

The Impact of Inclusive HR Policies on Organisational Efficiency in Nigerian Faith-Based Institutions

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Abstract

In response to increasing demands for fairness, transparency, and professionalism in educational management, attention has turned to the influence of inclusive human resource (HR) policies on the efficiency of faith-based institutions. This research explores how inclusive HR practices influence administrative effectiveness, staff engagement, and institutional cohesion in three selected Nigerian faith-based secondary schools. Adopting a qualitative multiple case study design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with school administrators, HR officers, and teaching staff, alongside a review of policy documents. The study draws on Social Exchange Theory and the Resource-Based View to interpret the relationship between inclusivity and organisational performance. Findings indicate that institutions with formalised, inclusive HR structures experienced higher staff morale, stronger trust in leadership, more efficient conflict resolution, transparent promotion pathways, and improved communication systems that directly enhanced organisational efficiency. In contrast, schools relying on informal, network-based practices faced challenges such as gender disparities in leadership, opaque recruitment processes, and disengaged staff, which contributed to weakened institutional identity and administrative inconsistency. The study argues that inclusivity in HR policy is both a moral and strategic imperative, especially for faith-based schools seeking to model ethical leadership while remaining operationally effective. Theoretically, the research demonstrates how Social Exchange Theory explains the reciprocity between fair HR practices and staff commitment, while the Resource-Based View positions inclusivity as a unique organisational capability that drives sustained efficiency. Embedding inclusion into recruitment, development, and communication practices enhances the school's capacity to attract talent, foster collaboration, and sustain long-term institutional health. The research concludes by recommending that faith-based schools adopt context-sensitive but deliberately inclusive HR frameworks that align with both their educational goals and spiritual commitments.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Inclusion, Faith-Based Schools, Organisational Efficiency, HR Policies.

Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) remains a crucial element in shaping organisational outcomes, particularly in educational settings where personnel effectiveness directly impacts institutional performance (Armstrong, 2024). The growing emphasis on inclusive HR policies reflects a global trend towards fostering equitable, diverse, and participatory workplace environments. These policies, which encompass fair recruitment practices, non-

discriminatory staff development opportunities, and inclusive leadership pathways, have been linked to enhanced organisational efficiency, improved employee satisfaction, and sustained institutional growth (Muralidhar et al., 2025). However, the integration of such policies within faith-based institutions presents a unique set of challenges and considerations. These organisations often operate under guiding theological principles which may, intentionally or otherwise, limit the scope of inclusivity along lines of gender, doctrinal alignment, or social norms (Faletahan, 2024).

Faith-based educational institutions, particularly in the Nigerian context, occupy a significant space within the national education framework. They are recognised for promoting moral instruction and academic excellence, yet many continue to function within conservative administrative cultures that resist structural changes, especially in human resource governance (Olarinmoye, 2023). Although these schools often champion values such as compassion and justice, their HR practices may lag in reflecting contemporary standards of inclusion and equity. In such contexts, organisational efficiency may be compromised by rigid hierarchies, limited staff engagement, and opaque decision-making processes (Osman et al., 2025). As such, a critical interrogation of how inclusive HR policies are understood and operationalised within these institutions is both timely and necessary.

This study is situated within the broader discourse on the link between inclusion and institutional effectiveness. Inclusion in HRM refers to the deliberate effort to ensure that all employees, regardless of background, gender, belief, or ability, are equitably recruited, supported, and advanced within an organisation (Eshete & Birbirssa, 2024). Organisational efficiency, on the other hand, is measured not only in terms of output but also in the ability to maintain a motivated workforce, resolve internal conflicts amicably, and sustain administrative clarity (Widiyastuti & Darmawansyah, 2025). In this regard, inclusive HR practices serve as a catalyst for fostering a sense of belonging and accountability among employees, which in turn promotes performance and cohesion.

Despite the wealth of literature on inclusion in the workplace, little attention has been given to how faith-based secondary schools in Nigeria engage with these principles in practice. Most existing studies focus on public or corporate organisations, leaving a gap in understanding how religiously affiliated institutions align HR practices with inclusive ideals without compromising their spiritual mission. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of inclusive HR policies on organisational efficiency in selected Nigerian faith-based schools. Through a qualitative investigation of three institutions, the research aims to provide insights into the facilitators, barriers, and implications of inclusive HR policy implementation within a faith-governed educational context.

Therefore, the specific gap in the literature lies in the limited scholarly attention given to the intersection of inclusivity and HR practices within Nigerian faith-based secondary schools. This study addresses that gap by examining how inclusive HR policies are interpreted and implemented in such institutions, with particular attention to their

influence on organisational efficiency. Theoretically, it contributes to the expansion of HRM scholarship by integrating the concept of inclusivity into faith-based organisational studies, thereby extending the applicability of inclusion theory to religiously governed contexts. Practically, the study offers evidence-based insights that can guide school administrators and policymakers in balancing theological commitments with inclusive HR practices that foster efficiency, equity, and long-term institutional growth.

Literature Review

The evolving discourse on inclusivity within human resource management (HRM) has underscored the significance of inclusive HR policies as a fundamental component of organisational sustainability. Scholars have examined the interplay between inclusive HR strategies and organisational outcomes, particularly in corporate, public, and academic institutions. However, the extent to which these insights apply to faith-based institutions, especially within the Nigerian educational context, remains under-explored. This review synthesises key theoretical and empirical contributions on inclusive HRM, organisational efficiency, and the peculiar dynamics of faith-based organisations to establish the framework within which this study is situated.

Inclusive HR Policies and Organisational Outcomes

Inclusive HR policies refer to deliberate organisational strategies aimed at ensuring equitable access, representation, participation, and advancement for all categories of employees regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, or religious belief (Eshete & Birbirssa, 2024). These policies encompass diverse practices such as inclusive recruitment, bias-free promotion criteria, equitable training and development, flexible work arrangements, and responsive grievance mechanisms (Vivek & Krupskyi, 2024). Ezeafulukwe et al. (2024) posit that inclusive HR practices are not merely a social ideal but are crucial for building a resilient and productive workforce, particularly in environments characterised by diversity and social plurality.

Research by Memon et al. (2021) established a strong correlation between inclusive HR systems and positive organisational outcomes, including employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention. They argue that when employees perceive fairness and openness in organisational processes, they are more likely to exhibit commitment and discretionary effort. Similarly, Chikwe et al. (2024) identify inclusivity as a performance enabler, noting that institutions that promote participation and fairness tend to experience fewer internal disputes and a stronger alignment of staff behaviour with institutional goals.

Organisational Efficiency and the Role of HR Practices

Organisational efficiency is generally described as the institution's ability to achieve set objectives using available resources with minimal waste and maximum impact (Oyetunde et al., 2023). In educational settings, this includes timely delivery of services, quality teaching, administrative responsiveness, and a conducive work environment. Human

resource practices play a vital role in driving such outcomes. According to Alhosani and Ahmad (2024), strategic HR practices, particularly those that focus on inclusion and employee empowerment, are strongly associated with higher productivity and organisational agility.

Furthermore, effective HR systems serve as a conduit for organisational learning and adaptability, especially when they are underpinned by values of equity and responsiveness (Shayrine & Venugopal, 2025). By integrating inclusive policies into their HR strategies, institutions not only promote ethical standards but also create mechanisms for feedback, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving. This suggests that inclusivity functions not only as a moral imperative but also as a managerial tool that enhances organisational adaptability. However, as highlighted by Thorjussen (2020), inclusivity must be contextualised, especially in institutions where cultural, doctrinal, or historical norms shape the boundaries of what is considered acceptable or possible.

Faith-Based Institutions and HRM Challenges

Faith-based institutions, while primarily mission-driven, often function as structured organisations requiring effective HR management. In Nigeria, many such institutions operate schools that are respected for discipline and academic rigour but often lack formalised HR structures that align with contemporary best practices (Faletahan, 2024; Chung et al., 2024). While these schools are expected to exemplify moral excellence, their employment practices may not always reflect inclusivity, particularly in the areas of gender equality, staff welfare, and equitable career progression.

Notably, Okonkwo et al. (2025) contend that the peculiar nature of faith-based institutions necessitates a balance between doctrinal fidelity and professional HR standards. While inclusivity in such contexts may not always align with secular definitions, it remains imperative to develop models of inclusive HRM that respect religious values while upholding fairness, equity, and transparency. For instance, training opportunities and workload distribution should not be skewed by religious affinity but should be guided by competence and performance metrics.

Gender and Inclusivity in Faith-Based Schools

Gender remains one of the most contentious areas in the discourse on inclusivity within faith-based institutions. In many Nigerian Christian schools, leadership and promotion pathways are often subtly gendered, reflecting broader ecclesiastical structures that privilege male leadership (Naidoo, 2025). As such, inclusive HR policies that promote gender equity are either non-existent or not enforced. This limits the institution's ability to harness the full potential of its workforce.

Chikwe et al. (2024) note that gender-inclusive policies not only support workplace equity but also contribute significantly to innovation and knowledge sharing. In faith-based schools where women constitute a significant percentage of the teaching staff, the absence

of inclusive promotion criteria and participation in decision-making hinders institutional development. Developing a gender-sensitive HR framework, therefore, becomes essential for improving organisational efficiency.

Evidence from Wider Sectors

Empirical studies across sectors have confirmed the positive link between inclusion and organisational outcomes. For instance, Cahyono (2025) found that organisations that embraced inclusion as a core value experienced lower turnover rates, higher job satisfaction, and better performance metrics. Similarly, Siyal (2023) demonstrated that inclusive climates lead to psychological safety, where employees feel valued and are more willing to contribute ideas and raise concerns.

In the educational sector, inclusion is also associated with improved teamwork, curriculum innovation, and teacher commitment (Kusmawan et al., 2025). However, there is a paucity of empirical work examining these dynamics in faith-based schools, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Where studies exist, they often treat HR processes in broad terms without exploring how inclusion is framed, implemented, and experienced by different categories of staff.

Towards a Context-Sensitive Conceptual Framework

Despite the growing interest in inclusive HRM and its impact on organisational performance, there is limited research that focuses specifically on faith-based schools in Nigeria. Most existing literature either treats faith-based organisations generically or emphasises doctrinal influences without assessing how inclusivity in HR practices affects operational efficiency. Moreover, studies that examine HR policies in educational settings rarely address the complex intersection between faith commitments, institutional culture, and inclusive workplace practices. This study departs from existing literature by adopting a conceptual framework that foregrounds inclusivity as both a theological and managerial construct, recognising that faith-based schools operate within dual logics of spiritual mission and organisational efficiency. By interrogating how inclusive HR practices are framed, negotiated, and enacted within this hybrid context, the study extends inclusion theory to settings where doctrinal values and professional HRM norms co-exist.

In doing so, it contributes theoretically by advancing a faith-sensitive model of inclusive HRM and contributes practically by offering evidence-based recommendations for administrators and policymakers who must reconcile religious commitments with inclusive practices that enhance organisational efficiency.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative multiple case study design, which is particularly suited for exploring complex organisational phenomena within real-life contexts (Annamalah, 2024). By focusing on three faith-based secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, the study seeks

to provide an understanding of how inclusive HR policies are implemented, interpreted, and experienced, and how these, in turn, impact organisational efficiency.

The target population comprises faith-based secondary schools operating within South-West Nigeria. From this population, three schools were purposively selected based on accessibility, diversity in denominational affiliation, and willingness to participate. Each selected institution has a functioning administrative structure and a reasonable number of staff, which provides an ideal setting for exploring HR practices.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify key informants who possess direct knowledge of the HR systems and operational processes of their institutions. Participants included HR officers or their equivalents, school administrators, and selected teaching staff. In total, 12 participants (4 from each school) were engaged in the study. The justification for this sample size rests on the principle of data saturation in qualitative inquiry, where the focus is not on numerical generalisability but on obtaining rich, detailed insights. Engaging 12 participants across three institutions provided sufficient breadth to capture variation across contexts while allowing for in-depth analysis within each case.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and perspectives while maintaining focus on the core research objectives. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. A sample of guiding interview questions included:

1. How does your school define and practise inclusivity in its HR policies?
2. What procedures exist for recruitment, promotion, and staff development, and how fair do you consider them?
3. In what ways do religious values influence HR decisions in your school?
4. Can you describe challenges faced in implementing inclusive HR practices?
5. How do you think inclusive or exclusive practices affect staff morale and organisational efficiency?

Data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This involved familiarisation with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. To ensure credibility, triangulation was achieved by comparing accounts across different categories of staff within each school. Member-checking was conducted by sharing summaries of interview transcripts with participants for verification. Dependability was enhanced by maintaining a detailed audit trail, including documentation of coding decisions, theme development, and analytic memos. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues also provided an additional layer of rigour.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured

through the use of pseudonyms to represent the schools such as School A, School B, and School C. Institutional consent was also sought from the selected schools.

Theoretical Framework

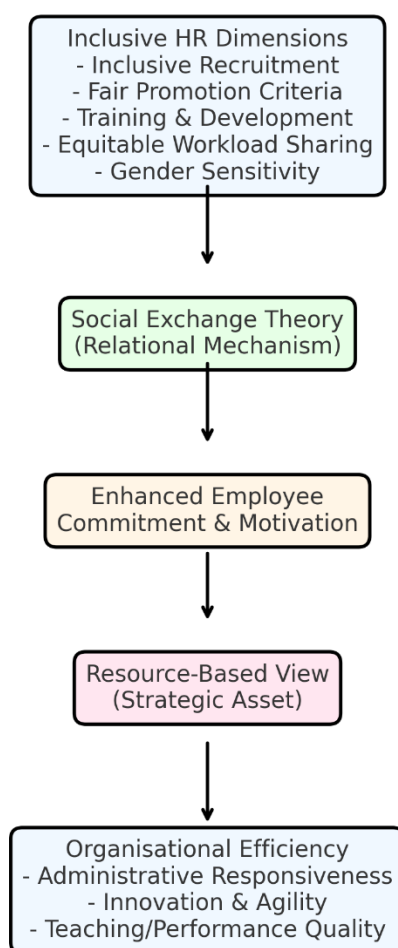
This study is underpinned by the Social Exchange Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the Firm, both of which offer complementary perspectives on the relationship between inclusive HR practices and organisational efficiency.

Developed by Blau (1964), Social Exchange Theory posits that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process aimed at maximising benefits and minimising costs. In the context of HRM, SET suggests that when organisations demonstrate fairness, inclusivity, and respect for employees, workers are more likely to reciprocate with increased loyalty, commitment, and performance (Cook et al., 2013). Thus, inclusive HR policies that ensure equitable access to opportunities and respect for diversity may foster a positive exchange relationship that enhances organisational harmony and productivity.

The Resource-Based View, articulated by Barney (1991) cited in Bertram (2016), argues that sustained competitive advantage stems from internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Inclusive HR policies can be seen as a strategic asset, fostering a diverse and engaged workforce that contributes to innovation and operational efficiency. In faith-based schools, where mission alignment and ethical conduct are emphasised, HR inclusivity can be a unique resource that strengthens the institutional identity while improving administrative and teaching performance.

Conceptual Model

By combining SET and RBV, the study situates inclusive HR practices as both a relational strategy (based on employee-employer exchange) and a strategic resource that enhances institutional capability. Accordingly, the conceptual model links the dimensions of inclusive HR (recruitment, promotion, training and development, equitable workload distribution, and gender sensitivity) with organisational efficiency (measured through staff motivation, administrative responsiveness, and overall performance). Social Exchange Theory provides the mechanism through which inclusivity builds commitment and reciprocity, while the Resource-Based View positions inclusivity as a strategic internal resource that sustains competitive advantage.



Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented under key thematic areas aligned with the research objectives and guided by the Social Exchange Theory and Resource-Based View (RBV).

Varied Conceptions and Applications of Inclusion

The concept of inclusion, as observed in the three faith-based schools studied, revealed significant variance not only in language but also in policy orientation and lived practice. While all institutions verbally affirmed the importance of “unity,” “equity,” and “love,” the operational definitions of these values diverged considerably, resulting in different outcomes for staff morale, administrative responsiveness, and organisational cohesion.

In School A, inclusion was institutionalised through clearly articulated HR policies that explicitly prohibited discrimination based on gender, denominational affiliation, or length of service. HR manuals were available to staff, and leadership appointments followed transparent procedures. A senior administrator stated, *“Inclusion for us means fair opportunity for everyone. We do not look at whether someone is male or female, Anglican or Pentecostal. What matters is competence and character.”* This inclusive culture was reflected

in observable patterns where women held significant leadership roles, including Vice Principal and Head of Departments, and junior staff felt empowered to express their views without fear of reprisal. One teacher shared, *"We have a sense that our voices matter. I've seen people promoted because of their contributions, not just who they are close to."*

In contrast, Schools B and C operated within less formalised HR structures, where inclusion was understood largely through a spiritual or moral lens. While there was a general avoidance of overt discrimination, equity across categories such as gender or denomination was not embedded into policy or practice. An HR officer in School B commented, *"We are a Christian school, so we expect all staff to live by Christian values. If someone is loyal and faithful, we trust them more with responsibilities."* Another staff member added, *"Most of the leaders are people who have been close to the school founders for a long time. That's just how things are done here."*

In School C, inclusion was closely tied to doctrinal alignment. Staff who were not members of the denomination that owned the school reported feeling overlooked in leadership matters. A female teacher noted, *"We have staff meetings, but it's obvious whose voices are heard more. I'm not from the same church as the leadership, so I often find out about decisions after they've been made."* This subtle exclusion led to a sense of disengagement and internal silos. Junior staff in particular reported that they were reluctant to share new ideas or raise concerns, as they perceived that inclusion was contingent on church affiliation rather than professional merit.

These findings illustrate that where inclusion is tied to informal networks, personal loyalty, or denominational proximity, the benefits of a diverse and empowered workforce are undermined. Staff begin to self-censor, innovation stagnates, and administrative efficiency is compromised. This pattern aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, which posits that human capital is a critical internal resource capable of delivering sustained advantage when it is nurtured through inclusive and strategic management practices (Bertram, 2016).

By contrast, in School A, inclusive HR practices were seen to produce tangible benefits. A middle-level manager observed, *"Since we began documenting and reviewing our recruitment and promotion processes, we've seen a significant improvement in staff performance and morale. People feel safe to contribute."* Such transparency fostered trust, which in turn contributed to greater internal stability and smoother administrative operations.

The disparity across the three schools suggests that the conception of inclusion is not merely a theoretical matter but has practical implications for institutional effectiveness. While some institutions interpreted inclusion through doctrinal or moral filters, only the school that operationalised it through professional HR structures saw the full organisational benefits. The data supports the argument that faith-based values and inclusive HR practices are not mutually exclusive, but rather, when intentionally harmonised, they can create a more just, productive, and cohesive working environment.

Gender and Promotion Opportunities

Gender-based disparities in promotion stood out as one of the most consistent and striking patterns across the three faith-based schools studied. Although women comprised a significant majority of the workforce, averaging over 60% of the teaching and administrative staff, they remained largely absent from strategic decision-making roles. In each school, senior leadership teams were either entirely male or overwhelmingly skewed in favour of men.

In School B, for example, all five top leadership positions (Principal, Vice Principal, Head of Administration, Chaplain, and Academic Coordinator) were held by men. A female teacher who had served in the school for over a decade remarked, *"I have taken on acting roles and led projects successfully, but when it comes to formal appointments, it's usually a man. There's no formal rule, but it's the unspoken pattern."* This view was echoed by another participant who observed, *"Leadership seems to follow a silent code. You can work hard, but if you're not male, you're less likely to be recommended for higher roles."*

In School C, the situation was similar. Out of 12 departmental units, only two were headed by women, both of whom had been in the system for over fifteen years. Even then, they held positions in areas stereotypically associated with female leadership, such as pastoral care and student welfare. The positions of Academic Coordinator, Examination Officer, and Financial Controller were all male-held. One female administrator noted: *"When we raise the question of leadership representation, the answer is usually framed around 'spiritual headship' or doctrinal tradition. So we've learnt not to push."*

This pattern resonates strongly with Wood's (2023) findings, which argue that gender role expectations rooted in religious ideology continue to limit women's upward mobility in faith-based institutions. These expectations often create glass ceilings, not through written policy, but through institutional culture that reinforces male dominance in leadership under the guise of spiritual order.

Even in School A, which had more inclusive HR practices in general, gender dynamics in promotion still revealed underlying inequities. Although there were more women in middle-management roles, top-tier positions were still predominantly male. A Vice Principal who was female stated, *"It took many years and visible accomplishments to get here. I believe I was considered only because I was indispensable. But that shouldn't be the benchmark. It should be fairness."*

From the lens of Social Exchange Theory, these findings underscore a breach in the implicit psychological contract between the institutions and their female staff. The principle of reciprocity suggests that employees respond to organisational fairness with loyalty and engagement (Blau, 1964; Cook et al., 2013). However, when female staff witness repeated instances of exclusion despite merit and long service, their emotional and professional investment in the organisation diminishes. This not only reduces morale but also contributes to passive disengagement, where capable individuals refrain from leadership pursuits or innovation because they perceive the system as closed.

Moreover, the lack of gender diversity in leadership limits the institution's ability to reflect the diversity of its staff and student body in governance decisions. Inclusive leadership has been shown to foster broader perspectives, greater problem-solving capacity, and more responsive institutional policies (Thorjussen, 2020). By excluding women from key decision-making spaces, these schools are inadvertently narrowing their leadership bandwidth and weakening their potential for sustainable organisational growth.

It is also important to note that in some instances, women themselves internalised these limitations. One respondent in School B remarked, *"I'm content with where I am. Leadership comes with a lot of spiritual responsibility, and it's better suited for men in this kind of setting."* Such responses reveal the deep-seated influence of institutional culture and religious teachings in shaping staff expectations and self-perceptions.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that gender inequality in promotion is not simply a matter of oversight or neutrality but is often embedded within the theological and administrative architecture of the schools. While faith-based institutions may feel bound by their doctrinal positions, they must also reckon with the cost of maintaining exclusive leadership systems. The underutilisation of a qualified, experienced female workforce diminishes not only staff satisfaction but also institutional efficiency and adaptability.

Inclusive Recruitment and Induction Practices

Recruitment and induction practices across the three faith-based schools revealed substantial disparities in approach and underlying philosophy. While each school expressed a commitment to employing competent staff, the pathways through which new employees were recruited and oriented varied significantly, reflecting deeper institutional assumptions about trust, loyalty, and cultural fit.

In School A, the recruitment process was formalised and structured around clear HR procedures. Vacant positions were publicly advertised via noticeboards, social media, and relevant professional networks. Applicants were shortlisted through a transparent scoring system based on qualifications, teaching experience, and interview performance. A member of the recruitment committee explained, *"We want the best hands, not just familiar faces. That's why we advertise and follow an objective screening process."* This approach allowed the institution to attract a diverse pool of candidates, including those from outside its denominational base, thereby enriching the school's human capital.

Staff recruited through this system noted that the transparent process positively influenced their commitment and sense of value. One newly hired teacher shared, *"I was not connected to anyone here before I applied. The fairness of the process convinced me that the school truly values professionalism."* The inclusive recruitment process also contributed to a more balanced workforce in terms of gender, denomination, and professional background. This diversity was perceived by staff as enhancing classroom dynamics and organisational learning.

In contrast, Schools B and C lacked formal recruitment policies and relied heavily on informal, relationship-based hiring. Positions were rarely advertised publicly. Instead,

school leaders recruited through internal networks, particularly among church members and personal contacts. An HR officer in School B stated candidly, *"We don't really do open recruitment. We hire those who are recommended by people we trust which is usually from our church or inner circle."* This practice, while convenient and culturally familiar, severely limited access to a wider talent pool and often resulted in a homogenous staff body.

Teachers in these schools expressed mixed feelings about the recruitment system. Some appreciated the perceived sense of community and shared faith values, while others raised concerns about fairness and meritocracy. A teacher in School C remarked, *"Sometimes people are hired because of who they know, not what they bring to the table. That can be discouraging to those of us working hard without such connections."* Another participant noted, *"If you are not part of the church or close to someone in leadership, it's unlikely you'll be considered, no matter how qualified you are."*

These findings reveal that while informal recruitment may strengthen trust and perceived loyalty, it often undermines the principles of equity, transparency, and competence-based selection. Moreover, it may unintentionally institutionalise exclusion, particularly for highly qualified candidates from outside the denominational or social network of the school. The lack of procedural clarity also creates room for favouritism and opacity, which can dampen staff morale and inhibit organisational growth.

From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), inclusive recruitment serves as a strategic mechanism for acquiring diverse and valuable human capital (Bertram, 2016). Diversity in educational staffing is not merely about representational balance; it also enhances creativity, adaptability, and pedagogical innovation. A workforce that includes individuals from varied backgrounds as professional, denominational, or gendered, broadens the institution's capacity to respond to different student needs and external challenges.

In addition to recruitment, induction practices also reflected the same divergence in institutional structure. In School A, newly hired staff underwent a formal induction process, including orientation sessions on institutional values, staff policies, teaching expectations, and performance appraisal mechanisms. A recently recruited teacher noted, *"From my first week, I knew what was expected of me. There were clear documents and mentorship support. It helped me settle in quickly."* This structured induction supported the professional integration of staff and fostered alignment with the school's operational ethos.

Conversely, in Schools B and C, induction was informal and often unstructured. New staff were expected to learn through observation or informal mentoring from colleagues. A teacher in School B shared, *"When I resumed, there was no formal orientation. I had to figure things out gradually by watching others."* The lack of structured onboarding often led to inconsistencies in classroom practice, misunderstandings of institutional expectations, and uneven professional development trajectories.

Furthermore, where new staff felt alienated from existing networks, they were more likely to struggle with adaptation, reducing their early productivity and long-term satisfaction.

This again illustrates the practical consequences of weak or exclusive recruitment and induction systems.

The presence or absence of inclusive recruitment and induction practices had a profound effect on staff composition, motivation, and organisational coherence. While School A's structured approach exemplified best practice in inclusive HR management, Schools B and C revealed how informal, insular practices can limit institutional capacity and contribute to inefficiencies. The findings underscore the critical importance of fairness, transparency, and merit-based systems in the recruitment and integration of staff especially within institutions that carry a faith-based identity.

Therefore, for faith-based schools to enhance organisational efficiency and remain responsive in a dynamic educational landscape, they must see inclusive recruitment not as a threat to their values, but as a strategic opportunity to harness the full range of available talent in service of their mission.

Staff Development and Access to Training

Staff development and access to training emerged as a central theme in assessing the inclusivity and strategic orientation of HR practices across the three faith-based schools. While all the institutions acknowledged the importance of continuous professional development, their approaches to its implementation revealed notable disparities in both structure and equity.

In School A, staff development was embedded into the institution's annual planning framework. A designated training budget was allocated at the start of each academic session, and a rotational model ensured that all staff members had the opportunity to benefit from external workshops, seminars, or in-house training programmes. As one senior teacher stated, *"There is fairness in how training opportunities are distributed. We have a calendar and criteria, and it's open to all. You can even nominate a course that interests you."* Another participant added, *"Since I joined this school three years ago, I have attended at least one major professional development activity each year, and I have also facilitated one."*

The presence of this structured system contributed significantly to staff morale and institutional performance. Teachers reported feeling valued and motivated, which translated into enhanced classroom practices and better student engagement. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, this investment in staff development represents a positive exchange relationship where the institution's commitment to staff growth is reciprocated with loyalty, improved performance, and reduced turnover (Blau, 1964; Adanu, 2024).

In contrast, Schools B and C exhibited less structured and more selective approaches to professional development. In School B, training was described as "occasional and invitation-based," with no transparent criteria for participation. Several staff members indicated that only a small group of teachers, often those perceived to be close to the leadership were consistently nominated for training opportunities. A teacher lamented, *"Training here is like a privilege, not a right. If you're not visible to management or in their good*

books, you won't be selected." Another staff member shared, *"We hear about trainings after they've happened. Sometimes it feels like a closed circle."*

Similarly, in School C, although some training events occurred, they were irregular and mostly dependent on donor organisations or external church bodies. More strikingly, staff were often expected to fund their own participation in external courses. A respondent recalled, *"When I asked to attend a workshop on curriculum design, I was told the school had no provision and that I could go if I paid myself. That was discouraging."* As a result, many teachers did not pursue professional development due to financial constraints, leading to stagnation in their instructional methods and professional growth.

This inequality in access to training undermines the development of a capable and dynamic teaching workforce. It also sends a signal that not all employees are equally valued, thereby weakening organisational commitment and reducing the collective competency of the school. According to Naseem et al. (2025), inclusive staff development practices are positively correlated with job satisfaction, innovation, and institutional learning.

The consequences of exclusionary staff development practices were evident in the attitudes of staff in Schools B and C. Several respondents described a sense of frustration and resignation. One remarked, *"Even when you try to do more or show initiative, it goes unnoticed. You stop trying after a while."* Such disengagement reflects a breakdown in the psychological contract between the institution and its employees, which Social Exchange Theory identifies as a major risk factor in organisational decline (Zhao & Detlor, 2021).

Interestingly, even among those who did receive training in these schools, there were concerns about follow-up and integration. A teacher who had attended a workshop on digital teaching methods noted, *"After the training, there was no system to share what I learned. It would have helped if we had sessions where trained staff could cascade their knowledge to others."* This highlights another dimension of inclusive staff development—not only ensuring access but also fostering a culture of shared learning and collaborative growth.

In contrast, School A had mechanisms for knowledge dissemination, such as post-training presentations and peer-led workshops. This ensured that even those who could not attend external events benefited indirectly. One administrator explained, *"We believe in multiplying learning. Everyone should grow, not just those who travelled or attended."* This inclusive approach amplified the institutional impact of individual training and contributed to a culture of continuous learning.

Thus, the findings suggest that inclusive staff development is not simply a matter of sending people to workshops, but rather a holistic commitment to equitable access, institutional support, and the diffusion of knowledge. Schools that approached development inclusively reaped the benefits of staff engagement, improved pedagogical practice, and operational cohesion. Conversely, those with informal, exclusive, or underfunded training systems experienced lower motivation, skills stagnation, and internal tension.

Organisational Communication and Conflict Resolution

Organisational communication and conflict resolution emerged as a vital dimension of inclusive human resource practice in the three faith-based schools studied. Effective communication not only fosters clarity and trust but also forms the basis for conflict prevention, timely decision-making, and staff cohesion. The extent to which communication was inclusive varied significantly across the institutions and had direct implications for organisational efficiency and morale.

In School A, communication was described by staff as “open, responsive, and participatory.” Regular staff meetings were held, both at departmental and whole-school levels, with clear agendas and opportunities for input. One teacher noted, *“We don’t just sit and listen. Everyone is given a chance to speak, and suggestions are genuinely considered.”* The school had also adopted an anonymous feedback mechanism, allowing staff to raise sensitive concerns without fear of reprisal. Another teacher shared, *“There is a feedback box in the staff room. I once used it to raise a complaint, and it was addressed at the next management meeting.”*

Furthermore, the school operated an established grievance resolution procedure, documented in the staff handbook and known to all employees. Staff were aware of who to approach when disputes arose, and conflict resolution was typically mediated through structured dialogue and guided by HR policy. As one staff member explained, *“Even when misunderstandings happen, they don’t escalate. We talk about issues quickly, and things are resolved respectfully.”* These systems contributed to a sense of psychological safety and institutional transparency. Teachers and administrators alike felt part of a shared mission, leading to smoother operations and enhanced collaboration.

In contrast, Schools B and C exhibited more hierarchical and exclusionary communication structures, often built around informal or personality-driven channels. In both schools, staff reported feeling “uninformed,” “powerless,” or “excluded” from key decisions that affected their work. A teacher in School B stated, *“Most of the time, we only hear about changes when they’re already in effect. There’s no room to give input or ask questions.”* Another added, *“You just follow instructions here. Decisions are made at the top, and you adapt.”*

Conflict resolution in these schools was equally informal and inconsistent. Staff noted that grievances were either “ignored,” “downplayed,” or dealt with behind closed doors. A female administrator in School C remarked, *“There is no formal complaint procedure. If you have an issue, you’re expected to keep quiet or speak privately to someone in authority. But nothing really happens afterwards.”* This lack of structure often led to unresolved tensions, gossip, and a general atmosphere of mistrust. Teachers who felt wronged but silenced by the system described feeling demoralised and less invested in their roles.

One particularly telling account came from a newly employed teacher in School B who said, *“When I had a misunderstanding with a colleague, I went to the head of department. He told me to ‘just let it go’ and focus on my job. It left me feeling like my concerns didn’t matter.”* Such experiences illustrate the organisational cost of poor communication and non-existent conflict resolution frameworks.

From the standpoint of the Resource-Based View (RBV), effective communication and conflict resolution mechanisms constitute intangible assets that support adaptability, cohesion, and long-term institutional success (Widiyastuti & Darmawansyah, 2025). Institutions that embed inclusive communication practices within their administrative culture are better equipped to handle internal challenges, manage transitions, and maintain workforce harmony. In the case of School A, such mechanisms proved instrumental in building staff loyalty and a positive institutional identity.

Equally, Social Exchange Theory offers insight into the consequences of communication breakdowns. When staff feel heard and respected, they are more likely to reciprocate with commitment, cooperation, and initiative (Kyambade et al., 2024). On the other hand, when communication is one-sided or dismissive, the psychological contract between staff and management is damaged, leading to disengagement, resistance, or even attrition.

Interestingly, staff in Schools B and C often described coping strategies rather than institutional solutions. Some spoke of confiding in trusted colleagues or enduring situations in silence. A teacher in School C commented, *"We just manage ourselves. If you talk too much, it can be seen as rebellion."* This informal culture of silent endurance not only restricts innovation but also erodes the emotional resilience of the workforce over time.

In contrast, School A demonstrated that when communication is structured to include all voices regardless of rank or affiliation, conflicts are addressed promptly, and decision-making processes benefit from broader insight and shared responsibility. One school leader captured this ethos succinctly: *"We believe inclusion is not just about gender or policy. It's about giving everyone a voice and acting on what we hear."*

The data affirms that inclusive organisational communication and structured conflict resolution are essential elements of HR effectiveness in faith-based schools. They contribute to clarity, staff unity, and smooth operations. Conversely, institutions that neglect these processes face greater risks of internal fragmentation, low morale, and inefficiency. To build resilient and thriving organisations, faith-based schools must move beyond hierarchical traditions and adopt inclusive communication strategies that promote transparency, trust, and accountability across all levels.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study set out with the specific aim of examining how inclusive human resource (HR) policies influence organisational efficiency in faith-based secondary schools in South-West Nigeria. By adopting a qualitative case study approach, the research has contributed to both theory and practice by demonstrating that inclusivity in HR is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic asset that enhances organisational cohesion and efficiency. Through the analysis of three schools with different denominational backgrounds, the study revealed how varying levels of inclusivity shape staff experiences, administrative processes, and institutional climate. While all the schools professed values consistent with Christian ethics and integrity, only one demonstrated a structured and

intentional inclusive HR system. The others relied on informal and often exclusionary practices that constrained staff development, communication, promotion, and participation in governance.

The findings underscore that inclusive HR practices are not peripheral but central to the effective functioning of educational institutions. This research contributes empirically by highlighting specific HR dimensions—recruitment, staff development, communication, and promotion—through which inclusion directly enhances morale, trust, and efficiency. It also contributes conceptually by linking Social Exchange Theory and the Resource-Based View to the context of faith-based schools, thereby extending the applicability of these theories to religious educational institutions. The study therefore affirms that faith-based organisations can retain their religious identity while embracing professional HR standards that promote fairness, transparency, and excellence.

Recommendations

Policy

Faith-based schools should review and revise their HR policies with a view to institutionalising inclusion as both a moral and strategic imperative. National and denominational education authorities could also introduce policy frameworks that require faith-based schools to document and report inclusive HR practices as part of their accreditation and oversight processes. Recruitment policies should be transparent and merit-based, with public advertisement of vacancies, clear job descriptions, and unbiased interview procedures.

Practice

In the area of staff development, schools should adopt equitable systems that ensure all staff, regardless of rank or affiliation, have access to relevant training opportunities. This includes budgeting for professional development, rotating training slots fairly, and creating structures for knowledge sharing. Schools must also develop clear and fair promotion criteria that enable both men and women to rise to leadership positions based on performance and contribution rather than proximity to leadership or perceived doctrinal fitness. Organisational communication should be made more inclusive by providing safe and effective channels for feedback, participation, and grievance resolution. Leaders should be trained in inclusive management practices that align with both professional standards and faith-based values, so as to foster cultures of justice, respect, and stewardship.

Future Research

Further studies could expand the sample to include faith-based schools across other regions of Nigeria, enabling comparative insights into denominational and cultural differences in HR inclusivity. Quantitative studies could also be conducted to test the causal relationship between inclusive HR practices and measurable outcomes such as staff retention, student

performance, and institutional growth. Additionally, future research could examine how inclusivity in HR policies interacts with broader governance practices in faith-based organisations, thereby extending the theoretical and practical contributions of this work.

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