

## Strategic Human Resource Alignment and Organization's Ability to Create Competitive Advantage in Insurance Sector in Lagos State

**Bankole Akanji Rafiu**  
*Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management*  
*Faculty of Management Sciences*  
*Lagos State University, Ojo*

### Abstract

The world has become a global village, thus organisations today operate in a global market. The inability of some organisations especially in the insurance sector to use their Human Resource Practices to strategically support their business objective and strategy in order to create competitive advantage in the highly competitive global market has made them to go out of operation. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the composite and relative influence of Strategic Human Resource Alignment on organisations' ability to create competitive advantage, with specific reference to some selected insurance companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research method was adopted and a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling techniques. A well simplified and validated questionnaire with reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was employed as the major instrument. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance with the use of multiple regressions for Hypotheses 1 and 2; and Pearson Product Moment correlation for Hypotheses 3. The findings of the study showed that the two independent variables (Vertical and Horizontal Alignment) jointly predicted the organisations' ability to create competitive advantage ( $R = 0.413$ ). Specifically, the predictors contributed 16% (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.160$ ) to the variance of the dependent measure. This contribution is shown to be significant ( $F_{(2,147)} = 15.139$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). Also, each of the independent variables separately and significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) predicted the dependent variable, with vertical alignment having a stronger relative contribution. The Pearson's product moment correlation equally showed a significant correlation between Strategic Human Resource Alignment and Organisations' ability to create competitive advantage. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others the need for top management executive of organisations to recognize Human Resource Department as strategic partner that can contribute significantly to value creation and thus involve directly HR professionals in critical decision making and business strategy formulation processes. Also, HR practitioners need to operate as strategy-focused professionals, spending more time to diagnose organisation's strategy needs and develop practical solutions for achieving business goal and creating competitive advantage. Again, HR practitioners need to become technologically oriented, leveraging information about the work-force. By so doing, it is expected that HR practitioners would be able to play a more strategic management role.

**Keywords:** *Strategy, Human Resource Alignment, Competitive Advantage, Vertical Alignment, Horizontal Alignment, Insurance Sector*

*Corresponding Author* Bankole Akanji Rafiu

### **Background to the Study**

The world today is a global village and the global market has been keenly competitive and extremely turbulent in the last couple of decades, so much that some organisations that could not cope with the “heat” had been grounded especially in the developing countries such as Nigeria.

The inability of some of the organisations to cope with the high competitive global market has been traced to their lack of clear cut strategies with which they could tremendously improve on their performance and consequently create competitive advantage that could sustain them in the global market. Competitive advantage occurs when an organisation is able to deliver the same benefits as competitors but at a lower cost (cost advantage) or deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products (differentiation advantage) ( Wang, Lin & Chu, 2011; Yasemin, Serdar & Esin, 2013).

It is noteworthy that before now, the traditional sources of competitive advantage had been the natural resources, technology, financial capital and economics of scale (Abdul-Kadir, 2012; Adeyeye et al, 2010). However, recent studies (Adeyeye, 2010; Wan-Jing and Ting, 2005) had shown that the traditional sources of competitive advantage are gradually becoming less effective because they are easily accessible and can be imitated by competitors. Meanwhile, an organisation that will command sustained competitive advantage must possess resources that are valuable, rare, non-imitable, non- substitutable and non-transferable (Barnay, 2000; Adeyeye, 2010).

However, some studies (Schuler et'al, 2001; Wang-Jing & Tung, 2005; Jackson & Schuler, 1995; Adeyeye, 2010; Pfeiffer, 1994) had shown that human resource is an invisible and strategic asset that creates value when it is embedded in the operational system of organization. It is further established that human capital can hardly be duplicated nor be easily substituted. This attribute of human capital allows any organisation that has access to highly trained and skilled personnel to outperform its competitors (Wang et'al, 2011). Thus, organisations especially in the private sector have recognized that it is not just financial and technological capital that provides companies with the competitive advantage rather human capital do too even better (Schultz,1971; U.S. Office of Personnel Management,2015 ).

Essentially, before human capital could enhance organisational performance and ultimately serve as alternative source of competitive advantage, some elements of strategy must be applied to the operation and management of human resource practices in organisation. In other words, the integration of HR strategy into the business strategy will enable the HR function to support an implement the strategic plan to achieve a competitive advantage (Loshali & Krishnan, 2013).

It is argued that when an organisation strives to adapt to different situations, it will need people of different characteristics and will equally need to adjust its investment in human resource (Armstrong, 2000). Thus, people are factors in driving the company's strategic plans, hence the need to align the human resource strategies with the organisations business strategies in order to achieve corporate objective of dominating the competitive market and maintain sustained competitive advantage.

It is against this backdrop that this study examines the relationship between strategic human resource alignment and organisation's ability to create competitive advantage with specific reference to insurance companies in Lagos State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The world has become a global village hence organisations today operate in a highly competitive market where it requires firm-specific strategies that can stand the test of time for an organisation to survive the keen global competition.

A number of organisations that were hitherto reputable have gone underground simply because they could not fashion out specific strategies that can enable them outperform their competitors and consequently command competitive advantage in the global market.

The traditional sources of competitive advantage such as natural resources, technology and financial capital have been found to be less effective in the modern global market because they are easily accessible and imitated by competitors. However, it has been discovered that human resource is an invisible and strategic asset that has the potential to enhance organisational performance and provide a source of competitive advantage because it is extremely hard for competitors to duplicate or substitute human resource. Though a number of studies had been carried out on strategic human resource management and organisational performance, not much has been done specifically on strategic human resource alignment as it relates to organisation's ability to create competitive advantage especially in the insurance industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Insurance is the bedrock of any economy but its non-performance or little contribution as a sector to Nigerian economy has been an issue of concern. Agba (2016) noted in his report that insurance industry in Nigeria has largely remained underpenetrated with insurance density (insurance premium as a percentage of GDP) at 0.225 percent. A number of factors had been adduced for its little contribution and one of such factors is the non-alignment of human resource practices to the organization's business strategy.

It is on the basis of the aforementioned gap that this study investigates the relationship between strategic human resource alignment and organisation's ability to create competitive advantage using the insurance sector in Lagos State as a reference point.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the composite (joint) influence of strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organisation's ability to create competitive advantage
2. To ascertain the relative influence of strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organisation's ability to create competitive advantage
3. To find out the relationship between strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) and organization's ability to create competitive advantage

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. What is the composite (joint) influence of strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organisation's ability to create competitive advantage
2. What is the relative influence of the two alignments (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organisation's ability to create competitive advantage
3. Is there any relationship between strategic human resource alignment and organisation's ability to create competitive advantage

### Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant joint influence of strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organisation's ability to create competitive advantage

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relative influence of strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) on organization's ability to create competitive advantage

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between strategic human resource alignment (vertical and horizontal alignments) and organisation's ability to create competitive advantage

### Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

**Strategy:** Literarily, the word strategy emanated from the military and according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, it is the art of planning and directing military activities in a battle. However, in business world, its denotative meaning is quite different. Strategy as a concept in business world is described as the total collection of plans, policies, programmes, objectives, goals, rules and procedures employed by an organisation to outwit the game plans of the competitors. In other word, business strategy is a combination of commitments and actions to achieve business objectives (Schuler & Jackson, 2006). It is instructive to mention that every strategy has two elements: the strategic objectives and the plan of action. The former has to do with the things that strategy is supposed to achieve while the latter is the means by which the objectives are to be met.

Essentially, the ultimate strategic objective of any profit-oriented organization is to create and maintain sustainable competitive advantage. The means by which the strategic objective is to be achieved according to Wan-Jing and Tung (2005) include: cost reduction, quality enhancement and innovation. The cost-reduction strategy refers to efforts to produce goods and services more cheaply than competitors. It stresses efficient scales, minimizing expenses and supplying a standard for reducing costs. The quality-enhancement strategy has to do with the production of high quality goods and services that could not be duplicated by competitors. The innovation strategy refers to the design and production of complex and unique products or services that are distinct from those of competitors and at high frequency.

**Strategy Human Resource Alignment:** It means integrating decisions about people with decisions about the results an organization is trying to obtain (US Office of Personnel Management, 2010). In essence, HR alignment occurs when human resource practices are in

their proper place relative to other practices and strategic objectives of the organisation. For instance, a compensation system that stresses and rewards loyalty and longevity is in alignment when it fits with other human resource practices and with the overall strategic objectives of the organization. Suffice is to say that the fit between HR practices and organisation's strategic objectives is one of the core elements in strategic human resource management (Feyter & Guerry, 2010). Basically, strategic human resource alignment has two components, namely: Vertical Alignment and Horizontal Alignment.

**Vertical Alignment:** It refers to the state in which an organisation's human resource strategy supports its competitive business strategy. The fundamental issue here is whether an organisation's human resource strategy fits with its competitive advantage (Delery, 1998). Recent empirical research (Wall & Wood 2015) has equally established that vertical fit positively affects organizational performance.

Essentially, organizations tend to be more effective when their approach to human resource management fits or aligns with their competitive approach. For instance, organizations with human resource strategies that emphasize developing long-term relationships with highly skilled employees have been found to be more effective than their competitors because they develop a climate of trust and co-operation that helps employees share knowledge and work together to create new products and services (Collins and Smith, 2006). This position conforms to the stand of Arthur (1992) who affirmed that successful organizations that pursue a specific organizational strategy usually have an appropriately aligned human resource strategy.

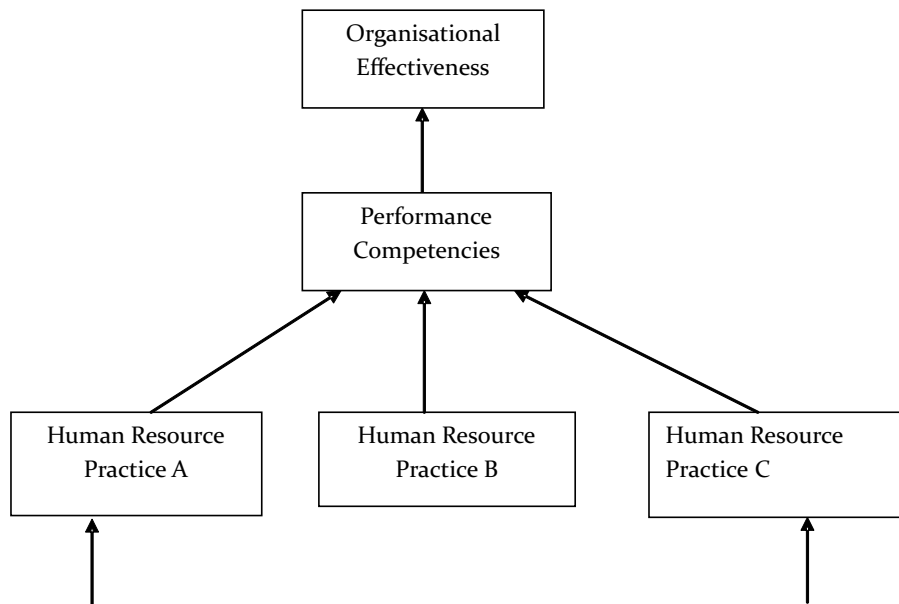
Examining the concept of vertical alignment from another perspective, Feyter and Guerry (2010) stressed that the linkage between HR practices and corporate performance can be achieved by two vertical alignment mechanisms namely: the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. The former suggests that suitable HR practices should be employed in a way that the required human capital that would enable organisation to execute its business plan and fully exploit market opportunity, would be made readily available. On the other hand, the latter preaches that the focus of HR practices should be on development human capital that will hold the potential of contributing to organisation's long term performance. Nevertheless, whichever way the direction of the argument, the fact remains that alignment between organisation's business strategy and HR strategy is crucial and fundamental in the quest for competitive advantage.

**Horizontal Alignment:** It refers to the state in which individual human resource practices fit together and support each other (Kathura, Joshi and Porth, 2007). In essence, it is concerned with the fit of specific practices with other practices. For instance, the selection practice of seeking employees who are likely to be team players aligns with the performance appraisal practice of reducing competition among employees (Delery, 1990). Little wonder, Wei (2006) sees horizontal alignment as the co-ordination among variety of HR practices and policies including how they work together as a system to achieve organizational objectives. Suffice it to say that productivity suffers when an organization engages in a human resource practice that is not aligned with its other human resource practices but if an organisation effectively achieves a fit between HR practices and organisation strategy, it will be able to increase added value and enhance firm productivity (Zatzick & Iverson, 2006; Feyter & Guerry, 2010).

In his contribution, Takashi ( ) argued that human resource practices including work design, recruiting, selection, training and compensation should fit together to create a consistent set of procedures for attracting and motivating workers who can help organization to create sustained competitive advantage. He noted that human resource management is most effective when various practices work together to create an overall culture of excellence. In essence, combination of practices tends to be more valuable and results yielding than a single good practice in isolation.

The interface between vertical and horizontal alignments in bringing about organizational effectiveness and ultimately competitive advantage is graphically presented in the Figure I below:

**Fig. I: Vertical and Horizontal Alignments**



**Source:** Herbert G. H. & Anthony, T. M. (2007).

Analysing Human Resource Practices Alignment, The vertical arrows in the Figure I show specific HR practices driving performance competencies, which in turn drive organizational effectiveness at various levels. To create such alignment, the organisation must ensure that the performance competencies are embedded in the HR practices themselves, so that the practices reflect and communicate the competencies. Horizontal alignment is shown by the horizontal arrows. Such alignment seeks to mesh the various HR practices together so that they are mutually supportive and reinforcing.



### **Competitive Advantage**

The concept of competitive advantage was propounded by Michael Porter (1985) and it arose out of a firm creating value for customers. Porter stressed the importance of differentiation, which consists of offering a product or service that is perceived industry-wise as being unique and focus – seeing a particular buyer group or product market more effectively or efficiently than competitors who compete more broadly. He then develops his well-known framework of three generic strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, focus- that organisations can use to gain competitive advantage. Corroborating the position of Porter(1985), Wang, Lin & Chu, (2011) said competitive advantage occurs when an organisation is able to deliver the same benefits as competitors but at a lower cost (cost advantage) or deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products (differentiation advantage).

### **Theoretical Framework**

A number of theoretical perspectives have been developed to organize knowledge of how Human Resource Practices are impacted by strategic considerations. This study is anchored on three of such theories that explain the strategic importance of human resources. They are: The Resource-Based View (RBV), the Universalistic Perspective and the Contingency Theory.

**The Resource-Based View (RBV):** The resourced-based view holds that a firm's resources are key determinants of its competitive advantage, which suggests that all competitors are not homogeneous rather they differ in the resources they possess and this account for the differences in their performance. The advocates of this theory believe that a firm that possesses resources that are valuable, rare, non-imitable, non-substitutable and non-transferable, with the capability to exploit the resources is more privileged to command sustainable competitive advantage than other firms in the industry.

Meanwhile, the traditional sources of competitive advantage such as financial and natural resource, technology and economics of scales have been found to be increasingly accessible and easily imitated; hence they are less significant for competitive advantage. The relevance of this theory to this study therefore is that since recent theoretical and empirical works have found human resources to be valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate and/or substitute, organisation's human resource can be used as source of competitive advantage. All what organisation needs to do is to align its human resource practices with its business strategy in order to create and maintain sustainable competitive advantage.

**The Universalistic Perspective:** This perspective is of the view that there is a set of best human resource practices that can be replicated in all firms to enhance performance and create competitive advantage. The theory apparently presumes that all organizations irrespective of size, industry or business strategy can improve their performance and create sustainable competitive advantage by adopting the 'best practice' embedded in Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Some of the 'best practices' according to Pfeffer (1998) include: employment security, selective hiring, self-managed team, provision of high pay contingent on company performance, extensive training, reduction of status differences and sharing information. The relevance of the theory to this present study is that it specifically emphasizes best HR practices as the

determinants of organisation's ability to create competitive advantage especially if the practices are aligned with the business strategy of the organisation.

**The Contingency Perspective:** In contrast with universalistic thinking, contingency scholars argued that human resource strategy would be more effective only when appropriately integrated with specific contextual variables such as business strategy, organizational culture, organizational climate and other environmental factors.

The contingency school is of the view that the assumption underlying the SHRM-Performance link is applicable only under high external fit conditions, termed the '**best fit**'. Thus, the perceived simple linear relationship between human resource practices and organizational performance does not hold water. Instead, the emphasis of contingency model is on the interaction between organization and its environment such that what organization does is largely dependent on the context in which it operates.

Therefore, the impression created by the universalistic approach that 'one size fits all' as portrayed in the 'best practice' syndrome is questionable because what works well in one organization may not necessarily work well in another. The reason being that it may not fit its business strategy, organizational culture, management styles, technology or working practices.

This theory is the most relevant to this study because it takes cognizance of both vertical and horizontal alignment (best fit) between the human resource strategy and business strategy as well as among the various human resource practices

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling techniques. At first, purposive sampling method was employed to select ten (10) reputable insurance companies that are adjudged to be the best ten insurance companies in Nigeria based on the criteria of (i). They must be known to the public (2). They must have a track record and (3). They must have testimonials. Thereafter, stratified sampling technique that takes cognizance of the three levels of management was engaged to select 20 respondents each from the ten insurance companies. For easy administration of the questionnaires, systematic sampling procedure was equally introduced using the nominal roll of the staff as sampling frame to select respondents to whom copies of the questionnaire were distributed. This was made possible with the assistance of their HR managers and HR directors in some cases. Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire administered, 178 copies were retrieved but 150 copies were certified valid for analysis.

A well simplified close ended questionnaire was the major instrument used. It is formatted on four (4) point rating scale of SA, A, D, SD. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by experts in measurement and evaluation from Department of Psychology and Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management, Lagos State University, Ojo. The instrument was thereafter pilot tested using test-re-test method and reliability coefficient of  $r = 0.82$  was obtained which confirms the strength of its reliability. The three hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The parametric statistics of



multiple regressions was used to test the hypotheses 1 and hypotheses 2 while correlation was used for hypothesis 3.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant joint influence of Strategic Human Resource Alignment (Vertical and Horizontal Alignments) on Organisation's ability to create competitive advantage

**Table 1:** Regression analysis on the joint influence of Strategic Human Resource Alignment on Organisation's ability to create competitive advantage.

R = 0.413

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.171

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.160

**Standard Error of the Estimate = 5.8260**

Variables	Sum of squares	Df.	Mean Square	F.	Significant
Regression	1027.753	2	513.876	15.139	.000
Residual	4989.587	147	33.943		
Total	6017.340	149			

**Significant at F (2,147) = 15.139; P < 0.05**

The results in Table 1 above shows that the two elements of Strategic Human Resource Alignment: vertical alignment and horizontal alignment which constitute the independent variables when taken together yielded a co-efficient of multiple regression R = 0.413 and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.160, which implies that 16% of the total variance in the organisation's ability to create competitive advantage is accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables.

The table further establishes that the joint contribution of the independent variables did not occur by chance as it produced F – ratio value of 15.139 significant at 0.05 alpha level. This lends credence to the effectiveness of the two independent variables as predictors of organisation's ability to create competitive advantage in the insurance sector.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relative influence of Strategic Human Resource Alignment (Vertical and Horizontal Alignments) on Organisation's ability to create competitive advantage.

**Table 2: Relative influence of Strategic Human Resource Alignment (Vertical and Horizontal Alignments) on Organisation's ability to create competitive advantage.**

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Significant	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Vertical Alignment	.169	.040	.608	4.239	.000	Sig.
Horizontal Alignment	.188	.068	.216	2.845	.005	Sig.
Constant	21.004	4.275		4.913	.000	Sig.

**Significant at  $P < 0.05$**

From the results obtained in Table 2, each of the independent variables made significant separate contributions to the prediction or organisation's ability to create competitive advantage. The results indicate that vertical alignment has relative influence of  $\beta = 0.322$ ;  $t = 4.239$ ;  $P < 0.05$  followed by Horizontal Alignment with  $\beta = 0.216$ ;  $t = 2.845$ ;  $P < 0.05$ . Though the two variables made significant relative contribution to the prediction of organisation's ability to create competitive advantage, the result shows that vertical alignment is a stronger predictor because its t-value is more than that of horizontal alignment and its margin error is also minimal (.000) compared to horizontal alignment that has 0.005.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between strategic Human Resource Alignment and organisation's ability to create competitive advantage.

**Table 3: The Relationship between Strategic Human Resource Alignment and Organization's ability to create Competitive Advantage**

**Correlations**

		Vertical Alignment	Horizontal Alignment	Organisations Ability to create C.A.
Vertical Alignment	Pearson Correlation	1	.393**	.822**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	150	150	150
Horizontal Alignment	Pearson Correlation	.393**	1	.470
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	150	150	150
Organisations ability to create C.A.	Pearson Correlation	.822**	.470**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150

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

The correlation table above shows positive relationship between the predictors and the criterion variable, and also among the predictor variables. Vertical alignment significantly correlated with Horizontal alignment ( $r = .393$ ) and organisation's ability to create

competitive advantage ( $r = .822$ ) respectively. Similarly, Horizontal alignment correlated significantly with organisation's ability to create competitive advantage ( $r = .470$ ).

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the multiple regression analysis shows that both vertical and horizontal alignments, either collectively or separately significantly predicted organisation's ability to create competitive advantage. The extent of the relationship between the independent variables and the criterion variable is reflected in the value of coefficient of multiple regression (0.413) and in the multiple r-squared adjusted (0.160) as shown in the table 1. Thus, it can be inferred that 16% of the total variance in the organisation's ability to create competitive advantage is accounted for by the combination of vertical and horizontal alignments.

In the same vein, the f-ratio value of 15.139, significant at 0.05 proves the effectiveness of the independent variables to predict the criterion variable (organisation's ability to create competitive advantage). In essence, it shows that the predicting capacity of the independent variables did not occur by chance. Although the result of the regression analysis in table 2 shows that each of the independent variables has a separate capacity to predict organisation's ability to create competitive advantage, vertical alignment is a more potent predictor of organisation's ability to create competitive advantage.

The results of this study find support in the work of Panayoto Poulon et al (2003) that HR of an organisation is a source of competitive advantage provided that the policies of managing people are integrated with strategic business planning. Also, the results lend credence to the discovery of Yasemin et al (2013) that HRs are the valuable and unique assets of organisation for gaining competitive advantage in today's challenging environments. Again, the findings of this study are in agreement with that of Chem and Hung (2010) which state that improving the competence of workforce through training and development activities is a way of creating competitive advantage. They stated further that in the process of learning (training) within an organisation, human capital remains increasingly firm-specific and cannot readily be reproduced by its competitors.

Similarly, the results of this study authenticate the claims of Havard Business School (2006) that with the shift of paradigm from a manufacturing to knowledge based economy, many organisations' competitive advantage now stem more from their human assets (skills, knowledge, behaviour and attitudes). Furthermore, this study affirms the assertion of Burrus (2014) that HR leaders are in an excellent position to create an HR strategy aligned with organizational business strategy to capitalize on the workforce in support of differentiation and sustained competitive advantage. The result of this study is equally in line with the work of Korami et al (2004) that people management is a key source of sustained competitive advantage.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of this study have clearly established the fact that for an organisation to achieve its corporate objectives of commanding competitive advantage in the industry, there must be alignment between its HR strategies and business strategies. This is because it is the human

resource that drives the organisation's strategic process and ultimately determines the effectiveness of strategy development, implementation and subsequent competitive advantage. Thus, any business strategy that is devoid of HR strategy may not be able to stand the test of time let alone create competitive advantage because it is the human capital that leverages all other areas of an organisation.

Therefore, the human asset must be effectively aligned vertically and horizontally with the business strategy for the organisation to attain optimal performance and consequently create competitive advantage. Suffice it to say that the greater the HR practices of an organisation, the brighter its chance to create sustained competitive advantage. The three theoretical perspectives on which this study is anchored equally affirmed the potentiality of human resource as a strategic asset to achieve optimum performance and create competitive advantage. Though their level of analysis differs, yet they all point to the reality of strategic HR alignment as a predictor of organisation's ability to improve performance optimally and create sustained competitive advantage.

The policy implications of this finding for captains of industry especially in the insurance sector is that the top management executives of insurance companies should recognize HR department as a strategic partner that can significantly contribute to value creation in the organisation and not just a mere administrative unit concerned with processing benefit forms and tracking vacation days. Also, the top management executives should promote the HR professionals to the strategic level by directly involving the HR personnel in critical decision making and business strategy formulation processes from the earliest stage.

The HR practitioners on their part should henceforth operate as strategy-focused professionals, spending more time to diagnose their organisations' strategic needs and develop practical solutions for achieving business goals. Similarly, the HR practitioners need to become technologically oriented in order to be free from routine administrative work and leverage information about the workplace. By so doing, it is anticipated that HR practitioners would be able to play a more strategic management role.

Though it is acknowledged that efficient administrative work remains the bedrock upon which to build a strategic influence in organisation, yet to enable HR staff focus more on strategic initiatives, some of the routine administrative duties could be automated or outsourced. Doing so will enable HR practitioners to become more strategically involved in the business strategic planning process.

## References

- Abdul-kadir, D. S. (2012). Strategic human resource management and organizational performance in the Nigerian Insurance Industry: the impact of organizational climate. *Business Intelligence Journal*, 5(1), 8-20.
- Adeyeye, O.J., Tugbobo, A. N. & Aremo, M. (2010). Human resource Practices: Panacea for tackling the multiplicity of challenges posed by economic meltdown in the globalised economy. *African Journal of Information Technology and Educational Media*. 2 (2), 31-44.
- Agba, D. (2016). The Insurance Industry Report. Retrieved from <http://www.blueprint.ng/2016/01/22/nigeria-re-unveils-insurance-industry-report/>
- Armstrong, M. (2009). *A Handbook of Human Resources Management Practice (10<sup>th</sup> Ed)*. London: Kogan Page.
- Arthur, J. (1992). The link between business strategy and industrial relations systems in American Steel Mini-mills. *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 45 488-506.
- Barney, J. (2000). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 17, 203-207.
- Burrus, G. (2014). *Strategic human resources in casino operations: Revealing the Perceptions of Casino operators and Human Resource Leaders*. An unpublished dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi. Page 237.
- Chen, H. & Hung, S. (2010). Systematic linking of organizational strategy, HR Strategy and Training Strategy across OLC. *International Journal of Business Strategy*, 10 (1), 104-115.
- Feyter, T. & Guerry, M. (2010). Effects of Strategic Human Resources Alignment Mechanisms on firm productivity in Belgian Medium-sized and large enterprises. Brussel: HUB Research Paper.
- Heneman, H. G. & Milanowski, A.T. (2007). *Analyzing Human Resource Practices Alignment*. Newyork: Carnegie Corporation.
- Korami, A., Analou, F. & Cusworth, J. (2004). Strategic HRM and resource-based approach: the evidence from the British Manufacturing Industry. *Management Research News*, 27(6), 50-68.
- Loshali, S & Krishnan, V. R. (2013). Strategic human resource management and Firm Performance: mediating role of transformational leadership. *Journal of Strategic Human Resource Management*, 2(1), 9-15.

- Nemli Caliskan, E. (2010). The impact of strategic human resource manpower on organisational performance. *Journal of Naval Science and Engineering*, 6(21), 100-116.
- Panayotopoulou, L., Bourantas, D. & Papalexandris, N. (2003). Strategic HRM and its efforts on firm performance: an implementation of the competing values framework. *International Journal of HRM*, 14 (4) 670-699.
- Pfeffer, J. (1994). Competitive advantage through People. *California Management Review*, 36 (2), 9-28.
- Pfeffer, J. (1998). Seven Practices of Successful Organisations. *California Management Review*, 40(2), 96-124.
- Righeriner, J. P. & Energy, M. (2000). *Aligning Human Resources and Strategic Plans*.
- Scholar, R. S., & Jackson, S. E. (2006). *Human resource management*. USA: Thomson South-Western.
- Scholar, R. S., Dolan, S. & Jackson, S. E. (2001). Introduction. *International Journal of Management*, 22, 195-197.
- Schuler, R. S. & Jackson, S. E. (2006). *Human resource management*. USA: Thomson South-Western.
- Schultz, T. W. (1971). *Investment in Human Capital: the role of education and research*. Newyork: The Free Press.
- US Office of Personnel Management (). *Strategic HRM: Aligning with the mission*.
- Wall, T. & Wood, S. (2005). The romance of human resource management and business performance and the case for big science. *Human Relations*, 58, 1-34.
- Wang, W.C, Lin, C.H, & Chu, Y.C. (2011). Types of Competitive Advantage and Analysis. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6 (5), 100-104.
- Wan-Jing, A. C. & Tung, C. H. (2005). Relationship between strategic human resource management and firm performance: A contingency perspective. *International Journal of Manpower*, 26(5) 434-449.
- Wutthiring, P. & Noknoi, C. (2009). Aligning human and innovation strategies for the Sustainable competitive advantage of the Siam Cement Group (SCG). *NIDA Development Journal*, 49(4), 23-56.
- Yasemin, B., Serdar, B., & Esin, E. (2013). A study on determining the relationship between strategic HRM practices and Innovation in organisations. *International Conference 2013 organised by Knowledge, Management and Innovation*, 19-21 June, 2013 Zadar, Croatia.