

**Human Resource Management (HRM) Functions in Organizational Development and Sustainability in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *As the issue of organizational competitiveness and sustainability in today's business environment became crucial in all markets, the need to implement the strategic role of human resource management function in organizations becomes a prerequisite. The research problem defined by the authors refers to the definition of the roles that human management function performs in organizations in the Republic of Nigeria in order to examine the level of representation of the strategic role of human resource management function as a prerequisite for sustainability. The main objective of this paper was to define the characteristics of each of the three roles that the human resource management function plays in organizations in Nigeria. This will enable organizations to define more specifically the goals that need to be achieved in order to improve the role of the human resource management function from being administrative to operational and from operational to the strategic one, which is the basis for gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability. Human Resource Management (HRM) is an area of organizational science that deals with the study of all aspects of employment by implementing various activities aimed at aligning the interests of employees with the organization's strategy.*

[1] *The role of the human resources management function has evolved over time from a traditional and exclusively administrative role, through the modern human resource management in which it had an operational role, up to the strategic role of integrating all activities with the strategic needs of an organization.*

[2]. *It is generally accepted that the basis for gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability is the implementation of the strategic role of human resource management in organizations.*

[3]. *Accordingly, the impact of the human resource management function is observed in relation to its strategic importance for the organization.*

[4]. *Depending on the various circumstances and levels of economic development, the role of human resource management was different. In market developed economies, the role of human resource management is an important strategic function, while in less developed economies, the*

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*role of human resource management was under a major influence of the government and administration.*

*[5]. The market of Nigeria, as well as markets of other countries in Central and Western Africa, are becoming attractive for foreign investments. Numerous studies of the role of human resource management function in Western and Central Africa, show a shift in focus from an administrative to a more modern approach to people management.*

*[6]. Since Nigeria became a member of the ECOWAS network, which deals with comparative research of human resource management practices as early as in 1975, with the aim of defining similarities and differences between different countries, primarily in Europe. Numerous researches show positive shifts towards a more modern role of human resource management in organization.*

*[7]. In the research of the impact of human resource management function in relation to its strategic importance for the organization and sustainability, three key issues were defined that are related to the place and status of the human resource management function in top management, the level of participation of the human resource management function in the development of the organization's strategy and the level of participation of line managers in its evaluation and implementation.*

*By analyzing the research studies in Central and Western African countries, especially in Nigeria, Ghana, Benin Republic, Niger, Togo, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Angola and Gabon; the authors noticed that there are two key shortcomings. The first one refers to the insufficiently clear boundaries between the administrative, operational and strategic roles that the human resource management function plays in organizations in terms of its integration with the strategic needs and thus the impact it generates in organizations. Namely, the mentioned research studies were focused on the administrative (personnel) and strategic roles of the human resource management function in organizations, neglecting the third role which represents the second development phase in this field and function of human resource management, and which aims to develop and formalize the processes of human resource management in organizations. The second one refers to defining the characteristics of all three roles that the human resource management function performs in organizations.*

*In this paper, the authors focused on overcoming the identified shortcomings, and taking the work of Gooderham et al., and CRANET networks as a baseline for defining the strategic impact of the human resource management function. For research purposes, they defined the characteristics of all three roles and created an extended questionnaire intended to determine if the role of the human resource management function in an organization is administrative, operational (functional) or strategic. Defining the characteristics of each of the three roles that the human resource management function plays in organizations in Nigeria will enable organizations to define more*

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*specifically the goals that need to be achieved in order to improve the role of the human resource management function from being administrative to operational and from operational to the strategic one, which is the basis for gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability. Given that the research studies have shown that there are numerous differences that determine the role which the human resource management function assumes in an organization and thus also of the corresponding processes, the authors wanted to examine some of these specifics in the organizations in the Republic of Nigeria. The paper is structured in five parts. The first one deals with defining and analyzing the three basic roles that human resource management can play in an organization with an emphasis on the strategic role that, according to researches, affects the achieving of a competitive advantage and sustainability. In the second part of the paper, the authors introduce readers to the role and practices of human resource management in organizations in Nigeria. The third and fourth parts of the paper deal with research conducted in 86. organizations in Nigeria with the aim of determining the role of human resource management as well as defining the characteristics for each of the defined roles. The fifth part of the paper refers to the discussion about the results and the concluding considerations of the author.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Evolution and role of human resource management function**

The role of the human resource management function has been developing and changing in the broader context of social, industrial and economic development and it emerged in response to the key changes that the industrialization created had in the society and work.

In essence, defined periods of human resource management evolution are viewed as three roles that the function performs in organizations:

a) The first role of human resource management is related to the period when the personnel function came into existence in organizations. Its development was most influenced by industrialization, which caused numerous problems in the type, content and organization of work. Defining working hours, compulsory health care, improving occupational safety and employee training were the first tasks of the personnel function. From a historical point of view, and relative to the changes in the environment, the focus and importance of certain activities of personnel management have shifted, as well as the employers' understanding of the importance of these activities. Looking after health insurance, employee file management, work logs and sick leaves, as well as job design, testing and training and union negotiations and workforce planning [28], personnel function, had an exclusively administrative role in the organization. According to the

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authors Torrington, Hall, and Taylor the personnel function is the basis for the development of activities related to employees in the organization and it is focused on the workforce.

b) Although it was intended to align the role of human resource management function with the strategic needs of the organization in this period of development, many authors were primarily concerned with developing and formalization of the human resource management processes (job analysis, human resource planning, human resource recruitment, selection, onboarding and orientation, human resource development, performance appraisals and rewards, labor relations, etc.,) in organizations as well as examining the impact of these processes on organizational performance. The author West with associates, over a five-year period, investigated the types and impact of management activities on the company's performance during which he concluded that changes in profits are the results of different methods of selection, employee orientation, training, rewarding as well as job design, and not of the strategic position, investment in technology or quality. Watson Wyatt, the creator of the Human Capital Index, in a 1999 study conducted in 400 organizations in the US and Canada identified 30 key activities in human resource management that could be associated with a 30% increase in the market value of the organization. Eleven years later, the same research resulted in the identification of 43 activities, which W. Wyatt grouped into 5 dimensions, given the impact in increasing the market value of the company (rewards based on performance, a collegial and flexible workplace, recruitment, communications, training, and career management). Ten years later, a similar survey was conducted in 16 European countries, identifying 19 main activities that can be associated with a 26% increase in the market value of the company. Also, differences in human resource management between European and American companies were determined, which initiated further research in the direction of comparative analyses between the countries for which it was determined that the differences were primarily resulting from different cultures, norms, values, attitudes, characteristics of the workforce. Research studies conducted in the United States confirmed the link between employee productivity and/or organizational performance with recruitment and selection activities, employee education, impact assessments, compensations and benefits, and activities that support innovation. Research has also shown that organizations that implement these processes perform better than organizations that do not have formalized processes within the same industry. The major contribution of this developmental role is reflected in the formalization of these processes and their connection with the strategy of the organization. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the second role of human resource management was consultative with the aim of developing and formalizing processes and practices for guiding individual skills, knowledge, abilities and interests of employees for the purpose of implementing organizational goals and strategies.

c) The impact of the changing environment and inability of the human resource management function, primarily due to its operational role, to provide a competitive advantage and sustainability have initiated further development of its role into a strategic human resource management. An obvious difference between human resource management and strategic perspective is the adaptation and development of the existing paradigm that views people as a means to achieve organizational goals into a new paradigm that views people as a source of competitive advantage or change of focus from micro to macro perspective. The role of strategic human resource management is focused on aligning human resource management activities with the process of strategic management as well as the alignment and coordination of these activities within the organization. The authors Lepak, Liao, Chung, and Harden, gave a specific contribution to the implementation of the strategic role of human resource management, by analyzing its systemic perspective. Researchers of strategic human resource management mostly rely on the resource-based approach in explaining the impact of the strategic human resource management approach on gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability. The quality of human resources is viewed as the main source of competitive advantage, which means that the organization bases its strategy exclusively on developing their skills, knowledge and abilities faster than the competition. Such a view focuses on a systemic perspective regarding the relationship between internal resources (of which people are the one), strategy, and organizational performance.

Based on the afore-mentioned analysis of the evolution of the role of human resource management in organizations, it can be concluded that it has developed from the traditional role that examined the impacts of individual activities on the performance of the organization and used to be administrative in nature with very low impact on strategy and performance, through being operational (functional) with relative impact on strategy, which dealt with the development and formalization of human resource management processes as well as examining the impact of all processes on performance in order to align the human resource strategy with the organization's strategy, to becoming a strategic and having a systemic perspective, high impact on the organization's strategy and dealing with the integration of all human resource management activities with the strategic needs of the organization.

### **Roles and evolution of human resource management in Central and Western African countries**

The role of human resource management, over time, has developed all over the world under the influence of American theories and concepts. In Africa, the application of American concepts was not entirely possible primarily due to cultural differences as well as due to social, economic and institutional factors which initiated a development of the African model of human resource management. It is these factors specifically that influenced the development of comparative human resource management practices in different African countries, which resulted in defining their

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similarities and differences that allow foreign companies to adapt the role of human resource management to local circumstances. The main problem in organizations entering foreign markets is the adjustment of the role of the human resource management function to local conditions. In market-oriented economies, the role of human resource management is much more developed and has a strategic character in comparison to the countries of Central and Western Africa, where it was of a purely administrative nature until 2000. However, in recent years, the most important change affecting the role of human resource management is the shift of focus from administrative to a more contemporary role that is oriented towards increase of performance. A comparative study of the role of human resource management function in Nigeria Ghana, Niger and Benin Republic eight years ago, showed different stages in the development of the human resource management function in organizations and thus of the role it plays in them. In organizations in Nigeria, the function of human resource management had an operational role, it was viewed as a tool for the implementation of top management decisions and its impact was assessed as very low. Unlike Nigeria, Gabon, the function of human resource management had a partially strategic character with a focus on the implementation and formalization of the process of human resource management in organizations. In Nigeria, the role of human resource management function was fully integrated with the strategic needs of an organization, there was a high formalization of all human resource management processes associated with increasing performance. Based on the mentioned example of comparative research, it can be noticed that the role of human resource management function in Nigeria corresponds to the first development phase, that is administrative role, in Ghana it corresponds to the second development phase, that is operational role and in Libya it corresponds to the third development phase of an organization, i.e. strategic role. Although recent research in Ghana shows the development of the role of human resource management function, it still cannot be viewed as strategic primarily due to the small percentage of human resource managers being involved in the top management of organizations, the lack of formally defined strategies and insufficient number of engaged human resources experts to implement the defined strategies.

The evolution of the role of human resource management function in Nigeria began in the period between 1975 and 1990, when personnel experts first became employed in organizations. The evolution of the role of human resource management function in Nigeria was evidently influenced by the Socialist model of development as well as by the political and economic situation. Also, research studies, scientific journals and faculties were scarce. Researches has rarely been done, mostly in individual organizations, however without any comparative analysis that would create an opportunity for applying good practices, as well as defining both similarities and differences between organizations in various fields and industries. Such situation made it much more difficult

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to transform the administrative role of human resource management function into a strategic one, which is the basis for gaining a competitive advantage . The research of the activity of human resource management function conducted in Nigeria in the period from 2008 to 2010 indicated certain similarities and differences in relation to other countries of Central and Western Africa. The similarities were related to strengthening the importance of the role of human resource management in organizations, defining organizational and human resource strategy in organizations and the level of its involvement in the development of organizational strategy, while the differences were related to the role and place of human resource managers in the top management of the organization and the sources of recruiting human resource professionals. Four years later, research results showed positive developments regarding the role of human resource management in organizations in Nigeria by showing that the human resource management function existed in organizations as independent units, that the departments were led by human resource managers holding university degrees in this field and that the human resource managers were involved in making certain decisions related to employees. However, taking into account the national culture and tradition of Nigeria as a country, the authors were of the opinion that the transformation of the role of human resource management, in the coming years, will be a long-term and difficult one. Since the CRANET research is being conducted continuously for the purpose of identifying changes that have occurred over time, in the course of the second research conducted in 2015, involving 160 organizations in Nigeria, a comparative analysis showed that the role of human resource management function is slowly gaining a strategic character. However, although a certain progress can be noticed in terms of the number of human resource managers who have their places in top management and participate in the formation of strategy, their impact remains relatively negligible, which is a key limitation in the changing of the role of human resource management function.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Based on the analysis of the literature which concerns the role of the human resource management function in organizations, the authors' main assumption is that the existence of the strategic role of human resource management function is a necessary prerequisite for gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability. Consequently, the research problem of this paper is to determine which role of the human resource management function is present in the surveyed organizations in the Republic of Nigeria. Based on the defined problem, the objectives of the paper are the following:

Based on the theoretical framework, to define the characteristics of all three roles (administrative, operational and strategic) of the human resource management function so that organizations gain insight into the current situation and be able to take measures to strengthen the impact of the function and its transformation into a strategic role,

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To determine the contribution of the existence of an independent function of human resource management in the surveyed organizations to the understanding of the characteristics of its role,

To define the specifics of each of the examined roles in relation to the independent variables.

Based on the previously formulated problem and research objectives, the following hypotheses were established:

H1 - Different roles of the human resource management function are present in the surveyed organizations.

H2 - There are statistically significant results of different roles of the human resource management function in relation to the defined independent variables.

H3 - Independent human resource management function in organizations contributes to a better understanding of the characteristics of the role of human resource management function.

The instrument is designed for the purposes of research in accordance with the defined problem, objectives and hypotheses of the paper. Taking the first segment of CRANET research and the criteria defined by Gooderham et al. as a starting point, and based on the analysis of the literature in the theoretical part of the paper, the authors defined an extended set of characteristics of the three basic roles of human resource management in organizations, as follows: administrative, operational and strategic roles of the human resource management function. Then, based on the characteristics of each role that the function of human resource management plays in organizations, a questionnaire was designed, which contained three sets (batteries) of questions. Each set of questions is related to the characteristics of one of the roles of human resource management function in organizations. The questionnaire defined 18. questions that were scored by the respondents on the Likert scale offering 5. answers. In addition to the questions defined in the questionnaire, which represented dependent variables, independent variables were also defined (number of employees, business activity and legal form of organization, level of management to which respondents belong and the existence of an independent human resources department) whose role was to define the specifics of each of the examined roles of the human resource management function in the surveyed organizations.

Dependent research variables involved defining three sets (batteries) of questions that define the characteristics of the administrative, operational and strategic roles of the human resource management function in organizations, namely:



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The questions in Battery I referred to the administrative role of the human resource management function and were examined based on the following statements:

The role of the human resource management function is to be an intermediary between managers and employees,

Tasks related to human resources include (updating documentation on sick leaves, vacations, leaves of absence, pensions, health insurance, work discipline) and

Tasks related to human resources are subject to the decision of the CEO.

The questions in Battery II referred to the operational role of the human resource management function and were examined based on the following statements:

Management in your organization makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department,

There is a budget in your organization for the activities of the human resources department,

Human resources department assists business functions in planning the necessary staff,

There is a human resources expert in your organization,

Human resources department assists business functions in designing jobs,

Human resources department conducts staff recruitment for each business function, the human resources department conducts training and development of employees,

Human resources department defines a reward system for each business function,

Human resources department introduces employees to business function strategies.

The questions in Battery III referred to the strategic role of the human resource management function and were examined based on the following statements:

In your organization, the manager of the human resources department is a member of the top management,

The human resources department is involved in strategic planning,

The human resources plan completely fits into the strategic plan of the organization.

The human resources department participates in defining the goals of business functions (marketing, production, development, commercial, etc.),

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The management in your organization makes decisions, forwards them to the human resources department and expects feedback in order to be able to make the best decision.

The independent variables related to the business activity, the legal form of the organization, the number of employees, the level of management to which the respondents belong and the existence of an independent human resources department.

For the reliability of the questionnaire, the Alpha coefficient was applied and its reliability with a score of .928 was rated as high. Therefore, we can say that the instrument was reliable at an acceptable level. According to DeVellis Cronbach's alpha reliability scores higher than 0.6 are considered acceptable.

The following statistical methods were applied in the research: Frequency Analysis, Mann-Whitney U Test, Spearman's Rank Correlation, Pearson's Chi Squared Test and Kruskal Wallis Test.

### **Description of the research sample**

The research involved 127. respondents, employees at all three levels of management (top management, middle management and line management), in 86. organizations in the territory of the Republic of Nigeria (Central Nigeria region). The structure of the sample in relation to the characteristics of the organization in which the respondents are employed is defined by the activity and legal form of the organization, the number of employees and the existence of an independent function of human resource management:

In relation to the level of management at which they are employed, 42.1% of respondents from the highest management level (top managers), 33.3% of respondents from the middle management level (middle management) and 24.6% of respondents from the first management level (line management) participated in the research.

In relation to the business activity of the organization, 46.03% of respondents from production and 53.97% respondents from service organizations participated in the research,

In relation to the legal form of the organization, 38.6% of respondents from public and 61.4% of respondents from private organizations participated in the research,

In relation to the number of employees in organizations, 7.1% of respondents from organizations with up to 10 employees, 48.4% of respondents from organizations with 10–50 employees, 17.5% of respondents from organizations employing 50–250 employees and 27% of respondents from organizations employing over 250 employees participated in the research,

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In relation to the existence of an independent function for human resources, 45.7% of respondents employed in organizations in which there is a function for human resources, 52% of respondents employed in organizations in which there is no function for human resources and 2.4% of respondents employed in organizations in which they did not know if there was a function for human resources, participated in the research.

**Organization and course of research**

The research was conducted in 2019 on the territory of the Republic of Nigeria. Questionnaires were forwarded in writing to the managers of organizations. The anonymity of all respondents was maintained, and in terms of personal data they were asked for information on professional qualifications, length of service and the title of the job they are currently performing. Respondents completed the questionnaires independently and within the scheduled time limit of 45 minutes. It should be emphasized that the results do not have to be objective indicators in all cases but are based on individual assessments of managers. As one of the indicators of the attitude that the economic entities held towards the research is the fact that 127. out of 250. distributed questionnaires were filled in. The respondents who agreed to participate in the research and filled in the questionnaires did not indicate any ambiguities or demands for additional clarifications.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

In testing the first hypothesis, which reads: In the surveyed organizations, there are different roles of the human resource management function, and by analyzing the answers to three independent batteries of questions, each of which was related to one of the roles that the human resource management function plays in organizations, the following results were obtained:

Table 1

Representation of the role of the function of human resource management

<b>Role of the function of human resource management</b>	<b>Number of surveyed organizations</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Administrative role	52	60.46%	63	49,6%
Operational role	17	19.77%	40	31,5%
Strategic role	17	19.77%	24	18,9%

Table 1

Representation of the role of the function of human resource management

Role of the function of human resource management	Number of surveyed organizations	%	Number of respondents	%
Total	86	100%	127	100%

The obtained results show that in most of the surveyed organizations (60.46%), in the opinion of the respondents, the role of human resource management function is administrative, while in (19.77%) the role of human resource management function is operational, and in the same number of organizations (19.77%) the role of human resource management function is strategic, which has confirmed the first hypothesis. Although the distribution has largely shown that the traditional or administrative role of the human resource management function is still dominant, a transformation trend towards a more contemporary operational and strategic roles of the function in organizations can be noticed.

Based on the defined batteries of questions, scores were formed for each of the roles of human resource management function

The Kruskal-Wallis Test found a difference in the assessment of all items intended to assess the role of human resource management function

Table 2

Testing the differences between respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function

Kruskal - Wallis Test	$\chi^2$	df	p
In your organization, the manager of the human resource department is a member of the board of directors (top management)	59.590	2	.000**
Human resources department is involved in the strategic planning of the organization	63.653	2	.000**

Table 2

Testing the differences between respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function

<b>Kruskal - Wallis Test</b>	$\chi^2$	df	p
Management in your organization makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department	53.064	2	.000**
Management in your organization makes decisions, forwards them to the human resources department and expects feedback to make the best decision.	56.760	2	.000**
Human resource plan completely fits into the strategic plan of the organization	57.778	2	.000**
Human resources department participates in achieving the goals of business functions (marketing, production, research & development, sales, legal services, etc.)	61.224	2	.000**
Human resources department assists business functions in planning the required staff	58.448	2	.000**
Human resources department assists business functions in designing jobs	59.772	2	.000**
Human resources department recruits staff for each business function	60.761	2	.000**
Human resources department conducts training and development of employees	57.140	2	.000**
Human resources department defines a reward system for each business function	52.020	2	.000**
Human resources department introduces employees to the organization's strategy	59.462	2	.000**

Table 2

Testing the differences between respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function

<b>Kruskal - Wallis Test</b>	$\chi^2$	df	p
Human resources department introduces employees to the strategy of business functions	56.919	2	.000**
There is a human resources expert in your organization	54.816	2	.000**
Human resources affairs are the decision of the CEO	31.638	2	.000**
The role of the human resources department is to mediate between directors and employees	44.516	2	.000**
Tasks related to human resources include (updating documentation on sick leave, vacations, leaves of absence, pensions, health insurance, work discipline)	28.185	2	.000**
There is a budget in your organization for the activities of the human resources department	33.463	2	.000**
b. Grouping variable: attitude to human resource management			
<i>Legend * Significance at a level less than 0.05 ** Significance at a level less than 0.001</i>			

By applying the *post hoc* test, significant differences were found among the assessments of all claims provided by all groups, except in comparing the answers of respondents employed in organizations that apply the operational role of human resource management and respondents employed in organizations that apply the strategic role of human resource management in the activity: Management in your organization makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department, which indicates the key difference between these two roles.

Table 3

*Post hoc* analysis of the answers of respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function using the Mann-Whitney Test

	Administrative role			Operational role			Strategic role		
	U	Z	P	U	Z	p	U	Z	p
In your organization, the manager of the human resources department is a member of the board of directors (top management)	105.5	-5.962	0.000**	0	-6.966	0.000	231	-2.931	0.003**
Human resources department is involved in the strategic planning of the organization	60.5	-6.43	0.000**	11.5	-6.865	0.000	195.5	-3.663	0.000**
Management in your organization makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department	79	-6.172	0.000**	29	-6.363	0.000	277.5	-1.61	0.107
Management in your organization makes decisions, forwards them to the human resources department and expects feedback to make the best decision.	81.5	-6.111	0.000**	25	-6.508	0.000	231	-2.788	0.005**

Table 3

*Post hoc* analysis of the answers of respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function using the Mann-Whitney Test

	Administrative role			Operational role			Strategic role		
Human resource plan completely fits into the strategic plan of the organization	112.5	- 5.601	0.000**	24.5	- 6.558	0.000	102.5	- 4.936	0.000**
Human resources department participates in achieving the goals of business functions (marketing, production, research & development, sales, legal services, etc.)	75	- 6.179	0.000**	12.5	- 6.803	0.000**	161	- 4.024	0.000**
Human resources department assists business functions in planning the required staff	94	- 5.891	0.000**	27.5	-6.48	0.000**	102	- 4.845	0.000**
Human resources department assists business functions in designing jobs	117	- 5.718	0.000**	5	- 6.854	0.000**	114	- 4.523	0.000**
Human resources department recruits staff for each business function	91.5	-5.96	0.000**	14.5	- 6.754	0.000**	105	- 4.787	0.000**



Table 3

*Post hoc* analysis of the answers of respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function using the Mann-Whitney Test

	Administrative role			Operational role			Strategic role		
Human resources department conducts training and development of employees	97	-5.868	0.000**	26	-6.545	0.000**	138	-4.304	0.000**
Human resources department defines a reward system for each business function	101.5	-5.908	0.000**	34	-6.322	0.000**	171	-3.38	0.001**
Human resources department introduces employees to the organization's strategy	83.5	-6.143	0.000**	15	-6.744	0.000**	144.5	-4.061	0.000**
Human resources department introduces employees to the strategy of business functions	103	-5.937	0.000**	19	-6.678	0.000**	168	-3.672	0.000**
There is a human resources expert in your organization	105.5	-5.878	0.000**	36.5	-6.442	0.000**	221.5	-3.068	0.002**
Human resources affairs are the decision of the CEO	227	-4.182	0.000**	112	-4.937	0.000**	246	-2.316	0.021*

Table 3

*Post hoc* analysis of the answers of respondents employed in organizations with different roles of human resource management function using the Mann-Whitney Test

	Administrative role			Operational role			Strategic role		
	The role of the human resources department is to mediate between managers and employees	155	-5.153	0.000**	77	-5.631	0.000**	264	-2.39
Jobs related to human resources include (updating documentation on sick leave, vacations, leaves of absence, pensions, health insurance, work discipline)	247.5	-3.789	0.000**	135	-4.596	0.000**	251	-2.54	0.011*
There is a budget in your organization for the activities of the human resources department	190.5	-4.46	0.000**	78.5	-5.326	0.000**	246	-2.028	0.043*
<i>Legend * Significance at a level less than 0.05 ** Significance at a level less than 0.001</i>									

In testing the second hypothesis, which reads: There are statistically significant results of different roles of human resource management function in relation to the defined independent variables, the following results were obtained:

By analyzing the differences between the role of human resource management function in relation to the characteristics of the organization – business activity, legal form, number of employees in the organization and the existence of the human resources department, the following results were obtained:

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In relation to the business activity of the organization, the results show that out of the total number of respondents (127), 63 respondents recognized the administrative role of human resource management function, 60.3% from services and 39.7% from production activities.

Table 4

Differences between the roles of human resource management function in relation to the type of activity

Type of activity	Role of human resource management function					
	Administrative role	No.	Operational role	No.	Strategic role	No.
Production organizations	39.7%	25	60%	24	37.5%	9
Service organizations	60.3%	38	40%	16	62.5%	15
Total	100%	63	100%	40	100%	24

By Mann-Whitney Test it was found that the answers of the respondents employed in service organizations do not differ from the answers of the respondents employed in production organizations in the area of questions concerning the role of human resource management function.

In relation to the legal form of the organization, the results show that out of the total number of respondents (127) the administrative role of the human resource management function was recognized by 63 respondents, 57.1% from private organizations and 42.9% from public organizations, the operational role of the human resource management function was recognized by 40 respondents, 75% from private and 25% from public organizations, and the strategic role of the human resource management function was recognized by 24 respondents, 50% from public and 50% from private organizations.

Table 5

Differences between the roles of human resource management function in relation to the legal form of the organization

Legal form	Role of human resource management function					
	Administrative role	No.	Operational role	No.	Strategic role	No.
Public organizations	42.9%	27	25%	10	50%	12
Private organizations	57.1%	36	75%	30	50%	12
Total	100%	63	100%	40	100%	24

The Mann-Whitney Test found that the answers of the respondents employed in public organizations do not differ from the answers of the respondents employed in private organizations in the area of questions concerning the role of human resource management function.

In relation to the number of employees in the organization – The results of examining the differences in the role of human resource management function in relation to the number of employees show that out of the total number of respondents (127) the administrative role of the function was recognized by the respondents in organizations employing 10 to 50 employees 61,3% (65 respondents), the operational role was recognized by the respondents in organizations employing over 250 employees 52.5% (21 respondents) and the strategic role of the human resource management function was recognized by respondents from organizations employing 10 to 50 employees (14 respondent).

Table 6

Differences between the roles of human resource management function in relation to the number of employees

No. of employees	Role of human resource management function					
	Administrative role	No.	Operational role	No.	Strategic role	No.

Table 6

Differences between the roles of human resource management function in relation to the number of employees

No. of employees	Role of human resource management function					
Up to 10 employees	11.3%	10	2.5%	1	4.2%	1
10–50 employees	61.3%	38	22.5%	9	58.3%	14
50–250 employees	12.9%	8	22.5%	9	20.8%	5
Over 250 employees	14.5%	9	52.5%	21	16.7%	4
Total	100%	65	100%	40	100%	24

Spearman's in organizations with a higher number of employees rated the following activities with a higher score and level of agreement rank correlation determined that the respondents employed:

- Human resources department is involved in the strategic planning of the organization ( $\rho_s = .259^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Management in your organization makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department ( $\rho_s = .282^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ),
- Human resources department defines a reward system for each business function ( $\rho_s = .217^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and
- There is a human resources expert in your organization ( $\rho_s = .213^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )

Also, the Kruskal Wallis test determined the difference between the respondents employed in organizations with different roles that the human resource management function plays in relation to the number of employees in the organization ( $\chi^2 = 24.276$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The group of respondents in whose organizations the operational role of human resource management function is applied has significantly more employees than the group of respondents who are employed in organizations in which the administrative and strategic roles of the human resource management function are applied.

Table 7

Average ranking by groups for variables that significantly differentiate respondents in relation to the number of employees in the organization

	<b>Role of human resource management function</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average rank</b>
Number of employees in your organization	Administrative role	62	51.49
	Operational role	40	84.95
	Strategic role	24	58.77
	Total	126	

In relation to the level of management to which they belong, Spearman's rank correlation determined that the respondents at higher levels of management rated the following activities with a higher grade and level of agreement:

- Human resources department is involved in the strategic planning of the organization ( $\rho_s=.266^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Human resource plan completely fits into the strategic plan of the organization ( $\rho_s=.283^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )
- Human resources department participates in achieving the goals of business functions ( $\rho_s=.242^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Human resources department assists business functions in planning the required staff ( $\rho_s=.231^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Human resources department recruits staff for each business function ( $\rho_s=.271^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Human resources department conducts training and development of employees ( $\rho_s=.234^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )
- Human resources department defines a reward system for each business function ( $\rho_s=.253^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )

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The results of the research show that there are specifics of the role of human resource management in relation to the number of employees in organizations and the level of management to which the respondents belong, which confirmed the second hypothesis of the paper.

In testing the third hypothesis, which reads: Independent human resource management function in organizations contributes to a better understanding of the characteristics of the role of human resource management function, the following results were obtained:

## **DISCUSSION**

The testing of the first hypothesis of the paper showed that although different roles of human resource management function are present in the organizations in the Republic of Nigeria, the administrative role is still dominant (60.46%). The strategic role of human resource management function, as a main precondition for gaining a competitive advantage, is represented in only 19.77% of organizations, while the operational role of human resource management function which aims to develop and formalize the human resource management process in organizations is also represented in 19.77%. These results are similar to the results of the latest CRANET survey which showed that in most organizations the role of human resource management function is still administrative. Also, the research conducted by the authors in that period shows that although a progress could be noticed in regards to the number of human resource managers who got their places in top management and participate in strategy formulation, their influence remains relatively negligible, which represents a key constraint in changing the role of human resource management function. By examining the characteristics of the defined roles of human resource management function, the statistical significance of the result indicated the difference between the strategic and operational roles. Namely, in organizations where the role of human resource management function is operational, the management makes decisions and forwards them to the human resources department, while in organizations where the role of human resource management function is strategic, the management makes decisions, forwards them to the human resources department and expects feedback in order to be able to make the best decision. This difference clearly indicates the difference in the level of impact that the human resource management function has in organizations and defines a clear boundary between these two roles. The research also showed that the respondents in organizations in which the role of human resource management function is strategic rated with higher scores all of the characteristics defining the roles, which confirms that the strategic role of the function aims to integrate all human resource management activities with the strategic needs of the organization.

The testing of the second hypothesis, which aimed to define the specifics of the roles of the human resource management function, showed that there are differences between the roles in relation to the number of employees in organizations and the level of management to which the respondents

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belong. The research did not show any specifics of the role of human resource management function in relation to the activity and legal form of the organization, nor the number of employees in the human resources department.

The fact that the number of employees in organizations affects the role of human resource management function in an organization was confirmed in an earlier research. Namely, the higher the number of employees in the organization, the higher the formalization of the human resource management processes (job analysis, human resource planning, recruitment and selection, performance assessment, etc.) . Namely, the results obtained in the Republic of Nigeria show that organizations with a larger number of employees are characterized by the operational role of the human resource management function, whose role is precisely to develop and formalize the human resource management process.

The research of the role of human resource management function in relation to the level of management to which the respondents belong in the Republic of Nigeria indicates a statistically significant difference in recognizing the roles of human resource management function. Such results are not surprising if we take into account the research showing that managers at all levels are involved in the development and formalization of human resource management processes in organizations. This applies both to the middle managers whose role in implementing the human resource management processes also affects the impact of the selected processes to the performance of the organization and to the top managers who have a role in defining the human resource management strategy that is aligned with the strategic needs of the organization.

The research of the role of human resource management function within the framework of industries in which they operate aims to define their specifics since it has been shown that organizations belonging to the same industries more quickly adopt processes that prove to be efficient. The researches of the role of human resource management function in private and public organizations have shown significant differences. Unlike private organizations that are market-oriented and whose survival depends exclusively on the profits they make, public organizations are financed by the government. Consequently, the number of employees in public organizations is higher in most cases, they are quite bureaucratic and depend on the economic and political situation in a particular country, and so the role of human resource management function is limited. Human resource managers in these organizations are largely limited in their work in implementing the necessary changes in the transformation of the very role of human resource management function in organizations. In the research conducted on the territory of the Republic of Nigeria, the specifics of the roles of human resource management function between private and public organizations were not observed, however the results show that out of the total number of respondents (127), 63. respondents recognized the administrative role of human resource management function, namely 57.1% from private organizations and 42.9% from public



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organizations, the operational role of the human resources management function was recognized by 40 respondents, 75% from private and 25% from state organizations, and the strategic role of the human resource management function was recognized by 24. respondents, 50% from public and 50% from private organizations. Such results in public organizations can be explained by their high level of centralization and dependence on the government and economic situation, although transformations from the administrative to the operational role of human resource management function would improve the quality of service they provide to the users. In market-oriented private organizations, the administrative role of human resource management function is also dominant, which could be explained either by a smaller number of employees, in which case the activities of the function are left to the CEO or owner of the organization or by underdeveloped market conditions as a result of the transition that the country is undergoing.

The researches around the world show differences between production and service organizations in applying the role of human resource management function. Namely, it was noticed that in relation to the level of technological development, production organizations invest more resources in strengthening the human resource management process, especially recruitment and selection, as well as employee development, while the organizations that apply simpler technology in the production process see no purpose in developing specific human resource management processes. Similarly, differences in service organizations have shown that higher levels of knowledge necessary for service delivery, higher service quality, and higher service costs imply greater investment in human resource management processes, especially recruitment, payroll and employee development. The research of the differences in the roles of human resource management function between production and service organizations in the Republic of Nigeria indicate that there are no statistically significant differences. Nevertheless, the results showed that out of the total number of respondents (127), 63. respondents recognized the administrative role of human resource management function, 60.3% from services and 39.7% from production activities. Such results indicate a low level of development of production technologies as well as lower quality and lower price of services provided by the organizations from various fields of activity in the Republic of Nigeria.

The testing of the third hypothesis of the paper, which aimed to test the claim whether the independent function of human resource management in organizations contributes to a better understanding of the characteristics of the role of the function of human resource management. Although the results of the survey on the entire sample showed that the human resources department exists in 45.7% of organizations, and does not exist in 52% of organizations (2.4% of respondents did not know the answer to this question), respondents in whose organizations there is an independent department for human resources recognized and scored higher all the characteristics of the examined roles in organizations, which confirmed the third hypothesis of the

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paper. The necessity of forming an independent department of human resource management is indicated by other researches of authors who have proven the influence of the human resource management process on the performance of the organization as well as gaining a competitive advantage. The fact that a half of the surveyed organizations in the Republic of Nigeria do not have an independent human resources department is certainly not encouraging, considering that the strategic role of human resource management function is a basic precondition for gaining a competitive advantage. Taking into account the afore-mentioned level of education of economic entities on the role and function that the human resources department has in organizations is a necessity in the coming period.

When considering the obtained results, it is necessary to point out that due to a high percentage of organizations in which the administrative function of the role of human resource management is recognized, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the situation in organizations in the Republic of Nigeria which would primarily refer to defining the role that human resource management function plays in organizations in order to define further directions of development and transformation of the role as a basis for gaining a competitive advantage.

## CONCLUSION

As the issue of organizational competitiveness in today's business environment becomes crucial in all markets, the need to implement the strategic role of human resource management function in organizations becomes a necessary prerequisite. In this paper, the research problem defined by the authors refers to the definition of the roles that human management function performs in organizations in the Republic of Nigeria in order to examine the level of representation of the strategic role of human resource management function. Also, the authors wanted to examine whether there are specifics in the roles that human resource management function performs in relation to the business activity, legal form, number of employees, the level of management to which the respondents belong and the existence of an independent human resources department. Starting from the research problem, the main objectives of the paper as well as the hypotheses of the paper were defined.

In the testing of the first hypothesis of the paper related to the examination of the role played by human resource management function in the surveyed organizations, the results showed that the administrative role of human resource management function is still mostly represented in the surveyed organizations in the Republic of Nigeria, but that there are positive developments towards a more contemporary operational role as well as a strategic one which is the basis for achieving a competitive advantage. Also, the results showed that in those organizations where the role of human resource management function is operational and strategic, there is insufficient integration with strategic needs. The obtained results are similar to the results of the research conducted five

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years ago in which the transformation towards more contemporary roles was observed, but unfortunately insufficient strategic integration was recognized as the main reason that hinders its further development. The results of further research showed that in 52% of organizations there is still no independent department for human resources, which, in fact, is the main reason why in most organizations the role of human resource management is still administrative. As the testing of the first hypothesis of the paper implied defining the characteristics of all three roles of human resource management function, the practical contribution of research in this segment is reflected in the possibility of its application in examining the role of human resource management function represented in each organization, with the aim of defining appropriate measures for its further development and transformation.

In testing the second hypothesis of the paper related to the defining of the specific role of human resource management function in relation to the business activity, legal form, number of employees, existence of human resources department and level of management to which respondents belong, the results showed that there are differences in relation to the number of employees, as confirmed by previous research and the level of management to which respondents belong, which is also confirmed by previous research but not in relation to the business activity and legal form of the organization, although previous research indicates that specifics exist and that they represent main determinants of both defining the human resource management processes and their alignment with the objectives and strategy of the organization. The research of the role of human resource management function within the industries in which they operate aims to define their specifics because it was shown that organizations belonging to the same industry adopt more quickly the processes which prove to be efficient. As the testing of the second hypothesis of the paper referred to the research of specifics in relation to all three roles of the function of human resource management, the practical contribution of research in this segment refers to the possibility of further research in relation to business activity, legal form of organization, etc., with the aim of identifying similarities and differences that will enable more efficient implementation of human resource management processes that are in line with the objectives and strategy of the organization.

In the testing of the third hypothesis, which referred to the examination of the contribution of an independent human resource management function to the understanding of the roles it plays in the organization, the results of the research undoubtedly showed that in the organizations having an independent human resource management function, the respondents scored higher the characteristics of all three defined roles, which also indicates its significance. Independent human resource management function is a necessary condition for its influence on the development and formalization of the human resource management processes as well as on integration with strategic needs in order to gain a competitive advantage. As the testing of the third hypothesis referred to the research of the existence of an independent human resource management function, as well as

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its influence in organizations, the practical contribution of the research is to confirm that in organizations with an independent human resources department there is a better understanding of all three roles. Further research in this segment would be related to examining the reasons why most of the surveyed organizations do not have independent departments for human resource management.

Based on the analysis of relevant literature as well as the results of the conducted research, it can be concluded that the dominant role of human resource management in organizations in the Republic of Nigeria is still administrative, however that there are certain shifts towards a more contemporary operational and strategic roles, although insufficiently in order to be the basis for gaining a competitive advantage and sustainability.

For the purpose of future research on the role of human resource management function, the constraints of the study which the authors defined should certainly be taken into account. The main constraint of the research is certainly reflected in the small sample of organizations that participated in the study, and which are representative of the region of Central Nigeria. Future research on the role of human resource management function should be focused on organizations from the entire territory of the Republic of Nigeria in order to determine possible similarities and differences. Then, in the research of specifics between organizations only the differences between production and service organizations are taken into account, whereas future research should be focused on examining the characteristics in each industry branch, in order to cover their specifics. Also, the research was limited to managers of all three management levels, while future research should be also focused on the employees in organizations in order to gain a complete insight. The research instrument should be standardized in order to obtain the best possible results of comparative analysis and attention should be focused on longitudinal research in which, in addition to characteristics, trends in the role of human resource management functions could be observed.

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