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ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT - A NEW NORMAL

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The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted socio-economic activities globally.In the same vein, police brutality, Black life matters in the US and ENDSARS protest in Nigeria re-emphasized the importance of technological advances in business activities. Before this period, businesses in Nigeria have been skeptical in using technology to run businesses, as employees have to resume work by 8:00am and leave after 8 hours of work. However, with the advent of COVID19 and ENDSARS protests, working from home with flexible work hours that are being practiced in technologically advanced economies is now becoming the new normal in Nigeria. This study examines the effect of technology adoption on human resource practices in selected manufacturing firms in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria. The study employed survey research design, through the administration of structured questionnaire on selected members of staff of the selected manufacturing firms. The findings reveal that e-hr implementation has a positive significant effect on HR practices with a coefficient of 0.5612(p-value <0.05). However, the findings further reveal that technology adoption has a negative significant effect on employees' collaboration and bonding. It can therefore be concluded that while e-hr has positively affected HR practices, technology adoption has negatively affected employees' collaboration and bonding. It is recommended that engagement strategies should be adopted by management to facilitate collaboration and bonding among employees while implementing e-HR in the organization.

Keywords: collaboration, COVID-19 pandemic, e-HR, emotional intelligence (EI), workplace

INTRODUCTION

Change is the only constant thing in life and can either be disruptive or constructive. In whatever form it comes, innovation, renovation and creation are imminent afterwards. The transformation of HR today is a natural extension of changes occurring more broadly within firms. Globalization, diversity, intellectual capital, information technology, COVID19 pandemic, ENDSARS and the like are expanding the scope of organizations, accelerating the rate of change, and placing

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a premium on organizational agility, flexibility and rapid response of the Human Resource Management to the pace of change(Snell, Stueber, &Lepak, 2001). The current COVID19 pandemic has in a way affected various sustainable developmental goals mostly in areas such as poverty reduction, shrinking inequalities and social inclusion encouragement. (UN 2020; Buheji and Ahmed, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021).

HR departments are being charged with being simultaneously strategic, flexible, cost-efficient, and customer-oriented. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that traditional models of HR are poorly suited for these challenges. Critics charge that HR departments are often the last bastions of bureaucracy in organizations, and that the command and control approaches they use actually impede rather than facilitate progress to strategic goals. Although these limitations of traditional HR functions have always been there, recent health emergencies and societal unrest like the COVID-19 pandemic, police brutality, Black life matters in the US and ENDSARS protest in Nigeria have re-emphasized the urgent need for technological adoption in rightly and promptly responding to the ever-increasing global business opportunities. Businesses in Nigeria have hitherto been skeptical in using technology to run, as employees before now have to resume work by 8:00am and leave after 8hours work. However, with the advent of COVID19 and ENDSARS protests, working from home with the use of technological tools and internet have now become the new normal in Nigeria. Buheji and Ahmed (2020) postulated that a lot of corporate, business and social activities would become virtual under the new normal, and as such, many physical businesses would change their means of services 'delivery to more technologically-driven methods.

Old-economy companies attempt to fit into the new economy with the use of Internet to expand and improve their current collaborative relationships among their stakeholders however there is lack of reliable data on the people issues arising from a move from a traditional brick-and-mortar business model to an e-business model (Snell, Stueber, &Lepak, 2001). Moreso, Buheji and Ahmed (2020) identified the psychological impact of implementing technologically-driven systems to manage the organisation's human resource in the new normal as gap in literature that other researchers should explore. Based on this the objective of the study is to examine the effect of technology-driven initiatives like zoom meeting and Facebook chat room in managing human resource in the manufacturing businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria. The questions this paper answered are;

1. What is the effect of e-HR/HRIS on the way the human resource is being managed in selected manufacturing companies in Lagos State, Nigeria?

2. What effects does technological adoption in HR practice have on employees ' collaboration and bonding, retaining of new talents and overall emotional/mental wellness in selected manufacturing companies in Lagos State, Nigeria?

The attendant hypotheses tested were:

1. There is no significant effect of e-HR/HRIS implementation on HR practices.

2. There is no significant effect of the technological adoption made in HR practice on the employees 'collaboration and bonding.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section focused on empirical reviews concerning the new normal perspective on post-COVID-19, technology adoption and human resource.

The new normal

Currently, globalization, diversity, intellectual capital, information technology are increasing organisational operating space, accelerate the pace of change, and place premium on organizational agility, flexibility and rapid response. Today, firms compete more on capabilities, relationships, new ideas and have discovered the importance of collaborating with all stakeholders both internal, external partners as well as maximize the use of technology. Doing this, allows them to focus resources and their expertise, integrate knowledge from the outside, react quickly to arising opportunities, and deliver better value to customersin the midst of either environmental, economic or health hitches that may be encountered (Snell, Stueber, &Lepak, 2001).

Virtual working, Teleconferencing and flexible working have been in existence long before the advent of COVID-19. However, the pandemic activated most organisations into their importance. Buheji and Ahmed (2020) stated that the New Normal started with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Asia, and spreading over many nations of the world, with very limited facility for effective suppression. The pandemic disordered trade and industry activities, social life, and endangered basic socio-economic principles. Ozili and Arun (2020) believe that the global health implications of Covid19 pandemic would lead to more economic hardship, arising from national and international travel bans, monetary procedure alteration, additional restrictive processes and unrelenting vacillation in global stock market.

Ambrosi De la Cadena (2020) assert that the pandemic has brought to the fore, many technology-driven opportunities which had reshaped work roles views. One of the envisaged features of the new normal as prompted by the Covid19 pandemic is the change in the mind-set of the entrepreneurs about how to run a successful business.

Technology adoption

Frederick Winslow Taylor developed the scientific management theory at the turn of the industrial revolution and has successive improved the manual labour practices that existed before the industrial revolution. Technological mechanisms in organisations speed workflow processes, giving employees the ultimate resource – more time – to focus on the important work, and in turn, make the communication process within the organisation more effective and efficient. However, technological adoption in HR Practice is not without its downside issues. Unlike face-to-face work environs, communication through technology creates barriers and limits honest interactions. There are also the valid concerns of data safety, misdeeds and violence, communal cut off, confidentiality abuse, overwork, manoeuvring of digital media and job uncertainty (Thompsonand McHugh, 1995 p.32).

Ozili and Arun (2020) opine that COVID19 pandemic has triggered the introduction of various hi-tech appliances, which were not in use pre Covid19 pandemic, into the manufacturing and production activities globally. Buheji and Ahmed (2020) mentioned that the COVID19 transformed every aspect of human life, having a huge impact on e- learning, remote-working and e-commerce, with its both hurtful and helpful implications on various sectors of the world economy.

Human resource

Information Technology has been a veritable tool in Human Resource Management and Practice for several years, with its usage being intensified and its roles being expanded with Human Resource developments. (Sharma, 2020). The term e-HRM was first used in the late 1990s when e-commerce was sweeping the business world and e-HRM was seen as an internal application of e-business techniques. It helps the management in a more effective and efficient flow of information and method of doing HRM. Organizations could manage an increasing number of HRM processes effectively with enhanced information technology, thus contributing to the accessibility of information and knowledge. This also assisted HRM professionals in playing a strategic role in attaining enhanced competitive benefit. Drawing, preserving and encouraging employees, meeting demand for a more calculated HR function and overseeing the "human element" of technological alteration in the future have all been facilitated by advancement in IT to meet the challenges of Human Resource Management (Ashbaugh and Miranda, 2002).

HRM can live up to expectation by concurrently becoming more bendable, cost-efficient, tactical and customer-oriented through the power of information technology (Lengnick-Hallet al., 2009). Worldwide economies and businesses were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Human Resources (HR) has been at the heart of it. Now that most organisations are at the recovery stage, the role of HR is much more important than before (Bashsoun, Braik and Kassis 2020). Sneader and Singhal (2020) opine that post COVID-19, livelihoods of many people will change as both commerce and trade are likely to experience swift reorganization in both the technological, socio-economic and political precedence. With the advent of COVID19, every business framework is open to questioning in order to arrive at its best. With the drastic change in both the standard and cost of living, occasioned by the outbreak of COVID19 pandemic, the mind-set of people will not be the same again. Both the social and economic structures would progress towards computerization. The automated system would be moving across different business models, where every worker becomes a skilled worker (Buheji, 2020). Gigauri(2020) declares that as businesses focus on the convalescence after the pandemic, which was consumed by disruption of jobs, automation, and changing workforce demographics, the worker's wellbeing is a priority.

Theoretical framework

Emotional intelligence theory postulated by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) as a type of social intelligence, separable from general intelligence, which involves the ability to monitor one's own and others 'emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions. In a later attempt, they expanded their model and defined EI as the ability of an individual to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion

and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Lam and Kirby, 2002)

Arora (2017) defined Emotional intelligence as someone's ability: (a) to understand his feelings, (b) to listen to others and to feel them, and (c) to express his emotions in a productive manner. The rational for using Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004); Goleman (1998) EI principle stems from the understanding that in the new normal some skill sets will become dormant/latent due to emergence/ use/ advent of Artificial Intelligence in the work place. Although robotic will take over some jobs, the human's role would not be taken way completely (Belsky, 2020; Hessman, 2020). Therefore, the organisation's leaders 'ability to adopt emotional intelligence skills while implementing the new technological way of working will engender positive employee engagement within the organisation (Suehs, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Snell, Stueberand Lepak(2001) and Buheji and Ahmed (2020) suggested that there is need to investigate technological adoption in HR practice, The cross-sectional survey research design was employed and the manufacturing organization was the focus of the study with the Western Region of Nigeria as the scope.

The population of the study comprises of members of staff of Cadbury Nigeria PLC, Nestle Nigeria PLC and PZ Cussons Nigeria PLC. The three firms were selected because they are among the top ten manufacturing firms, quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. The numbers of employees of the three selected firms are stated below:

Table 1: Numbers of Employees of the Selected Firms

S/N	Name of Company	Number of Employees
1	CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	1,797
2	NESTLE NIGERIA PLC	3,300
3	PZ CUSSONS NIGERIA PLC	4,476
	TOTAL	9573

Source: Author's compilation from the firms 'website

The study employs Survey System Sample Size Calculator at 95% confidence level and margin of error of 7, which gave a sample size of 192. This study employed stratified sampling as well as simple random sampling. The population was divided into three strata based on the three companies and a simple random sampling was carried out in each stratum.

The questionnaire items were in 5-point Likert scale structured as Strongly Agreed (5), Agreed (4), Indifferent (3); Disgreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1) which included questions on (1) Respondents Level of Experience (2) e-HR, (3) Technology adoption. Questions on e-HR were adapted from Loon, Otaye-Ebede and Stewart, (2020) while Technology adoption was from Sharma (2020) and its validity and reliability were established. Copies were administered to simple randomly selected Human Resource managers and management team of selected manufacturing companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. Linear Regression method of data analysis was used. One hundred and ninety two copies of questionnaires were

administered on the selected respondents. However, only one hundred and fifty four copies were properly completed and found useable. This represent 80.2% response rate.

Results

Table 2 indicated that 20% of the respondents have been working with their firms for less than 5years, while 74% of the respondents have been working with their firms for between 5-9 years. Furthermore, 6% of the respondents 'years of experience range from 10years and above. This implies that 80% of the respondents have a minimum of 5 years of working experience. Therefore, the respondents are relatively conversant with their firms' operations and information provided by the respondents can be relied upon, since they are conversant with their firms 'operation.

Table 2: Respondents Level of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5years	31	20%
5-9 years	114	74%
10years and above	9	6%
Total	154	100%

Source: Field Survey (2020) Authors 'Computation from SPSS 23

Hypotheses testing

Ho1: E-HR does not have a positive significant effect on HR practices in manufacturing firms.

Table 3: The regression result for hypothesis 1 (HR Practices)

Variable(s)	Coefficient	T	P-Value
Constant	6.673	7.452	0. 000
e-HR	0. 5612	4.932	0. 000
F-Stat=24.342(0. 000)			R-Square= 0.293

Source: Field Survey (2020) Author`s Computation from SPSS 23

The result in table 3 revealed that e-HR implementation significantly affects the HR practices of manufacturing firms. This can easily be deduced from the coefficient and probability value (0. 5612, P-value <0.05), which is less than the 5% (0.05) level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Furthermore, the F-stat showed that the model is fit for prediction and decision-making. The R2 (0.293) indicates that e-HR implementation accounts for 29.3% change in HR practices.

Ho2: Technology adoption does not have a significant effect on employees ' collaboration in manufacturing firms

Table 4: The regression result for hypothesis 2 (Employees' Collaboration)

Variable(s)	Coefficient	T	P-Value
Constant	5.039	3.202	0. 002
Technology adoption	-0. 555	-6.342	0. 000
F-Stat= 41.502(0.000)			R-Square= 0.419

Authors 'Computation from SPSS 23Source: Field Survey (2020)

The result in table 4 revealed that technology adoption has a negative significant effect on employees collaboration of manufacturing firms, this can easily be deduced from the coefficient and probability value (-0. 555, P-value< 0.05), which is less than the 5% (0.05) level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis will be accepted while the alternative hypothesis will be rejected. Furthermore, the F-stat showed that the model is fit for prediction and decision making. The R2 (0.419) indicates that technology adoption accounts for 41.9% change in employees collaboration.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The advent of COVID-19 which had a global presence, police brutality in the US, ENDSARS in Nigeria has reinforced the axiom "the only constant in life is change" because change is a fact of organizational life, just as it is in human life. From the findings of this study, the researchers found that adoption of e-HR in the selected manufacturing organization during the COVID-19 pandemic era in Nigeria has further led to technologically-driven HR practices.

From the findings of this study, the employees of selected manufacturing firms in Lagos State, Nigeria felt that e-HR is effectively implemented in their organizations. The organizational culture is gradually being eroded due to the virtual mode of working. The result of this the study is in line with the study conducted by Karanja (2015),changes in organizational structures due to technological advancement, such as downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions not only affect employee numbers in an organization, but can also radically affect factors such as management style, organizational culture, and employee commitment and performance.

Employees in the selected manufacturing firm in Lagos State, Nigeria from this study revealed that technology adoption does not encourage collaboration, therefore, indicating that the emotional and mental wellness of staff were not probably adequately considered during policy formulation. This finding corroborates finding of Rashid, Sambasivan and Rahman (2004), that people are the most important factor in making change, and however, they are also the most difficult element to deal with. Therefore, managing the human part of the organization becomes a major challenge in handling change processes in the organization as it involves values, preferences, and attitudes toward a particular activity.

A study conducted by Sunindijo and Zou (2013) has shown that to effectively work in a team to achieve high organizational performance, emotional intelligence competence is a vital requirement. However, EI is not only the ability to control one's feelings, it is also the ability to understand other people by learning to recognize someone else's experiences and show empathy. The study revealed that implementing technologically-driven HR practices in companies in the Western Region of Nigeria does not encourage employee collaboration. The leadership while formulating policies in the new normal should "penetrate the inner world" of colleagues to engender a feeling of unity, a feeling that both the leader and follower are - at one wave (Sneader and Singhal, 2020).

The study revealed that the rate of technologically-inclined talents inflows into the organization has increased due to the COVIC-19 pandemic, sociological happenings around the globe and the deployment of e-HR practices which have reduced the number of workforces to give room for light overhead. In the new normal, automation has changed the world of work. The new robot generation has a different purpose: to overcome both the physiological and psychological limitations of human beings. However, the few talents that will be available to work in this dispensation are expected to be filled with ideas, insights, perspectives and abstract creative genius that no machine and no software can duplicate (Hessman, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Literature has emphasised the fact that Human Resources are the most significant and vital input for the success of any organization. To thrive in the new normal, the HR function must inculcate technological literacy as a requirement. The roles and skills of HR managers have grown considerably in recent times due to the adoption and use of new technologies. The managers are now able to perform the traditional functions of procurement, maintenance, development and utilization more effectively and efficiently. Human resource managers can now take up more challenging roles in organizations. The growing use of information technology in human resource has significantly increased the efficiency of HR management activities and processes, increased their speed and reduced associated costs.

Technology cannot displace man in the workplace; however, the need for man to collaborate effectively has been discovered to be a necessity. The study, recommends that engagement strategy should be adopted by management to facilitate collaboration and bonding among employees while implementing e-HR in the organization. Further studies to test the research variables in other sectors like service, banking and construction, would make for better generalization of the outcomes.

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