

Multinationals Human Resource Management Strategies and Objective Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Managers face similar interest when formulating strategies for either domestic or multinational companies. This paper is concerned with elucidating the multinationals' traditional management strategies such as ethnocentric, regiocentric, polycentric and geocentric policies which drives their planning to achieve their objectives or goal. Three research questions were asked and three hypotheses were tested. A sample size of 24 employees was drawn from a population of 36 employees from six multinational companies in different firms. Data for the analysis were derived from personal interview and the administered 18 copies of questionnaire to human resource professionals in the six multinational companies, out of which 15 copies were returned and 3 copies were not returned. Analysis of the data was done using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. Findings revealed a significant relationship between multinational management strategies and achievement of their objectives. It was then concluded that locally responsive multinational companies are more successful in achieving international their objective. The study therefore recommended that multinationals management strategies should take cognizance of the varying legal, political and cultural factors of different nations that are capable of affecting the achievement of their objectives.

Key Words: Human resource management strategies, Multinational human resource management strategies, Multinationals.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ability of multinationals to effectively compete in the world market depends on their strength to change and adapt their resources strategically, to match with their human resource departments (Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade, & Drake, 2009). Since people in an organization sell and market, develop and create products, make and implement decisions, it becomes vital to achieve success through human resource practices. In other words, human resource practices are vital in maximizing employees' effectiveness in line with the organizations' missions and objectives.

Managers in charge of international operations have onerous task of developing strategies which must be in line with the strategic plan of their multinational corporations, and in addition, try to have a balance in the various external environmental factors of their host countries (Milliman; Von Glinow and Nathan, 2011).

The strategies adopted in managing multinational globally vary greatly because the processes, practices, systems and structures in place to implement the strategies also varies (Tung and Punnett, 2013). Developing global strategies is difficult because of different demands of the global environment on multinational companies. This conflicting demand arise as multinationals tend to maximize their interest to respond to the needs of the host countries while trying to maintain their corporate structure globally. To achieve a balance gave rise to the classification of management strategies of multinational by (Adler and Ghadar, 2012) with resulting management strategies involving the interplay between global integration and local responsiveness. These are ethnocentric, regiocentric, polycentric and geocentric which allows for maximization of parent country control, host country control and balancing of both global integration and local responsiveness respectively.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the relationship between ethnocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.
2. To examine the relationship between polycentric staffing policy and the achievement of multinational objectives
3. To examine the relationship between geocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between ethnocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives?
2. What is the relationship between polycentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives?
3. What is the relationship between geocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives?

1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H_01 : There is no significant relationship between ethnocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

H_02 : There is no significant relationship between polycentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

H_03 : There is no significant relationship between geocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Human Resource Practices

Corporations all around the world recruits and selects qualified personnel who are well suited to perform their respective tasks and duties. The problem faced by these corporations lie on their inability to know the number of managers and workers needed and how to recruit the best. The above problems could be explored through the following:

2.1.1 Human Resource Planning of Multinational

This involves forecasting the human resource needs and its supply. Thus, the first step includes taking an inventory of the company's human resource needs which involves collecting data such as educational background, special job skills, language skills, experience and previous jobs (Armstrong, 2001). The second step involves an estimation of the company's future human resource needs, giving that the company wants to sell or manufacture its products in a foreign market, what are the options left for the company. The third step involves developing a plan for recruitment and selecting people to fill vacant positions.

2.1.2 Recruitment

This involves the process of identifying and attracting pool of applicants for vacant positions through internal or external sources. Identifying an international manager among existing employees is easiest for companies that do not have skilled managers. These managers must have prominent contacts with host countries and perhaps exposed to varying cultures. Multinationals can also recruit from graduates who came from other countries to school in the firm's home country. They can also recruit local managers with relevant talents when emphases are laid on cultural knowledge as a key for job requirement. Multinational companies can also recruit locally for non-managerial positions where there is need for highly specialized skills.

2.1.3 Selection

Multinational selection involves the process of screening and hiring the best qualified applicant with the greatest performance potential Wild et al; (2010). As a consequence, the process for international assignment involves the measurement of an individual's ability to bridge the differences in culture. This is evidenced in the individual's ability to adapt to a new way of life in the host country. On the other hand, native managers must also be able to work with host country's managers who have different cultures.

With respect to foreign managers, the differences in cultures of home and host countries are very significant factors that can determine the success of the employees. The reason being that managers who are culturally minded and sensitive are most likely to achieve multinational business goals. These managers are asked questions bordering on their ability to adapt to new ways of doing things, racial and ethnic issues.

2.2 Multinational Management Strategies

The management of multinational companies with respect to global strategies is believed not to be the same because of the varying practices, processes and the developed structures intended to put those strategies into action. Another reason hinges on the different demands by the host countries which are seen as parts of social responsibilities of multinationals to the host countries that endeavours to ensure an adequate control of their worldwide structure.

After the research studies conducted by Heenan and Pertmutter, (2009) on the classification of the strategies adopted by multinationals, it is obviously recognized that there are four major management strategies including (1) Ethnocentric, (2) polycentric, (3) geocentric and (4) regiocentric. Ethnocentric strategy emphasizes

adequate control of decision making by home country personnel based on their culture in branch offices in the host countries. The polycentric strategy permits employees from the host countries to manage subsidiaries in their countries. Regiocentric strategy also allows local employees to take decisions and manage operations overseas with less home's influences. The geocentric strategy stands out to be adjudged the best because it allows both global and local qualified individuals to manage operations. Hierarchically placed, the best is the geocentric, seconded by polycentric and regiocentric and lastly, the ethnocentric which emphasizes more on control of operations coming from the headquarters.

According to (Prahalad & Doz 2011), the maturity of subsidiaries makes them become independent concerning the use of technology, capital, management and access to market and as a result, boost the corporate culture of the organization globally. Again, the degree of sharing the corporate cultures as expected by the multinationals greatly determines if the host countries have accepted the corporate culture (Wikins & Ouchi 2014).

Different practices of human resource management by multinational such as recruitment, selection, interview placement, induction depends upon multinational human resource management strategy (Adler & Ghadar, 2012). These also are not applied the same globally, because the staffing of subsidiaries could be with foreign employees in one hand and host country nationals on the other hand which eventually has its benefits. For instance, host nationals have in-depth knowledge of their cultures, languages, laws, traditions and rituals which facilitates the running of the subsidiaries if accepted and incorporated into the structure.

International managers who have become successful often enjoy working and living outside, and are also required to relocate any time. As a result, they could adapt easily to local market conditions and business practices. It is very stressful to live in an unfamiliar culture. Hence, multinational human resource management practices involve considering this trend as very crucial when recruiting.

2.2.1 Multinational Staffing Strategies

The most valuable resource of successful multinational is the humans who are part of it. An attached importance to resource and the management of human recourse practices are exemplified in profound performance by employees who are highly trained and productive. The management of international human resources is quite different from the domestic setting by dint of differences in national environments of business. Major concerns cut across expatriate's employment on jobs which could last for many years.

The traditional strategy adapted by multinationals in staffing its offices is known as staffing policy which is influenced by the value of cultural differences. As a result of the importance of different cultures on international businesses, there are four main approaches to staffing of multinationals.

(i) Ethnocentric Staffing Strategy

This staffing strategy allows employees who believe in the superiority of their own culture over others to manage operations outside their country. In other words, the strategy is used by companies that are interested in maintaining strong control over decision making without decentralisation. As a consequence, they ensure that only them formulate and design policies that will work in every country where they operate. According to (T. Gelhoff 2008), when subsidiaries are staffed with expatriates in top management positions, they only want to gain control of centralized decision making more than when managed by host nationals. According to (Edstrom & Galbraith 2007), multinationals using ethnocentric staffing policy expects that their expatriate managers are to transfer the culture and philosophy of headquarters with which they could work with host nationals.

There are several reasons why most multinationals are interested in this policy. One of which is that people who are qualified are not always available more especially in the developing and newly industrialized nations (Wild et al; 2010). It is also used as a socialization strategy through which corporate managers who have climbed the corporate ladder in the organization infuse branch offices with corporate culture. There is also the feeling that managers from home countries will be interested more in the company than host country employees.

According to Wild et al; (2010), ethnocentric policy has some disadvantages. One of it is that the cost of relocating managers from home country, bonuses received from relocating the entire families are very expensive. It can also create disorder in the home country because of the lower level employees who could perceive that their needs may not be well understood by foreign managers.

(ii) Polycentric Staffing Strategy

This policy is devised by some multinationals to give nationals some degrees of independence in making decision. The strategy allows employees from the host country to manage operations of the subsidiaries. This policy has positive effects on both top, middle and lower level managers. However, it does not imply that host country personnel should run the company in any way they seem fit.

The host country managers are given extensive training and are allowed to visit home country periodically on how the subsidiaries should be operated. As a result, host country managers manage the subsidiaries with rare involvement of home country managers.

Its advantages include placement of managerial responsibility in the hands of host managers who are conversant with local business environment, have deep cultural knowledge, familiar with the practices of local business. It also includes the removal of high cost of relocation of expatriate managers and families. However, potential problem could arise from losing control of the host country's operation.

(iii) Geocentric Staffing Strategy.

Multinationals adopting this strategy in managing its human resources tries to achieve coherence in global culture. This is in view of the fact that the multinationals are interested in integrating their foreign subsidiaries through integrating global culture (Heenan & Perlmutter, 2009). In this strategy, the individuals who are best qualified, manage subsidiaries regardless of nationality Will et al; (2010). This implies that managers can be chosen from either the host country, home country or the third country to fill positions. As a consequence, there could be a unified culture since the headquarters and the foreign subsidiaries will see themselves as an integrated part of a word organization and not to be influenced by the headquarters. According to (Edstrom & Galbraith, 2007), the geocentric staffing strategy has the most complex organizational structure which requires a high degree of communication and integration across national boundaries (Edstrom & Galbraith, 2007).

The geocentric strategy enables companies to develop manager who can easily adjust to global business environment, more especially, the cultural difference. It also enables the braking down of nationalistic barriers between managers in a single office or offices. On the contrary, its disadvantage include the expensiveness involved in pricing managers who are capable of understanding different cultures and also effective on their jobs which are reflected in their salaries.

2.3 Multinational Corporation

It is not very easy to answer the question `what is multination? In any case, to be known as multinational, a firm should be involved in business transactions in more than one country and experience international difference in management and organization. The United Nations defines multinational enterprises as enterprises that own or control production or service facilities outside the country in which they are based.

According to (Wild et al; 2010) a multinational corporation is a business that has direct investments in the form of marketing or subsidiaries abroad in different countries. These companies provide important jobs, investment and revenue through tax for the nations where they operate. On the contrary, if they also close or reduce their operations, thousands of people will also be out of work.

A multinational corporation can also be called International Corporation, transnational corporation, global enterprise, world enterprise or stateless corporation. These are large in size having their worldwide activities controlled by the parent companies. By dint of their global presence, multinationals gain in different ways such as economy of scale, Research and Development, usage of technological knowhow, purchasing of power taping lower cost available in some developing countries.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design: The quasi- experimental design was adopted because of the individual complex relationship which are devoid of manipulation.

3.2 Population for the study: The study population consisted of six multinational companies under the umbrella body of human resource management association concerned with the staffing of subsidiaries.

3.3 Sampling Technique: The sampling technique adopted was the probability sampling technique which ensured that every member of the study subject had the equal chances of being selected.

3.4 Validity and Reliability: The questionnaire was validated through the content and construct validity, while the reliability of the research instrument was ascertained with the use of Crombach Alpha at .07

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data generated from the survey are as presented and explained in the following tables.

Table 4.1: Determination of Samples Drawn from each Multinational

SN	NAME OF MULTINATIONAL	POP. SIZE	SAMPLE DRAWN	% OF SAMPLE
1	AGIP	6	4	16.66
2	British Airways	5	3	12.5
3	Dangote	7	5	20.8
4	DHL	5	3	12.5
5	IBM	6	4	16.66
6	Unilever	7	5	20.8

TOTAL	36	24	100%
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Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

The table above shows the population of the six multinationals for the study. The number of respondents in each company was a result of available records from their respective personnel offices.

TABLE 4.1.2: Questionnaire Determination/Responses

SN	NAME OF COMPANY	POP. SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE DRAWN	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE	NUMBER RETRIEVED	NUMBER NOT RETURNED
1	AGIP	6	4	3	3	0
2	British Airways	5	3	3	2	1
3	Dangote	7	5	3	3	0
4	DHL	5	3	3	2	1
5	IBM	6	4	3	2	1
6	Unilever	7	5	3	3	0
TOTAL		36	24	18	15	3

Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

From the table, 15 copies of the questionnaire were returned which represented 83.3%, while three (3) copies of the questionnaire were not returned.

Table-4.1.3 Biographical Characteristics

Description		Frequency	%
Yr. of Service	1-5yrs. 6yrs-8yrs	10 5	66.66 33.33
Qualification	Bachelors Masters	9 6	60 40
Marital Status	Married Single	12 3	80 20

Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

The above table indicates the biographical information about the respondents, their qualifications, years of service marital status and designations expressed in frequencies and percentages.

4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

4.2.1 Ethnocentric Policy and Management of Multinationals

Questions on ethnocentric human resource strategy were asked to figure out the effect of ethnocentric hiring policy on the achievement of objectives. The responses to the questions below were used for the analysis.

Table 4.2 Analysis of Research Question one

COMPANIES	SA		A		DA		SDA	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
AGIP	3	20.0	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
British Airways	2	13.33	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
Dangote	3	20.0	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
DHL	2	13.33	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
IBM	3	20.0	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
Unilever	2	13.33	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66
TOTAL	15	100	6	100	6	100	6	100

Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

The above table showed the responses which determined the effect of ethnocentric hiring policy on the human resource management of multinationals with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The implication of the responses showed that ethnocentric staffing policy gives multinationals the opportunities of maintaining strong control over decision making which enhances the achievement of their objectives.

4.2.2 Polycentric Staffing Policy of Multinationals

This question was asked to known the degree of independence in making decisions.

Table 4.2.2 Analysis of Research Question Two

COMPANY	SA		AG		DA		SDA	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
AGIP	3	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
British Airways	2	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
Dangote	3	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66

DHL	2	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
IBM	3	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
Unilever	2	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
Total	15	100	6	100	6	100	6	100

Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

The above table revealed the response rates and frequencies expressed in percentages with respect to the choice of polycentric staffing policy and how it influences multinational management. The response rates indicated that the choice of polycentric policy enables multinationals to allow employees from the host country to manage operations of subsidiaries.

Table 4.2.3: Influence of geocentric staffing policy on the management of multinationals. This question was asked to understand the values attached to integrating foreign cultures in the management of multinationals.

Table 4.2.3 Analysis of Research Question Three

COMPANY	SA		AG		DA		SDA	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
AGIP	3	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
British Airways	2	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
Dangote	3	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
DHL	2	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
IBM	2	20.0	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
Unilever	3	13.33	1	16.66	1	16.66	1	16.66
TOTAL	15	100	6	100	6	100	6	100

Source: Researcher's field survey (2020)

The above table indicated response rates supporting multinationals to develop managers who could easily adjust to global business environment, more importantly, an understanding of the cultural differences and its adaptability.

4.3 Analysis of Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between ethnocentric staffing policy and international human resource objectives. This hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 confidence level. The result indicated a positive correlation coefficient of R = .216, P<0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, thus there is a significant relationship between ethnocentric staffing policy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between polycentric staffing policy and the achievement of multinational objectives. This hypothesis was tested to confirm the importance of using host nationals more than expatriates in the management of multinationals. With the application of the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, it revealed a correlation coefficient of R= .275 and P<.05 which means perfect significant relationship, thus, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between geocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives. In testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance with the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, the result revealed a positive relationship. That is P<0.05, R =.260. As a consequence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted that there is a significant relationship between geocentric staffing strategy and the achievement of multinational objectives.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The major concern for conducting this research was to examine the relationship between multinational human resource management strategies management of and the achievement of multinational objectives. The six multinational companies chosen were to avert the problems associated with dealing with the entire population.

The research study explained the varying multinational management strategies such as ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric and geocentric and how they have significant relationship with the achievement of multinational objective.

To have evidence on the construct validity for the variables, questions were asked to the human resource executives to describe the implications of the different multinational human resource management strategies and on the achievement of their objectives. From the questions, responses on ethnocentric was different from others because ethnocentric companies prefer to maintain their parent corporate culture as a means of control while others did not differ from each other on the question by accepting the realities of adopting geocentric and polycentric strategies as indispensable in achieving their objectives as a result of turbulent environmental factors.

In testing the first hypothesis using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 confidence level, it was revealed that ethnocentric companies mostly prefer using their employees to maintain their original home culture. This means that they would prefer to send host nationals to headquarters to learn the culture of the parent company.

In testing the second hypothesis using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 confidence level, it was revealed that polycentric companies prefer host nationals to manage subsidiaries with some coordination from headquarters. This is because host nationals have no language barriers and also understand much of their environments than non-nationals in the management and communication with employees.

In testing the third hypothesis using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 confidence level, it was revealed that geocentric companies prefer all their subsidiaries to have knowledge of world-wide culture. This implies that the best people are staffed regardless of nationality.

V. CONCLUSION

The human resource strategy theory states that organizations work hard to maintain practices which are in tandem with global business strategy in order to be effectively competitive. As a consequence, questions were asked to determine the extent to which multinationals wish to maintain the culture of their headquarters through all their subsidiaries. Attempts were also made to distinguish between the three main multinational hiring policies which includes ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric.

However, ethnocentric multinationals are seen to be different from others because of the need to maintain parent corporate culture for strategic control, while others did not differ significantly. This is because of the legal, political and cultural constraints involved in foreign countries.

It is worthy of note that both the ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric policies are used to achieve multinational objectives. In other words, any global strategy that must be adopted by the multinational companies must have the possibility of influencing all aspects of their operations for the achievement of their objectives.

5.1 Recommendations

Ethnocentric multinational corporations prefer an absolute understanding and transfer of their home country cultures and ideas as a panacea for working with host nationals. In the polycentric, host nationals manage subsidiaries of multinationals in synergy with home headquarters' coordination, while the geocentric management strategy involves an understanding of global corporate culture based on qualification irrespective of origin. Based on the imperatives of the three major strategies, the following recommendations are put forward.

1. Human resource practice of recruitment and selection should be based on global human resource principles in order to attract pool of talented applicants.
2. Multinationals should be aware of the human resource management practices that are constrained by more of cultural differences.
3. Ethnocentric principle should be re-examined to consider the realities of geocentric and polycentric strategies because of the stringent cultural implications and advancement in technology and globalisation.
4. Multinational should adopt three of the human resource management strategies to exploit the existing competencies in turbulent times.
5. Multinational should adapt more of the geocentric and polycentric human resource hiring strategies with respect to the global situation.

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