

**EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMAN RESOURCE BUSINESS PARTNERING
(HRBP) MODEL IN ENHANCING STRATEGIC ROLE OF HRM IN
MALAWI**

**MA (HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS) THESIS**

GIFT ALLAN NYAMBALO

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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RELATIONS) THESIS**

By

**GIFT ALLAN NYAMBALO
BA (HRM) – University of Malawi**

Submitted to the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of
Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts (Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations)

University of Malawi

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other studies have been used, acknowledgements have been made.

GIFT ALLAN NYAMBALO

Full Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval

Signature:Date:

M. Hussein, PhD (Associate Professor)

Main Supervisor

Signature:Date:

M. Mfuné, MA (Lecturer)

Second Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother and daughter, **Patuma.**

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I thank God Almighty for this special favour. I'm forever grateful!

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of Human Resource Business Partnering (HRBP) model in enhancing Strategic role of HRM in Malawi. The study was guided by industrial and organisational psychology theory to examine the perceptions of key internal stakeholders over the functioning of their HR departments within organisations that adopted HRBP model in Malawi. To do this, the study investigated the factors behind the adoption of HRBP model in selected corporations; examined linkages between HRBP model and strategic roles of HR functions; explored perceptions of key internal stakeholders on the effects of HRBP model on HR functions' roles; and evaluated challenges associated with the development, adoption and implementation of HRBP model. Primary data was collected using Key Informant Interviews (KII) with CEOs, Line Managers and HR Practitioners who were purposively sampled for working with organisations that have adopted the HRBP model in Malawi. Using qualitative research design, a total of 28 respondents from four organisations participated in this study. The findings of this study show that HRBP model in the sampled organisations was adopted from 2012 to 2017. The study further found that the main drivers behind the adoption of the HRBP model in sampled organisation include the need to align HR functions to business strategy and units as well as to conform to headquarters policies for the multinational organisations. The study also established that adoption of HRBP model in different organisations is beneficial in enhancing the strategic role of the HR functions. Further, the study established that there is limited ability among HR practitioners in dealing with high level strategic roles which are often outsourced to consultants. Not only that, the study has also revealed that high cost, time consumption and resistance to change are some of the main challenges affecting the development, adoption and implementation of the HRBP model in Malawi. In general, the findings of this study collaborate with literature although a few unique issues have emerged especially on the drivers and challenges affecting HRBP model.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

HR:	Human Resources
HRM:	Human Resource Management
SHRM:	Strategic Human Resource Management
BP:	Business Partner
HRBP:	Human Resource Business Partnering Model
HRBPs:	Human Resource Business Partner
TLSM:	Three-legged stool model
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
CS:	Civil Society
IPMM:	Institute of People Management
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CIPD:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of study, problem statement, research questions, study objectives, and justification of studying the effectiveness of Human Resource Business Partnering (HRBP) Model in enhancing strategic role of Human Resource (HR) functions in Malawi.

1.2 Background of the Study

Human Resource Management (HRM) has been defined differently by scholars and seems to be understood differently by practitioners; specifically with the emerging of HR competency models. Competency models are defined as narrative descriptions of the competencies for a targeted job category, occupational group, division, department or other unit of analysis (Ashkezari & Aeen, 2012). There has been an enormous growth in the use of HR competency models over the last decade as part of an overall attempt to realign the HR function and transform HR professionals into ‘business partners’ (Ulrich et al., 1995; Ulrich, 1997; Ramlall, 2006). At Global level, the growth of HR competency models is mostly driven by the level of competition in different industries (Abdullah & Illham, 2012). One of the most dominant Competency Model that has been widely adopted world over is the HRBP model (Abdullah & Illham, 2012). According to Beckett (2005), business partnership refers to business advisory which focuses on utilising the human capital assets in the most profitable manner. From this definition, the purpose of HRBP model can be understood to achieve integration of HR professionals into business processes by way of aligning their day-to-day work with business outcomes. Ulrich’s HRBP model asserts that HR professionals will be successful if they effectively integrate the four principle roles namely; strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent (Ulrich, 1997).

In this paper, therefore, HRBP model is understood as the modern approach of managing HR functions that focuses on business alignment and integration of HR with core business of the organisation (Caldwell, 2010). Based on this understanding, it implies that adoption of HRBP models aim at enhancing the strategic role of HRM. HRM is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets-the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives (Armstrong, 2006). On the other hand, Storey (1989) defines HRM as a set of interrelated policies with an ideological and philosophical underpinning. Therefore, when HRM is business strategy-centric, it's called strategic human resource management (SHRM). According to Truss & Gratton (1994), SHRM is a branch of HRM that helps in aligning the skills present in the employees with the goals to be achieved by the organization. On the other hand, Armstrong (2014) defines SHRM as a process that involves the use of overarching approaches to the development of HR strategies, which are integrated vertically with the business strategy and horizontally with one another. Armstrong (2014) further describes SHRM as an approach to the development and implementation of HR strategies that are integrated with business strategies and support their achievement. While according to Boxall (1996), SHRM is the interface between HRM and strategic management. In this paper, SHRM will be looked at as the integration of HR function to business strategy and its ability to get involved and contribute positively to the same. From this discussion, it can be said that HR functions that lean more towards organisational design and change management are deemed to be more strategic than those whose roles and responsibilities are concentrated on administrative aspects.

Beer (1997) assert that companies have long known that, to be competitive, they must develop a good strategy and then realign structure, systems, leadership behaviour, HR policies, culture, values and management processes. With the growing complexity of organisations, their competitiveness heavily relies upon their own ability to adapt (Delany, 2016). This, as argued by Delany (2016), implies that it is imperative to establish a proper integration between an organisation's business and HR strategies in order to enhance an organisations' adaptability. In order to deliver this SHRM challenge, some corporations have adopted HRBP model.

With HRBP model therefore, HR functions as strategic partners would perform respective roles beyond the administrative and transactional functions they have traditionally played. It has been argued that HRBP model offers the possibility of creating an integrated and consistent framework for the selection, appraisal, training and development of HR practitioners, as well as a mechanism for linking HR strategy and business performance (Boyatzis, 1993; Ulrich et al., 1995; Ulrich et al., 2008). In their study, Becker and Huselid (1998) found that there was a strong positive relationship between HR practices and firm performance as HR functions were found to have a value-addition role to play in corporate strategy development and execution. In the same vein, Delany (2016) observes that from historical perspective, modern organisations, both private and public have widely adopted good HRM ideals with competency models that impact positively on business strategy.

However, despite the growth in adoption of HRBP models and their widespread advocacy, there appears to have been very few empirical or survey based investigations of the effectiveness of these models in redefining HR roles or in delivering a more strategic HR function (Huselid et al., 1997; Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

It is argued that many organisations are struggling to make HRBP model work effectively across the globe; be that in applying the Ulrich model itself or a customized approach and interpretation of its roles, structure and strategy outputs (Lawler & Mohrman, 2000). According to Lawler and Mohrman (2000), difficulties include uncertainty over the approach, inadequate preparation and weak implementation. At global level, challenges continue to grow affecting organizations' effectiveness when it comes to integration of HR practices in strategy development (Boxall, & Purcell, 2000). Related studies in Africa also report challenges associated with the integration of HR practices at a strategic level (Mwatete, 2012; Mzee, 2012). To the researchers knowledge, a number of organisations in Malawi especially in multinational and banking sectors are using HRBP model and these include; World Vision International, Save the Children, Standard Bank, NBS Bank, Unilever, among others.

For the organisations that have adopted HRBP model, the HR function is expected to participate in strategic planning to help the business meet present and future goals rather than concentrating solely on HR duties such as benefits, payroll and employee relations among others (Caldwell, 2010). HR functions seek to add value to the corporations by overseeing business alignment, change management, acquisitions, human capital on-boarding, development and retention. In theory, the HRBP model is designed to positively impact the business at all levels over time. According to Wright et al (1999), in knowing the inner workings of the business, the strategic nature of the HRBP model is tasked with a corporate chess game of employee and manager placement to achieve the most productive outcome. In view of the going, therefore, this study attempted to establish if the adoption of HRBP model enhances the strategic role of HR functions. This was done by investigating the internal stakeholders' perceptions over their HR department's functioning in organisations that have adopted the HRBP model in Malawi.

1.3 Problem Statement

The Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) is a popular designation for many human resources professionals in today's world labour market and Malawi is not exceptional. Corporations in Malawi have developed relatively sophisticated and role-specific competency models for business partnering based on the strong wish to move into HR business partnering (Mamman, et al., 2018). Usually, corporations adopt competency models in order to position their businesses for competitive advantage. This can be evidenced by scholars' consensus that there has been an enormous growth in the use of HR competency models over the last decade as part of an overall attempt to realign the HR functions and transform HR professionals into 'business partners' (Ulrich et al., 1995; Ulrich, 1997; Ramlall, 2006). From the discussion above, it can be seen that there has been wide publicity and strong advocacy on the need to subscribe to competency models to sustain the survival of the HR functions in the face of ever-changing business environment.

However, despite the growth in 'business partnering' competency models and their widespread advocacy, there appears to have been very few empirical or survey based academic investigations of the effectiveness of these models in redefining HR roles or

in delivering a more strategic HR function (Huselid et al., 1997; Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Ulrich et al., 2008). It is not fully clear whether the integration is really delivering as a useful foundation for role reinvention, performance improvement and the transformation of the HR function, among others, in organisations.

Furthermore, despite that the topics of HR competency models and HRBP in particular have been widely researched, the overarching question of their effectiveness has rarely been critically addressed in the HR competency literature, at least directly (Caldwell, 2010). At global level, studies have generally focused on effectiveness of competency models in predicting performance (Caldwell, 2010). In developing countries and transitional economies there have been investigations of the strategic roles that HR practitioners can play in general (Antila, 2006; Antila & Kakkonen, 2008; Bowen et al., 2002; Mamman & Al Kulaiby, 2014; Mamman & Somantri, 2014; Rees, 2013; Sumelius et al., 2009).

To the researcher's knowledge, there is only one known study in Malawi on the subject matter by Mamman et al., (2018) which has touched on HRBP model although with focus on Employee Champion role only. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM in Malawi. This was done by comparing the internal stakeholders' perceptions of HR Function's role in case organisations that have officially adopted the HRBP model in Malawi.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 Main Research Question

What are the effects of adopting HRBP model on HR functions' strategic role of selected corporations in Malawi?

1.4.2 Specific Research Questions

The specific research questions of the study are:

1. What are the factors behind the adoption of HRBP in selected corporations?
2. What is the linkage between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions?

3. What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles?
4. What are the challenges facing HRBP model?

1.5 Research Objectives

1.5.1 Main Research Objective

The aim of the study is to analyse the effects of adopting HRBP model in enhancing the strategic role of the HR functions of selected corporations in Malawi.

1.5.2 Specific Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate factors behind the adoption of HRBP in selected corporations
2. To examine linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions
3. To explore perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles
4. To evaluate challenges facing HRBP model

1.6 Significance of the Study

The determination of perceived effectiveness of HR functions' in contributing to business strategy in selected corporations in Malawi is of significance for future research, knowledge sharing as well as relevant intervention. It may also be argued that for quality corporate strategic support, competitive advantage, talent management, improved productivity and service delivery to mention but a few, a shared understanding of an ideal HR Competency model for an organisation to adopt is imperative. Knowledge and understanding of whether the adoption of HRBP model is effective in enhancing the strategic role of HR functions in Malawi is essential. This can help in stimulation of wider adoption of the model as well as in reflecting over current practices.

To the researcher's knowledge, the subject matter is highly under researched in Malawi as no published study has been found to explore the effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM in Malawi. The only known related study

is by Mamman, et al., (2018) which only attempted to assess the perceptions of employees over the effectiveness of HR Practitioners' Employee Advocacy/Champion role derived from Ulrich's HRBP Model.

Furthermore, despite that the topics of HR competency models and HRBP in particular have been widely researched at global level, the overarching question of their effectiveness has rarely been critically addressed in the HR competency literature, at least directly (Caldwell, 2010). In the United Kingdom (UK) for example, studies have generally focused on effectiveness of competency models in predicting performance (Caldwell, 2010). In developing countries and transitional economies on the other hand, studies have mostly investigated the strategic roles that HR practitioners can play in general (Antila, 2006; Antila & Kakkonen, 2008; Bowen et al., 2002; Mamman & Al Kulaiby, 2014; Mamman & Somantri, 2014; Rees, 2013; Sumelius et al., 2009). Therefore, this study will help in providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM in Malawi.

Further, this study will help to improve people's understanding about the effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM in Malawi. The study focused on the perceptions of HR practitioners, line managers and CEOs about their assessment of the difference that adoption of HRBP model makes in an organisation as far as the issue of significant contribution to business strategy is concerned. The paper focused on the organisations that have officially adopted the HRBP model in terms of general perceptions of internal customers towards the role of HR function in their organisations.

The findings of this study, therefore, bring in new knowledge to existing literature on the subject matter from Malawian context. This is an important way of gap filling in the knowledge and literature on what enhances the strategic role of HRM in organisations in Malawian setting. The study will also help study sample to reflect on whether the adoption of HRBP model is shaping their HR functions' strategic roles. Results from this study may be helpful to stakeholders to adequately appreciate the phenomena and tackle challenges associated with HR/business integration.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 1 is the introduction which gives the background information, states the problem, objectives of the study and assumptions; Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the topic of study as well as providing the theoretical framework that guided the research study; Chapter 3 describes the study methodology; Chapter 4 discusses the study findings; while Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and implication of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on perspective effects of adopting HRBP model in enhancing the strategic role of the HRM in Malawi. Focus will be on defining key terms; analysing factors behind adoption of HRBP in selected corporations; assessing linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions; analysing perceptions regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles; exploring challenges facing HRBP model ; and providing theoretical framework for the study including conclusion

2.2 Definition of Key Terms

This section presents definitions of words and phrases as operationalised in this study. According to Poole (1990) HR can be described as the business unit responsible for management decisions that affect the nature of the relationship between the organisation and its people, emphasising the link with business policy and strategic management. On the other hand, Boxall and Purcell (2000) argues that HRM includes anything and everything associated with the management and employment relations in the firm. In this paper therefore, HR has been operationalised to mean the function or department within an organisation that deals with people issues while HRM is contextualised as the traditional way of managing HR function as a separate supporting unit from core business. According to Beckett (2005), business partnership refers to business advisory which focuses on utilising the human capital assets in the most profitable manner. In this paper, HRBP model is presented to mean the modern approach of managing HR functions that focuses on business alignment and integration of HR with core business of the organisation. HRBP is one form of competency models. Competency models are defined as a narrative description of the competencies for a targeted job category, occupational group, division, department or other unit of analysis (Ashkezari & Aeen, 2012).

According to Wright and McMahan (1992), SHRM focuses on the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities required for a business to achieve its goals. SHRM is therefore presented to mean the integration of HR function to business strategy and its ability to get involved and contribute positively to business strategy. Business Strategy refers to long term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal or set of goals or objectives that exists in all organisations even when it is not explicit. Strategic planning on the other hand refers to a formal process of defining what and how things will be done in the future (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). According Lawler and Boudreau (2009), strategic role of HR implies participating in business strategy setting is in providing input, in the form of data and opinion, and then being most active in strategy implementation. On the other hand, Huselid et al., (1997) argues that strategic approach to HRM involves designing and implementing a set of internally consistent policies and practices that ensure a firm's human capital (employees' collective knowledge, skills and abilities) contributes to the achievement of organisational goals.

2.3 Factors behind adoption of HRBP in selected corporations

As HR functions move to take on different, more strategic roles and responsibilities, there is an inevitable shift in the roles for the HR and broader people management community and for the way that the HR function itself is organised (Delany, 2016). A key driver for this interest is the 'Ulrich model' seeing HR as a 'business partner' and leading to partnership between HR and line managers with an ultimate expectation that HR leaders will operate as 'strategic business partners' (Ulrich, 1987). Ulrich's (1997) work is widely referred to as the HRBP model because the approach's central goal is the increase of HRM's strategic orientation through the establishment of HRM professionals as strategic consultants for other organisational units (Marchington, 2015). The Ulrich framework presented four distinct roles for the HR profession being an employee champion, change agent, administrative expert and most importantly, a strategic business partner of line managers to implement and influence organisational strategy.

2.3.1 Ulrich's HR Business Partnering Model

This model asserts that HR professionals will be successful in the effective integration of the four principle roles namely; strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent (Ulrich, 1997)

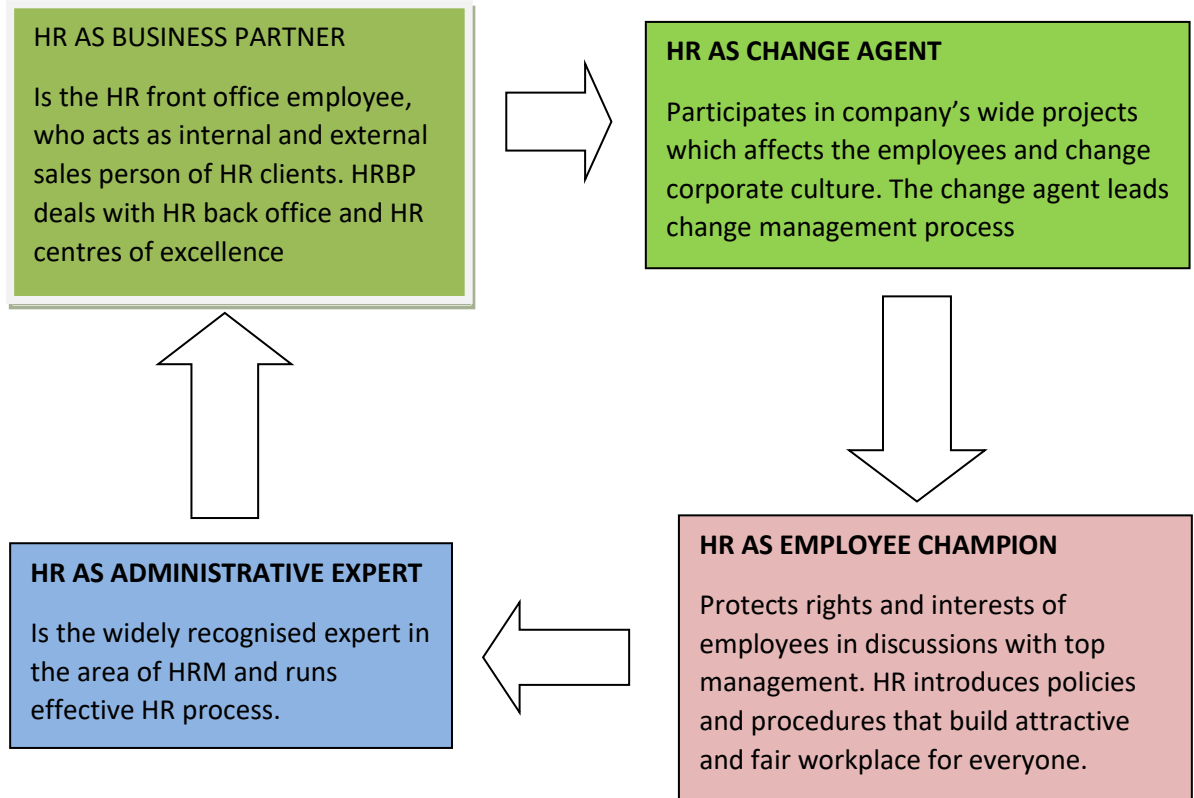


Figure 1: Ulrich's HRBP model

In this model, HR practitioners working as Strategic Partners work alongside management to align HR with the business and help line managers execute strategy, meeting planned objectives and performance requirements. Administrative Experts deliver the basics of HRM by designing and improving people-related processes, focusing on efficiency and cost effective delivery of transactional or administrative HRM. Employee Champions retain the required link with employees to protect and/or improve motivation and competencies, targeting employee engagement and commitment to secure business success, accepting that there is potential for role conflict in mediating between the interests of employees and the business. And, finally, Change Agents facilitate organisational transformation and culture change, suggesting a shift in role for HR as a move away from reaction to one of intervention (Dalany, 2016).

Widely, scholars have generally agreed that adoption of HRBP model is driven by the need for organisations to adapt to changes in the operating environment, to increase organisation success, as well as to improve the quality and efficiency of HR services (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015; Caldwell, 2003; Hailey et al., 2006 & Francis et al., 2014). These widely agreed upon factors behind the adoption of HRBP model explains why most organisations have already adopted HRBP model over HRM as a support function worldwide. The term HRM has been around for almost a century but its modern application and recognition as a means of supporting the strategic business goals is a recent development. In contradiction of previous approaches to personnel management, which associated the personnel function with the role of a negotiator and administrator of policies, HRM involves a proactive and flexible approach of managing employees (Hope-Hailey et al., 1997). In this sense, HRM enables organisations to move away from the bureaucracy of personnel management and develop an HR function that could match the changing organisational context and develop according to specific business goals (Boxall et al., 2007). Recent changes in the organisational environment and the shift from traditional operative work to an increased strategic focus has therefore caused many organisations to review their HR departments (Hope-Hailey et al., 1997). Therefore, alignment of processes and a well-functioning relationship with line managers is considered critical for linking HR to the business (Hope-Hailey et al., 1997).

According to Baxter(2009),despite that numerous revisions to the model have been made to suit organisational contexts, Ulrich's HRBP models continuous to be widely adopted by organisations worldwide. This is so because the ongoing change of the business environment requires HRM roles to continuously adapt to the new context hence most organisations are compelled to adopt the HRBP model (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015).

Regardless of the fact that the number and responsibilities of Ulrich's HRM roles have changed several times, practitioners maintain a high level of interest in translating the HRM roles into concrete job descriptions (Tayel, 2020). In practice, the most common interpretation of Ulrich's (1997) work to restructure HRM functions is known as the Three-Legged Stool Model (TLSM) based on the three aspects from which HRBP is widely operationalised (Reilly et al, 2007). First aspect

comprise of Strategic Partners who are usually senior or key HRM professionals assigned to specific business units to help line managers develop and execute functional strategies or projects; secondly, Centres of Expertise comprising of skilled workers who have profound HRM knowledge to deal with specialist HRM activities such as talent development or change management; and thirdly, Shared Service Centres designated to managing routine HRM tasks with administrative staff. It is important to note that the TLSM as it is implemented in organisations today is more of an interpretation of Ulrich's work promoted by HRM professionals and management consultants than an application of his original propositions which still bases as the understanding of HRBP model in this paper.

Studies have shown that the adoption of HRBP model by way of restructuring HR functions started in the United States following the publication of Ulrich's book; Human Resource Champions (Ulrich, 1997). In the subsequent years, the trend immediately spread to other countries in the Western industrialized world (Ayodeji, 2015). To illustrate this, 93% of the companies listed in the German stock exchange index DAX30 have implemented Ulrich's HRBP model followed by numerous small and medium sized companies mimicking their larger counterparts (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012).

The HRBP model's widespread adoption signifies that there are factors influencing organisations to adopt it (Caldwell, 2003; 2008; Hailey et al., 2006). According to scholars, the continued use and adoption of HRBP model by organisations from different sectors worldwide signifies the critical role that the model plays in ensuring organisational success (Caldwell, 2003; 2008; Hailey et al., 2006). In contrast however, it is argued that HRBP model's value is largely consultancy/practice led and characterized by functional concerns about improving the quality and efficiency of HR services but not evidence based (Francis et al., 2014). It is further argued that business media and practitioners' journals make up for the lack of rigorous studies by spreading success stories and anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of the HRBP model implementation (Peacock, 2007; Towers, 2011). This positive bias in communication is what is considered as the main reason in faddish dynamics where large numbers of organisations adopt the HRBP model without considering whether it

fits their company-specific internal configuration and their external market environment (Strang & Macy, 1999).

Given the HRBP model's lack of scientific foundation, missing success proof and insufficient contextual adaptability as argued by scholars, the question arises as to why practitioners in the Western industrialized countries are still caught by the "Ulrichization" of HRM (Keegan & Francis, 2010). The approach seems to be almost immune against critique: If evidence emerges that questions the concept's validity, a number of alternative explanations for a lack of implementation success are brought forward, such as a talent gap among HRM professionals (Kienbaum, 2014), insufficient commitment of the top management or line managers (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2009), and a need to re-skill HRM employees (Deloitte, 2014).

Having appreciated the varying arguments of the factors behind adoption of HRBP Model, this paper takes a position that HRBP model is adopted with the aim to align HR to business strategies and integrate HR with other business units so as to improve organisational efficiency. This is so considering that organisations do benchmark before adopting new frameworks. And given the cost associated with the restructuring of an HR function, it is only reasonable to assume that the wide adoption of HRBP models signify their efficiency. To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have been published so far relating to factors behind the adoption of HRBP model in corporations that have adopted the model in Malawi. This particular study therefore sheds more light on the matter.

2.4 Linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions

With reference to the changing role of HR and the importance of HRM practices, to the researcher's knowledge, much research has been dedicated to capture the meaning of the complex HR roles and their linkages to other functions within the organisational structure. This is especially relevant for the HRBP role since it involves having a profound knowledge of the business venture while also providing high-quality HR services to line managers specifically (Lambert, 2009). This, in turn, enables leaders to manage personnel accordingly and is an important part in ensuring the success of both organisational performance and HR strategies (Ulrich et al., 2009).

In this sense, the HR business partners (HRBPs) function as a link between the HR community and line managers by translating business needs from an HR perspective. As a result, progress in the role is largely determined by the HRBPs' ability to form successful partnerships with line managers as well as their position in relation to the other HR functions (Lambert, 2009). In the transition towards HR becoming a strategic business partner, there are a number of criteria which need to be fulfilled to achieve successful business partnering (Lambert, 2009).

According to Brockway (2007), HR must first abandon the traditional view of working reactively and become more proactive and future oriented while also continue to deliver HR services efficiently. Second, the HRBPs specifically need to develop and sustain credible relationships with line managers while the managers take responsibility for people management within their space. Lastly, HRBPs need to be empowered with the right skills and enough time to make use of their expertise. This is facilitated by having a clearly defined HR structure, open communication and ensuring that the different functions are easily accessible for both HR professionals and managers (Brockway, 2007). Similar arguments are made by Beer (1997) in the discussion on how HR must act to take on a more strategic role. Claims are made regarding the need to develop both analytical and interpersonal skills in order to earn credibility while also taking initiatives towards change (Beer, 1997).

Ulrich (1998) collaborates the foregoing by stating that pressures from the organisational environment, such as expansion from local to global markets and increased competitiveness, requires HR to take on new roles and responsibilities so as to deliver value. In order to meet these challenges, many organisations are in the process of adopting an HR perspective based on market performance, organisational renewal and change management rather than administrative support. For the HR profession to be transformed it must overcome its reputation as a support function and be closely integrated with the business goals by delivering impactful solutions based on both an HR and business oriented perspective (Brockway, 2007). Research by Ulrich et al., (2009) on how HR should be structured in order to efficiently contribute to the business, suggests a combination of three different functions: a centralized shared service centre which performs standardized, transactional HR services; a centre of expertise operating as a specialized consulting firm within the organisation; and

HR business partners working closely with senior and line managers in strategic development and change management.

Further research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) show that successful implementation of this shared service model (SSM) is considered to make delivery of transactional services more efficient, improve quality of specialized services and bring HR closer to the business by partnering with line managers (CIPD, 2007). In the discussion on delivery of HR services, a distinction must be made between transactional and transformative work. Transactional work, often referred to as operative, is based on standardized assignments often carried out through a centralized service function and applied similarly throughout the organisation (Ulrich et al., 2009). This allows for a consistent and effective approach to solving issues within areas such as payroll, personnel and benefit administration. Transformative HR on the other hand, is focused on strategy and processes which contribute to organisational goals and correspond to specialized needs within the business units (Ulrich et al., 2009).

Although there is an increasing focus on HR as a strategic business partner, high-quality transactional work must be performed in order for the transformative work to be successful and HRBPs specifically need to have knowledge of both. In a study by Truss (2008), HR is described as developing into a form of hybrid-role which establishes validity of administration while also delivering at a strategic level by working in close collaboration with other business functions. However, despite this development, there is often a reluctance to replace traditional HR roles within organisations (Truss, 2008). In order for HR to be successful in fulfilling their potential as a strategic partner, the organisation as a whole must therefore ensure that expectations on HR business partnering correspond with reality. This is further discussed by Francis and Keegan (2006) who express concern over new HR structures causing a lack of commonly accepted definition of the term business partnering, which may create a disconnection between operative and strategic HR. As a result, the HBRP role in particular is claimed to become determined by specific business needs which complicates a generic definition and contributes to confusion regarding its responsibilities (Francis & Keegan, 2006).

According to Sandstrom (2002), in the 1990s, corporations made an effort to take advantage of every cost-cutting tool. However, they realized that the great competitive advantages do not come from cost cutting but from growth. So, their aim went beyond cost cutting to focus instead on growing their business faster. According to Emmott (2004), many top management gurus and line managers perceive the increasing importance of HRM beyond administrative function to solving business problems. This entails that, HRM takes a step forward with ideas and insights which become more and more valuable for the company's success and will enhance the company's growth and performance; which has seen HR experts being provided an equal seat at the business planning table. From the increasing roles and importance of HR experts, companies tend to use the generic term "Business Partner" to call them (Sandstrom, 2002).

Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) outline the trends about the increasing roles of HR professionals and suggest that HR must play as full business partners in organisations; the role of HR business partner has to be closely aligned with business strategy and its tasks should flow from the company's needs. They further describe the purpose of the business partner model as an integration of HR professionals into business processes by way of aligning their day-to-day work with business outcomes. This entails that HR business partners should concentrate more on deliverables and business results rather than HR activities. To make the full impact of HR practices on firm performance, HR professionals are needed to be involved in the strategy formation process hence accountable for managing the corporate and business unit level strategic direction by deploying their people management knowledge (Vosburgh, 2007).

It is scholarly agreeable that there is a strong link between HRBP model and HR functions' strategic roles as the former requires the latter to use their knowledge to create the people strategy for meeting current and future organisational goals. Meaning, with HRBP model, strategic role of an HR function should entail ability to find the most effective ways to attract people with right skills, to hire before its competitors and to keep them within the companies. All HR staff functions are striving to seek opportunities to provide more value to top-line growth and bottom-line profitability (Ulrich et al., 2009). Although the right competencies and strategies

are essential for this exchange, specific qualities and values within the partnership are also crucial for its success and consequently, the organisational value it creates. In their work on value adding HR, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) claim that mutual trust in the HR-line partnership is essential and largely established by having both formal and informal meetings regularly. The authors also explain that partnerships of this nature ensure that, while both parties bring unique competencies for their joint task, their combined skills are more than the sum of their parts (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005, p.236), implying that the partnership adds more value than would the separate performance of each part. In order for this to succeed however, both HR and line managers need to realize the added value of contributing to the partnership as well as respect each other's separate objectives.

From the discussion above, it can be said that it is scholarly agreeable that there is a strong link between HRBP model and HR functions' strategic roles as the former requires the latter to use their knowledge to create the people strategy for meeting current and future organisational goals. Meaning, with HRBP model, strategic role of an HR function should entail ability to find the most effective ways to attract people with right skills, to hire before its competitors and to keep them within the companies. However, as can be seen, most of these studies have been done elsewhere with different sets of emphasis altogether. This study therefore hopes to provide Malawian context of the linkages between HRBP model and HR functions in the organisations that have adopted the model.

2.5 Perceptions regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles

Despite the growth in adoption of HRBP models and their widespread advocacy, there appears to have been very few empirical or survey based investigations of the effectiveness of these models in redefining HR roles or in delivering a more strategic HR function (Huselid et al., 1997; Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Furthermore, despite that the topics of HR competency models and HRBP in particular have been widely researched, the overarching question of their effectiveness has rarely been critically addressed in the HR competency literature, at least directly (Caldwell, 2010).

At global level, studies have generally focused on effectiveness of competency models in predicting performance (Caldwell, 2010). In United States of America (USA), Becker and Huselid (1998) found that there was a strong positive relationship between HR practices and firm performance as HR functions were found to have a value-addition role to play in corporate strategy development and execution. In United Kingdom (UK), another empirical study was done by Caldwell (2010) who conducted a survey which used a total of 118 completed questionnaires from respondents in 114 different organizations in the UK that have embraced the HRBP model. The survey aimed at assessing the effectiveness of HRBP competency models in the UK by linking selection and development as antecedents of the HR-business strategy linkage, with HR business partner performance as its outcome. The overall survey findings indicate that competency models for business partners are not as effective as generally assumed, and they are particularly weak in predicting performance in business partnering roles.

In developing countries and transitional economies too, there have been investigations of the strategic roles that HR practitioners can play (Antila, 2006; Antila & Kakkonen, 2008; Bowen et al., 2002; Mamman & Al-Kulaiby, 2014; Mamman & Somantri, 2014; Rees, 2013; Sumelius et al., 2009). In Pakistan for example, most studies on the subject matter have been carried out. Such studies include Aldrich et al (2015), who, based on 47 interviews from 21 different institutions, found that HR's modest influence on organization performance is contingent on the pre-dispositions and convictions of key stakeholders, notably the CEO, but also depends on the decision being taken. On the other hand, Asadullah et al (2015) found that the quality of the strategic partner and change agent role is the lowest, the quality of the employee champion role is the highest and the quality of the administrative role of HR is modest. However, this was done on not-for-profit health sector organizations in Pakistan using four roles of the HR Champions Model presented by Ulrich. Another study by Jansson and Rozenbachs (2016) based on interviews, recommended a more holistic approach to the problem (including business and top management) is needed to facilitate a strategic partnership with the HR function. Teal (2019) also investigated the effects of the growth of the role of HR practitioners in current business operations. Specifically, through the research of this study, the current skills and knowledge gap within current HR practitioners and how they align with organizational expectations

and expansion initiatives were explored. Lastly, a study by Partner (2014) shows the impact of line management's resistance to HRM and the concomitant need for HR managers to legitimate their position in a new way. However, this study examined HR Business Partnering relations in one organization and mainly from the perspective of HR managers.

While in African context, Pieterse and Rothmann (2009) conducted a study which aimed at confirming the validity of the HRBP model and to determine the relationship between the perceptions of functional managers and those of human resource practitioners regarding the importance of human resources roles, as well as the perceived business enabling contribution of human resource activities. The study was conducted in a petrochemical company operating in South Africa and a number of other countries in Africa, Europe and the United States. The sample selected for the study included 709 human resource generalists, managers and specialists in this organisation, as well as the most senior functional managers to whom they are rendering a human resource service. The study found that both line managers and human resource practitioners regard the human resources roles suggested by Ulrich (1997) as important. Strategic partnering was perceived by both human resource practitioners and line managers as most important, while administrative expertise to be the least important human resource role.

As it can be seen, most of the studies done on HRBP model both at global and regional level have touched on most aspects of the model except its effectiveness in enhancing the strategic role of HR in particular. This study therefore, attempts to bridge this gap by providing a Malawian perspective on the aforesaid. It is this paper's argument that despite the attractiveness of the HRBP model to modern organisations' needs, its effectiveness is dependent on how well the model is employed to the letter. This argument aligns with what most scholars have argued that there are many organisations that have failed to implement HRBP model successfully and have thought that the model is ineffective. For example, Ulrich (1997) states that the companies fail because they fail to apply this new role correctly or the person, who is responsible for the new strategic role, is not sufficiently trained or qualified. The author further argues that there is need for HR business partners to know about the company's process and its direction which allows them to develop the most

effective methods in helping it reach its goals. On the other hand, Sandstrom (2002) argues that having the know-how is not enough to perform the HRBP role. This new role is only suitable for individuals who have multi-skills to be able to perform tasks because some may require strong generalist skills while the others may need HR expertise. The author further argues that the business partner must have good communication skill to provide full and effective HR support for the management team and must have marketing skills necessary to influence key managers and make change happen. Reilly (1952) also mentions about the requirement for business partner role in terms of developing skills set in both HR and their generic management roles in order to add useful value to the business at a strategic level.

According MacNeil (2003), the relationships that are formed between HR functions and line managers can improve both individual and organisational performance, but successful collaboration also requires mutual commitment to the partnership. This is so because the line manager's role includes both operative and strategic responsibilities which depend on an ability to manage both people and the business, including taking full responsibility for HRM activities. This line of thinking is supported by Ulrich (1998) who states that the main benefits of line manager involvement in daily HRM activities such as employee development, performance management and recruitment is that it allows them to improve their leadership skills while also enabling HR to focus on strategy.

The involvement in such activities and support from the business partner requires that managers view HRM activities as a natural part of the managerial role rather than an additional workload. This is in accordance with Currie and Procter (2001), who claim that rather than devolution of HRM responsibilities to the line, increased collaboration between HR and managers should be considered a partnership based on exchange of knowledge and a shared understanding for the added value of collaborating. However, there is evidence that the HR-line relation is not unproblematic and there are several factors which influence its relative success. In addition, Currie and Procter (2001) explain that there is lack of a clear understanding for how this partnership works in practice since it is contingent on different considerations depending on how the same is perceived at management level.

Development of a collaborative relationship between HR and line managers is also considered a fundamental part of ensuring success of daily HRM activities throughout the organisation. Line managers have an important role in successfully integrating HR strategy throughout the organisation due to their responsibility for performing daily HRM activities (Ulrich, 1998). This, in turn, requires a robust HR function which can provide line managers with high-quality support on both operative and strategic HR issues. This support is illustrated by Renwick (2003) who suggests that line managers must fulfil their HRM responsibilities since management includes both managing people and money, which can only be successfully achieved by having knowledge of both. Therefore, the justification for line manager involvement in HRM and partnering with HR to develop these skills is a prerequisite to their relative success and impact on organisational performance (Ulrich, 1998).

According to Renwick (2003), HRM responsibilities are largely considered a part of line management although support from HR in performing such responsibilities is important for positive results. The general consensus among scholars is that line managers have HRM responsibility for their business area, while HR professionals are responsible for HRM on an organisational level, which further promotes a close collaboration (Renwick, 2003). In their study on variations in line management responsibility for HRM across Europe, Renwick (2003) found that despite differences in organisational structure and functional sector, line manager involvement in HRM is increasing. The authors claim that this trend is largely due to reductions of HR departments in response to financial pressures, which in turn leads to a greater demand on HR to prove its value. The service shared management can be considered such a reduction since its implementation often involves line managers being given more responsibility for HRM in the daily business.

According to Renwick (2003), this can lead to a number of practical problems including a reluctance to take on more responsibility, lack of time or knowledge and not having a long-term focus on the value of HR for organisational performance. Similarly, HR professionals also express concerns regarding managers' ability to cope with formal HR responsibilities although it is also suggested that by having the ultimate responsibility, line managers may become committed to these issues and thereby enhance integration of HR with other objectives (Whittaker & Marchington,

2003). Based on a case study investigating line managers' view of HR and their role in performing HR responsibilities, Whittaker and Marchington (2003) also found that line managers consider HRM a natural part of being a manager and consider their collaboration with HR as developing into a partnership. In this sense, HRM is considered a shared area rather than a separate or devolved responsibility.

An important part of line manager involvement in HRM activities can be understood as based on a willingness to develop their people management skills. In a study on how line managers view their HR responsibilities, Brandl et al., (2009) observe that HRM success requires active involvement of all managers and that their personal motivation and ability are important for conducting HR tasks such as recruitment, employee development and performance appraisal. It is therefore crucial that HR empowers line managers by helping them develop the right skills while also motivating them to assume a positive mindset toward HRM (Brandl et al., 2009).

Equally important is that the HRBP is invited into the business agenda and that line managers are open and honest about the challenges within their specific business unit (Lambert, 2009). According to Lambert (2009), the main barrier in establishing a successful partnership is line managers' lack of understanding for how to use their HRBP model. This entails that successful partnering depends on line managers realizing the benefits and added value of a close collaboration with HRM within their business units.

From this discussion, it can be seen that there is generally conflicting views as to whether adoption of HRBP models have an impact on HR functions' roles. What is clear is that for HRBP model to work, there are prerequisites that organisations need to meet. Depending on how well the model is being employed, positive impact on HR functions is anticipated. This study therefore aims at establishing whether adoption of HRBP model has positive effects on the functioning of HR functions in organisations that have adopted the model in Malawi.

2.6 Challenges facing HRBP model

Though widely adopted worldwide, scholars have cited that HRBP model face limitations to deliver intended results. To support this argument, lapses in implementation, capacity inefficiencies on the part of the project champions, insufficient commitment of the top management or line managers to support the business partnering agenda and failure to clearly share roles have been cited as the main challenges associated with HRBP model in practice (Kienbaum, 2014; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2009; Deloitte, 2014).

According to Beer (1997), there is need for open communication and higher levels of coordination across business units if HRBP model is to work. Arguably, it is only when the aforementioned are adhered to that HR functions can successfully develop in the role as a strategic partner to the business. In connection to debate on the success of HRBP role, the Corporate Research Forum (CRF) conducted a comprehensive study on requirements for effectiveness in the role, presented in a report by Lambert (2009). Their study suggest that problems related to the HRBP role include the risk of HRBPs being burdened with operative tasks which hinders strategic focus and can result in duplication of services between the HR functions as well as distrust in terms of HRBPs contribution to the line of business. A lack of shared vision and unclear role definitions between the different HR functions were also found to affect the success of partnerships between HRBPs and line managers. To avoid these potential problems, Lambert (2009) argues that open communication and a close collaboration is necessary for aligning expectations. Similarly, Wright (2008) argues that legitimacy of the HR function is established through the acceptance of managers and acknowledgement of the HRBP role itself rather than its power relations within the organisation.

It is further argued that achieving status as a trusted adviser on the part of the HRBP depend on characteristics such as superior influencing to enable managers to make more qualified decisions as well as having well developed relationship and networking skills (Wright, 2008). This argument for legitimization is important since the development of HR as a function and diversity in roles such as the HRBP could potentially dilute the occupational identity of the profession further if it is not accepted by managers on all levels. Hence, HRBPs cannot become successful by

working in isolation but depend on the professional relationships formed within the organisational environment which requires both professional and relational skills.

To the researcher's knowledge, studies from the discussion above have been done in other countries. No known publications have been done to establish challenges associated with the development, adoption and implementation of HRBP models in Malawi. This study therefore can potentially help to contribute to the already existing knowledge on the subject matter.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study falls within the disciplinary field of industrial and organisational psychology. By definition, industrial and organisational psychology refers to the application of psychological theory to understand the behaviour of people in the workplace (Campbell, 1999). According to Muchinsky et al., (1998), such a study of the behaviour of people in the workplace implies scientific observation, evaluation, optimal utilisation and influencing. This study further dissects the theory to the subfields of personnel psychology and organisational development. According to Muchinsky et al (1998), personnel psychology is an applied discipline that focuses on individual differences in behaviour and job performance and on methods of measuring and predicting such performance. Generally, a study on the effectiveness of an HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM function falls within the field of personnel psychology.

Boninelli (2004) described the role of the HR function as dealing with people-related behaviour that is critical to organisational success, and the positioning of such behaviour or problems within the broader context of the organisation as a system. In industrial psychology, methods of social science can be used to assess the usefulness or effectiveness of social interventions (Bless, et al., 1995). The study involves assessing a specific problem to ensure usability and ground it in wants, needs, and desires of real people (Bless, et al., 1995). The study on the effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing strategic role of HRM in Malawi could benefit from industrial and personnel psychology to identify the perceptions of key stakeholders within organisations regarding the effectiveness of HRM role in general, and HRBP model in particular, in effectively contributing to business strategy. From a formative perspective, personnel psychology could further assist by shaping the foregoing

model so that it could have the greatest beneficial impact in enhancing strategic role of HRM in organisations.

From the discussion above, it can be deduced that different studies related to the HRBP Model have been conducted across the world; however, to the researcher's knowledge, very few studies have been done in Malawi. This particular study therefore hopes to add to the already existing knowledge in the field.

2.9 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed the relevant literature on the perspective effectiveness of HRBP model in enhancing SHRM by defining key terms, analysing factors behind adoption of HRBP in selected corporations, assessing linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions, analysing perceptions regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles, exploring challenges facing HRBP model and providing theoretical framework for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology employed in conducting the research. It describes the location where the study was conducted, the research design, sampling method employed, tools for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, study limitations and conclusion.

3.2 Study Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design because of its investigative, explanatory and descriptive nature which is critical in understanding the scope, depth and practice of HRBP model and its potential influence in enhancing the strategic role of HR functions in selected organisations. The study also sought to unearth how the HR and other business functions work together in delivering on business strategy. These core aspects of the study can only be best understood using a qualitative approach because they enabled the researcher to answer the “how?” and “why?” questions thereby examining how the HR functions are perceived in contributing to business strategies in some of the organisations that officially adopted HRBP model in Malawi.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Lilongwe and Blantyre cities. The two cities were selected purposely because they host the organisations that have officially adopted HRBP model being World Vision International; Save the Children International; NBS Bank; and Standard Bank. The two cities constitute the study area on this basis.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

Sampling is a process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in a study (Ogula, 2005). It is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected (Ogula, 2005). This study used purposive sampling technique to identify the respondents. Jupp (2006) narrates that purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in a study. Despite the fact that purposive sampling is often associated with bias on the part of the researcher in selecting a sample as well as that it can limit the information collected as it is based on the views of one particular group (Macnee & McCabe, 2008), it also allows researchers to focus on a particular subject which can best be addressed by respondents with authority over the subject matter. This study found purposive sampling handy as it enabled the researcher to interview key stakeholders with authority over the subject matter in the organizations that have adopted the HRBP model in Malawi.

3.5 Study Sample and Sampling and Sample Size

The study employed a purposive sampling approach to identify and select respondents. In this approach, a list of targeted respondents was generated from a variety of published sources and proprietary databases that contained information on organisations pursuing HRBP model or those in which the HRBP job title is used based on a review of organisational profile and company information available on their websites, through print publications and professional networks. This helped to determine nature of their respective HR functions. In addition, to purposively sample, it was anticipated that some respondents would be referred to during data collection. Therefore, snow-balling method was also included as an approach to complement purposive sampling. All respondents were selected purposively because their perceptions, knowledge, and experience with HRBP model were sought intentionally. Individual respondents including HR practitioners, Line Managers and CEOs constituted a unit of analysis. A minimum of 28 respondents were interviewed in this study. Data was collected until the type of information being collected reached a

saturation point. The study included 4 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)/Country Representatives, 12 line managers and 12 HR practitioners.

3.6 Data Collection

The study involved collection of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained using Key Informant Interviews. The secondary data was collected using Desk reviews of the company's websites, profiles as well as other related documents.

3.6.1 Key Informant Interviews

The study involved a series of 28 interviews. These interviews were one-on-one interviews with key informants. These included 2 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), 2 Country Representatives, 12 line managers and 12 HR practitioners. Jupp, (2006) states that key informants include respondents more experiential and or technically knowledgeable about the subject matter under discussion; hence the study included senior management members of the sampled organisations. A total of 28 interviews with key informants were conducted and were considered enough as respondents' responses became repetitive. However, through the discussions, respondents were granted the latitude to discuss issues in great depth and scale with reference to examples.

3.6.2 Desk Review

Desk review is a form of secondary data collection by reviewing existing documents. In this study, it involved soliciting relevant HR documentation specifically Consultancy reports, HR Handbooks, Organograms and organisation profiles both on their websites and directly during data collection. These helped in understanding how HR functions were set up.

3.7 Data Analysis

The study employed content analysis as a method of analyzing data obtained from four case organizations. Content analysis is a systematic and objective process of determining the content of published documents, written notes and other such information (Jupp, 2006). In this study, the analysis involved organizing and summarizing the data collected by use of key words and themes, in terms of the basic

idea emerging or predefined by the researcher, as coding units. While some codes were predefined by the researcher, others emerged as the analysis proceeded. Depending on how similar or different these were, they were categorized in a way that enabled the researcher to draw inferences. This process thus involved identifying the common expressions, identifications, characterizations and descriptions that emerged from among the various sources of data in the form of concepts, ideas, phrases, terminologies and interactions.

In other words, the ideas, words, perceptions and arguments that came out by use of the data collection tools and interactions as a general outcome, were used to build an argument of what the general commonly felt truth in practice constitutes. Thus, categories and sub-categories were built to contain similar and different bits of data that were arranged according to how they could be subjected to comparison. The techniques of identifying themes ranged from quick word counts to in-depth line by line scrutiny to create the categories. These thematic categories are important because without them, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain (Ogula, 2005).

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no one was harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities (Ogula, 2005). For this reason, in the study, consent was sought to ascertain voluntary participation. The subjects were informed about the purpose of the research in order for them to make informed decisions as to whether to take part or not; the respondent were given the right to decide of the time and the date of their interview and the right to withdraw at any time; and respondents were assured of their anonymity. In addition, the respondents were informed and assured that the information sought and acquired was purely for purposes of this study and thus their identity and used tools will not be open for public consumption.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

A key limitation of the study is that due to its qualitative nature, the results cannot be generalised. However, this does not undermine the core aspects of the research including the discovery of new information relating to the subject matter in Malawi.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains an analysis of the data collected and discussion of the findings. The chapter discusses findings obtained from the 28 key informant interviews. In order to address the specific objectives of the study, practical questions were directed to various respondents seeking theoretical knowledge, perspectives and information. The subsequent sections therefore, present the study findings according to the specific objectives. Each sub-section provides an outline of the themes from the various data sources followed by an in-depth discussion of the same.

4.2 Drivers behind adoption of HRBP model in selected Corporations in Malawi

To appreciate the drivers behind the adoption of HRBP model in the sampled organisations; World Vision International; Save the Children International; NBS Bank; and Standard Bank. The study concentrated on identifying the period the HRBP model was adopted and the reasons behind its adoption.

4.2.1 Years of HRBP Model adoption in Malawi

Using Key informant interviews the 28 respondents were asked to state when the HRBP model was adopted. The responses from respondents were varying depending on the organisation. The results showed that two organizations adopted the Model in 2012, while the other two adopted the model in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Despite the fact that the model was first introduced in 1997 (Ulrich, 1997), these findings indicate that adoption of HRBP model in Malawi is relatively new. The four organizations involved in the study only adopted the model by restructuring their HR functions as recently as 2012 from HRM/Human Capital to HRBP model, yet many other organisations in Malawi have not yet even adopted the model.

These findings collaborates with the literature as studies have shown that the adoption of HRBP model by way of restructuring HR functions started in the United States, in around 1997 and had been spreading to other countries in the Western industrialized world (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). Therefore, to have World Vision International as one of the oldest organisations to have adopted HRBP model in Malawi around 2012 implies that the model is still wide-spreading even after 25 years of its inception (Tayel, 2020; Ayodeji, 2015).

4.2.2 Drivers behind the adoption of HRBP Model at the sampled organisations

To understand the reasons behind adoption of HRBP model in the 4 sampled organisations, respondents were asked to explain what they think were the main reasons for their organisations to adopt the HRBP model over the previous HRM model. Figure: 1 presents the findings from the respondents:

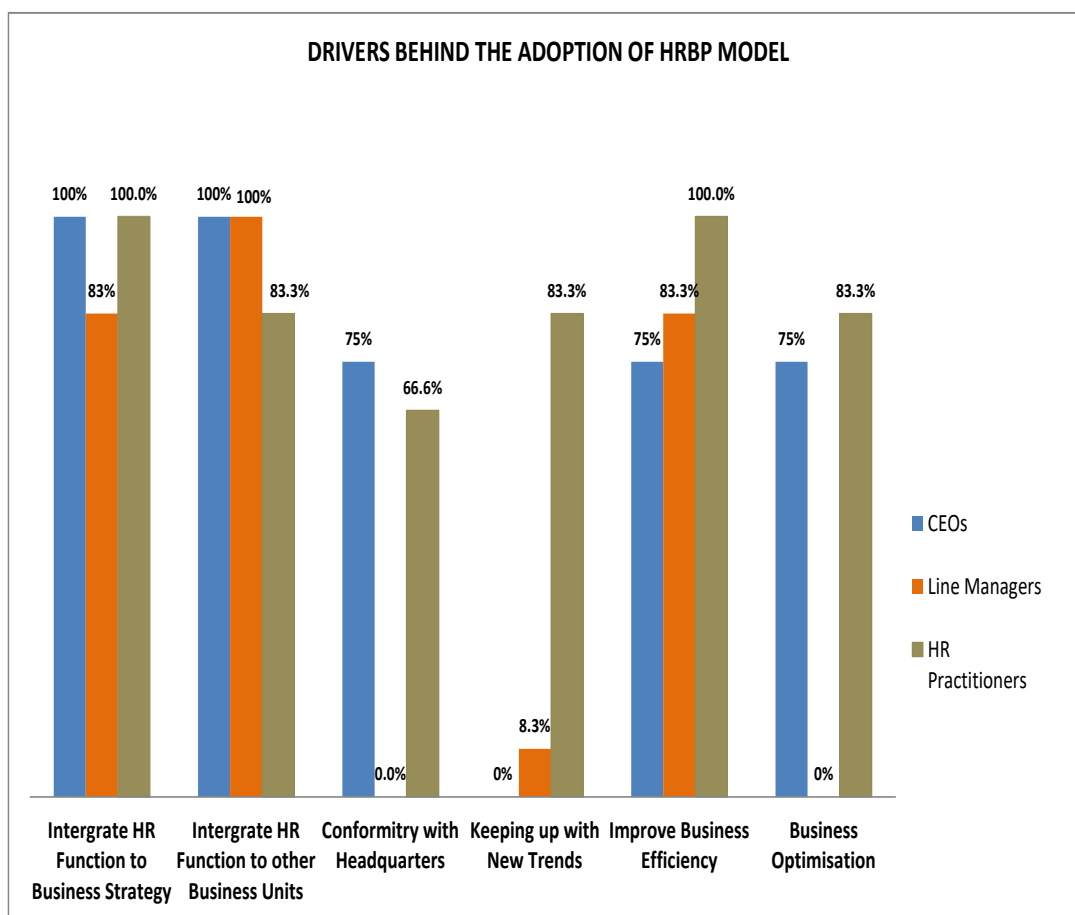


Figure 2: Drivers behind the adoption of HRBP Model

Figure: 2 shows that there were differing views from respondents on what the drivers behind the adoption of the HRBP model in their organisations are. Further, the results show that the varying opinions are attributed to the job category of the respondents. For example, 100% of respondents under CEO category mentioned integration of HR function to business strategy as well as to business/project unit as the main drivers in behind the adoption of HRBP model in their organisations. They further identified with about 75% conformity with Headquarters; need to improve business efficiency and business optimisation as other drivers behind the adoption of HRBP model in their organisations. On the other hand, 83% of Line Managers identified integrating HR function to business strategy and need to improve business efficiency as the main drivers behind the adoption of HRBP model. While as 100% of HR Practitioners category identified integration of the HR function and other business units; integration of HR function to Business Strategy and need to improve business efficiency as the

main drivers behind adoption of the HRBP model in their organisations. However, 83% of respondents under HR Practitioners identified integration with other business units; keeping up with trends in the industry and business optimisation as the other drivers behind the adoption of HRBP model. Just like CEOs category, 66% of HR Practitioners' category also identified Conformity with headquarters as the main driver behind the adoption of their HRBP model as per figure 2 above.

From this analysis, it is clear that the findings of this study are pretty much consistent with the drivers behind the adoption of HRBP model in literature except that a new issue has emerged whereby about 75% of CEOs and 66% of HR Practitioners stated that the adoption of the HRBP model in their organisations was due to the need to conform with their Headquarters as they are multinational corporations. It must be noted that by organisation, 3 of the 4 sampled organisations identified conformity with headquarters as the main driver behind the adoption of the HRBP model in their organisations. The quote below represents the common view from the respondents:

“For us I would say decision to adopt HRBP model was a matter of directive. Being a subsidiary of a multinational, policy changes at globe level requires our adaptation that is why we have moved from traditional HR to Human Capital and now HRBP model”

HR Practitioner

Widely, scholars have generally agreed that adoption of HRBP model is driven by the need for organisations to adapt to changes in the operating environment, to increase organisation success, as well as to improve the quality and efficiency of HR services (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015; Caldwell, 2003; Hailey et al., 2006 & Francis et al., 2014).

In terms of total study population, Figure: 3 below presents summary of results of what the respondents considered as drivers behind the adoption of the HRBP model in their organisations. The responses were summarised into six main themes as seen in figure 3 and were common in all organisations as below:

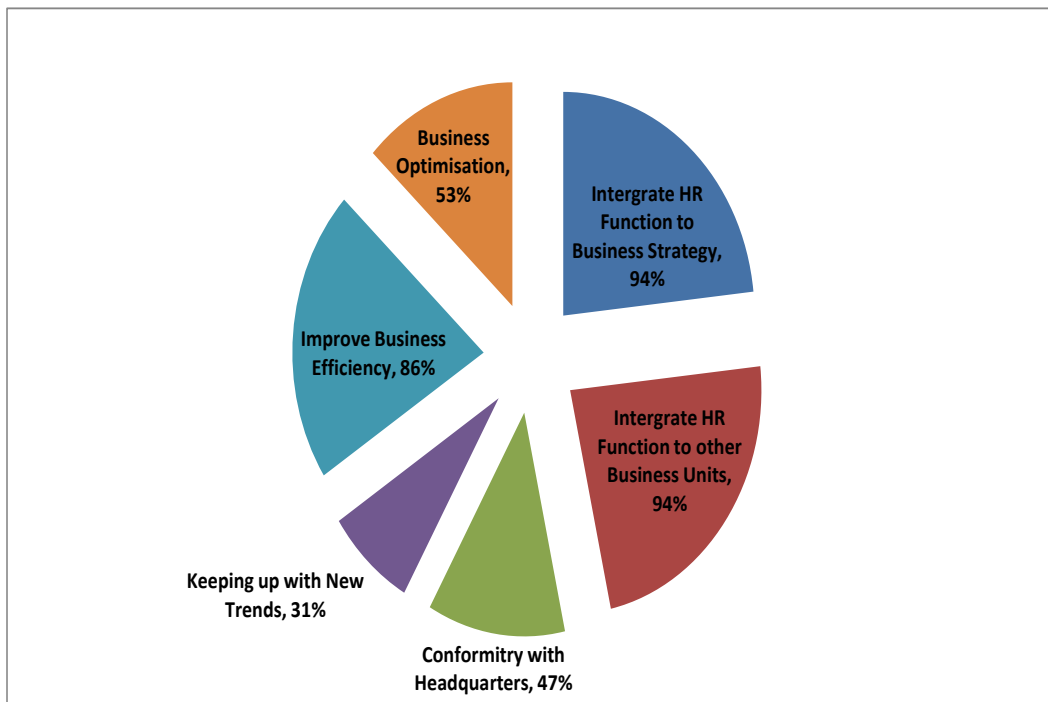


Figure 3: Results on respondents' responses on Drivers behind adoption of HRBP model

From figure: 3 above, the study finds that integration of HR function to business strategy as well as to other business/project units were considered as the main drivers behind adoption of the HRBP model with 94% followed by need to improve efficiency; business optimisation; conformity with headquarters and keeping up with new trends in that order. This is consistent with literature as alluded herein above except that conformity with headquarters has emerged as a new driver from this study.

4.3 Linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions

To appreciate the respondents' assessment of the linkages between HRBP model and strategic roles of HR functions in the sampled organisations, 3 key questions were asked to assess respondents' understanding of SHRM, their opinion as to whether the HR functions in their organisations meet their understanding of SHRM and to assess their perception over the influence HRBP model being applied in their organisation has over their HR functioning.

4.3.1 Respondents Understanding of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

The respondents in the study were asked to explain their understanding of SHRM using key informant interviews. Two themes were investigated to understand respondents' understanding of SHRM, their opinion as to whether the HR functions in their organisations meet their understanding of SHRM. 100% of the respondents gave their responses to the question; however, not as descriptively identical. Nonetheless, all explanations contained 2 key aspects: *“understanding business strategy and contributing to its attainment”*.

Scholars have argued that a distinction must be made between transactional and transformative HR work; with the former being standardized assignments often carried out through a centralized service function and applied similarly throughout the organisation, while the latter being focused on strategy and processes which contribute to organisational goals and correspond to specialized needs within the business units (Ulrich et al., 2009). From this theory, HR work can be categorised as transactional (traditional HRM) and transformational (Strategic HRM).

The study finds the varying explanations of SHRM from the respondents to be consistent with literature as scholars have argued that it is virtually impossible to define SHRM; since there is no unitary phenomenon but a collection of phenomena (Storey et al., 2005). According to Storey (2005), SHRM is defined as a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. The quote below summarises the common understanding of what SHRM is by the respondents:

“Though it is not a clear-cut, I would think SHRM is ability of HR department to integrate its activities to business strategy and be able to get involved and contribute positively to core business”

KII: CEOs, Line Managers and HR Practitioners

4.3.2 Respondents opinion if their HR functions met their understanding of SHRM

When asked if the functioning of the HR function in their organisation meets their understanding of SHRM, 80% of the respondents affirmed. However, 15% raised reservations on actual output of the HR function beyond the renaming of the job titles to HRBPs. On the other hand, 5% of the respondents were not sure on what to comment.

4.3.3 Impact of HRBP model on HR functioning

Figure: 4 below show how respondents replied to the question whether they think adoption of HRBP model had a bearing on the functioning of their HR functions:

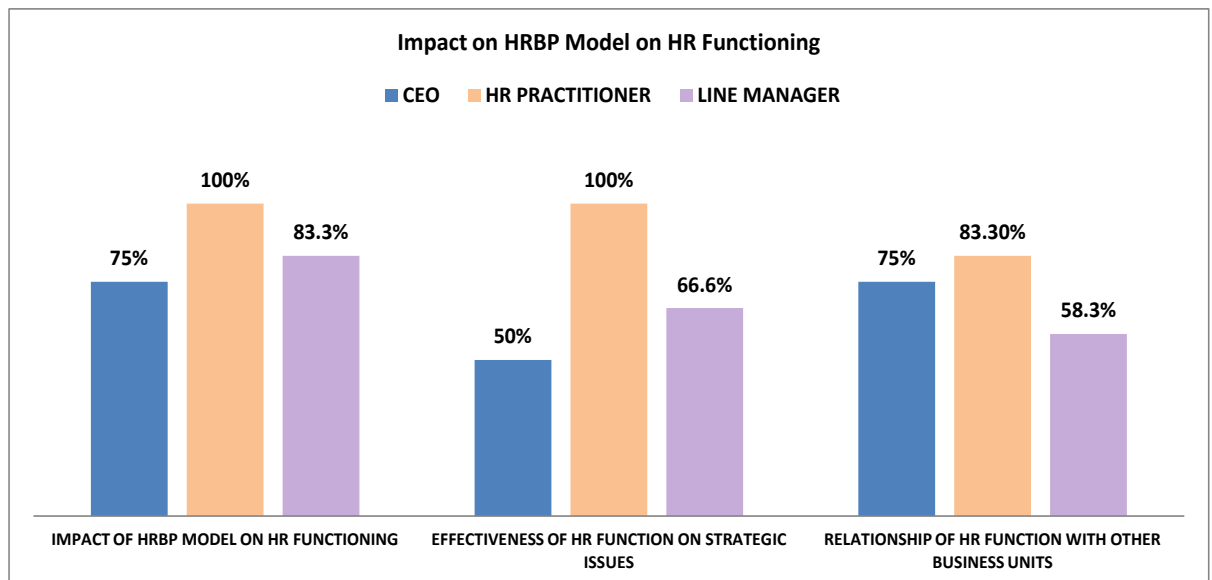


Figure 4: Impact of HRBP model on the function of HR Function

To analyse respondents' responses on the impact the adoption of HRBP model has on HR functioning by job category, Figure: 4 shows that CEOs category affirmed with about 75% that adoption of HRBP model had influenced the functioning of their HR functions as well as improving the relationship between HR function and other business units. They further affirmed with 50% that adoption of HRBP had improved the effectiveness of the HR function on strategic issues in the organisations. On the other hand, HR Practitioners affirmed with 100% that adoption of HRBP model in their organisation had impacted on the functioning of HR functions in dealing with

strategic issues. They further affirmed with about 83% that adoption of HRBP model had improved the relationship between HR function and other business units. Respondents under Line Managers category reported with 83% that adoption of HRBP model improved HR functioning. They further affirmed that adoption of HRBP model has an effect on HR function's effectiveness in handling strategic issues with 66% while in nurturing relationship with other business units with 58.3%.

As a total study population, the findings of this study show that adoption of HRBP model has more impact on HR functioning seconded by its effectiveness on strategic issues and relationship with other business units. See in figure: 5 herein below. These findings collaborate with literature as Ulrich's (1997) work is widely referred to as the business partner model because the approach's central goal is the increase of HRM's strategic orientation through the establishment of HRM professionals as strategic consultants for other organisational units (Marchington, 2015). Therefore, respondents' views that HRBP model has impacted on how their HR functions are operating after the adoption of the model affirms the widely propagated argument by scholars as shown above. The quote below summarises what most respondents said on their review of the impact of HRBP model on HR functioning:

"Since the adoption of this model, one can see that business is not as usual. The HR function has arisen to the occasion and you are able to feel the impact" **CEO, Line Manager, Key Informant Interview**

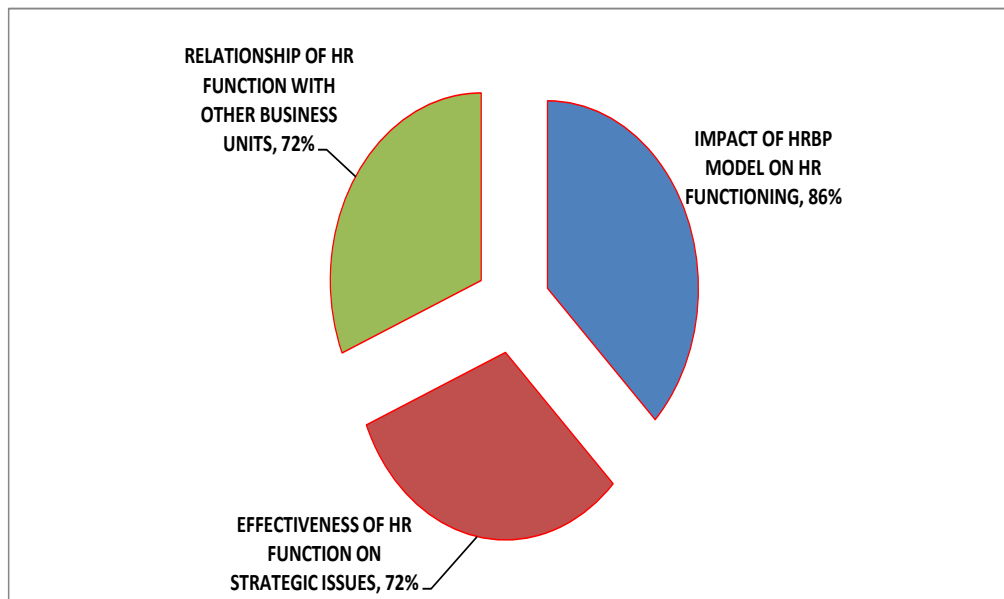


Figure 5: Results on the effect of HRBP model on HR functioning

4.4 Perceptions Regarding Effects of HRBP Model on the Roles of HR Functions

To analyse respondents' perceptions regarding effects of HRBP model on HR functions' roles, 4 questions were asked to gauge respondents' opinions on whether their HR functions were demonstrating HRBP roles of strategic partner, change agent, employee champion and administrative expert as required by HRBP model.

According to Ulrich's (1997) initial model, HRM professionals should simultaneously fulfil the role of being an employee champion, change agent, administrative expert and most importantly, a strategic business partner of line managers to implement and influence organisational strategy.

4.4.1 HR Function's demonstration of Strategic Partnership Role

Figure: 6 below presents respondents' opinions on the extent to which they considered their HR function demonstrates HRBP role of strategic partner:

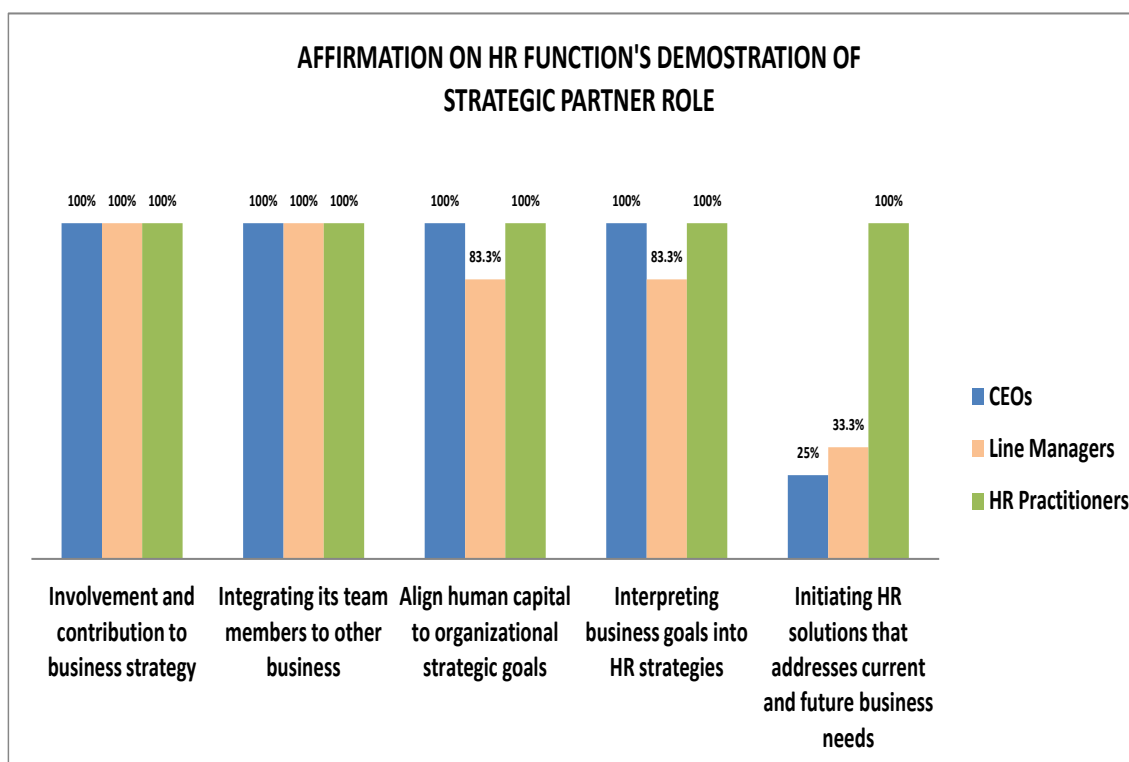


Figure 6: HR function's demonstration of Strategic Partner role

Analysis of results on respondents' responses to how their HR function demonstrates strategic partner role as prescribed in Ulrich's HRBP model by job category, Figure: 6 shows that CEOs affirmed with 100% that their HR function demonstrated involvement and contribution to business strategy, integration of HR business partners to other business/project units, alignment of human capital to organisation goals and interpreting of business goals into HR strategies. However, they rated their HR functions' ability to initiate HR solutions that addresses current and future business needs at 25%. On the part of Line Managers, they reported that their HR function demonstrated strategic partner role in the involvement and contribution to business strategy and integrating HR personnel to other business units. They however, reported with 83.3% alignment of human capital and interpreting business goals into HR strategies while, initiating of HR solutions that addresses current and future business needs was rated at 33.3%. In terms of HR Practitioners' assessment of HR function's demonstration of Strategic partner role, they rated 100% all the widely raised attributes as per Figure: 6 above.

Based on total study population, findings of this study show that respondents reported that their HR function demonstrated strategic role with 100% on their involvement

and contribution to business strategy as well as integrating HR personnel to other business units. The study further shows that alignment of human capital to organisational strategic goals and interpreting business goals into HR strategies was affirmed with 94% while initiating HR solutions that addresses current and future business needs was rated at 53% as per Figure: 7 below.

The findings of this study on the perception of respondents on the extent to which HR function demonstrates strategic partner role collaborate with what scholars have said on the topic. For example, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) argued that HR must play as full business partners in organisations; the role of HR business partner has to be closely aligned with business strategy and its tasks should flow from the company's needs. The author further describes the purpose of the business partner model as an integration of HR professionals into business processes by way of aligning their day-to-day work with business outcomes. Vosburgh (2007) weighs in as well by arguing that to make the full impact of HR practices on firm performance, HR professionals are needed to be involved in the strategy formation process hence accountable for managing the corporate and business unit level strategic direction by deploying their people management knowledge. Therefore, respondents for rating their HR function's strategic role on involvement and contribution to business strategy among others, they have confirmed what is widely propagated in literature. The quote below from one of the respondent summarises the general view of respondents on their HR function's strategic role:

“Unlike in the past when HR was just a mere support function, nowadays we take them as a key stakeholder on business decisions”

CEO, Key Informant Interview

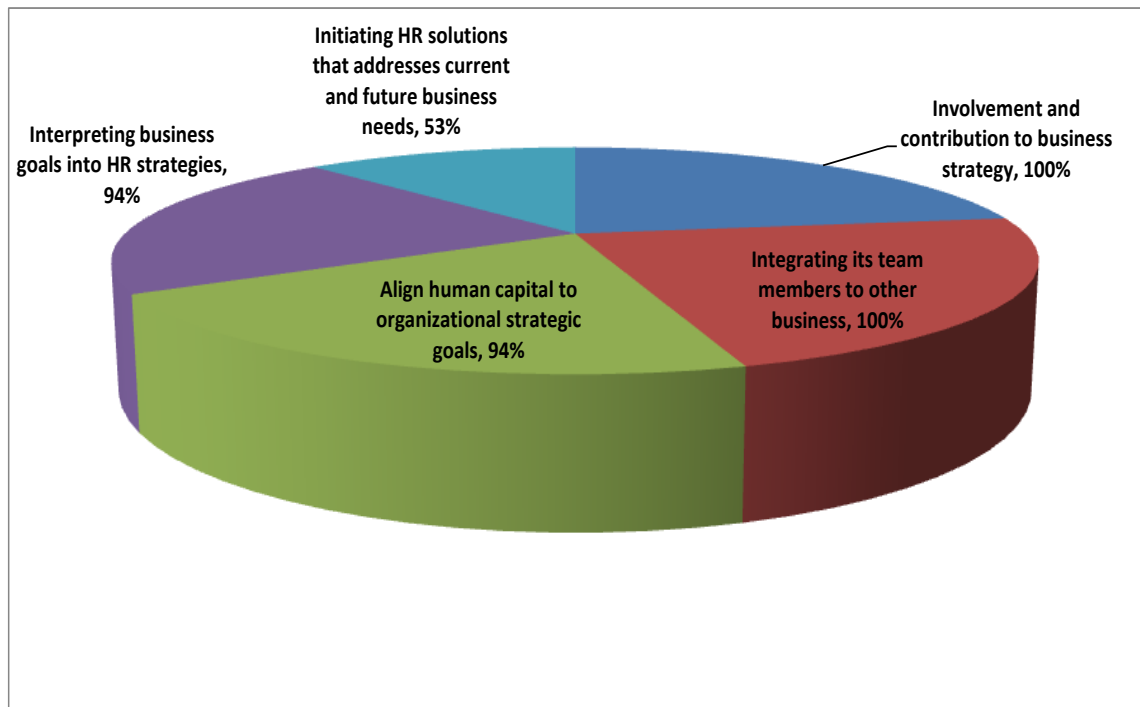


Figure 7: Results on the HR function's demonstration of Strategic Partner role

4.4.2 HR Function's demonstration of Change Agent role

Figure: 8 below present respondents' opinions on the extent to which they considered their HR function demonstrates HRBP role of change agent:

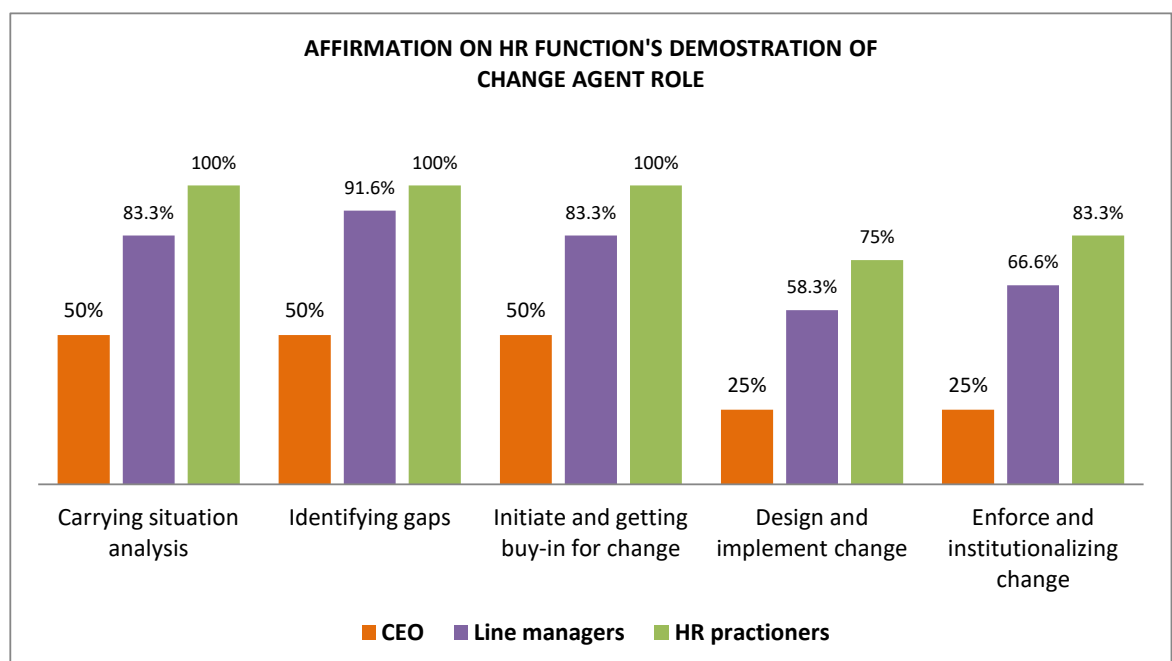


Figure 8: HR function's demonstration of Change Agent role

Figure: 8 above present findings of this study by respondents' job category on whether they think their HR function demonstrates HRBP role of change agent. Results show that the CEO category considers that their HR function demonstrated by 50% change agent role in carrying situation analysis, in identifying gaps and in initiating and getting buy-in for change interventions while with 25% in designing and implementing change as well as enforcement and institutionalising of change. On their part, Line Managers rated with 91.6% their HR function's ability to identify gaps, 83.3% on carrying of situation analysis and initiating and getting buy-in for change intervention. They however, rated enforcement and institutionalising of change and designing and implementing of change at 66.6% and 58.3% respectively. As for the HR Practitioners category, 100% of the respondents reported that their HR function demonstrated change agent role in carrying out situation analysis, identifying gaps and initiating and getting buy-in for change. 83.3% and 75% was considered for enforcing and institutionalising change and designing and implementing change respectively.

Figure: 9 below present results by total study population. Respondents considered their HR functions effective in change agent role in identifying gaps with 81%, carrying situation analysis and initiating and getting buy in for change interventions 78% while 58% and 53% were considered for enforcing and institutionalising change and designing and implementing change respectively. Findings of this study though very enlightening on the practical aspects of change management; as they highlight carrying out situation analysis, initiating and getting buy-in for change interventions, designing and implementing change which makes a lot of practical sense than most prescriptive theoretical change management processes (Baekdal et al., 2006), collaborate in essence with literature both on the role of HR as a change agent and the change management process itself. According to Ulrich (1998), HR should not be defined by what it does but by what it delivers by becoming an agent of continuous transformation, shaping processes and a culture that together improve an organisation's capacity for change. In this study, respondents reported that HR functions are the champion of most organisation-wide change initiatives. The quote below from 1 respondent summarises the widely reported response by the respondents:

“Change agent name befits our HR function. If they are not the ones proposing change, then they are the ones advising on how to operationalise ours” – Line Manager, Key Informant Interview

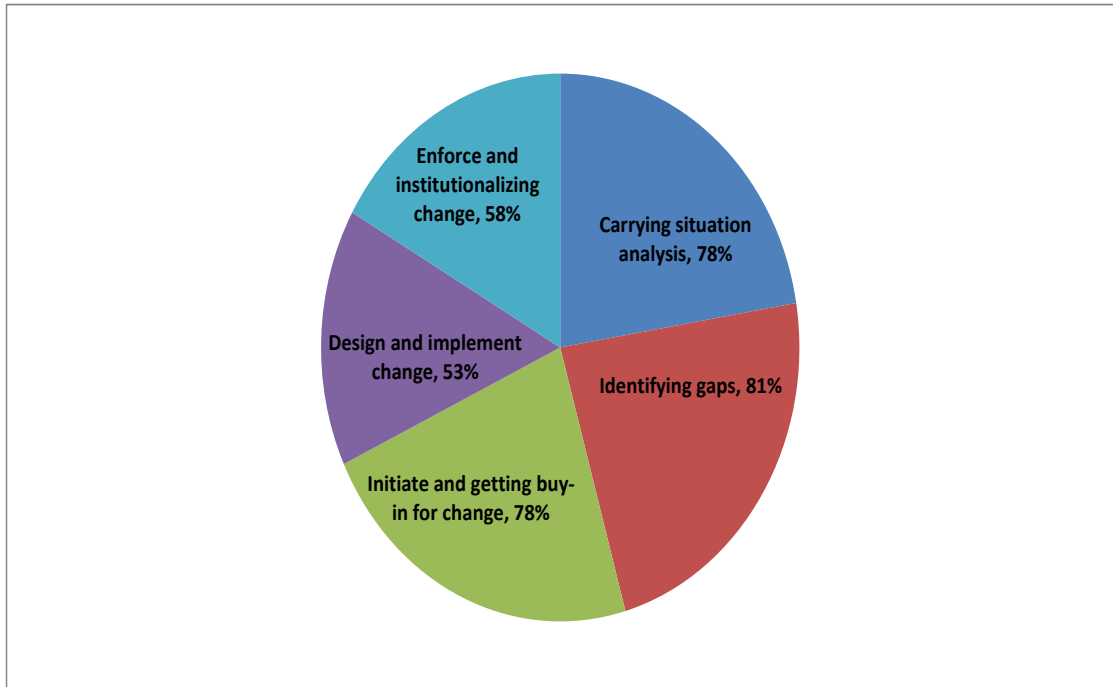


Figure 9: Results on HR function’s demonstration of Change Agent role

4.3.3 HR function demonstrate Employee Championship

Figure: 10 below present respondents’ opinions on how they considered their HR function demonstrates HRBP role of employee champion:

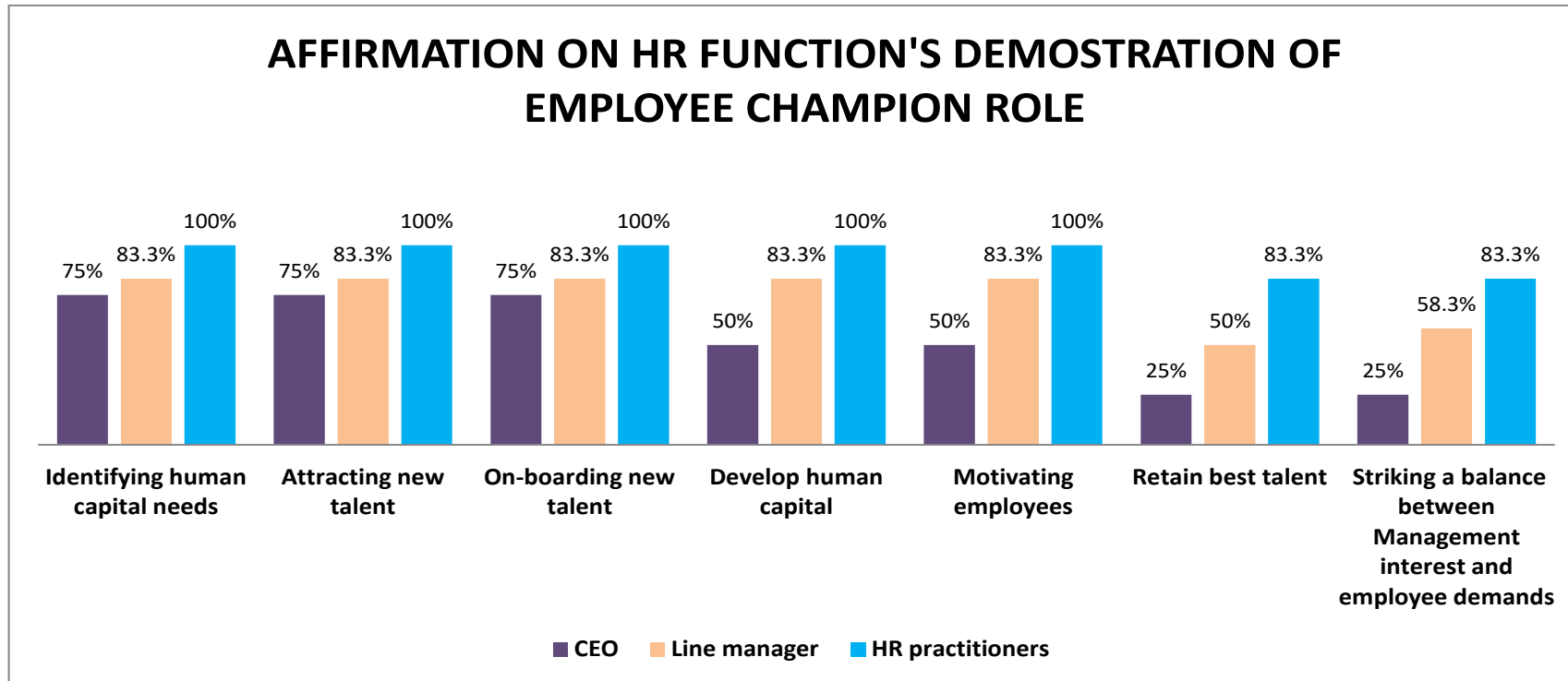


Figure 10: HR function's demonstration of Employee Championship

Figure: 10 above present findings of the study by job category on how respondents rated their HR function's demonstration of employee champion role as per the dictates of the HRBP model. Respondents under CEO category considered that their HR functions demonstrate employee champion role with 75% in identifying human capital needs, attracting new talent and on-boarding of new talent. They rated with 50% and 25% development of human capital, motivating of employees and retention of best talent and striking a balance between management interest and employee demands respectively. While as the Line Managers category, they rated with 83.3% identifying of human capital needs, attracting new talent, on-boarding new talent, developing human capital and motivating employees. They rated with 58.3% and 50% striking of balance between management interest and employee demand and retention of talent respectively. The HR Practitioner category rated with 100% the HR function's demonstration of employee champion role in identifying human capital needs, attracting, on-boarding, developing, and motivating of human capital while they rated retention of best talent and striking a balance between management and employee interests with 83.3%.

The findings of this study on how respondents considered their HR function in employee championship role agrees with most scholarly arguments on the matter. Although the issues that have emerged in this study depicting employee championship role such as identifying human capital needs and talent management seems new to the subject matter, striking of balance between management interest and employees demand is pretty much a descriptive approach to employee relations role which is widely discussed in literature. For example, Ulrich's (1998) argues that HR should become a champion for employees, vigorously representing their concerns to senior management and at the same time working to increase employee contribution, that is, employees' commitment to organisation and ability to deliver results. This argument unpacked, would bring out the specific issues that have emerged from this study hence the premise that the findings of the study collaborates with literature despite the fact that new aspects have emerged. The quote below by a CEO respondent depicts the widely shared view of respondents on HR's playing of employee championship role:

"Sometimes you wonder whether the unionist has made his way to the boardroom when these HRs become very advocative of staff matters in

business discussions. So yes, I would say these guys demonstrates employee championship role” CEO, Key Informant Interview

In terms of findings by total population of the study, Figure: 11 below present the results.

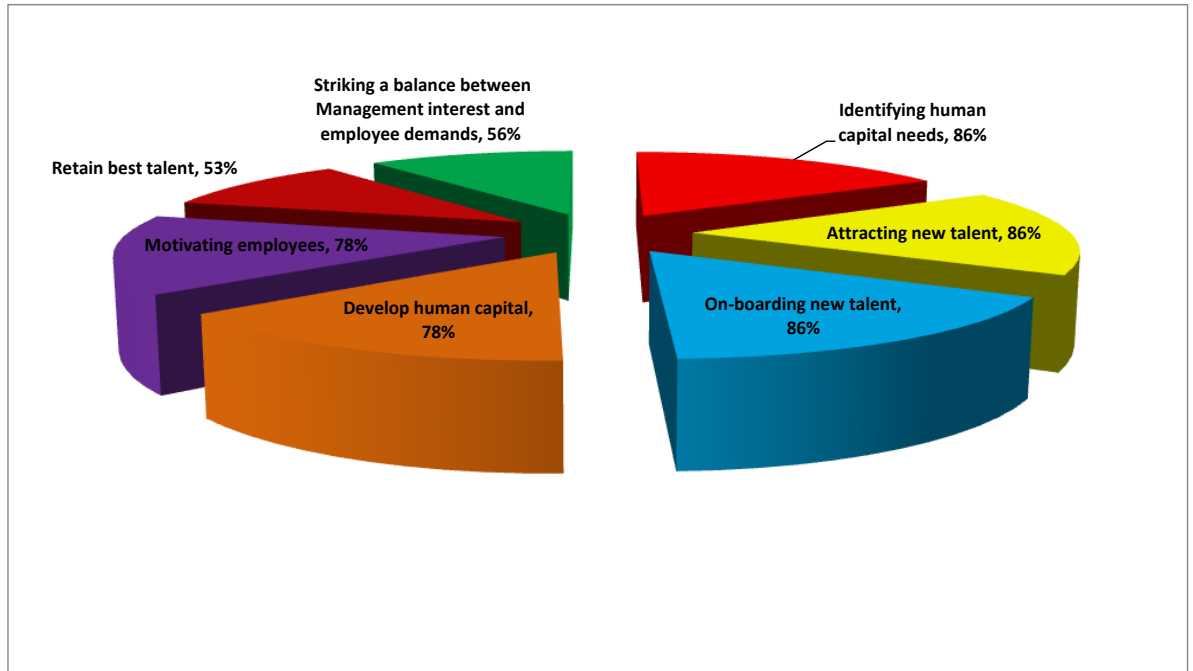


Figure 11: Results on HR function’s demonstration of Employee Championship role

4.4.4 HR function demonstrate Administrative expertise

Figure: 12 below present respondents’ opinions on the extent to which they considered their HR function to demonstrate HRBP role of administrative expert:

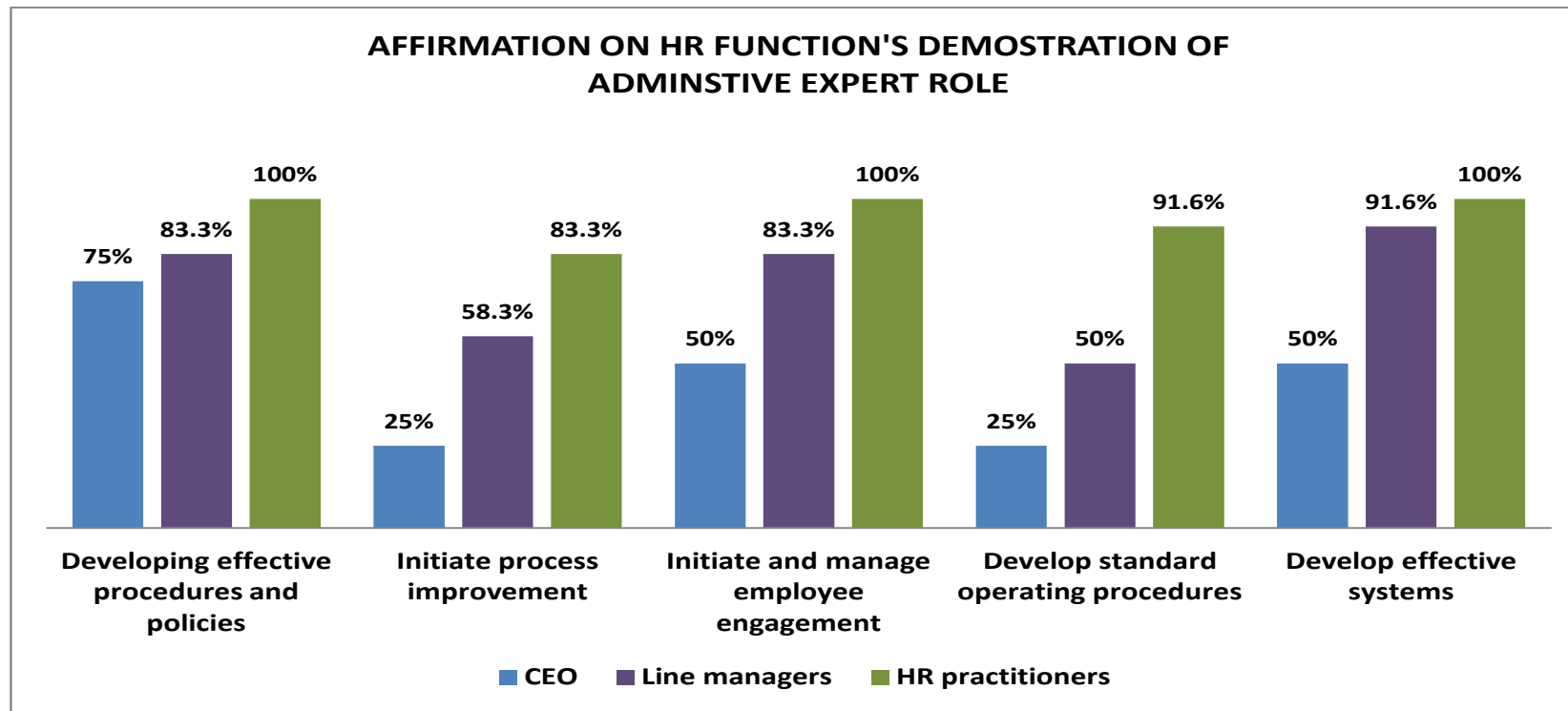


Figure 12: HR function's demonstration of Administrative Partnership role

Figure: 12 above present findings of this study by respondents' job category on their views about the functioning of their HR function in terms of HRBP model's administrative expert role. CEO respondents rated HR function as demonstrating administrative expert role with 75% in developing effective procedures and policies while 50% was given to initiating and managing employee engagement as well as developing effective systems. Initiating process improvement and developing standard operating procedures were rated 25% respectively. The Line Manager category rated development of effective systems at 91.6% seconded by developing effective policies and procedures and initiating and managing employee engagement at 83.3%. They further rated initiating process improvement and developing standard operating procedures at 58.3% and 50% respectively. The HR Practitioners' category rated HR function's administrative expert role with 100% in developing effective procedures and policies, initiating and managing employee engagements and developing effective HR systems. They then rated development of standard operating procedures at 91.6% while initiating process improvement was given 83.3%.

Findings by total study population have been presented in figure: 13 below with developing effective procedures and policies topping the list with 86%, seconded by developing of effective HR systems at 81% and initiating and managing employee engagement at 78%. Process improvement and developing of standard operating procedures were rated at 56% each.

Ulrich (1998) argues that for HR to deliver excellence it should become an expert in the way work is organised and executed, delivering administrative efficiency to ensure that costs are reduced while quality is maintained. This argument collaborates with the findings of this study as 86% of respondents reported that their HR functions demonstrated expertise in developing effective procedures and policies while 81% reported that their HR function demonstrated expertise in developing effective HR systems. Further, 78% of the respondents reported that their HR functions demonstrated administrative expertise in employee engagement while with 56% in development of operating standard procedures. A quote below by HR Practitioner summarises the widely given response on the HR function's demonstration of administrative expert role by respondents:

“Most administrative and operational policies are developed internally without involving consultants, that should tell you the capacity HR has in delivering on administrative matters” -HR Practitioner, Key Interview Informant

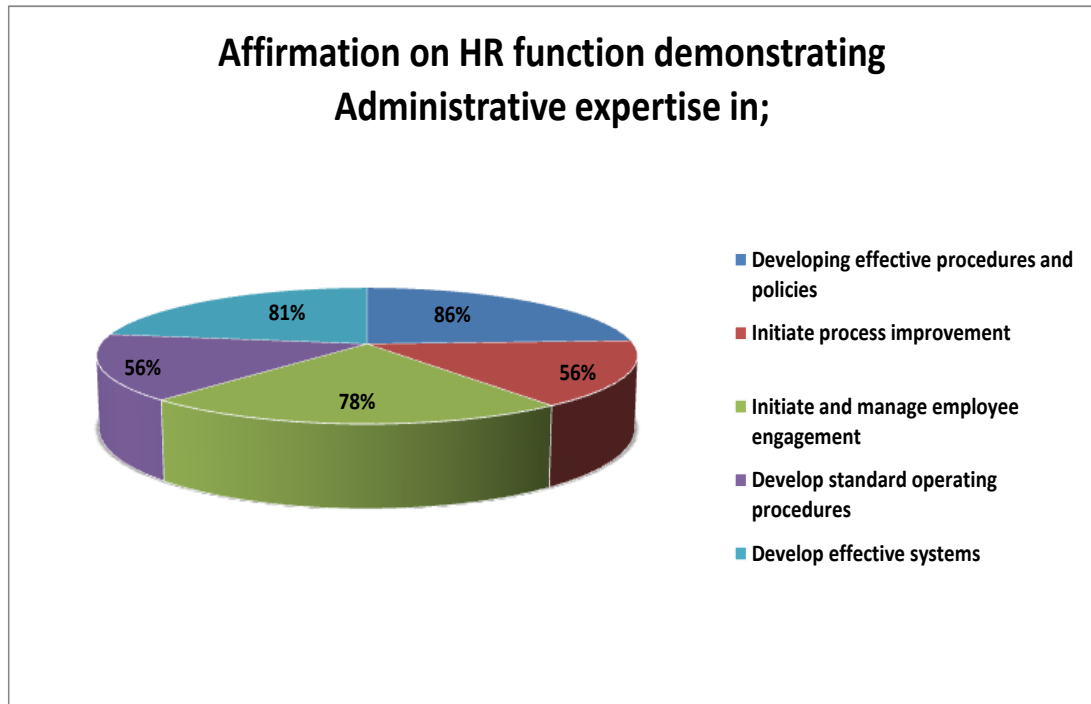


Figure 13: Results on HR function’s demonstration of Administrative Expert role

4.5 Challenges facing HRBP model in Malawi

To explore the respondents’ opinions on the challenges associated with HRBP model, 3 key questions were asked as to whether there are challenges in developing, adopting and implementing HRBP model. From the findings of the study, challenges associated with HRBP model were not classified according to stage of HRBP model’s adoption but in general as presented in Figure: 14 below:

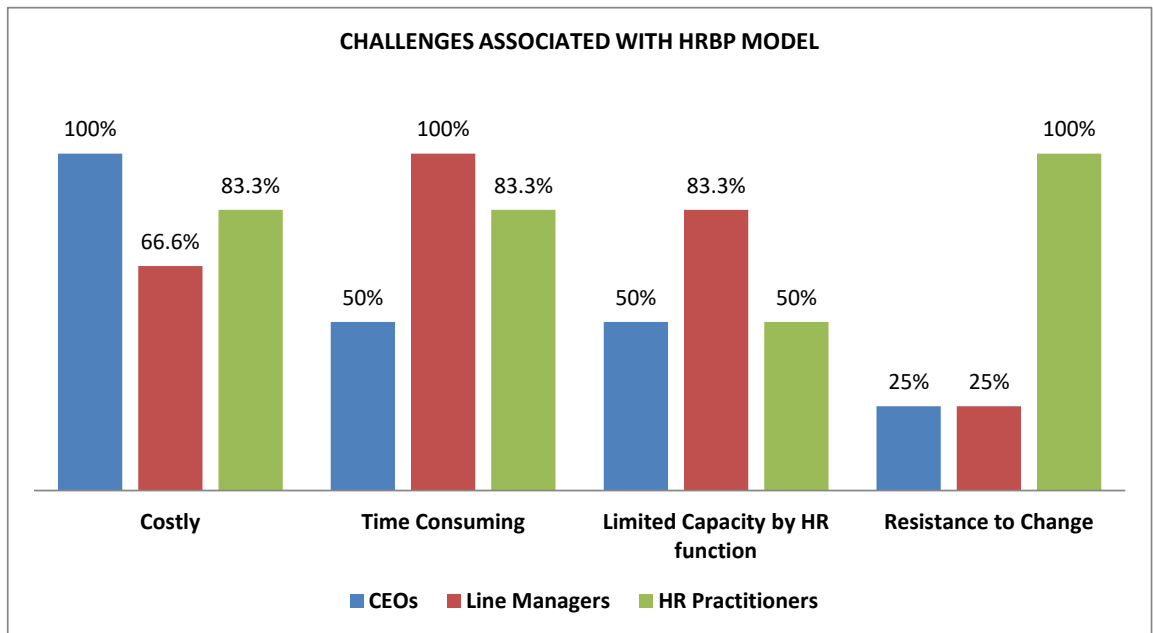


Figure 14: Challenges associated with HRBP model

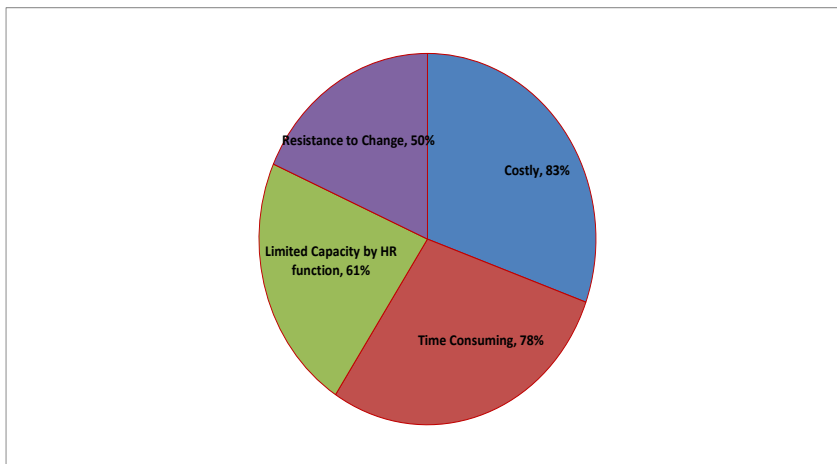


Figure 15: Results on Challenges associated with HRBP model

Figure: 14 above shows findings by respondents' job category. For example, CEOs reported with 100% that the main challenge attributed to adoption and implementation

of HRBP model is cost while they rated by 50% time consumption and limited capacity of the HR function as other challenges associated with HRBP model.

This category of respondents however identified resistance to change as another challenge associated with HRBP model with about 25%. On their part, Line Managers affirmed with 100% time consumption as the main challenge associated with HRBP model seconded by limited capacity of HR functions, cost, then resistance to change in that order. According to HR Practitioners, however, resistance to change is the main challenge associated with HRBP model with 100% affirmation followed by cost and time consumption then limited capacity in that order.

On the other hand, figure: 15 above show findings of this study by total study populations of 28 respondents. From the above, 83% of the respondents reported high cost as the main challenge associated with the adoption and implementation of HRBP model. 78% reported time consumption, followed by limited capacity by HR functions at 61%, then resistance to change at 50% as the main challenges associated with HRBP model.

Findings of this study have brought in new aspects over the challenges recorded in literature. According to Lawler and Mohrman (2000), difficulties include uncertainty over the approach, inadequate preparation and weak implementation. To support this argument, lapses in implementation, capacity inefficiencies on the part of the project champions, insufficient commitment of the top management or line managers to support the business partnering agenda and failure to clearly share roles have been cited as the main challenges associated with HRBP model in practice (Kienbaum, 2014; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2009; Deloitte, 2014). According to Beer (1997), there is need for open communication and higher levels of coordination across business units if HRBP model is to work. For example, Ulrich (1997) states that the companies fail because they fail to apply this new role correctly or the person, who is responsible for the new strategic role, is not sufficiently trained or qualified. From this discussion, it is clear that issue of cost has not been tackled in literature as a challenge affecting HRBP while it has emerged prominently from the findings of this study. To underscore this fact, a quote below from an interview with one of the respondents summarizes the common perception on this key constraint:

“Just like any other organisation development intervention, adoption of HRBP model is very expensive as it involves structuring of the HR function, lots of trainings and this is usually done by highly specialised consultants who are expensive. Maybe this explains why most organisations have not yet adopted the model” **CEO, Key Informant Interview**

The findings of this study collaborate with the literature as scholars have argued that many organisations are struggling to make HRBP work effectively across the globe; be that in applying the Ulrich model itself or a customized approach and interpretation of its roles, structure and strategy outputs. According to Lawler and Mohrman (2000), difficulties include uncertainty over the approach, inadequate preparation and weak implementation.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study on each research objective. The chapter dwelt on analyzing and discussing those research findings. Summary pertaining the findings and limitation of this study are presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusions and implications of the study and implicitly offers possible recommendations for practice and further research on the topic. It also restates the significance of the study as well as the difference the study would make.

5.2 Conclusions

The overall objective for conducting this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of adopting HRBP model in enhancing the strategic role of HRM in Malawi. The study used key informant interviews purposively to solicit views from the respondents.

Specifically the study sought to understand the factors behind adoption of HRBP model at sampled organisations. Under this specific objective, two themes were investigated using key informant interviews thus; identification of the period HRBP model was adopted in the organisation and the reasons behind such adoption. On when the model was adopted, the study reveals that adoption period varied from one organisation to another ranging from 2012 to 2017. On the drivers behind adoption of HRBP model, the study reveals that integration of HR function to business strategy as well as to other business/project units were considered as the main drivers behind adoption of HRBP model with 94% followed by need to improve efficiency; business optimisation; conformity with headquarters and keeping up with new trends in that order which is consistent with literature except that conformity with headquarters has emerged from this study as a new driver.

Secondly the study aimed at understating the linkages between HRBP model and the strategic roles of HR functions of sampled organisations. Three themes were investigated to understand respondents' understanding of SHRM, their opinion as to whether the HR functions in their organisations meet their understanding of SHRM and to assess their perception over the influence HRBP model being applied in their organisation has over their HR functioning.

The study found that there were varying understanding of strategic SHRM but respondents generally highlighted the issue of aligning HR activities to strategic targets as well as providing human capital solutions to business needs with at least 80% of the respondents holding the view that their HR functions were strategic in nature. The study further shows that adoption of HRBP model has an impact on HR functioning in terms of its effectiveness on strategic issues and relationship with other business units.

The third objective of the study was to assess perceptions regarding effects of HRBP Model on the roles of HR Functions. This objective focused on HR function's demonstration of the HRBP model roles of strategic partner, change agent, employee champion and administrative expert. The findings of the study shows that respondents were of the view that their HR functions demonstrated competency in strategic partnering, change agency, employee championship as well as administrative expertise albeit different degrees attached to specific roles.

Lastly the study aimed at understanding the challenges associated with HRBP model. The findings shows that high cost was reported as the main challenge associated with the adoption and implementation of HRBP model with about 83% while time consumption, limited capacity by HR functions and resistance to change were also said to be other challenges affecting HRBP model.

In general, most of the findings in this study collaborate with literature although a few unique issues have emerged especially on the drivers and challenges affecting HRBP model. To the researcher knowledge, the key unique issues emanating from this study is that organisations adopt HRBP model as a way of conformity with their

Headquarters in the case of multinationals and that high cost is the major factor affecting restructuring of HR functions in Malawi.

5.3 Implication of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, more studies and debates are required on the subject matter for other organisations in Malawi to appreciate the effectiveness of HRBP model on the strategic functioning of HR functions. This is so because this study has revealed that of the 4 organisations in Malawi using HRBP model, only 1 adopted the model as a deliberate policy as the rest were just conforming to practices and policy direction from their headquarters being multinationals. Further to that, research also is required to understand the rationale behind modifying Ulrich's HRBP to 3 legged stool model as widely used by consultants and HR practitioners. Further study is also required on the impact of Competency Models in general and HRBP model in particular on overall business performance as this study was limited to their effect on strategic role of HR functions. Another interesting area for future study is on the comparison of organisations with HRBP and those using HRM model in terms of internal stakeholders perceptions on their effectiveness. The main limitation of qualitative study as employed in this study is that it limits the audience as issues become saturated with just very few cases especially in this case that respondents were purposively selected based on the HR model used in their organisations and expertise. The researcher recommends a similar or related study at a large scale, especially comparing organisations that have adopted HRBP model to those that have not in terms of internal stakeholders' perceptions on their effectiveness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Key Informant Interview Guide for CEOs/Line & HR Managers

To analyse drivers behind adoption of HRBP in selected corporations

- a) Describe the HR model you are using in your Organisation? HRBP/HRM
- b) If HRBP, when was it adopted and what were the reasons behind its adoption?

1. To assess linkages between HRBP and strategic roles of HR functions

- a) How do you understand the term Strategic HR?
- a) Would you describe the functioning of your HR department as meeting your understanding of strategic HR as per (2:a) above?
- b) Would you attribute the functioning of your HR function to the HRBP model?
- c) Has the contribution of your HR function been effective in strategic issues?
- d) What relationship is there between HR function and other business units?

2. To analyse perception regarding effects of HRBP on HR functions' roles

- a) Does your HR Function demonstrate **Strategic Partnership** in;
 - i) Integrating HR officers to other business units?
 - ii) Align human capital to organisational strategic goals?
 - iii) Interpreting business goals into HR strategies?
 - iv) Initiating HR solutions that addresses current and future business needs?
 - v) Aligning HR system to business philosophy?
- b) Does your HR Function demonstrate **Change Agent role** in;
 - i) Carrying situation analysis?
 - ii) Identifying gaps?
 - iii) Initiate and getting buy-in for change?
 - iv) Design and implement change?
 - v) Enforce and institutionalizing change?

- c) Does your HR function demonstrate **Employee Championship** in;
 - i) Identifying human capital needs?
 - ii) Attracting new talent?
 - iii) On-boarding new talent?
 - iv) Develop human capital?
 - v) Motivating employees?
 - vi) Retain best talent? Striking a balance between Management interest and employee demands/aspirations?
- d) Does your HR function demonstrate **Administrative expertise** in;
 - i) Developing effective procedures and policies?
 - j) Initiate process improvement?
 - k) Initiate and manage employee engagement?
 - l) Develop standard operating procedures?
 - m) Develop effective systems?

3. To explore challenges facing HRBP model

- a) What would you say were constraints in developing HRBP Model for your organisation?
- b) What would you say are challenges in adopting HRPB models?
- c) What would you say are challenges in implementing HRBP Model?