

THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF SECURITY AGENCIES IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

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Abstract

The performance of security agencies hinges not only on technological advancements and tactical operations but equally on the quality of human capital management thus, the paper examined how human resource practices impacts on the performance of security agencies in developing economies. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational survey design with a structured questionnaire administered to personnel from selected Nigerian security agencies. Using stratified random sampling with proportionate allocation, 316 questionnaires were distributed, and 297 copies successfully retrieved. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques were employed for data analysis and the result revealed that all human resource practices variables had significant positive relationships with performance outcomes. Training and development, and employee relations were identified as the strongest predictors of agency performance in developing climes. Also, the regression model accounted for 62% of the variance in performance, indicating a substantial influence of human resource practices. Thus the study concluded that effective human resource management is critical to enhancing operational and institutional performance of security agencies in developing economies. The paper recommended for improved investment in staff development, transparent recruitment, fair performance appraisal systems, and stronger employee engagement mechanisms as key to boosting performance.

Keywords: Contextual performance, Employee performance, Innovative performance, Security agency, Task performance.

Introduction

In an increasingly volatile global security landscape, the performance of security agencies hinges not only on technological advancements and tactical operations but also on the quality of human capital management (Aduda, et al., 2022; Awol & Chalchissa, 2023), which have been recognized as critical to enhancing the operational efficiency and responsiveness of security institutions (Al-Qudah, Osman, & Hisham, 2021). In both developed and developing countries, the shift toward strategic human resource management (Awol & Chalchissa, 2023) has demonstrated measurable improvements in law enforcement efficiency, organizational commitment, and overall public trust (Mohammed & Clark, 2023). Security institutions, like all complex organizations, require a workforce that is well-selected, continuously trained, deployed appropriately to areas of competence, and adequately motivated to adapt to emerging threats and dynamic operational environments.

However, many security agencies struggle with outdated HR systems, politicized recruitment processes, insufficient training programs, and poor employee welfare in developing climes (Ahmed & Zhao, 2022). These challenges are particularly pronounced in Africa, where institutional weaknesses and resource constraints often limit the capacity of security agencies to deliver their mandates effectively. Thus, scholars adduced that Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and a regional power, faces persistent security threats ranging from terrorism and banditry to cybercrime and insurgency (Emuekpere & Owu, 2025; Okoli and Ugwu (2019). These multifaceted threats demand not only advanced tactical responses but also a professional, well-managed workforce thus, Olatunji and Nwankwo (2024) highlighted the role of HR practices as determinant to security agencies performance in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the nation's law enforcement agencies saddled with the responsibility of securing the people and its interest from enemies of the State, have not professionally positioned and accorded the human elements its priority. These agencies most often conceptualize their Personnel Department to be performing exactly similar functions with Human Resource Management hence, the dearth of strategic HR policies to drive personnel commitment and performance.

It is therefore, instructive to note that, despite growing recognition of the HR importance; many developing economies including the Nigerian security agencies remain plagued by structural inefficiencies, faulty recruitment process, and wrong deployment of personnel, resulting in mismatch of skills and limited investment in staff development (Ibrahim & Etim, 2025). This has contributed to low morale, corruption, compromise, and operational inefficiencies, undermining public confidence in these institutions. Even with the growing and critical role that Human Resource (HR) practices play in shaping organizational performance, security agencies in developing economies like Nigeria continue to perform sub-optimally in addressing the country's complex security

challenges. While global evidence underscores the importance of effective recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and employee motivation in enhancing the operational efficiency of security institutions (Al-Qudah et al., 2021; Mohammed & Clark, 2023), Nigerian security agencies are yet to fully align their HR strategies with international best practices. The persistent issues of low morale, inadequate training, unstructured promotion systems, poor employee welfare, and politicized recruitment processes have significantly undermined the professionalism and operational capacity of Nigeria's security sector (Ibrahim & Etim, 2025). These shortcomings are reflected in the widespread inefficiencies, human rights abuses, weak intelligence gathering, and a deteriorating public perception of the agencies entrusted with ensuring national security.

Moreover, while several reforms have been proposed or implemented, many have failed to address the root of HRM issues that hinder performance improvement in developing economies. For instance, training programs often lack consistency, unprofessional deployment of personnel even after been trained, to where they will be unproductive and alignment with modern security threats. Performance appraisal systems are rarely merit-based (Olatunji & Nwankwo, 2024). These gaps have created an environment in which personnel are ill-equipped, poorly motivated, and insufficiently accountable, thereby limiting the effectiveness of security responses across developing countries. In the face of growing insecurity including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and cybercrime—the urgent need for a strategically managed, well-trained, and motivated security workforce cannot be overstated. Yet, there remains a significant gap in empirical studies that specifically examine how HR practices influence the performance of security agencies in developing economy like Nigeria. Addressing this gap is essential to informing policy reforms and ensuring that HRM practices becomes the cornerstone of security sector transformation. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of human resource practices on the performance of security agencies in developing economies (Nigeria), with a view to proposing actionable strategies for improvement.

Literature Review

Theoretical Domains

The study is anchored on two significant theoretical frameworks underpinning the understanding of HR practices and their effect on performance: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Human Capital Theory (HCT).

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The RBV posits that organizations can achieve a competitive advantage by effectively utilizing internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 2021). In the

context of security agencies, human capital recruited, trained, and retained through HR practices serves as a critical internal resource. When security agencies invest in strategic recruitment, employee development, and reward systems, they enhance their capacity to achieve operational efficiency and high performance (Agyemang & Boateng, 2022).

Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Human Capital Theory suggests that organizations benefit when they invest in the education, training, and health of their employees. These investments enhance employee productivity and contribute to better organizational outcomes (Becker, 2023). In security agencies, which demand discipline, strategic thinking, and ethical judgment, developing human capital through training, fair performance appraisal, and adequate compensation improves overall morale and trust in the organization (Okafor & Musa, 2024).

Human Resource Practices

HR practices, often referred to as high-performance work systems, include a range of functions such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, and employee relations. These practices directly influence organizational performance indicators such as contextual performance, adaptive and tasks performance, innovative and interpersonal performance including operational efficiency and employee productivity.

Recruitment and Selection: Recruitment and selection are foundational HR practices that significantly affect organizational performance by determining the quality of new hires. A strategic recruitment process ensures that the most suitable candidates are attracted and retained (Ali & Ahmad, 2021). Modern recruitment methods, such as e-recruitment and AI-assisted screening, have enhanced efficiency and reduced bias (Otoo, 2020). Effective selection processes help ensure a good person–job fit, which is positively associated with employee retention and productivity (Mensah & Bawole, 2021). In public sector and security agencies, where integrity and capability are critical, structured recruitment protocols and psychological evaluations have become essential (Agbozo, et al., 2022). Poor recruitment decisions can result in high turnover and reduced morale, underscoring the importance of rigorous and transparent hiring systems.

Training and Development: Training and development are pivotal in equipping employees with relevant skills and promoting adaptability. Continuous learning initiatives are linked to innovation and performance outcomes (Khan & Rasheed, 2023). In security agencies, ongoing training enhances crisis response, decision-making, and ethical behavior (Umar & Musa, 2021).

Development programs that align with organizational goals foster employee engagement and retention (Boateng, et al., 2020). Training also addresses skills obsolescence, a critical issue in rapidly evolving environments. A culture of learning strengthens individual and organizational resilience (Ndungu & Muturi, 2022). Hence, strategic training plans are vital for maintaining high performance and operational efficiency in both private and public institutions.

Performance Appraisal: Performance appraisal serves as a tool for assessing employee effectiveness and guiding career development. When conducted transparently and fairly, it enhances motivation and accountability (Ahmed & Mahmood, 2021). In security organizations, appraisals influence promotions, trust, and discipline enforcement (Chukwuma, et al., 2023). Objective appraisals promote performance feedback and help identify training needs (Nyameh, 2020). However, bias or lack of standard criteria can lead to dissatisfaction and reduce morale (Agyekum, et al., 2021). Modern trends advocate for 360-degree feedback, continuous performance reviews, and data-driven appraisal systems to improve fairness and outcomes (Nnaji & Ugwoke, 2022). Performance appraisals thus serve as a linchpin for HR development and organizational alignment.

Compensation and Benefits: Compensation and benefits play a central role in employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention. Competitive compensation packages correlate strongly with improved job performance and reduced turnover (Okafor & Udechukwu, 2022). In public and security sectors, where budgetary constraints exist, non-financial benefits like housing, healthcare, and job security are often equally valued (Adedeji, et al., 2023). Transparent compensation structures reduce workplace conflict and enhance employee trust (Kusi, et al., 2020). Performance-based incentives, when aligned with institutional goals, drive accountability and excellence (Mensah & Bawole, 2021). Thus, both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards should be balanced to sustain workforce morale and productivity.

Employee Relations: Employee relations encompass organizational efforts to foster positive employer–employee dynamics. Effective relations reduce conflicts, enhance collaboration, and improve job satisfaction (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2023). Open communication, participatory management, and grievance handling mechanisms are critical (Obi, et al., 2021). In hierarchical institutions like security agencies, maintaining respectful and ethical relationships helps prevent abuse of power and supports morale (Lawal & Amos, 2020). Strong employee relations are also linked to reduced absenteeism and increased loyalty (Otoo, 2020). Therefore, establishing trust-based, inclusive, and respectful relationships within organizations is key to sustaining workforce harmony and performance.

Security Agency Performance

Security agency performance refers to the extent to which such agencies achieve their mandates in maintaining law, order, and public safety. Performance in this context is multifaceted, including effective response to threats, deterrence, and citizen satisfaction (Aliyu & Hassan, 2023). The use of strategic HR practices has been linked to better resource deployment and staff competence (Oladipo, 2022). Performance metrics often consider incident resolution rates, intelligence effectiveness, and compliance with operational standards (Afolabi, 2021). Emerging studies emphasize the importance of technology and inter-agency collaboration in enhancing outcomes (Eze, 2020). Therefore, performance hinges on internal capacity and external responsiveness.

Contextual Performance of Security Agencies: Contextual performance in the context of security operation is the inter-agency collaboration and extra-role efforts that maintain public trust (Fan, et al., 2023) including community policing. It is the discretionary work behaviour of personnel that supports their psychological and social environment within their operations such as volunteering for extra tasks, cooperation and the protection of organizational reputation (Maile, et al., 2022). Thus, AFRILAW (2019) highlight the critical relevance of contextual performance due to the weak community relations, poor oversight, and governance gaps that undermines the operational effectiveness and legitimate operations of security personnel thereby strengthening ethical standards, governance and code of professional conduct. However, Kagame and Ndahiriwe (2021) advocated for unified training, improved public-private cooperation and clearer regulation as switch to increase contextual behaviour that could complement core policing tasks among security personnel.

Task Performance of Security Agencies: Task performance in the security setting denotes how well personnel and their agencies carry out core, role-defined duties such crime prevention, detection, arrest, protection of life and property (Irving, et al., 2019) etc. Task performance among security operatives within developing economies are often constrained by resource gaps such as poor funding and lack of equipment, limited training regarding to modern ways of operation including weak inter-agency information sharing, and community distrust among others (AFRILAW, 2019; Lanshima & Lanshima, 2024). This lacuna often reduces personnel ability to execute core functions effectively. However, Lanshima and Lanshima (2024) in their study argued that an improvement in task performance is often traceable to investments in intelligence systems, skill retraining and logistics, clearer inter-agency coordination, and reforms that strengthen institutional capacity. Nonetheless, task performance among security personnel requires intelligence integration, equipment, response time, technical training level and crime rate at the time.

Operational Efficiency of Security Agencies: Operational efficiency in security agencies refers to the ability to deliver quality services with optimal use of resources. Efficient operations minimize response time and maximize public safety coverage (Bako & Musa, 2023). Factors influencing efficiency include training quality, personnel deployment, and communication systems (Chinedu, 2021). Lean organizational structures and digitized workflows also enhance performance outcomes (Okoro, 2020). Studies show that agencies with streamlined administrative processes report higher threat management success (Adamu & Ibrahim, 2022). Thus, operational efficiency is both a function of HR inputs and technological advancement.

Employee Productivity of Security Agencies: Employee productivity reflects the output and effectiveness of personnel in fulfilling assigned duties. In security settings, productivity is often measured by patrol coverage, report filing, and mission outcomes (Lawal & Ajayi, 2021). Training, motivation, and adequate tools significantly influence productivity levels (Oyetunde, 2023). Research has linked fair appraisal systems and supportive leadership with higher workforce output (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2022). Thus, lack of recognition and unclear goals, on the other hand, reduce effectiveness (Uzochukwu, 2020). As such, productivity is driven by a blend of organizational support and individual competencies.

Innovative Performance of Security Agencies: Innovative performance is personnel behaviour that goes beyond routine duties to developing new techniques, strategies, processes and tools that improve effectiveness of security operations. This is the introduction of new surveillance approaches, using novel communal engagement tactics or modern digital tools to enhancing security intelligence (Piza & Welsh, 2022; Laufs & Borrión, 2022). Innovation is often driven by technological adoption to build technical skills that enable organization to raise service effectiveness that equip personnel with what it takes to perform more innovatively (AFRILAW, 2019; Kagame & Ndahiriwe, 2021). Forsberg (2023) adduced that innovative behaviour contribute to personnel development of new procedures, improved processes and proactive threat-detection methods in order to recognize and scale extra-role improvements in their operation.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey design with stratified random sampling techniques used to apportion the questionnaire to 316 security officers drawn from 1500 serving personnel of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), and the Intelligence community using Taro Yamane's formula. These agencies were selected due to their national relevance and significant involvement in public safety and internal security. However, data were collected using structured questionnaire designed on a 5-

point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5)”. The questionnaire was adapted from empirically validated scales in Human Resources Management, Organizational Behaviour and Performance Management literatures. The recruitment and selection item statements was adapted from Huselid (1995) and Delery and Doty (1996); training and development (Noe, 2017; Tharenou, et al., 2007); performance appraisal (Boswell & Boudreau, 2002; DeNisi & Smith, 2014); compensation and benefits (Heneman & Judge, 2000; Milkovich, et al., 2019); employee relations (Guest, 2002; Kersley, et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the contextual performance scale was adapted from the works of Borman and Motowidlo (1997) and Podsakoff, et al., (2000); tasks performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991); operational efficiency (Neely, et al., 2005; Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986); employee productivity (Koopmans, et al., 2014); innovative performance (Janssen, 2000; Scott & Bruce, 1994). The item statements of these scales were modified to suit the Nigerian environment and security agencies however; the instrument was administered to the sample population of 316 officers with the aid of two (2) security personnel per outfit. Nevertheless, the collected data were cleansed and omitted questionnaires were sorted out and removed before keying the usable instruments into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was done using multiple regression and the reason for this was to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the predictive impacts of HR practices on security agencies performance in developing economy like Nigeria.

Results

Response Rate and Demographic Summary

Out of 316 questionnaires distributed across the selected security agencies (Nigerian Police Force, NSCDC, Nigerian Immigration Service, and the Intelligence agencies), 297 were correctly filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 94%. Respondents were stratified by rank and agency, ensuring a balanced representation: 45% junior officers, 35% middle-level officers, and 20% senior officers.

Descriptive Statistics of HR Practices and Performance

Variable	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Interpretation
Recruitment and Selection	4.01	0.62	High
Training and Development	3.89	0.70	Moderately high
Performance Appraisal	3.76	0.68	Moderately high
Compensation and Benefits	3.55	0.75	Moderate
Employee Relations	3.92	0.60	Moderately high
Contextual Performance	3.88	0.66	Moderately high
Tasks Performance	4.00	0.59	High
Operational Efficiency	3.65	0.72	Moderate
Employee Productivity	3.79	0.64	Moderately high
Innovative Performance	3.57	0.73	Moderate

Interpretation: Recruitment and selection and task performance had the highest mean scores, indicating strong perceptions of their importance. Compensation and benefits scored lowest among HR variables, suggesting perceived gaps in this area.

Correlation Analysis

Dimensions/Measure	Contextual Performance	Tasks Performance	Operational Efficiency	Employee Productivity	Innovative Performance
Recruitment and Selection	0.64**	0.58**	0.45**	0.52**	0.41**
Training and Development	0.61**	0.67**	0.55**	0.60**	0.51**
Performance Appraisals	0.49**	0.62**	0.41**	0.59**	0.48**
Compensation and Benefits	0.45**	0.57**	0.43**	0.55**	0.61**

Employee Relations	0.60**	0.63**	0.61**	0.64**	0.39**
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Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: All HR practices had significant positive correlations with security agency performance variables. The strongest correlation was between training and development and tasks performance ($r = 0.67^{**}$), and between recruitment and selection and contextual performance ($r = 0.64^{**}$).

Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
Regression	0.79	0.62	0.61	0.48

ANOVA Table

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	88.43	5	17.69	63.44	0.000**
Residual	54.10	291	0.15		

Coefficients Table

Predictor	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Recruitment and Selection	0.24	4.89	0.000**
Training and Development	0.31	5.55	0.000**
Performance Appraisal	0.19	3.48	0.001**
Compensation and Benefits	0.17	3.15	0.002**
Employee Relations	0.28	5.02	0.000**

Interpretation: The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 63.44$, $p < .01$), and the independent variables (HR practices) jointly explained 62% of the variance in the Nigerian security agency performance. Training and Development ($\beta = 0.31$) and Employee Relations ($\beta = 0.28$) were the strongest predictors.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that all dimensions of human resource practices significantly influence the performance of security agencies in Nigeria. The high reliability coefficients affirm the robustness of the questionnaire items in capturing relevant constructs. The descriptive results indicate that while recruitment and selection and training and development are perceived positively, compensation and benefits remain relatively weak, possibly due to delays in promotion, allowances, or lack of motivational incentives - issues widely reported in Nigerian security institutions (Afolabi & Oludayo, 2021). The correlation and regression analyses further confirmed strong relationships between HR practices and key performance indicators such as contextual performance, tasks performance, operational efficiency, employee productivity, and innovative performance in the Nigerian security agency performance.

In the first proposition, it was discovered from the empirical investigation that recruitment and selection had strong positive impact on personnel contextual performance thereby, indicating that initial hiring decisions substantially affect performance outcomes of personnel in the Nigerian security agencies. The finding is in line with Okolie and Omolayo (2022) whose study affirmed that employees chosen through merit-based and transparent recruitment processes are most likely to engage in behaviours that would sustain organizations in terms of building public trust, supporting colleagues and respect for superiors. This implies that hiring qualified, value-driven and ethical personnel in the agencies would foster a sense of co-operation and teamwork among the workforce, thereby strengthening the agencies for improved societal trust. Thus, Kristof-Brown, et al., (2018) adduced that aligning these values (individual and organizational) would give credence to contextual performance (greater extra-role among the workforce).

In particular, training and development emerged as the most significant driver of employee tasks performance, thereby highlighting the importance of continuous, context-relevant skill enhancement as drivers to effective operational efficiency among security agencies. This corroborate with Agu and Nnamani (2021); Lanshima and Lanshima (2024) whose positions claimed that employees exposed to continuous training often demonstrate improve response to emergency situations and as well make salient decisions during operations. That is to say, investment in human capital in terms

of training and or skill development gives credence to performance. This not, only boost tasks proficiency but equally instill discipline, confidence and co-operations among the security agencies.

Performance appraisal had a modest but significant effect, underscoring the need for transparent and merit-based evaluation systems by Nigerian security agencies. This suggest that effective appraisal systems supports operational efficiency of security personnel thus, Kagame and Ndahiriwe (2021), Mensah (2020) in their separate investigations affirmed that employees that receive constructive feedback and recognition during appraisal exercises are often stimulated to response to work efficiently. This response includes but not limited to delivering quality services with minimal wastage of resources such as response time, safety coverage and deployment of personnel when required (Bako & Musa, 2023; Chinedu, 2021). Nonetheless, transparent and fair appraisal procedures stand to promote a reciprocal relationship that reduces time wastage by enhancing deployment time which is a function of security personnel performance (Cropanzano, et al., 2017; Kagame & Ndahiriwe, 2021). This suggests that performance appraisal practices that emphasize developmental feedback and recognition stimulate employees' response time for operations (Forsberg, 2023; Mensah, 2020)

The empirical outcome of the fourth proposition revealed that compensation and benefits had positive and significant impact on employee productivity because the rewarding of extra-effort increases personnel effectiveness during service operations. The outcome of this empirical claim is in tandem with Bako and Mashi (2023) whose position revealed that fringe benefits and adequate remuneration generate psychological safety that enable employees to fulfill assigned duties. This implies that fair compensation and benefits drives increased personnel agility (Okechukwu & Kabuoh, 2020) which in turn stimulate them to willingly exert more effort towards attaining desired results for their agencies.

Finally, employee relation was proven to moderately predict innovative performance of security personnel thereby, suggesting that open communication, fair grievance mechanisms, and mutual respect are vital in hierarchical agencies. The outcome of this proposition is consistent with Gittel (2020), Mensah (2020) that trust-based relationship lead to enhanced co-ordination that give birth to new ideas generation towards innovative means of crime prevention, intelligence gathering and modern technological adoption among security agencies. This relationship as demonstrated by employees in the workplace often foster a culture of creativity that aid knowledge sharing (Forsberg, 2023) which is key to effective information gathering in security operation. Thus, Li (2025) stated that employee relationship foster open communication and supportive relationship that enhances teamwork and innovative behaviour that improves security operations. Conclusively, all the findings are in agreement with the submissions of scholars like Bryman (2016), Creswell and Creswell

(2018), who emphasize that human resource investment are directly linked to improved organizational outcomes.

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