



The Functioning of Human Resource Management Practices as a Correlate of Economic Recession in Manufacturing Sector of the Nigerian Economy

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Authors' contributions

This article was a collaborative work among all the authors. Author OOB designed the study and wrote the methodology. Author OOS wrote the literature review with author OOB while author AOA designed the research instrument and collected data. Authors OOS and AOA analysed the data collected while authors OOB and OOS interpreted the results. All the authors read and approved the final draft of the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The main aim of the study was to examine the functioning of Human Resources Management Practices during economic recession in the manufacturing sector.

Study Design: Descriptive study through survey of human resources activities during recession documented in the cable industries dated 2013 – 2016.

Place and Duration of Study: Cable industry in Lagos, Nigeria and it was for between September, 2016 – June, 2017

Methodology: The paper made use of primary and secondary data to elicit relevant information on the functioning of HRMP during economic recession with population of 2356 employees from 12 organisations purposively selected (cable, beverage, brewery and diary) in the sector using 342 employees as sample size.

Results: Data obtained were analysed through descriptive and statistical inferences and it was

discovered that recruitment, training and promotion are mostly affected during economic recession and that political instability and government policy made recession to linger.

Conclusion: During the recession period the practice is not in pursuit of objectivity but as a strategy to survive the recession because the longer the period of recession, the lower the level of HRMP activities. Employees are further subjected to excessive work load due to restriction on recruitment and promotion thus experiencing job enlargement without commensurate compensation.

Keywords: Recession; human resource management practices; monetary policy; training; political instability; recruitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The people at work or people who make – up an organization are known as human resources and are considered to be sensitive and critical to the overall success of the organization whether the organization in question is private or public [1,2]. It is the sensitivity of human resources to the success of organization that makes organizations to strive and attracts qualified and competent employees into their organization because it is believed to be the *sine qua non* for growth and development as well as attainment of organizational objectives. In the views of Deconzo and Robbins [3] on the sensitivity of human resources, it is a source of competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by other organizations in comparison with other organizational resources. Barney [4] affirmed that the source of competitive advantage was based on the premise that as human resource is unique because people are not owned by the organization. Individuals come into their organization with own perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards the organization, systems and styles of management, duties and responsibilities, and working conditions under which they work. It is on this basis that every organization strives to employ qualified and competent employees into her workforce, however, a recession which is a period of low activities in general economic activities of an economy is a strong factor in the capacity of an organization to attract, retain and motivate competent employees due to financial constraints. The recession has her root in the US but has been experienced by virtually all the countries in the world and Nigeria is not left out of the effect of the recession. In the last two decades, the country has been battling with the ripples effects of the recession on all facets of the economy and there appears to be no end in sight because the effects are more visible since 2016 till date biting harder than the usual surface scratching. The recession in Nigeria is characterized by galloping inflation,

unemployment and decline in business activities leading to downsizing, mass unemployment and crashes in the money market as well as free fall of Nigerian currency.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is evident that recession affects business activities and in the wake of coping with the effect, organizations adopt various strategies to cope of which human resource management practices is one. Availability of workers is often determined by the prevailing economic conditions which afford organizations the opportunity to adequately plan towards the actualization of their objectives. One of this is the decision to attract, motivate and retain competent and qualified personnel in the organization. To attract borders on goodwill, image, and reputation and to motivate is contingent on the positive side of psychological contract, training and development while to retain rested on compensation packages. The implication of this on human resource management practices focus is that wages and salary, training and development opportunities, over time payment, promotion, hiring and laying off, incentives schemes of workers during the recession are often reduced and received low patronage and sometimes result into downsizing, restructuring, and reorganization as well as mass unemployment. If the number of people in the organization is reduced on account of recession, should the organization compromise quality of man power to interact with other resources, should meritocracy be sacrificed for mediocrity, should professional services be replaced with ad hoc services in the short and long time? Therefore, the thrust of this paper examines the nexus between the functioning of human resource management and economic recession.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper was to examine the functioning of human resource management

under economic recession and was achieved through the following specific objectives which were to;

1. Evaluate human resource management practices found in the selected manufacturing organization during the economic recession
2. Examine human resource management practices during the economic recession.
3. Assess various challenges confronting human resource management practices during the economic recession

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions were derived from the research objectives to navigate into the work and were

1. What are the kinds of human resource management practices found in the selected manufacturing organization during an economic recession?
2. How do human resource management practices fair during an economic recession?
3. What are the challenges confronting human resource management during a recession?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study was limited to human resource management practices during an economic recession with a focus on the manufacturing sector of Nigeria economy in Ikeja area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The manufacturing sector was classified on the basis of what they produce and in all, there were four different classifications namely Cable industry, Beverage industry, Brewery industry and Dairy industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature was based on the variables in the focus of study i.e. human resources management practices and economic recession

2.1 Human Resources Management Practices

Management according to Follet in Shokan (2002), management is the art of getting things done by other people. By implication, a manager does nothing on his/her own except with the help or assistance of others and this explains why Drucker (1985) opined that the only weapon in

the hand of any manager is communication which is used to instruct, persuade and perform assigned duties. To this end, whatever the nature of work organizations, a manager will achieve results through the performance of other people. In the views of Deconzo and Robbins [3] that part of management that is concerned with the 'people management' dimension at the workplace is known as human resource management (HRM). This view was corroborated by the expression of Fadiora [5] that HRM described the procedure for creating and identifying key procedures to the management of human asset that includes all management choices and movements that influences the relationship between the organization and the workers.

As management function that is concerned with people at the workplace and their relationship within an enterprise, organization achieves people management dimension through recruitment, selection, and placement; training and development; wages and salary administration; manpower planning and performance appraisal; integration and career development; industrial health and safety; maintenance and separation. Osibanjo, Abiodun, and Obamiro [6] however cautioned that for fairness in the people management dimension, there must be a policy in place to make case for consistency and reduce dependency on the actions of individual managers. The policy in question would be a reflection of philosophies of the founders with recourse to the business environment. Therefore, the evolving of human resource management policy into implementation or execution is known as human resource management practices (HRMP) i.e. the ways and manners by which all the activities in the human resource management are being carried out. Fajana [7] opined that the kind of human resource policy found to be in operation at any given time would definitely determine the nature and practice of human resource management.

Oginni & Faseyiku [8] described HRMP as the process of developing, applying and evaluating policies, procedures, systems, and methods as well as programs relating to the employment relationship in the workplace.

The HRMP would reflect one of the perspectives of HRM which were universalistic, contingency and configurational perspective [9]. The universalistic believed that practice of HRM should be the one that adopts the best practice in order to get employees' best performance, to

contingency, it is believed that organization should adopt specific practice for different situations while the configurational believed in the development of multiple practices to achieve organizational objectives.

2.2 Economic Recession

In Western economies, the recession is unusual. Take the world's largest economy the United States of America who has suffered only two official downturns 1990 – 91 and 2001. When it happened, it tends to be short-lived lasting perhaps no more than two or three years but this cannot be said about Third world's economy especially Nigeria. A recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales [10,11]. This may be as result of natural disaster, monetary policy and political instability as noted by Fajana [7]. Fapohunda [12] described economic recession as a period of economic slowdown featuring low output, illiquidity and unemployment. It is characterised by its length, abnormal increases in unemployment, falls in the availability of credit, shrinking output and investment, numerous bankruptcies, reduced amount of trade and commerce as well as highly volatile relative currency value fluctuation, mostly devaluation, financial crises and bank failure. A comparison of these characteristics with developments in Nigerian economy showed that truly Nigeria is currently under recession.

The recession does not operate in isolation but contingent to series of events which can be the end of a war, a change in government policy, adoption of an innovation with pervasive effects, digital revolution etc. whatever the cause may be, it has to be of great effect to alter the economic outlook. Any event or series of events that would cause recession would have to generate cobweb effects on all items of the economy in order to manifest recession. However, a good source is finance or volume of money in the economy. Loss of capital will reduce bank ability to lend accompanied by a general increase in price level. To this extent, all organizations irrespective of their line of business have their own share in the ripple effects of the recession in Nigerian economy with more compelling adverse effect on the human resources in these organizations. Opeyemi [13] noted that effect of the recession became

noticeable as organizations embark on various strategies to cope with the management of people in the organization such as retrenchment, downsizing, rightsizing, reorganization and layoff.

2.3 Relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Recession

2.3.1 Recruitment, selection and placement and recession

Employees come into an organization through recruitment processes which can either form internal or external methods. Although if it is through internal method, the end result will still be an external method in order to fill the vacuum created by the internal method. The quality of attraction into the organization is a function of many variables but a chief dominant factor is salary structure i.e. an organization with good salary structure will enjoy good patronage from the labor market. However, during the recession, the practice is somewhat different due to financial constraint. Most organizations outsourced some of the vacancies with residual skills and concentration on the recruitment of core skills while some places embargo on recruitment exercise. Another noticeable practice is employees' placement. It is generally believed that employees are usually allowed to perform in their area of competence but with recession, employees are expected to be versatile in all areas which are often beyond their area of competency.

2.3.2 Training and development and recession

The essence of training and development is to make job performance to be easier and faster without much wastage in order to satisfy customer needs [14]. Oginni and Faseyiku [8] opined that training and development are kinds of financial investment in employees as a way by which they acquire new skills and methodology for specific job performance with long time return on the investment. The implication is that no organization can neglect the training and development of her employees in order to avoid skills being obsolete. However, during the economic recession, the amount budget for training and development is usually low in comparison to boom period of the economy. It is only those that hinges on the survival of the organization that is likely to be considered for training and development.

2.3.3 Performance appraisal and recession

Performance appraisal is an evaluation of the relative contribution of employees to the organization over a given period of time [15]. The end result of any performance appraisal exercise is either for promotion exercise or identification of training needs whatever be the case, the execution of promotion exercise means more money and the need to train employees also means additional operating cost which is always considered as a luxury during the economic recession simply because the focus is on survival. Any investment that cannot bring immediate returns is usually not welcomed.

2.3.4 Grievances and recession

During the economic recession, most organizations find it difficult to meet their financial obligations to their employees because of low activities in the economy as a whole leading to a reduction in profitability. However, organizations experienced more crises from employees during the recession because of a general increase in the price level thus reducing their bargaining power or value of real income [16]. Therefore, employee protest from time to time demanding for improved welfare package and better working conditions which are often difficult to meet. Where their needs could not be met, they result to strike while some engage in moonlighting and absenteeism. The recession also affects the relationship between employer and employees which is not always cordial as the parties expect each other to understand the prevailing economic situation in the business environment.

2.3.5 Employees compensation and recession

Employee compensation is made up of financial and non – financial incentives. The two kinds of incentives are always affected during the recession and this is a source of constant conflict in the organization. Some organizations sometimes failed to meet the financial incentives and where eager to meet it, embark on downsizing and pay cut to reduce the overhead cost. This explains the views of Fajana [7] on employee's compensation that organization should be skeptical during economic boom to increase employee's salary because it made be difficult to reverse during recession without resistance that might paralyse work activities in the organisation for days or months.

2.3.6 Manpower planning and recession

This is about making adequate preparation for the present need and future of acquisition and utilization of the enterprise human resources [15]. In the views of Akindele [15], manpower planning involves considerable uncertainty as it tries to foresee changes and identify trends in staffing resources as well as adopting personnel policies that would help to avoid redundancy. To Beardwell and Hodden [17], the importance of manpower planning lies in maintaining a sufficient supply of employees, in the right size, place, and time and at the right cost. However, during the recession, the importance is often over looked as efforts are directed towards other resources in the organization.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used primary and secondary data. Secondary data were obtained from the records of the organizations selected for the study on human resources management practices and their activities during the economic recession while questionnaire was used as the primary source to obtain data from employees of the selected organizations. From the classifications of the manufacturing sector; twelve (12) organizations were selected through purposive sampling technique i.e. three (3) from each industry in the sector (Cable, Beverage, Brewery, and Dairy). The selection criteria were based on an organisation with clear-cut human resource management practices and availability of data for use. Proportional sampling technique was used to get the number of the respondents from each of the organizations and random sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. The population for this study was all the employees in the 12 selected organizations totaling 2356 from which 342 respondents were selected through Yemen's method as sample size (See Table 1 for details). Descriptive (mean, graph and frequency tables) and inferential (ANOVA) statistics were used to analyze data collected.

4. RESULT FINDINGS

4.1 Analyses and Interpretation of Data

The two classes of data obtained were presented starting with the primary data and followed by the secondary data.

4.1.1 Primary data analysis and interpretation

The analysis starts with demographic data of the respondents as shown in Table 2. From Table 2, the majority of the respondents were male representing 63% of the sample population, the majority of the respondents were married representing 66% and 38% of the respondents

were graduate although holders of OND/NCE were very close to this. The work experience revealed that majority of the respondents were within the range of 6 – 10 years and the majority of the respondents under age bracket range was 41- 50 years. The implication of this result for the study was that

Table 1. Selected respondents from the manufacturing sector of the economy

S/N	HRMP Variables	Cable	Brewery	Beverage	Dairy	Total
1.	Recruitment	12	11	10	10	43
2.	Training	15	22	19	14	70
3.	Appraisal	14	11	16	10	51
4.	Compensation	9	19	14	11	53
5.	Promotion	11	10	20	8	49
6.	Career Planning	11	12	10	7	40
7.	Employee's Relations	9	8	11	8	36
	Total	81	93	100	68	342

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
• Male	• 217	• 63%
• Female	• 125	• 37%
	Total 342	Total 100
Marital Status		
• Singles	• 93	• 27%
• Married	• 225	• 66%
• Divorced	• ----	• ----
• Widow	• 19	• 6%
• Widower	• 5	• 1%
	Total 342	Total 100
Educational Level		
• OND/NCE	• 119	• 35%
• B. Sc/HND	• 129	• 38%
• M. Sc/M.A/M. ED	• 87	• 25%
• PhD	• 7	• 2%
	Total 342	Total 100%
Work Experience		
• Less than 1 year	• 18	• 5%
• 1 – 5 years	• 37	• 11%
• 6 – 10 years	• 132	• 39%
• 11 – 15 years	• 107	• 31%
• 16 years and above	• 48	• 14%
	Total 342	Total 100
Age Bracket		
• Less than 20 years	• 14	• 4%
• 21 – 30 years	• 79	• 23%
• 31 – 40 years	• 88	• 26%
• 41 – 50 years	• 137	• 40%
• 51 years and above	• 24	• 7%
	Total 342	Total 100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 showed that training and development of employees are mostly affected during the economic recession with 96% of the respondents in agreement also buttressed by the mean criterion of 4.234, followed by the compensation packages made available to the employees and next was employees' performance appraisal. Employee's promotion is ranked fourth in terms of effect during economic, followed by recruitment exercise, career planning, and employee's relations respectively. However, the bench mark that was set at the weighted mean of ≥ 3.0 for agreement could not support employee relations as a correlate of economic recession. This is because the mean of employee relations is ≤ 3.0 with 55.8% of the respondents in disagreement as a correlate. The implication of this result is that economic recession affects the practice of recruitment, training, appraisal, compensation, promotion and career planning as variables of HRMP. i.e. these HRMP activities are low. For employee relations, the existing relationship is outside economic recession although it is a factor but employees could not really see how the economic recession has affected their relationship with their employers perhaps before the economic recession the difference is insignificant.

Table 4 has coefficient values information of HRMP dimensions during economic recession analyzed. It showed that recruitment exercise was the most potent of the HRMP and was followed by promotion into the next cadre. Next to this was training and compensation while career planning and appraisal followed respectively. Employee's relations was a unique contributor with respect to its statistical value.

4.1.2 Secondary data analysis and interpretation

The data were obtained from the personnel units of the selected organizations and presented in graphical form to reveal the functioning of human resource management practices during the economic recession. It was however based on comparison with a period without economic recession using the year 2013 as the base year.

Fig. 1 revealed that there is a persistent drop in the recruitment, training, compensation and promotion levels while appraisal, career planning, and employee's relations showed a relative stability.

From Fig. 2, the levels of activities in recruitment, training, compensation, promotion and career

planning witnessed a sharp decline while appraisal and employee's relations have stability in their levels of activities.

Fig. 3 showed that there is a decline in the levels of activities for recruitment, training, and promotion while the levels of activities in appraisal, compensation, career planning and employee's relations are relatively stable.

From Fig. 4, recruitment, training, compensation and employee's relations witnessed a decline in their levels of activities while promotion and career planning are relatively stable and appraisal is increasing relatively.

5. DISCUSSION

From the demographic data, it was found that was more of male respondents than female respondents and the average age among the respondents was within the range of 41 – 50 years which was considered relatively young and adequate for evolving organization like manufacturing sector. Majority of the respondents were married signifying the level of maturity among the respondents and the average work experience in the organisation among the respondents was 6 -10 years which was an indication of relative stability while the educational level in terms of qualifications showed that majority of the respondents were first degree holders implying that the respondents are literate and can understand the questions in the questionnaire.

The result of the analysis of the primary data with respect to HRMP identified recruitment training, appraisal, compensation, promotion, career planning and employee's relations with the HRMP found in the manufacturing sector. It was found that during the recession, recruitment, training, appraisal, compensation, promotion, career planning, and employee's relations were affected. However, recruitment exercise is mostly affected but the effect on employee's relations is not significant. This is corroborated by the views of Akindede [15] that organizations that are task-oriented without concern for employees would not witness any significant change in employee relations whether during boom or recession and analysis of secondary data also confirmed that the level of activities during a recession is also low for all the identified HRMP. The same is also for training, appraisal, compensation, promotion, career planning and employee's relations although each of the selected organizations in the manufacturing sector (Cable, Beverage,

Brewery, and Diary) did not have the same proportion of effect. It was only recruitment and training that were reported to share similar chart. In the cable industry, appraisal was not the same with the rest of the organisations so also were compensation, promotion, career planning and employee's relations. The implication is that apart from the common factors to all the organisations, there are other peculiar factors that were organisational bound. However, employee's relations which was measured in terms of overt strike showed that as the recession is protracted so is the relationship being worsened and this was in line the position of [5,11].

of HRMP as a correlate of economic recession change in government policy, change in monetary policy, persistent inflation, natural disaster, political instability and change in technology. However, out of these challenges, change in government policy, change in monetary policy, persistent inflation and political instability were found to be peculiar to Nigerian business environment capable to warrant economic recession. The result showed that political instability and monetary policy were the main challenges of economic recession towards HRMP. This result was consistent with a summation of [11] that recession does come with a low level of activities in the economy in all its ramification but it is people that feel the burden more because HRMP is centered around people in the organization Opeyemi [13].

From the analysis of the data, the following were identified as challenges indicating the functioning

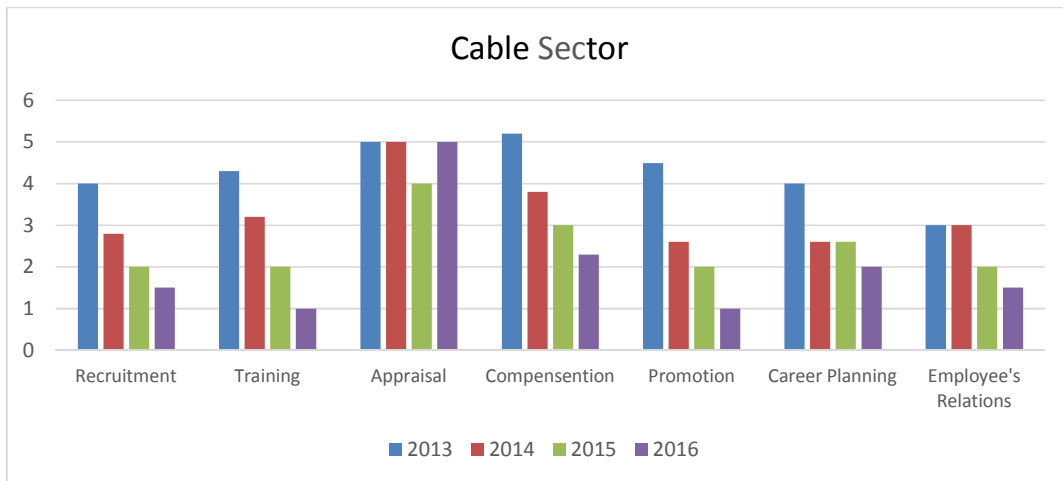


Fig. 1. Comparison of recession period with non – recession period in the Cable Sector

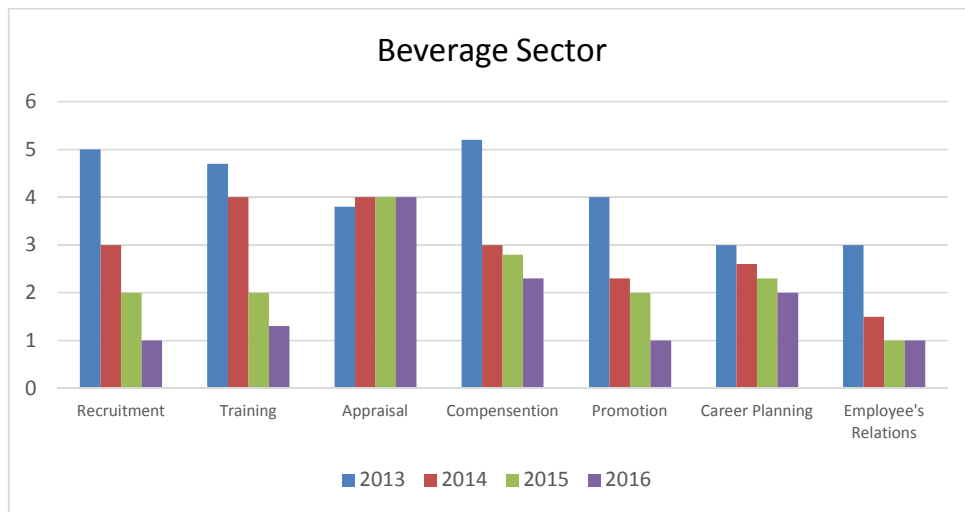


Fig. 2. Comparison of recession period with non – recession period in the Beverage Sector

Table 3. Descriptive information on HRMP during economic recession

S/N	HRMP variables	Measurement scales and percentage					Mean	Rank	Remark
		SD(1)	D(2)	N(3)	A(4)	SA(5)			
1.	Recruitment	–	32(9.4)	48(14.0)	168(49.1)	94(27.5)	3.721	3	A
2.	Training	3(0.9)	4(1.2)	5(1.5)	219(63.5)	111(32.5)	4.234	1	A
3.	Appraisal	7(2)	38(11.1)	57(16.7)	168(49.1)	72(21.1)	3.223	6	A
4.	Compensation	8(2.3)	21(6.1)	18(5.3)	157(45.9)	138(40.3)	3.873	2	A
5.	Promotion	8(2.3)	42(12.3)	51(14.9)	175(51.2)	66(19.3)	3.703	4	A
6.	Career Planning	5(1.5)	78(22.8)	68(19.9)	133(38.9)	58(17)	3.422	5	A
7.	Employee's Relations	79(23.1)	112(32.7)	53(15.5)	65(19.0)	33(9.6)	2.874	7	D

Remark (Decision criterion) where Agreement (A) \geq 3.0 and Disagreement (D) \leq 3.0; Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4. Coefficient values of HRMP during economic recession

S/N	HRMP Variables	B	t	F	Potency
1.	Recruitment	0.439	1.316	4.076	1
2.	Training	0.170	1.543	1.608	3
3.	Appraisal	0.132	0.113	6.227	5
4.	Compensation	0.169	0.239	5.469	4
5.	Promotion	0.281	1.119	5.667	2
6.	Career Planning	0.167	0.416	5.532	5
7.	Employee's Relations	-0.085	1.215	1.485	6

Source: Field Survey, 2017

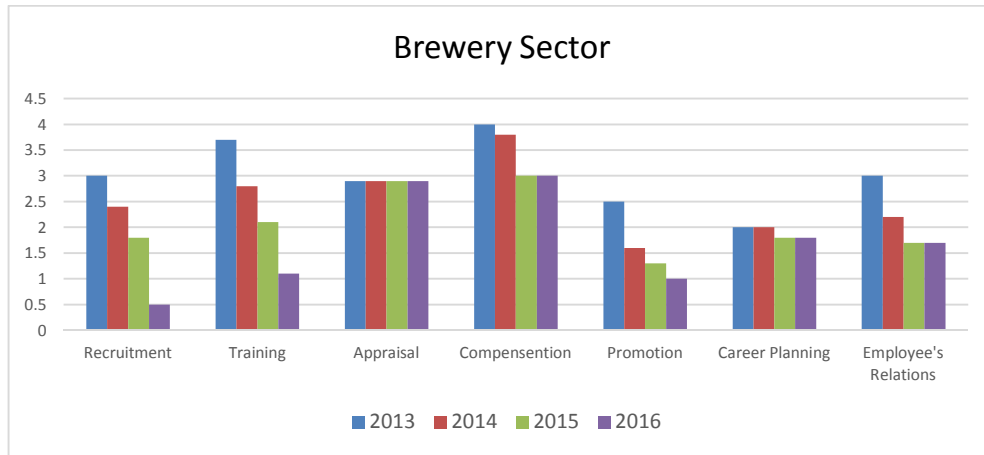


Fig. 3. Comparison of recession period with non – recession period in the Brewery Sector

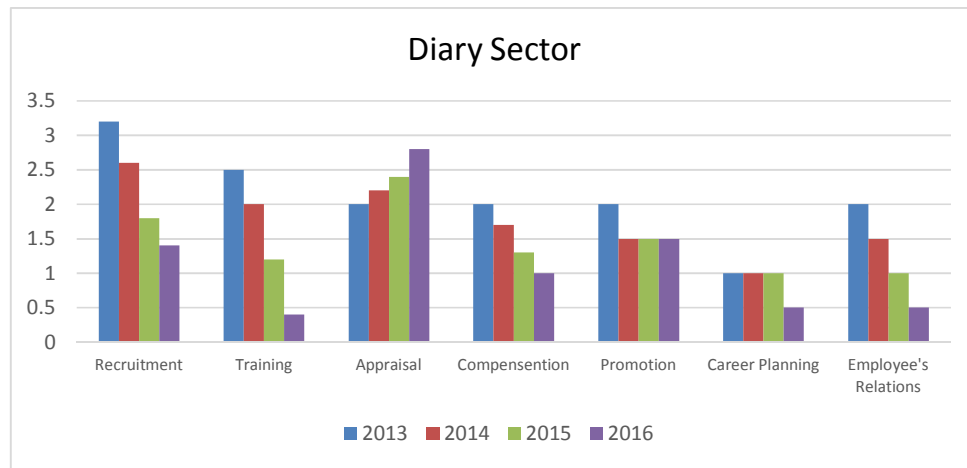


Fig. 4. Comparison of recession period with non – recession period in the Diary Sector

6. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the functioning of HRMP during economic recession thereby identifying various kinds of human resource management practices in the manufacturing sector and those that were in practice during economic recession and challenges confronting the functioning of HRMP during the economic recession. On the basis of the findings, the organizations in the manufacturing sector are aware of all HRMP and found recruitment, training, compensation, appraisal, career planning, promotion and employee's relations as noticeable practices. However, during the recession period, the practice is not in pursuit of objectivity but as a strategy to survive the recession because the longer the period of recession, the lower the level

of HRMP activities. Employees are further subjected to excessive work load due to restriction on recruitment and promotion thus experiencing job enlargement without commensurate compensation. So also, is the level of attainment of employees in the organization and skills becoming obsolete as years passes by. The factors adduced forward as causes of recession are germane to Nigerian business environment and there is no solution in sight at least for now. Therefore, recession affects the flourishing of HRMP functioning to the extent that a lingering recession period can extinguish the life of an organization.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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