

A Study Of Staff Recruitment Practices In Small And Medium Enterprises: A Case Of Ibadan

**Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi
Elizabeth Atinuke Dairo
Samuel Ayodeji Omolawal**

Phd, Department Of Sociology, Faculty Of The Social Sciences, University Of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abstract

For any business to achieve its set objectives, a competent workforce is critical. Recruitment involves putting the apt labor force in place in workplace by ensuring that such individuals possess the requisite skills, capabilities, talents and abilities. Hiring staff recruitment is a crucial practice in every organization, be it big or small. Small and Medium scale enterprises are described to be instrumental to the economic growth. This stresses the need for standard recruitment procedures in hiring qualified and competent people across SMEs. Nonetheless, there is dearth of literature with regards to recruitment practices in SMEs most studies are directed towards large organizations. This study was therefore designed to examine Staff recruitment practices among Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Ibadan. Structural Functionalism and Human Capital theories provided a framework. A cross-sectional survey design was employed and data were collected using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection among SME owners and managers in Ibadan. A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered randomly and 4 In-depth interviews were conducted with the owners and managers of businesses in operation for over 5 years using purposive sampling. Findings from the study revealed that 72% of respondents do not have a formal unit to handle recruitment given that it is singlehandedly conducted by the owners or managers of businesses. Staff Recruitment Practice is considered as a mere administrative role in most SMEs. The study revealed that 99.1% of respondents do advertise vacant positions through different means such as bill boards, words of mouth, social networking, social media, and referrals. Majority of the SMEs rely solely on oral interviews in recruiting staffs; a few of them do reference check on applicants with little or no attention given to written test, medical test, giving appointment letters and formal inductions. Most SMEs adopt a semi-formal approach to recruitment. The study concludes that Staff Recruitment Practices among SMEs are less-structured. Therefore, SMEs need a more structured approach in recruiting staff.

Keywords: *Small and Medium Scale enterprises, formal unit, Staff Recruitment, Organizations, Ibadan*

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I. Introduction

Human effort is central to every economic activity which epitomizes the importance of staff recruitment in businesses and organizations. SMEs are regarded as the economic backbone to developing countries such as Nigeria (World Bank, 2018). They are conceptualized as a critical aspect of development of the modern economy which is essentially fostered by hiring competent hands and brains to execute tasks. The operations and economic performance of a business are directly affected by the quality of employees in an organization. Studies have revealed that people are the most valued assets to every organization, irrespective of their size, nature of business and services rendered, it is therefore important to get the right people on the job this is attained by the means of effective recruitment practices.

SMEs are independent firms which employ less than a given number of employees. The Longman dictionary of Contemporary English defines SMEs as companies whose turnover and number of people working in them that are lower than a particular amount. The Central Bank of Nigeria defines SMEs as entities with asset base of 5 million naira and not more than 50million excluding land and buildings with employees between 11 and 200. Across the globe SMEs generate employment opportunities, reduce poverty at low investment cost create entrepreneurial opportunities (Olanipekun & Brimah, 2018). SMEs, according to International Labor Organization, are responsible for more than two third of all jobs worldwide, providing a total of 70% of employment opportunities for the unemployed and promote the advancement of local technology. SMEs

contribute over 65% of the Gross National Product (Osolor, 2010). The operations and economic performance of SMEs are however determined by a competent workforce that is highly dependent on their patterns of staff recruitment. Effective staff recruitment practices do have effect on organizational performance (Gberevbie, 2010 & Adenugba et al., 2017). Staff recruitment is significant in attaining organization's objective and gain competitive advantage (Bombiak et al., 2018).

Staff recruitment is therefore the sole responsibility of the management that involves the advertisement, recruitment, selection and probation of the right candidates for the right positions or taking into consideration educational qualifications, competencies, personality, aptitude, expertise, and experiences of the candidates. According to Opatha (2010), it is the process of finding and attracting suitably qualified people for vacant positions in organizations. According to Ahmad and Schroeder, (2002) the most imperative thing in ensuring the success of an organization is to ensure that employees possess the right cognitive skills. Since SMEs are part of all work organizations, and considering their contributions to economic development, it is expected that standards and effective recruitment are the guiding principles of Human Resource Practitioners.

II. Brief Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Small and Medium Scale Enterprise was introduced in the late 1940s with the primary aim of improving trade and industrialization (OECD, 2004). The notion of SME is a concept with no specific definition. Its definition varies across countries depending on the economy size. It may also vary across sectors depending on the purpose for which the definition is sought for (Onyeiwu, 2012). In general terms, SMEs are independent firms which employ less than a given number of employees. According to the Longman English Dictionary, SME is a company whose turnover and the number of people working in it are lower than a particular number. The central bank of Nigeria defines SMEs as entities with asset base of 5million naira and not more than 500million excluding land and buildings with employees between 11 and 200. SMEs in Nigeria are further divided into micro small and medium enterprises with employees fewer than 10. SMEs therefore entail Micro enterprise (between 1-9 employees) with 5 million naira worth assets, small enterprise (between 10-49 employees) with above 5 million but less than 50 million naira asset and medium enterprise (between 50-199 employees) with above 50million but less than 500 million naira asset (Essein, 2001, Ajayi, 2002, Gberevbie & Isiafwe-Ogbari, 2007 & Ogan, 2012).

SMEs cut across business activities such as education, manufacturing, wholesale, accommodation, and food services. According to Ogundele (2007), SMEs represent 90% of enterprises in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific nations. In the same vein, Osolor, (2010) states that SMES contribute over 65% of the Gross National Product and have made more than 70% jobs available, providing job opportunities for the unemployed (Iwere, 2013). SMEs are therefore crucial to the development of the modern economy and contribute to economic growth result in the creation of new jobs across business sectors. There are certain criteria used in defining SMEs, these include number of employees, profit, capital employed, market share and relative size within the industry. SMEs considerably differ from large firms due to certain peculiarities that to an extent influence their functionality and performance. According to Nicolescu (2009), these peculiarities include low size and complexity, high typological diversity, low degree of formalization, structural simplicity and high flexibility. In addition, Bateman (2013), maintains that additional qualities of SMEs are stated as follows:

- a. SMEs are local and compact markets,
- b. They are situated in small areas with significant reliance on local environment with most employees and customers found within the area,
- c. They are free to invest in activities directly connected with local environment and targeting the given local conditions
- d. SMEs administration is relatively non-complex that allows for quick and less expensive changes

Recruitment Practices

Of all resources available to an organization, human resources, according to Mathis & Jackson (2010), are pivotal, they are the glue that binds or holds other resources. Human resources are the most valued asset of every organization. Therefore, hiring the right personnel cannot be overemphasized. Every organization, including SMEs cannot function effectively without people; recruitment is therefore an inevitable practice.

Recruitment is the process of finding and hiring the most qualified candidates for job openings in a cost effective manner and timely manner (Omolawal & Okafor, 2016). According to Bratton & Gold (2007), recruitment practice involves two interrelated practices, namely: recruitment and selection. Recruitment is the process of creating a large pool of applicants for employment for an organization while selection is the process by which specific instruments are employed to choose from a pool of applicants most suitable for the jobs. Mathis (2004), defines recruitment as the process of gathering qualified applicants for available positions in an organization while selection according to Price (2004), is a decision making activity or a psychological

calculation of appropriateness. Recruitment involves attracting prospective employees while selection involves tests are being carried out in order to examine the quality of human resources required to perform certain tasks related to the job. According to Olulekan (2006), some of these tests include aptitude tests, vocational and personality tests. In other words, recruitment practices are adopted mechanisms that involve putting the right persons in the right jobs, individuals with the right skills, capabilities, talents and abilities are hired.

Recruitment Practices in SMEs

Empirical studies have revealed that effective recruitment and selection process affects organizational performance (Gberevbie 2010 & Adenugba et al., 2017). SMEs are more likely to operate in an informal or flexible manner unlike large organizations, management in SMEs generally are informal, unstructured, unsophisticated and weak without a strategic element (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2009). Similarly, studies have revealed that SMEs prefer an informal approach to recruitment (Barret & Mayson, 2007), with most of recruitment and selection decisions being handled by owners and managers. Recruitment in SMEs is characterized by the employee utilization of social networks, referrals, and relationships. In most cases, SME owners heavily rely on their social networks of friends and families to look for suitable personnel for vacant positions, managers rely on words of mouth which are considered more cost effective (Byars & Rue, 2000). A study carried-out by Oduro-Nyarko (2016), has revealed that applicants in SMEs are not usually selected by managers based on referees' reports, written tests and medical examinations but rather by assessing their application letters, qualifications and experiences and conduct of oral interviews. Recruitment in large organizations is characterized by dedicated HR units with formalized and strategic procedures while recruitment in SMEs is characterized by constrained pool of resources for recruitment with more informal methods such as words of mouth (Redman & Wilkinson, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Structural Functionalism and Human Capital theories. Structural Functionalism is premised on structures, role patterns, systems and institutions and overall integration of institutions in the society. The theory conceives the society as a complex whole whose parts work collectively to promote social order and stability. It was majorly founded by Emile Durkheim in the late 19th century which was greatly influenced by the work of Herbert Spencer and his Organic Analogy. Emile Durkheim argued that each system of the society depends upon the functions of each other in the maintenance of social order and stability. It is a perspective that principally focuses on the functions performed by social structures in the society. The theory states that how well each part of a system performs its functions enormously promotes or interferes with the maintenance of such system. Structural functionalism is applicable to Staff recruitment in SMEs in that a functional management is needed for the workforce to perform optimally and in the same light, a functional workforce tremendously benefits the managements and organizations. Achievements of the strategic objectives of organizations are conditioned by the abilities of the human resource managers to connect organizations' needs with individuals' skills and abilities that recruit the right individuals for the right jobs at the right time

Human capital signifies the productive capabilities of people (Becker, 1964). Human Capital Theory basically is the totality of investments in people to ensure that they perform their best. It is about the idea of people increasing their productivity and efficiencies through a greater focus on education and training. Human capital is the intangible economic value of a worker's experience and skills which includes education, training, skills, health, and employees' values that organizations seek to add to their workforce (Sean, 2021). According to this viewpoint, an organization is able to achieve competitive advantage if the company has the human resource that is effective and that cannot be compared to that of rivals. Apparently, this is achieved through standard recruitment procedures.

III. Methodology

The research design for the study was a cross-sectional survey and data were collected using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Ibadan was purposively chosen being the third- largest city in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano, with a total population of 3,649,000 as of 2021 and having about 6 million people in its metropolitan area. Ibadan is the largest city by geographical area in Nigeria. The study was conducted across randomly selected business districts in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State. The target population was composed of SMEs owners or managers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered to owners/managers of SMEs while four in- depth interviews were conducted with 4 owners/managers of SMEs. Respondents for quantitative method were randomly selected while participants for the in-depth interviews were selected using purposive sampling with inclusion criteria of businesses in operation for more than 5 years. The

quantitative data were analyzed at univariate level using simple frequencies and percentages while the qualitative analysis was analyzed using thematic and content analysis

Ethical standards guiding research with human subjects were put into consideration in that both respondents and participants gave their consent to use all responses elicited from them for research purpose. No participant was coerced to give information. In addition, the study maintained confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity of respondents and data.

IV. Findings and Discussion

Table 1.0 Participants' demographic characteristics

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	116	58.0
	Female	84	42.0
Age	Below 30	78	39.0
	30 – 39	94	47.0
	40-49	10	5.0
	Above 50	16	8.0
Marital Status	Single	92	46.0
	Married	108	54.0
Ethnicity	Hausa	0	0.0
	Igbo	18	9.0
	Yoruba	182	91.0
Academic Qualifications	SSCE	9	4.5
	OND	47	23.5
	First Degree	122	61.0
	MSc	10	5.0
	Others	12	6.0
Religion	Christianity	150	75.0
	Islam	46	23.0
	Others	4	2.0
Years of Establishment	Less than 2 years	8	4.0
	3-5 years	68	34.0
	6-10 years	52	26.0
	More than 10 years	72	36.0
Respondents' Positions	Owner	116	58.0
	Manager	84	42.0
Total		200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents by sex, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, education, position and year of establishment. It can be submitted that about (42%) of the respondents are females and (58%) representing the majority who are males in the study. In the study, the majority of the respondents (47.0) are between the ages below 30–39 years, about (39%) of the respondents are below 30 and 47% for 30-39 years. The table also depicts that the majority of the respondents (54%) are married while (46%) are single. For the study, (75%) of the respondents practiced Christianity, (23%) practiced Islam and (2%) are other forms of religion. It found that about (91%) of the respondents are Yoruba and (9%) are Igbo. This was expected because the study was conducted in a Yoruba speaking state. The table also shows that majority of the respondents given that they are educated with (61%) having first degrees, (23.5%) having OND, (5%) are masters' degree holders and (4.5%) are SSCE holders. In the study, it was observed that (42%) of the respondents are managers and (58%) are owners of SMEs. The table also indicates that (4%) of the SMEs are in operation for less than 2 years, (34%) of respondents have been in operation between 3-5 years, (26%) are in operation between 6 -10 years and (36%) have been established for over 10 years.

Table 2.0 Socio-Demographic Variables of the Interviewees

Interviewee's ID	Gender	Age	Position	Type of business	Number of workers	Date of interview
1	Male	28	Owner	Garment production	15	January, 2023
2	Male	45	Manager	Electronic and electrical	12	January, 2023

3	Female	33	A'level School Coordinator	Academic	22	January, 2023
4	Female	29	Manager	Rental services	6	January, 2023

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3.0 Frequency distribution on staff recruitment practices in SMEs

Questions/Variable	Response	Frequency (F)	Percent (100%)
Performance of staff recruitment	Manager		35.0
	Manager and Director		64.0
	Owner		1.0
Do you advertise your vacant positions?	Yes	199	99.5
	No	1	0.5
If yes, how?	Online (e.g. social media)	126	63.0
	Physical (e.g. (Bill board, notice board, banners)	48	24.0
	Families & friends	22	11.0
	People walk in	4	2.0
On the average, how many applicants apply for a vacant position in your organization?	5-10	112	56.0
	11-15	48	24.0
	16-20	17	8.5
	above 20	23	11.5
Applicants are selected based on merit?	Yes	196	98.0
	No	4	4.0
Applicants are selected based on recommendations and not on merit?	Yes	50	25.0
	No	150	75.0
Do you conduct written tests for applicants?	Yes	61	30.5
	No	139	69.5
Do you conduct oral interviews for applicants?	Yes	185	92.5
	No	15	7.5
Do you arrange for medical tests before recruitment?	Yes	39	19.5
	No	161	80.5
Do you conduct reference check on the applicants?	Yes	124	62.0
	No	76	38.0
Do you do a formal inductions for selected applicants?	Yes	54	27.0
	No	146	73.0
Do you give letters of appointment to selected applicants?	Yes	75	37.5
	No	125	62.5
Challenges faced during recruitment process?	Applicant issues	177	88.5
	Cost of recruitment	14	7.0
	Crowd management	9	4.5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table illustrates that staff recruitment is handled by the managers, directors and owners of SMEs as SMEs do not have a separate HR unit to perform HR duties. Unlike the large and multinational companies, most SMEs do not involve trained professionals in their recruitment and selection processes. Advertisement of vacant positions is a common recruitment practice among the SMEs and this is done using various means such as social media, (63%) representing the majority, (24%) of the SMEs make use of physical advertisement such as notice boards and bill boards, (11%) of respondent advertise vacant positions through families and friends, they inform their social networks, (2%) of respondents disclose that sometimes, applicants walk in to apply for jobs. This was buttressed in an in-depth interview session. The participant reveals thus:

The current workers in the factory gave us referrals of other friends, relatives, acquaintances and people whom they know, most times. The workers in the factory bring their friends and if they are not satisfactory, we expeditiously send them away. **(IDI/Male/28years/Owner/Garment production/2023)**

Another participant further stated thus:

We advertise through words of mouth, telling people for example, if they have someone who can drive dexterously, please they should tell him to contact us. There is also a notice board in front of our shop where we usually advertise vacant positions. **(IDI/Female/29years/Manager/Rental services/2023)**

SMEs do create awareness about vacant positions and the recruitment processes which are mostly handled by the managers, directors and owners of SMEs. They usually make use of various means of advertisement. In advertising vacant positions; SMEs make use of the social media, words of mouth, notice boards, recommendations by friends and families. This finding is in tandem with the viewpoint of Orlitzky

(2007), who avers that recruitment strategies in SMEs are traditional and conservative which attract similar pool of applicants through referrals and networking.

For every vacant position, (56%) of the respondents demonstrate that 5 to 10 people applicants applied for a vacant position in their enterprise, (24%) said 11 to 15 people, (8.5%) said 16 to 20 people and (11.5%) said above 20 people. The study also reveals that applicants are selected based on merit with (98%) representing the majority. This fittingly connects with the response of a participant in an in-depth interview who avows that individuals are recommended by families and friends. Regardless, they are selected based on merit:

When we are in need of workers, we simply put it outside on the notice board and sometimes, we use social media like WhatsApp. We equally inform people around us and our friends. We often receive recommendations from people but if they fail, we would not hire them.

(IDI/Male/45years/Manager/Electronics and electrical/2023).

The study reveals that oral interviews and reference checks are the most prominent staff recruitment practices among SMEs with little or no attention given to others such as written tests, medical tests, giving of letters of appointment and formal inductions. The table above depicts that (92.5%) representing the majority of respondents who conduct oral interviews for applicants and 62.0% also representing the majority do conduct reference check on their applicants, 69.5% do not conduct written tests; (80.5%) do not arrange for medical tests; (73%) do not arrange for a formal inductions and (62.5) do not give letters of appointment to selected participants. To buttress this, a participant in an in-depth interview posits thus:

We feel like we can comfortably determine if someone is truly fit for a particular job but not through an oral interview alone. We really do not conduct other forms of test. Through oral interviews, we get to know a lot of information about job applicants. **(IDI/Female/29years/Rental services/2023)**

Another participant submits thus:

We conduct only oral interviews and reference checks; we ask them to drop two guarantors' names and their contacts such that we can easily call them in order to ask about the candidates. We do not actually do formal inductions; we do not give letters of appointment and we do not conduct medical tests for recruits. **(IDI/Male/45years/Manager/Electronic and Electrical/2023)**

This reflects the informal approach of most SMEs to selection procedures thereby candidates are mostly selected by merits with oral interviews and reference checks as a common practice. Be that as it may, a few of the sometimes conduct written tests, medical tests, formal inductions and giving of appointment letters. Oduro-Nyarko (2016), maintains that applicants are not usually selected based on referees' reports, written tests and medical examinations but rather, solely by assessing their application letters, qualifications and experiences and conduct of oral interviews.

In as much as most SME owners and managers heavily rely on oral interviews, the study also revealed that the nature of business, position and job description or responsibilities influences the staff recruitment practices adopted. To shed more light on this, a participant in an in-depth interview explained:

We do not usually conduct written tests but oral interviews; we do not conduct medical tests and we do not give appointment letters. We only give appointment letters to the managers and marketers and reference check are only applicable the cashiers owing to the fact that they will be handling moneys.

(IDI/Male/28years/Owner/Garment production/2023)

Another participant further stressed thus:

We do conduct standard A'level examinations for the teaching staff but for the non-teaching staff, we only conduct oral interviews. For the medical tests, we do not conduct them following that we expect them to know about their health statuses which we ask them during the oral interviews. We do not do reference checks. **(IDI/Female/33years/A'level School Coordinator/Academic/2023)**

V. Conclusion

It can be established from the findings that staff-recruitment practices are handled by managers and owners of SMEs, rather than professional Human Resource Personnel Practitioners. SMEs do advertise vacant positions through the use of words of mouth, social networks, recommendations from families, friends and existing workers, social media and notice boards. In spite of the methods of advertising vacant positions in SMEs, recruitment and selection of applicants in most SMEs is merit-based. In addition, oral interviews are a dominant staff recruitment practice and quite a number of SMEs do reference checks on applicants. Nonetheless, little or no attention is given to other recruitment practices such as written tests, medical tests, giving of appointment letters and formal inductions.

SMEs cover a wide range of economic activities given that the study revealed that the type of business a SME operates do have an influence on its staff recruitment practices and also job positions of candidates

enormously determine the recruitment procedure in SMEs. In other words, a more formal approach to recruitment is adopted by managers when recruiting technical and professional roles.

Conclusively, recruitment in SMEs is largely characterized by informal methods such as words of mouth, friends and families, social networks and social media for advertisement and solely relying on oral interviews for selection unlike in large organizations, where recruitment is characterized by standard HR units with formalized and strategic staff recruitment procedures. Effective recruitment practices are crucial to every organization owing that the workforce of every organization enormously determines its success, profitability, effectiveness, and sustainability. It is therefore recommended that SMEs should adopt a more formal and professional approach to recruitment in order to recruit a more result-oriented labor force.

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