

STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT PERSPECTIVE IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices on employees engagement within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) context, anchored on Psychological Empowerment Theory. Specifically, it investigates the influence of strategic talent acquisition, strategic training and development, strategic performance management, strategic reward and recognition, and strategic talent management on employee engagement in AfCFTA-aligned firms in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 165 employees across 51 AfCFTA-aligned organisations using structured questionnaire, analysed through descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings reveal that SHRM practices collectively exert a significant effect on employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.440$, $p < 0.05$). At the individual level, strategic talent acquisition, strategic training and development, and strategic talent management significantly and positively influenced employee engagement, while strategic performance management and strategic reward and recognition showed no significant effect. The study concludes that HR practices enhancing employees' competence, career growth, and organisational fit are more effective in fostering engagement than transactional or administrative HR mechanisms, providing novel empirical evidence from the under-researched AfCFTA economic context. It is therefore recommended that organisations operating within AfCFTA member states should prioritise competency-based recruitment, continuous training, and structured talent management programmes that offer clear career pathways. Furthermore, performance management and reward systems should be redesigned to emphasise fairness, transparency, and employee development in order to build a more engaged and competitive workforce capable of leveraging AfCFTA opportunities.

Keywords: Strategic HRM, Employee Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, AfCFTA.

JEL Classification: M12, J24, F15

1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive global economy, organisations are compelled to treat human capital as a strategic resource essential for sustained performance and growth. Central to this is Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), defined as the deliberate alignment of HR policies and practices with organisational goals to build workforce capabilities that drive competitive advantage (Wright & McMahan, 1992). A well-established body of evidence links specific SHRM practices directly to employee engagement. Strategic talent acquisition strengthens engagement by ensuring

person organisation fit, thereby enhancing employees' sense of belonging and purpose (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Strategic training and development foster engagement by building employees' competence and confidence, reinforcing their perceived ability to contribute meaningfully (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Strategic performance management sustains engagement by aligning individual objectives with organisational priorities through continuous feedback and coaching (Guest, 1997), while strategic reward and recognition reinforce engagement by signalling that employees' contributions are valued (Milkovich & Newman, 2020). Collectively, these practices create the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability that Kahn (1990) identifies as the foundations of employee engagement. Conversely, poorly aligned HR systems are associated with reduced motivation, higher turnover, and diminished organisational performance, reinforcing the strategic imperative for intentional HR design (Saks, 2019).

Within the African context, the SHRM employee engagement relationship takes on particular significance given the transformative economic environment created by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Established in 2018 and operationalised in 2021, AfCFTA is the world's largest free trade area by participating nations, creating a single continental market across 54 African Union member states (African Union, 2023). While AfCFTA dramatically expands market access and trade opportunities, it simultaneously intensifies competitive pressure, compelling organisations to improve productivity, innovation, and workforce adaptability to survive and thrive (Debrah & Ofori, 2023). African firms operating in this environment face unique workforce challenges, including persistent skills gaps, youth unemployment, limited HR infrastructure, and socio-cultural dynamics that shape how employees respond to HR practices (Shokunbi, 2025). These conditions make the effective deployment of SHRM practices not merely a management preference but a strategic necessity. How organisations attract, develop, manage, and retain talent directly determines their capacity to harness AfCFTA opportunities, making the SHRM-employee engagement nexus a critical driver of competitive positioning across the continent.

Despite the growing recognition of SHRM's importance, empirical studies explicitly examining how specific SHRM practices link to employee engagement within the AfCFTA context remain scarce. Most existing literature is grounded in Western organisational settings and may not adequately capture the institutional and socio-cultural realities of African workplaces (Osabutey et al., 2015). The broad objective of this study is to investigate the effect of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices on employees engagement within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) context. The specific objectives are to examine the effects of strategic talent acquisition, training and development, performance management, reward and recognition, and talent management, individually influence employee engagement in AfCFTA-aligned firms in Nigeria. Drawing on Psychological Empowerment Theory (Spreitzer, 1995) as its explanatory framework, the study provides both theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding the SHRM-employee engagement relationship.

2. Literature Review:

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM): The journey of Human Resource Management from a simple administrative role to a strategic partner in driving organisational success represents a major shift in modern management thinking. This transformation is captured in the idea of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM takes a proactive stance on managing an organization's human capital, setting itself apart from traditional Human Resource Management (HRM), which mainly deals with everyday personnel tasks. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is all about proactively managing people in a way that aligns HR strategies with the overall business goals, giving organizations a competitive edge (Tognoli, 2022). Unlike traditional Human Resource Management (HRM), which tends to focus on administrative tasks, SHRM emphasizes strategic integration and long-term planning (Adeniyi & Damilola, 2024). Traditional HRM mainly deals with the everyday operations of managing employees, like payroll, legal compliance, and maintaining employee records. On the flip side, SHRM is described as "the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals" (Wright & McMahan, 1992). This approach is proactive, long-term, and looks at the bigger picture. Rather than treating HR activities as isolated tasks, SHRM aims to create a cohesive system that aligns the organization's human capital with its strategic objectives. While traditional HRM views employees as costs to manage, SHRM sees them as valuable assets that can be leveraged for a competitive advantage. In Contrast, Strategic Human Resource Management isn't just a one-off action; it's more like a "bundle" of interconnected practices that work together to enhance organizational performance (Delery & Doty, 1996). Although the specific elements of this bundle can differ, the literature consistently points out several key dimensions:

Strategic Talent Acquisition : Strategic Talent Acquisition is all about the thoughtful process of attracting, identifying, and choosing candidates whose skills, values, and behaviors fit well with the organization's long-term goals and competitive strategy. It requires proactive planning to make sure that talent acquisition aligns with organizational objectives and helps maintain a competitive edge (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). This process goes beyond merely filling open positions. It involves anticipating future talent needs based on strategic objectives and systematically attracting, identifying, and selecting individuals who not only have the necessary skills but also fit well with the organizational culture and show potential for long-term development.

Strategic Training and Development: Strategic training and development encompass planned learning activities designed to improve employees' skills, knowledge, and behaviors in alignment with the organization's strategic goals. This process facilitates organizational capacity building and prepares employees to meet current and future business challenges (Lado & Wilson, 1994). This approach is all about equipping people with the skills they need for future success. It emphasizes ongoing learning, upskilling, and reskilling efforts that align with the organization's strategic goals, like fostering cross-cultural skills for companies looking to expand under AfCFTA.

Strategic Performance Management: Strategic performance management is the continuous process of setting organizational goals, monitoring employee performance, providing ongoing feedback, and aligning individual objectives with strategic priorities to enhance overall organizational effectiveness (Guest, 1997). This is a continuous journey of aligning individual and team objectives with the broader goals of the organization. It focuses on regular feedback, coaching, and development instead of just relying on annual reviews, ensuring that employees' efforts are directed toward what truly matters.

Strategic Reward and Recognition: Strategic rewards and recognition involve designing compensation and incentive systems that are aligned with organizational objectives to motivate employees, reinforce desired behaviors, and sustain high levels of performance in support of strategic goals (Milkovich & Newman, 2020). This involves crafting compensation, benefits, and recognition programs that inspire and reinforce behaviors and results that align with the strategic vision. This could mean performance-based pay, profit sharing, or even non-monetary recognition for innovation or outstanding teamwork.

Talent Management: Talent management is all about creating a cohesive approach within an organization to attract, nurture, keep, and make the best use of individuals who have exceptional potential and essential skills. This process is crucial to meeting both current and future business demands, ultimately paving the way for lasting success in the organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This is a comprehensive, integrated strategy to ensure the organization has a steady pipeline of high-potential individuals ready to meet its future leadership and technical demands. It brings together recruitment, development, and retention efforts focused on the most crucial roles.

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement has risen to be a critical determinant of organisational performance reflecting a deeper psychological connection between employees and their work beyond mere job satisfaction. One of the foundational definitions by Kahn (1990) conceptualizes engagement as the harnessing of employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional selves in role performance, driven by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Building on this, González-Romá and Bakker (2002) defined work engagement as a positive, fulfilling state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. This perspective, operationalized through the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), emphasizes energy, strong involvement, and deep concentration in work activities. From a practitioner standpoint, Gallup (2023) describes engaged employees as individuals who are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace, highlighting the importance of supportive work conditions such as clear expectations, adequate resources, and growth opportunities. Overall, the literature underscores that employee engagement is a multidimensional construct influenced by both psychological conditions and organizational practices. It plays a vital role in enhancing employee motivation, productivity, and organizational performance, particularly in dynamic and emerging market contexts

Theoretical Framework: *Psychological Empowerment Theory*: The Psychological Empowerment Theory, developed by Spreitzer (1995) building on Kahn's (1990) foundational work, provides the theoretical lens for this study. The theory conceptualises psychological empowerment as an intrinsic motivational construct comprising four cognitive dimensions: meaning (the alignment of one's work with personal values and beliefs), competence (the belief in one's capability to perform tasks effectively), self-determination (a sense of autonomy and choice in initiating and regulating actions), and impact (the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operational outcomes at work). The central proposition of the theory is that when these four psychological states are simultaneously activated, employees experience higher levels of motivation, commitment, and engagement (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The theory is particularly well-suited as the explanatory framework for this study because it positions organisational systems and HR practices as the primary antecedents of these empowerment perceptions. Specifically, strategic talent acquisition strengthens the competence and meaning dimensions by ensuring employees are well-matched to their roles and perceive their work as purposeful. Strategic training and development directly enhance the competence dimension by equipping employees with the capabilities needed to perform effectively and grow professionally. Strategic performance management activates the self-determination and impact dimensions by giving employees clarity on objectives and feedback that reinforces their sense of contribution to organisational outcomes. Strategic reward and recognition reinforce the meaning and impact dimensions by signalling that employees' efforts are valued and consequential. Strategic talent management sustains all four dimensions over time by providing structured career pathways that affirm employees' growth, influence, and sense of belonging within the organisation. Taken together, these linkages establish the theoretical basis for expecting that SHRM practices will positively influence employee engagement. While the theory has attracted some criticism for its reliance on subjective self-report perceptions that may vary across individuals and cultural contexts (Spreitzer, 2008), it remains the most widely validated framework for explaining how organisational practices translate into employee psychological states and behavioural outcomes.

Empirical review: The empirical literature on the relationship between SHRM practices and employee engagement has grown considerably, though it remains unevenly distributed across contexts. Evidence from developed economies consistently confirms a positive association. Anderson (2024) demonstrates that SHRM practices significantly improve employee engagement in Australian organisations, with leadership style and organisational culture serving as critical enabling conditions. Glarino (2013) similarly establishes that SHRM practices positively influence engagement through perceived organisational support, underscoring the mediating role of employees' interpretations of HR intent. Adeniyi and Damilola (2024) further show that aligning HR strategies with business objectives strengthens talent development and employee motivation, while Wu (2025) highlights the additional importance of integrating SHRM with organisational behaviour principles to sustain engagement in dynamic work environments. At the level of individual SHRM practices, Cahyono (2024) finds that talent management, training, and performance systems each independently foster motivation and commitment, while Gunawan and

Mikhail (2025) demonstrate that sustainable and strategic HRM practices jointly enhance employee commitment, organisational resilience, and long-term competitiveness, particularly when underpinned by continuous learning and inclusive leadership. These findings suggest that the effect of SHRM on engagement is not uniform across practices and is conditioned by the quality and consistency of implementation. Evidence from the African context, though comparatively limited, reveals important contextual nuances. Osabutey et al. (2015) demonstrate that context-sensitive HR practices aligned with global standards are essential for improving engagement, retention, and productivity in African organisations, particularly under evolving trade frameworks such as AfCFTA. Shokunbi (2025) extends this argument by contending that existing employee engagement models are largely Western-centric and insufficiently account for African socio-cultural realities, including communal values, power distance, and informal organisational norms that shape how employees respond to HR interventions. This signals a critical gap: while the conceptual and empirical case for SHRM's positive influence on engagement is well established in Western literature, its differential effects across specific practices within the AfCFTA context remain empirically underexplored.

3. Methodology: This study adopted a cross-sectional quantitative survey design, which is appropriate for capturing employees' perceptions of SHRM practices and engagement at a single point in time without manipulating variables. The study was conducted among employees and HR practitioners in 51 accredited AfCFTA-aligned firms in Nigeria, sourced from the Nigeria AfCFTA Coordination Office in Abuja. These firms operate across the logistics, freight forwarding, and warehousing sectors industries that have completed multiple export cycles under the AfCFTA framework and are thus directly embedded in the trade integration dynamics that motivate this inquiry. Given the absence of a centralised workforce registry and the confidentiality policies of individual organisations, a precise enumeration of the total employee population was not feasible. Accordingly, a purposive sampling technique was employed, enabling the intentional selection of respondents with direct knowledge of and experience with SHRM practices within AfCFTA-operating environments.

A total of 224 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Of these, 165 questionnaires were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, yielding a response rate of 73.7%, which is considered acceptable for organisational survey research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Consequently, the effective sample size for the study was 165 respondents. The adequacy of the sample size was assessed based on the recommendations of Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) for multiple regression analysis. According to these authors, the minimum sample size required for testing the overall regression model is $N \geq 50 + 8m$, while the minimum sample size required for testing individual predictors is $N \geq 104 + m$, where m represents the number of predictor variables. Given the five predictor variables included in this study, the minimum required sample sizes were 90 and 109 respectively. The achieved sample size of 165 respondents exceeded both thresholds and was therefore considered adequate for the multiple regression analysis. Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire comprising three sections: respondent demographic information, SHRM practices, and employee engagement. The copies of questionnaire were distributed across the

selected firms, with the distribution figure deliberately set above the minimum target to account for the characteristically lower response rates in operationally intensive sectors such as logistics, freight forwarding, and warehousing, where heavy workloads, shift patterns, and internal participation restrictions frequently constrain participation.

SHRM practices were measured using a scale adapted from Huselid's (1995) High-Performance Work Systems instrument, a foundational and widely validated measure of the degree to which organisations have implemented strategic HR policies across talent acquisition, training and development, performance management, reward and recognition, and talent management dimensions. Employee engagement was assessed using the nine-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006), which measures the three core dimensions of engagement -vigour, dedication, and absorption. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the demographic profile of respondents, while multiple regression analysis, executed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, was used to test the study's hypotheses regarding the individual and collective effects of SHRM practices on employee engagement.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 4.1. Demographic Details of Respondents

Variable	Item	No. of Response	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	91	55.2
	Females	71	43
	Preferred not to Say	3	1.8
	Total	165	100
Age Bracket	Below 25 years	10	6.1
	25 – 34	37	22.4
	35 - 44 years	56	33.9
	45 - 54 years	45	27.3
	55 years and above	17	10.3
	Total	165	100
Highest Educational Qualification	O - Level /SSCE	2	1.2
	Diploma /NCE	9	5.5
	Bachelor's Degree / HND	73	44.2
	Master's Degree (e.g. M.Sc, MA. MBA)	60	36.4

	Doctorate (PHD)	17	10.3
	Others	4	2.4
	Total	165	100
Job Tenure	Less than 1 year	8	4.8
	1 - 3 years	37	22.4
	4 - 6 years	48	29.1
	7 -10 years	28	17
	More than 10 years	44	26.7
	Total	165	100
Job Level	Non - Managerial Staff	33	20
	Junior Management	34	20.6
	Middle Management	51	30.9
	Senior Management / Executive	47	28.5
	Total	165	100
Industry Sector	Financial Services / Banking	41	24.8
	Logistics / Supply Chain	48	29.1
	Manufacturing	22	13.3
	Government	4	2.5
	Others	50	30.3
	Total	165	100

Source: Field survey (2025)

From Table 4.1: Out of the 165 respondents, the gender distribution accounts for male participants which constituted the majority (55.2%, n = 91), while females accounted for 43.0% (n = 71). A very small proportion of respondents (1.8%, n = 3) preferred not to disclose their gender. This indicates a male-dominated sample, though female representation remains substantial. For age, the respondents were predominantly within their economically active mid-career age groups: Overall, more than 80% of respondents fall between 25 and 54 years. Approximately 91% of respondents possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher, indicating that the study population is highly educated and professionally skilled. The result for job tenure, demonstrate varying levels of professional experience: Over 70% of participants have more than four years of work experience, suggesting a mature workforce with substantial practical exposure, increasing the credibility of workplace-related opinions captured in the study. The job level occupies diverse organizational positions: More than 59% hold middle or senior management roles, indicating that most participants are decision-makers or supervisory staff. The industry sector result demonstrates a broad range of industries: The largest

sectoral representation comes from logistics and diversified “other” industries, followed by banking/financial services.

Inferential Result and Test of Hypotheses

Table 4.2: Model Summary: SHRMP on Employee Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.663 ^a	.440	.422	.58408	.440	24.987	5	159	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), STM, STD, STA, SRR, SPM

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 4.3: ANOVA^a SHRMP on Employee Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.622	5	8.524	24.987	.000 ^b
	Residual	54.242	159	.341		
	Total	96.864	164			

a. Dependent Variable: EE

b. Predictors: (Constant), STM, STD, STA, SRR, SPM

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 4.4: Coefficients HRMP on Employee Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance
1	(Constant)	1.962	.219		8.951	.000	1.529	2.395		
	STA	.187	.089	.214	2.085	.039	.010	.363	.335	2.986
	STD	.178	.071	.254	2.508	.013	.038	.319	.344	2.909
	SPM	.031	.105	.039	.298	.766	-.175	.238	.201	4.972
	SRR	-.027	.080	-.036	-.332	.741	-.185	.132	.296	3.382
	STM	.196	.089	.266	2.200	.029	.020	.373	.241	4.148

a. Dependent Variable: EE

Source: Field survey (2025)

From Table 4.2, the regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined effect of strategic human resource management practices on employee engagement. The results showed a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.663, indicating a strong positive relationship between SHRM practices and employee engagement. The R-square value of 0.440 suggests that approximately 44% of the variation in employee engagement is explained by the five strategic HRM practices included in the model, while the remaining 56% may be explained by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R-square value of 0.422 further confirms that the explanatory power of the model remains strong even after adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. In addition, the standard error of 0.58408 indicates that the regression model provides a reasonably accurate prediction of employee engagement. Overall, the model demonstrates that strategic HRM practices collectively contribute significantly to explaining employee engagement within the organization. The ANOVA test in table 4.3, was used to determine whether the regression model as a whole is statistically significant in predicting employee engagement. The results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant with $F(5,159) = 24.987$ and $p = 0.000$, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This implies that the independent variables jointly have a significant influence on employee engagement. Therefore, the overall regression model is considered appropriate for explaining the relationship between strategic HRM practices and employee engagement. The regression coefficient analysis from table 4.4 shows the individual contribution of each strategic HRM practice to employee engagement. The results revealed that Strategic Talent Acquisition (STA) has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.214$, $t = 2.085$, $p = 0.039$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 1a, which states that there is no significant effect of strategic talent acquisition on employee's engagement is rejected.

The findings further show that Strategic Training and Development (STD) significantly influences employee engagement ($\beta = 0.254$, $t = 2.508$, $p = 0.013$). Therefore, the formulated hypothesis 1b is rejected. Moreover, the results indicate that Strategic Performance Management (SPM) does not have a statistically significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.039$, $t = 0.298$, $p = 0.766$). Although performance management systems are designed to improve employee productivity and accountability, the findings suggest that in this context, performance management practices may not strongly influence employee engagement. Therefore, the hypothesis 1c is accepted. The analysis further revealed that Strategic Reward and Recognition (SRR) has a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with employee engagement ($\beta = -0.036$, $t = -0.332$, $p = 0.741$). This result implies that reward and recognition practices do not significantly influence employee engagement in the studied organization. It is possible that the reward systems currently in place are not perceived as motivating or meaningful by employees. Therefore, hypothesis 1c is accepted. The results further show that Strategic Talent Management (STM) has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.266$, $t = 2.200$, $p = 0.029$). Therefore, the hypothesis 1d is hereby rejected.

Discussion of Findings: The results indicate that SHRM practices collectively have a significant effect on employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.440$), supporting the argument that HR systems can enhance employees' perceptions of competence, meaning, and impact, thereby fostering engagement. At the

individual level, strategic talent acquisition was found to significantly influence employee engagement, aligning with Cahyono, (2024), who emphasizes the role of effective recruitment in enhancing employee commitment and organisational fit. Similarly, strategic training and development showed a positive and significant effect, reinforcing findings by Osabuley et al. (2015) and Shokunbi (2025) that employee development initiatives enhance motivation and engagement by strengthening competence. In the same vein, strategic talent management was also significant, supporting Williams Ben Gunuwan (2025), who highlights the importance of career development and talent retention in fostering employee commitment and involvement. However, strategic performance management was found to be insignificant, suggesting that performance systems may not enhance engagement when perceived as routine rather than developmental. This contrasts with Shokunbi (2025), who reported positive effects under transparent and fair systems. Similarly, strategic reward and recognition showed no significant influence, diverging from Osabuley et al. (2015), possibly due to contextual differences in reward structures and employee perceptions.

Overall, the findings provide empirical support for Psychological Empowerment Theory by demonstrating that HR practices that enhance employee capability, growth, and organisational fit are more effective in driving engagement. The study further highlights that not all HR practices exert equal influence, emphasizing the importance of development-oriented HR strategies in shaping employees' psychological experiences and engagement levels.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effect of SHRM practices on employee engagement in AfCFTA-aligned firms in Nigeria, anchored on Psychological Empowerment Theory. The findings confirm that SHRM practices collectively and significantly enhance employee engagement, with strategic talent acquisition, training and development, and talent management emerging as the principal drivers. Strategic performance management and reward and recognition, however, exerted no significant influence, suggesting their effectiveness is contingent on employees perceiving them as developmental rather than administrative. These results affirm that HR practices fostering employees' competence, sense of meaning, and organisational impact are more effective in sustaining engagement than transactional mechanisms. The study contributes novel empirical evidence from the AfCFTA context and demonstrates that SHRM practice effectiveness is neither uniform nor universal, but dependent on the degree to which practices activate intrinsic psychological states. Future research should examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment, adopt longitudinal designs, and conduct comparative studies across AfCFTA member states.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, organisations operating within the AfCFTA framework should prioritise competency-based talent acquisition that aligns recruitment with long-term strategic and cultural fit. Investment in continuous, strategically driven training and development is essential to build the cross-functional and cross-cultural competencies required for expanded market participation.

Structured talent management systems with clear career pathways and succession planning should be institutionalised to deepen employees' sense of purpose and long-term engagement. Performance management should be redesigned around developmental feedback and coaching rather than routine appraisal, while reward and recognition systems should be restructured to ensure fairness, strategic alignment, and the inclusion of non-monetary recognition, such as merit-based advancement to strengthen the psychological conditions most closely associated with sustained employee engagement.

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