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HUMAN RESOURCES AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract

This paper being an empirical work assessed Human Resources and Regional Integration especially as it relates to Nigeria and other regional bodies like the Africa Union (AU), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Three research questions were designed for the study expecting responses from participants. The study used survey research design as this design type helps to gather, organize and analyze data obtained from a pool of respondents and generalise its outcome on the larger population. The population for this study comprises all human resource personnel in both private and public enterprises from Edo, Anambra and Lagos states respectively. The choice of these states is based on the premise that they are one of the economically strategically located states that have a functional HR structure in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 180 human resources personnel from both private and public establishments across the three identified states above. From each of the states, 60 respondents were captured from establishments like tertiary institutions, secondary schools, banks and companies respectively. The researcher adopted a researcher-structured instrument titled "Human Resources and Regional Integration Questionnaire (HRARIQ)" to collect data. The structured Questionnaire has 20 close-ended items on a 4-Point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. The Questionnaire was validated as construct validity was assured and sub-scale index $r=0.835, 0.841$ and 0.816 for the instrument was derived. With Cronbach Alpha, a reliability from an index value of 0.893

was obtained which shows internal consistency. Through mean and simple percentage, a descriptive statistics type, the sourced data was analysed. The study revealed that human resources management has an established influence on regional integration. It then concluded that the Presence of functional and operational labour laws would likely promote the integration of member states of which Nigeria is a key member.

Keywords: Human Resources, Regional integration, Sources, Per Capita Income, Rates, Labour

Introduction

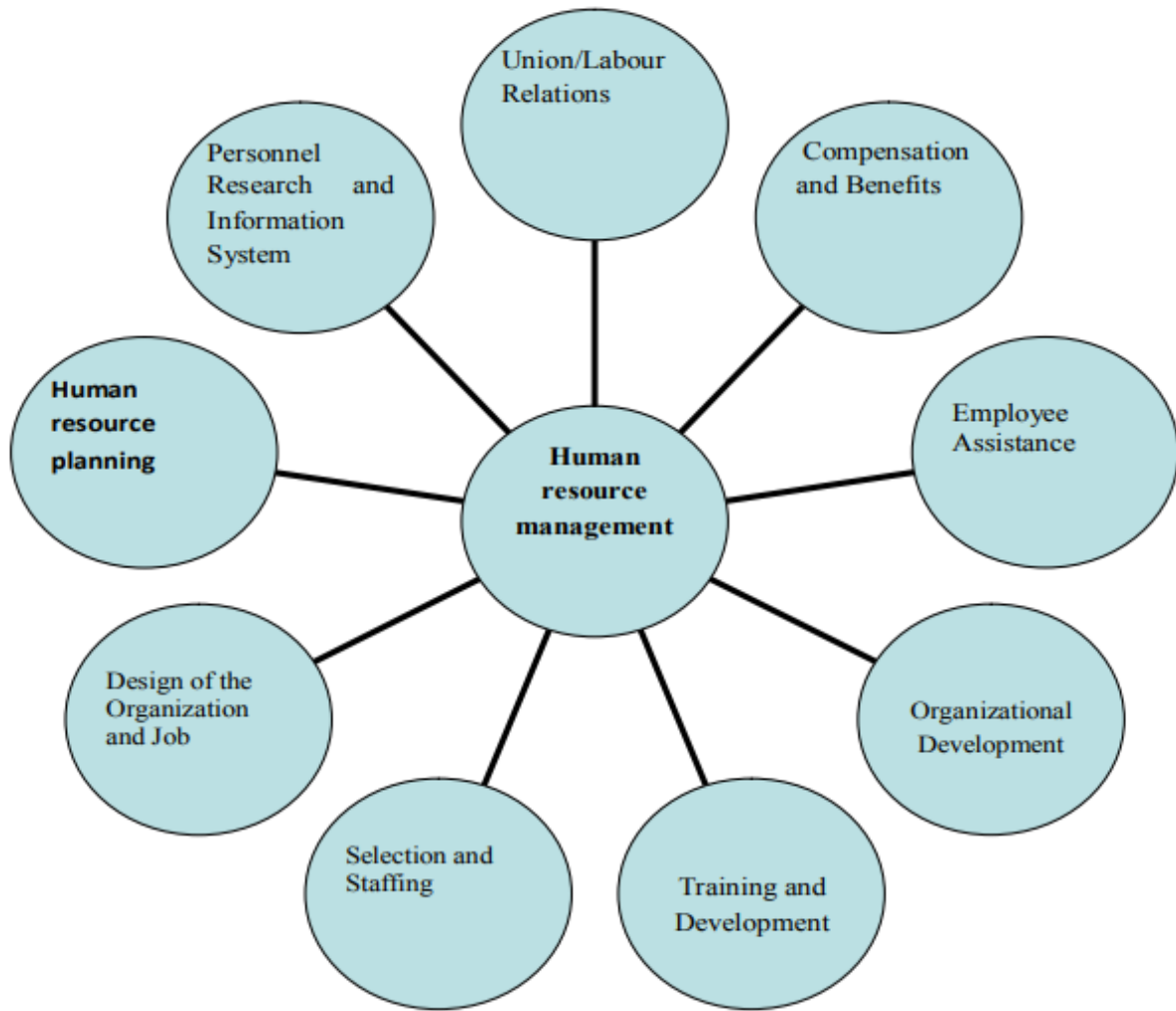
Over the years there has been a series of interests from industry players in driving economies but addressing the loopholes that surround human resources management has always been the barrier to break as human resources is often regarded as the oil bloc of any organisation (Michael, 2023). The concept of human resources can be referred to as a universal word used in representing stipulated and legalised workforce in an organisation, industry and economy respectively. A broader definition of human resources includes labor, manpower, human capital, and the knowledge and abilities that everyone possesses. An organization's human resources department oversees funding, hiring, training, and screening candidates for open positions, managing employee benefit plans, and firing staff members.

Human beings are social animals and are known to hardly work in isolation. They are known as good planners and manage relationships consciously and unconsciously. This relationship is a function of action and depends on their ability to manage expected actions. From the cradle, every individual acquires knowledge and experience in understanding others and how to behave in every life situation. Later in life forward this learning and understanding in the management of relations at workplace. The concept of Human Resources revolves around the core matter of managing relations in the workplace (Prasad & Aswathappa, 2008).

Most managers in public and private sector firms of sizes agree that people truly are the organisation's most important asset. Having competent staff either as members of staff or the management team does not guarantee that the firm human resources will be a source of competitive advantage. Rather to remain competitive, grow and diversify, such an organisation must ensure that its employees are qualified, placed in appropriate positions, properly trained, managed effectively and committed to the firm's growth and development. Human Resources management aims to maximise employee contribution to achieve optimal productivity and effectiveness while simultaneously attaining individual objectives such as having a challenging job and obtaining recognition while meeting societal objectives.

According to Ogunbameru (2008), human resources is a management function in an establishment or organisation concerned with hiring, motivating and maintaining people in an organization. It focuses on the development of people in organizations. Human resources is a designed management system that ensures that human talent is used effectively and efficiently to accomplish organizational goals. Mamora and Gankar, (2006) see HR as the personnel function which is concerned with procurement, development, compensation, integration and maintenance of personnel of an organization to contribute towards the accomplishments of the organization's objectives. Invancevich and Glueck (2013), noted that HR is concerned with the most effective use of people to achieve organisational and individual goals. It is a way of managing people at work so that they give their best to the organisation. Meanwhile, Dessler (2010) opined that the policies and practices involved in carrying out people or human resources aspects of a management position include recruiting, screening, training, rewarding and appraisal of human resources management. Generally, HR refers to the management of people in an organisation concerning activities, policies and practices involved in obtaining, developing, utilising, evaluating, maintaining and retaining the appropriate number and skill mix of employees to accomplish the organisation's objectives. In a holistic term, Human Resources (HR) is the art of procuring, developing and maintaining a competent workforce to achieve the goals of an organization effectively and efficiently. The goal of HR is to maximize employees' contributions to achieve optimal productivity and effectiveness, while simultaneously attaining individual objectives (such as having a challenging job and obtaining recognition), and societal objectives (such as legal compliance and demonstrating social responsibility).

According to David et al (2002); Mamora and Gankar (2006), human resources encompasses all the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions, activities, and methods related to managing people as employees in any organisation. It is the foundation for all aspects of people's interactions and relationships at work. Below is the scope of HR in a functional establishment as given below:



Source: Adapted from Johnson and Solomon, (2009)

HR has a broad scope. HR is responsible for overseeing all significant aspects of an employee's work life from the moment they join a firm until they depart. American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) conducted a fairly exhaustive study in this field and identified nine broad areas of activities of HR. Primary among them as identified by Dessler (2013) are Human Resource Planning (HRP), Design of the Organisation and Job (DOJ), Selection and Staffing, (SS), Training and Organisational Development (TOD), Compensation and Benefits (CB), Employee Assistance (EA), Union Labour Relations (ULR) and Personnel Research and Information System (PRIS) respectively.

Although many scholars have developed the various primary responsibilities of HR personnel in any given establishment, that of David et al (2002); Mamora and Gankar, (2006) best fits all organisations. Among these functions are:

- a. To gain an in-depth understanding of company culture, plans, and necessary policies
- b. Serve as a consultant and internal change agent
- c. Start anticipated change and act as an expert and facilitator
- d. Participate in the company's strategic formulation
- e. Maintain open lines of communication between the HRD function, individuals, and groups inside and outside the organization
- f. Identify and evolve HRD strategies in line with the overall business strategy
- g. Support the growth of various organizational teams and their optimal working relationships with other teams and individuals.
- h. Try to connect with others and work to accomplish the organization's goals in an effective and efficient manner.
- i Identify issues and choose suitable fixes, especially in the field of human resources.
- j. Offer assistance and coordination in the implementation of HRD services and programs.
- k. Assess the results of an HRD study or intervention to determine, create, or test the ways that HRD generally has enhanced organizational and individual performance.

In a bid to produce quality human resources that meet international standards and specifications and can compete with other human manpower supply in the international market by way of regional integration. Trudi (2011) stated that there is not much support from African Governments for regional integration. Indeed, since independence, they have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies and concluded a very large number of regional integration arrangements (RIAs), several of which have significant membership overlap. There are however a few success stories as regional integration is generally an ambitious scheme with unrealistic time frames towards deeper integration and in some cases even political union. According to the African Union Commission (2022), it is the process by which neighboring nations decide to improve their cooperation by using common institutions and regulations. It is the procedure through which two or more states decide to collaborate and work closely together to bring about peace, stability, and prosperity. The adoption of policies by separate countries as if they were a single political unit; although Obasaju, Olayiwola, Okodua, Adeniran and Lawal (2021) see it from another perspective. To them, they envisage that regional integration is a conscious effort and deliberate decision taken by neighbouring nations to agree in the pursuit of a set objective. Regional integration is an offshoot of a decision taken by relative countries that aim and wish to share commonalities concerning trade, politics, religion, legislation among others. Briefly,

Shiff and Winters (2003) were of the perception that regional integration remains a “Neighbourhood arrangement undertaken by countries who share the same vision and mission towards achieving bilateral activities”. The whole essence of regional integration is to expose nations to regional opportunities where effective and efficient policies are undertaken and determined.

In the future, underdevelopment, insufficient resource endowment, and economies of scale have all been presented as financial justifications for the creation of regional organizations. It is thought that regional integration will eliminate these issues that plague the underdeveloped and isolated economies of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and open the door for sustainable growth and development, particularly in the member countries' human resource management.

Presumably, the treaty, which was signed in Abuja in 1991, assumed the presence of a strong foundation upon which it could be created by using the continent's existing regional communities as building bricks. With more than forty regional organizations on the continent, it is necessary to assess the current integration initiatives. In West Africa where Nigeria is domiciled, there are many other regional bodies. A few decades ago, there was a great deal of momentum towards regional integration inspired by the growing awareness of globalisation, increased homogeneity in issues relating to fiscal, financial and technical barriers to trade and servicing a robust human resources network. The significance and necessity of the numerous regional cooperation programmes that have been established since World War II are highlighted by these and the quick development of scientific and technological advancements.

A more recent type of such cooperation is the European Union's introduction of a single currency and establishment of the Union's integrated process to include East European countries. Some of the other known examples of this trend include the emergence of initiatives such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) agreement between United States Japan, China, Mexico, Australia and a few other countries bordering the Pacific Ocean, North American Free Trade Areas (NAFTA), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEN), Southern Common Market (SCM) and Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARCOM). All these bodies share a common desire to establish free trade areas, customs unions and perhaps common currencies to better the lots of their regions thereby having a 21st-century Human Resources System.

The global increase in regional integration has also been fueled by the perceived advantages of regionalism for commerce and economic growth, particularly the advantages of trade and economies of scale through specialization. Notwithstanding Africa's abundance of natural

resources, the continent continues to suffer from a weak industrial base, reliance on foreign loans and money, and a reliance on the production and export of primary commodities, with commerce primarily directed towards EU markets.

The challenge, therefore, is to reduce these dependencies, which over the years have been aggravated by the rapid growth in regional integration among her major trading partners in Europe and elsewhere. Consequently, the share of Africa's products (Nigeria inclusive) have seen the EU market decline from 6.3% in 1980 to 3.3% by 1992, 9.5% in 2000 to 4.2% in 2020; and in Nigeria, a steady decline reoccurring from 2.2% to 1.4% in Q2 of 2023 respectively thereby revealing a trend which is expected to continue in the wake of more stringent economic policies and ties faced within the European Community. Regional integration undoubtedly has a potentially important contribution towards growth and development in African countries not forgetting that regional penetration allows for more refinement of nations' human resources due to acculturation (Abraham and Adekola, 2014).

Need for regional economic integration

After outlining the function of the organization required to carry out the operations of one of the regions with the highest rate of economic integration, it is crucial to emphasize how critical this need is. The need for swift economic integration is summarised below as stated by Okoduwa (2003):

- ❖ **Trade Creation:** Through integration, member nations have a better opportunity to get first-hand information on what the market needs and the prevailing price. Aside from being good, the value of the human resources component is determined to meet demands.
- ❖ **Free Factor Movement:** Here, labour, equipment, and entrepreneurial skills—factors of production—are willingly moved from a comparatively saturated area to an area where they may be used more successfully. It is safe to say that those nations lack true entrepreneurial expertise and will struggle to achieve or implement real development in their nations.
- ❖ **Specialization will flourish more:** The need for specialization will intensify when integration is well achieved. Countries within the bloc will engage in creative specialisation instead of being the jack of all trades and masters of none. Additionally, this will result in more effective resource allocation, which will improve the final touch of the quantity of products introduced to the regional market. *Ceteris paribus*, it goes without saying that the

more commodities that are made available on the market, the lower their prices are for consumers. Naturally, this measure will increase production efficiency since unproductive producers will inevitably have to make room for more productive ones.

Effects of Economic Integration

The establishment of an economic community has an impact on member nations' trade volume and composition, as well as their resource use, output, and prices of traded goods, as well as their ability to negotiate on global markets. To be more precise, economic integration has the following effects:

1. Following the concepts of comparative advantage, the elimination of import duties from member nations results in a positive rise in trade volume.
2. Member nations often enhance their production of the items for which they are most suitable when tariffs are removed. As a result, productive resources are allocated more effectively.
3. The formation of a community results in a single enlarged market for many commodities. Producers in member countries begin to compete with one another and the most efficient displaces the less efficient rivals. The surviving producer is then able to increase its volume of production and realize the economics of mass production. Put differently, the unit cost of production falls as the level of production increases.
4. The member countries, particularly raw material-producing countries, can cooperate as regards the supply of commodities to the world market. For example, ECOWAS countries control an overwhelmingly large proportion of the world's output of cocoa and groundnut, and could thus have some monopoly power in the world markets for these commodities. This power could enable member countries to improve their trade. Because of increased efficiency in member countries resulting from integration, member countries would experience an increased rate of economic growth. Such an increased rate of growth has occurred in the European Economic Community (EEC).

However, Obadan and Dimowo (2020) noted that aside from political, economic and political reasons the pillars of regional integration are such which include economic integration, economic integration, human and social development human and social development, foreign policy coordination and guarantee of security. Meanwhile, Iyoha and Ekanem (2002) asserted that potent factors that can hinder regional integration of nations are geography of the area,

absence of a common strategy for development, influence of MNCs and TNCs, lack of diversification in production, differences in stages of growth and development, competition for location of industries, absence of common currency, unequal distribution of resources.

Human resources and regional integration

From empirical studies it has been established that human resources management have an established influence on regional integration. Globalization propels HR to adopt flexible workforce models like remote work and virtual teams. By extension this helps organisations accommodate various time zones and market demands while going beyond geographical boundaries (Rodrik and Rodriguez, 2002); Sister nations sometimes pool resources together to develop the human component of neighbouring countries through foreign funding, assistance and aids. Regional integration could also assist less developed human resources personnel form less developed economies on how to build their human resources base and technological capacities that would allow Africa to sustain growth and remain globally competitiveness (Abraham and Adekola 2014); As part of regional efforts towards improving the quality of human resources in Nigeria and continent in general, countries come together to address common challenges and harness their shared strengths to realise the continent's potential labour market of 2.2 billion people where the World Bank is a key contributor to Nigeria's regional integration (Abraham and Adekola, 2014). Another worthy impact identified by Michael (2023) from the interplay of both variables is the efficacy of comparative cost analysis. Here nations endowed with superior quality human resources are better informed on how to continue on that paradigm so as to produce a better workforce with superior productive lifespan. Naturally nations are endowed specially on certain resources such that they determine their comparative cost advantage over others and consolidate on it; Facilitation of flow of trade, human capital, energy, people and ideas are another influence that is enhanced. Also, eradication of barriers to trade, bureaucracy, and improvement in knowledge acquisition that enhance skill development and outcome (human resources) are better determined as well; Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by way of raising per capita income which is usually a baseline for determination of a nation's value for her human resources (African Union Commission, 2022).

Theoretical Framework: Functionality theory of regional integration

This theory was developed by David Mitrany in 1965. As a student, he predicted that the then world unions were likely to be close unions and hence advocated that independent nations

should see to the development of a given skill or item that makes them unique from other nations as they stand a chance of deliberating and influencing decisions not taken in their favour. This theory states that regional integration brings mutual benefits for all participating nations by fostering economic, social and political cooperation. It posits that increased cooperation through trade, investment and cultural exchange leads to more productive economies, higher living standards and greater political stability. Additionally, it suggests that nations will have a greater chance of experiencing the positive effects of technological advances, scientific development and better diplomatic relations. In summary the functionalist theory of regional integration asserts that cooperation between nations leads to mutual benefits such as increased productivity, improved standards of living and greater political stability.

Statement of the problem

Of a truth in the international market, human resources is confronted with challenges ranging from economies of scale, low per capita income, deficit of skilled labour in Nigeria, dearth in professional IT personnel, poor resource endowment and under-development, problem of unparallel exchange rate just to mention a few have been adduced as economic and social arguments for the establishment of regional bodies which is also called regional integration. Negligence to address this lacklustre action may lead to under-utilization of human resources at the regional level, create under-employment and even possible devalue labour. It is believed that regional integration would obviate these difficulties and challenges which are the bane of isolated and poor economies in African and Nigeria inclusive. In view of this the researcher was out to investigate human resources and regional integration especially in the 21st century.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to justify the relationship that exists between human resources and regional integration especially in 21st century; while the specific objectives include:

- Determine how human resources affect regional integration
- Identify the challenges confronting human resource penetration of regional integration.
- State remedy to be adopted by resource managers to enhance regional integration.

Research Questions

- What influence does human resources have on regional integration?
- What are the challenges confronting human resource managers from regional integration?

- Which viable remedy should be adopted by resource managers to enhance regional integration?

Significance of the study

The outcome of this work would be relevant to various stakeholders including human resource managers, government, and researchers among others.

- To human resource managers, the outcome of this study would allow them to strive towards effective and efficient regional integration.
- For the government the outcome of this work would expose them to the numerous constraints and limitations often encountered by local resource managers which go a long way to impede regional integration of its members.
- For researchers, the outcome of this work would help contribute to the frontier expansion of knowledge on human resources and regional integration. By implication, it aids in the review of contemporary literatures and update on the identified topic.

Methodology

The survey research design was used by the researcher in this study. This research design type is seen to be suitable because it helped to gather, organize, analyze data obtained from a pool of respondents and generalise its outcome on the larger population. Under survey research design, touching the needed fragment of people is achieved and generalisation is allowed. The population for this study comprises all human resource personnel in private and public enterprises in Edo, Anambra and Lagos states respectively. The choice of these states is based on the premise that they are one of the economically strategically located states in Nigeria. It is expected that the calibre of human resources personnel in these states should be used as the target population of this study due to their level of exposure and inclusivity. In the selection of samples, a multi-stage process was employed by the researcher to select an appropriate sample for this work. A purposive sampling technique was first used to identify the states (Edo, Anambra and Lagos) whose human resources personnel are best trained to execute their functions. A simple random sampling technique was then introduced to select a sample of 180 human resource personnel from both private and public establishments across the three identified states above. It should be well stated that from each of the states, 60 respondents were captured ranging from private and public establishments. These establishments include tertiary institutions, secondary schools, banks and companies respectively. The researchers then adopted the use of a researcher-structured instrument titled “Human Resources and Regional Integration Questionnaire (HRARIQ)”. The Questionnaire was divided into two

sections A & B. Section A generated questions on respondents' biodata while Section B generated questions to answer the three research questions generated for the study. The section B was further divided into three sections of B₁, B₂ and B₃. In general, 20 items were designed on a 4-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. Positive items were scored 4-3-2-1 while negative items were reversely scored 1-2-3-4 respectively. To capture the appropriate sample for this work, a softcopy of this instrument was placed on the WhatsApp group of HR personnel in the concerned states with permission of an HR manager close to the researcher. The placed copy was designed in Google format such that as each personnel respond, they are computed immediately. 60 respondents were selected from the pool of HR personnel gotten across the states. The Questionnaire was validated by three experts in the Educational measurement and evaluation in the Department of items in the instrument. A sub-scale index value of the instrument was determined as $r=0.835$, 0.841 and 0.816 . In general, Cronbach Alpha, a reliability form was carried out on the scale used for this work and the overall index value for the instrument was 0.893 which shows internal consistency. Through the use of mean and simple percentage, a descriptive statistics type, the sourced data was analysed for this study.

Data Presentation using Descriptive Statistics

Response to Research Questions 1-3

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	Mean	Position
	Influence of human resources on regional integration							
1	Quality HR aids in the calculation of a nations' per capita income	86(47.8%)	78(43.3%)	14(7.8%)	2(1.1%)	180	3.38	7 th
2	HR helps in promotion of nations' ties	94(52.2%)	72(40%)	6(3.3%)	8(4.5%)	180	3.44	6 th
3	HR harness their shared strengths to realise the continent's potential labour market	92(51.1%)	74(41.1%)	14(7.8%)	-	180	3.46	3 rd
4	HR develops the human component of neighbouring	112(62.2%)	56(31.1%)	12(6.7%)	-	180	3.56	2 nd

	countries through foreign funding, assistance and aids.							
5	HR allows for identification of ready market in need of labour services in the continent	86(47.8%)	78(43.3%)	14(7.8%)	2(1.1%)	180	3.38	7 th
6	It promotes quality representation of labour produced	94(52.2%)	72(40%)	14(7.8%)	-	180	3.44	5 th
7	Quality HR does create healthy completion for labour demand globally	94(52.2%)	74(41.1%)	12(6.7%)	-	180	3.46	3 rd
8	It allows for collaborative services	112(62.2%)	56(31.1%)	12(6.7%)	-	180	3.59	1 st
Criterion Mean for accessibility.....3.47								
Challenges limiting human resource management from regional integration								
9	Lack of adequate knowledge on the geography of the area	43(47.8%)	39(43.3%)	7(7.8%)	1(1.1%)	90	3.38	6 th
10	The absence of a common strategy for development impede regional integration	47(52.2%)	36(40%)	7(7.8%)	-	90	3.44	3 rd
11	The absence of a common currency restricts regional integration	47(52.2%)	37(41.1%)	6(6.7%)	-	90	3.46	2 nd
12	Unequal distribution of resources limits regional integration	56(62.2%)	28(31.1%)	6(6.7%)	-	90	3.56	1 st
13	Inadequate legal interpretation backing ILO policy	43(47.7%)	39(43.3%)	7(7.8%)	1(1.1%)	90	3.38	5 th
14	Racial discrimination limits regional integration	47(52.2%)	36(40%)	7(7.8%)	-	90	3.44	3 rd
Criterion mean.....3.44								
Remedy adopted to enhance HR and regional integration								
15	Tariff reduction may promote bilateral exchange	56(62.2%)	28(31.1%)	6(6.7%)	-	90	3.46	3 rd
16	Functional and operational labour laws promote integration	56(62.2%)	28(31.1%)	6(6.7%)	-	90	3.56	1 st

17	Application of comparative cost advantage principle enhances integration	42(46.7%)	40(44.4%)	7(7.8%)	1(1.1%)	90	3.37	6 th
18	Mobilisation of resources and support is key	47(52.2%)	36(40%)	7(7.8%)		90	3.44	4 th
19	Identification of labour skills is very important	46(51.1%)	37(41.1%)	7(7.8%)	-	90	3.43	5 th
20	Identification of objectives and scope is very key	55(61.1%)	29(32.2%)	6(6.7%)	-	90	3.53	2 nd
Criterion mean3.47								

Results Interpretation

On assessing the influence of human resources and regional integration it can be deduced that 93.% of the respondents agreed that it allows for collaborative services while 6.7% disagreed; 92.2% of the respondents agreed that HR develops human component of neighbouring countries through foreign funding, assistance and aids as 7.8% are never in support; 92.2% of the respondents agreed that Quality HR does create healthy completion for labour demand globally as 7.8% disagree; 92.2% of the respondents agreed that HR harness their shared strengths to realise the continent’s potential labour market while 7.8% of the persons disagree; Again 92.2% of the respondents agreed that it helps promotes quality representation of labour produced as 7.8% disagreed; 92.2% of the students agreed that HR helps in promotion of nations’ ties as 7.8% disagreed; 91.1% of the respondents agreed that Quality HR aids in the calculation of a nations’ per capita income while 8.9% of the students disagreed; 91.1% of the respondents agreed that HR allows for identification of ready market in need of labour services in the continent while 8.9% totally disagreed.

On the challenges limiting human resource management from regional integration, 93.3% of the respondents claim that unequal distribution of resources limits regional integration as only 6.7% disagreed; again, 93.3% of the respondents agreed that absence of a common currency restrict regional integration while 6.7% refuted; 92.2% of the respondent agreed that absence of a common strategy for development impede regional integration while 7.8% of the participants disagreed; 92.2% of the participants agreed that racial discrimination limits regional integration as a minority of the participants representing 7.8% disagreed; Moreso 91% of the people agreed that inadequate legal interpretation backing International Labour Organisation, ILO, policy exists while 8 participants representing 9% totally disagreed; meanwhile 91.1% of the respondents agreed that Lack of adequate knowledge on geography

of the area is really a constraint while 8,9% of the participants disagreed vehemently among others.

On remedy adopted to enhance HR and regional integration. 93.3% of the respondents claimed that Functional and operational labour laws promote integration as 6.7% refuted; surprisingly, 93.3% of the respondents maintained that identification of objectives and scope is very key for successful integration while 6.7% of the people disagreed; again 93.3% of the participants accept that Tariff reduction may promote bilateral exchange as against 6.7% that disagreed; 92.2% of the respondents admitted that Mobilisation of resources and support is very key as well while 7.8% also disagreed; Again 92.2% of the respondents agreed that Identification of labour skills is very important and remains a factor to be considered as against a minor percentage of the respondents representing 7.8% disagree; meanwhile 91.1% of the participants agreed that Application of comparative cost advantage principle enhances integration as 8.9% of the respondents disagree.

Discussion of Findings

In studies carried out by Rodrik and Rodriguez (2002); and Abraham & Adekola (2014), they maintained that human resources management has an established influence on regional integration. *“Globalization propels HR to adopt flexible workforce models like remote work and virtual teams. By extension this helps organisations accommodate various time zones and market demands while going beyond geographical boundaries”* (Rodrik and Rodriguez, 2002); Sister nations sometimes pool resources together to develop the human component of neighbouring countries through foreign funding, assistance and aid. In the other way round, regional integration could also assist less developed human resources personnel from less developed economies on how to build their human resources base and technological capacities that would allow Africa to sustain growth and remain globally competitive (Abraham and Adekola 2014).

Also, Iyoha and Ekanem (2002) investigated a study and identified some workable constraints and challenges often encountered by HR personnel and regional integration to include, the geography of the area concerned, absence of a common strategy for development, lack of diversification in production value and chains, differences in stages of growth and development, competition for location of industries, absence of common currency and unequal

distribution of resources. They observed that although other regional challenges and concerns abound the above-mentioned factors are related to our environment and communality.

Meanwhile, Olukoya, Akinsanmi and Oloyede (2019) identified certain remedies that can facilitate HR and regional integration. Primary among them are functional and operational labour laws, identification of objectives and scope of HR, tariff reduction, mobilisation of resources and support, identification of labour skills and application of comparative cost advantage principle if well addressed can promote HR management and regional integration. Every economy wants to minimise costs and maximise maximum utility at all levels. If they must leverage it, then there must be a desired attitude to remedy every causal factor that would directly and indirectly impede effective HR and regional integration.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study investigated an empirical review of Human Resources and Regional Integration. The study addressed the Human Resources (HR) and Regional Integration concepts to discover the imperatives surrounding the work. At the end of the findings, the study among others concluded that

- There exists a positive influence of human resources on regional integration especially as it relates to Nigeria's situation
- Some of the challenges limiting effective human resource services from regional integration may include a lack of adequate knowledge of the geography of the area, the absence of a common currency, and racial discrimination among others.
- The presence of functional and operational labour laws would likely promote the integration of member states of which Nigeria is a key member.

The study among others recommends that:

- Countries must first attach value to their human resources components in which labour is factored in, as failure to value its human component would only end up selling its labour force cheaply.
- Recruitment of human components should be taken seriously as training should form a periodic intervention measure for human resource managers.
- Government should see to how she can increase her per capita income as the current amount may not motivate regional integration with developed economies of the world.

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