

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES IN ETHIOPIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract. Human resource management (HRM) plays a strategic role in improving organizational effectiveness, particularly in educational institutions where teachers represent the core driver of instructional quality and school performance. Despite growing policy attention toward educational reform in Ethiopia, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the implementation of HRM practices in secondary schools, especially in relation to teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation. This study investigates the prevailing HRM practices and the institutional challenges affecting their implementation in Ethiopian secondary schools. A concurrent mixed-methods research design was employed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative insights. Quantitative data were collected from 262 secondary school teachers through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained from 12 purposively selected school leaders and administrative personnel through semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using one-sample t-tests and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), whereas qualitative findings were analyzed thematically to support data triangulation. The findings reveal that the implementation of major HRM functions remains below the expected standard across the sampled schools. Teacher induction programs were inadequately structured, performance appraisal systems lacked developmental orientation and constructive feedback mechanisms, and motivational practices were constrained by insufficient financial and non-financial incentives. The study further identified several institutional barriers, including limited leadership capacity, inadequate supervision, low salary structures, weak professional recognition systems, and insufficient opportunities for professional development. Moreover, MANOVA results indicate that demographic variables such as gender, educational status, work experience, and school context did not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of HRM practices. This study contributes to the growing discourse on context-specific HRM in developing educational systems by demonstrating how structural and managerial constraints hinder effective human resource management in public secondary schools. The findings highlight the need for adaptive HRM policies, school-based performance management frameworks, and sustainable teacher motivation strategies to strengthen educational quality and institutional effectiveness in Ethiopia..

Keywords: Human Resource Management; Secondary Schools; Teacher Motivation; Performance Appraisal; Teacher Induction; Educational Management; Institutional Challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources constitute the most strategic asset in educational organizations because the effectiveness of schools largely depends on the competence, commitment, and professional performance of teachers and school leaders. In contemporary educational management discourse, Human Resource Management (HRM) is increasingly recognized as a critical mechanism for improving institutional effectiveness, educational quality, and sustainable school development [1], [2]. Effective HRM practices enable schools to optimize teacher performance, strengthen organizational culture, and enhance student learning outcomes through systematic processes such as recruitment, induction, performance appraisal, professional development, and motivation [3], [4]. Consequently, educational institutions that implement effective HRM systems are more likely to achieve organizational stability, teacher retention, and instructional excellence. Globally, educational reforms in both developed and developing countries have increasingly emphasized strategic HRM approaches as a means of strengthening school performance and educational accountability [5]. Recent studies demonstrate that HRM practices significantly influence teacher effectiveness, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and institutional productivity [6], [7]. In particular, induction systems, teacher appraisal mechanisms, and motivational strategies have become central dimensions in educational HRM frameworks because they directly affect teachers' professional engagement and long-term performance [8]. Research further indicates that schools with supportive induction programs and developmental appraisal systems tend to demonstrate stronger professional collaboration and improved instructional quality [9].

In the context of developing countries, however, the implementation of HRM practices in schools often encounters substantial structural and managerial challenges. Limited institutional capacity, insufficient financial resources, weak leadership systems, and inconsistent policy implementation continue to undermine the effectiveness of educational HRM practices across many African educational systems [10]. In Sub-Saharan Africa, teacher motivation and retention remain major concerns due to low salaries, inadequate professional recognition, and limited opportunities for career advancement [11]. Such conditions frequently contribute to reduced teacher morale, weak organizational commitment, and declining educational quality. In Ethiopia, educational reform agendas have increasingly highlighted the importance of teacher management and institutional accountability within the broader framework of educational quality improvement. The Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program (ESDP VI) emphasizes teacher professionalism, school leadership effectiveness, and human resource development as strategic priorities for strengthening the national education system [12]. Despite these policy directions, empirical evidence suggests that the practical implementation of HRM functions in Ethiopian secondary schools remains inconsistent and insufficiently institutionalized [13]. Existing studies have mainly focused on isolated HRM dimensions such as teacher recruitment, training, or motivation, while limited attention has been given to the integrated examination of induction, performance appraisal, and motivational practices within secondary school contexts [14].

Previous studies in Ethiopia reported that teacher induction programs are often informal, poorly monitored, and inadequately supported by school leadership structures [15]. Similarly, performance appraisal systems have frequently been criticized for emphasizing administrative compliance rather than professional growth and developmental feedback [16]. Moreover, teacher motivation continues to be constrained by inadequate compensation systems, limited recognition mechanisms, unsupportive working environments, and insufficient professional development opportunities [17]. These conditions suggest that HRM problems in Ethiopian secondary schools are not merely administrative issues but also institutional and systemic challenges that affect school effectiveness and teacher performance. From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in systems theory and contingency theory. Systems theory emphasizes that educational institutions operate as interconnected systems in which HRM practices influence organizational effectiveness through the interaction of leadership, teacher performance, motivation, and institutional support structures [18]. Meanwhile, contingency theory argues that HRM practices should be adapted to contextual realities rather than applied through universal and standardized approaches [19]. These perspectives are particularly relevant in developing educational systems where organizational conditions, resource limitations, and institutional capacities vary substantially across schools and regions.

Although previous international and local studies have established the importance of HRM in educational institutions, there remains limited empirical investigation regarding how key HRM functions are practiced simultaneously within Ethiopian secondary schools and how institutional constraints influence their implementation. Most prior research has examined these functions separately or within broader public-sector contexts, thereby creating a significant contextual and empirical gap in the literature [20]. Furthermore, few studies have investigated whether demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, and teaching experience significantly shape teachers' perceptions of HRM practices within school environments. Therefore, this study aims to examine the practices and institutional challenges of selected HRM functions namely teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation in Ethiopian secondary schools. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) assess the extent to which these HRM functions are practiced, (2) identify the major institutional challenges affecting their implementation, and (3) examine whether teachers' demographic characteristics significantly influence their perceptions of HRM practices. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational HRM in developing-country contexts and provides practical implications for policymakers, school leaders, and educational administrators seeking to strengthen institutional effectiveness through improved human resource management practices.

Human Resource Management in Educational Institutions

Human Resource Management (HRM) in educational institutions refers to the systematic management of teachers, school leaders, and educational staff to achieve institutional effectiveness and educational quality. In school contexts, HRM extends beyond administrative personnel management and increasingly emphasizes strategic functions that support teacher performance, organizational development, and student achievement [21]. Contemporary educational management literature recognizes HRM as a multidimensional process involving teacher induction, professional development, performance evaluation, motivation, retention, and organizational support systems [22].

Strategic HRM perspectives suggest that effective management of human resources contributes significantly to school improvement because teachers represent the central actors in educational delivery systems. According to educational leadership research, schools with effective HRM systems generally demonstrate stronger instructional practices, collaborative organizational culture, and improved academic outcomes [23]. Consequently, educational organizations are increasingly expected to align HRM policies with institutional objectives and long-term school development strategies.

In developing-country contexts, however, educational HRM systems frequently face institutional limitations such as inadequate funding, weak leadership structures, policy inconsistencies, and insufficient professional support mechanisms [24]. Such conditions reduce the effectiveness of school management practices and weaken teacher commitment and organizational performance. This indicates that HRM implementation in educational institutions is highly influenced by contextual realities and institutional capacity.

Teacher Induction Practices in Secondary Schools

Teacher induction is widely recognized as a fundamental HRM function that facilitates the professional integration of newly appointed teachers into school systems. Induction programs generally include mentoring, orientation, professional

guidance, classroom support, and socialization processes intended to help novice teachers adapt to institutional expectations and professional responsibilities [25]. Effective induction systems are associated with improved teacher confidence, instructional effectiveness, organizational commitment, and retention.

Recent international studies emphasize that induction programs contribute significantly to reducing teacher turnover and strengthening professional identity formation among beginning teachers [26]. Structured mentoring systems, collaborative learning environments, and continuous supervisory support are considered essential components of effective induction practices. In contrast, weak induction systems often result in professional isolation, role ambiguity, and decreased teaching effectiveness.

In many developing educational systems, induction programs remain inadequately institutionalized due to resource limitations and administrative challenges [27]. Studies conducted in African educational contexts indicate that induction practices are frequently informal, inconsistently implemented, and weakly monitored by school leadership [28]. Ethiopian secondary schools demonstrate similar patterns, where induction activities are often treated as procedural formalities rather than developmental professional support systems. As a result, novice teachers experience difficulties in adapting to school culture, instructional responsibilities, and performance expectations.

Performance Appraisal and Teacher Professional Development

Performance appraisal constitutes another essential dimension of HRM in educational institutions. Teacher performance appraisal refers to the systematic evaluation of teachers' instructional effectiveness, professional conduct, and institutional contribution using predetermined performance criteria [29]. In modern educational management systems, appraisal mechanisms are expected to function not only as accountability tools but also as developmental processes that promote professional growth and instructional improvement.

Research demonstrates that effective appraisal systems improve teacher performance by providing constructive feedback, identifying professional development needs, and encouraging reflective instructional practices [30]. Development-oriented appraisal systems also strengthen organizational trust and teacher engagement when implemented transparently and fairly. However, appraisal systems that emphasize administrative control rather than professional support often generate teacher dissatisfaction and resistance.

Several studies in developing educational systems reveal that teacher appraisal practices frequently encounter challenges related to subjectivity, lack of transparency, inadequate evaluator competence, and limited feedback mechanisms [31]. In Ethiopian schools, performance appraisal systems have often been criticized for relying on generalized criteria that inadequately reflect subject-specific instructional realities and career-stage differences among teachers [32]. Furthermore, limited participation of teachers in designing appraisal criteria weakens the legitimacy and acceptance of the evaluation process. Such conditions reduce the developmental value of appraisal systems and limit their contribution to school improvement.

Teacher Motivation and Institutional Effectiveness

Teacher motivation is widely acknowledged as one of the strongest determinants of educational quality and organizational effectiveness. Motivation influences teachers' commitment, instructional engagement, job satisfaction, and willingness to contribute to institutional goals [33]. Educational HRM literature generally classifies motivational factors into intrinsic dimensions, such as professional recognition and personal achievement, and extrinsic dimensions, including salary, incentives, working conditions, and career advancement opportunities [34]. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate higher instructional performance, stronger organizational loyalty, and greater participation in school improvement initiatives [35]. Conversely, inadequate motivation contributes to absenteeism, burnout, reduced instructional effectiveness, and teacher attrition.

In developing countries, teacher motivation remains a persistent challenge due to economic constraints, limited institutional support, and weak professional recognition systems [36]. Ethiopian secondary schools are similarly affected by low salary structures, insufficient incentive mechanisms, unsupportive working conditions, and limited opportunities for professional development [37]. Previous studies indicate that these conditions negatively influence teachers' morale and reduce institutional effectiveness. Therefore, strengthening teacher motivation requires both financial and non-financial HRM interventions that address contextual institutional realities.

Theoretical and Empirical Research Gap

The present study is anchored in systems theory and contingency theory, both of which emphasize the interdependence between organizational structures, leadership processes, and HRM practices. Systems theory explains that schools function as interconnected organizational systems in which weaknesses in one HRM function may influence overall institutional performance [38]. Meanwhile, contingency theory argues that HRM practices should be adapted to specific institutional conditions rather than universally applied across different educational environments [39]. These theoretical perspectives provide an appropriate framework for examining HRM implementation in resource-constrained educational systems such as Ethiopian secondary schools.

Although previous international and Ethiopian studies have investigated isolated aspects of educational HRM, significant empirical gaps remain. Most earlier studies focused separately on teacher motivation, induction, or appraisal practices without examining their interconnected influence within a unified HRM framework [40]. Additionally, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how institutional challenges simultaneously affect the implementation of these HRM functions in Ethiopian secondary schools. Existing studies also provide limited analysis of whether demographic characteristics influence teachers' perceptions of HRM practices. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by providing an integrated

examination of induction, performance appraisal, and motivational practices within Ethiopian secondary schools while simultaneously exploring the institutional challenges constraining their implementation. The study contributes to the broader discourse on context-sensitive educational HRM in developing-country educational systems.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and institutional challenges in Ethiopian secondary schools. The mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence to obtain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to secondary school teachers, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews involving school principals, vice-principals, supervisors, and administrative personnel. The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. Teachers were selected using proportional random sampling to ensure representative participation across schools, whereas interview participants were selected purposively based on administrative role and professional experience. The questionnaire items focused on three major HRM dimensions, namely teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation. Prior to the main data collection process, the instruments were subjected to pilot testing and expert validation to ensure content validity, reliability, and contextual appropriateness. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha indicated acceptable internal consistency across all constructs, exceeding the recommended threshold for social science research [41].

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the support of SPSS version 26. One-sample t-tests were employed to determine the extent to which HRM practices were implemented in secondary schools, while Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to examine differences in teachers' perceptions based on demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, age, and work experience. Assumptions related to normality, homogeneity of covariance matrices, and multicollinearity were examined prior to inferential analysis to ensure statistical appropriateness. In addition, qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically to complement and triangulate the quantitative findings. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence strengthened the credibility, trustworthiness, and interpretative validity of the study findings, thereby providing a robust methodological basis for investigating HRM practices in resource-constrained educational environments [42].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in Ethiopian secondary schools remains below the expected institutional standard across the three investigated dimensions: teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that induction practices were weakly institutionalized, with most respondents indicating inadequate orientation programs, limited mentoring support, and insufficient professional guidance for newly appointed teachers. Interview data further confirmed that induction activities were often treated as administrative formalities rather than developmental support mechanisms. Such findings suggest that schools have not yet established systematic induction frameworks capable of facilitating professional integration and organizational adaptation among novice teachers. This condition potentially affects instructional quality, teacher retention, and institutional effectiveness. Similar findings have been reported in comparative educational studies indicating that poorly implemented induction systems contribute to teacher uncertainty, professional isolation, and reduced organizational commitment in developing educational systems [43].

The study also found that teacher performance appraisal practices were implemented inconsistently and lacked developmental orientation. Teachers reported that appraisal systems primarily emphasized administrative compliance rather than professional improvement and constructive feedback. Several respondents further expressed concerns regarding evaluator subjectivity, generalized assessment criteria, inadequate communication, and limited opportunities for reflective professional discussion. From a theoretical perspective, these findings demonstrate a misalignment between performance appraisal objectives and strategic HRM principles. Strategic HRM theory emphasizes that appraisal systems should function as developmental instruments that strengthen teacher capacity, instructional effectiveness, and organizational learning [44]. However, in the present study context, performance appraisal practices appear to function predominantly as bureaucratic accountability mechanisms, thereby limiting their contribution to teacher development and school improvement.

Another significant finding concerns the low level of teacher motivation across the sampled secondary schools. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence revealed that teachers experienced inadequate financial incentives, limited professional recognition, weak career advancement opportunities, and unsupportive working environments. Respondents consistently emphasized that low salary structures and insufficient institutional appreciation negatively affected morale and work commitment. These findings align with motivational theories suggesting that employees' performance and organizational engagement are strongly influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors [45]. In educational settings, inadequate motivational systems may reduce teacher effectiveness, increase absenteeism, and weaken institutional productivity. The present

findings therefore reinforce previous international evidence indicating that teacher motivation constitutes a critical determinant of educational quality and organizational sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained school systems [46].

The institutional challenges identified in this study further demonstrate that HRM weaknesses in Ethiopian secondary schools are not solely managerial problems but also structural and systemic issues. The absence of supportive leadership practices, inadequate supervision systems, limited professional development opportunities, and weak organizational support mechanisms significantly constrained the effective implementation of HRM functions. From the perspective of systems theory, these findings suggest that deficiencies in one organizational subsystem inevitably influence the effectiveness of other institutional processes [47]. Weak leadership and inadequate HRM structures therefore create cumulative organizational inefficiencies that negatively affect teacher performance, institutional climate, and school effectiveness. Similarly, contingency theory provides additional explanatory relevance because the findings indicate that standardized HRM practices are insufficient when implemented without consideration of contextual institutional realities such as resource limitations, organizational culture, and local administrative capacity.

Interestingly, the MANOVA results demonstrated that demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, age, and teaching experience did not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of HRM practices. This suggests that the identified HRM problems are systemic and uniformly experienced across different teacher groups rather than being restricted to particular demographic categories. Such findings indicate that institutional deficiencies in HRM implementation are deeply embedded within the broader organizational structure of secondary schools. Similar empirical patterns have been identified in educational administration studies conducted in developing-country contexts, where structural resource limitations and centralized policy implementation affect all teaching personnel regardless of individual background characteristics [48].

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on educational HRM by demonstrating that effective school management requires integrated, context-sensitive, and development-oriented HRM systems. The study reinforces the argument that teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation should not be treated as isolated administrative activities but rather as interconnected strategic processes that collectively influence organizational effectiveness and educational quality. Consequently, strengthening HRM practices in Ethiopian secondary schools requires institutional reforms that prioritize leadership capacity building, participatory appraisal systems, structured induction frameworks, and sustainable teacher motivation mechanisms. Such improvements are essential for enhancing educational effectiveness within developing-country school systems facing persistent institutional and resource-related challenges.

The findings of this study provide several important implications for educational policymakers, school leaders, and educational administrators. At the practical level, secondary school leaders should strengthen the implementation of structured induction programs that include mentoring systems, professional orientation, and continuous support mechanisms for newly appointed teachers. Such programs are essential for facilitating professional adaptation, reducing teacher isolation, and improving instructional performance. In relation to performance appraisal, schools should redesign appraisal systems to emphasize developmental objectives rather than administrative compliance. Performance evaluation processes need to incorporate transparent assessment criteria, constructive feedback mechanisms, teacher participation, and continuous professional support. This would enhance the credibility and effectiveness of appraisal systems while promoting teacher engagement and professional growth. The study also highlights the urgent need to strengthen teacher motivation through both financial and non-financial strategies. Educational authorities should improve incentive systems, establish professional recognition mechanisms, create supportive working environments, and expand opportunities for training and career development. Strengthening teacher motivation is particularly important in resource-constrained educational systems where institutional sustainability largely depends on teacher commitment and organizational loyalty. At the policy level, the findings suggest that educational HRM policies should move beyond generalized administrative frameworks and become more responsive to contextual institutional realities. Policymakers should provide schools with greater flexibility to design HRM strategies that align with local organizational needs while maintaining national educational standards. Institutional leadership development and HRM capacity-building programs should also be prioritized to strengthen the effectiveness of school management systems.

Although this study provides important empirical insights into HRM practices in Ethiopian secondary schools, several limitations create opportunities for future investigation. First, the study was limited to selected secondary schools within a specific regional context. Future studies may expand the geographical scope by including multiple regions, educational levels, or comparative cross-country analyses to improve generalizability and contextual understanding. Second, the present study focused primarily on three HRM dimensions: induction, performance appraisal, and motivation. Future researchers may investigate additional HRM components such as teacher recruitment, retention strategies, leadership development, and professional learning systems to provide a broader understanding of educational HRM practices. Third, this study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to observe changes in HRM practices over time. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of HRM reforms on teacher performance, organizational commitment, and school effectiveness. Finally, future studies may adopt multilevel analytical approaches to better examine the interaction between institutional factors, leadership practices, and teacher-related variables within educational organizations.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the practices and institutional challenges of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Ethiopian

secondary schools, focusing specifically on teacher induction, performance appraisal, and motivation. The findings demonstrate that the implementation of these HRM functions remains substantially below the expected institutional standard. Teacher induction practices were inadequately structured and insufficiently supported by mentoring and professional guidance systems. Similarly, performance appraisal mechanisms were primarily administrative in orientation and lacked developmental feedback processes capable of supporting teachers' professional growth. Teacher motivation was also found to be relatively low due to inadequate financial incentives, limited recognition systems, unsupportive working environments, and restricted opportunities for professional advancement. The study further revealed that institutional and structural challenges significantly constrained the effective implementation of HRM practices. Weak leadership capacity, insufficient supervision, inadequate organizational support, and limited professional development opportunities emerged as dominant barriers affecting school effectiveness. Moreover, the findings indicated that demographic characteristics such as gender, educational qualification, and teaching experience did not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of HRM practices, suggesting that HRM-related problems are systemic and broadly experienced across teacher groups. Overall, this study confirms that effective HRM practices constitute a critical component of educational quality and institutional performance in secondary schools. The interconnected nature of induction, appraisal, and motivational systems highlights the necessity of adopting integrated and context-sensitive HRM strategies within educational institutions. Without systematic improvements in these areas, schools may continue to face challenges related to teacher performance, organizational commitment, and instructional effectiveness.

V. References

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