductive and deductive approaches correspond to qualitative and quantitative methods respectively (Bryman, 2012). The effort to bridge the gap between inductive and deductive approaches and give a more practical approach to the process of handling research data gave rise to abductive approach (Bryman, 2012). The deductive approach proceeds from theory and/or hypotheses for statistical analysis, whereas the inductive approach proceeds from collated data and data analysis to the development of a theory (Bryman, 2012). In other words, the deductive approach follows the deductive process of the sciences for theory testing; whilst the inductive approach is usually adopted in the interpretive research to generate/build a theory. The abductive approach moves from inductive to abductive application and vice versa, throughout the research process.

The deductive approach is synonymous with the natural sciences. The process of deduction is clearly suggested in literature (Robson, 2002; Bernard, 2013) to involve distinct stages. Foremost, the development of a set of hypotheses deduced from explicit theory. Secondly, the deduction of measurable propositions. The third stage is to, compare premises with existing theories to ensure knowledge advancement. Fourthly, the collection of appropriate data and testing them in accordance to the nature of the theory. Fifth, the results are analysed to check for consistency with premises; and sixth, the theory is then corroborated if the premises show consistency with existing theory. Basically, these steps are generally accepted in literature (Saunders et al, 2012), but the nature of the theory and study could determine the type of tests that suit the hypotheses.

The inductive approach implies that the process of logical reasoning develops from minute details to general conclusions (Thomas, 2004). This approach draws conclusions from a series of observation to develop a theory that forms a general picture of the key characteristics of data (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research literature (Easterby-Smith, et al, 2008) suggest that this approach is most appropriate for qualitative studies due to the emphasis on social actor perception of qualitative studies. Inductive researchers are concerned with particular contexts in which an observable phenomenon takes place.

Abductive approach consists of initial collection and interpretation of data, and based on the findings of initial data, further data could be collected and analysed using different methods (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). Basically, this type of approach moves from data to theory, and theory to data in order to develop a theory or modify an existing theory.

This study uses inductive approach to develop conclusions on qualitative data; likewise, the deductive approach is used to develop an understanding of quantitative data. An inductive approach is necessary for this study, in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the semi-structured interview responses (Bryman, 2012). The outcome will be the generation of a valid body of themes and concepts that will form items on the survey material. Subsequently, responses to the quantitative survey will answer the research questions and hypotheses deductively. This study deals also with numbers and will analyse quantitative data using deductive methods. For a clearer understanding of the adoption of the two approaches in this study, they have been matched diagrammatically to the phases of the study in which they are used, as shown in Figure 12.



**Phase One**

Qualitative Data

Inductive approach

Semi-structured Interviews

Words, sentences, expressions

Thematic Analysis

Development of Survey Instrument

**Phase Two**

Quantitative Data

Deductive Approach

Survey Questionnaire

Numerical Data,

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative Tests
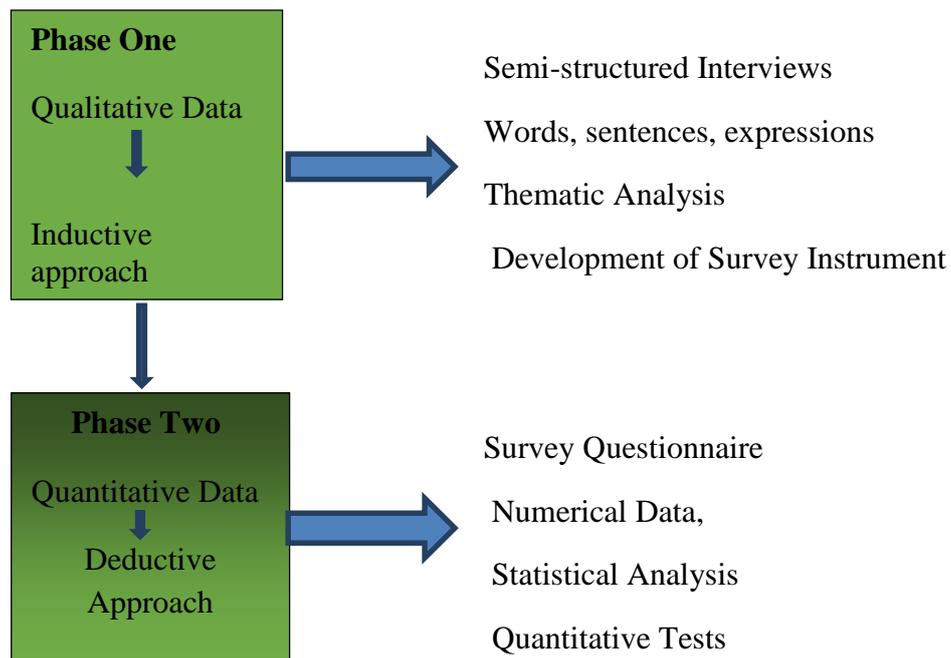
**Figure 12 Research Approaches adopted for the Study**

## 3.5 SAMPLING METHOD

Sampling method refers to the means by which data and research observations are chosen from a given population for the purpose of obtaining suitable data for particular study (Bryman, 2012). The aim, objectives and key research questions determine the types of sampling methods that could be adopted in a given research (Bernard, 2013). In social and business management research, sampling is generally categorized into two groups – non-probability sampling and probability sampling (Bryman, 2012). Notably, non-probability sampling techniques are associated with qualitative studies whereas probability sampling techniques are used in quantitative research studies (Bryman, 2012).

### 3.5.1 Non-Probability Sampling for the Qualitative Phase

Non-probability sampling identifies units of population selected based on the purpose of the study. Non-probability sampling affords a researcher an opportunity to choose samples from population that best suits the aim and objectives of the study and provides appropriate information required to carry out the study (Bryman, 2012). Non-probability sampling is effective in exploratory stages of research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This sampling technique is appropriate for this study because it will allow the researcher to determine the extent of the research problem and give an in-depth exploration of the critical aspects of the research objectives.

Four main types of non-probability sampling are identified in social research namely; purposive, quota, volunteer and Convenience non-probability sampling techniques (Ritchie et al, 2013). Whereas, purposive sampling refers to the selection of samples based on their ability to provide information required for the study (Ritchie et al, 2013),

quota sampling is based on the identifying samples through some well-defined characteristics. Volunteer sampling is technique of sampling based on individuals freely and willing offering to offer information for research reasons. Finally, convenience sampling techniques refers to the selection of samples based on researcher's ease.

Sample size for non-probability sampling depends to a great extent on the research objectives; there are no set rules on how to calculate the sample size (Robson, 2002). However, the researcher has to critically establish the relationship of sample size to the aims and objectives of the study. The reason is to access correctly the required sample size that would give the information required in the study (Patton, 2002). As such, even though it is left to the determination of the researcher, set criteria for selection are required that reflect the study objectives.

This study adopts non-probability purposive sampling (Ridolfo and Schoua-Glusberg, 2011) to enable the researcher to choose samples that are likely to generate the models of SHRM practices in medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Organisational criteria and individual respondents' criteria were set out that fit the context of the study and position of the respondents in the selected organisations. Regarding the criteria for selecting participating organisations, the respondents are picked from enterprises considered as medium-sized: firm size (50-199 employees), financial turnover (N50-500m). Following these criteria, the individual respondents are managers, members of the management board, HR professionals or someone in the organisation who performs the HR duties. The respondents' criteria were modified following the pilot study to reflect the findings from the pilot study to include HR coordinators and Administrative officers who are involved in key management decisions in the organisations. The scope of the respondents was widened to include: managing

directors, members of board of management, HR managers, HR coordinators, and administrative officers. The above positions were found to be best placed in NMSEs to provide information on CS-HRMp linkage in their organisations.

### 3.5.2 Probability Sampling for the Quantitative Phase

Probability sampling refers to the equal chance of each sample to be chosen for data collection (Robson, 2002). Usually related to survey strategy, probability sampling is appropriate for this research in order to collect questionnaire data from a wider population. Probability sampling gives an opportunity for every member of the population to be chosen for the research (Bryman, 2012). Four types of probability sampling identified in literature (Thomas, 2003) are simple random, systematic, stratified and cluster sampling. Whereas in the simple random, every member of the population has the same chance of selection; stratified sampling method involves the development of strata from sample population according to groups identified by specific features (Bernard, 2013). In stratified sampling technique, samples are chosen according to the different divisions or strata, thus signifying representation based on different groups (Bryman, 2012). Further, systematic sampling adopts a methodical approach that selects samples from particular sample of population (Bernard, 2013). Finally, cluster sampling selects groups that have common identification. Hence, the emphasis of cluster sampling is on groups rather than individuals (Bernard, 2013).

Stratified and simple random probability sampling are adopted for this study. Stratified technique is adopted to obtain representative samples according to the different geo-political regions of Nigeria; whilst simple random sampling is adopted within the various geo-political regions to obtain samples within regions. Stratified probability

sampling is most appropriate for this research, due to the uneven distribution of medium-sized firms in Nigeria (Ministry of Industry, 2013). Adopting a stratified sampling method ensures that, out of the sample size of 323, data will be collected representing the six main geopolitical zones of Nigeria namely; North Central, North East, North West, South West, South East and South South. The total population size of NMSEs is 1654 (SMEDAN, 2012).

To calculate the sample size, Yamane's simplified sample size formula is adopted because the sample population is small and will need only a slight reduction (Yamane, 1967). Yamane's formula is as below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size, N = total population size, and e = 0.05, referring to the level of precision. Therefore,

$$n = \frac{1654}{1 + 1654(0.5)^2} = 323 \text{ medium-sized firms}$$

Given that the total sample size for the study is 323, the number of expected samples from each region according to the total number of medium-sized firms in each region, representing a percentage of the total sample size and presented in Table 14:

**Table 14 Expected Valid Responses According to the Geo-political Zones of Nigeria (Appendix, I)**

| Economic Regions | Total Number of Medium-sized Firms | Percentage | Expected Sample Number |
|---|---|---|---|
| North Central | 372 | 22.49 | 72 |
| North East | 187 | 11.31 | 37 |
| North West | 169 | 10.22 | 33 |
| South West | 575 | 34.7 | 112 |
| South East | 200 | 12.09 | 39 |
| South South | 151 | 9.13 | 30 |

Table 15 above shows the representative percentage of expected valid responses to the questionnaire in accordance to each geo-political region of Nigeria. The strata follow geo-political differentiation is due to the already existing format used by the SME development agency of Nigeria, and adopted by a number of Nigeria SME researchers (SMEDAN, 2015).

Further, random sampling is also used to probability that each sample in each geopolitical region has equal chance of providing information for the study. Based on SMEs directory list provided by SMEDAN, NMSEs in each region are identified. For each region, the samples were assigned numbers based on the directory. Due to very few cases of missing contact addresses, numbers were assigned only to samples that have complete email and office addresses. Next, the numbers were chosen using random number tables. Finally, the chosen numbers of organizations in each region were contacted.

### 3.6 Techniques (Tools) of Research

Tools of research, otherwise referred to as techniques of research (Jankowicz, 1999) refers to the means of collection of research responses that provides the suitable type of data required for research. The type of tools used in research is determined by the objectives, aims and questions covered by the research (Mason, 2004). Identified in social research (Bryman, 2012) are a variety of research tools such as open-ended instruments and close-ended structured instruments. Open-ended instruments are: semi and unstructured interviews, focus groups, field observation; whereas close-ended instruments include structured interviews, questionnaires and scaling.

For the collection of qualitative data, this study adopts the semi-structured interview tool. An interview is often referred to as a form of 'interaction' (Charmaz, 2003; Bryman, 2008; Punch, 2009) which is effectively controlled by the interviewer to generate responses from the interviewee that could be later be constructed critically to generate knowledge about a phenomenon or a set of phenomena. The underlying reason for the necessity of conducting interviews is the variety of individual experiences and the differences in ways individuals perceive and construct the realities all around them. Interviews are very helpful in the unearthing of respondents' subjective feelings and exploring the richness of diverse perceptions (Silverman, 2011).

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Whiting, 2008; Moore and Philips, 2002; Gillham, 2005). Structured interviews contain closed-ended questions which demand direct or defined responses, and are usually very helpful in the generation of quantitative data (Smith, 1995). On the other hand, unstructured interviews adopt an undefined approach which allows interview questions emerge

from discussion, whilst allowing the interviewee to narrate the story concerning the phenomenon (Gillham, 2005). Semi-structured interviews adopt an open-ended question approach; thus, they are not totally undefined and not totally defined. The semi-structured interview strikes a balance between the structured and unstructured interviews by asking open-ended questions, which allows for the conscious and controlled guidance of the researcher (Bryman, 2012). Hence, this study adopts the semi-structured interview to achieve an in-depth probing of the set of questions that give answers to the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews are very useful for gathering in-depth information (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This study intends to gather in-depth information regarding HRM practices and Competitive strategy, and the linkage between them in order to develop the required survey instrument for gathering wider information over a wider population. As such, the semi-structured interview is appropriate for this study. By adopting this qualitative data collection tool, this study asks for reasons (why) certain practices are adopted and not others, and identifies the pervading management language, concepts and models of practice in NMSEs. Following the interviews, the qualitative data are analysed qualitatively by means of thematic analysis to identify the themes that establish the extent of the linkage between HRM practices and competitive strategy from the subjective point of NMSEs.

This qualitative phase of the study adopts the semi-structured interview to allow the required flexibility to explore the link between HRM practices and competitive strategy in NMSEs. For the purpose of this study, therefore, semi-structured interviews will involve an established set of questions, and for this study the set of questions are generated from the critical literature review conducted on SHRM practices in the preceding chapter. The interview protocol is derived from the literature on the main

areas of HRM practices and systems, competitive strategy, CS-HRMp linkage, and the levels and outcomes of the linkage. This adequately reflects the objectives and aim of this study.

The most common data collection tool for survey research is the questionnaire (Pinsonneult and Kraemer, 1993; Punch, 2009). A questionnaire is a standardized instrument for obtaining responses to a set of specific questions from willing and free respondents (Bryman, 2012). The questionnaire is appropriate for this study to gain wider and standardized responses from a wide range of NMSEs across different regions of Nigeria. It will help in the collection of data from Nigerian society made up of a wide expanse of land and peoples, and ensures that same questions are asked to and responded by different medium-sized enterprises all over Nigeria.

The questionnaire format for this study follows a 5-point Likert scale (Ekinci, 2015) which requests that respondents respond to a set of statements ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The aim for this 5-point Likert scale is to gain responses from individuals affirming or rejecting a set of questions on a specific object of research (Croasmun and Ostrom, 2011).

## 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis makes data gathered for research meaningful, interpretable and understandable in the light of the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Different research designs and research questions have their distinctive set of techniques for analysing information gathered for research (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). This section

examines the different qualitative and quantitative analytic tools used for data analysis in this study.

### 3.7.1 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Semi-structure interview data for this study is analysed to generate themes that reflect the nature of CS-HRMp in NMSEs. The process involved is an inductive process which is aimed at examining the responses as they are collected and identifying emerging themes until no new emerging themes are identified (Yin, 2009). As such, this study considers thematic analysis appropriate for required flexibility in identifying key themes from qualitative data.

Although thematic analysis has been conceived in some studies (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan and Bernard, 2000) as a tool that could be used across other methods (shown in Table 12) of qualitative analysis, the analytic method has increasingly become a useful flexible method that could be used independently of other qualitative methods. The thematic method is used for identifying and reporting patterns within a data set (Braun and Clark, 2006). Often literally relegated to the level of identifying of themes, this method could be a very useful technique for interpreting the pattern within data (Boyatzis, 1998). Various methods of qualitative analysis are summarised in Table 15 below.

**Table 15 Some Methods of Qualitative Analysis**

| Method | Description |
|---|---|
| Conversation Analysis (Hutchby and Woofitt, 2008:11) | "A systematic study of talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction; talk-in-interaction". |
| Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith and Osborn, 2003) | IPA explores how partakers of social experience make meanings out of their experiences of events taking place around them. |
| Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Akwei, 2007) | Grounded theory analysis develops theories about social experiences from social interactions and through the process of rigorous data coding which presents an overall view of socially constructed phenomena. |
| Discourse Analysis (Burman and Parker, 1993; Lawless, 2008; Willig, 2013) | Discourse Analysis focuses on the turn of language and studies language of social interaction, whilst basing meaningfulness of language on socio-cultural and interactional context without making allusions to psychological phenomena. |
| Narrative Analysis (Fina, and Georgakopoulou, 2015) | Narrative Analysis presents a framework of analysing personal experiences in contexts and emphasises the socio-personal context of narrative experience. |
| Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013) | Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic tool that focuses on identifying, analysing and reporting the distinct patterns of qualitative data. |

Table 16 above shows some popular methods of qualitative analysis. The conversation approach to qualitative analysis focuses on the network of practices, reasoning and inferences that show the pattern of a socially intelligible course of action (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990); interpretative phenomenological analysis stems from the phenomenological epistemological theory and focuses on the unfolding of reality in people's day-to-day experience (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Whereas the conversation and interpretative analysis are based on the foundation of a particular theoretical orientation, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative analysis and

thematic analysis are independent of any theoretical orientation and could be of use irrespective of the particular theoretical underpinning for the qualitative research (Braun and Clark, 2013). The constant comparison analysis in grounded theory undertakes a rigorous coding of data for theory development (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In spite of the goal of grounded theory being to develop a theory, the approach still exhibits a data coding procedure that is similar to thematic coding in thematic analysis. Regarding discourse analysis with its varying forms of critical discourse analysis, the socio-political perspective of social phenomena takes centrality in analytic processes. Discourse analysts base their approach on the presupposition that language in all its forms is emergent and context specific (Van Dijk, 1993; Lawless, 2008). The discourse approach differs from the text-based approach of narrative analysis even though they both share the "specific cultural system approach" (Cortazzi, 2014: 1).

Despite the differences among the qualitative analytic methods identified above, they share certain similarities. They aim to identify patterns within a data set and that specifically links them to the thematic method. Unlike other methods, however, the thematic approach offers a rich flexibility, so much so that other methods could effectively make use of the thematic procedures (Bruan and Clarke, 2013).

The qualitative phase of this study adopts a thematic method of analysis. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews focuses on a careful identification of useful sentences, extracting required information and grouping this extracted information according to themes and patterns which aptly reflect the concerns of the objectives of the study and which answer the research objectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Esmaeili et al, 2012). The thematic steps adopted for this study are: reading the transcribed data several times to become familiar with the data and making initial notes of the ideas;

coding remarkable features of the data; reviewing the codes to put them into possible themes; reviewing the identified themes to make comparisons between data; and then carrying out an ongoing analysis to refine the overall story of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Esmaeili et al, 2012). To aid the process of organizing data for thematic analysis, the computer-assisted NVIVO 10 software is used. The reason for using NVIVO 10 is to support the researcher to achieve a clearer, ordered and more systematic handling of qualitative data. The usage of NVIVO 10 software is justifiable to helping provide a consistent and transparent data analysis process (Morison and Moir, 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

### 3.7.2 Analysis of Quantitative Data

In quantitative analysis, two types of tests can be run on the data for analysis – parametric tests and non-parametric tests (Field, 2009). In normal distribution, in which case the regularity of results is indicated, then parametric tests are used. Where the distribution is not normal, non-parametric tests could be used, provided that the researcher chooses not to transform non-normal data to normal data (Pallant, 2013). Statistical tests corresponding to normal and uneven distribution of results are shown in tables 16 and 17 respectively.

**Table 16 Parametric Test**

| Parametric Test | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Descriptive statistical analysis | This will be adopted to descriptively analyse the statistical data in order to examine the trends using the mean model (Bernard, 2013) |
| T-test | The one sample T-test will be conducted to establish the difference between the means of the samples (Bernard, 2013). |
| ANOVA tests | Using the ANOVA tests, this study will examine the differences between the means of various groups (Field, 2009). |
| Pearson's Correlation's coefficient | Using the Pearson's correlation's coefficient, this study will determine and express the relationships between the variables (Field, 2009) |

The tests enumerated in Table 14 above are commonly used in cases where data are normally distributed (Field, 2009; Bernard, 2013; Pallant, 2013). Descriptive analysis examines data and reports conclusions based on the trend and patterns established within data. Descriptively, therefore, central tendency could be provided to show the level of distribution represented in mean, median and mode scores. In the same line, while T-test in all its varieties establishes the differences in mean between two groups; ANOVA examines the difference in mean between more than two groups (Bernard, 2013). The table above also showed the parametric equivalent of correlation coefficient – Pearson's correlation coefficient – which is used to test the direction and strength of relationship between two variables. Where parametric tests are not considered appropriate for usage, the non-parametric equivalents are used. Table 18 presents key non-parametric tests.

**Table 17 Non-parametric Tests**

| Non-parametric Test | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Descriptive statistical analysis | This descriptively analyses the statistical data in order to examine the trends using the median model (Bernard, 2013) |
| Chi Square | Using the Chi square, the data can be tested to determine differences between variables and groups of variables (Field, 2009) |
| Kruskal-Wallis Test | The parametric equivalent of this test is ANOVA. This test is conducted to determine the differences among more than two groups or groups of variables (Bernard, 2013) |
| Mann Whitney test | This test does to non-parametric tests what the T-test does to parametric tests. Using the Mann Whitney test, comparison is made between two independent variables (Field, 2009) |
| Spearman's rank correlation coefficient | The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient tests between the variables to establish the strength of relationship between the variables (Bryman, 2012) |

Most common non-parametric tests are outlined in Table 18 above: Descriptive statistical analysis, the chi square, Kruskal-Wallis tests, Mann Whitney test, and Spearman's correlation. The non-normal distribution of data is generally analysed using non-parametric tests in the above table according to the study objectives (Pallant, 2013). Although the tests enumerated above can be used in a study, the choice of tests is determined mostly by the aim and objective of the study, the hypotheses being tested and the design of the study. For this study, the non-parametric test is used due to the non-normality of distribution of the study data. Due to the not normal nature of data distribution for the study, the median central tendency measure is adopted (Smothers et al, 1999; Perkins et al, 1999; McGreavy et al, 2009).

Spearman's correlation coefficient is used to test the relationship between individual competitive strategies and human resource management practices to determine the direction and strength of the relationship (Bryman, 2012). Correlation tests are used to explore the relationship between variables, to identify the direction and strength of the association between the variables (Field, 2009). Further, correlation is used to establish the relationship between contextual factors and CS-HRMp to determine the moderating effect of the factors on the linkage. Cross-tabulation analysis is deployed to identify the percentage of organisations that have all the available structures, some of the available structures and no available structures of CS-HRMp linkage. Based on the percentages, the levels are determined to include all structures, some structures or no structures.

Multiple regression analysis is adopted to test the predicting power of independent variables (IVs) on dependent variables (DVs) or to test the relationship of IVs and DVs (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Field, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Pallant, 2013). This study follows the correlational design for the quantitative phase and the key concern is measuring relationships between variables; hence, the aim of using multiple regression analysis is to understand the negative or positive direction of the relationship between CS-HRMp linkage and outcomes. Whereas linear regression predicts outcome of a variable based on one independent variable, the multiple regression analysis predicts the association or relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables (Field, 2009). Multiple regression is based on a number of assumptions (Pallant, 2013). Key assumptions (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Field, 2009:220-221; Pallant, 2013) are outlined in Table 18 below which justifies the application of multiple regression analysis in this study:

**Table 18 Basic Assumptions of Multiple Regression Analysis**

| Assumptions | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Types of variables | The types of Variables used for multiple regression analysis are: two or more quantitative or categorical IVs and a quantitative or continuous DV |
| Variance | Variation value of for IVs must not be zero-variance |
| Multicollinearity | Two or more of the IVs must not have completely linear relationship |
| External Variables | External variables should not be included in the model |
| Homoscedasticity | This refers to equal variance of residuals for IVs at all levels |
| Normally Distributed Errors | Normally distributed errors refer to the difference between model and residual errors. The difference is suggested to be zero or reasonably near to zero |
| Other Errors | This refers to lack of self-correlation among the IVs |
| Independent Outcome Variables | This assumption supposes that the values of outcome variables should be independent |
| Linearity | This assumption suggests that the DVs are modelled on a straight line for each increase on IVs |

Based on the above assumptions, some authors (Bernard, 2013) associate multiple regression analysis with normally distributed data. The choice of multiple regression analysis for normally distributed data and argument of its unsuitability for non-normally distributed data stems from misinterpretation of the assumption of normally distributed errors (Field, 2009). The term normally distributed errors refers to the residuals in the regression model which show the difference between model and data. It is well documented (Field, 2009) that in multiple regression analysis, the predictor variables "do not need to be normally distributed" (Field, 2009:221; Treiman, 2009: 99).

## 3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative data for this study, certain steps were taken in reference to the development of interview instruments, the conduct and transcription of the interviews, and the analysis of the data. Although related, validity and reliability are not the same when applied to social research (Bryman, 2012). While reliability refers to the consistency and reproducibility of research instruments, validity concerns the interpretation of data ensuring that data are interpreted without bias and with objectivity (Bryman, 2012).

### 3.8.1 Validity

Validity refers to the rigour of the research process which ensures that the process and outcome are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable (Guba and Lincoln, 1982). Often used to denote the truthfulness of findings (Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Whittemore et al, 2001; Morse et al, 2001), validity applies also to the processes involved in carrying out the qualitative study. Despite the questions about establishing validity in a qualitative study surrounding issues such as the researcher's bias and objective transcription of data (Sandelowski, 1993; Rolfe, 2006; Noble and Smith, 2015), trustworthiness has become a key demand of qualitative studies (Noble and Smith, 2015). Yin (2013) therefore suggests that appropriate operational actions be taken to ensure that the research subject is studied correctly. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative data for this study, certain steps were taken in reference to the development of interview instruments, the conduct and transcription of the interviews, and the analysis of the data.

Foremost, examination of previous studies in CS-HRMp linkage was undertaken in a systematic literature review. The conduction of the literature review produced good knowledge of the research area (Shenton, 2004; Silverman, 2011); the outcome of the literature review is a detailed interview guide. Further, the interview guide was piloted, using three managers and HR professionals in NMSEs, to explore the effectiveness of the expressions, constructions and linguistic comprehension of potential respondents. Following the initial piloting, the interview guide was moderated and a substantive guide was provided (Appendix VII).

Further, the sampling criteria (Chapter three) were established for interview respondents. An appropriate sampling method well suited for qualitative research and for this study was adopted (Bryman, 2012), which ensured that the correct respondents were used for the study. Further strategies adopted are: creation and sustenance of conducive interview momentum; adoption of good interview methods; detailed transcription taking note of social cues; confirmation of transcribed document by interviewees; storage of interview data in a secure manner to avoid access by unwarranted intervention; choice of appropriate data analysis procedures; and a comparison of interview outcomes with previous literature (Shenton, 2004).

### 3.8.2 Reliability for Questionnaire

Reliability tests are a very necessary step in questionnaire development. The test for consistency of the instrument of measurement is usually referred to as reliability (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007). When items record consistency over a number of responses and from different groups of respondents, then it is inferred that the instrument is reliable for usage in the research. Regarding questionnaire items, the test

for reliability indicates whether the same questions are answered in the same way by different respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There are a number of tools used in the calculation of a measuring instrument's reliability. The test-retest and split-half approaches are appropriate to examine the reliability of knowledge-based questions. The interval and ratio scales are considered to be best tested using internal consistency tests.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is one of the popular ways of testing the internal consistency of a questionnaire (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Cronbach's alpha coefficient basically calculates the average of the degree of consistency between all split-half coefficients (Bryman, 2012). Usually the reliability is determined between the numbers 1 and 0, 1 being the perfect reliability and 0 being no reliability. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, 30 pilot questionnaires were analysed to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire. The result, as shown below in Table 19, indicated a coefficient of .876 for the 72 items on the questionnaire.

**Table 19 Reliability Statistics 1**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| .876 | 72 |

Further reliability tests using Cronbach alpha coefficient is carried out after the collection of main data for the study. The result as shown in Table 20 below indicated a coefficient of .784 for the 70 items on the questionnaire. Hence, the data were considered as providing reliable and consistent information for this study.

**Table 20 Reliability Statistics 2**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| .784 | 70 |

## 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Key ethical issues relating to this study have been examined in detail by the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) ethical approval committee prior to the conduction of the study, and approval was received for the conduction of this study. Social research is attendant with myriad issues that border on ethics and integrity of the research process, research materials and research outcomes (Jankowich, 2000). Each stage of the research process is replete with ethical issues that could be involved. Accordingly, the choice of proper participants for data collection through the correct processes, the identification of a suitable research design, sampling and data collection procedures, apt analysis and correct reporting of the research outcomes are implicated as key areas of ethical consideration (Richard and Schwartz, 2002; Halai, 2006; Bryman, 2015).

Conduct of proper research is more importantly acceptable in the light of due consideration of key ethical issues that are implicated in the research process; thus ethical consideration influences the reliability, validity and acceptability of a research project (Jankowich, 2000; Atarahwneh, 2015). Moreover, conducting ethically correct research ensures that the dignity of participants, veracity of the research outcomes and correct processes are maintained throughout the study. Conversely, improper research behaviour reduces the trustworthiness of research outcome and researcher's integrity.

In the context of this study, and as approved by the LJMU ethical approval committee, major areas were considered prior to undertaking the study. For both quantitative and qualitative study, the following areas were considered: confidentiality and anonymity of participants; voluntariness of respondents to willingly participate or withdraw; consent obtainment; avoidance of harm or discomforting behaviour towards participants; and use of proper sampling techniques. Similarly, the transcription processes and secure use of interview data were applied. Additionally, the correct statistical tools were adopted for the analysis of quantitative data. Further, a participant information sheet (Appendix V) containing a summary of required information about the study and consent forms (Appendix VI) were sent to each participant in the study. Proper verbal expressions were used, and all data used for this study have been securely locked away in a research cabinet and LJMU's well-secured computer M-Drive.

## 3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has identified the philosophical orientation guiding this study and the sequential exploratory mixed method research design used. In addition, this chapter emphasised the use of qualitative phase of the study to develop the quantitative research instrument and hypotheses. In the same line, the research strategies adopted and tools used in gathering and analysing data were set out. Key issues of validity, reliability and ethical consideration were also discussed in this chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR    QUALITATIVE PHASE

## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the collection, analysis and findings of qualitative data. The aim of the qualitative data is to identify themes connected with the dynamics of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, and key contextual factors moderating the linkage. Based on the outcome of the qualitative data, the quantitative research instrument and theoretical framework were developed. This chapter commences with a presentation of the development and piloting of interview guide, and data collection procedures. Following an analysis of interview data, the theoretical framework was developed showing the hypotheses being tested in this study.

## 4.1 DEVELOPMENT AND PILOTING OF INTERVIEW GUIDE

The first step of collection of qualitative data for this study was to conduct a comprehensive literature review (Chapter, 2) which identifies key issues relating to the study objective. Following the literature review, a number of theoretical concepts and themes were examined and existing models of linkage between HRMp and competitive strategies were analysed, thus establishing key themes in existing literature (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The themes identified from the literature review were used to develop an initial interview guide. Subsequently, the interview guide was piloted using three respondents. It was necessary to pilot the interview guide to determine its appropriateness of the interview question wordings and respondents' ability to comprehend the questions, prior to conducting the full research interview.

Often referred to as mini version of a full-scale project (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), a pilot study is usually conducted to find any errors or difficulties, weaknesses or limitations of an instrument at the development stage in order to increase the likelihood of its successful usage (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It could be used to test both qualitative and quantitative instruments. Moreover, the qualitative pilot study has been used to develop the quantitative instrument and establish themes/concepts that form scales for the quantitative instrument (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Further reasons for the adoption of a pilot study approach have been linked to the unravelling of practical issues the research process could face. Issues bordering on the best ways of disseminating the instrument, the wording or choice of language, and identifying the scope of a research problem have been revealed using a pilot study (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). As such, although the successful piloting of an instrument prior to full usage does not guarantee research success, it does, however, contribute to the success of a research project. Having considered the documented impact of piloting the research instrument prior to usage, and the peculiar nature of this study, which is based in an area of scant information, it was found necessary to undertake a pilot of the initial interview guide. This was conducted and the respondents were chosen according to the established criteria outlined in Section 3.6.4.

The outcomes of the pilot study were a change of the choice of words and language used in the interview; an adjustment of the time allowed for the interviews; a widening of the scope of the interview guide to include further contextual factors affecting the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy in NMSEs; and the inclusion of further criteria for identifying the potential respondents. These steps were necessary to maintain the focus of the study and conduct in-depth study of the research phenomenon.

Following the pilot study therefore, the full-scale collection of the qualitative data was conducted on 10 respondents, reaching theoretical saturation (refer to Section 4.3).

## 4.2 DATA COLLECTION

The research interviews were conducted between March and May 2015, using a sample size of 10, selected through the non-probability purposive sampling technique already discussed in Section 3.6.4. Telephone interviews lasting an average of one hour were conducted and recorded. Despite the argument of reduced social cues and mild detachment from the immediate environment of the interviewee (Mann and Stewart, 2000), it is recommended that telephone interviews be used for a variety of reasons which fall into the context in which the study is being carried out. With reference to the timing of this study and the impediments posed for it by travelling across Nigeria in times of violent religious unrest, to conduct face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews were considered the appropriate method to use. Moreover, the initial pilot interviews revealed that participants felt more comfortable discussing their CS and HRMp over the phone to allow them flexibility to fit the interviews into their very tight schedules.

Some identified positives derived from telephone interviews include: cost effectiveness, minimisation of bias and influences caused by face-to-face interviews, development of a positive relationship between researchers and interviewees, and improvement in the quality of the interviews (Smith, 2005; Opdenakker, 2006; Musselwhite et al, 2007; Bryman 2012). Care was taken during the interviews to overcome most of the issues of creating and sustaining participants' involvement and clear communication by using up-to-date recording equipment tested before the

interviews. The initial pilot study also helped to monitor the pace of the study. Social cues such as pauses, intonation, stress and voice fluctuations were noted in the coding process (Sage, 2004). Other concerns like health issues of participants were considered during the interviews.

A total of 10 participants from 10 different organisations were chosen, to give this study a wider range of responses and increase the possibility of receiving responses from a wide range of organisations until no new themes emerged (Sage, 2004). Following the interviews, the transcript for each interview was mailed to the respective participant to read through and attest that it contained the information provided. The participants were five HR professionals/coordinators and five Managers/business owners of Nigerian medium-sized enterprises (tables 21 and 22).

**Table 21 Semi-structured Interview Respondents**

| Respondent Category | Numbers |
|---|---|
| Managing Directors | 5 |
| Human Resource Professionals | 5 |
| Total | 10 |

**Table 22 Respondents' Profiles**

| Respondent | Education | Years in Position | Overall Years of Work Experience | Industry/Sector |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| R1 (Managing Director) | Bachelor's Degree | 15 | 22 | Petrol/Gas |
| R2 (Managing Director) | Master's Degree | 7 | 24 | Education |
| R3 (Business Owner) | Bachelor's Degree | 2 | 18 | Education |
| R4 (Managing Director) | Bachelor's Degree | 8 | 18 | Construction |
| R5 (Managing Director) | MBBS | 6 | 15 | Health Sector |
| R6 (HR Professional) | Bachelor's Degree | 11 | 18 | IT/Information |
| R7 (HR Administrator) | Bachelor's Degree | 8 | 13 | Construction Sector |
| R8 (HR Officer) | Bachelor's Degree | 4 | 6 | Events Management/Hospitality |
| R9 (HR Manager) | Bachelor's Degree | 6 | 9 | Media/Information |
| R10 (HR Coordinator) | Master's Degree | 9 | 12 | Health Sector |

Tables 21 and 22 above show that the respondents are from a wide range of sectors, have a range of years of experience in their position and certainly fulfil the criteria set for the choice of participants. The chosen participants were HR professionals and managers in the selected organisations who were best positioned to have a comprehensive knowledge of the competitive strategies and HRM practices. Likewise, the status and positions reflect the pool of respondents that would offer reasons for adopting the strategies and practices and have all-round knowledge of factors

influencing the linkage of HRM and business strategies. The wide range of markets in SME sectors gave the researcher an opportunity to identify specific factors faced by the different sectors and identify the pattern and commonalities that characterise the SME sectors in Nigeria in relation to linkage of competitive strategy and HRM.

## 4.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

During the course of the interviews, the participants described their strategies, their HRM practices, and the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy. They also discussed the outcome of the linkage in their organisations and how Nigerian factors have affected the linkage. They addressed the process of formulation of competitive strategies and HRM practices; and what facets of the organisations were involved in the formulation and implementation of competitive strategies. They talked about why such competitive strategies and HRM practices were adopted. In their discussion, therefore, they spoke at length regarding the involvement of certain players in carving the linkage between HRM and competitive strategies. While some participants acknowledged that they establish a linkage but it is not formally presented, others affirmed their company's strategic linkage. Also discussed were the negative and positive outcomes of the linkage and how certain factors affected this linkage. The following subsections provide an analysis of the qualitative data.

### 4.3.1 Competitive Strategy

Whilst accepting the difficulty of crafting strategies and implementing them in the market, many participants were affirmative of the existence of strategies that drive

their competitive advantage. *"Yes <u>we have a number of competitive strategies</u> that we have adopted over the past four to five years that have helped us to gain a good rating among the other FCT [Federal Capital Territory] schools..."* (Underlined parts are made for emphasis). There was a sense of the importance these strategies portend for the survival of their organisations. Strategy meant that in a low competitive economy (GCR), it would not take a lot to be competitive and sustain competitive advantage.

Although there were differing approaches to the formulation of competitive strategies, it was commonly observed that these strategies are formulated at various levels. In some organisations, they were the preoccupation of the top management or the management board, or even the competitive strategy group in the organisation with some degree of consultation with the HR professionals: *"In our organisation, <u>the departmental heads, the administrative officer and the HR administrative</u> study our workforce and develop them to meet up our strategies and trends.* In other organisations, *"the <u>manager</u> has the final say; what the marketing and <u>HR administrative staff</u> contribute is their opinion but the final say is with [the] managing director".* What this supports is that staff and management have various levels of involvement in the formulation of competitive strategies. In addition, some organisations also employed the specific assistance of external consultants to contribute to the formulation of their strategy. This approach seemed more particular to the educational sector businesses, *"We have <u>consultants</u> that help us in drafting our strategies and policies…".*

In line with strategy formulation, many of the participants highlighted that their strategy, though it largely remained in its basic formulation, had consistently adapted to *"to <u>suit</u> the changes in the market…"; "…to the line of business we operate in"; "yes we change, like in Nigeria today, we used to have excursions but, because of*

*security concerns, we have to revise and <u>change</u> the system of excursions".* Therefore, the strategic approaches of the participants' organisations were very emergent and but with a mixture of prescriptive approach.

In terms of the contents of competitive strategies, some participants on a few instances used *company policies* and *competitive strategy* interchangeably while still referring to such policies as what increased their market share and the relevance of their position in the industry. Regarding specific strategies, a number of competitive strategies were identified as being in use by the participants. One participant identified that: "*our firm uses the strategy of <u>personal contacts and through bidding</u>… and written proposals*", which best suits the construction sector. The personal contact approach perhaps was dragged further by the events management sector, which identified their strategy as based on personal/customer-value relationships and a business-to-business (B2B) relationship-building approach: "*We use a <u>business-to-business relationship</u> which is <u>not commonly used</u> in the events management in Nigeria and good customer relations; we also make our <u>network of relationships the first thing</u> when we are doing business deals. You don't want to spoil things, do you? …*". Thus, this could be regarded as a relationship-based approach to competitive advantage. Another strategy that the participants identified being in use in the NMSEs is utilization of unique advertising styles to gain advantage over competitors: "*We also take advantage of our <u>mobile advertising systems</u> that offer us inroads to potential customers… very unique to us in the sector…*". In line with advertising approach, some participants identified their usage of information and communications technology (ICT) in driving a digital change in their set industries. In the event of further probing, the respondent strengthened their responses by stating that, in the context of Nigeria, ICT, internet and computer services are still at a low level, and this is coupled with intermittent

power supplies. So, "*We utilize our <u>ICT ability</u>, which is not available to so many in our organisations, to make our money…*".

Pricing and leading in price competition were also emphasised as key competitive approaches to strategy. There were instances of reduction in prices, reduction in cost of production in some areas in order to cover the reduction of prices in larger cities, and the usage of goods' prices to create a customer base: "*…[our] main strategy is that we bid for large volumes of contracts and <u>reduce the price of our services</u> for our clients… another thing is we do jobs in smaller towns where there is cheaper labour and use the gain from them to subsidise prices for the large cities like Lagos and Abuja…*". Still, the same participant suggested that they do not sacrifice their quality approach, which makes them different and puts them apart from others in the same sector. Quality was identified in two senses by the participants. Some referred to quality in reference to their products which were different from others: "*We <u>put ourselves aside from others</u> in this business because of our <u>quality products</u> we supply…*"; still others emphasised the quality of human resources that made them different: "*We don't need to advertise ourselves; the <u>quality of our employees</u> is not to be compared and we pay them well, we employ the best and give them training, home and abroad because we want the best, so our employees are our strategy*". While the first sense could be interpreted in the sense of quality ensuring unique differentiation, the second is in the purview of a resource-based approach to strategy and to HRM. When referring to the changes in their competitive strategies and how they adapt the contents of their strategy to the external environment and how things change, the participants indicated that technological and financial factors are aspects that were changed to suit the external changes: "*Like now, ICT has brought changes in the world and it is now happening in Nigeria, [so] we have to <u>rearrange our systems,</u>*

*and that means also our finances and the way we run things here to meet up with the external impacts"*.

Of great interest also to strategic and HRM formulation is the mode of documentation of these two variables. During the interviews, three forms of documentation were identified. In some organisations, the competitive strategies and the HRM practices were documented in written form: "*We have everything in written form", "We do have our laws, policies and strategies in written form"*; yet in others they are in both written and unwritten form: *"Some are written, some are not written because strategy is not just paperwork"*; still yet in others, *"It is not written".* Interestingly, the respondents indicated that the forms of documentation of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs are in written form, unwritten form and in both forms depending on the organisations in question.

From the above, we identify a number of key themes (Appendix XI Thematic map). Although competitive strategy is adopted and their importance acknowledged by the participants, the way they are applied differ according to the internal processes of each organisation.

### 4.3.2 Human Resource Management Practices

The use of certain practices that help in organizing the workforce and manage employees was evident from the responses of all the participants. Also, they recognized the importance of creating a network of practices that would be pivotal in reaching mapped-out organisational goals. Participants affirmed that the practice of HRM is part of their organisational activities for various reasons, "*to produce competent workforce… to ensure quality workers… to increase productivity… to suit*

*the organisation's rapid growth… for better interpersonal relationship in the workplace… to suit their type of job".*

However, with regard to the HR department or the position of HR manager, there were differing responses. Some respondents mentioned the existence of a HR department in their organisation vis-a-vis the position of a HR manager in their organisation: *"Yes we have a HR manager who oversees the activities of workers' management…".* In most cases where there is a HR professional in the organisation, it was a one-person affair and not a team of HR professionals: "*We have a HR officer [one person] for four years now…".* This could be explained in respect of the size of the organisations that were interviewed. There were respondents who indicated that their HR department was merged with other departments and run by a HR professional: "*Our HR department, like I said before, is merged with the marketing department and they are in charge of managing the workers and marketing activities…".* Another participant combines his role as HR manager with being an administrative officer: "*I am the HR manager but I oversee the role of administrative officer in my organisation".* One thing commonly expressed though by the respondents was that there is always someone who is charged with the duties that a HR professional should discharge. Hence, NMSEs have a series of HRM practices even though persons delegated to carry them out might not be trained HR professionals, in all cases. Furthermore, it was obvious too that some of the firms had no HR professional and no formal HR department but did carry out HRM practices.

The HRM practices most commonly expressed by the respondents are as follows: recruitment, empowerment and retention: *"Our consultancy firm uses recruitment, hiring, empowering and retention practices"*; training, reward/salary: *"We train them to encourage them to perform better, …determination of appropriate salary scale"*;

performance evaluation practices: "*performance measures in accordance with planned parameters…*"; disciplinary/levies/fines: "*disciplinary measures, levies and fines for workers not working hard enough…*"; social support: "*…providing general support to them in all circumstances and expecting a good commitment from them… take care of them when they have good thing or [during] bereavement… we give them support in personal family needs…*"; and individual career path development: "*…individual career path development*".

The practices were adopted and used in the firms based on the interpretation of what suits them best. As such, what fits their needs, and the changes in the environment were instrumental to the choice of these practices: "*The HRM practices we adopt are for our policies and concerns, so they are seamless, fitted together to meet our strategy*". In addition, another respondent referred to the upcoming general elections as one of the changes that provide a context-specific consideration of what practices to adopt: "*For example, we are expecting some changes to the oil sector after the next coming elections… the effect of that will make us do some changes that will definitely affect our staff*".

From the evidence from the responses, Nigerian SMEs tend to adopt practices that best suit their organisations and contexts. The contextual and contingent HRM practices receive greater popularity than the universalistic and configurational approaches to HRM practices (Ugheoke et al, 2015). There is minimal sophisticated application of SHRM practices, which is indicative of the context of adoption and application of the HRM practices.

**4.3.3 Linkage of Human Resource Management Practices with Competitive Strategy**

Most of the respondents showed a good deal of understanding regarding the importance of establishing a strategic linkage between HRM and competitive advantages: "*The link between our HRM practices and competitive strategies is very important to us…*". However, the degree of importance was placed on the role of HRM practices as serving the dictates of competitive strategy: "*When the right hands are hired, the right competitive strategies will be implemented*". There was evidence that not all participating respondents actually make a formal linkage in their organisation: "*We don't really make a direct link between competitive strategy and our HRM practices but we know we consider both aspects in our business*". This would suggest that there are varying perspectives on linking competitive strategy and HRM in the interviewed organisations.

Still, the question of how the link between HRM and competitive strategies is made is somewhat unclear. One of the respondents identified that the link is created at the departmental level after careful study of the policies; then the HRM department is involved only in implementation: "*In our organisation, what we have is departmental heads, and the strategy applied is made after careful study of the company's policy; the HRM is then involved in overall implementation of the study*". Respondents also recognized that the link is not a quantifiable activity but is expressed in realistic outcomes: "*That link is not like something you can quantify, but you can see the result…*".

Apart from the existence of competitive strategies and HRM practices, linkage involves not only the HR department but also requires the involvement of line managers in the implementation of HR practices and competitive strategies, and the

strategic involvement of employees where necessary. With reference to the position of line management, some of the respondents used such terms as "*foreman", "head of school", "head of department"* and *"supervisors"* to depict the role and function of a line manager. The extent of line manager involvement differed from one organisation to another. Respondents specified that, "*Not usually are they involved in decision-making processes, but the <u>foremen</u> do help us carry out our work of monitoring attendance, absenteeism and give us feedback on our strategies and HRM functions".* For investment reasons, the line management involvement includes handling disciplinary issues that are implicated in the employees' performance of duties. They are also "*<u>involved in recruitment and direct supervisions</u> of the sections".*

Just like the preceding discussion on the involvement of the line management in linking HRM and competitive strategies together, the role employees play in the decision-making process of the organisations varies according to the organisation. In some, the employees are involved in the form of "*<u>general meetings and feedback</u> <u>regarding strategic activities the organisation is involved in".</u>* However, the same does not happen in all organisations interviewed. A few respondents categorically stated, "*No no, they are not involved in the strategy and HRM formulation process although we ask their opinion regarding certain issues".* The level of employee involvement therefore ranges from limited involvement in the formulation stage of strategy and HRM practices to full involvement; however, in all the respondents' organisations they have full involvement in the strategy implementation stage. In order to fully participate in the implementation of strategy and HRM practices, the employee undergo strategy training, which entails "…*<u>training portfolios</u> that would lead the employees to understand our operations and strategy of the organisation, and our policies too".*

The participants all responded that the labour union has no involvement or influence in the affairs of their organisations. Reasons were given for why the labour union does not deal with "*private establishments as such, if it is something affecting workers, then we have to comply with the industry as an establishment, and that is rare, and nothing to do with our employees*".

The level of involvement of the key players – top management, HR professionals/department, line management and employees – in the process of linking of HRM and competitive strategy in NMSEs differs from one organisation to another. On the positive side, the organisations acknowledge the importance of linking HRM and competitive strategy and have their own defined organisational processes that create opportunity for linkage. For a fully integrated level of linkage, the competitive strategy and regular evaluation of strategy, options of HRM practice and investment, and full involvement of the key players are key criteria (Wei, 2006).

### 4.3.4 Nigerian Contextual Factors Influencing the Linkage of Human Resource Management Practices and Competitive Strategy

In consideration of influences on the linkage, the participants alluded to the role of cultural influences in the workplace. Nigeria is a culturally diverse society, which in most cases is translated into the workplace. The respondents identified the impact of culture on CS-HRMp linkage: "*There is always diversity in culture and religion in many organisations in Nigeria. We have <u>cultural issues</u> in that different cultures have their different approaches to doing things. And although the traditional culture that used to be has changed a bit with the coming of Christian and Muslim culture, we still have to consider the cultural issues about to how to manage in our organisations*".

Instances of cultural issues that come up in Nigerian organisations were mentioned by the respondents to include seniority and manners of greeting and moral framework: "*We are very cultural people, so accepted ways of reacting to top management [are] recognised in and emphasise seniority*". The challenge of harmonizing the people's culture with organisational culture and creating a positive value in organisations laid a greater burden on planning and budgets because organisations had to "*work on laying-down rules and policies that guide individual behaviours. We integrate and harmonise cultures to our unique good*". Therefore, culture of the people is not particularly considered as a negative factor in organisational growth but an influencing one that could be harnessed to the good of the organisation. For that to happen though, there is a need for adequate planning and good policies to be put in place to realize the organisation's strategies and HRM planning.

Closely addressed with culture was the impact of religion. The participants were divided on its impact on the linkage of HRM and competitive strategies. One group suggested that religion had no significant impact on their organisations: "*Religion has never been of any issue in what we do in this business*". In contrast, the second group suggested that religious violence in northern Nigeria had had an impact on their strategic expansion plans and the businesses offices in the North. A few respondents regarded the situation as "*volatile*". Moreover, they talked about too many religious holidays that fall on work days and disrupt the delivery of their goods and products, and in part hike up prices of materials for production. However, positive identification of religious contribution to workplace order was also noted: "*However, spirituality, especially Christians and Muslims, have formed groups for fellowship which, from personal opinion, have [a] positive impact on the moral values of workers. This ensures order, respect and good moral behaviours*".

Closely related to culture and religion is language differences. Although minimal emphasis was made regarding language distinction in the work places, due to the prevalent use of English and "*broken English*" language, there was still mention made of the difficulty of getting people to work in areas where their form of mother tongue is not spoken: "*People want to work with people of [the] same <u>language</u>; they want to be sent to work with people of [the] same <u>tribe and language</u>*".

Government policies also affect the linkage of HRM and Competitive language in a largely recognized way. Although the Nigerian government put into place plans and policies to enhance the growth of SMEs in Nigeria, there are still issues regarding regulation especially in the areas of getting a new organisation registered and the renewal of registration. This could pose a dire problem for the organisations: "*There are a lot of bureaucratic bottlenecks in getting registration and renewal of registration from the <u>government</u>. We also encounter issues with sourcing funding that has been put aside for businesses by the CBN and BOI*". The issue of financing is very important in formulating and investing in adequate programmes of employee development and commitment.

Radical economic changes were also mentioned by the respondents as affecting effective linkage in the manner of cost of management, production cost, delivery costs and purchasing value of the naira. The fuel-scarcity issues grounded businesses, restricted movement and made it difficult for implementation of workers' salary schemes. The respondents linked the poor economy to the high effort they had to make in maintaining working conditions: "*We have [a] <u>tough economy</u> now and things are really getting harder and harder, and maintaining our <u>workers' conditions</u> is not easy anymore*". With regard to the purchasing value of naira in international markets, the respondents thought that it is affecting their import and export businesses: "*Even the*

*high and unbearable rise in <u>exchanging dollars and other foreign currencies</u> has affected our purchases… it is adversely affecting us now''*. The tough economy was linked to <u>corrupt practices</u> in the oil sector and government parastatals, to mention just two: "*Sometimes you just get frustrated, my brother, when you are given a contract and you carry out the contract, [and then] payment becomes a problem. The government will not pay; even when they pay up, you have lost a lot of money, lost workers and lost businesses*".

Furthermore, low quality of available skills and poor quality of education were addressed by a few participants as one of the issues they consider in linking HRM and competitive strategy in their organisations: "*This is about getting the right workers for the right jobs; the <u>quality of graduates out in the job market</u> is often short of what we want in our areas. I am a HR in a banking sector. We have a lot of graduates but in the end we retrain them because many of them don't really know what to do even after graduation*". Therefore, skill shortage was linked to the poor quality of graduate turnouts and is considered to affect the strategic position of some NMSEs. Finally, ethnicity was mentioned but only by a few in reference to job positions and job posting. The ethnic composition of an organisation's management board gives rise in some cases to discontent in the workforce. In addition, the ethnic psychology leads to management tussles: "*When someone is promoted for doing something good, you have to prove that the person is doing well; if not they will say you are <u>tribalistic</u>. Even when you prove it, some people will still see it from ethnic point of view, you see. So we put measures of control so justice and fair play are served.*"

**4.3.6 Outcome of the Linkage of Competitive Strategy and Human Resource Management Practices**

Most of the respondents who discussed the dynamics of linking HRM and competitive strategy in their organisations mentioned the outcome derived from undertaking the strategic linkage. The outcome revolved around a number of benefits and downsides to the linkage.

Employee Satisfaction was topmost on the list, reoccurring in the responses of seven respondents, for example: "*Like I said earlier, we don't quantify the outcome of the linkage but we do see the result; we find that we were able satisfy our employees by our training programmes, which brought out the best in them to our strategic advantage*". In addition, there was evidence of increased commitment, which was noted in the employees' reduced amount of absenteeism and increased readiness to take further responsibilities: "*I see the result of the linkage especially in bringing up for us committed workers, especially those guys who had to commute – labourers from the villages to town – twice daily. We pay them well and they are happy doing more*".

Further areas noticed to have improved by assessing the strategic needs of managing employees and the strategic content of the organisation were acknowledged by the respondents to be the higher level of motivation recorded over time. Motivation comes mainly in the form of social support, personal relationships and giving the employees a sense of family belonging: "*When they work hard and are supported, they work with motivation*"; "*they are motivated by our support and the way we treat them*". Following on from the support-based motivation, the respondents showed the importance of social support, financial support and social recognition as tools of employee motivation in NMSEs. Interestingly, the respondents acknowledged the increase in overall business performance as a consequence of the linkage: "*Personally,*

*we envisage increased profits and further growth through the linkage*". One of the processes identified by the respondents as a means of recognizing the business impact of the linkage is the continuous evaluation process: "…*evaluation process has been a major linkage to track performance in line with our strategy and HRM*".

Participants also branded the linkage as one that has decisively increased the competence of employees. The consideration of their strategy in relationship to job requirements and the employees' skills helped to understand what skill areas needed improvement and what persons were required for particular jobs. Hence, professionalism led to increased employee competence: *"Employee skills and abilities measurable in our organisation through the level of performance have been improved because we match the best people for the right job"*. The idea of matching jobs to improve employee competencies was also articulated by another one of the respondents: "*The success of our business derives from matching manpower to assignments and emphasizing competent and qualified persons to the right position"*. In the same line, a respondent addressed the role strategic linkage performs in their multi-tribal workforce. The idea of setting a scale of evaluation linked to goals, objectives and strategies of the organisation makes it clear to employees that the process of promotions is just and fair: "*Yes, one is justice and fair play, and you know, in Nigeria, if you don't use that kind of visible measure that people see and accept, they will say you are being tribalistic, especially in our organisation where we have many tribes"*.

In spite of the positive outcomes stated above, issues of higher management cost and lower retention cost were mentioned by a few participants. Higher management cost stemmed from an increase in recruitment and training requirements. Recruitment involved the usage of more sophisticated recruitment methods that increase the

possibility of getting the right candidate from the right pool of potential employees. Due to the need to train the employees in strategy implementation and developing the right skill to adequately understand and apply the strategies, the cost of management increased. In addition, some of the participants cited the need to engage the help of external consultants as adding to overall costs for the organisation: "*We hire, train and empower our workers to understand our strategy; we send some of them abroad and some train here… this in the short term has increased our total expenses".* In line with retention: "*Due to our too much emphasis on improved performance and quality, we need skilled workers; those who do not measure up we could not retain. You can send someone to training and still find the training a waste, what do you do? You give up on the employee*".

Participants agreed with the positive outcomes mentioned above, whereas a few pointed out the negative impact on their own organisations. The degree of impact of the linkage is, however, influenced by the type of sector, the management structures and other factors, which include availability of finance and organisational goals (Bowen, 2004).

### 4.3.5 Key Themes Emerging from the Semi-Structured Interview Analysis

The aim of undertaking a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview responses is to identify key themes and concepts used in the NMSEs regarding the dynamic linkage of competitive strategy and HRM, and to understand the context of the linkage. Consequently, a thematic map has been developed to show the key themes emerging from the analysis, as shown in Appendix IX and XXXV. In addition, the themes contribute to the development of the quantitative instrument and the formulation of

hypotheses for the study. Areas of peculiarity of Nigeria context of CS-HRMp linkage were also clearly identified in the analysis.

Popular literature (Budhwar and Aryee, 2008) suggests written documentation of competitive strategy and HRM strategy, policies and practices to establish a linkage between HRM and competitive strategy. The reason is based on the formalization of HRM practices and competitive strategy and placing them at pole position in an organisation. In contrast, many NMSEs use both written and unwritten documentation formats. Interview respondents affirmed that their strategy and HRM practices are not all about paperwork: *"Some are written, some are not written because strategy is not just paperwork"*. They also adopt communication modes peculiar to them to circulate information. This would seem therefore that the usage of purely documented and written materials goes hand -in-hand with the written documentation in NMSEs. That also is indicative of the conception of strategy as pervading each organisation's approach to business, without limitation to their formal settings.

Creating significant personal relationships with suppliers, customers, employees and other businesses plays an important role in NMSEs. Granted that business literature (Grönroos, 1996; Egan, 2004; Lin and Wang, 2015) identifies relationship marketing and a relationship strategic approach to business, the NMSEs' approach seems very peculiar because it is not limited to the plane of business transaction but also involves extra-business social relationships. Personal relationships create a base for exploiting opportunities that would be beneficial to business, "*our network of relationships [is] the first thing*". This is vitally linked to family orientation, which plays a very important part in the SME businesses in Nigeria, most of them being family-owned or individual-owned businesses.

Due to the level of technological development in Nigeria, it is understandable that NMSEs consider ICT as a significant factor of competitive advantage. The adoption of ICT in SMEs in Nigeria is relatively low compared to that of Nigerian Multinational Companies (NMNCs) (Lal, 2007; Apulu and Ige, 2011; Apulu, Latham, and Moreton, 2011; Ladokun et al, 2013). The resultant effect is that SMEs that adopt new technologies and new ways of production and marketing tend to enjoy a greater market share than others (Apulu, Latham, and Moreton, 2011). Hence, they consider it as a vital strategic component in competing with others in the same sector: "*We utilize our ICT ability, which is not available to so many in our organisation, to make our money*". While SMEs in the western world are relatively more advanced in the usage of ICT (Adebimpe, 2014), NMSEs see it as a vital competitive factor for businesses to outperform others competitors in the same industry.

HRM practices adopted in Nigeria are mostly reflected in HRM literature (Armstrong, 2009; Vanhala and Stavrou, 2013); they include recruitment practices, training and development practices, empowerment and retention practices, performance and evaluation practices, career path development and payroll practices. However, the rationales given during the interviews for the application of these practices showed significant differences in ways they were applied in the organisations. For instance, in some organisations the training practices focus on retention and development of required skills: "*We train them to encourage them to perform better*", while in others they simply serve as an incentive for a longer period of service: A significant practice that is adopted by NMSEs relates to social support for the wellbeing of employees outside of workplace environment. HRM literature has evaluated the influence of family life on workplace behaviours and work-life balances (Bloom et al, 2006; Chou, 2015), and some organisations have adopted practices to enhance the balance between

work and personal life, and suggested practices and ways to strike a balance between work and personal/family life (Muli et al, 2014). However, although these studies examined factors of personal life that affect work performances, the practices aimed at striking a balance between both have always been limited to the workplaces. NMSEs place a lot of premium on offering social support and practices to employees outside of the confines of workplaces, "*providing general support to them in all circumstances and expecting a good commitment from them… take care of them when they have good thing or in bereavement… we give them support in personal family needs*". This implies that the organisation supports the employees, not only when it directly relates to their jobs but even when indirectly related. Thus, they accompany them in events related to cultural activities, social achievements, bereavements, and festive religious seasons. The interview respondents identified that this is achieved by physical presence at such events, financial support and publicity. The social approach is not performed as a matter of professional courtesy but as a fundamental practice of the organisation.

In the same line, there are four basic theoretical perspectives that inform the choice of HRM practices in an organisation. – best practice, best fit, bundle of practices and context-based perspectives (Pfeffer, 1998; Lazanova et al, 2008; Kaufman, 2011). From the analysis of interview data, majority NMSEs implement the contingency approach and context-based practices with a few basing their choice purely on the best practice approach and contingent approach. This has strategic importance in the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy in that the type of HRM practices reflects the strategies adopted.

Another issue relates to the conceptualization of the position of the Line managers in NMSEs. In the context of NMSEs, the term 'line manager' was not popularly used by

the respondents. However, when probed further, they identified the functions of line management with different positions in their firms. Such terms used include: "*supervisors*", "*head of school*", "*head of department*", "*foreman*", "*my oga*" (person occupying a superior position in the organisation) and *the admin officer*". Based on line management literature, the function performed by the above-mentioned positions in NMSEs relates to the function of a line manager.

The impact of culture on organisations and strategic linkage of competitive strategies and HRM is well documented (K'Bonyo and Dimba, 2007). NMSEs are not a different case in this situation. Following the analysis of qualitative data, the influence of Nigerian cultural issues on strategic linkage of HRM and competitive strategy in NMSEs is quite evident in two major ways: (1) the added effort to implement strategies and practices that transcend one particular culture to accommodate a variety of cultures; and (2) the implementation of strategies that are in line with accepted cultural values. In the first instance, a few organisations did actually invest greater effort in putting "*down rules and polices to …harmonise cultures to our unique good*". Having recognised the impact of the people's culture, organisations in the first group carve out ways to avoid culture having a negative impact. The second tendency, however, which seems to the dominant position, is to utilize the impact of cultural values in forging a better working environment: "*We are very cultural people, so accepted ways of reacting to top management are recognised in and emphasise seniority*". Harping on the positive side of culture that facilitate the linkage, the second tendency absolves cultural values as a fundamental aspect that gives employees the social sense of belonging that impacts on employee productivity (Van Yperen and Hagedoorn, 2003). Some aspects of cultural values that have identifiably impacted on NMSE management practices are the high emphasis on seniority, high

masculinity/femininity divide, high level of touch, and the 'oga' mentality which creates a balance in the employer-employee relationship, according to Fajana (2011). Other aspects include the high importance placed on the network of personal relationships and high family orientation, which contribute to the richness of relationships in NMSEs.

## 4.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The theoretical framework structures the researcher's view of the research data (Troudi, 2014) and assures that the research problem is examined in a more consistent manner to achieve the objectives and aim of a study (Jabareen, 2009). As a concept-representing exercise, the theoretical framework shows how relationships among variables and theories are understood and identified in relation to the research problem or research hypotheses (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013; Ekinci, 2015).

Previous models – the Warwick Model, Harvard Model, Paauwe, Guest and Wright Model, and Celtess Model – provide insights into the dynamics of the linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategy. The models identified two significant components of linkage of HRM and competitive strategy, the strategic content (competitive strategy) and options of HRM practices. Competitive strategy involves how businesses should compete in particular markets or industry; it involves decisions on how businesses should provide products and services that give them an in edge in a competitive industry (Johnson et al, 2008). Regarding competitive strategy, two approaches that relate to the management of resources see the utilization of human resources as necessary to achieve competitive advantage (RBV), and the reconfiguration of organisational resources' management practices to suit changes in

the organisation and environment (DC). As identified from the exploratory interviews, NMSEs use CS such as differentiation, low pricing, focus, advertising, value based strategy applied from the perspective of RBV and DC. However, the formal adoption of these strategies across the whole NMSE sector is yet unclear. NMSEs appear to give greater preponderance to the competitive strategies while tailoring SHRM practices to the services of strategy. As such, employees are trained to understand the competitive strategies and apply them, without participating in the actual formulation of the strategies. The use of competitive strategies in NMSEs therefore examined by these hypotheses:

$H_0$ Competitive strategies are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises
$H_a$ Competitive strategies are used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises

The second component of the linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategies constitutes the option of HRM practices adopted in an organisation. A range of SHRM literature (Kaufman, 2011) show a variety of HRM practices linked to four distinct theoretical perspectives. The universalistic, contingency, configurational, and contextual perspectives emphasise best practices, fit-practices, bundle-practices, and context-based practices respectively. The universalistic perspective suggests a set of practices that guarantee higher performance irrespective of the organisations involved (Pfeffer, 1998). Best fit practices focus on the choice of an organisation in determining what suits it best in adapting to changes to the environment (Ruzic, 2015). The bundle practices focus on the relationship among the chosen HRM practices (Clinton and Guest, 2013). Contextual practices suggest that practices that reflect the societal, institutional and cultural uniqueness should be adopted (Naidu et al, 2014).

The exploratory interviews revealed the adoption of a number of HRM practices by the NMSEs namely; salary structures, performance evaluation, training, empowerment, employee retention, practices supporting employee social/welfare support, disciplinary practices, recruitment practices and individual career development path. A reoccurring piece of information mentioned by the respondents was the adoption of HRM practices that suit their strategies and context, HRMp are examined using the following hypotheses:

$H_0$ HRMp are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises
$H_a$ HRMp are used in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises

CS-HRMp linkage involves the consideration of issues concerning HRMp in the framing of competitive strategy, emphasizing strategic contents of the business-level decisions, and the relationship between the two key components of CS-HRMp linkage (Brewster et al, 1992; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008; Vernon and Brewster, 2012). Vertically, the nature and type of competitive strategy is linked to HRMp facilitated by HR strategy, whereas the horizontal linkage involves options for HRM practices, investment in HRM and relationships among individual practices (Wei, 2006). To understand the relationship between HRM and competitive strategy, an examination of the consideration of HRM, the formulation of the competitive strategy, and the consideration of competitive strategy in formulation of competitive strategy should be explored. The next hypotheses therefore measure the relationship between HRM and competitive strategies in NMSEs:

H3
$H_0$ There is no positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs
$H_a$ There is positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs
H3b

$H_0$ There is no strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs

$H_a$ There is strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSES

Furthermore, the impact of contextual setting on the linkage of CS and HRMp was also indicated in the literature. Similarly, the respondents identified a number of factors that influence NMSEs in CS-HRMp linkage. Hence, the following hypotheses establish the contextual factors that impact on the NMSEs' CS-HRMp linkage.

$H_0$ Contextual factors do not influence CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

$H_a$ Contextual factors influences CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

Four levels usually regarded as the extent of linkage of HRM practices and competitive strategy in an organisation, namely: the administrative level, the one-way level, the two-way level and the integrative level (Teo, 2000; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008). To determine the level of integration in an organisation, one should test the representation of the HR department (and/or HR professional) in the process of the organisation's strategic decision-making process, and the involvement of line managers in carrying out practices of HRM value (Kandula, 2003; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008; Abang, 2009; Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

Overall, the organisations showed varying degrees of HR involvement in the strategic decision-making process. On the top rung of the decision-making process, the management board and managing director hold the key to all decisional issues in the organisations, "*having the final say*". Then the HR is given second place with the administrative officers and marketing managers. In situations where there is no HR department or HR professionals, NMSEs have a clearly designated office or person who is charged with the responsibility of performing the HR functions. The HR staff

member is regularly referred to as the HR coordinator, officer, supervisor, or simply the HR. Next to the HR is the line management, variously called "*foreman*", "*supervisors*", "*head of department*" and "*head of school*" in NMSEs. Their involvement in the organisations is limited to identifiable functions of direct control of employees, monitoring absenteeism, regulating attendance to duties, disciplinary actions and, in some cases, to offer 'feedback' to HR and the management board for appropriate consideration in strategy formulation. The involvement of employees is highly limited in certain organisations. While some organisations, mainly in the education sector, usually adopt staff general meetings and staff feedback to enhance employee involvement, few organisations consider the impact of employees in strategy and HRM formulations. The next hypotheses are to measure the level of integration of HRM practices and competitive strategy in NMSEs in the light of the criteria set out in the literature.

H5

$H_0$ There is no administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

$H_a$ There is administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

H6

$H_0$ There is no one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs

$H_a$ There is one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs

H7

$H_0$ There is no two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

$H_a$ There is two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

H8

$H_0$ There is no integrative level of linkage in NMSEs

$H_a$ There is integrative level of linkage in NMSEs

The outcome of the linkage between HRM practices and competitive strategy has been studied in current empirical SHRM studies, especially in the western world (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013). The empirical studies show that linking competitive strategy with HRM contributes to effective implementation of competitive strategy, achieving competitive strategy, nurturing the context of knowledge transfer, enhancing employee motivation, interpreting job design, creating employee satisfaction and high job commitment. Integrating competitive strategy with HRM provides an opportunity for organisations to consider a broader range of options to address organisational problems. Further, a strong linkage facilitates achievement of competitive advantage (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2004; Othman, 2009).

Similar to the earlier empirical SHRM studies mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the respondents to the research interview revealed a number of outcomes, which included: employee satisfaction, increased commitment, development of competence, enhanced motivation, higher business performance, and increased quality. However, in contrast to the mentioned studies, the interview participants also mentioned negative impacts ranging from higher-cost management and lower retention of employees.

The following hypotheses therefore test the negative and positive relationship between CS-HRMp linkage and organisational outcomes:

$H_0$ The linkage of CS and HRMp is not positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs

$H_a$ The linkage of CS and HRMp is positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs

Based on: (1) the critical analysis of available SHRM literature and previous models identifying the above-discussed components of linkage of HRM and competitive

strategy; (2) literature review on the levels of linkage; and (3) the findings of the exploratory semi-structured interviews, this study proposes the theoretical framework that will guide the collection and analysis of quantitative data shown in Figure 10 below.
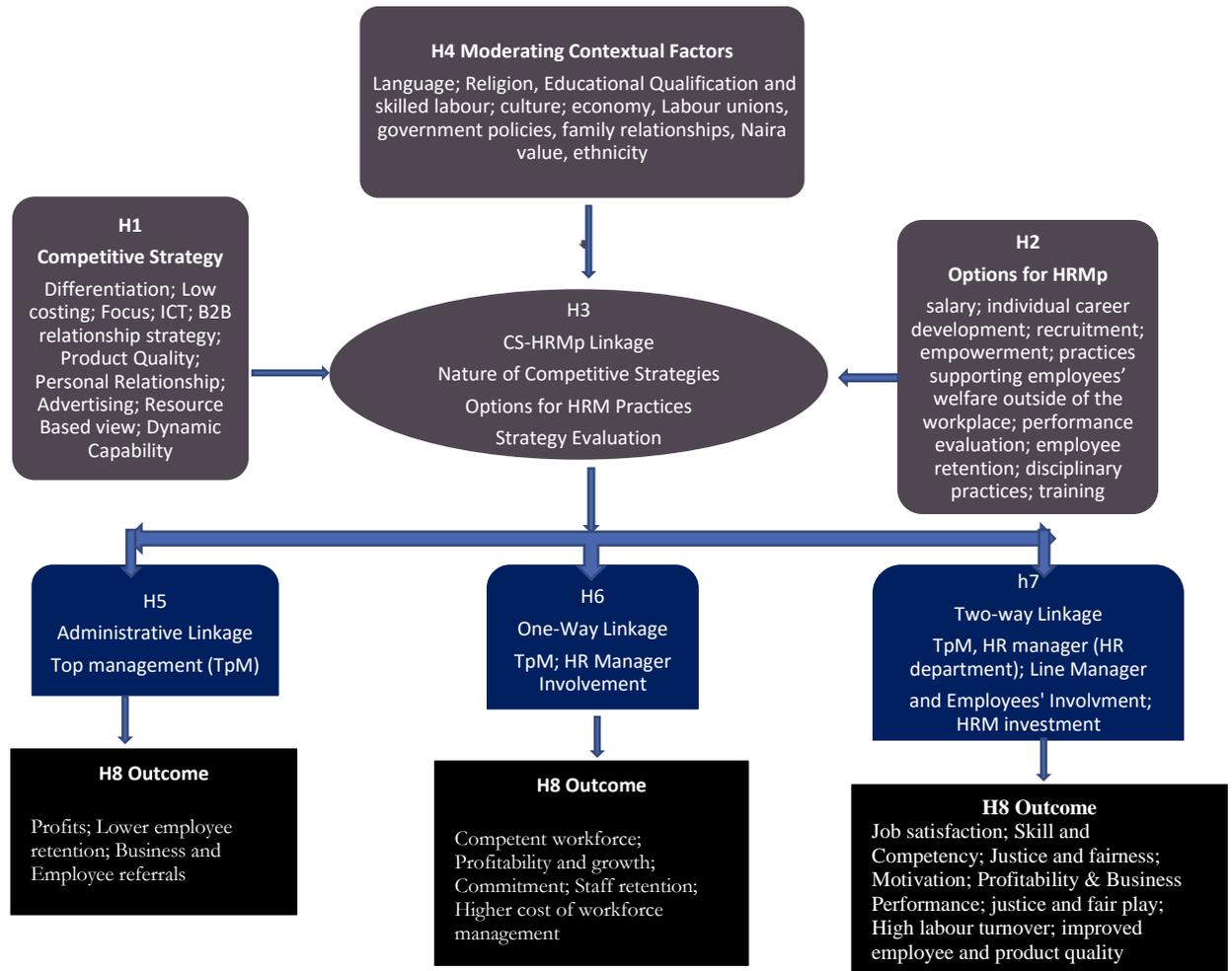


**Figure 13 Theoretical Framework for this study**

## 4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has undertaken an explanation of the process leading to the collection and analysis of qualitative data using semi-structured interviews. An analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using thematic analysis which identified the themes emerging from the interview data. The themes emerging from the interview data and literature review were then used to develop theoretical framework and hypotheses. Based on the findings of the qualitative data, the next chapter presents the development of quantitative research instrument.

## CHAPTER FIVE   QUANTITATIVE PHASE

**5.0 I**NTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the quantitative phase of this study. The first section of this chapter presents the development of the questionnaire, based on the findings of qualitative data and literature review. This chapter also shows the process of data collection, cleansing and normality tests. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the basic trends of the quantitative data and to measure the central tendency and dispersion. Further, an analysis of quantitative data by using non-parametric tests to test the hypotheses and achieve the research aim and objectives were presented. Finally, this chapter presents the findings from quantitative data analysis.

**5.1 DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire was developed following four key stages; identification of key terms and concepts from the literature (see Chapter two); identification of key terms and expressions from qualitative data (Appendices IX and XL; See also Chapter four), development of the scale item using identified themes, and piloting of the questionnaire items for reliability. The following subsections discuss the format, scaling, piloting and reliability testing performed in the process of developing the questionnaire.

**5.1.1 Questionnaire Format**

The questionnaire format comprises an introduction, demographic questions and the main research questions, followed by an appreciation for participation (Appendix VIII). The introductory part summarises the aim of the study and the scope of the questions to be answered. Contained in the introductory section too is the indication of the average time it could take to complete the questionnaire and the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality. In keeping with ethical practice, the respondents were advised on the voluntariness of participation and assured that they could stop participating at any point of completing the questionnaire.

In contrast to the approach of some researchers (Wadongo, 2013) that places demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire, this study preferred to place them at the start, in order to gradually ease the respondents into the questionnaire (Garson, 2002). This approach was adopted because the researcher discovered during the semi-structured interviews that the Nigerian respondents preferred a less formal introductory approach prior to the climax of interview section. Furthermore, the researcher felt it was better to situate the status and position of the respondents prior to the completion of the questionnaire, thereby determining their ability to answer the questions.

The questionnaire for this study was made up of seven sections. The first section of the questionnaire aims at providing general demographic data and is made up of eight items. Following the first section are the preliminary questions identifying the usage of CS, HRMp and the function of the HR manager in the respondent organisations. The third and fourth sections ask questions identifying the CS and HRMp adopted in NMSEs. Further, the fifth and sixth sections contain statements that are aimed at testing the relationship between CS and HRMp, and the extent of linkage and

outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage. Finally, the seventh section establishes the key contextual factors that impact on the linking of CS and HRMp in NMSEs

Generally, there are two types of question formats that could be asked on the questionnaire namely; open-ended and close ended questions (Ekinci, 2015). They depend on the type of response the researcher expects to get from the respondents. Questions that require the respondent to select a number of possible responses from a list of options fall under the open-ended question format, whereas the closed-ended question format involves rating statements on a scale (Foddy, 1993). The open-ended questions are useful when the researcher is expecting verbatim responses but could be more time-consuming. For this study, the questionnaire follows a closed-ended format, which is considered more appropriate for hypothesis testing (Ekinci, 2015). It was also necessary to avoid respondent fatigue (Lavrakas, 2008) and for easier management of quantitative data. The nature of the study requires focusing the respondents' attention on specific aspects of the questions. Additionally, for easier comparability of the responses to the specific questions relating to HRM practices and competitive strategy identifying their relationship and extent of relationship, closed-ended questions have been used.

### 5.1.2 Scaling

In scaling the questionnaire, the four basic types of scales were considered. The nominal scale shows differing nominal variable categories and groups respondents in equally limited and combined categories (Ekinci, 2015). Ordinal scales list respondents in order to show their differences in reference to one another. They are usually applied to items that involve the ranking of statements in order of prearranged

criteria (Wadongo, 2013). Ratio scale differs from other rating scales because it has an absolute zero that is statistically meaningful (Ekinci, 2015). The interval scale is another type of scaling that could be considered in developing a questionnaire. It is most useful when the measurement required involves the grouping of respondents in terms of their order and extent of their differences.

This involves sets of statements that require the respondents to rank them in terms of how much they agree with the statements in relation to their competitive strategy, HRM practices and the linkage of both. Questionnaires that involve closed-ended questions could use rating scales to give respondents the opportunity to indicate their experiences along a range of response categories. Table 23 shows some popular rating scales according to the literature (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

**Table 23 Rating Scales**

| Rating Scale | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Dichotomous | This scale involves only two possible answers to the statement |
| Category Scale | Collects nominal data and requires an answer to multiple choices |
| Likert Scale | Attains the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a series of statements. |
| Itemized Rating Scale | Similar to Likert, this scale involves stable and unstable categories |
| Semantic Differential Scale | This involves using two opposing adjectives to explore respondents' perceptions |
| Staple Scale | This involves using a single adjective and determining a range of negative or positive responses to it |
| Linear Numeric Scale | This is used when items are to be rated in a single measurement. |

The focus of this study is to elicit the agreement or disagreement of respondents to sets of statements constructed using the themes identified from the literature review and semi-structured interviews. Therefore, among the rating scale options in the above table, the Likert-type rating scale suits this study. However, the dichotomous scale is used also for demographic reasons to identify the gender and availability of HR professionals in the organisations. The choice of the Likert type is based on the researcher's assumption that the respondents' experience as shown in their responses can be measured in order to understand the relationship between HRM and competitive strategy in NMSEs. A dichotomous rating scale is used for a couple of "YES and NO" answers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In contrast to some other studies that have used a 7-point Likert rating scale or a 10-point Likert rating scale, the format for the questionnaire in relation to this study is a 5-point Likert type. The 5-point Likert scale was arranged in order of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree, where strongly disagree connotes strong negation of the statement, and strongly agree shows a feeling of strong affirmation of the question (see Table 23). Besides being a very useful format, the 5-point Likert scale is commonly used in studies investigating the linkage of HRM and competitive strategy (Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Khandekar and Sharma, 2005; Abang, 2009; Azmi, 2009; Mudili, 2012; Hamid and Saloua, 2014). Table 25 below presents the scale description and values.

**Table 24 Scale Description and Value**

| Scale | Scale Value | Scale Description |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 5 | Shows the complete and vehement affirmation of the reality being investigated, from the point of view of the respondent |
| Agree | 4 | This is a show of affirmation that, to the knowledge and experience of the respondent, the statement is true |
| Neutral | 3 | This scale connotes the fact that the statement could either be partly true or partly false according to the experience of the respondent |
| Disagree | 2 | Refers to the unimportance of the message that is being asked in the respondent's experience |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | Stout negation showing the reality |

Bryman and Bell (2011)

Table 25 above shows the value allocated to each scale on the questionnaire. The value of 5 shows that the question is highly favoured and holds true of the reality being questioned, whilst 1 shows that it is highly untrue and does not hold true of reality.

**5.1.3 Pilot of Questionnaire**

In line with the requirements of this study and due to the importance of piloting research instrument (Chapter three), the questionnaire for this study was piloted to determine its suitability to generate the required data for the research hypotheses testing and objectives of this study. It was also important to determine the ability of the respondents to give answers to the items on the scale. Therefore, the questionnaire was disseminated via web-based and paper-based formats.

The two forms of distribution were adopted for the study because of the difficulties other researchers encountered in using one form of questionnaire distribution in

Nigeria. First, using a web-based questionnaire alone for NMSEs was hindered by the limited internet availability in all regions of Nigeria. This difficulty has been experienced by other researchers too (Oshikoya and Awobusuyi, 2009). This does in no way reduce the credibility of using a web-based system of questionnaire distribution. Web-based questionnaire distribution is considered one of the most valid means of disseminating survey data (Flemming and Bowden, 2009), especially closed-ended questionnaires, to intended respondents (Reja et al, 2003). The web-based format, sometimes referred to as online questionnaires (Dillman, 2011), offers greater flexibility for respondents and easy manageability for the researcher. To monitor the number of surveys disseminated, this study adopted the option of sending the online link to the questionnaire via email and company websites using NMSEs' database information provided by small and medium-sized enterprises agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). In addition, paper-based questionnaires were sent out in the mail. The two methods gave the respondents the opportunity to choose which option best suited their conditions and were instrumental in the high response to the pilot questionnaire (See also Chapter three).

**5.1.4 Test of Reliability**

Reliability tests are a very necessary step in questionnaire development. The test for consistency of the instrument of measurement is usually referred to as reliability (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007). When items record consistency over a number of responses and from different groups of respondents, then it is inferred that the instrument is reliable for usage in the research. Regarding questionnaire items, the test for reliability indicates whether the same questions are answered in the same way by different respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There are a number of tools used in the calculation of a measuring instrument's reliability. The test-retest and split-half

approaches are appropriate to examine the reliability of knowledge-based questions. The interval and ratio scales are considered to be best tested using internal consistency tests.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is one of the popular ways of testing the internal consistency of a questionnaire (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Cronbach's alpha coefficient basically calculates the average of the degree of consistency between all split-half coefficients (Bryman, 2012). Usually the reliability is determined between the numbers 1 and 0, 1 being the perfect reliability and 0 being no reliability.

Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, 30 pilot questionnaires were analysed to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire. The result, as shown Table 26 below, indicated a coefficient of .876 for the 72 items on the questionnaire. This shows that the questionnaire had high reliability.

**Table 25 Reliability Statistics 1**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .876 | 72 |

For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .876, which demonstrates a good internal consistency and reliability rating (Pallant, 2001).

**5.2 DATA COLLECTION**

The questionnaire was based on a systematic literature review and findings from qualitative data. Emails were sent to participant organisations, followed by phone calls. The participants were given two weeks to indicate their willingness to participate in the survey through emails. The period of two weeks was deemed appropriate due to the low quality of internet/communication technologies available in the country as found out during the interview stage of this study. Moreover, it was also important to balance the time given to participants to indicate their acceptance to participate and the time for dissemination of the questionnaires.

This study adopted three methods of distributing the questionnaire, web-online-based and emails, and face to face. It was considered important to adopt these three key means of getting the questionnaire across to participants due to the disadvantages of using a single means in the vast and religiously volatile situation of the country at the time of this study. Web-online using qualtrics.com and email were used to reach areas in northern Nigeria where religious violence was mainly occurring; whereas face-to-face delivery questionnaires was used in more secured areas of the country. Using these approaches, a good response rate was achieved. The questionnaire distribution and collection lasted for four months, from September 2015 to January 2016.

Despite the recommendation in some academic texts (Burgess, 2001) suggesting the distribution of five times as many questionnaires as the researcher wants returning, this study sent out three times as many due to the total sample population of the study. A total of 969 questionnaires were distributed via emails and face to face (refer to Section 3.7.2), and 490 were returned; thus making up a 50.6% response rate. Details

of the total number of questionnaires distributed and returned per region according to the total sample population are provided in Table 27 below.

**Table 26 Questionnaire Responses**

| Regions | NMSEs Population | Expected Valid Responses | Questionnaire Distributed | Questionnaire Returned | Valid Responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Central | 372 | 72 | 216 | 85 | 79 |
| North East | 187 | 37 | 111 | 49 | 42 |
| North West | 169 | 33 | 99 | 50 | 41 |
| South West | 575 | 112 | 336 | 192 | 150 |
| South East | 200 | 39 | 117 | 71 | 56 |
| South South | 151 | 30 | 90 | 43 | 38 |

Table 27 above shows that the questionnaires returned per geo-political zone satisfied the required and expected valid responses and the percentage of valid responses stands at 82.9%. The implication of the response rate for this study points to the fact that representative data were collected based on the six geographical regions of Nigeria.

### 5.2.1 Data Cleansing

Data cleansing is concerned with detection of errors and subsequent exclusion of inconsistent data to ensure that data used in research are of high quality (Rossi et al, 2013). To ensure that the data used for this study are of high quality, certain steps were taken. The first preparatory stage for the quantitative data analysis was to ensure that

the responses were adjudged usable for the study. The first action performed was to ensure that only completed or reasonably completed questionnaires were used. As such, some questionnaires were deemed unusable and discarded. Secondly, the questionnaire data were accurately entered into SPSS, and a comprehensive check for missing data was run.

### 5.2.2 Normality Tests

Normality tests were carried out to screen the data and determine the normality of distribution of scores on the data set. Distribution of scores could be normal or not normal depending on how close the scores revolve round the middle or how skewed the data are towards the positive or negative responses (Field, 2009; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Pallant, 2013); hence, statistical literature identifies normal distribution and not normal distribution among other probability tests. 'Normal data' refers to frequencies of data revolving round the middle score in a data set, and is usually expressed in a normal curve structured in a bell form. The central idea about normal distribution is that the character of the data set shows predictability revolving round the middle score. However, it has been noted in a number of studies (Pallant, 2013) that data are not always normally distributed, even though researchers tend to assume so. Data are not normally distributed they are skewed either positively or negatively (Field, 2009).

Testing for normal or not normal distribution of data is recommended in literature (Bernard, 2013) due to the importance of determining appropriate statistical tests to be applied to either of the two types of distribution. Whereas parametric tests are used to analyse normal data, non-parametric tests are usually recommended for data that are

not normally distributed (Field, 2009). However, some studies (Vickers, 2005) have been carried out using parametric tests to analyse not-normal data in order to find out the outcome of carrying out normal tests on not normal data.

In cases where data are not normally distributed, further investigations are carried out statistically to determine the reasons for non-normality. Possible reasons have been identified which include: extreme values of data set, overlap of processes of data collection, previously sorted data, values close to zero, outliers, limited data, natural boundary placed on data, and differences in sample groups (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Bernard, 2008; Field, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Pallant, 2013; Colton, 2014). Due to the common understanding among a number of researchers in social sciences and management studies that data are not always normally distributed, a number of steps have been suggested to deal with not normal data (Pallant, 2013). The key suggestion for dealing with data that are not normally distributed is to undertake data transformation. Data transformations are carried out statistically to modify scores on a data set. However, data transformation could alter the original variables, thus affecting interpretation based on valid original scores (Chou et al, 1998; Osborne, 2002; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In addition, interpreting transformed data presents difficulties in cases where original variables require substantial interpretation. Alternatively, the majority of researchers (Bernard, 2013; Pallant, 2013) have suggested the use of non-parametric tests instead of utilizing the mathematical approach of data transformation. The main argument against non-parametric tests does not doubt the reliability of the tests or their interpretation but considers them as slightly weaker than parametric tests. However, studies (Pallant, 2013) have shown that the differences between the two sets of tests are marginal; in fact, the difference is narrower than usually presented. Parametric tests are equivalent to non-parametric

tests in most cases (Field, 2009). Non-normal data can be much skewed or moderately skewed depending on how extreme the values are distributed.

Based on the discussion so far, Shapiro-Wilk tests and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were carried out on the data set for this study to determine the normality of distribution. These two tests were chosen because of their ability to determine the difference in statistical normality (Field, 2009). The test results show that the data are not normally distributed (see output in Appendix X). However, although the tests showed this, the histogram indicated that the data were not very skewed for all variables tested. Following further probing of the data set identifying missing values and scores, further normality tests were conducted which provided not normal histograms and p-plots. The option of transformation of data was not chosen due to the need to undertake substantial interpretation of variables such as gender, age, and organisations' years of operation. Therefore, the non-parametric tests were adopted based on the discussion already espoused above. Moreover, previous studies (Omowumi, 2013) carried out in the broad spectrum of SMEs in Nigeria have used non-parametric tests where data distribution showed non-normality.

## 5.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The demographic data section of the questionnaire is made up of made up of eight items identifying the gender, age, position of respondents, years of work experience in their present position, educational qualification, years of organisation's operation, and industry sectors. The following subsections undertake a descriptive presentation of the demographic data of participants in the survey.

### 5.3.1 Respondents' Position

The respondent groups were made up of 31.7% managing directors, 25.5% administrative officers, 21.1% members of the management boards, 14.6% human resource managers and 7.1% human resource coordinators over 323 NMSEs. Combined, the top management constitutes 52.8% of the total respondents, whereas human resource management professionals make up 21.7% of the respondents. The administrative officers, who functions in both capacities in Nigerian firms, constitute 25.5% of the respondents, providing 82 valid responses. Further details are provided by Figure 14 below:
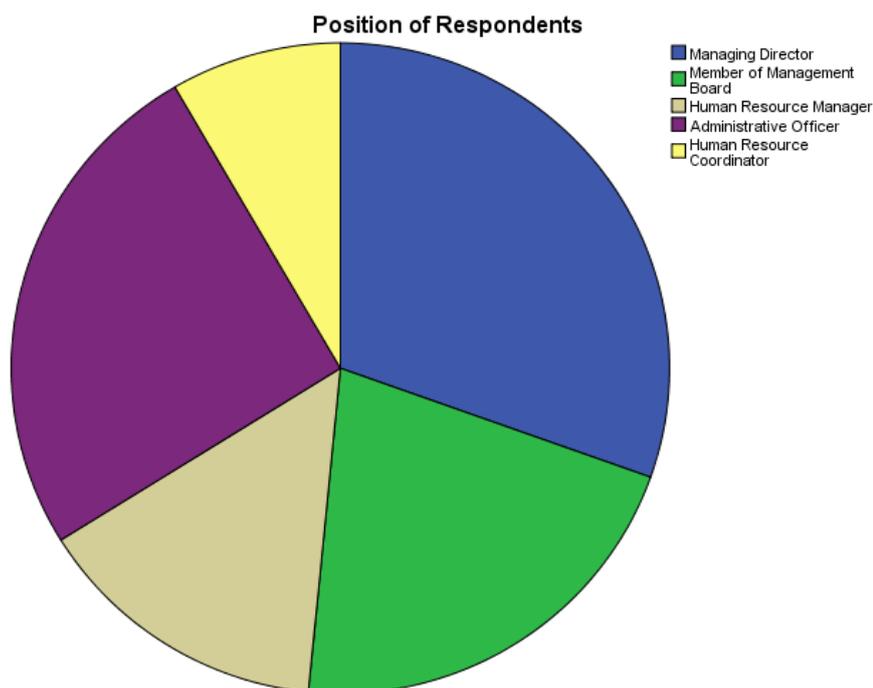


**Figure 14 Respondents' Position**

**5.3.2 Respondents' Years of Work Experience**

Out of 323 respondents to the questionnaire, 21 had 26 years and above of work experience in their current positions, 75 respondents had 1-5 years' experience, and 45 and 23 had 12-17 years' experience and 17-25 years' experience, respectively. The majority of respondents (158) had 6-11 years' experience in their current positions. The highest number of respondents with 26+ years of experience in their current position was in the managing directors' category, compared to the human resource managers, where just one respondent had in the range of 26+ years of experience. Administrative officers had the highest number of respondents in the 6-11 years range. Human resource managers had the highest number of respondents in the 12-17 year range jointly with managing directors.
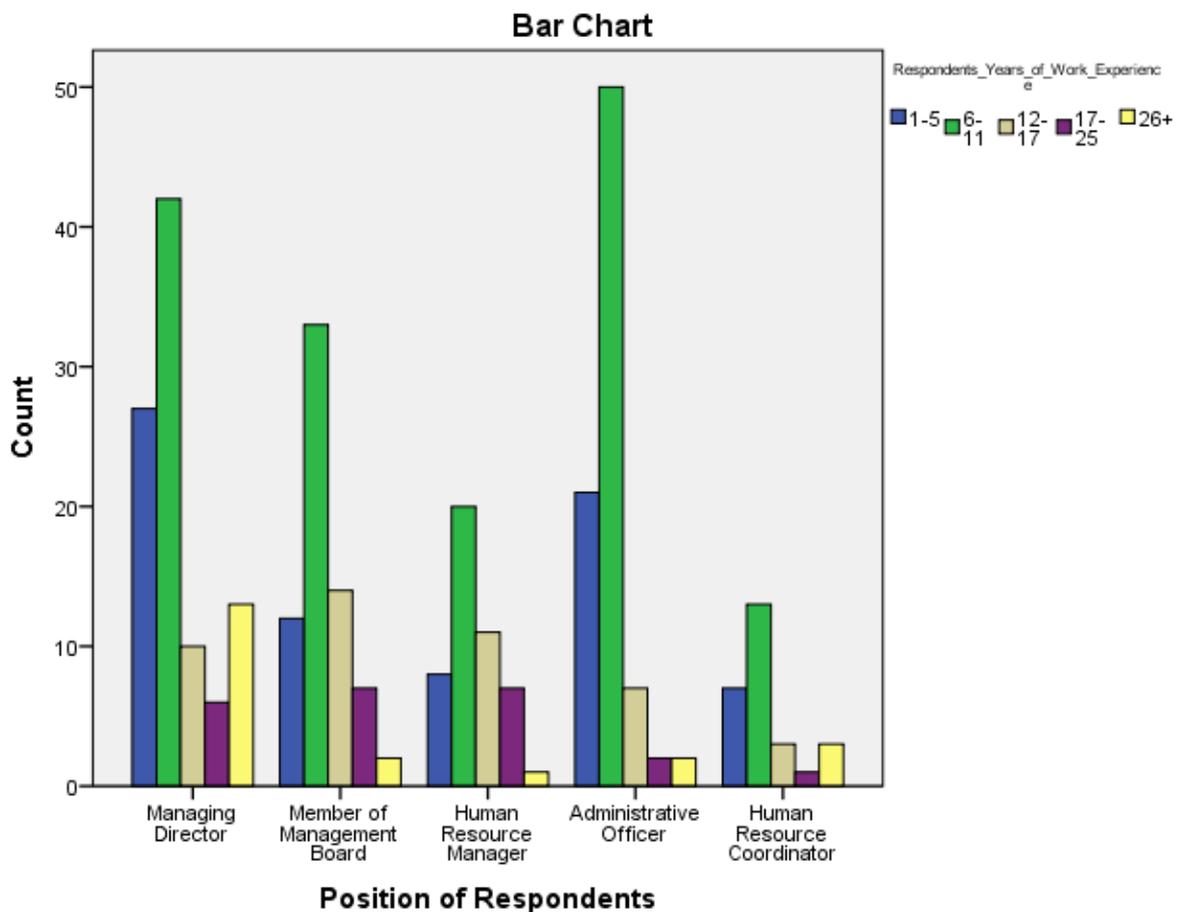


**Figure 15 Respondents' Position and their Years of Employment**

**5.3.3 Respondents' Gender**

There were more male respondents (56.7%) than female respondents (41.2%) to the questionnaire. Significantly, the five categories comprising top management (Managing directors, Members of management board and Administrative officers) and human resource management professionals (Human Resource manager and Human Resource coordinators) were dominated by the male gender. This is exceptionally so when Nigerian society is considered, where males show more dominance in matters of organisational decision than their female counterparts. Figure 16 shows the ratio of Males to Females in all the categories of top management and human resource professionals group.
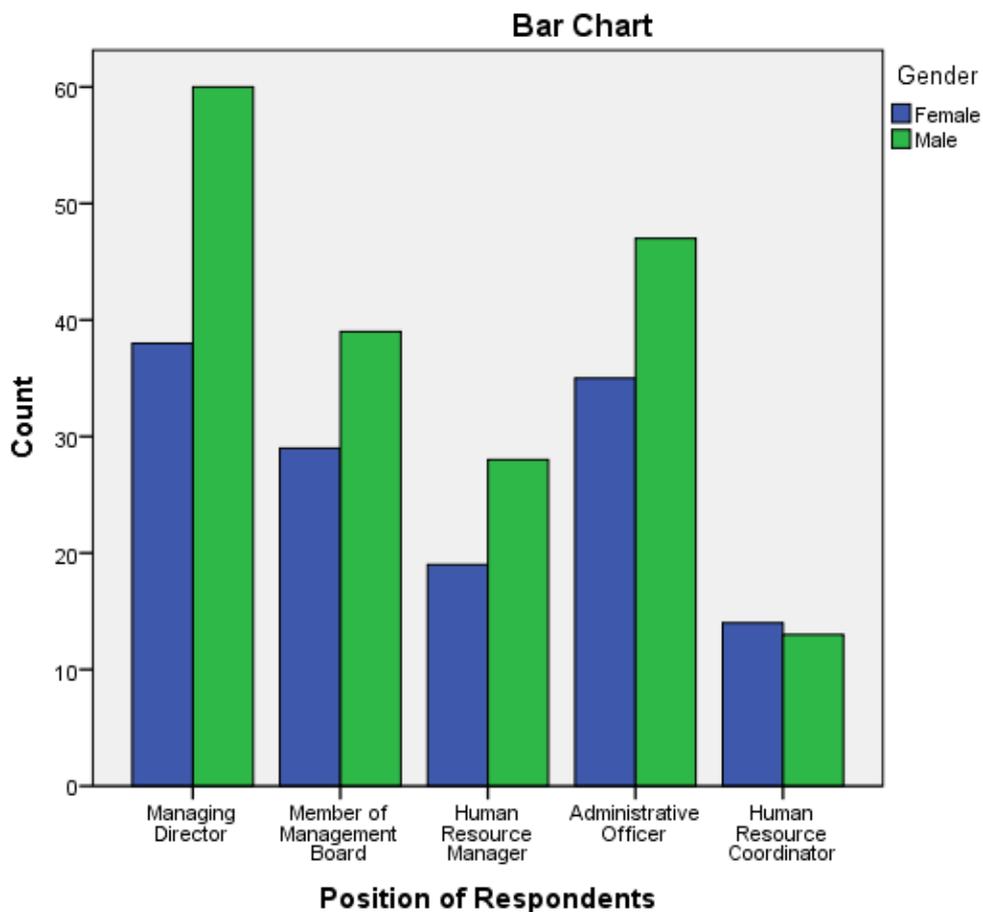


**Figure 16 Respondents' Gender Distribution**

### 5.3.4 Respondents' Age Group

Out of the 323 respondents, 55 were in the 18-44 age range. The ranges of 25-34 and 35-44 contained 113 and 91 respondents respectively, 49 respondents were in the 44-55 age group, and 14 were 55+. As such the age bracket ranging from 25-44 constitutes 63.2% of the questionnaire respondents. The highest range was 25-34, and the lowest 55+. The managing directors and administrative officers had the highest number of respondents in the 25-34 age range, whereas there were fewest Human Resource managers in the age range of 55+. The high number of overall respondents for the 25-34 age range is indicative of the Nigerian educational system which graduates students at an average age of 24/25 and ensures a supply of adults in first employment job experiences. Figure 17 shows the percentage range of age and position of respondents.
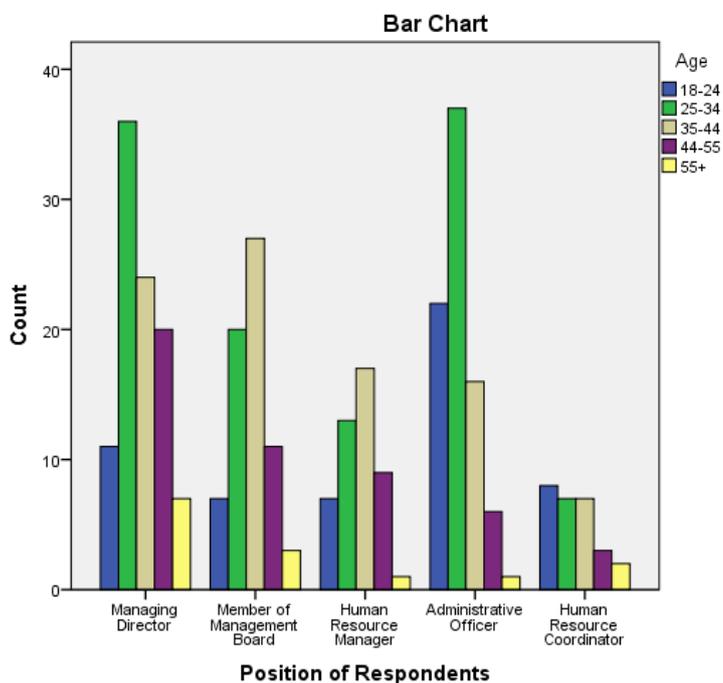


**Figure 17 Respondents' Age range**

**5.3.5 Respondents' Highest Level of Educational Qualifications**

In terms of highest level of educational qualification attained by the respondents, the questionnaire ranged it according to the following categories: No formal education, Primary level education, Secondary level education, Undergraduate level, and Postgraduate level. The results showed that 118 respondents had undergraduate qualifications whilst 158 had postgraduate qualifications; thereby constituting the majority of respondents. Whereas respondents with secondary school level and primary school level of education as their highest level of formal education attained ranged between 37 and 5, those with no formal education were a mere two in number. Whereas those with undergraduate and postgraduate-level qualifications account for 85.5% of the total, those with no formal education constitute a mere 0.62%. This is understandable within the purview of importance laid on qualifications as a key factor in offering employees management positions in Nigeria. Figure 18 below presents a summary of the respondents' educational qualifications.
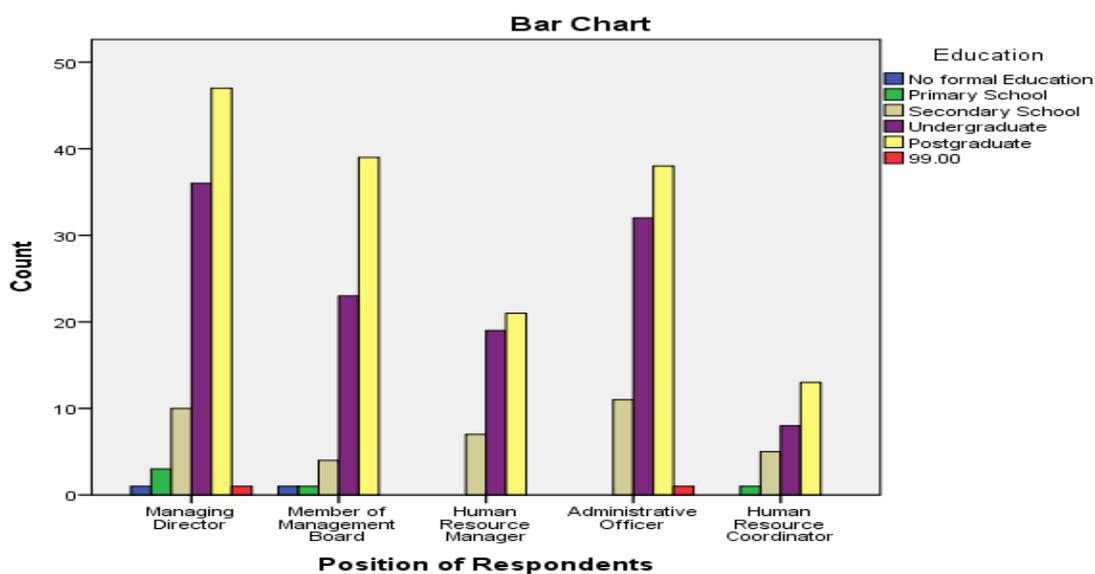


**Figure 18 Highest Level of Educational Qualification Attained by the Respondents**

**5.3.6 Respondents' Geo-Political Region**

All six geo-political zones were represented in terms of respondents to the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were from the South West region of Nigeria (112) and North Central (71). The rest of the regions provided an average of 34.7 respondents each. Similarly, the South West had more respondents in all categories than any other region. Figure 19 provides further details.
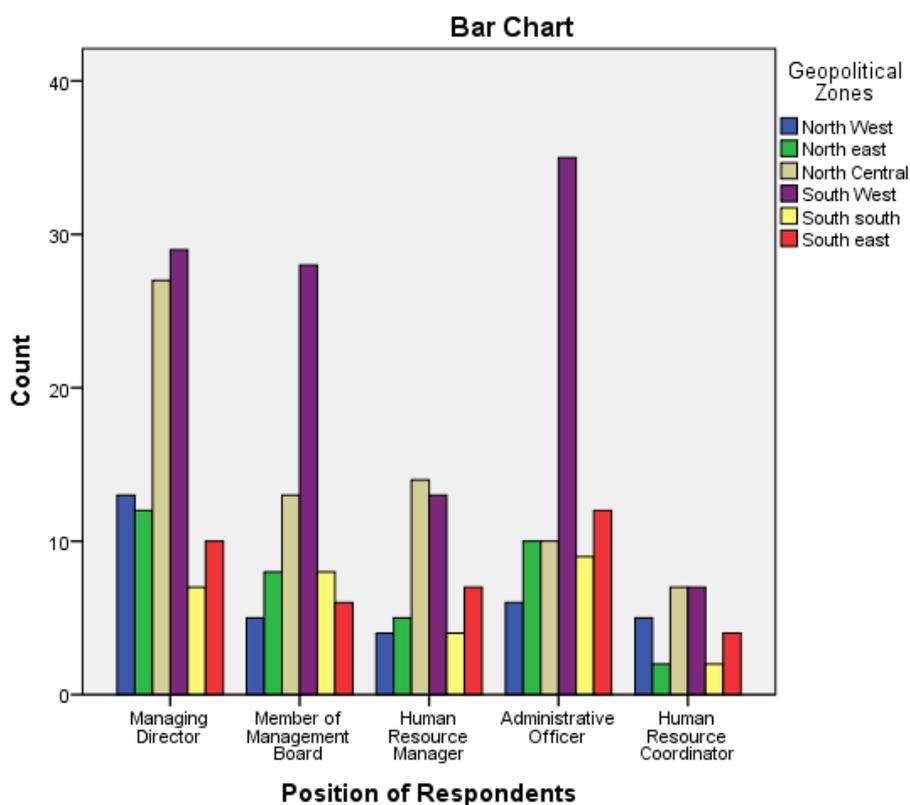


**Figure 19 Respondents' Geo-political region**

**5.3.7 Respondents' Market Sector**

The respondents were from 18 different business sectors across NMSEs. Figure 19 provides information regarding the different sectors and percentage of respondents from each sector: 21.4% and 22.3% of the respondents were from the education and manufacturing sectors respectively, 18.9% were from the construction sector while

10.8% were from the health sector. The smallest percentage of respondents (.3%) was provided by the oil and gas, energy and utility, environment and waste management, and photography sectors. The varying degree of responses according to the various sectors is indicative of the size of the sectors in Nigeria.
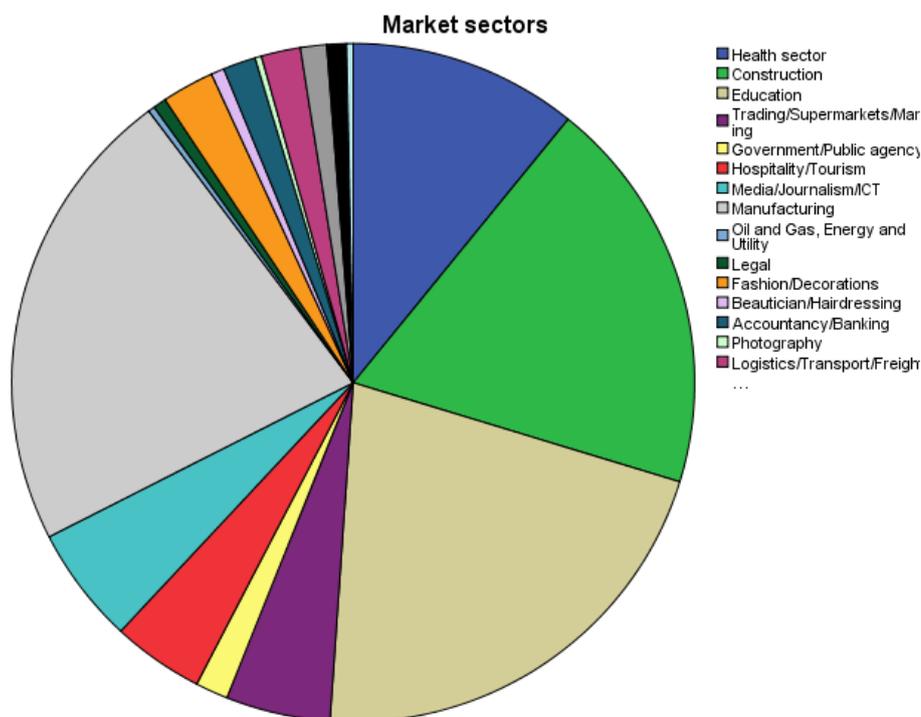


**Figure 20 Respondents' Market Sector**

## 5.4 OBJECTIVE ONE: TO IDENTIFY THE COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES USED IN NMSES

This objective investigates the two key components of CS-HRMp linkage as identified in literature and interview findings to establish CS and HRMp used in NMSEs. Based on key literature review and CS-HRMp variables identified through semi-structured interviews, the questionnaire items were developed. Following responses to the

questionnaire, the variables were coded and inputted into SPSS. The following

hypotheses examine the competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs:

$H_0$ Competitive strategies are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises

$H_a$ Competitive strategies are used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises

$H_0$ HRMp are not used in Nigeria medium-sized enterprises

$H_a$ HRMp are used in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises

### 5.4.1 Competitive Strategy

The majority of the respondents identified the adoption of competitive strategies in

their organisation: 98.8% affirmed the adoption and usage of competitive strategies in

their organisation compared to the 1.2% of NMSEs that had no competitive strategies.

Therefore, competitive strategy is used by most NMSEs in Nigeria. Further details are

presented in Figure 21:
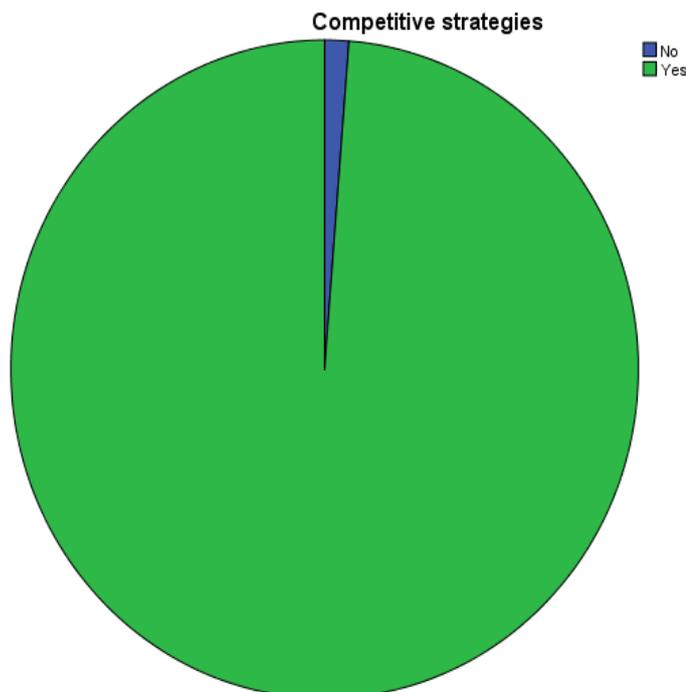


**Figure 21 The adoption of competitive strategies in NMSEs**

Regarding the documentation format of the competitive strategies in the respondents'

organisations, 64.3% indicated that their competitive strategy was in both written and

unwritten forms. A further 22.7% had their competitive strategy in written form only,

and 13.0% percentage of the respondents indicated that their competitive strategy was

in unwritten form only. Hence, the majority of the organisations have a competitive

strategy and in predominantly both written and unwritten forms. Figure 22 provides

further details of the adoption and form of competitive strategy documentation in

NMSEs.



**Documentation form of Competitive Strategy**

- written
- unwritten
- both written and unwritten
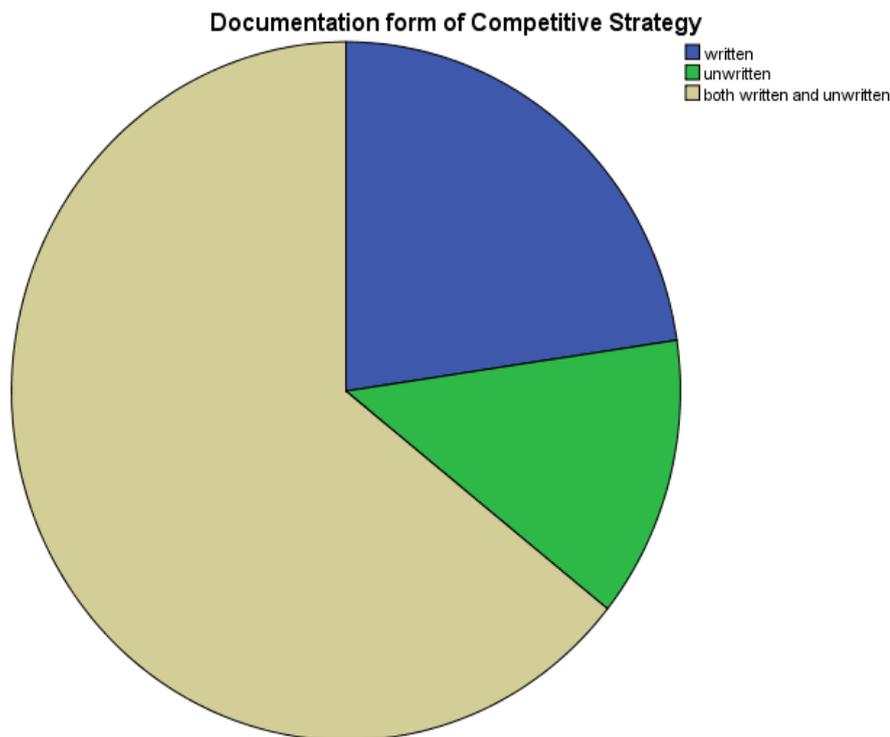
**Figure 22 The documentation form of Competitive strategy**

Following the identification of the documentation format of competitive strategy, a

Kruskal Wallis test was performed to identify key descriptive trends of the competitive

strategy variables and the differences in mean rank to examine the range of the chi square, the differences and how equally the means were distributed. First, the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 27 below.

**Table 27 Descriptive Table of Competitive Strategies Used in NMSEs**

|        | N   | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|--------|-----|--------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Adv.   | 323 | 4.1579 | .84689         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| ICT    | 323 | 4.1424 | .86951         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| B2B    | 321 | 4.1090 | .73140         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| CL     | 322 | 4.0994 | .74637         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| Diff   | 321 | 4.2991 | .71434         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| VBS    | 321 | 4.3614 | .69390         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| QuP    | 322 | 4.4720 | .67035         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| P.Rel  | 323 | 4.2786 | .71132         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| RBV    | 322 | 4.2360 | .78946         | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| DC     | 323 | 4.1796 | .71710         | 1.00    | 5.00    |

From Table 28 above, it can be seen that the mean rank of the variables falls within the range of 4; however, there are slight differences among the means. Product/service quality showed a slight difference, ranking highest among the variables based on the average rank score of 4.4720, whereas the B2B had lowest score of 4.1090. Furthermore, to test the mean differences of the scores of the groups of respondents affirming the use of competitive strategy in NMSEs, a Kruskal Wallis test was conducted. Based on the assumption that significance of $p<0.05$ affirms that the mean ranking is not equally distributed, whereas a non-significant equation above $p<0.05$ shows that the mean ranking is equal, Table 29 below shows the results of the Kruskal Wallis test.

**Table 28 Competitive Strategies: Kruskal Wallis Test Statistics - Respondents**

|  | Adv. | ICT | B2B | CL | Diff | VBS | QuP | P.Rel | RBV | DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 1.045 | 6.606 | 5.023 | 2.532 | 18.632 | 6.900 | 8.105 | 7.021 | 8.820 | 11.166 |
| df | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .903 | .158 | .285 | .639 | .001 | .141 | .088 | .135 | .066 | .025 |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Position of Respondents

c. p<0,05

From the table above, difference in mean score is noted only in differentiation strategy, which is statistically significant at $p<0.01$. Therefore, there is no difference in median score test for both groups of respondent. Hence, this supports the overall affirmation that the competitive strategies outlined above are used in NMSEs.

### 5.4.2 Human Resource Management Practices

Similar to responses relating to competitive strategies, the respondents (n=323) replied to questions determining the adoption of a clear set of HRMp in their organisations: 97 % (n=314), making up a majority of the respondents, affirmed the adoption of HRMp whereas 2.8% (n=2.7) indicated the lack of a clear set of HRMp adopted in the organisations.
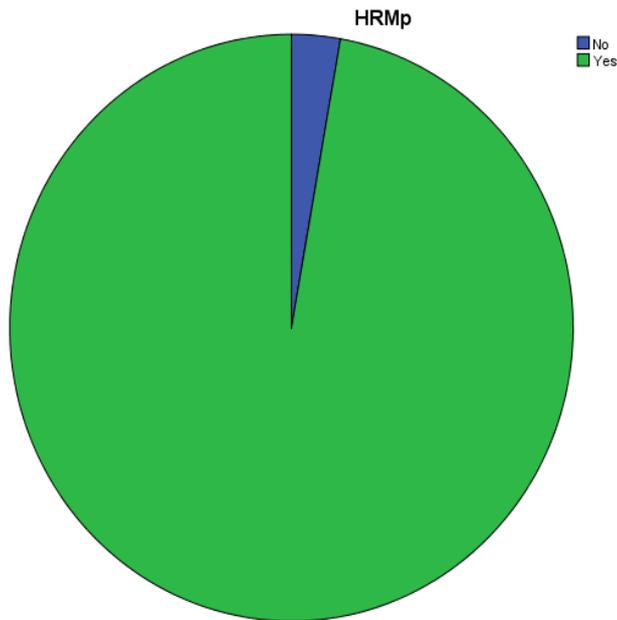
HRMp



**Figure 23 The adoption of HRM practices in NMSEs**

The form of HRMp documentation was established by the respondents. The majority of respondents (65.0%) adopted both written and unwritten forms of HRMp documentation, 24% had their HRMp in documented form only, and 10.2% had it in unwritten form only (cf. Figure 24).

Documentation form of HRM practices
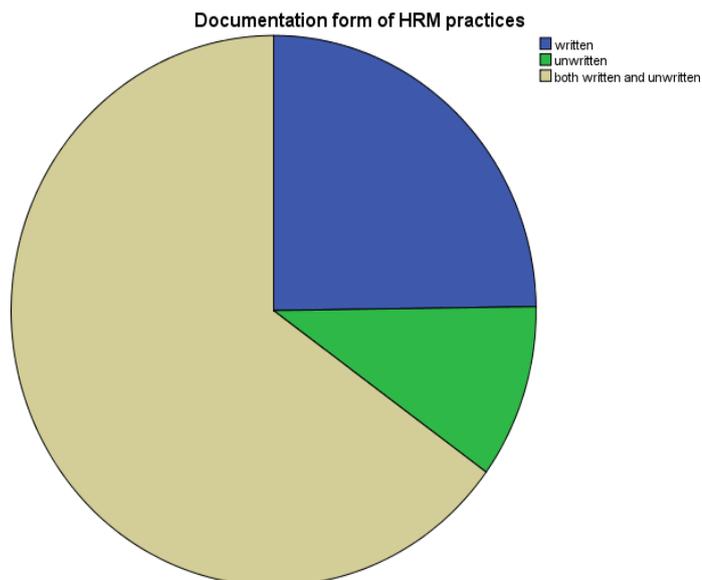


**Figure 24 The adoption of HRM practices in NMSEs**

Following the identification of the documentation format of HRMp used in NMSEs, a Kruskal Wallis test was performed to identify key descriptive trends of the HRMp variables and the differences in mean rank to examine the range of the chi square, the differences and how equally the means were distributed. First, the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 29 below.

**Table 29 Descriptive Statistics for HRMp**

|  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PSES/W | 323 | 4.4056 | .75154 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| S.S | 322 | 4.1739 | .77793 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| ICP | 322 | 4.0870 | .86749 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| RP | 323 | 4.0062 | .86331 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| TP | 323 | 4.0743 | .74395 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| DM | 322 | 4.1273 | .77294 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| PE | 322 | 4.0870 | .80413 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| ER | 321 | 3.9875 | .86594 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Emp | 319 | 4.016 | .8447 | 1.0 | 5.0 |

From Table 30 above, it is clear that the mean rank of the variables falls within the range of 4 and 3. Practices supporting employees' social welfare (PSES/W) showed a slight difference, ranking highest among the variables based on the average rank score of 4.4056, whereas the Employee retention practices (ER) had the lowest score of 3.9875.

Furthermore, to tests the mean differences of the scores of the groups of respondents affirming the use of competitive strategy in NMSEs, Kruskal Wallis test statistics were examined. Table 30 below presents the test statistics.

**Table 30 HRMp: Kruskal Wallis Test Statistics - Respondents**

|  | PSES/W | S.S | ICP | RP | TP | DM | PE | ER | Emp |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 2.362 | 7.553 | 3.053 | 2.594 | 1.849 | 4.548 | 3.204 | 1.285 | 4.380 |
| df | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .670 | .109 | .549 | .628 | .764 | .337 | .524 | .864 | .357 |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Position of Respondents

c. $p < 0.05$

Based on the assumption that significance of $p < 0.05$ affirms that the mean ranking is not equally distributed, whereas a non-significant equation above $p < 0.05$ shows that the mean ranking is equal, the test statistics showed that the mean ranking is generally equal.

Summarily, the respondents have strongly affirmed the usage of competitive strategies and HRMp in their organisations. Although a slight difference is noted in the mean ranking and Kruskal Wallis test score between the competitive strategies and HRMp, overall, high scores are recorded in relation to the variables of CS and HRMp in NMSEs; thereby confirming the use of the above-discussed types of competitive strategy and HRMp in NMSEs. Hence, the alternative hypothesis ($H_1$) is affirmed and the null hypothesis rejected.

## 5.5 OBJECTIVE TWO: TO MEASURE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

This section of the study measures the relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs using the Spearman's correlation coefficient to determine the direction and strength of the relationship. The use of Spearman's correlation coefficient for this analysis is considered more appropriate due to the non-normality of distribution for the data set (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2013). Hypotheses being tested using the correlational coefficient are as follows:

H3
$H_0$ There is no positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs
$H_a$ There is positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs
H3b
$H_0$ There is no strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs
$H_a$ There is strong relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSES

The number of cases vary from one variable to another due to the exclusion of pairwise cases, where there were cases of missing data (Field, 2009), and the direction of the correlation is determined by the indication of negative and positive signs before the figures in the table (Bryman, 2012). The negative sign implies that a high score on one variable necessarily means a low score on the other variable. The value for the set of correction is indicated by 'rho value' in accordance with the Spearman's correlation coefficient adopted for this analysis. In determining the strength of the relationship, this study adopts Cohen's (1988) guidelines for determining the strength of relationships, because this gives the study the opportunity to link the objective of this analysis with the rest of the objectives determining the extent of linkage of CS and

HRMp in NMSEs. The study follows the guidelines: rho = .10 to .29 (small or weak relationship), rho = .30 to .49 (medium or moderate relationship), and rho = .50 to 1.0 (large or strong relationship). Further, the significance level is reported at the level of 0.05 ($p<0.05$). Although the significance level does not show the strength of the relationship between two variables, it does, however, specify the confidence level of the researcher in the results obtained (Pallant, 2013).

The continuous variables correlated are: Advertising (Adv), ICT, B2B, Cost leadership (C.L), Differentiation (DIFF, Value-Based Strategy (VBS), Quality Product (QuP), Personal Relationships (P. Rel), RBV, and DC, for CS; and practices supporting Employee social welfare (PSES/W), Salary, Individual Career Development Path (ICP), Recruitment practices (RP), Disciplinary measures, Training practices (TP), Performance evaluation (PE), Employee retention (ER), Empowerment (Emp), Best-practice, Best-fit, Context-based, and Bundling for HRMp. This study reports only variables that show statistical significance. The full result is shown in Appendix XII.

The relationship between salary structure in NMSEs and the various competitive strategy variables was analysed using spearman's correlation coefficient. The table below presents the summary of the correlation. The result showed that salary structures in NMSEs is positively correlated with four out of eight competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs as exhibited in Table 31 below.

**Table 31 Spearman's Correlation – Salary Structures**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| B2B | .153** | 320 | .006 |
| CL | .155** | 321 | .005 |
| VBS | .112** | 321 | .045 |
| QuP | .127** | 321 | .023 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Although significantly correlated at the statistical significance of 0.05, the correlation coefficient of salary structure and B2B, CL, VBS, and Qup, ranged from .112 and .153 which is a weak correlation. Secondly, individual career development practice used in NMSEs was measured to find its relationship with the various competitive strategies. Table 32 below shows the result of spearman's correlation tests performed.

**Table 32 Spearman's Correlation - Individual Career Development Path**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| B2B | .140** | 320 | .012 |
| CL | .138** | 321 | .013 |
| VBS | .271** | 320 | .000 |
| QuP | .165** | 321 | .003 |
| ICT | .164** | 322 | .003 |
| DIFF | .182** | 320 | .001 |
| P.Rel | .138** | 322 | .013 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table 32 above, the direction of the relationship between individual career development practices and competitive strategies show positive correlation. ICP is positively correlated with B2B, CL, VBS, QuP, ICT, DIFF, and P. Rel. Table 34 suggests that the correlation is a weak correlation in all cased except valued based strategy.

Similarly, PSES/W was found to be positively related to only one of the competitive strategies adopted in the NMSEs namely: Value based strategy.

**Table 33 Spearman's Correlation - PSES/W**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| VBS | .181** | 321 | .001 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 33 above shows that PSES/W in NMSEs is given the least consideration in the formulation and implementation of competitive strategies. Though the positively correlated with VBS, it is a weak positive relationship showing spearman's correlation coefficient of .181.

In the same line, recruitment was measured using spearman's correlation to determine the direction and strength of its relationship with the various competitive strategies. The findings show that although it is positively correlated with ICT, DIFF, VBS, QuP, and P. Rel, there is negative relationship with some of the competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs (see Table 34 below):

**Table 34 Spearman's Correlation – Recruitment Practices in NMSEs**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| VBS | .320** | 321 | .000 |
| QuP | .200** | 322 | .000 |
| ICT | .271** | 323 | .000 |
| DIFF | .111** | 321 | .046 |
| P.Rel | .126** | 323 | .031 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 34 above indicates that the relationship coefficient between recruitment practices and the competitive strategies showed weak and moderate relationship. Furthermore, the correlations result shown in Appendix XII show that training practices is has a positive relationship with six out of the eight competitive strategies measured. Table 35 below summarises the correlation result in regard to training practices.

**Table 35 Spearman's Correlation – Training Practices**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adv. | .133** | 323 | .017 |
| VBS | .322** | 321 | .000 |
| QuP | .126** | 323 | .031 |
| ICT | .162** | 323 | .003 |
| DIFF | .127** | 321 | .023 |
| P.Rel | .138** | 322 | .013 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between training practices and the competitive strategies in NMSEs show that some of the competitive strategies are considered in the formulation and implementation of competitive strategy and vice versa; however, the relationship ranges from weak to moderated relationship.

Disciplinary measures is another HRMp used in NMSEs. Using spearman's correlation coefficient, the relationship between Disciplinary measures and the various competitive strategies was determined. Although the relationship shows positive correlation, there was no positive relationship between disciplinary measures and differentiation strategy. Table 36 presents spearman's correlation for disciplinary measures.

**Table 36 Spearman's Correlation – Disciplinary Measures**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| B2B | .133** | 320 | .017 |
| CL | .111** | 321 | .043 |
| VBS | .239** | 320 | .000 |
| QuP | .123** | 321 | .028 |
| ICT | .121** | 322 | .030 |
| Adv. | .188** | 322 | .001 |
| P.Rel | .135** | 323 | 0.15 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The lack of positive relationship between disciplinary measures and differentiation could be further understood in the light of similarity of disciplinary measures used in most NMSEs organisations. In addition to the direction, the strength of the relationship

is determined to suggest a weak relationship based on the coefficient of the relationship.

Furthermore, performance evaluation is another variable tested to find its relationship with competitive strategies in NMSEs. Table 37 below summarises the result of the test:

**Table 37 Spearman's Correlation – Performance Evaluation**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| B2B | .231** | 320 | .000 |
| VBS | .244** | 320 | .000 |
| QuP | .126** | 321 | .024 |
| ICT | .136** | 322 | .015 |
| DIFF | .122** | 320 | .029 |
| P.Rel | .188** | 322 | .001 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Based on the result shown in Table 38 above, performance evaluation shows stronger relationship with B2B and VBS than the other competitive strategies. Although the relationship ranges from weak to the moderate relationship, it does show a positive relationship between performance evaluation and six out the eight competitive strategies measured.

With regard to correlation between employee retention and the different competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs, the results show that ER is correlated positively with four different competitive strategies. As such, employee retention in NMSEs is not related to all the competitive practices that were measured.

**Table 38 Spearman's Correlation – Employee Retention**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| VBS | .175** | 319 | .002 |
| CL | .138** | 320 | 0.14 |
| DIFF | .214** | 319 | .000 |
| P.Rel | .124** | 321 | .026 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of Spearman's correlation summarised by Table 38 above in relation to employee retention finds a weak to moderate positive relationship between employee retention and the following competitive strategies in NMSEs: VBS, CL, DIFF, and P.Rel.

Finally, significant positive correlations coefficients were obtained for empowerment and competitive strategies. Table 39 below summarises the result:

**Table 39 Spearman's Correlation –Empowerment**

| Competitive Strategy Variable | Spearman's rho | Number | Sig (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| VBS | .243** | 317 | .000 |
| CL | .141** | 318 | .014 |
| DIFF | .170** | 317 | .002 |
| ICT | .127** | 319 | .024 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results of the correlation test show that the relationship between empowerment practices and competitive strategies in NMSEs is rather weak although it shows a positively significant correlation.

Summarily, the results of the correlation tests show that there is positive relationship between tested competitive strategy and HRMp variables correlation ranging from .1 to .3 which affirms the hypothesis: there is positive relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs; hence, the null hypotheses is rejected. Further, among the HRMp and competitive strategies, the coefficient is spread between .1 and .3; and based on literature classification of strengths of coefficient (Cohen, 1988; Gerber and Fin, 2005), the relationship between HRMp and CS in NMSEs ranges from weak to moderate positive relationship. Furthermore, in most cases as reported in this section, the p value which shows the statistical significance of the results indicate that correlation follows a consistent pattern less than the identified p value.

## 5.6 OBJECTIVE THREE: TO ESTABLISH THE NIGERIAN CONTEXTUAL FACTORS MODERATING CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NMSES

Objective three identifies the contextual factors that impact on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Based on the literature review and initial exploratory interviews, a number of contextual factors that impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs were built into the questionnaire scale and responses collected from different regions of Nigeria to determine which factors influence CS-HRMp linkage. Questionnaire items 60-72 covered a range of factors, namely quality of education, lack of skilled labour, corruption, personal relationships, family relationships, currency value, culture, religion, labour union, language, government policies, economy and ethnicity. The factors were scored ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale. Due to non-normal distribution of the data, the median was used to identify the central tendency measure (Smothers et al, 1999; Perkins et al, 1999;

McGreavy et al, 2009). Table 40 below shows the central tendency table for the contextual factors.

**Table 40 Statistics for the Median Scores of Contextual Factors (1)**

|  |  | Quality of Education | Lack of Skilled Labour | Corruption | Personal Relationships | Family relationships influencing the level of involvement | Currency Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 322 | 322 | 320 | 323 | 323 | 320 |
|  | Missing | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Median |  | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 |
| Std. Deviation |  | .96612 | 1.02100 | 1.95145 | .78868 | 1.00943 | 1.03405 |

The table 40 above shows that Quality of education impacts on the CS-HRMp linkage and is summarised by the equation: N=322, Mdn=4.0000, SD=.96612; Lack of skilled labour: N=322, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.02100; Corruption (N=320, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.95145); Personal relationships (N=323, Mdn=4.0000, SD=.78868); Family relationships (N=323, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.00943); and Currency value (N=320, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.03405). Based on the score of 1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree, the median value for quality of education aptly shows a central tendency of respondents agreeing to the above factors as having influencing power on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Therefore, the result shows strong support for the impact of quality of Nigeria education, lack of skilled labour, corruption, personal and family relationships, and currency value impact on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.

Similarly, statements regarding the impact of local cultures, labour union, religions, languages, government policies, economy and ethnicity were put to the respondents

(Questionnaire items 60-66). Table 41 below summarises the central measure of the responses to the statements.

**Table 41 Statistics for the Median Score of Contextual Factors (2)**

|  |  | Culture | Labour Union | Religion | Language | Government Policies | Economy | Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 323 | 322 | 320 | 322 | 322 | 323 | 323 |
|  | Missing | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Median |  | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 |
| Std. Deviation |  | .90402 | 1.02660 | 1.98150 | 1.50398 | 2.38258 | .82662 | .94018 |

The statistics 41 above show that the key factors have the same median score, with varying standard deviation. The median score indicated a general affirmation of the influence of these factors on the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, based on the scoring format of the responses. Culture (N=322, Mdn=4.0000, SD=.90402); Labour Union (N=322, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.02660); Religion (N=320, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.98150); Language (N=322, Mdn=4.0000, SD=1.50398), Government policies (N=322, Mdn=4,0000, SD=2.38258); Economy (N=323, Mdn=4.0000, SD=.82662); and Ethnicity (n=323, Mdn=4.0000, SD=.94018). Based on the median test score, the respondents affirm that culture, labour union, religion, language, government policies, economy, and ethnicity impact on CS-HRMp linkage in their organisations.

Further tests were performed to determine the relationship between the contextual factors and CS-HRMp linkage; thus identifying the moderating influence of the factors on the relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs and identifying the factors that

exercise the most influence. The correlation analysis was interpreted at the statistical significance of 0.05. The relationship between CS and HRMp was therefore examined using correlation analysis.

Based on the correlation tests shown in Table 42, culture and religion influence the linkage of competitive strategy and HRMp in NMSEs. The correlation coefficient signifies a positive relationship between the contextual factors tested and the CS-HRMp variables, whilst the strength of the relationship ranges from weak to moderate impact.

**Table 42 Spearman's Correlations - Culture, Religion, CS-HRMp**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Culture | Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho* | *HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . | | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | | | |
| | *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .392 | | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | . | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | 323 | | |
| | *Culture* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .304 | .236 | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | .000 | . | |
| | | *N* | 322 | 323 | 323 | |
| | *Religion* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .174 | .199 | .267 | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .002 | .000 | .000 | . |
| | | *N* | 319 | 320 | 320 | 320 |

Similarly, the governmental policies and labour union were also measured to establish the direction and strength of their relationship with CS and HRMp in NMSEs. Table 43 below presents the correlation result.

**Table 43 Spearman's Correlations - Labour Union, Government Policies, CS-HRMp**

|  |  |  | HRMp | CS | Labour Union | Government Policies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | HRMp | Sig. (2-tailed) | . |  |  |  |
|  |  | N | 322 |  |  |  |
|  | CS | Correlation Coefficient | .392 |  |  |  |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |  |  |
|  |  | N | 322 | 323 |  |  |
|  | Labour Union | Correlation Coefficient | .261 | .305 |  |  |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | . |  |
|  |  | N | 321 | 322 | 322 |  |
|  | Government Policies | Correlation Coefficient | .223 | .233 | .426 |  |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | . |
|  |  | N | 321 | 322 | 321 | 322 |

Based on the correlation result, the relationship between labour union and government policies in CS-HRMp relationship in NMSEs is statistically significant showing a positive relationship. This implies that the Nigerian labour union and governmental policies regarding NMSEs play moderating role in the NMSEs linkage of CS and HRMp.

Further correlation tests examined moderating influence of ethnicity and language differences on organisational efforts to link CS and HRMp in the Nigeria medium-sized enterprises. Table 44 below shows the relationship:

**Table 44 Spearman's Correlations - Language, Ethnicity, CS-HRMp**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Language | Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho* | *HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . | | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | | | |
| | *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .392 | | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | . | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | 323 | | |
| | *Language* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .179 | .220 | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .001 | .000 | . | |
| | | *N* | 321 | 322 | 322 | |
| | *Ethnicity* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .173 | .171 | .414 | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .002 | .002 | .000 | . |
| | | *N* | 322 | 323 | 322 | 323 |

Language and ethnicity show statistically significant positive relationship when measured against CS and HRMp in NMSEs. This suggests that differences in ethnic group and linguistic affinities in Nigeria play an influential role in the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs.

Furthermore, the economy, currency value and corruption factors were also examined. Table 45 below is exhibits the correlation result:

**Table 45 Spearman's Correlations – Economy, Corruption, and Currency Value**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Economy | Corruption | Currency Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | HRMp | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | | | | |
| | CS | Correlation Coefficient | .392 | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 323 | | | |
| | Economy | Correlation Coefficient | .179 | .190 | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .001 | . | | |
| | | N | 322 | 323 | 323 | | |
| | Corruption | Correlation Coefficient | .188 | .085 | .273 | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .130 | .000 | . | |
| | | N | 319 | 320 | 320 | 320 | |
| | Currency Value | Correlation Coefficient | .123 | .111 | .195 | .300 | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .028 | .047 | .000 | .000 | . |
| | | N | 319 | 320 | 320 | 317 | 320 |

Economy and currency value also influences the relationship between CS-HRMp, following from the above correlation result. In addition, corruption is another contextual factors that was examined and it shows that the CS and HRMp linkage in NMSEs is also affected by the pervading corruption issues in the Nigeria society.

Finally, personal and family relationships were measured to establish their relationship with CS and HRMp in NMSEs as shown in Table 46 below:

**Table 46 Spearman's Correlations – Personal and Family Relationships**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Personal Relationships | Family Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho* | *HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . | | | |
| | | *N* | *322* | | | |
| | *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.392* | | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.000* | . | | |
| | | *N* | *322* | *323* | | |
| | *Personal Relationships* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.112* | *.116* | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.044* | *.038* | . | |
| | | *N* | *322* | *323* | *323* | |
| | *Family Relationships* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.002* | *.109* | *.294* | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.966* | *.051* | *.000* | . |
| | | *N* | *322* | *323* | *323* | *323* |

Personal relationships showed positive correlation with CS and HRMp used in NMSEs. This indicates that that personal relationships have moderating influence on the practice of CS and HRMp linkage in NMSEs. In contrast to personal relationship networks, although family relationship shows positive relationship with HRMp, it does not show positive relationship with competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs. Other contextual factors texted that showed no statistical significance are quality of education and lack of skilled labour. Based on the correlation coefficient, culture, labour union and governmental policies showed stronger relationship with CS and HRMp used in the NMSEs than other contextual factors.

## 5.7 OBJECTIVE FOUR: TO DETERMINE THE LEVELS OF CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NMSEs

This objective aims at investigating the level to which CS-HRMp are linked in NMSEs using cross-tabulation analysis to identify the distribution of structural factors that facilitate CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. The levels of integration are differentiated based on the availability of a necessary structure that facilitates the linkage of CS and HRMp. The relationship between CS and HRMp makes it imperative for a consideration of both in their respective formation and implementation stages; and this is facilitated by the HR department (HR manager) and the line management and employees' involvement (Wei, 2006; Abang, 2009; Gulati and Monica, 2016), while presuming the involvement of top management or business owners. Hence, the absence of any of these levels of involvement in the process of formation and implementation of CS-HRMp linkage determines the classification of administrative, one-way, two-way and integrative linkage in NMSEs (Golden and Ramananujam, 1985; Teo, 2000; Abang, 2009). Thus, this objective tests the following hypotheses:

H5

$H_0$ There is no administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

$H_a$ There is administrative linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

H6

$H_0$ There is no one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs

$H_a$ There is one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs

H7

$H_0$ There is no two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

$H_a$ There is two-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

To determine the linkage levels, descriptive statistics were employed to determine the distribution of responses indicating the availability of the structures in the NMSE organisations. To achieve a correct and valid result, the variables relating to line management and employees were recoded into new values; values indicating strongly disagree and disagree were recoded as 'disagree' and shown by the value of 2. Similarly, agree and strongly agree were recoded with the value of 4. For reasons most appropriate to a study, a continuous variable could be transformed and computed into a categorical variable, likewise a categorical variable could be collapsed to create groups that serve the purpose of the study (Pallant, 2013). For this study therefore, the continuous variables line management and employee involvement have been transformed and coded into different variables in order to perform a cross-tabulation identifying the percentage of responses that indicate the various levels of integration. Cross-tabulation serves the descriptive purpose of determining the percentage of responses that identify the various structural factors of integration that determine the level of linkage. Human resource manager, line management and employee involvement were cross-tabulated with one another to present the existence of the levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Table 47 below shows the percentage of NMSEs that have human resource manager and line management involvement.

**Table 47 Human Resource Manager * Line Management Cross-tabulation**

|  |  |  | Line Management | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | No | Yes |  |
| Human Resource Manager | No | Count | 11 | 43 | 66 |
|  |  | % of Total | 3.4% | 13.3% | 20.4% |
|  | Yes | Count | 20 | 201 | 257 |
|  |  | % of Total | 6.2% | 62.2% | 79.6% |
| Total |  | Count | 31 | 244 | 323 |
|  |  | % of Total | 9.6% | 75.5% | 100.0% |

The table 47 above shows that, out of 257 organisations that have HR managers, 62.2% have line management involvement, while 6.2% indicate no line management involvement. Out of the 66 organisations with no HR managers, 13.3% have line management involvement, compared to 3.4% that have no line management involvement. The rest of the percentages relate to those who indicated neither yes nor no to involvement of line management in their organisations.

Similarly, HR management involvement were cross-tabulated with employee involvement to determine the percentage of organisations that have HR management and employee involvement, hence, determining the levels and percentage of organisations belonging to different levels of CS-HRMp linkage. Table 48 below gives a succinct view of the percentages of involvement.

**Table 48 Human Resource Manager * Employee Involvement Cross-tabulation**

|  |  |  | Employee Involvement | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | No | Yes |  |
| Human Resource Manager | No | Count | 14 | 37 | 66 |
|  |  | % of Total | 4.3% | 11.5% | 20.4% |
|  | Yes | Count | 55 | 161 | 257 |
|  |  | % of Total | 17.0% | 49.8% | 79.6% |
| Total |  | Count | 69 | 198 | 323 |
|  |  | % of Total | 21.4% | 61.3% | 100.0% |

Out of the 257 organisations that have HR management involvement, 49.8% involve employees in issues regarding human resource management practices and competitive strategy formulation and implementation; and 17.0% have no employee involvement. Likewise, out of 66 organisations that have no HR managers, 11.5% have employee involvement; whereas 4.3% do not have employee involvement.

Another very important structural factor in the linkage of CS and HRMp which perhaps has often been overlooked in the earlier CS-HRMp linkage is HRM investment (Chapter two). Question 14 of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether there was strong investment in HRM in their organisations. HRM investment variable was then cross-tabulated with the HR management involvement in the organisations to determine the percentage of organisations that have a HR manager and also undertake strong HRM investment. The result is shown in Table 49 below.

**Table 49 Human Resource Manager * HRM Investment Crosstabulation**

|  |  |  | HRM Investment | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | No | Yes |  |
| Human Resource Manager | No | Count | 35 | 31 | 66 |
|  |  | % of Total | 10.9% | 9.7% | 20.6% |
|  | Yes | Count | 31 | 224 | 255 |
|  |  | % of Total | 9.7% | 69.8% | 79.4% |
| Total |  | Count | 66 | 255 | 321 |
|  |  | % of Total | 20.6% | 79.4% | 100.0% |

Out of the 257 organisations that have HR management involvement, 69.8% have strong HRM investment; whereas 9.7% do not have strong HRM investment. Further, out of 66 organisations that have no HR management involvement, 9.7% indicated that their organisations have strong HRM investment, while 10.9% have no strong HRM investment. In this case, absence of a formal HR manager slightly increases the lack of strong HRM investment.

In like manner, line management involvement was examined in relation to employee involvement. This was considered necessary to investigate the involvement of line managers and employees of the same organisation in CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. The percentages for the organisations are presented in Table 50 below:

**Table 50 Line Management * Employee Involvement Crosstabulation**

| | | Employee Involvement | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Line Management | No | 4 | 15 | 31 |
| | | 1.2% | 4.6% | 9.6% |
| | Yes | 59 | 161 | 244 |
| | | 18.3% | 49.8% | 75.5% |
| Total | | 69 | 198 | 323 |
| | | 21.4% | 61.3% | 100.0% |

Out of the 244 organisations that involve line management in CS-HRMp linkage, 49.8% also involve employees; whereas 18.3% do not involve employees in the linkage of CS and HRMp formulation. Out of 31 organisations that affirmed that there was no line management involvement, 4.6% involve employees, and 1.2% do not involve employees in CS-HRMp linkage in their organisations. The rest of the organisations neither affirmed nor negated the involvement of employees or line management in the consideration of issues of CS and HRMp formulation.

With regard to line management involvement and strong HRM investment and line management involvement, the relationship shows varying percentages of responses. The cross-tabulation table, Table 51, below succinctly shows this relationship.

**Table 51 HRM Investment * Line Management Cross-tabulation**

| | | | Line Management | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | No | Yes | Total |
| HRM Investment | No | Count | 5 | 49 | 66 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 7.6% | 74.2% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Line Management | 16.1% | 20.2% | 20.6% |
| | | % of Total | 1.6% | 15.3% | 20.6% |
| | Yes | Count | 26 | 193 | 255 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 10.2% | 75.7% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Line Management | 83.9% | 79.8% | 79.4% |
| | | % of Total | 8.1% | 60.1% | 79.4% |
| Total | | Count | 31 | 242 | 321 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 9.7% | 75.4% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Line Management | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % of Total | 9.7% | 75.4% | 100.0% |

In 15.3% of 66 organisations where there is strong HRM investment, there is also line management involvement; whereas 1.6% have no line management involvement in CS-HRMp linkage. Correspondingly, out of 255 organisations that strongly invest in HRM, 60.1% also use the line management devolvement in forging a synergistic linkage of CS and HRMp in their organisations.

Finally, HRM investment and employee involvement were compared. There was significant difference in the percentage of the organisations that invest strongly in

HRM and the level or employee involvement in CS-HRMp linkage in respondents'
organisations.

**Table 52 HRM Investment * Employee Involvement Cross-tabulation**

| | | | Employee Involvement | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | No | Yes | Total |
| HRM Investment | No | Count | 16 | 36 | 66 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 24.2% | 54.5% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Employee Involvement | 23.2% | 18.4% | 20.6% |
| | | % of Total | 5.0% | 11.2% | 20.6% |
| | Yes | Count | 53 | 160 | 255 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 20.8% | 62.7% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Employee Involvement | 76.8% | 81.6% | 79.4% |
| | | % of Total | 16.5% | 49.8% | 79.4% |
| Total | | Count | 69 | 196 | 321 |
| | | % within HRM Investment | 21.5% | 61.1% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Employee Involvement | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % of Total | 21.5% | 61.1% | 100.0% |

The results presented in Table 52 above show that, out of the 255 organisations that
adopt strong HRM investment, 49.8% also involve employees in strategic linkage of
the types of competitive strategy and practices used to manage employees, while 16.5%
do not engage employees in the dynamics of CS-HRMp linkage. Further, out of 66
organisations, 11.2% adopt employee involvement and 5.0% do not engage employees
in the process of linkage.

Based on the above-presented cross-tabulation analysis, the percentage to which each of the four main structural factors were analysed, organisations that have no HR manager, line management and employee involvement, and HRM investment have been explored. Further analysis of the crosstab output showed also the percentage of organisations that have either all or some of the structures and grouped them according to the three levels identified. Table 53 below presents a summary of the findings.

**Table 53 Levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs**

| Structural Factors In NMSEs | Administrative linkage | One-way linkage | Two-way linkage |
|---|---|---|---|
| HR Manager Involvement % | No HR Manager 20.4% | HR Manager Involvement 79.6% | HR Manager Involvement 79.6% |
| Line Management Involvement % | No Line Management Involvement 9.6% | Line Management Involvement 61.3% | Line Management Involvement 75.5% |
| Employee Involvement % | No Employee Involvement 9.6% | No Employee Involvement 21.4% | Employee Involvement 61.3% |
| HR Investment % | No Strong HRM Investment 20.6% | No Strong HRM Investment 20.6% | Strong HRM Investment 79.4% |

Table 53 above indicates the percentage to which the structural factors implicated in the linkage of CS and HRMp are represented in NMSEs. Based on the cross-tabulation analysis performed on the key structural variables, different ranges of percentages were identified in relationship with other categorical variables.

Administrative linkage consists of organisations that had no HR manager and whose HRM functions were united with the organisation's top management function. At the administrative level, the line management and employees are not involved in the

process of CS-HRMp linkage; HRM investment is limited; hence a very weak relationship is forged between CS and HRMp in such organisations. Out of the respondent organisations, 20.4% had no HR managers but had their human resource management functions performed by designated offices united with the organisation's top management board, whilst 9.6% of the respondents had no line management involvement or employee involvement. Similarly, 20.6% did not have strong HRM investment; hence, the hypothesis: CS-HRMp is linked administratively in NMSEs is affirmed.

In addition, out of respondent organisations that had HR manager involvement, 21.4% had no employee involvement and 20.6% had no strong HRM investment. Therefore, with HR manager and line management involvement, but with no employee involvement and lacking in strong HRM investment, the organisations fall into the one-way level of CS-HRMp linkage to which HRMp is crafted and tailored to suit the needs of CS. Consequently, the hypothesis - there is one-way linkage of CS-HRMp in NMSEs - is asserted.

The cross-tabulation analysis conducted shows that the majority of the respondents affirmed the availability of a HR manager, line management, and employee involvement in their organisations as well as strong HRM investment. Based on analysis, 79.6% NMSE organisations investigated indicated HR management involvement, 75.5% had line management involvement, 61.3% involved employees and 79.4% invested strongly in HRM. As such, the majority of the NMSEs in Nigeria fall in the two-way linkage (Refer to Chapter two), thus the hypothesis - there is two two-way linkages of CS-HRMp in NMSEs affirmed.

## 5.8 OBJECTIVE FIVE: TO MEASURE THE OUTCOME OF CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NMSES

The purpose of this objective is to test the relationship between the outcomes and CS-HRMp linkage in organisations using correlation coefficient. Spearman's correlations coefficient is used for non-normal data to test the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Pallant, 2013). Based on the purpose of this objective, spearman's correlation test was performed to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between CS-HRMp linkage and the various outcomes of the linkage namely; job satisfaction, employee commitment, employee motivation, quality of products, improved employee competence, fair treatment of employees, business performance, management cost and employee retention (questionnaire items 51-59). Spearman's correlation test was performed therefore, to test the following hypotheses:

$H_0$ *The linkage of CS-HRMp is not positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs*

$H_a$ *The linkage of CS-HRMp is positively related to organisational outcomes in NMSEs.*

The number of cases vary from one variable to another due to the exclusion of pairwise cases, where there were cases of missing data (Field, 2009), and the direction of the correlation is determined by the indication of negative and positive signs before the figures in the table (Bryman, 2012). The negative sign implies that a high score on one variable necessarily means a low score on the other variable. The value for the set of correction is indicated by 'rho value' in accordance with the Spearman's correlation

coefficient adopted for this analysis. In determining the strength of the relationship, this study adopts Cohen's (1988) guidelines for determining the strength of relationships, because this gives the study the opportunity to link the objective of this analysis with the rest of the objectives determining the extent of linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs. The study follows the guidelines: rho = .10 to .29 (small or weak relationship), rho = .30 to .49 (medium or moderate relationship), and rho = .50 to 1.0 (large or strong relationship). Further, the significance level is reported at the level of 0.05 (p<0.05).

The relationship between CS-HRMp and the various outcomes are presented in tables below. Table 54 below shows that the correlation coefficient signifies a positive relationship between CS-HRMp and employee motivation and competence whilst the strength of the relationship is weak ranging from .246 to .265.

**Table 54 Spearman's Correlation – Motivation and Competence**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Motivation | Competence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho* | *HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . | | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | | | |
| | *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .392 | | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | | | |
| | | *N* | 322 | | | |
| | *Motivation* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .265 | .246 | | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | .000 | | |
| | | *N* | 320 | 321 | | |
| | *Competence* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .253 | .252 | .593 | |
| | | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | | *N* | 319 | 320 | 319 | 320 |

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Similarly, spearman's correlation was performed to establish the direction and strength of their relationship with CS-HRMp, fair treatment of employees and improved quality of products in NMSEs. Table 55 below presents the correlation result.

**Table 55 Spearman's Correlation – Fairness and Quality Products**

|  |  | HRMp | CS | Fairness | Quality |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . |  |  |  |
|  | *N* | *322* |  |  |  |
| *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.392* |  |  |  |
|  | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.000* | . |  |  |
|  | *N* | *322* | *323* |  |  |
| *Fairness* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.256* | *.177* |  |  |
|  | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.000* | *.002* | . |  |
|  | *N* | *318* | *319* | *319* |  |
| *Quality* | *Correlation Coefficient* | *.297* | *.199* | *.362* |  |
|  | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | *.000* | *.000* | *.000* | . |
|  | *N* | *319* | *320* | *317* | *320* |

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Based on the correlation result, the relationship between CS-HRMp and fair treatment of employees in NMSEs is statistically significant showing a positive relationship. This implies that the linkage between CS and HRMp contribute to fairness of practices and management between employers and employees in NMSEs. In the same vein, the positive relationship between CS-HRMp and quality of product signify an improvement in the product quality and quality assurance in NMSEs.

Further correlation tests examined the relationship of CS-HRMp linkage on employee satisfaction in the performance of their job requirements and their commitment to organisational goals. Table 56 below presents the correlation result expressing the relationship between employee commitment and CS-HRMp linkage.

**Table 56 Spearman's Correlation – Commitment**

|  |  | *HRMp* | *CS* | *Commitment* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . | | |
| | *N* | 322 | | |
| *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .392 | | |
| | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | . | |
| | *N* | 322 | 323 | |
| *Commitment Correlation* | *Coefficient* | .252 | .253 | |
| | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | .000 | . |
| | *N* | 321 | 322 | 322 |

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

From the table 56 above which shows the outcome of correlation between employee commitment and CS-HRMp, the direction of the relationship indicates a positive contribution of CS-HRMp linkage on employee commitment in NMSEs. The coefficient however does not suggest a strong relationship.

Similarly, the linkage of CS and HRMp was measured to determine whether the linkage positively impact on the job satisfaction in NMSEs. The result of the correlation test as shown in table 57  gives an indication that HRMp leads to improved job satisfaction in NMSEs. However, the tests show that the relationship between CS and job satisfaction is not statistically significant at .102; as such, it shows that the HRMp variable impacts on the level of job satisfaction in NMSEs in contrast to CS.

**Table 57 Spearman's Correlation – Job Satisfaction**

| | | HRMp | CS | Job Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | HRMp | . | | |
| | | 322 | | |
| | CS | .392 | | |
| | | .000 | . | |
| | | 322 | 323 | |
| | Job Satisfaction | .155 | .091 | |
| | | .005 | .102 | . |
| | | 322 | 323 | 323 |

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Furthermore, business performance and management cost were measured to show the relationship between CS-HRMp and improved business performance and increase in management costs in NMSEs. Table 58 below presents the result of the spearman's correlation test.

**Table 58 Spearman's Correlation – Business Performance and Management Costs**

| | | | HRMp | CS | Business performance increased | Management Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | HRMp | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | | | |
| | | N | 322 | | | |
| | CS | Correlation Coefficient | .392 | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . | | |
| | | N | 322 | 323 | | |
| | Business performance increased | Correlation Coefficient | .296 | .154 | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .006 | . | |
| | | N | 321 | 322 | 322 | |
| | Management Cost | Correlation Coefficient | .221 | .193 | .201 | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .001 | .000 | . |
| | | N | 321 | 322 | 322 | 322 |

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Based on the Table 58 above, the linkage of CS-HRMp is positively related to improved business performance and increase in management cost in NMSEs. Though positively correlated, the coefficient ranging from .154 and .296 does not show a very strong relationship.

Finally, to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between CS-HRMp and lower employee retention in NMSEs, correlation tests was performed using spearman's correlation. Table 59 below presents the summary of the correlation test.

**Table 59 Spearman's Correlation – Lower Employee Retention**

|  |  |  | HRMp | CS | Lower Employee Retention |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Spearman's rho* | *HRMp* | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | . |  |  |
|  |  | *N* | 322 |  |  |
|  | *CS* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .387 |  |  |
|  |  | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .000 | . |  |
|  |  | *N* | 322 | 323 |  |
|  | *Lower Employee Retention* | *Correlation Coefficient* | .141 | .154 |  |
|  |  | *Sig. (2-tailed)* | .011 | .006 | . |
|  |  | *N* | 322 | 323 | 323 |

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Although the result of the correlation test shows that the relationship between CS-HRMp and lower employee retention indicates a positive relationship, the strength of the relationship is one of the weakest among other organisational outcomes that are associated with CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs; second only to job satisfaction.

Summarily, the results of the correlation tests show that there is positive relationship between CS-HRMp and organisational outcomes ranging from .1 to .3 which affirms the hypothesis: there is positive relationship between CS-HRMp and organisational outcomes in NMSEs; hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The strength of the relationship, based on literature classification of strengths of coefficient (Cohen, 1988; Gerber and Fin, 2005), the relationship between CS-HRMp linkage and organisational outcomes in NMSEs ranges from weak to moderate positive relationship.

## 5.9 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the results of quantitative data analysis based on the responses collected from managers and HR professionals in NMSEs. Details of statistical tests used were also outlined in this chapter. The analysis has been carried out according to the objectives and hypotheses guiding this study. Findings indicate that NMSEs adopt competitive strategies and HRMp that suit their business context. The findings also indicate a positive relationship between CS and HRMp, and establish the key contextual factors that impact on the linkage of both components in NMSEs. Finally, three levels of linkage were identified and a number of outcomes of the linkage were examined.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion of the results of quantitative results in relation to existing literature in CS-HRMp linkage. Discussion undertaken in this section highlights the types of competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs and discusses the relationship between CS-HRMp in NMSEs. Further, the influence of contextual factors on the linkage is presented in this chapter. The final sections of this chapter undertake a detailed discussion of the levels and outcomes of the linkage in NMSEs and present the model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, based on the objectives of the study.

### 6.1 COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES USED IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

In reference to objective one, this study established the competitive strategies and HRMp that are adopted in NMSEs. Competitive strategies are: advertising, ICT, B2B, cost leadership, differentiation, quality, valued-based strategy, and personal relationships. The kinds of relationship between the competitive strategies mentioned above and HRMp were determined as: RBV and DC. Previous studies (Porter, 1985; Schuler and Jackson, 1988; Grant, 1991; Akwei, 2007; Teece et al, 2014) have highlighted the impact of product market strategies on people management in organisations and the link between RBV and DC approaches to utilization of available resources to achieve competitive advantage. Product market strategies – cost

leadership, differentiation, and focus (quality) – show differing practices tailored to achievement of the generic strategies (Schuler, 1992; Hsieh and Chen, 2011; Wang and Verma, 2012). This implies that competitive strategies adopted in organisations invariably have an effect on the choice or HRMp; likewise, HRMp plays a significant role in the choice of competitive strategies. NMSEs use product market strategies (Chapter two), however, they also adopt other context-specific competitive strategies.

Although NMSEs adopt product market strategies as indicated above, thus influencing the practice of HRM in the firms, there are specific strategies peculiar to the context that are adopted which give the organisations competitive advantage in the Nigerian context. ICT, B2B, advertising and personal relationships are considered by NMSEs to be strategies that afford them advantage over rivals, in contrast to popular mainstream CS literature (Treacy and Wiersma, 1995; Rapp et al, 2014; North and Varvakis, 2016). Utilizing the advantages of ICT in a low technology emerging economy, such as Nigeria, is seen as a very useful advantage by NMSEs to drive their competitive advantage. Likewise, relational strategies utilizing B2B and personal relationships feature immensely in the sector as effective strategies to engage with customer intimacy, employee belongingness and business networking. In the same line, the impact of advertising and the use of advertising media to gain advantage in the market sector inform the NMSEs' consideration of coherent advertising strategies as a vital feature of their competitive advantage.

Recent studies (Uchegbulem et al, 2015) in the broad spectrum of SMEs in Nigeria in relation to competitive strategies have often identified the uniqueness of the Nigerian business context in relation to the choice of strategies in small and medium-sized enterprises. ICT, product features and customer base are some key strategic approaches that have been identified as guaranteeing competitive advantage for the

Nigeria's SME spectrum (Oyedijo, 2012; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014; Uchegbulem et al, 2015). Adding to these factors, the findings of this study suggest that NMSEs utilize a combined use of ICT and relational strategies of B2B, personal relationships and advertising to promote their product features and engage customer intimacy, which in turn drives their competitive advantage in the sector.

Similarly, studies have focused on the impact of RBV approach on the development, adoption and application of HRMp in organisations. RBV emphasises the value of the resources as inimitable, rare and non-substitutable (Laosirihongthong, 2014; Rashidirad, 2015; Tebboune, 2016). Approaching the contents of CS and HRMp from an RBV perspective implies a unique acquisition of human resources, a well-tailored training of and continual enhancement of internally developed human resources to create a unique repertoire of required skills and capabilities of an organisation (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Ulrich, 1991; Pee and Kankanhalli, 2009; Pertusa-Ortega, 2010; Bromiley and Rau, 2014). Results of this study have identified a strong emphasis on quality of employees, the rare and unique skills of employees and utilization of human resources in driving competitive advantage in NMSEs following the adoption of RBV in NMSEs (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Ulrich, 1991; Pee and Kankanhalli, 2009; Pertusa-Ortega, 2010; Bromiley and Rau, 2014).

Furthermore, the findings of this study showed evidence of a strong approach to reconfiguring existing resources in order to adapt to changes in the external environment; hence, the DC approach to the strategy and resource management is evident in NMSEs. DC literature (Teece et al, 1997; Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Akwei, 2007; Teece, 2009; Schilke, 2014; Helfat and Peteraf, 2015; Lin, 2016; Jeng, 2016; Finch, 2016) suggests that the turbulent and ever-changing business environment requires a unique re-consideration of organisational capabilities in order to create a

system that supports reconfiguration of capabilities in firms. The Nigerian business environment, being one of the emerging economy contexts that are most likely susceptible to global changes (Akinyele and Ayodotun, 2015), shows evidence of adoption of the DC approach to the contents of competitive strategies; and likewise towards management of human resources.

In CS-HRMp literature (Budhwar, 2000; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008), the format of documentation of competitive strategies has been suggested to be in written format for easier understanding of the organisation's strategic contents and evaluation of the relationship between its CS and HR contents. However, findings from this study suggest that formal and written documentation does not always apply in all contexts and to all organisations. Section 5.3 shows that competitive strategies are documented in written, unwritten, and both written and unwritten formats in NMSEs. The majority of respondents have their competitive strategy in both written and unwritten formats (64.3%), whereas the rest have either written format only (22.7%) or unwritten format only (13%). In addition, the age of the organisations plays a very important role in the documentation format of the competitive strategy. Following the findings (Section 5.3), the noticeable pattern indicates that organisations that have been actively involved in business for over 25 years have the details of their competitive strategies in written format, whereas organisations less than 25 years old have their competitive strategies either in written or unwritten form, or in both written and unwritten. The highest number of organisations with unwritten documentation falls within one to five years of active existence. Evidently, therefore, age of an organisation has an impact on the application of competitive strategy and the form of documentation in NMSEs.

Regarding HRMp, there are a variety of people management practices that have been adopted in organisations for the management of human resources, as found in the literature (Pfeffer, 1998; Combs, 2006; Lertxundi and Landerta, 2011; McClean and Collins, 2011; Clinton and Guest, 2013; Chatzoglu, 2014; Naidu et al, 2014; Park et al, 2015; Li et al, 2015; Srivastava, 2016; Masum et al, 2016; Belizon, 2016); and the choice of practices used to manage employees often depends on the theoretical perspectives that inform this choice. In reference to NMSEs, this study investigated the adoption of HRMp used to manage the employees. The following practices were identified as used in NMSEs: practices supporting employees' social welfare, empowerment, individual career development, recruitment practices, training practices, disciplinary practices, performance evaluation, salary structures, and employee retention practices. Further to the practices mentioned above, evidence of the four theoretical perspectives that underpin the practices was also found. As such, the best practice, best fit, bundle practice approach and context-based perspectives were shown as influencing NMSEs' choice of the above practices. Although the practices are detailed as presented above, the manner of application could differ among organisations through particular theoretical and contextual perspectives (Abang, 2009).

Furthermore, strong evidence shows that disciplinary practices and practices supporting social welfare of employees outside the limitations of workplace activities occupy an important position in the practice of employee management in NMSEs. In contrast to wider SHRM literature (Lertxundi and Landerta, 2011; McClean and Collins, 2011; Clinton and Guest, 2013; Chatzoglu, 2014; Naidu et al, 2014; Park et al, 2015; Li et al, 2015; Srivastava, 2016) and Nigeria SHRM literature (Ayanda and Sani, 2011; Sani, 2012; Olusola et al, 2015), this study's findings suggest that disciplinary practices (see Section 4.4.2) were adopted in NMSEs as part of core

practices of human resource management, not just to moderate employees' behaviour but to directly improve employee output. Perhaps this is due to the contextual emphasis given to the need to directly observe and supervise employees (Section 2.5.5). Similarly, practices supporting employee social life/welfare recorded a median value of 4.0 on a scoring format of 1-5 on a Likert scale. This indicates very strong affirmation from the respondents towards the adoption of such practices. The strong emphasis on the social life of the employees is perhaps related to the role of family tendency in workplaces in Nigeria, as noted in previous literature (Webster, 2006; Akintayo, 2010; Akanji, 2012).

Regarding the theoretical underpinnings, previous literature (Pfeffer, 1998; Lertxundi and Landerta, 2011; McClean and Collins, 2011; Naidu et al, 2014) identified the use of best practice approach, best fit and contextual HRMp in Nigerian organisations. The best fit approach is shown in the organisations' attempt to adopt and apply HRMp in ways that best suit the institutional purposes and goals (Badejo, 2015). Some organisations adopt context-based practices or context-determined ways of applying the practices in order to adapt to the cultural and societal demands of Nigerian society (Ugheoke, 2015). Ojokuku (2015) previously identified evidence of adoption of best practice HRMp in NMSEs even though the literature did not clearly suggest the reasons for this adoption and had no concrete evidence to prove it. Previous Nigeria SHRM literature identified some key theoretical perspectives that influence the choice of HRMp in Nigerian context (Badejo, 2015; Ojokuku, 2015; Ugheoke, 2015); however, HRMp bundling perspective has received minimal discussion. Questions relating to the planned bundle approach to HRMp in NMSEs were not clearly addressed. Hence, this study also measured the adoption of the configurational theoretical perspective of HRMp in NMSEs. The questionnaire responses show strong

evidence of adoption of a configurational theoretical perspective in NMSEs that has not been previously shown in SHRM literature on NMSEs. Therefore, evidence shows that the four theoretical perspectives – best practice, best fit, context-based and configurational perspectives – inform the choice of people management practices in NMSEs. Based on the differences in standard deviation, the best fit approach is clearly the most favoured theoretical perspective supporting the adoption of certain HRMp in NMSEs, whereas the best practices is the least considered perspective in HRMp adoption and application.

Regarding the format of documentation of HRMp, previous CS-HRMp linkage literature (Budhwar, 2000; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008) suggests that HRMp have to be presented in written form, just like the competitive strategies and that this is an indication of a planned and deliberately organized approach to HRMp (Aryee and Budhwar, 2008). This, however, is not the case in all contexts; whereas some contexts are more formal, others might be less formal. In the context of NMSEs, a range of documentation format is found, from written to unwritten and both written-unwritten formats. The majority of the NMSEs (65%) surveyed predominantly have their HRMp documentation in both written and unwritten format, 24% have it in written form only, and 10.2% in unwritten form only. While most organisations that have been in operation for six years and above have both written and unwritten forms of HRMp documentation, most organisations that have been in active operation for 25 years and above have only a written form of documentation. In the same vein, the majority of responses for organisations that fall within the range of one to five years of operation indicated that they have the unwritten form of HRMp documentation only. Based on the form of documentation, it is arguable to say that age of an organisation and how long the organisation has been in active existence go a long way to determine the

format of its HRMp documentation. Therefore, using the criteria of documentation form to determine CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs might not be justifiable. Rather, this shows that the age/how long an organisation has been in existence impacts on the linkage of CS and HRMp in the context of Nigeria. Furthermore, the documentation format might not imply the lack of adoption and application of consistent people management practices in an organisation. Justifiable reasons for use of both written and unwritten formats could effectively be linked to the key contextual factors of language differences, quality of education and lack of skilled employees noted in Section 5.3 above.

Finally, the evidence of this finding supports the alternative hypothesis which states that: competitive strategies and human resource management practices are adopted and applied in NMSEs. This also fulfils the first of objective of this study, establishing that CS and HRMp are adopted that suit the Nigerian context of NMSEs.

## 6.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

CS-HRMp linkage is established on the relationship between competitive strategies adopted by an organisation and the set of practices used in managing its workforce. Previous literature (Bird and Beechler, 1995; Budhwar, 2002; Wei, 2006; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009; Lee et al, 2010; Zhang, 2011; Vernon and Brewster, 2012; Buciniene and Kazlauskaite, 2012; Cascio and Boudreau, 2012) therefore suggests a consideration of the relationship between the two key components in assessing the interaction of CS and HRMp in organisations. The extent to which issues

of competitive strategy are considered in the formulation of HRMp and vice versa is clearly seen in the level of relationship of both concepts (Wei, 2006; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009).

This study tested individual competitive strategies with the HRMp and measured the relationship between both components using the Spearman's correlation coefficient (Section 5.6). The outcome of the Spearman's correlation showed positive correlation between the set of competitive strategies and HRMp that were measured. Previous SHRM studies in Nigeria have given minimum emphasis to CS-HRMp linkage (Abang, 2009; Lee et al, 2010). This study found out that the CS-HRMp relationship was measured and shows a positive relationship, although the strength of the relationship is moderate.

Management practices in NMSEs supporting employees' welfare and social life outside of the workplace was measured to determine the relationship with the competitive strategies. The outcome of the correlation coefficient indicated a positive relationship with one of the competitive strategies. This implies that NMSEs create a positive linkage between practices supporting social welfare of employees and the competitive strategies. However, given the overall score of Spearman's correlation coefficient, it signifies that the relationship is a weak positive relationship.

Furthermore, the use of disciplinary actions and practices to control employee behaviour might seem a very common practice in organisations because most organisations have rules and regulations put in place to influence or control employee behaviour. Likewise, this study shows that NMSEs have disciplinary practices that are used to control employee behaviour. However, where they would appear to serve the same purpose as controlling and maintaining acceptable behaviour, the disciplinary

practices are deliberately used to directly influence employee performance; hence, failure to achieve a desired output per period is followed with specific action that negatively reinforces employee work rate (Section 4. 4.2). Based on the correlations coefficient, disciplinary measures is positively related to seven out of the eight competitive strategies measured though the relationship is weak. Notably therefore, disciplinary practices occupy a very prime position in achieving organisational goals in NMSEs.

In NMSEs, employee salaries are considered in the formulation and implementation of competitive strategies as clearly shown in its relationship with competitive strategies. Salary structures was measured to determine its relationship with competitive strategies (Section 5.4) and showed a positive relationship four of the competitive strategy variables namely; B2B, CL, VBS, QuP. However, key product/market competitive strategies such as differentiation did not show a positive relationship with salary structures. As such, the determination of what salaries are paid to employees in NMSEs might not strictly be dependent on utilizing salary differences to gain advantage over competitors.

Individual career path development is also a key practice of NMSEs and is positively related to the competitive strategies, excluding cost leadership. The individual career development path prioritizes the development of core skills and abilities and support of employees professionally and socially. This clearly reflects on the positive relationship between individual career development approach and other competitive strategies in NMSEs including: differentiation, personal relationship, VBS and B2B.

Similarly, the recruitment practices variable was measured to determine the direction of the relationship with competitive strategies. It was shown to be positively related to

the competitive strategies, excluding cost leadership. Recruitment practices in NMSEs are driven by the usage of appropriate methods of reaching the required pool of potential employees via ICT and advertising tools. The relationship between recruitment practices and value-based strategy, quality approach, differentiation, RBV, and DC indicates NMSEs' commitment to ensuring that the most appropriate candidates are employed in suitable positions in their organisations (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009; Section 4.4.2). A positive relationship between recruitment practices and value-based and quality-based strategy denotes that NMSEs employ workers whose skills offer greater value and higher-quality products (Ma and Allen, 2009). Notably, establishing a relationship between recruitment practices and differentiation strategy ensures that candidates with unique skills and abilities that drive the differentiation strategy of the organisation are employed. Further, RBV and DC approaches place importance on the uniqueness, rarity, flexibility, non-substitutability, and skills of prospective employees; hence, the focal point would be the role the prospective employees would play in the NMSE organisations.

Akin to the relationship between recruitment practices and competitive strategies, training practices in NMSEs are positively correlated with all the competitive strategies, except cost leadership. Training practices are positively related to advertising, ICT, B2B, differentiation, quality, personal relationships and value-based strategy, as well the RBV and DC approaches to competitive strategy. The relationship between training and aforementioned competitive strategies in NMSEs represents a clear interpretation of training needs and practices in the light of the contribution of employees' acquired skills to the implementation of competitive strategies (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Chan et al, 2004; Section 4.4.2).

Performance evaluation plays a very important role in ensuring that employee and business performance are in line with organisational goals (Yuan and Woodman, 2010); as such, the relationship between performance evaluation and competitive strategies cannot be over-emphasised in NMSEs. The measurement of performance evaluation practices with competitive strategies showed a significant positive relationship; however, cost leadership strategy is not positively correlated with performance evaluation practices. Value-based strategy showed a stronger relationship with performance evaluation in NMSEs to indicate the high emphasis placed by the organisations on the role of constant employee evaluation to achieve greater value for business and competitive advantage. The positive relationship between performance evaluation practices and the approaches to the contents of competitive strategy, namely RBV and DC, points to the emphasis on employee performance duly assessed by employees' skills, ability and competencies (Section 4.4.2).

Employee retention practices showed a positive relationship with the fewest competitive strategies in NMSEs. Value-based strategy, differentiation, personal relationships were the key competitive strategies that were positively related to employee retention. Further, employee retention is positively correlated with the approaches to the content of strategy, namely RBV and DC. In relation to differentiation, creation of values and utilizing of vital relationships for an organisation's competitive advantage, employee retention practices contribute to long-term development of required employee competencies, and maintaining a regular supply of expertise in creation of business value for NMSEs.

Another HRMp that was measured to ascertain its relationship with competitive strategies was empowerment. Empowerment refers to the involvement of employees

and the allocation to them of a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility in dealing with issues relating to work in the workplace (Grigg, 2010; Armache, 2013). As a practice of managing employees in the workplace, it is exceptionally important at the implementation stages of competitive strategies (Grigg, 2010). Empowerment practices in NMSEs are positively correlated with seven out of the 10 competitive strategy variables measured, namely ICT, B2B, RBV, DC, differentiation, quality and value-based strategies in NMSEs. NMSEs therefore place high emphasis on achievement of their organisational goals via the allocation of reasonable autonomy to employees. However, empowerment in NMSEs is mostly related to the implementation stage rather than to the formulation of competitive strategies stage (Section 4.4.2).

In addition to the HRMp investigated with reference to their relationship with competitive strategies, four distinct theoretical perspectives underpinning the adoption of the individual HRMp in NMSEs were measured to the identify the degree to which they inform the choice of practices adopted. The theoretical perspectives are: best practice, best fit, context-based and bundle approach. Whichever perspective an organisation deems appropriate and/or adopts as informing its choice of HRMp, it is important that the set of HRMp and competitive strategy are linked to create a synergy of positive relationships between the practices in the organisation.

Best practice suggests a universalistic approach that sees a set of HRMp applicable across organisations generating the same outcomes irrespective of organisational differences (Pfeffer, 1998; Combs, 2006). In the case context of NMSEs, a best practice approach had a positive relationship with eight out of the 10 competitive strategies measured, excluding cost leadership and personal relationships. Similarly, best fit HRMp practice is a theoretical perspective that suggests that HRMp adopted

in an organisation suit the particular peculiarities of the adopting organisation (Kaufman, 2011). Findings from this study indicated that best fit HRMp practices correlated with competitive strategies and showed a positive relationship with seven out of the 10 competitive strategies, excluding differentiation, value-based and quality-based competitive strategies. Further, findings suggested that context-based HRMp, which is a theoretical perspective that suggests that the choice of HRMp is determined by specific cultural and societal contexts, had a positive relationship with eight out of the 10 competitive strategies. Finally, the configurational approach was positively related with nine out of the 10 competitive strategies, excluding cost leadership. Therefore, the four theoretical perspectives influence the choice of HRMp in NMSEs and have a positive relationship with the competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs. As such, NMSEs that are influenced by different theoretical perspectives or a combination of theoretical approaches show a linkage of CS and HRMp irrespective of the theoretical perspectives, though varying in the number of competitive strategies that show a positive relationship. Whereas, best fit practices show a relationship to the fewest competitive strategies (seven), context-based and best practices show a relationship with eight competitive strategies, and the configurational approach shows a relationship with the highest number of competitive strategies (nine). Notwithstanding the differences in the number of competitive strategies positively correlated with the theories, a more reasonable approach to the relationship would be to understand the influence of the theoretical perspectives on the choice of HRMp adopted in NMSEs.

Cost leadership had the least relationship among the competitive strategies with HRMp and theoretical underpinnings that were investigated. This is an indication that NMSEs minimally subscribe to the cost leadership strategic approach; as such, even

though cost leadership is adopted, its application is less effectively linked with the choice of HRMp adopted in NMSEs.

Furthermore, the relationship between the HRMp and competitive strategies shows a range of rho coefficient of .120 to .360, and, bearing in mind the Cohen (1988) determination of strength of the coefficient. Cohen (1988) .10 to .29 (small or weak relationship), .30 to .49 (medium or moderate relationship), and rho = .50 to 1.0 (large or strong relationship). As such, although there is a positive relationship between the HRMp and competitive strategy in NMSEs, the findings suggest the relationship is weak to moderate.

## 6.3 KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS MODERATING CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

The third objective of this study establishes the moderating contextual factors in the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs. The influence of key contextual factors that affect the dynamics of establishing a relationship between the competitive strategies and HRMp was established outlining the following contextual factors: culture, labour union, religious values, language differences, quality of education, lack of skilled labour, corruption, personal relationships, government policies, economy, ethnicity, age of organisation, gender differences, and currency value.

Recently, emphasis on contextual approaches to CS-HRMp has increased in SHRM studies (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Chang et al, 2005; Abang, 2009; Emeti, 2012; Liang et al, 2012; Kaufman, 2015; Beer et al, 2015; Altarawneh, 2015: Gupta, 2016; Pereira and Fontinha, 2016). Contextual SHRM studies argue that society and cultural

variables serve to moderate the adoption and application of SHRM theory; hence, the understanding, approaches and linkages of competitive strategy variables and human resource management practice variables are moderated by unique contextual factors peculiar to the context of application. Therefore, to properly understand the practice of CS-HRMp linkage in different contexts, it is paramount to understand the underlying contextual factors (Lau and Hang-Yue, 2004; Festing, 2012; Morley et al, 2016). Notably, earlier models of CS-HRMp linkage were developed along the lines of contextual studies utilizing data derived from particular contexts to study the phenomenon of the relationship between CS and HRMp. Interestingly, more recent models and literature (Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Kaufman, 2015; Morley et al, 2016) have continued to assess the role of factors peculiar to the context of adoption and practices of a wide range of SHRM theories.

Chapter two of this study undertook an examination of previous models to develop a theoretical framework for the study. The models examined outline a number of contextual factors implicated in forging a relationship of the CS and HRMp in organisations. Beer et al (1984) identified stakeholders' interests, government policies, workforce skills management, employee groups, labour market and unions, task technology, laws and societal values. Accordingly, the Harvard group were arguably the first group of SHRM researchers to introduce social values as a moderating factor in CS-HRMp linkage literature. In addition to the moderating factors suggested by Beer et al, Hendry and Pettigrew (1998) suggested that socio-economic factors and organisational structure vitally influence the formulation of an organisation's strategic contents and its employee management practices.

Whereas the above-outlined moderating factors were identified in studies that investigated the phenomenon in European and American contexts, researchers in

developing economies are increasingly becoming aware of the implication of contexts in SHRM research. A range of studies carried out in the emerging economy context identified a number of factors peculiar to the practice of CS-HRMp linkage in emerging economies. Wei et al (2001) identified strong corporate culture and structure as the most influencing factor in SHRM processes in China, while firm size and environment were suggested as moderating factors in Greece (Panayotopoulou et al, 2003). While in some contexts, the moderating factors have been identified as mainly financial and market performance (Chan et al, 2004), sources of firm growth have more recently been identified as more influential in developing economies due to the ever-increasing influence of globalization (Wei et al, 2011; Chang et al, 2005).

In the African context, it has been clearly identified that SHRM research is on a low level compared to the developed economy context (Zoogah and Zoogah, 2014; Zoogah et al, 2015). Thus, African SHRM researchers Seidu et al (2013) have suggested that the knowledge of SHRM leveraging productivity with workforce skills is lacking in the African context. However, more recently, as shown in the increase of SHRM literature on the African context in recent years, studies (K'Obonyo and Dimba, 2010; Phirinyane, 2010; Itika, 2011; Kamoche et al, 2012; Zoogah and Zoogah, 2014) have started to evaluate the moderating factors that impact on SHRM adoption and application, and CS-HRMp linkage in the African context. Importantly, Ifedapo (2014; 2015), whilst specifying the impact of institutional factors on management practices in Africa, acknowledged the effect of African context on people management practices. Specifically analysing and evaluating factors that affect CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria, Emeti (2012) undertook a seminal work in Africa examining the contextual factors that moderate the linkage of CS and HRMp in Nigeria. In perhaps an unclear effort to propose a model of CS-HRMp linkage, Emeti (2012) suggested the following

contextual factors that moderate the linkage in Nigeria: culture, economy, environment, technology, leadership style of manager, structure of organisation and seniority in terms of birth and position.

Relating to the Nigerian context, wider management literature (Mamman et al, 2009; Owoyemi, 2011; Ojokuku et al, 2014) suggested further contextual factors that affect organisations' management practices, CS-HRMp linkage being one such practice. The identified factors are poverty (economic factors), skilled labour arrangement, epistemological and conceptual worldview which has the family at its base, age and seniority in the workplace, political policies, and poor quality education. This study, however, undertook an examination of the contextual factors with reference to the linkage of competitive strategies and the variety of people management practices adopted in NMSEs. Contextual factors moderating CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs were identified as culture, labour union, religion, language, government policies, economy, ethnicity, and quality of education, lack of skilled labour, corruption, personal relationships, age of the organisations, gender differences, family relationships and currency value.

Culture featured prominently in earlier models of CS-HRMp linkage developed in western economies (Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998); however, in most recent models (Paauwe et al, 2013), the moderating role of culture in CS-HRMp linkage has been downplayed. While some researchers focus on organisational culture (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998), others have aptly brought out the impact of societal cultures and values on people management (Fombrun et al, 1984; Sander et al, 2016). Most recently, however, researchers into the African context have emphasised the role of institutional factors as well as cultural factors in shaping the adoption and application of SHRM theory linking CS and HRMp effectively in this context

(Adeleye, 2011; Adeleye and Anibaba, 2014). Further, studies (Okpara, 2007; Iguisi and Baldry, 2009; Senaji et al, 2014) in Nigeria have shown that the culture of people in Nigeria permeates and impacts on every facet of its societal activities. In addition, it was found in earlier SHRM linkage in Nigeria (Emeti, 2012) that cultural values have a high impact on the CS-HRMp linkage in Nigerian organisations. In the same vein, results from this study show that NMSEs consider culture as one of the factors that impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in their organisations. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that that cultural and societal values moderate CS-HRMp in NMSEs.

Labour unions also play a moderating role in forging a relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs. This is in line with previous literature (Beer et al, 1984) which identified labour and market unions as an important contextual factor that impacts the CS-HRMp linkage in organisations. Unlike western economies, where the labour union contributes to the development of enhanced communication between the top management and HR professionals in carrying out their functions in an organisation, the labour union plays a rather dysfunctional role in Nigerian organisations. The role and function of Nigeria's labour union has been seen as hampering the progress of organisations rather than helping the same organisations to progress (Akeem, 2014). Contrasting sharply to the well-developed economies, Nigeria's labour union is still at the level of struggling to understand the neo-liberal policies introduced by the Nigerian government. Buttressing this point, Akeem (2014) indicated that the lack of a harmonised perception of collective bargaining rights and contracts by the different organisations that constitute Nigeria's labour union contributes to an incessant struggle that leaves smaller organisations at the mercy of a striking union and struggling with government policies. Based on the above-explained platform, the

labour union in Nigeria influences, in part, the management of people in organisations, and therefore the choice and practice of HRM in Nigeria. The moderating influence of the labour union in NMSEs is further established by the responses of the top management and HR professionals to the research instrument of this study.

Another contextual factor identified in the findings of this study is the moderating influence of religion in the NMSEs. Previous western models and SHRM studies (Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Paauwe et al, 2013) investigating the linkage of CS and HRMp in organisations gave minimal importance to the impact of religion and people's religious beliefs and observances on the people management practices. Remarkably, the difference between the western context and Nigerian context is pretty obvious based on the impact of the religion factor on management in Nigeria. The outcome of this suggests that, contrary to the insignificant role that religion plays in CS-HRMp linkage in developed economies, religious values significantly influence management decisions in human resource management in NMSEs. Management literature on Nigeria (Meagher, 2009; Adogame, 2010; Salawu, 2010) affirms that Nigerians interpret events and happenstances in the workplace in the light of religious intervention, and religious sentiments and emotions are generally normally expressed (Adogame, 2010; Section 4.4.5). The three main religions – Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religion – inform the way events and activities in the workplace are accepted and articulated by employees and management alike. Although CS-HRMp literature seemed to downplay the import of the phenomenon of religion in formulation and implementation of decisions regarding people management practices in organisations, religion and religious consciousness are as important as culture in the moderating CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. The role of religion has far-reaching consequences in workplace religious observances,

regulation of work hours, and the acceptable manner of behaviour within the social network of workplace relationships.

The Nigerian economy features another important contextual factor that moderates CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. The impact of economy on the linkage of CS-HRMp is well documented in previous literature on SHRM and previous models of CS-HRMp linkage (Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Emeti, 2012). Basically, the ability of an organisation to carry out some strategic activities and implement strategic choices depends to an extent on the availability of the resources required to carry out such activities. Among the most important resources required in an organisation are human, technological, financial, and managerial resources. An organisation's economic situation and that of its country could, therefore, either hamper or enhance the CS-HRMp choices it makes (Bae and Lawler, 2002). With reference to increased management costs, identified in Section 5.7 as an outcome of CS-HRMp in NMSEs, it means that an organisation that has the financial resources to support the processes of CS-HRMp linkage stands in a better position to carry out strategic policies affecting competitive strategies and HRMp. Having identified the pervasive economic challenges that are faced by the NMSEs given the weakened economic position of Nigeria due to high dependency on a one-factor economy, NMSEs indicated that one of the moderating factors in CS-HRMp linkage in the NMSE context is the poor state of the economy. A poor economy affects currency value; the Nigeria naira is week comparable to the currencies of developed economies, and its value has continued to dwindle over recent years (CBN, 2016). Recent valuation of the central bank of Nigeria showed that the naira had weakened to a record low in Nigeria's history (CBN, 2016). The currency value has an adverse effect on importation, and exportation, foreign direct investment (FDI) and general business investments (Ang, 2008); the

result of which would be a hampering effect on businesses in carrying out strategically mapped activities that aid competitive advantage. Findings from this study aptly indicate that, due to the weakness of the Nigerian economy and the value of the Naira, NMSEs find it increasingly difficult to carry out their strategic plans regarding competitive strategies and HRMp in their firms. The economic strength is markedly a fundamental difference between developed and flourishing economies and the stagnating Nigerian economy and currency valuation.

Closely related to the issue of the economic situation in Nigeria are the governmental policies that have directly or indirectly influenced the growth of Nigeria's economy over time. Governmental policies regarding business climate in Nigeria were identified in literature (Olusegun and Ajigboye, 2016) as being highly unfavourable to NMSEs as part of the wider spectrum of SMEs in Nigeria. A range of government policies relating to energy, financing, infrastructure, business registration and transport facilities, good electricity supply and SME stimulation has been suggested as affecting businesses and organisations in Nigeria (Okpara and Okpara, 2011; Section 4.4.5). Following an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire used to gather data for this study, it is clear that the majority of NMSEs consider the government policies as a key determining factor in some organisational decisions relating to workforce management and strategic choices made in the organisations.

In the same line as government policies, another significant factor found to influence the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs is the issue of corruption. Current literature (PwC, 2016) assessing the pervasion of corruption in Nigerian polity and effects on businesses established a relationship between corruption and lower human capital, weaker investments in businesses, and lower government effectiveness, which affects tax base and government expenditure on NMSEs' infrastructure (PwC, 2016).

Consequently, the impact of corruption in Nigeria has a debilitating effect on human capital development and management in organisations in the country. Corruption is identified as one of the major moderating contextual factors in Nigeria, having a negative effect on CS-HRMp linkage; thereby supporting PwC's (2016) study demonstrating the impact and potential effects of corruption on business investments, and human capital management and development. Closely related to issues of human capital development and management, and perhaps to the issue of corruption, is quality of education in Nigeria.

A comprehensive literature review (Chapter 2) revealed that the issue of ethnicity lacked clear examination in reference to its impact on the broad area of SHRM adoption and application, and more precisely on CS-HRMp linkage. The factor of ethnicity is very peculiar to the Nigerian context, as Nigeria is a country made up of over 250 ethnic groups (Irobi, 2005). Ethnicity could create conflicts and tensions in the workplace in Nigeria, and has been identified as one of the major issues that generally hamper societal development in the country (Irobi, 2005; Watson, 2007; Ploch, 2012). Nigeria management literature identifies ethnicity as a problem in the country only when different groups come together in the same organisations or on the same platform (Irobi, 2005). The problem of ethnicity in Nigeria organisations is seen in situations where positions in organisations and selection of capable candidates to undertake strategic duties in organisations and people management are decided (Nnekwu, 2010; Imran, 2015; Section 4.4.5). Supporting the previous studies that discusses the problem of ethnicity in Nigerian organisations (Irobi, 2005; Watson, 2007; Nnekwu, 2010; Ploch, 2012; Imran, 2015), this study identifies the impact of ethnicity on the application of strategic HRMp in the Nigerian context. Findings

suggest that the problem of ethnicity affects the linkage of CS and HRMp in the NMSE context.

Similar to the diversity of ethnicity in the Nigerian context is the issue of language differences. Just as varied as the country's ethnic composition is the diversity of languages spoken, although three major languages, namely Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo dominate in terms of popularity and number of speakers (Egbon, 2015). Consequently, the English language is often used as a common language for government policies and education (Meagher, 2009). However, it is commonly understood that, beyond the official English language of communication used in formal organisational communications, there are still variations of the English language and Arabic that are used in Nigerian organisations. Contrary to developed economies, in Nigerian workplaces, employees tend to show a preference for working with other employees who speak similar languages or opt to work in regions where languages similar to their mother tongue are spoken (Section 4.4.5). This results in situations whereby market expansion and strategic positioning come to question; and management of employees poses a tougher task because of their different linguistic affinities. The majority of respondents to the research instrument for this study identified the moderating role of linguistic affinities and abilities in carrying out vital organisational decisions. Linguistic affinities also play an important role in the creation of a network of relationships in Nigerian society, which in turn influences the strategic connection between policies and practices in organisations.

The personal relationships factor is found to influence CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, which is a key contextual factor that has not been clearly identified in previous CS-HRMp models. The findings suggest that NMSEs' employees make allusion to their networks of social relationships existing both inside and outside the workplace to

define themselves. Personal relationship is regarded as a vital force that enhances progress in an organisation; hence, managers in some NMSEs (Section 4.4.5) tend to establish a proper relationship with employees and other businesses to create a strategic unity that drives their competitive advantage. At the core of Nigerian (vis-a-vis, African) personal relationships is the family, and the idea of family cohesion is translated into the workplace (Kamoche, 1997: Webster et al, 2006; Ezeome and Marshall, 2011; Okpara and Kabongo, 2011). The cultural disposition to place family at the centre of all affairs perfectly correlates with the high ethnic, linguistic and religious tendency that is found in Nigerian society (Ezeome and Marshall, 2011). Family and personal friendship is signified by the extent of handshakes, greetings, and high contact culture experienced in Nigeria (Wayar, 2015). Further, the attitude of holding family and personal connection in the highest esteem and defining employee personality on the basis of how strongly related the employee is manifests strongly in the idea of seniority in the workplace, and respect for age and status in the NMSE workplace. In some cases, it has been noted that personal and family relationships could negatively impact on organisations where certain employees fear to express disagreement on the basis of maintaining the status quo with family connections (Oweyemi et al, 2011). Findings from this study therefore suggest that personal and family relationships are key contextual factors that impact on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, as indicated by respondents to the research questionnaire.

In the same line, high masculinity and gender differences in Nigerian workplaces have often been mentioned in the literature (Adegboye, 2013) in line with Hofstede's (1984) description of cultural and power distances. Nigeria's high masculine culture is well documented in literature (Owoyemi, 2011), showing the high dominance of males in relation to the locus of control and the dimensions of work; this has a lasting effect on

the work models and approaches to management of people in Nigerian organisations (Adegboye, 2013). Findings from this study suggest that there are slightly more male than female top management and HR professionals in the NMSEs who are involved in the strategic decision-making process regarding competitive strategies and people management practices. However, with a percentage of 56.7% to 41.2%, the distance between male top management and HR professionals is not largely differentiated from females. Therefore, even though the masculinity is pronounced in top management in NMSEs, the gap is closing due to the gradually increasing amount of females to males in the labour force and in education (NBS, 2016; Appendix IV). The high masculinity and gender differences in organisations impact on employees and management mainly in forms of psychological effect and leadership styles (O'Neil et al, 2015). Distinct from western and most developed economies, the Nigerian context shows a higher power distance and high level of masculinity, as found in this study, although the findings also show that the power distance is gradually decreasing.

## 6.4 LEVELS OF CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

Although previous literature identified four main levels of linkage between CS and HRMp, namely administrative linkage, one-way linkage, two-way linkage and integrative linkage (Golden and Ramanujam, 1985; Teo, 2000; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009), this study found evidence of three levels of linkage in NMSEs: administrative linkage, one-way linkage and two-way linkage.

The administrative linkage establishes a minimal relationship between CS and HRMp and concentrates decisions relating to competitive strategies and HRMp in an

organisation at the top management (Abang, 2009). At the administrative level of CS-HRMp linkage, structural factors such as the availability of human resource management professional and/or HR department, line management devolvement, employee involvement and strong HRM investment is often non-existent (Abang, 2009). The functions of a human resource management professional and line management are usually merged with other departments such as the finance/accounting department, and employees' involvement in the decision-making process is rather insignificant. Thus, HRM investment is usually very low at the administrative level of linkage. Evidence from the findings of this study suggests that some NMSEs fall into this level of CS-HRMp linkage. The percentage of responses concerning the availability of the structural factors in the organisations showed that 20.4% had no human resource management involvement; 9.6% had no line management involvement; 9.6% had no employee involvement; and 20.6% had no strong HRM investment. This aptly falls within the range of administrative linkage of CS and HRMp; thereby providing evidence to show that some NMSEs are at the administrative level of CS-HRMp linkage. The administrative linkage falls short of comprehensive and strategic positioning of HRM in organisations due to the non-existent system of HR manager position, lack of strong HRM investment, and line management devolvement. SHRM theory suggests that HRM is placed in prime position in organisations as an intricate tool that works with other strategic contents of the organisation to achieve cohesive organisational performance (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2009). As such, at the administrative level, the SHRM theory is yet to realize full contribution of the general competitive strategy formulation and implementation. The implication of the administrative linkage for NMSEs that are at the level of

administrative linkage would be minimal contribution of organized and formalized HRM function to achievement of competitive strategies.

The second level of CS-HRMp linkage involves a one-way level of linkage. At this level, the human resource management professional (and/or HR department) is involved in the implementation of competitive strategy, and HRMp is tailored to the strategy requirements. Thus, at the one-way linkage, HRM functions to serve the purpose of competitive strategy requirements, and the HR manager's function ensures smooth execution of the strategy demands. Although the human resource manager and line management are involved in strategy implementation and the management of human resources, they are limited to the implementation stages, rather than being involved in the formulation stages of both competitive strategies and HRMp (Abang, 2009). Due to the emphasis on HRM function as a subordinate to competitive strategy in one-way linkage organisations, employee involvement and HRM investment are often limited. Regarding NMSEs, out of the 79.6% of respondent organisations with human resource managers, 61.3% indicated there was also line management involvement. However, out of the 79.6% of respondents who indicated that their organisations had human resource managers, 21.4% indicated that there was no employee involvement; likewise, 20.6% of respondents in the same category had no strong HRM investment. The findings outlined above present evidence that some of the NMSEs fall into the second level of CS-HRMp linkage, having structures that include HR manager and line management devolvement whilst lacking employee involvement and strong HRM investment. One-way CS-HRMp linkage falls short of full integration of HRM architecture (Teo, 2002) due to lack of representation of HR manager/professional at the board level for formulation of competitive strategies and people management practices. The lack of employee involvement in the decision-

making process of an organisation limits the establishment of an integral relationship between the types of competitive strategies adopted and the variety of practices used to manage the workforce (Sahoo et al, 2011).

Finally, two-way CS-HRMp linkage is identified in NMSEs based on an analysis of structural factors that facilitate the linkage in organisations. Top management, human resource manager, line management and employee involvement combine to facilitate a mutual interaction between CS and HRMp in an organisation (Golden and Ramanujam, 1985; Fleming, 2000; Teo, 2000; Wei, 2006; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009; Power, 2009). Mutual interaction of the two components – CS, HRMp – implies that competitive strategy is fully considered in the formulation and implementation of HRMp; likewise, HRMp is fully considered in the formulation and implementation of the competitive strategies. With reference to the two-way linkage, out of the 79.6% NMSEs respondents that had a HR manager, 75.5% had line management involvement and 61.3% involved employees in decision-making processes, with 79.4% indicating that they had strong HRM investment. Given the statistical information, the majority of the respondent NMSEs fall into the two-way CS-HRMp linkage. The consequence of having two-way linkage is that organisations evolve the most effective practices to maximize employees' abilities and skills to realize the intent of the types of CS adopted; and likewise the organisations adopt the types of strategies that would be effectively accomplished by the available unique human resources at their disposal.

Previous literature (Teo, 2000; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009) suggests a fourth level of linkage, which is the integrative linkage. The integrative linkage involves the full unification of HRMp and CS at the formulation and implementation stages in an organisation, and this is clearly determinable in the strength of the

relationship between HRMp and CS. An integrative relationship between types of competitive strategies and practices of managing employees is clearly shown in the strong interaction of HRMp and competitive strategies "both formally and informally and represents the strongest fit" (Paauwe and Boon, 2009: 47). In NMSEs however, the relationship is moderate (Section, 5.4); hence, the moderate interaction between the two linkage components does not signify integrative linkage. The strength of the relationship is deducible in terms of their correlation-ship, and how clearly both are weaved together at the formulation level (Paauwe, 2009).

NMSEs have shown evidence of administrative, one-way and two-way levels of linkage; clear evidence of integrative linkage is, however, lacking, based on the aforementioned reasons. Various outcomes of the C-HRMp linkage have also been identified in this study. The next section examines the outcome of the linkage in NMSEs.

## 6.5 OUTCOME OF CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

The acknowledgement that linking practices used in managing human resources and competitive strategies adopted in a firm contribute to organisational outcomes has been a source of SHRM debate over time (Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013). However, despite the apparent debate about the contribution of CS-HRMp linkage in organisations and the extent of the impact of the linkage on organisational performance, empirical tests (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013) in various countries have shown an impact on certain organisational outcomes. CS-HRMp linkage is suggested to ensure

the achievement of competitive advantage, nurture channels of knowledge transfer in organisations, and improve employee motivation, commitment and satisfaction, which ultimately impacts on general organisational performance (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013).

In relation to NMSEs, certain outcomes were noted in this study. Supporting previous literature (Wang and Shyu, 2008; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013), the following outcomes were attributed to the linkage in CS-HRMp in NMSEs: increased job satisfaction, improved employee commitment, improved quality of products, enhanced competence, and higher business performance. However, other outcomes were established which have received minor consideration in literature examining linkages in SHRM, such as fair treatment of employees, improved quality of goods, increased management costs and lower employee retention. Whereas fair treatment of employees predominantly shows the influence of the Nigerian context, increased management cost and lower employee retention show that the linkage not only leads to positive outcomes but also has negative outcomes that could be attributed to it in NMSEs.

Fair and just treatment of employees is a very peculiar issue in the Nigerian context where ethnic rivalry, tribalism and 'favouritism' are rife in organisations (Nnekwu, 2010; Imran, 2015); hence, fair treatment of employees is a very significant outcome of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Although previous models (Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Paauwe et al, 2013) on the linkage gave little consideration to this outcome, probably due to the context in which they were developed, the outcome aptly defines the Nigerian context of CS-HRMp linkage. Based on the correlation tests, fair treatment showed the strongest relationship with the CS and HRMp among the various

outcomes measured, thereby signifying the importance NMSE managers and HR professionals give to the achievement of this outcome in their organisations.

Further, the linkage shows a positive impact on presentation of goods and service; as such, the linkage results in improved quality of goods and services provided by NMSEs. The NMSE context of linkage leaves businesses open to constant struggle to compete with large organisations in the same market and the large number of vibrant small businesses (Morley et al, 2016). The competitive market leads to continual changes in the strategic presentation of goods and customer intimacy approaches adopted by the firms (cf. Section 6.1 on NMSEs' competitive strategies). Therefore, the relationship between CS and HRMp is seen as a vital tool for utilizing the skills and expertise of employees to create the most appealing, high-quality products. It is therefore not surprising that NMSE managers and HR professionals regard improved quality of their goods and services as an important outcome of CS-HRMp linkage. Previous SHRM literature (Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Zhang, 2011; Cascio and Boudreau, Boswell et al, 2006; 2012; Paauwe et al, 2013; Sikora et al, 2016; Gulati and Monica, 2016) investigating the dynamics of linking the types of competitive strategies adopted in organisations and the practices used to manage employees have yet to give a comprehensive overview of quality product as an outcome of the linkage. Quality of products/services could have a positive impact on general organisational performance; hence, a positive outcome of CS-HRMp linkage on quality of products/services is significant to business performance.

Unlike extant literature (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Scully et al, 2013; Paauwe et al, 2013) that links the relationship between CS and HRMp to positive organisational outcomes only, this study found that the linkage also has perceived negative impacts on NMSEs. The initial exploratory phase of this study identified that organisations

noticed an increase in management costs and lower level of employee retention (Section 4.6). The correlation tests (Section 5.5) showed that there is a positive relationship between the linkage and increased management costs in NMSEs. The increase in management cost is explicable with the purview of the variety of HRMp practices adopted in the organisations. Practices that could increase management cost in relation to the linkage include: enhanced and more formal strategy training, more detailed recruitment processes for suitable candidates, programmes for individual career progressions, and salary structures (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). The increase in management could be further highlighted by considering that cost leadership strategy showed a positive relationship with the fewest practices used in managing employees in NMSEs, among other types of competitive strategy. As such, it is assumed that the reduction of costs in training, recruitment and other practices was not strictly considered by NMSEs. In the same line, another outcome that results from the linkage is employee retention. Statistical tests carried out in Section 5.5 demonstrate that the outcome – lower employee retention – shows a positive relationship to CS and a negative relationship to HRMp; therefore, the outcome is yet indeterminable.

Overall, CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs leads to a variety of employee and organisational outcomes. Whereas some of the established outcomes show partial support for previous literature, others denote the clear impact of the Nigerian context on them. Based on the findings of this study, therefore, a model is developed that specifies the context of practice of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.

## 6.6 A MODEL OF CS-HRMp LINKAGE IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

Based on the types of competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs, the positive relationship established between the two components, the contextual factors established, the levels of linkage, and outcomes of linkage, a model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs is suggested as shown in Figure 25 below:
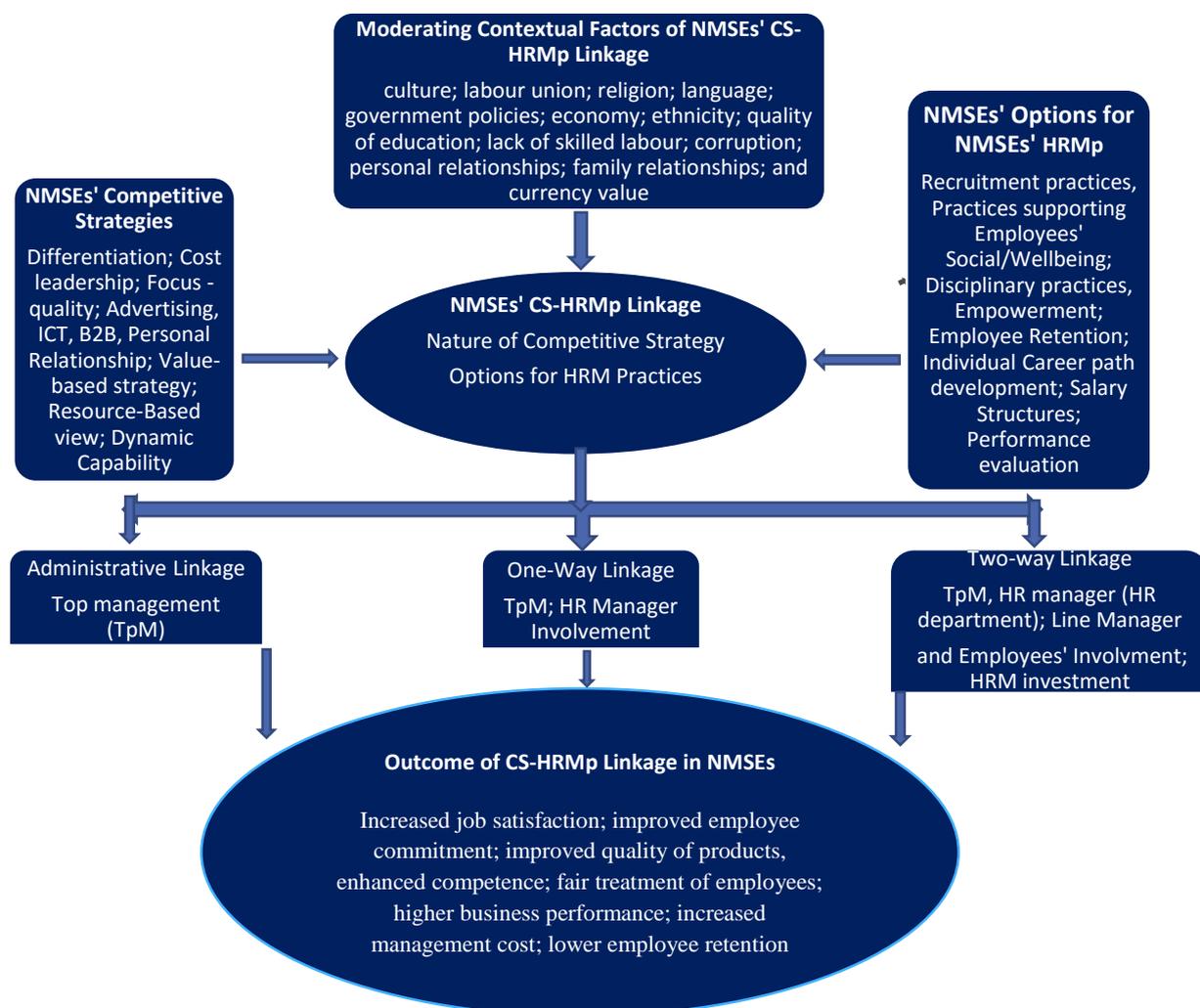


**Figure 25 Model of CS-HRMp Linkage in NMSEs**

The result from the findings suggests that NMSEs use the following types of competitive strategies: Porter's generic competitive strategies (differentiation, cost leadership, focus – quality) and context-based competitive strategies (relationship and value-based strategies, ICT, B2B, and advertising). In addition, the findings provide evidence to show that the predominant theoretical approaches that influence the contents of the relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs are RBV and DC. Along the same line, the results show that the types of practices used in the management of employees in NMSEs include: recruitment practices, practices supporting employees' social/wellbeing; disciplinary practices, empowerment practices; employee retention practices; individual career path development; salary structures; and performance evaluation practices. On examination of the key theoretical perspectives that underpin the choice of HRMp in NMSEs, the results show the influence of best practice approach, best fit approach, contextual and HRMp bundling perspectives. Consequently, the findings, while partially supporting previous literature (Muogbo, 2013; Olusola et al, 2015; Kaufman, 2011; Ruzic, 2015; Clinton and Guest, 2013; Naidu et al, 2014; Ugheoke, 2015; Badejo, 2015), unearth clear areas of peculiarity in the Nigerian context of CS-HRMp linkage.

Secondly, the relationship between the two components of linkage – types of competitive strategies and practices used in managing employees – was measured and showed a moderate positive relationship. Although the relationship is moderate, it is suggestive of the direction of the relationship between the CS and HRMp in the context of NMSEs. Whilst this is not supportive of any previous SHRM literature on the Nigerian context, because of the pervading focus of such literature (See Section 2.5), it is pertinent to note that a positive relationship between CS and HRMp has been noted in some studies (Abang, 2009) carried out in developed economies.

The extent of the linkage of HRM and CS refers to the degree to which issues concerning HRM are regarded in the framing of an organisation's strategy, emphasizing strategic contents of the business-level decisions, and the involvement of HR group and line managers in carrying out HR practices (Brewster et al, 1992; Vernon and Brewster, 2012). Based on the strength of the relationship of the two components in an organisation and the involvement of the structural factors in linkage of CS and HRMp in an organisation, the different levels of linkage are differentiated into administrative level, one-way level, two-way level and integrative linkage (Teo, 2000; Kandula, 2003; Aryee and Budhwar, 2008; Abang, 2009; Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). Some NMSEs were found to fall into the administrative level of linkage primarily because structural factors in the organisations were non-existent. Organisations that have HR managers and line management involvement but no employee involvement and only weak HRM investment fall into the category of one-way linkage. Finally, although evidence of full structural factors was noted in some NMSE organisations, they showed overall moderate relationship between CS and HRMp; hence, the two-way relationship.

The outcomes of the linkage between HRMp and CS constitute the final aspect of the model. The outcomes include both the positive and negative outcomes as noted in NMSEs, and are: increased job satisfaction, improved employee commitment; improved quality of products, enhanced competence, fair treatment of employees, higher business performance, increased management cost, and lower employee retention. The outcomes listed above partially support previous literature (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013), and indicate specific outcomes that are relate to the Nigeria context (Section 6.4).

Finally, moderating contextual factors were examined to establish which have an impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs. The findings indicate that the factors that impact on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs are: culture, labour union, religion, language, government policies, economy, ethnicity, quality of education, lack of skilled labour, corruption, personal relationships, age of organisation, gender differences, family relationships and currency value. Some of the factors have been previously studied in extant literature (Anyim et al, 2011; Ayanda and Sani, 2011; Emeti, 2012; Ugheoke et al, 2015); however, a number of factors have yet to be given emphasis in empirical studies.

## 6.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the study findings as presented in the preceding chapter. A link is established between the findings and extant literature in the CS-HRMp linkage. Competitive strategies and HRMp adopted in NMSEs were discussed, showing that NMSEs adopt competitive strategies and HRMp are already identified in wider CS-HRMp literature and Nigeria management literature. Further, a discussion of the relationship between the competitive strategies and HRMp was undertaken, showing a positive relationship between the two components in NMSEs; as such presenting the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. In addition, this chapter discussed the extents of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, highlighting the three identifiable levels of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Furthermore, the outcomes of the relationship between CS and HRMp were discussed, based on the outcome of multiple regression analysis. Contextual factors that impact on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs were discussed and related to existing literature; thus succinctly highlighting the factors

expressed in existing literature and the peculiarity of the Nigerian context of CS-HRMp. Finally, the summary of the above objectives was presented in the model of CS-HRMp linkage, which is the sixth objective of this study. The next chapter undertakes a summary of the main findings of the research, emphasizing the theoretical and practical contribution of this study and its limitations, and suggesting areas of further research based on the foundations the study has provided.

## CHAPTER SEVEN:  CONCLUSIONS

**7.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a general conclusion of the study. The first part presents a reminder of the aim and key objectives of the study, the methods used to achieve the objectives and summary of key findings. Based on the study's key findings, implications of the study are presented and key contributions are highlighted. The final part of this chapter outlines the key limitations to the study and suggests areas of further research.

**7.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To conclude this study, the aim and objectives have been recapped. The aim of the study is to investigate the dynamics of linkage between CS and HRMp in NMSEs and subsequently develop a model of CS-HRMp linkage that takes into consideration the peculiarity of Nigeria context. This aim was achieved through the objectives presented in sections 7.1.1 to 7.1.6.

**7.1.1 Research Objective 1. To identify the type of competitive strategy and human resource practices adopted by NMSEs**

This objective was achieved through examining the key SHRM literature on CS-HRMp linkage to identify the key themes and concepts used to conceptualise the linkage and develop a conceptual framework. Qualitative data was collected from 5 managing directors and HR professionals in NMSEs who by virtue of their position

were best placed to provide information regarding their organization's competitive strategy, HRMp and the linkage of CS and HRMp. From qualitative data analysis, key themes and concepts used in NMSEs were found (Appendix IX) and were embedded in the quantitative research instrument. In addition, the qualitative data findings were used to develop the theoretical framework that guided the study. Further, quantitative data were collected from 323 sample of HR professionals and top management in NMSEs. Quantitative data were analysed using median score result and Kruskal Wallis test.

From the analysis of quantitative data, competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs were found. Competitive strategies found are: cost leadership, differentiation, ICT, B2B, quality (focus), value-based, personal relationship approach, and advertising strategy. Whereas, cost leadership, focus, and differentiation which were often emphasised in strategy literature were used, ICT, B2B, value based, personal relationship and advertising were found to be considered as key competitive strategies that ensures competitive advantage in the NMSEs context. In addition, RBV and DC were found to be key competitive strategy approaches used in NMSEs. Furthermore, HRMp practices that were found to be in use in NMSEs are: salary (wages) practices, individual career development practices, recruitment practices, empowerment practices, practices supporting employees' welfare outside of the workplace, performance evaluation practices, employee retention practices, disciplinary practices and training practices. Although it is immediately assumed that these are common practices in organisations (Chapters two and five), NMSEs specifically utilize these practices as part of a planned decision to maintain the level of personal relationships required for the implementation of their strategy. In addition, evidence of best practice, best fit, context-based and configuration perspectives was found to show the influence

of the key theoretical perspectives on the choice of practices used to manage employees. Based on the findings, therefore, this study affirms that the key components of CS-HRMp linkage are used in NMSEs. The findings of this objective formed the bases on which the other objectives were achieved.

### 7.1.2 Research Objective 2. To measure the relationship between competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs

This objective examined the relationship between competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs. To achieve this, quantitative data was collected and analysed. Quantitative data collected from 323 respondents were analysed using spearman's correlation tests to determine direction and strength of the relationship between competitive strategies and human resource management practices used in NMSEs. Based on the correlation tests, this study found that there was positive correlation between competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs. Furthermore, using the Cohen (1988) determination of strength of coefficient, the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp in NMSEs was examined. It was found that the strength of the relationship ranges from .10 to .332 which showed that the relationship between competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs fall into the ranges of weak to moderate relationship.

### 7.1.3 Research Objective 3. To establish the Nigerian contextual factors moderating CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

The third objective was to establish the contextual factors that influence the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs. This objective was achieved using literature review,

qualitative data, and conduct of appropriate statistical tests. Foremost, literature review was conducted to a conceptual framework. Following the literature review, qualitative data was collected and analysed using thematic analysis to identify the themes and concepts used in NMSEs to represents the contextual factors that impact on the linkage. The key contextual factors were embedded in the questionnaire to collect quantitative data. Quantitative data was analysed using median test score, factor analysis and correlation tests. The median test was used to determine the central score which showed the degree of respondents' affirmation of the impact of the contextual factors on NMSEs' CS-HRMp linkage. Next, factor analysis was conducted to determine the sampling adequacy and level of sphericity among the factors identified. Finally, correlation analysis was conducted to determine how statistically significant the relationship between the contextual factors and CS-HRMp in NMSEs was; hence, the moderating influence of the contextual factors on CS-HRMp linkage was determined

Using the median test, this study found that the respondents strongly affirmed that the contextual factors impact on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs' context. Further tests conducted using factor analysis showed that the contextual factors had good sampling adequacy at .706 and the correlation matrix showed that they were well correlated with each other. Furthermore, correlation tests established the relationship between the contextual factors and CS-HRMp. Correlation coefficient identified a positive relationship between the contextual factors mentioned above and CS-HRMp except lack of skilled workers and quality of education. Hence, based on the statistical analysis this study concluded that the following contextual factors have moderating influence on CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs:  culture, religion, language, ethnicity,

Nigerian economy, currency value, corruption, governmental policies, labour union, family and personal relationships.

### 7.1.4 Research Objective 4. To establish the extent CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs

This objective examined the extent of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. This objective was achieved using the literature review and findings of quantitative data analysis. First, the literature review identified four levels of linkage between CS and HRMp in organizations which are administrative linkage, one-way linkage, two-way linkage and integrative linkage, based on key structural factors available in organization. Key structural factors were also identified: top management, HR professional (and/or HR department), line management and employee involvement. Furthermore, SHRM literature suggested that at the integrative level, the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp is very strong. Based on quantitative data, cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to establish the availability of these structural factors, and to what percentage they were distributed in NMSEs sector. Furthermore, the findings of the second objective which identified the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp were also used to achieve this objective. Following analysis of quantitative data, this study found that there were three levels of linkage in NMSEs, namely administrative linkage, one-way linkage, and two-way linkage. Evidence of integrative linkage was not found in NMSEs.

**7.1.5 Research Objective 5. To establish the outcomes of the linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs**

The fifth objective was to determine the outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage by establishing relationship and predictive power of CS-HRMp on a set of organizational outcomes. This objective was achieved using literature review, qualitative data and analysis of quantitative data using spearman's correlation tests. Key organisational outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage were identified from SHRM literature. Based on the literature reviewed, the qualitative data was collected which identified the key employee and organisational outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage as follows: improved job satisfaction, increased employee commitment, improved employee motivation, increased employee competency, improved quality product, fair treatment of employees, increased business performance, lower employee retention and increased management cost. These outcomes were embedded in the questionnaire for quantitative data collection. Quantitative data was analysed using spearman's correlation tests.

This study found that although the strength of the correlation ranges from weak to moderate correlation, the CS-HRMp and the organisational outcomes were positively related, based on the correlation tests. Further, this study identified that contrary to extant SHRM literature which examined positive outcome of CS-HRMp, there were both negative and positive organisational outcome attributed to CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs.

**7.1.6 Research Objective 6. To develop a model of linkage of competitive strategy and HRM practices in NMSEs**

The final objective was to develop a model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. This objective was achieved through the outcome of objectives one, two, three, four and

five, using literature review, qualitative data, and findings of the quantitative data analysis. Foremost, the competitive strategies and HRMp used in NMSEs were identified as foundation of this study. The first objective therefore establishes the existence of the two components of linkage in NMSEs. Secondly, the competitive strategy and HRMp variables were measured to determine the direction and strength of their relationship. The outcome of the second objective was a clear indication of the relationship and need to bolster a stronger relationship between the variables in NMSEs. The moderating contextual factors were identified showing their relationship with CS-HRMp. Finally, the different levels of linkage of in NMSEs were unearthed and the outcome of the linkage established (See also 6.6).

Summarily, the model of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs proposed a strong positive relationship between competitive strategies (Differentiation, cost leadership, quality (focus), advertising, ICT, B2B, personal relationship, value-based strategy; RBV and DC) and HRMp (recruitment practices, empowerment practices, employee retention practices, practices supporting employees' welfare outside of the workplace, individual career path practices, salary structures, disciplinary practices, and performance evaluation practices) used in NMSEs. In addition, the model suggested a holistic consideration of the context-specific factors (culture, religion, language, ethnicity, Nigerian economy, currency value, corruption, governmental policies, labour union, family and personal relationships) that influence the linkage. Furthermore, the model emphasised the key structural factors that are required to facilitate the smooth linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs which are top management (members of the board of management included), HR manager involvement (HR professionals and/or department), line management and employee involvement; in addition, a strong linkage between CS and HRMp is required for an integrative level

of linkage. Finally, the model identified both positive and negative outcome of linkage (increased job satisfaction, increased employee commitment, improved quality of products, enhanced employee competence, fair treatment of employees, higher business performance, increased management cost and lower retention of employees) and proposed a unique consideration of both negative and positive impacts of CS-HRMp on organisational outcomes.

## 7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

As there is a dearth of SHRM literature showing the linkage of CS and HRMp in Nigeria context, and given the lack of context-specific model of CS-HRMp linkage, this study has made a number of key theoretical and practical contributions to SHRM study. SHRM studies in Nigeria is an emerging area in people management studies in the past decade and the focus of previous studies have been limited to examining the impact of SHRM theory adoption on organisational performance (Sani, 2012; Ugheoke, 2014; Badejo, 2015; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016); thus creating a gap in literature investigating the dynamics of CS and HRMp linkage in the context. This study therefore contributes to broadening the horizon of SHRM studies in Nigeria and provides foundational academic and practice evidence of CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria.

Theoretically, SHRM literature examining the linkage of CS-HRMp have limited investigation to broadly providing a blanket articulation of competitive strategy without specifically analysing the competitive strategy variables (Budhwar, 2000; Abang, 2009; Buciniene and Kazlauskaite, 2012), and/or focusing on porter's three generic strategies (Schuler, 1987; Hsieh and Ming, 2011; Waiganjo et al, 2012). Hence,

most recent SHRM studies (Kaufman, 2015) have advocated for studies in CS-HRMp linkage to further emphasize and investigate different competitive strategy variables that are linked with HRMp in different organisations. This thesis, therefore, responds to the call for further theoretical investigation into various competitive strategy variables and their relationship with HRMp. Based on the findings of this study, it is noted that a number of competitive strategies are adopted in NMSEs and linked with HRMp which are: advertising strategy, ICT, B2B, cost leadership, differentiation, value-based strategy, quality, personal relationships, RBV, and DC (Section 5.5). Notably, these strategies exhibit peculiar influences of contextual and developmental level of the Nigeria level of competitiveness, development, and cultural values. Similarly, in regard to HRMp, this study further supports the theoretical understanding that particular contexts impact on the choice of HRMp adopted in different countries (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Chang et al, 2005; Abang, 2009; Emeti, 2012; Liang et al, 2012; Kaufman, 2015; Beer et al, 2015; Altarawneh, 2015: Gupta, 2016; Pereira and Fontinha, 2016) by identifying such practices as PSES/W and key disciplinary practices (Section 5.5) which are linked with various competitive strategies in NMSEs. Based on identification of key competitive strategies, and HRMp adopted in NMSEs and contributing to calls for investigation into a variety of competitive strategy variables, this study goes on to make a further theoretical contribution examining the relationship between CS and HRMp in Nigeria particular.

Previous empirical studies on CS-HRMp linkage have identified positive, negative, or no relationship between the two components in different organisations. In a number of developed economies such as France (Razouk and Bayad, 2009), United Kingdom (Naismith, 2007), Netherlands (Brand and Bax, 2002), as well as emerging economies such as Malaysia (Abang, 2009), India (Budhwar, 2000), studies have identified and

suggested the need to foster positive relationship between the competitive strategy and HRMp in organisations. However, CS-HRMp relationship has not previously been investigated in Nigeria. This study therefore has delved into this area of study and identified academic information relating to the relationship between CS and HRMp in Nigeria. Foremost, the findings show that generally the competitive strategies adopted in NMSEs exhibit positive relationship with HRMp used in NMSEs. However, the findings also suggest that not all the competitive strategies are equally linked with each and every HRMp. In few cases, HRMp are linked with some CS and not with others. Hence, suggesting that in NMSEs, some strategies are emphasised more than others. Secondly, the relationship between the CS and HRMp in NMSEs have been shown to range from weak to moderate relationship.

Recently, in current SHRM literatures (Cascio and Boudreau, 2012; Kaufman, 2015; Morley et al, 2016), scholars have called for further contextual approaches to SHRM studies aimed at examining the key influences on particular cultural and contextual factors on SHRM studies; and this includes all facets of SHRM theory adoption and practice. Following this call, there have been notable increase in contextual studies in CS-HRMp linkage besides previous models of CS-HRMp linkage being particularly contextual models. This study therefore is also a response to this call and contributes to context-specific study by establishing key contextual factors that impact on the CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. Although the role of context-specific factors in the CS-HRMp linkage is already established in the literature (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Budhwar and Sparrow, 2002; Lovell, 2009; Dewentick and Remue, 2011; Kundu and Gahlawat, 2016), the types of factors vary from context to context. Based on empirical investigation, this study has unearthed the key contextual factors that impact on the effective connection of CS and HRMp in the Nigerian context. Based on the findings

of this study, the contextual factors that influence the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs are: culture, religion, language, ethnicity, Nigerian economy, currency values, corruption, governmental policies, labour union, family and personal network of relationships. Notably, in contrast to the previous studies, this study identified the contextual factors that play most important role in CS-HRMp linkage in Nigeria as follows: culture, labour union and governmental policies.

Further, although four levels of CS-HRMp linkage have been identified in literature (Teo, 2000; Abang, 2009; Arshad et al, 2014), this study has established, in the light of empirical data, that there are three levels of linkage associated with NMSEs, namely administrative, one-way and two-way linkage. Further, the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp has received minimal discussion in previous CS-HRMp literature (Budhwar and Sparrow, 2002; Aryee and Budhwar, 2000; Abang, 2009; Arshad et al, 2014) due to the general approach of research to present either a positive or negative relationship. Determining the strength of the relationship between CS and HRMp gives a clearer perspective on the association of issues relating to both components in the formulation and implementation stage of each. This study has identified varied degrees of relationship between CS and HRMp as weak, moderate and strong. Based on the strength of the relationship as found in this research, the relationship can be said to range from weak to moderate.

Furthermore, despite the fact that organisational outcomes of CS-HRMp linkage has been source of debate in SHRM literature (Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013), recent studies (Young et al, 2010; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Muduli, 2012; Scully et al, 2013) have suggested some positive outcome of the linkage in specific contexts such as: competitive advantage, social wellbeing of employees, employee commitment, job satisfaction, improved business performance, employee competences and better job

design. These outcomes have been previously identified in other contexts; this study undertook an examination of the outcomes in Nigeria context based on the previously identified outcome. Theoretically, findings of this study supports most of the previously identified outcome of CS-HRMp linkage which are: job satisfaction, employee commitment, employee competence, improved business performance. However, further outcomes peculiar to the NMSEs' context have been found by this study as follows: improved quality of product and fair treatment of employees. Improved quality product and fair treatment of employees aptly shows the impact of the Nigeria contextual factor of ethnicity; hence NMSEs suggest that a clear linkage of CS and HRMp expresses unequivocally the strategies and practices that transcend tribalism and ethnic bigotry in their formulation and implementation. Additionally, whilst previous literature (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1998; Scully et al, 2013; Paauwe et al, 2013) have been concerned with positive outcome of CS-HRMp linkage, this study finds that CS-HRMp linkage could spell negative organisational outcomes namely; lower employee retention and increase in management costs. This study, therefore not only supports previous findings of positive outcome of CS-HRMp linkage but also identifies particular contextual influence on the outcomes and identified negative organisational outcomes attributed to the linkage.

A key contribution of this study is the development of context-specific model of CS-HRMp linkage which makes both theoretical and practical contribution to SHRM studies. While as, it is obvious in literature (Fombrun et al, 1987; Beer et al, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990; Boswell et al, 2006; Buller and McEvoy, 2012; Emeti, 2012; Paauwe, et al 2013) that previous models of CS-HRMp linkage were developed in particular contexts and takes consideration of the context of its development, this study gathered data from Nigeria context and has developed a model specific to the

context of this study. Theoretically, the model expresses the peculiarity of application and practice of SHRM theory in Nigeria, as well as offers unique insight into the influence of context in SHRM theory. Practically, the model develops a management tool for NMSEs practising CS-HRMp linkage. In regard to the practical implication of the model, most recent SHRM literature (Beer et al, 2015; Cascio, 2015; Kaufman, 2015) celebrating 30 years of evolution in the discipline advocates that studies in strategic HRM should refocus to engage in research that have practical implications in management practice. Notably, this study the model developed offers practising managers and HR professionals a tool for applying consistent procedures of CS-HRMp linkage in their organisations. Coupled with being a management instrument, the model is also aimed at encouraging managers and HR professionals to always engage in constant consideration of the contextual factors that have a negative and/or positive impact on the choice of CS and HRMp used in their firm.

In addition to key management and theoretical contributions, this study also makes a contribution to SHRM research methodology in Nigeria context. Whereas, most recent SHRM studies (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005; Azmi, 2010, 2011) have suggested the usefulness of conducting research in the discipline using mixed research designs due to the nature of the human resource management discipline, the majority of previous studies in SHRM in Nigeria (as noted in Section 2.7) have been conducted using a quantitative research design. In response to the methodological call, and having found out the suitability of using a mixed method approach to achieve the research aim and objectives, this study used mixed method approach. This study therefore contributes methodologically to the study of SHRM in Nigeria by exploring CS-HRMp linkage qualitatively first, and secondly by examining the research phenomenon using quantitative approach. In addition, the area of CS-HRMp study in Nigeria is a new

area in SHRM scholarly studies; hence, a mixed method approach is therefore considered as appropriate and has contributed to the development of this study.

This study also makes a contribution in response to recent calls for studies in Medium sized enterprises often seen as an abandoned sector in economic developmental policies (CBI, 2011; SMEDAN, 2015; Section 1.1). Most SHRM studies in have either focussed on larger organisations (Naismith, 2007; Razouk and Bayad, 2009; Bendickson et al, 2014; Crispin et al, 2016) or small enterprises (Brand and Bax, 2002; Onyebu and Agbo, 2016). The medium sized enterprises have received minimal emphasis, despite the growing importance of Medium sized enterprises in contributing to overall developmental goal of Nigeria economy. Although having the least number of enterprises and employing the least number of workers among SMEs in Nigeria, their importance in developing a relatively formalised structure of strategic contents and HRM architecture is identified as being very important in studying small and micro enterprises (Sani, 2012). The findings of this study in part supports the suggestion of previous studies (Sani, 2012) that suggest an existence of relatively formal structure of competitive strategies and HRMp in medium sized enterprises in Nigeria; and contributes to providing academic and management information on the practice of CS-HRMp linkage in the sector. Summarily therefore, this makes a contribution to medium sized enteprises' literature in Nigeria.

Finally, as discussed in Section 2.8.3, the Nigerian government places the NMSEs in a very pivotal position in the pursuit of the country's Vision 2020 developmental goals via the broad spectrum of SMEs. The key idea of Vision 2020 is to utilise the productivity of the sector to drive sustained economic development; however, the sector has continued to underperform in recent years. Intellectual capital management and development, otherwise known as human resource management and development,

has been identified by SMEDAN (2015) as one of the key issues requiring urgent attention in the sector. Notably, therefore, this study has contributed immensely to knowledge that will support the achievement of Nigeria's Vision 2020 through NMSEs.

## 7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Studies in SHRM in Africa have so far been limited to focusing on the examination of the linkage of SHRM practices to organisational performance and identifying the benefits of SHRM theory adoption in organisations (Ugheoke, 2015; Badejo, 2015). One major extrapolation to be taken from this study therefore is that it underlines the fundamental consideration of the dynamics of CS-HRMp linkage in the literature on Africa, and more particularly in Nigeria. In the same line, the model that was suggested bolsters the need for the development of models in the context of developing economies to understand the impact of peculiar context-based factors on CS-HRMp linkage.

The model developed in this study is a management model to enhance the consideration of issues of HRMp in the formulation and implementation of CS and likewise consideration of CS in the formulation and implementation of HRMp, at a concrete strategic level. Therefore, the model is a management tool to guide managers in NMSEs regarding human resources and competitive strategy decisions.

Finally, the establishment of the contextual factors in this study has further implications for the Nigerian government. Despite several policy initiatives and the establishment of SMEDAN to ensure that the sector maximises the opportunities at its disposal towards the achievement of Vision 2020, the sector has continued to

underperform. Although not the only problem facing NMSEs, intellectual capacity management and development has been identified as a key problem of the sector. Therefore, this study has further implications for the Nigerian government regarding ensuring that the positive contextual factors moderating CS-HRMp linkage are encouraged and negative context-based factors are solved.

This study has undertaken a rigorous approach to investigating the dynamics of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs, and its findings from have been utilised to develop a model of CS-HRMp linkage in SMEs. The model has wider implications for theoretical and practice-based studies in NMSEs (Section, 7.2) However, some issues have been encountered in the course of the study which constitute, to some degree, key limitations to the study.

## 7.4 LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations were encountered during the process of carrying out this study. Foremost, this study was carried out by the researcher in the UK whilst data were obtained from NMSEs. The difficulties posed by the issue of communication medium for interviews and inaccessibility in obtaining respondents for the exploratory interviews proved to be key areas of difficulty in carrying out this study. Limitations stemming from conducting telephone interviews were noted (Chapter four), such as indistinct voice recording and fluctuations in phone network services. To improve on this, respondents were sent a copy of their transcribed interview data so that they could affirm that it was a correct transcription of their views.

Other key issues in data collection include: the length of time it took respondents to reply to the questionnaire (primarily because of the inaccessibility issues); poor transport infrastructure, which made it difficult to reach out to all NMSEs across the vast range of regions in Nigeria; and high security risks in the form of violent terror attacks, which contributed to poor accessibility to certain areas of Nigeria. However, notwithstanding the key issues in reaching out to all parts of Nigeria, appropriate responses were obtained from the country's six regions (see Section 5.2).

Furthermore, the questionnaires were disseminated in three forms, online-web based, face to face and by emails. Although, in the case of emailing the questionnaires, the researcher ensured that the copies were sent directly to the respondents, this might not necessarily mean that the questionnaires were actually completed by the respondents. However, this can be considered insignificant and does not affect the result.

Respondents to the questionnaires were chosen from six geopolitical zones which have varying number of NMSEs. A statistical sampling approach was used to ensure that a representative sample was drawn from each geopolitical zone in accordance with the number of NMSEs in the particular zone. As such, the numbers of participants were not equal because the numbers of NMSEs in each zone were not equal, and this could affect the average mean of the statistical tests conducted. To resolve this and reduce the impact of the limitation on the overall result, non-parametric tests were used in the study; hence, this issue does not affect the overall result of the study. Similarly, the different industry segments were not equally represented due to the differences in the size of the different industry segments. This has implication to generalisability over the industries that have minimal representation; hence, generalisability of the results is limited to industry segments that have high number of respondents which are: construction, education, manufacturing and health sectors.

Furthermore, although this study is a context-specific approach to CS-HRMp linkage, hence generalised to the same NMSEs, reference could be made to the wider context of emerging economies CS-HRMp studies. Similarly, even though the study was conducted in Nigeria, the focus was on NMSEs; hence, the larger enterprises, multinationals and public organisations may have their own peculiarities and be areas for further studies. In the same line, this study focused specifically on CS and HRMp variables emerging from the literature review and exploratory interviews in the development of the questionnaire. The questionnaire aptly denotes the themes emerging from NMSEs and this does not limit the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the questionnaire for usage in the study, and the statistical tests for reliability confirmed the questionnaire's reliability.

## 7.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has made significant contributions to the study of SHRM literature by undertaking an investigation of the dynamics of linkage of CS and HRMp in the emerging economies context using NMSEs as a case context. Additionally, this study has contributed to management practice in Nigeria by developing a context-specific model of CS-HRMp practice. Some key gaps in literature therefore have been filled by the study. However, further areas connected to this study could be subject to further exploration and explanation.

Foremost, this study focused on the case context of NMSEs for very clear reasons, as stated in Chapter one. However, further research could be carried out on other forms of Nigerian organisations. Future studies could focus on government and public organisations, large organisations and multinationals to determine how the model

suggested could be applied to the wider variety of sectors in Nigeria. In that way, commonalities or differences in application of the model in large and multinational organisations or similar applicability could be established.

Regarding CS and NMSEs adopted and practised in Nigeria, this study focused on themes emerging from NMSEs; therefore, further studies could delineate the types of CS and HRMp used in large enterprises in Nigeria and identify the key differences and similarities in CS and HRMp variables in Nigeria's large enterprises and how they are linked together.

In addition, future studies could establish the relationship between the different levels of CS-HRMp linkage and specific outcomes, identifying the commonalities and differences between the different levels of linkage and outcomes attributed to them. This could be helpful in establishing the importance of achieving integrative CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs. In the same vein, further studies could focus on establishing the specific impacts of contextual factors on the different levels of linkage in NMSEs.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

This study has presented key theoretical issues of CS-HRMp linkage in NMSEs ranging from two components of the linkage in NMSEs, the relationship between the components, contextual factors that affect the linkage, and the levels and outcomes of the linkage. The case context is one that has been earmarked by the Nigerian government as part of the broad spectrum of SMEs to serve as an important wheel in driving Nigeria's Vision 2020. With the development of a context-specific CS-HRMp model for the management of human resources in NMSEs, a management tool has

been developed for application in the sector which contributes to knowledge supporting the Nigerian government's achievement of Vision 2020.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: Map of Nigeria, Showing the Geo-Political Zones
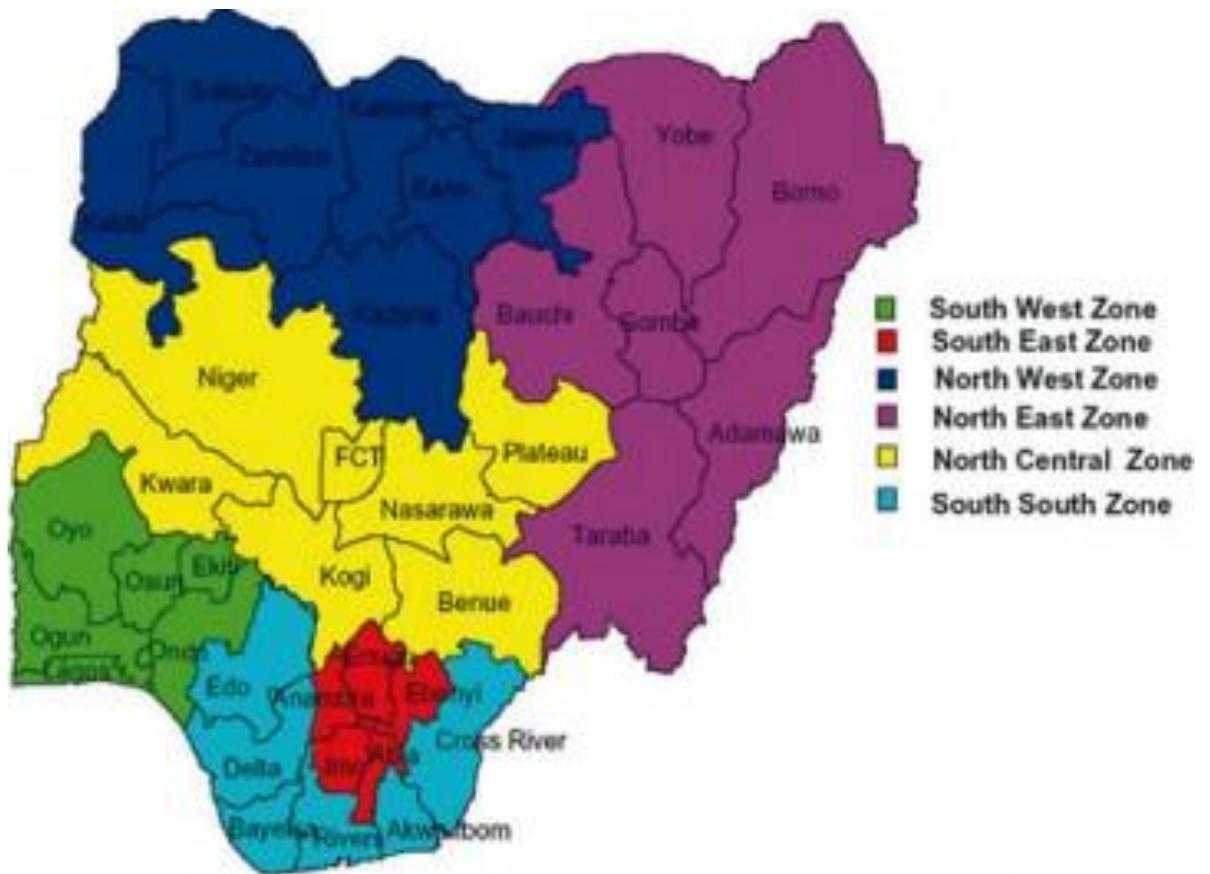
**APPENDIX II: Map of Nigeria, Showing the Poverty Distribution among the**

**Zones**
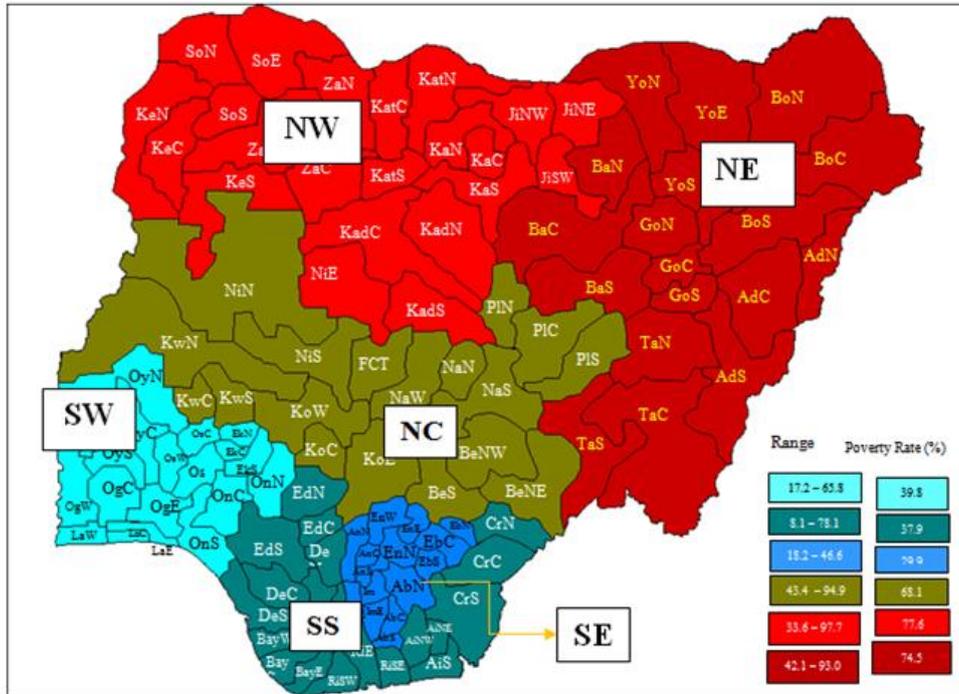


Source: Result of Data Analyzed (2010)

**APPENDIX III: Productivity Level of Nigeria's Labour Force, 2015 (NBS, 2015)**
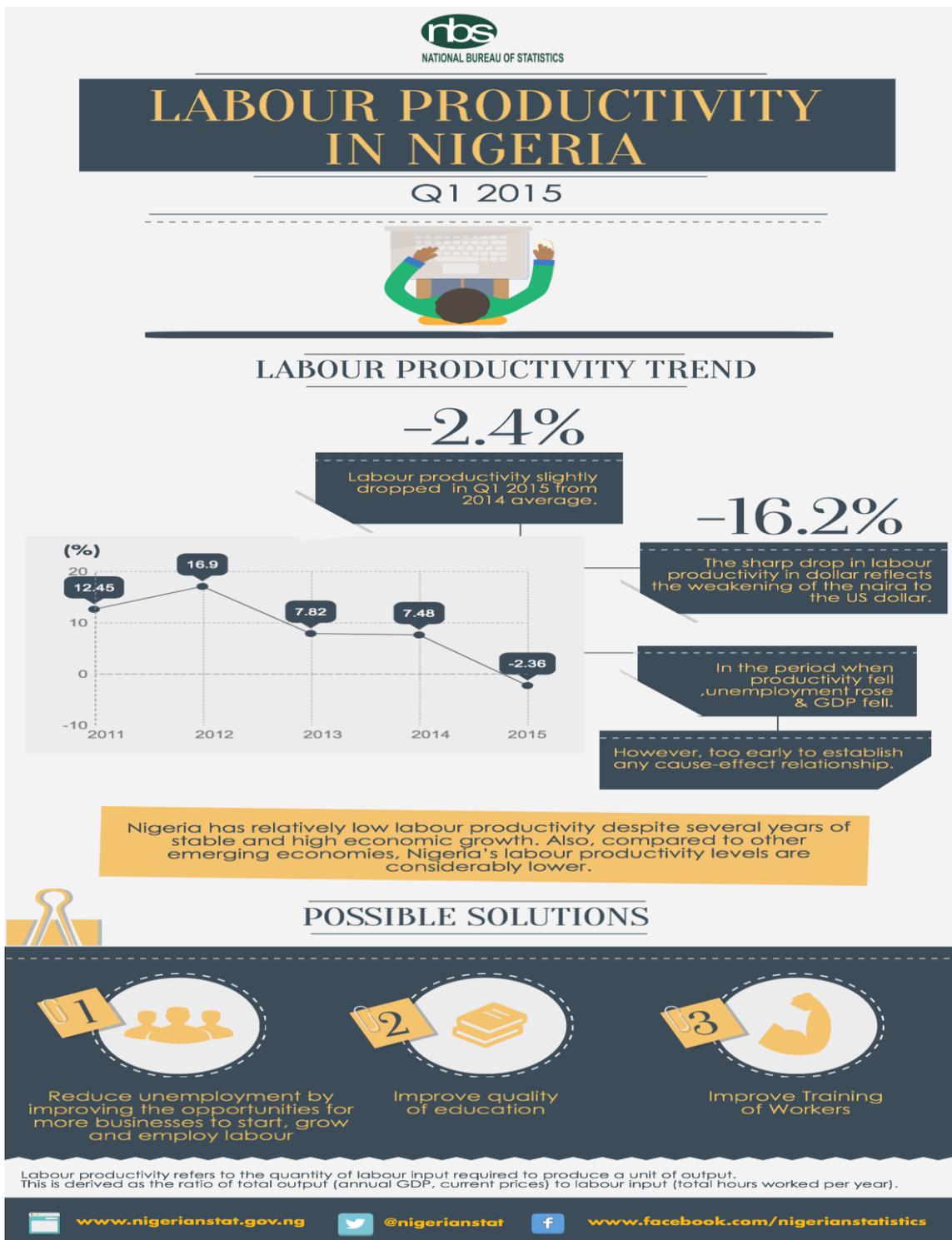
**APPENDIX IV: Unemployment Level Relating to Impact on People Management in Nigeria (NBS Data on Unemployment, 2015)**
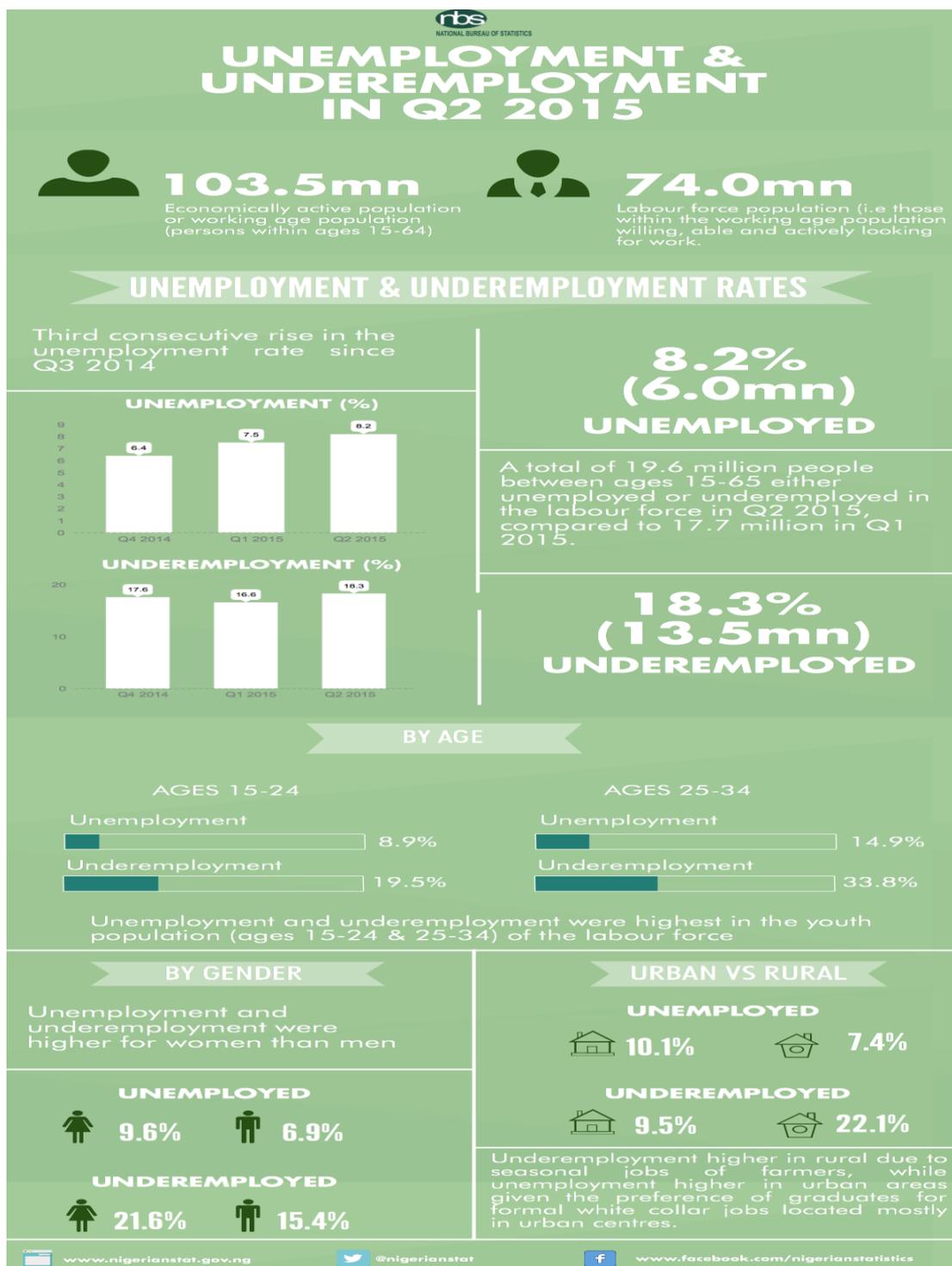
**APPENDIX V: Interview Respondents' Participant Information Sheet**

| | |
|---|---|
| LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY | **LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY** |

**Title of Project:** INVESTIGATING **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET** HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NIGERIA MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty: Nwachukwu Celestine (Liverpool Business School)**

**INTRODUCTION:** You are being invited to take part in a research study. Prior to your decision to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

**1. What is the purpose of the study?**
The aim of this study to investigate the linkage of human resource management practices and competitive strategies in Nigerian medium-sized businesses. It is a PhD study conducted by a student to find out how human resource management practices are linked with the competitive strategies, and make recommendations as regards a model of linking human resource management practices and competitive strategy in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises (NMSEs).

**2. Do I have to take part?**
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive.

**3. What will happen to me if I take part?**
You will be involved in the study during all through the period of this study. This study is intended to last for approximately 36 months. Your participation in the study is by being involved in semi-structured interviews that would serve as the primary source of data. The interviews would last approximately 45 minutes to one hour, and would focus on the study.

**4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?**
The practical contribution is directed to the enhanced human resource management in NMSEs. NMSEs are important for Nigeria's economic development goals (Ihua, 2009; Okpara and Wynn, 2009). This is recognized by the Nigerian in placing priority on the support of the SME productivity towards the achievement of "vision 2020". This study therefore contributes to the enhancement SHRM practices in Nigerian SMEs, for vision 2020, by studying the SHRM practices in Nigeria and suggesting a model to enhance the application of SHRM practices to enhance employee commitment.

This study contributes to research on SHRM practices in NMSEs, and suggests a model of linking competitive strategies and human resource management practices in NMSEs. It therefore, fills the academic gap created by little research in the area of SHRM in medium and small firms in Nigeria, supplies academic information on SHRM practices in Nigeria, and cross-examines academic literature with specific practices of SHRM in Nigeria.

**5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed before analysis. During and after the study, the recorded interview material and transcription will remain locked up in a research cupboard accessible only to the researcher. All information provided will be used only in the manner allowed by you.

**APPENDIX VI: Research Participant Consent Form**

**LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY**

**CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Project: AN INVESTIGATION OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN MEDIMEDIUM-SIZED FIRMS IN NIGERIA**

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty: Nwachukwu Celestine (Liverpool Business School)**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.

3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential

4. I agree to take part in the above study *(interview)*

5. I understand that the interview/focus group will be audio / video recorded and I am happy to proceed

6. I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised.

Name of Participant                    Date                    Signature


Name of Researcher                    Date                    Signature


Name of Person taking consent        Date                    Signature


*(If different from the researcher)*

**APPENDIX VII: Interview Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews**

**What is your position in the organisation?** (How would you describe yourself and your role?)

**What is the number of employees of the organisation?**

**How long has the company been in operation?**

**Do you have a HR department/ or HR manager?**

**How long has your HR department been running?**

**How many direct reports do you have?**

**A. COMPETITIVE STRATEGY IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (NMSEs)**
**What competitive strategies are in use in your organisation?**

**(Interviewer Moderated to probe note:**
Competitive strategy in Written or Unwritten form?
How is the company's strategy formed? (*This refers to what levels of management and employees are involved in the process of forming and deciding on the choice of your competitive strategy*)
Planned or Emergent Strategy (*do you amend the competitive strategy as events in the business, market or economy unfolds, or just stick to initial plans*?)

**B. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NMSEs**

**What is the approach to Managing your Employees/Human Resources?**

**(Interviewer Moderated to probe note:**

**What are your HRMp?**
Written or Unwritten form?
What Human Resource management practices are adopted? (*E.g performance evaluation, recruitment etc.)*
Why the practices are adopted?

**C.  LINKAGE BETWEEN CS AND HRMp IN NMSEs**

**How do you link Competitive Strategy and HR Practices?**

**(Interviewer Moderated to probe note**:
Is Competitive Strategy considered in Forming the HRMp, and How? Any Evidence?
Is Human Resources considered in forming of competitive strategy (*Ask only if qualified to answer*)
Do you Link among individual HR practices? (*E.g, recruitment and selection with job assignment, how*?)

**In making decision regarding competitive strategy and human resource practices, how involved are the following, and to what extent?**

*Top Management (*Manager, Business Owners, if any*)

*Human Resource Professional (*HR department*)

*Line Managers *(Line supervisors and managers*)

*Employees   (*any involvement in the process of decision making*)

*Labour Union (*or representative of labour union in the organisation, if any*)

**What Importance do you attribute to the Linkage of Competitive Strategy and Human Resource Practices in Your organisation?**

With regards to what the organisation wants to achieve, the employees' contribution, employee commitment, Any evidence?

**D. INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTS ON THE LINKAGE OF COMPETITIVE STRATEGY WITH HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES BY NMSEs**

**What contextual factors are encountered by the organisation in integrating competitive strategy and HRMp?**

**(Interviewer Moderated to probe note:**
Cultural Issues in Integration of competitive strategy with human resource practices
Influence of government legislation and regulations, *e.g labour laws*
Economic changes, *e.g oil price fluctuations*
Digital changes, *e.g use of internet apps*
Globalization, *e.g influx of foreign companies*
Religious Issues, *e.g religious unrest*

**APPENDIX VIII: Research Questionnaire**

**A SURVEY ON THE LINKAGE OF COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES**



This survey is a part of my PhD research being conducted at the Liverpool John Moores University. The aim of this survey is to investigate the extent to which competitive strategies and Human Resource Management practices are linked together in Nigerian Medium-sized enterprises.

I wish to implore your assistance in completing this survey, which takes about 20-25 minutes to complete. Your contribution to this study would be highly appreciated. Naturally, you are free to decide to participate or not, or to withdraw from the survey at any time. In addition, your participation in this study will be kept confidential and anonymous.

## Q1-8 Section A: Demographic and Organisational Data

Gender

| Male | Female |
|------|--------|
| ○ | ○ |

Into which age bracket do you fall? (*Tick one group*)

| 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55+ |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

What is your highest level of education attained?

| No Formal Education | Primary | Secondary | Undergraduate | Postgraduate | Other |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

What sector of business does your enterprise fall into? (*Tick or write in space provided if the sector is not listed*)

| Education | Health | Manufacturing | Construction/Engineering | Other (specify) |
|-----------|--------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

What is your position in the organisation? (*Tick the below* )

| Managing Director | Member of Management board | Human Resource Manager | Administrative officer | Human Resource Coordinator |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

How many years have you been in the position? (*Tick one group*)

| 15 | 6-11 | 12-17 | 18-25 | 25 + |
|----|------|-------|-------|------|

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

What is the number of Employees in the organisation? *(Tick one group)*

| 1-10 | 11-49 | 50-199 | 200 + |
|------|-------|--------|-------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

How many years has the organisation been in operation? (Tick one group)

| 1-5 | 6-11 | 12-17 | 18-25 | 25+ |
|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q9- 14 SECTION B Preliminary Questions**
**\*\*\*Competitive strategy is a set of planned actions or practices any business does especially well in order to gain advantage over other competitors in the industry.**

**\*\*\*HRM practices are the modes of practice and action used by the employer to communicate the goal of the business, control employee behaviour and get them involved in the business. For example, recruitment, performance evaluation, discipline.**

Does your organisation have competitive strategies? (*Tick the answer*)

| No | Yes |
|----|-----|
| ○ | ○ |

In what form are your organisation's Competitive strategies documented?(*Tick the answer*)

| written form | unwritten form | both written and unwritten form |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ |

Does your organisation have a clear set of practices for managing the employees? (*Tick the answer*)

| No | Yes |
|----|-----|
| ○ | ○ |

In What form are your organisation's human resource management practices? (*Tick the answer*)

| written form | unwritten form | both written and unwritten form |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| ○ | ○ | ○ |

Do you have a human resource manager in your organisation? ((*Answer the next question if your answer is "NO"*)

| No | Yes |
|----|-----|
| ○ | ○ |

**Q96**

☐

Do you have someone in your organisation designated to perform the function of a HR?

| No | Yes |
|----|-----|
| ○ | ○ |

There is a strong investment in human resources in the organisation

| No | Yes |
|----|-----|

## Q15-26 SECTION C: COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

**Which of the Following Statements represents competitive strategies in your organisation?** *(Tick which answer shows your response to each statement)*

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The organisation uses the help of external consultants to design our competitive strategy | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Competitive advantage is based on advertising | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Competitive advantage is based on the use of Internet Communication technologies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation utilizes relationship with other businesses to remain competitive | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation's strategy provides products/services for customers on a reduced cost | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation's strategy gives consumers what the consumers value most | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The quality of employees are used to be competitive | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation's strategy focuses on quality products and services | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The organisation focuses on being different from other competitors | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Personal relationship with customers give us advantage over our rivals | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation re-organizes the available resources to adapt to changes in business | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The competitive strategies are changed as things change | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Q27-39 Section D: Human Resource Management (HRM) Practices

**To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following HRM Statements in regard to your organisation?** *(Tick one answer for each statement)*

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The organisation strongly supports the social life of employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The salary structures are clearly specified | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employees have strong opportunities to develop their individual career | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation has effective processes for recruitment | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Human resource training practices are effectively used in the organisation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation has effective recruitment processes that suits the business | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disciplinary measures are used deliberately to control employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The Performance evaluation system is clearly stated | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation has an effective a set of employee retention practices | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Empowering the employees is a strong feature of our Human resource management practices | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| HRM practices adopted suit our organisational goals | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation adopts only HRM practices that have been successfully used by other organisations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation adopts HRM practices that fit the culture of the Nigerian society | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Q40-50 Section E: Relationship between Competitive Strategies and Human Resource Management Practices in Nigerian Medium-sized enterprises

**To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements that link competitive strategy and human resource management practices in your organisation?** *(Tick one answer for each statement)*

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When forming HRM practices, competitive strategy is considered | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| HRM practices are considered in the formulation of competitive strategies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The Line Manager (line supervisor) is involved in managing HR issues for employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employees are involved in making decisions concerning HRM practices in the organisation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The organisation regularly evaluate the link between competitive strategy and HRM practices | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Recruitment practices are clearly linked with competitive strategies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employee performance evaluation is clearly connected with competitive strategies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Salary structures are clearly related to the competitive strategy | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The organisation develop employees to fit the competitive strategies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The employee social support system is clearly linked with competitive strategies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When forming HRM practices, each practice is considered in relation to how it affects other practices | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q51- 59 Section F: Outcome of the Relationship between Competitive Strategies and HRM Practices in the Nigerian Context.**

**If the organisation makes a link between competitive strategies and HRM practices, what benefits does the organisation gain from the linkage?** *(Tick one answer for each question)*

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Improved Employee satisfaction | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employee commitment increased | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employee motivation is enhanced | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Employee competence is enhanced | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Fair treatment of Employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The quality of products/ services improved | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Increased business Performance | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Lower retention of Employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Increased cost of managing employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Q60-72 Section G: The Impact of Cultural and Contextual Factors on the Linkage of Competitive Strategies and Human Resource Management Practices in Nigerian Medium-Sized Enterprises**

**What factors impact on a positive linkage between competitive strategy and human resource management practices in the organisation?** *(Tick one response for each question)*

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural values | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Nigerian Labour Union's pressure | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Religious Differences | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Language Differences | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Government policies on Small and Medium sized enterprises | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Economic Changes | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ethnic origins | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Poor quality of Educational in Nigeria | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Lack of Skilled workers | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Corruption | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Personal Relationship among employees | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| family relationships | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Low Naira Value | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Any other factor that influences the linkage of competitive strategies and HRM practices in your organisation? (***Write in space below***)**

*Thank you very much for your assistance in completing this survey!*

**APPENDIX IX: Table of Themes Emerging From the Semi-Structured**

**Interviews**

| Key Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| Competitive Strategies | Advertising strategy; ICT-driven strategy; B2B relationship strategy; Cost Leadership; Differentiation; Resource based approach; Personal relationship strategy; Capability building strategy; Quality/Product; Dynamic Capability |
| Human Resource Management Practices | Salary; Performance evaluation practices; Recruitment practices; Individual career development; Employee retention practices; Employee empowerment practices; disciplinary measures; Practices supporting employee welfare outside of workplace; Fit practices; Contextual , Bundle practices, Best Practices |
| Linkage | Central/Top management; Departmental heads; Employee Representation; Line Managers; Human Resource Managers; Departmental heads; Strategy updating/evaluation; Investment, Employee Involvement |
| Context based Factors | Committed Employees; Highly motivated employees; Enhancement of competencies; Well satisfied workers; Just and fair treatment of Employees; Lower Retention; Quality products; Increased cost of management |
| Outcome of Linkage | Cultural values; Economic changes; Government policies; Religious values; Language differences; Education level of employees; Labour Union; Lack of skilled labour; Corruption; Ethnic origins; Naira Value; Age; Ownership Type; Seniority |

**APPENDIX X: Table of Normality Tests**

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Gender | .382 | 323 | .000 | .627 | 323 | .000 |
| Age | .217 | 323 | .000 | .902 | 323 | .000 |
| Education | .489 | 323 | .000 | .099 | 323 | .000 |
| Position of Respondents | .186 | 322 | .000 | .864 | 322 | .000 |
| Years of Operation | .235 | 321 | .000 | .886 | 321 | .000 |
| Work Experience | .313 | 323 | .000 | .820 | 323 | .000 |
| Market Sectors | .230 | 323 | .000 | .859 | 323 | .000 |
| Geopolitical Zones | .178 | 323 | .000 | .924 | 323 | .000 |
| Documentation form of CS | .400 | 322 | .000 | .653 | 322 | .000 |
| Documentation form of HRMp | .407 | 323 | .000 | .640 | 323 | .000 |
| CS | .532 | 323 | .000 | .085 | 323 | .000 |
| HRMp | .539 | 323 | .000 | .151 | 323 | .000 |
| Human Resource Manager | .489 | 323 | .000 | .494 | 323 | .000 |
| Someone designated to perform the function of a HR | .533 | 321 | .000 | .323 | 321 | .000 |
| HRM Investment | .489 | 321 | .000 | .496 | 321 | .000 |
| Advertising | .296 | 323 | .000 | .768 | 323 | .000 |
| ICT | .258 | 323 | .000 | .804 | 323 | .000 |
| B2B | .313 | 321 | .000 | .774 | 321 | .000 |
| Cost Leadership | .304 | 322 | .000 | .789 | 322 | .000 |
| Differentiation | .267 | 321 | .000 | .778 | 321 | .000 |
| Value based strategy | .285 | 321 | .000 | .751 | 321 | .000 |
| Quality of Products | .331 | 322 | .000 | .698 | 322 | .000 |
| Personal Relationships | .253 | 323 | .000 | .779 | 323 | .000 |
| RBV | .255 | 322 | .000 | .779 | 322 | .000 |
| DC | .265 | 323 | .000 | .796 | 323 | .000 |
| Practices supporting social/welfare of employees | .318 | 323 | .000 | .731 | 323 | .000 |
| Salary structures | .287 | 322 | .000 | .776 | 322 | .000 |
| development of individual career paths | .280 | 322 | .000 | .809 | 322 | .000 |
| Recruitment practices | .333 | 323 | .000 | .780 | 323 | .000 |
| Training Programmes | .336 | 323 | .000 | .754 | 323 | .000 |
| Disciplinary measures | .307 | 322 | .000 | .774 | 322 | .000 |
| Performance evaluation | .283 | 322 | .000 | .812 | 322 | .000 |
| Employee Retention | .228 | 321 | .000 | .851 | 321 | .000 |
| Empowerment | .270 | 319 | .000 | .835 | 319 | .000 |
| Contingency HRM practices | .287 | 321 | .000 | .780 | 321 | .000 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Best practices approach to HRM | .230 | 322 | .000 | .854 | 322 | .000 |
| Context-based Practices | .277 | 322 | .000 | .816 | 322 | .000 |
| HRMp | .321 | 322 | .000 | .794 | 322 | .000 |
| CS | .261 | 323 | .000 | .824 | 323 | .000 |
| Line Management Devolvement | .397 | 323 | .000 | .719 | 323 | .000 |
| Employee Involvement | .276 | 322 | .000 | .868 | 322 | .000 |
| Strategy Evaluation | .319 | 322 | .000 | .833 | 322 | .000 |
| Bundling HRMp | .333 | 322 | .000 | .797 | 322 | .000 |
| Commitment | .309 | 322 | .000 | .716 | 322 | .000 |
| Motivation | .279 | 321 | .000 | .772 | 321 | .000 |
| Competence | .282 | 320 | .000 | .776 | 320 | .000 |
| Fairness | .310 | 319 | .000 | .820 | 319 | .000 |
| Quality | .252 | 320 | .000 | .762 | 320 | .000 |
| Business performance increased | .284 | 322 | .000 | .746 | 322 | .000 |
| Lower Employee Retention | .249 | 321 | .000 | .868 | 321 | .000 |
| Management Cost | .279 | 322 | .000 | .829 | 322 | .000 |
| Culture | .299 | 323 | .000 | .855 | 323 | .000 |
| Labour Union | .222 | 322 | .000 | .897 | 322 | .000 |
| Religion | .245 | 320 | .000 | .439 | 320 | .000 |
| Language | .261 | 322 | .000 | .620 | 322 | .000 |
| Government Policies | .346 | 322 | .000 | .226 | 322 | .000 |
| Economy | .292 | 323 | .000 | .842 | 323 | .000 |
| Ethnicity | .251 | 323 | .000 | .884 | 323 | .000 |
| Quality of Education | .280 | 322 | .000 | .862 | 322 | .000 |
| Lack of Skilled Labour | .268 | 322 | .000 | .863 | 322 | .000 |
| Corruption | .275 | 320 | .000 | .420 | 320 | .000 |
| Personal Relationships | .341 | 323 | .000 | .802 | 323 | .000 |
| Family relationships influencing the level of involvement | .253 | 323 | .000 | .885 | 323 | .000 |
| Currency Value | .184 | 320 | .000 | .887 | 320 | .000 |
| Job Satisfaction | .331 | 322 | .000 | .807 | 322 | .000 |

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

**APPENDIX XI: Visual Presentation of SEMM Design for the Study**

**PHASE**                                          **PROCEDURE**                                          **OUTCOME**

**Phase one**

Qualitative Data Collection

*In-depth semi-structured interviews

*Telephone interviews
*Non-Probability sampling with set criteria

*Thematic Analysis

Interview data

Recorded interview Responses

Themes (Thematic Map)

Connection of Qualitative phase with Quantitative Phase

*Comparison of emerging interview themes with

*Literature

*Development of Questionnaire

Questionnaire Piloting

Distribution

Phase Two:

Pilot Study of questionnaire

Quantitative Data Collection

*Probability Quantitative sampling

Pilot

*Testing of Questionnaire for Reliability

* Collection of quantitative data via questionnaire

Numerical statistics

Numbers

measurement

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Interpretation

*Quantitative Tests Using SPSS

Findings on the linkage of CS and HRMp in NMSEs

**\*\*\*Discussions, Model of CS-HRMp Linkage in NMSEs, and Conclusions**

# APPENDIX XII: Spearman's Correlation

**Correlations**

| | | | Adv. | ICT | B2B | CL | Diff | VBS | QuP | P. Rel | RBV | DC | PSE S/W | S.S | ICP | RP | TP | DM | PE | ER | Emp |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Adv. | Correlation Coefficient | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ICT | Correlation Coefficient | .186 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | B2B | Correlation Coefficient | .169 | .198 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 | .000 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 321 | 321 | 321 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | CL | Correlation Coefficient | -.03 | .206 | .093 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .628 | .000 | .097 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 322 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Diff | Correlation Coefficient | .067 | .133 | .120 | .147 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .232 | .017 | .032 | .008 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 321 | 321 | 319 | 320 | 321 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | VBS | Correlation Coefficient | .144 | .318 | .093 | .142 | .257 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .010 | .000 | .098 | .011 | .000 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 321 | 321 | 319 | 320 | 319 | 321 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | QuP | Correlation Coefficient | .156 | .205 | .077 | .195 | .383 | .418 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .005 | .000 | .172 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 322 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | P.Rel | Correlation Coefficient | .056 | .168 | .108 | .030 | .097 | .364 | .179 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .318 | .003 | .052 | .598 | .083 | .000 | .001 | . | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 321 | 322 | 323 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | RBV | Correlation Coefficient | .052 | .187 | .176 | .105 | .210 | .305 | .308 | .170 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .349 | .001 | .002 | .060 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .002 | . | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 322 | 322 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | DC | Correlation Coefficient | .013 | .132 | .000 | .059 | .191 | .261 | .231 | .333 | .194 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .814 | .018 | .996 | .293 | .001 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 321 | 322 | 323 | 322 | 323 | | | | | | | | | |
| | PSES/W | Correlation Coefficient | .044 | .057 | .086 | .007 | .046 | .181 | .034 | .000 | .036 | .009 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .426 | .307 | .125 | .897 | .412 | .001 | .544 | .995 | .514 | .872 | . | | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 321 | 322 | 323 | 322 | 323 | 323 | | | | | | | | |
| | S.S | Correlation Coefficient | .049 | .019 | .153 | .155 | .079 | .112 | .127 | .083 | .287 | .176 | .040 | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .378 | .735 | .006 | .005 | .157 | .045 | .023 | .135 | .000 | .001 | .471 | . | | | | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 322 | | | | | | | |
| | ICP | Correlation Coefficient | .00 | .164 | .140 | .138 | .182 | .271 | .165 | .138 | .225 | .192 | -.02 | .282 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .966 | .003 | .012 | .013 | .001 | .000 | .003 | .000 | .000 | .001 | .750 | .000 | . | | | | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 321 | 322 | | | | | | |
| | RP | Correlation Coefficient | .074 | .271 | .104 | .083 | .111 | .320 | .200 | .120 | .203 | .276 | .057 | .252 | .397 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .183 | .000 | .063 | .139 | .046 | .000 | .000 | .031 | .000 | .000 | .310 | .000 | .000 | . | | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 321 | 322 | 323 | 322 | 323 | 323 | 322 | 322 | 323 | | | | | |
| | TP | Correlation Coefficient | .133 | .162 | .012 | .005 | .127 | .332 | .164 | .096 | .245 | .286 | .019 | .229 | .238 | .347 | 1.00 | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .017 | .003 | .836 | .930 | .023 | .000 | .003 | .086 | .000 | .000 | .729 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | | | | |
| | | N | 323 | 323 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 321 | 322 | 323 | 322 | 323 | 323 | 322 | 322 | 323 | 323 | | | | |
| | DM | Correlation Coefficient | .188 | .121 | .133 | .113 | .062 | .239 | .123 | .135 | .215 | .065 | .029 | .156 | .214 | .255 | .243 | 1.00 | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .030 | .017 | .043 | .267 | .000 | .028 | .015 | .000 | .244 | .601 | .005 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 322 | 322 | | | |
| | PE | Correlation Coefficient | .00 | .136 | .231 | .095 | .122 | .244 | .126 | .188 | .258 | .146 | -.11 | .193 | .297 | .234 | .319 | .320 | 1.00 | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .983 | .015 | .000 | .088 | .029 | .000 | .024 | .001 | .000 | .009 | .047 | .001 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | | |
| | | N | 322 | 322 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 321 | 322 | 322 | 322 | 322 | 322 | | |
| | ER | Correlation Coefficient | -.03 | .036 | .045 | .138 | .214 | .175 | .065 | .124 | .272 | .173 | -.05 | .219 | .282 | .147 | .237 | .243 | .375 | 1.00 | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .560 | .519 | .423 | .014 | .002 | .002 | .248 | .026 | .000 | .002 | .352 | .000 | .000 | .008 | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | |
| | | N | 321 | 321 | 319 | 320 | 319 | 319 | 320 | 321 | 320 | 321 | 321 | 320 | 320 | 321 | 321 | 321 | 321 | 321 | |
| | Emp | Correlation Coefficient | .070 | .127 | .061 | .141 | .170 | .243 | .080 | .00 | .189 | .149 | .074 | .171 | .238 | .187 | .275 | .114 | .206 | .298 | 1.00 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .209 | .024 | .280 | .012 | .002 | .000 | .154 | .971 | .001 | .008 | .190 | .002 | .000 | .001 | .000 | .042 | .000 | .000 | . |
| | | N | 319 | 319 | 317 | 318 | 317 | 317 | 318 | 319 | 318 | 319 | 319 | 318 | 318 | 319 | 319 | 319 | 319 | 318 | 319 |

p<0.05**; p<0.01*

**APPENDIX XIII: Median Table for Outcome of CS-HRMp Linkage**

| | | Job Satisfaction | Commitment | Motivation | Competence | Fairness | Quality | Business performance increased | Lower Employee Retention | Management Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 322 | 322 | 321 | 320 | 319 | 320 | 322 | 321 | 322 |
| | Missing | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Median | | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 | 4.0000 |
| Std. Deviation | | .76205 | .59194 | .72550 | .71124 | .81355 | .71509 | .65405 | .97636 | .88934 |

**APPENDIX XIV: Qualitative Data Output Visual**



Nodes compared by number of items coded

**APPENDIX XV: Qualitative Analysis Word Count**

| Name | Sources | References | Created By | Modified On | Modified By | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |
| Competitive Strategies | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Advertising Strategy | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| B2B | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| B2B | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| cost leadership | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Differentiation | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Dynamic Capability | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| ICT | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Digital | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Personal relationships for business | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Personal Relationship | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Quality | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| RBV | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Value based strategy | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Contextual Factors | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Bad Economy | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Culture | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Ethnicity | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Government Policies | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Labour union of Nigeria | 6 | 6 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Language Differences | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Naira Value and Dollar rate | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| quality graduates | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Relationships | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Religion | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| It is very volatile in Nigeria | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Violence and Civil Unrest | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| Skills | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| HRM practices | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:50 | C.1 | |
| best fit practices | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Best Practice | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Bundle HRM practices | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Career development path | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Contextual HRM | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Contingent HRM | 4 | 4 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Disciplinary measures | 4 | 4 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Employee Retention | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Empowerment | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| performance evaluation | 6 | 6 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| PSES_W | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Recruitment practices | 4 | 4 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Salary and Wages | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Training | 9 | 9 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Linkage | 7 | 7 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Administrative officers | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Administrative officers | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Both Written and Unwritten form | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Unwritten Form | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Written Form CS | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Written Form CS | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 21/07/2016 13:03 | C.1 | |
| Employee involvement | 6 | 6 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Feedback | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| General meetings | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| HR involvement | 5 | 5 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| We have a HR department | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 21/07/2016 11:59 | C.1 | |
| line management involvement | 8 | 8 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Departmental heads | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Head of Sections | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| TpM involvement | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| the management board | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| the managing director | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Use of Consultants | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Outcome of CS-HRMp Linkage | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Business performance and profits | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Commitment | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Competency | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Fair treatment of employees | 3 | 3 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| increase quality product | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Increase_lower employee retention | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| management costs | 2 | 2 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Motivation | 4 | 4 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |
| Quality of Products | 1 | 1 | C.1 | 22/07/2016 12:51 | C.1 | |

# APPENDIX XVI: Thematic Map of the Linkage of HRMp and Competitive Strategy in NMSEs Emerging from Qualitative Data Analysis

Quality

Unique Difference

Customer value

Cost leadership

**Competitive Strategy**

Written

Career Path

Best fit

Unwritten

Both written and unwritten

Advertising

ICT

Digital

Relationships

B2B approach

Dynamic configuration

Personal relationship

Resource-based view

Salary scheme

Performance

Empowerment

**Human Resource Management Practices**

Training

Bundle HRM

Recruitment

Retention

Nigeria context

PSES/W

Best practice

Fines/Levies/Disciplines

HRM investment

HR

Linkage is Important

Line Management

Departmental heads

Supervisors

Head of School

Employees

General Meetings

Feedback

**Linkage of HRMp and competitive strategy**

Administrative Department

Managing Director

Management board

Management

Human resource Department

Culture

Religious Influence

Who do you know?

Language differences

Ethnicity

Quality of Education

Skills

Government policies

Labour Union

**Nigeria Contextual Factors in the Linkage of HRMp and competitive strategies**

Corruption

Naira Value

Economic hardship

Job Satisfaction

Quality Product

**Outcome of Linkage of HRMp and competitive strategy**

Low retention

Commitment

High business performance

Management cost

Competence

Just/fair treatment

Motivation

Happy