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High-Performance Work Systems and Organisational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT : *This study examined the effect of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), measured through comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement, on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Resource-Based View and Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 360 small enterprise owners and managers using proportionate stratified random sampling, with 338 valid responses obtained. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and multiple regression. Findings revealed that HPWS significantly predicts organisational resilience, explaining 47.2% of its variance ($R^2 = .472$, $F(3,384) = 8.610$, $p < .001$). Comprehensive training emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .334$, $p = .001$), followed by performance-based compensation ($\beta = .286$, $p = .015$) and employee involvement ($\beta = .253$, $p = .004$). The study concludes that strategic human resource practices strengthen small enterprises' ability to withstand environmental disruptions. It recommends structured employee development, performance-linked incentives, and participative decision-making to improve survival and adaptability.*

Keywords: *High-Performance Work Systems, Organisational Resilience, Training, Performance-Based Compensation, Employee Involvement, Small Enterprises, Benue State.*

Introduction

The contemporary business environment is characterised by increasing uncertainty, including global supply chain disruptions, economic instability, and socio-political challenges that threaten organisational survival (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). These challenges are more severe in developing economies where small enterprises operate under conditions such as poor infrastructure, currency instability, weak institutions, and security concerns (Tink & Patel, 2022). Small enterprises in Benue State face additional pressures, including unreliable power supply, supply chain difficulties, and local environmental challenges (Ikyanyon & Abata, 2023). Although traditional strategic management emphasised competitive advantage through physical and financial resources (Barney, 1991), recent scholarship highlights organisational resilience as a critical capability for survival.

Organisational resilience refers to the ability of firms to anticipate threats, absorb disruptions, and adapt effectively to changing conditions (Duchek, 2020). It consists of three major capabilities: anticipation, absorption, and adaptability (Duchek, 2020; Denyer, 2017).For small enterprises with limited financial resources, resilience depends significantly on internal human capabilities. High-Performance Work Systems provide a strategic approach by integrating human resource practices that improve employee skills, motivation, and participation (Delery & Shaw, 2001). According to the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework, comprehensive training enhances employee ability, performance-based compensation strengthens motivation, and employee involvement creates opportunities for participation (Appelbaum et al., 2000).

Previous studies demonstrate that HPWS contributes to organisational survival during turbulent periods. Tink and Patel (2022) found that firms adopting high-performance practices showed greater capacity to survive structural shocks, while Han et al. (2020) reported that training and employee involvement improve employees' ability to solve operational problems during crises.

In Nigeria, HPWS research has largely focused on large organisations, leaving limited evidence on small enterprises. Ikyanyon and Abata (2023) found that human capital investment improves business continuity among micro and small enterprises in North Central Nigeria. However, gaps remain regarding how specific HPWS dimensions influence the different stages of organisational resilience, particularly within the socio-economic context of Benue State.This study therefore examines how comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement predict organisational resilience among small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem and Justification

Small enterprises in Benue State contribute significantly to economic development but operate within a challenging environment characterised by inflation, infrastructural limitations, unstable power supply, and security disruptions. These conditions contribute to high business failure rates (Ikyanyon & Abata, 2023; Tink & Patel, 2022).While external factors contribute to business difficulties, inadequate internal human resource practices also limit firms' ability to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to disruptions (Delery & Shaw, 2001; Wright et al., 2001). Without effective HPWS practices, small enterprises may lack the workforce capabilities required for organisational resilience (Duchek, 2020).This study addresses three major gaps. First, it shifts attention from traditional performance measures such as profitability toward resilience as a survival capability. Second, it examines resilience as a multidimensional construct involving anticipation, absorption, and adaptability rather than a single outcome measure (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Third, it provides evidence from small enterprises in Benue State, an under-researched context compared with urban corporate environments.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To examine the effect of High-Performance Work Systems, measured through comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement, on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Determine the effect of comprehensive training on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
2. Examine the effect of performance-based compensation on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
3. Assess the effect of employee involvement on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
4. Evaluate the joint effect of HPWS dimensions (comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement) on organisational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Model of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposes that human capital serves as the primary foundation of organisational resilience among resource-constrained small enterprises. It assumes that the adoption of an integrated bundle of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), comprising comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement, strengthens internal capabilities and promotes a flexible organisational culture.

Through enhanced employee skills, motivation, and participation, HPWS enables small enterprises to develop the capacity to anticipate disruptions, absorb environmental shocks, and adapt effectively to changing business conditions. Thus, the framework positions HPWS dimensions as independent variables that positively influence organisational resilience as the dependent variable as seen in Figure 1.

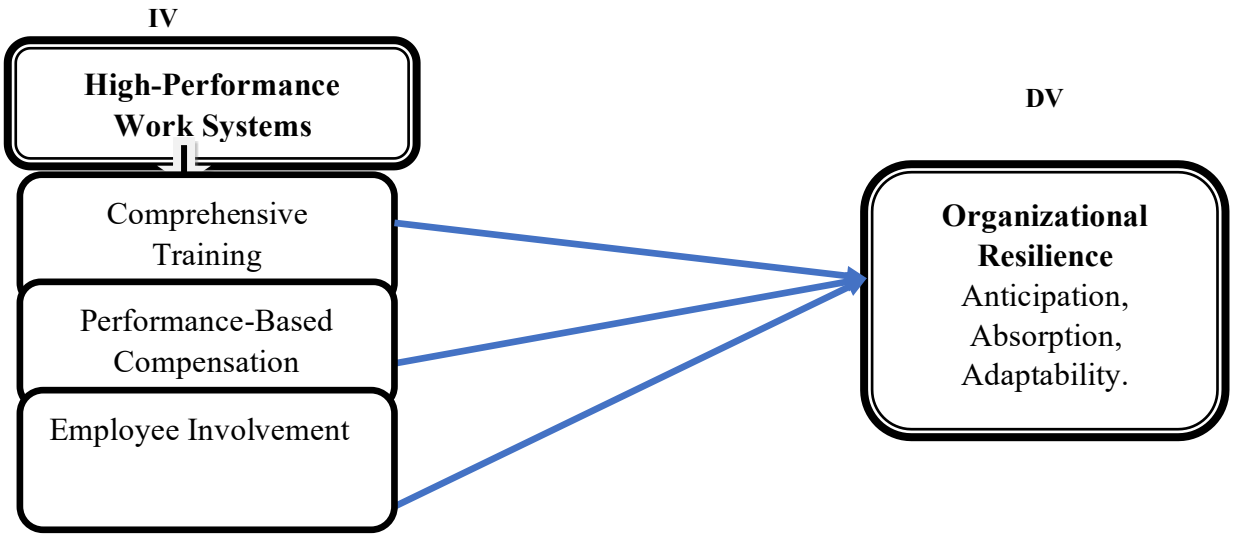


Figure1: Conceptual Model

Source: Developed by the Researcher from existing literature

High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)

High-Performance Work Systems represent a strategically aligned, complementary bundle of human resource practices designed to enhance employee skills, motivation, and commitment, thereby transforming human capital into a core competitive advantage (Delery & Shaw, 2001; Wright et al., 2001). Rather than treating HR practices as isolated, transactional functions, HPWS relies on the principle of "horizontal fit" (synergistic alignment), where the practices mutually reinforce one another to drive collective organizational outcomes.

In the resource-constrained context of Small Enterprises (SEs) in Benue State, HPWS acts as the structural foundation for internal capability building. It shifts firms away from informal, erratic, "low-road" labor management toward an intentional, "high-road" architecture that values employees as strategic assets (Ikyanyon & Abata, 2023). For this study, HPWS is operationalized through three primary dimensions:

Comprehensive Training: This refers to the systematic process of upgrading employee skills, knowledge, and behaviors to meet current and future operational demands (Noe, 2020). In the context of Benue State SEs (often operating in agro-allied, retail, and service sectors), comprehensive training moves beyond formal, classroom-based instruction. It encompasses structured on-the-job training, cross-training, and multi-skilling. This equips a lean workforce with redundant capabilities, ensuring that one employee can seamlessly step into another's role during disruptions.

Performance-Based Compensation: This is a strategic reward mechanism that links financial and non-financial incentives directly to measurable individual, team, or organizational outcomes (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). Given the tight liquidity and financial constraints of small firms in North Central Nigeria, performance-based compensation is operationalized as flexible incentive structures. These include performance bonuses, profit-sharing, or non-monetary recognitions tied to milestone achievements or crisis-response efforts. This aligns employee motivations directly with the survival and efficiency goals of the enterprise.

Employee Involvement: The degree to which an organization provides its workforce with the autonomy, information, and decision-making power to influence their work and broader organizational processes (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). In traditionally autocratic and highly centralized Nigerian small firms, employee involvement is operationalized as the decentralization of authority. It includes open-door information sharing regarding business health, participative problem-solving circles, and localized autonomy that empowers frontline workers to make immediate operational decisions without waiting for slow managerial approvals.

Organizational Resilience

Organizational resilience is a dynamic, meta-capability that enables an enterprise to withstand systemic environmental shocks, maintain operational continuity, and dynamically adapt to or emerge stronger from disruptive crises (Duchek, 2020; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). It is fundamentally distinct from linear performance metrics (like short-term profitability); resilience represents an enterprise's capacity for structural defense, survival, and renewal under conditions of high volatility.

For small firms in Benue State, resilience is not a passive "bouncing back" to a flawed status quo, but an active, continuous process of navigating severe localized shocks such as sudden fuel spikes, supply chain blockades, or currency fluctuations. This study operationalized organizational resilience as a Composite Index comprising three distinct, sequential temporal capabilities:

Anticipation (Pre-Crisis Phase): The cognitive capability of an organization to actively scan the internal and external environments, detect early warning signs of vulnerability, and proactively prepare for potential disruptions before they fully manifest (Duchek, 2020). This is measured by the firm's capacity to recognize shifting market trends, track impending raw material shortages, monitor localized security or infrastructure risks, and establish preemptive contingency plans.

Absorption (In-Crisis Phase): The operational stability and robust structural architecture that allows an organization to cope with the immediate impact of a shock, minimize damage, and maintain essential core functions during a crisis (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). In Benue SEs, absorption manifests as the ability to maintain baseline operations when the public power grid drops, when sudden inflationary shocks hit raw material costs, or when localized security challenges fracture standard distribution networks. It reflects the firm's coping mechanism under sudden stress.

Adaptability (Post-Crisis/Transformational Phase): This refers to the structural flexibility and behavioral capacity of an organization to execute strategic pivots, modify existing routines, and reorganize resources to align with a permanently altered post-crisis environment (Duchek, 2020). This is operationalized as the speed and effectiveness with which an enterprise changes its product offerings, adopts alternative local raw materials, shifts to digital/alternative marketing channels, or alters its business model to capture new market opportunities arising from a crisis.

Small Enterprises

In the context of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), a Small Enterprise is strictly defined using a dual-criterion matrix based on employment size and annual turnover (formerly total assets). According to the revised National Policy on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, an enterprise is classified as Small if it meets the following parameters:

- **Workforce:** It employs between 10 and 49 people.
- **Financial Threshold:** It generates an annual turnover between ₦25 million and ₦99 million (SMEDAN, 2025).

The Precedence Rule: In cases where a conflict in classification arises between the financial threshold and the workforce size, the employment-based criteria take precedence for statistical categorization (NBS/SMEDAN, 2019).

Empirical Review

Ogbonnaya, Daniels, and Connelly (2024) investigated how high-involvement work practices map onto localized crisis management phases in smaller, informal service firms during localized security and supply chain disruptions. Using a cross-sectional analysis and a sample of 185 owner-managers in sub-Saharan Africa, their study discovered that decentralized decision-making (employee involvement) significantly predicts rapid strategic pivoting. When frontline employees possess autonomous authority, the firm's overall time lag in responding to severe supply shocks decreases drastically.

Ikyanyon and Abata (2023) investigated the relationship between strategic HRM bundles and the survival of small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria. Utilizing a survey of 210 owner-managers and multiple regression analysis, their study found that informal, decentralized employee involvement and targeted skill development significantly reduced enterprise mortality during economic disruptions. However, the study relied on general survival metrics rather than a multidimensional resilience construct.

Eniola et al. (2023) examined the impact of high-performance work systems on sustainable organizational success in small and medium businesses (SMEs). Data were obtained from 820 SME employees in Nigeria. Their study used Partial Least Square (PLS) to check the hypothesis. Their study revealed that high-performance work systems (training and employee involvement) impacted positively and significantly on sustainable organizational success in SMEs.

Gu, Zhang, Li and Huo (2023) examined the impact of high-involvement human resource management practices on supply chain resilience from the ability-motivation-opportunity perspective. Based on data collected from 206 Chinese manufacturers, the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling. The results indicated that employee participation played the most powerful role in improving supplier, customer, and internal resilience.

Buodeigha et al. (2023) used a sample of 160 respondents to examine the correlation between employee involvement and the organizational resilience of manufacturing firms located in Rivers State. Findings indicated that employee involvement plays a crucial and substantial role in enhancing the adaptive and absorptive capacity and innovativeness of manufacturing firms located in Rivers State.

Ibua et al. (2023) researched the effect of on-the-job training techniques on the performance of SMEs in Mombasa County. The study established that employee coaching and apprenticeship all had a significant and positive effect on the performance of SMEs. The study concludes that on-the-job training techniques have a significant effect on organizational performance.

Han, Sun, and Wang (2020) explored the boundary conditions of HPWS implementations, shifting focus from baseline profitability to firm-level survival capabilities in volatile markets. Hierarchical linear modeling of multi-source data from 92 small corporate entities was utilized. Their study concluded that isolated HR practices fail during severe crises. Only when comprehensive training is actively backed by performance incentives does a firm develop the cognitive capacity to accurately anticipate market shocks and detect structural threats early.

Patel, Messersmith, and Lepak (2013) examined how HPWS configurations impact the organizational flexibility and growth of small-to-medium-sized manufacturing firms. A longitudinal survey design was adopted, tracking 202 small firms over multiple time waves. Their study confirmed that synergistic bundles of comprehensive training and high employee involvement create structural flexibility. This flexibility allows small firms to adapt rapidly to external shocks, proving that human resource practices directly foster post-crisis adaptability.

Cooke, Cooper, Bartram, Wang, and Xiang (2019) analyzed the impact of HPWS on the organizational resilience and psychological well-being of employees in resource-constrained businesses facing environmental turbulence. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and data from 450 employees across vulnerable sectors, their study demonstrated that training and performance-based compensation cultivate a collective psychological safety cushion. This baseline motivation enables the organization to absorb immediate financial and operational shocks, sustaining the "absorption" capability of the firm during prolonged crises.

Theoretical Anchors

The Resource-Based View (RBV)

Popularized by Barney (1991), RBV posits that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage and survival by developing bundles of resources that are Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable (VRIN).

- **Application to the study:** For Small Enterprises (SEs) in Benue State, physical and financial resources are rarely a source of long-term advantage because they are scarce and easily disrupted by the macro-environment. However, the human capital and social capital developed within the firm cannot be easily replicated by competitors.
- **The Link to Resilience:** When an enterprise invests in an HPWS, it transforms ordinary employees into a VRIN resource bundle. This collective workforce capability forms the internal buffer that enables the firm to absorb shocks and adapt to structural crises (Barney, 1991; Wright et al., 2001).

Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Theory

Formulated by Appelbaum et al. (2000), AMO theory states that organizational performance is a function of three core components: employee Ability (A), Motivation (M), and Opportunity to participate (O).

Application to the study: This theory maps directly onto the chosen independent variable dimensions:

- **Comprehensive Training → Ability (A):** Equips workers with the technical skills and mental models needed to identify external threats early.
- **Performance-Based Compensation → Motivation (M):** Incentivizes workers to exert discretionary effort, maintaining operational stability during a crisis.
- **Employee Involvement → Opportunity (O):** Grants workers the autonomy and structural platforms to suggest immediate operational pivots.

Methodology

Study Area: The study area is Benue State, located in Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone, a predominantly agrarian region known as the "Food Basket of the Nation." The area features a heavily resource-constrained, agro-allied small enterprise ecosystem that operates under severe environmental disruptions, acute infrastructural deficits, and unique localized security challenges.

Research Design: The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and data on all the variables under study were collected at one time in order to empirically determine the effect of HPWS on organizational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study: The population of this study comprised one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three (1,783) Small Enterprises (SEs) in Benue State (NBS/SMEDAN, 2021). The study focused on only owners/managers of SEs in Benue State because they are presumed to be the main people charged with the responsibility of implementing HPWS practices in the SEs.

Sample Size Determination: The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1964) formula:

$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where: n = the sample size required, N = Finite population, e = level of significance, 1 = constant.

Using Yamane's formula, the researcher calculated the sample size for this study as follows:

$n = 1,783 / [1 + 1,783(0.05)^2]$
$n = 1,783 / 5.4575$
$n = 327$ owners/managers

The sample size of 327 was adjusted to 360 (that is, 10% of 327) was added to the original sample size in order to provide for a non-response bias.

Sampling Technique: Proportinate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select 360 owners/managers of SEs in Benue State across different sectors.

Instrument of Data Collection: A structured survey questionnaire was the main research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed on a five-point Likert scale measuring from strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1).

Validation of the Instrument: Face and content validity of the questionnaire were established by giving the prepared questionnaires to two research experts in the field of study (one each from Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, and University of Mkar, Mkar). Their inputs were utilized to improve the questionnaires. Construct validity was also achieved using factor analysis. Utilizing a pilot sample of 30 owners/managers of SEs selected randomly in Makurdi and Otukpo Metropolis, copies of the designed questionnaire were administered to them to test for validity and reliability of the instrument. The result of the factor analysis as presented in Table 1 indicated that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)'s overall measure of sampling adequacy for the study's three (3) variables was 0.866, which surpassed the threshold value of 0.50 as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). The results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also highly significant ($\chi^2 = 739.223$, Df = 12, Sig. 0.000 < 0.05), confirming that validity was established.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.866	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	739.223
	Df	12
	Sig.	.000

a. Based on correlations

Source: Author's Computations from IBM SPSS 23.0 Output (2026)

Reliability of the Instrument: Reliability of the research instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha method. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed using data obtained from the pilot survey. The Cronbach's coefficient Alpha values of each variable in this study as shown in Table 2 were all above the threshold of 0.7 as recommended by Udofia (2011).

Table 2: Reliability Test

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Comprehensive Training	4	0.869
Performance-Based Compensation	4	0.877
Employee Involvement	4	0.885
Organizational Resilience	4	0.799

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Average Reliability Coefficient		**0.858**

Source: Researcher's Computations from SPSS 23.0 (2026)

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using descriptive (percentage ratings, mean scores and standard deviations) and inferential (regression analysis) statistical tools. Hypotheses 1, 2 & 3 (H01, H02 & H03) were tested using multiple regression Coefficients Table in the SPSS output at 5% level of significance. Decision rule for test of hypotheses was based on a standard significance level of alpha = 0.05:

- If $p < 0.05$, the effect is statistically significant, and we reject the null hypothesis.
- If $p \geq 0.05$, the effect is not statistically significant, and we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis Four (H04) was tested using the ANOVA Table (F-statistic) and the Model Summary (R^2 value). The F-test evaluated whether the independent variables together significantly predict the variance in the composite organizational resilience index. If the F-significance value is less than 0.05, the joint null hypothesis would be rejected.

Result And Discussion

Response Rate: Out of 360 questionnaires distributed to 360 owners/managers of SEs in Benue State across different sectors, 346 were retrieved. After discarding 8 incorrectly filled responses, 338 valid copies were used for analysis, yielding a 94% response rate.

Regression Results

Joint Effect of HPWS Dimensions (Comprehensive Training, Performance-Based Compensation, and Employee Involvement) on the composite Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State

The Joint Effect of HPWS dimensions on the Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State is evaluated using Model Summary and ANOVA statistics.

Table 3: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.687[a]	.472	.466	1.355	1.699

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Involvement, Comprehensive Training, Performance-Based Compensation

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Resilience

Source: IBM SPSS 23.0 Output (2026)

From Table 3, it can be seen that the three HPWS dimensions – employee involvement, comprehensive training, and performance-based compensation – have a strong positive correlation with organizational resilience (R = .687) and together account for 47.2% of its total variance (R^2 = .472, adjusted R^2 = .466). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.699 sits in the acceptable 1.5–2.5 range, confirming no major issue with autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	654.506	3	133.451	8.610	.000[b]
	Residual	887.152	384	15.499		
	Total	1541.658	387			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Resilience

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Involvement, Comprehensive Training, Performance-Based Compensation

Source: IBM SPSS 23.0 Output (2026)

The ANOVA test demonstrates that the overall regression model is statistically significant, $F(3, 384) = 8.610$, $p < .001$, confirming that the combined set of predictors – Employee Involvement, Comprehensive Training, and Performance-Based Compensation – significantly predicts Organizational Resilience. Because the p-value falls well below the standard .05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the relationship between these human resource practices and organizational resilience is non-random and statistically meaningful.

Individual Effect of HPWS Dimensions (Comprehensive Training, Performance-Based Compensation, and Employee Involvement) on the composite Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State

The regression coefficients in Table 5 provide the empirical basis for evaluating the Individual Effect of HPWS dimensions on Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises (SEs) in Benue State and for testing H01, H02 and H03.The multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the effects of Comprehensive Training (H01), Performance-Based Compensation (H02), and Employee Involvement (H03) on Organizational Resilience of SEs in Benue State. Evaluating each null hypothesis at the standard $\alpha = .05$ significance level reveals that all three predictors exert a statistically significant positive effect on the dependent variable.

Table 5: Regression Model Coefficients for Test of H01, H02 & H03

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig. (P)**	**Decision**
(Constant)	3.112	0.461		6.751	0	
H01: Comprehensive Training	0.365	0.106	0.334	3.443	0.001	Reject
H02: Performance-Based Compensation	0.319	0.113	0.286	2.823	0.015	Reject

H03: Employee Involvement	0.306	0.116	0.253	2.638	0.004	Reject

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Resilience

Source: Author's computation from IBM SPSS 23.0 Output (2026)

Hypothesis 1 (H01): Comprehensive Training has no significant effect on Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State

For the first hypothesis (H01), Comprehensive Training yields an unstandardized regression coefficient of B = .365 (SE = .106, Beta = .334) with a calculated test statistic of t = 3.443 and p = .001. Because the p-value is well below .05, the null hypothesis H01 is rejected, confirming that comprehensive training significantly enhances organizational resilience of SEs in Benue State. For every 1-unit increase in Comprehensive Training, Organizational Resilience increases by 0.365 units, holding other variables constant. Because p = .001 is less than .05, this positive effect is statistically significant. This finding agreed with the results reported by Han et al. (2020), Eniola et al. (2023), Ibua et al. (2023), Ikyanyon and Abata (2023) which confirmed that synergistic bundles of comprehensive training and high employee involvement create structural flexibility. This flexibility allows small firms to adapt rapidly to external shocks, proving that human resource practices directly foster post-crisis adaptability.

Hypothesis 2 (H02): Performance-Based Compensation has no significant effect on Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State

Regarding the second hypothesis (H02), Performance-Based Compensation shows an unstandardized coefficient of B = .319 (SE = .113, Beta = .286) with t = 2.823 and p = .015. Since p < .05, H02 is rejected, indicating a statistically significant positive effect on organizational resilience of SEs in Benue State. For every 1-unit increase in Performance-Based Compensation, Organizational Resilience increases by 0.319 units, holding other variables constant. Because p = .015 is less than .05, this positive effect is statistically significant. Corroborating earlier studies by Gerhart and Fang (2015) and Han et al. (2020), isolated HR practices prove insufficient during severe crises. Rather, training must be paired with strategic performance incentives to cultivate the cognitive capability necessary for early threat detection and proactive shock anticipation.

Hypothesis 3 (H03): Employee Involvement has no significant effect on Organizational Resilience of Small Enterprises in Benue State

For the third hypothesis (H03), Employee Involvement records an unstandardized coefficient of B = .306 (SE = .116, Beta = .253) with t = 2.638 and p = .004. As the p-value is less than .05, H03 is rejected, demonstrating that employee involvement significantly drives organizational resilience of SEs in Benue State. For every 1-unit increase in Employee Involvement, Organizational Resilience increases by 0.306 units, holding other variables constant. Because p = .004 is less than .05, this positive effect is statistically significant. This finding aligned with prior research by Ogbonnaya et al. (2024), Gu et al. (2023), and Ikyanyon and Abata (2023), which demonstrated that informal, decentralized employee involvement combined with targeted skill development significantly reduced enterprise mortality during economic disruptions.

Hypothesis 4 (H04): High-Performance Work Systems (measured jointly through comprehensive training, performance-based compensation, and employee involvement) have no significant effect on the organizational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State.

The fourth hypothesis (H04) was tested using the ANOVA Table (F-statistic) and the Model Summary (R^2 value). The F-test evaluates whether the independent variables together significantly predict the variance in the composite organizational resilience index. Based on the Model Summary, the independent variables explain 47.2% of the variance in organizational resilience ($R^2 = .472$). Supported by the highly significant ANOVA result ($p < .001$), this R^2 value confirms that the combined model has a meaningful and statistically significant explanatory power. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H04) is rejected, concluding that HPWS dimensions jointly exert a significant effect on the organizational resilience of small enterprises in Benue State. This finding is in consonance with previous studies by Han et al. (2020), Tink and Patel (2022), and Ikyanyon and Abata (2023), which indicate that High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) cultivate collective psychological safety and cognitive flexibility

among employees. This cognitive agility directly enhances an organization's capacity to adapt when market conditions shift overnight, demonstrating that targeted human capital investments are vital for long-term business continuity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study confirms that High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) serve as a critical internal engine for the survival and continuity of small enterprises operating in volatile environments like Benue State, Nigeria. Grounded in the Resource-Based View and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, the empirical findings demonstrate that HPWS practices – specifically Comprehensive Training, Performance-Based Compensation, and Employee Involvement – jointly account for 47.2% of the variance in Organizational Resilience ($R^2 = .472$, $F(3, 384) = 8.610$, $p < .001$). Individually, all the three dimensions exert a statistically significant positive effect on an enterprise's capacity to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to environmental disruptions, with Comprehensive Training ($\beta = .334$, $p = .001$) emerging as the strongest predictor by building core technical and multi-skilling capabilities, followed by Performance-Based Compensation ($\beta = .286$, $p = .015$) which mobilizes discretionary employee effort during crises, and Employee Involvement ($\beta = .253$, $p = .004$) which grants frontline workers the operational autonomy needed for rapid problem-solving and strategic pivoting. Ultimately, because small enterprises in resource-constrained economies cannot rely solely on scarce physical or financial capital to withstand environmental turbulence, transitioning from informal, fragmented labour management to an integrated HPWS architecture transforms human capital into a strategic defense mechanism that directly drives long-term organizational resilience.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings across the four tested hypotheses, the following actionable recommendations are provided for small enterprise owners, managers, and policymakers in Benue State:

1. Institutionalize Continuous Multi-Skilling and Cross-Training Programs

To leverage the primary driver of resilience, small enterprise owners must move away from informal, ad-hoc instruction and embed structured multi-skilling routines into their daily operations. Building on the strong positive effect of Comprehensive Training ($\beta = .334$, $p = .001$), firms should implement job-rotation schemes and continuous skill-upgrading that foster functional redundancy across the workforce. In a resource-constrained environment like Benue State, equipping frontline workers with cross-functional capabilities ensures that when operational shocks occur – such as key staff absences or sudden supply chain disruptions – the enterprise retains the internal versatility needed to maintain baseline continuity and absorb immediate stress without collapsing.

2. Implement Flexible, Value-Aligned Performance Incentive Structures

Capitalizing on the motivating role of rewards, enterprise managers should transition from rigid fixed-wage setups to flexible, performance-linked compensation models aligned with operational survival goals. Driven by the significant finding for Performance-Based Compensation ($\beta = .286$, $p = .015$), small businesses should combine modest financial bonuses with non-monetary recognitions, profit-sharing on cost-reduction initiatives, and milestone-based perks to stretch tight cash flows. Aligning individual and team rewards with crisis-response benchmarks directly galvanizes employee discretionary effort, ensuring that staff remain intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to sustain productivity during severe macro-economic stress.

3. Decentralize Authority to Foster Frontline Operational Autonomy

To eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks during crises, business owners must dismantle autocratic management practices in favor of participative decision-making frameworks. Stemming from the empirical link between Employee Involvement and adaptive capacity ($\beta = .253$, $p = .004$), firms should establish frontline problem-solving circles, open-door information-sharing channels, and localized authority boundaries. Granting frontline employees the autonomy to make immediate operational adjustments – such as troubleshooting supply logistics or adapting customer service protocols during power outages – drastically reduces response lag and empowers the firm to dynamically pivot in real time.

4. Adopt an Integrated "HPWS Bundle" as a Strategic Defense Architecture

Recognizing that isolated HR practices yield suboptimal defense against systemic shocks, enterprise leaders and SME regulatory bodies must implement training, compensation, and involvement as an interconnected, synergistic system. Grounded in the finding that the joint HPWS configuration explains 47.2% of the variance in Organizational Resilience ($R^2 = .472$, $p < .001$), management should systematically align these practices using the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework – where training builds capacity, rewards drive motivation, and involvement grants the platform to act. Furthermore, development agencies like SMEDAN and the Benue State Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment should integrate HPWS training modules into regional enterprise development programs to fortify local business ecosystems against environmental turbulence.

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