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An Evaluation of the Impact of Change Management on Employee Performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission

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Abstract

This research is aimed at evaluating the extent to which change management impacts on employee's performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission Sector. The study adopted research design based on data collected through questionnaire survey distributed to staff of the Commission. Questionnaires were distributed electronically to 80 employees and 60 completed questionnaires were returned at a response rate of 75%. Non-probability sampling techniques were used. Using descriptive and inferential statistics methods, this study found that a positive relationship existed between various changes in the Commission, the attitude of employees to work and their general performance. To the best knowledge of the researcher, few empirical studies have been conducted to determine how change management has impacted on employee performance in the Nigerian public sector; specifically, in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. This study aims to fill that gap.

Keywords

Change Management, Technology, Organizational Structure, Communication, Employee Performance, Electricity

1. Introduction

In a global knowledge economy as we have today, organizations in advanced countries around the world essentially depend on their employees to stay alive (Methode et al., 2019). In modern times, enhanced staff performance remains a critical target for organizations that seek to sustain their business achievement. Thus, companies strive to ensure the optimal performance of each employee, taking into cognizance the parameters that support such performance in the organization (Rusu et al., 2016). Due to improvements in information flow as well as technology, growing global participation of citizens in the affairs of their countries, change becomes unavoidable in organizations; hence, it has become pertinent that management attention is drawn to it to ensure assurance of unrelenting progression in organizational performance. However, three factors have been identified as impacting on work performance in organizations such as business support, aptitudes, and effectiveness of management as well as output of the workforce (Eliyana et al, 2019).

Extant research has shown that factors outlined above are not obtainable in the public service, and professionals are working to understand why the performance of civil servants remains abysmal. The Nigerian civil service has come under serious criticisms for its epileptic, poor and inefficient service delivery. Civil servants are perceived as unprofessional, lethargic, incompetent and inexperienced (Ihemeje & Afegbua, 2020).

Organisations continued to lack the essential skills and ability to take and implement decisions to move them forward. This situation is relevant to the Nigerian public service and can be explained by the extent of application of policies and implementation of change (Daniel, 2019).

Of particular interest to this study are employees of a special subset of the public service and a regulator of the Nigerian electricity industry—Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC). The role of electricity in development has long been recognized and the poor performance of this sector of the Nigerian economy remains legendary; hence an independent regulatory body, NERC, was established by the Electricity Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 with authority to regulate the electric power industry in Nigeria, protect customers, mediate between the DISCOs and customers, and between operators, and ensure fairness to all stakeholders (Idowu et al., 2020). Wider access to electricity contributes to poverty reduction and economic growth. Despite having Africa's largest economy, approximately 10% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa without electricity is Nigerians. Again, as at 2017, it was recorded that 77 million Nigerians which constitutes 40% of the population remains without access to affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity (Yetano et al., 2020).

NERC has since inception undergone various changes that has led to a change in organizational structure, deployment of technology at different levels of its operations while different communication strategies have been adopted to reach out to its stakeholders and for seamless staff communication. These changes keep evolving and are consistent with the Commission's strategic plan 2021-2023 (NERC Strategic Plan 2021-2023, 2021).

Given its important role as the regulator of a critical sector of the Nigerian economy, NERC has to keep pace with the best practices in different areas such as leadership skills, adoption of relevant technologies and evolving strategies that are in line with its mandate. The extent to which these changes are introduced and managed goes a long way in determining their impact on employee performance in the Commission.

From a resource based approach, it has been argued that human resources, financial resources, organizational policy, organizational structure and employee commitment are important drivers of strategy implementation that may enhance strategic performance (Nwachukwu et al., 2019).

The extent to which human resource reforms and other changes have affected employee commitment will determine the effectiveness of the Commission in meeting its mandate.

Consequently, this research seeks to assess the influence of change management on employee performance based on experiences of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja, Nigeria with their employees.

This research is particularly important given that its emphasis is on the employee performance in the electricity sector which holds the key to the Nigerian economic growth, yet it has not been given any serious consideration by previous researchers.

1.1. Statement of Problem

The World Bank Group (World Bank) published its 2020 Doing Business Report (the Report) and ranked Nigeria 131 out of 190 countries on the ease of doing business index. This represents an improvement by 15 places from 2019 ranking of 146 (Deloitte, 2019). Obviously empowered by the various Nigerian Laws establishing them, the management of the Departments and Agencies of Nigerian government has introduced reforms and changes in their operations with a view to enhancing efficiency and productivity. The changes which are usually structural in nature are also capable of fundamentally undermining the mandate of the organizations. The changes in the organizations are in the areas of leadership, organizational restructuring, technological changes, communication strategies changes, etc. The expectation is that the changes envisaged and implemented by management impacts positively on the mandate of the organization. That Nigerians continue to cry out over the low quality of services rendered by the public service despite the reforms and changes introduced in these organizations points to one important fact:

Despite the reforms, the Nigerian public service remains riddled with sub optimal performance and output and has not assimilated technological innovations as much as expected (Awosika, 2014).

The continued abysmal services offered by the public sector points to the fact that the changes introduced in the organizations have not adequately impacted on employees' performance; hence, they are not able to meet their obligations to Nigerians.

This situation has over time left Nigerians frustrated and dissatisfied with the services of the public sector. However, as far as the researcher is aware, few empirical studies have been conducted to determine to what extent change management has impacted on employee performance in the Nigerian public sector; specifically, no study has evaluated the influence of change management on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. A few studies on the impact of change management on employee performance have assumed different perspectives with varying results. A study by Garber (2013) shows that effective change management brings about enhanced chances of attainment of organizational objectives. Dauda & Akingbade (2011) found no significant correlation between changes in technology and personnel output, while Al-Jaradat, Nagresh, Al-Shegran, & Jadellah (2013) established a positive association between technology, organizational structure and the workers' performance.

This study intends to address this important gap by surveying the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja, Nigeria in order to determine to what extent change management has affected employee performance in this regulatory organization.

1.2. Aim and Objectives

This study aims to evaluate how change management practices affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. To fulfil this aim, the objectives of this study are as outlined below:

1) To evaluate the impact of technological changes on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja.

2) To assess the impact of organizational restructuring on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja.

3) To ascertain the influence of new communication strategies on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja.

1.3. Research Questions

1) To what extent does technological change impact employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

2) To what extent does organizational restructuring affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

3) To what extent do new communication strategies affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

1.4. Statement of Hypothesis

H0[1]: Technological change has no significant impact on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

H0[2]: Organizational restructuring has no significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

H0[3]: New communication strategies have no significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an in-depth information and reviews the literature from other scholars who have written extensively on change management practices and its impact on the performance of employees. The review took into consideration the different dimensions of change management and employee performance.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Change management enhances employee efficiency during and after changes in the context of business transactions. The employee's behavior is greatly influenced by instinctive responses during the change process. The employees tend to be nervous when the concept of change is incorporated. They also assume an impervious and self-protective position. The point is that employees do not positively crave change. It disrupts their daily routine and is prone to a divergence from what they do. They feel threatened and insecure. This contributes to vulnerability, often involving mental and emotional insecurity and thereby affecting their performance (Fedor & Herold, 2004).

When an organization effectively undertakes important changes and the personnel realize that the uncertainties they held concerning those developments are factual, such development will make future changes in the organization seamless. A critical impact of successful change management is in its capacity to infuse assurance in personnel concerning its leadership's capacity to make worthy corporate choices. This creates conducive environment for further changes to take place, builds employee confidence and simplifies regular decision making process (Udeh & Igwe, 2013).

Organizations that have recorded successes in their operations understand the worth and significance of good performance management practices. The workforce need to properly understand the extent of output required from them and must strive to achieve the set goals. Good communication and training can assist in evolving chances for employees and may also detect employees that are not suitable for their positions in the organization. Planned communication strategies are important and have a prospect of reducing after-employment legal actions if done correctly (Udeh & Igwe, 2013).

Kumari (2013) established that employee performance is enhanced with advancement of the company in use and adaptation of technology. This is linked to internal and systems management and control and external system response. When using modern technologies, substantial changes in production, efficiency and development are attained. Increased efficiency and general economic development is the result of increased technology and technical advancement in most developed countries.

The study by Isanda (2020) which identified the independent variable as change management with such dimensions as technological change practices, organisational structure changes, leadership and cultural change practices will form the conceptual framework for this research. The dependent variable which is employee performance is conditioned by such factors as job satisfaction, employee loyalty, and employee attitude and employee turnover. The dimensions of change management practices (independent) and employee performance (dependent variable) are as depicted in **Figure 1** below.

2.2. Empirical Review

Chiavoghi and Emerole (2017) examined the effects of change management on employee commitment, which leads to enhanced employee performance, in deposit money banks in Umuahia. The study indicated a significant positive effect by change management on commitment of employees. This study undertook a cross-sectional research survey consisting of 122 staff in ten (10) banks, made use of simple random sampling technique and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) for hypotheses testing, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS (20.0).

Using panel data from 13 countries, Dauda and Akingbade (2011) revealed that technological change would certainly bring about an enhancement in productivity or output when put to effective or efficient use in addition to other tools. Given such scenario, change makes employees more productive and efficient.

Karanja (2015) posited that technological improvement impacts heavily on employee performance and is critical in prompting enhanced productivity. Most research findings have shown repeatedly an affirmative association between technological improvements and performance, stressing the pivotal role of technological development in employee performance. A vast number of businesses in different countries have created units, departments and organizations, for research and development, to guarantee compliance with changes in technology.

Thomas (2014) evaluated how change management affected organizational performance of Nigerian telecoms sector with practical experience from Airtel Nigeria. Out of a population of 1000, a total of 300 personnel of Airtel were randomly selected for the research. Three hypotheses were used for the study

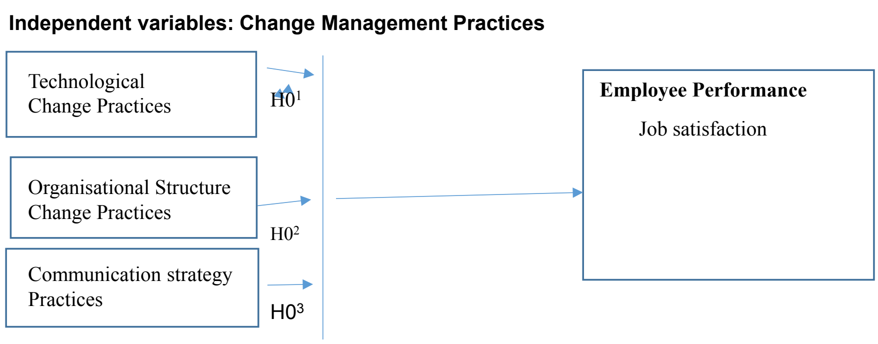

Figure 1. Dimensions of independent and dependent variables.

and collected data was analyzed by way of one-way analysis of variance. It was consequently discovered that change management in the area of leadership affects employee's performance significantly.

Sukiyanto and Maulidah (2020) found out that indicators of job satisfaction with the highest value are job satisfaction with work and communication between employees and leaders. This is in line with indicators of organizational change, which have a more detailed level of division of employee duties and are separate from one employee to another and the majority of employee's complete work according to company procedures.

The researchers found out that an increase in employee job satisfaction in the company is expected to shape employee attitudes with a high level of participation in the organization and can be called commitment.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presents the models that formed the bedrock of this research. For this study, Kotter's Theory of Change was used for the theoretical framework and its purpose is to describe and simplify the process of change.

Kotter's Change Model

Kotter's change model has realistically remained useful in change execution and organizations deploying it to pursue some change objectives will achieve systematic organizational regeneration (Das, 2019).

Kotter's eight stage process of creating changes was summarized thus: 1) Creating an impression of immediacy 2) Forming the controlling variables 3) Advance an idea and approach 4) Relating the change dream 5) Allowing fundamental change 6) Creating interim successes 7) Merging improvements and creating further change 8) Securing fresh methodologies in the philosophy. Kotter (2008) observed that inability to create an impression of immediacy remains the singular key error recorded in the quest to introduce organizational changes and that a sense of immediacy is critical in achieving the required support. Given an elevated lackadaisical attitude, many employees are not keen to achieve the required change.

Setting up strong coalitions is the next stage in the process and this entails putting together teams with sufficient power to initiate and follow through the change effort. The team should also be able to evolve a vision and develop strategies for attaining that vision. Such vision is required to channel the change efforts constructively. The success of any change is also predicted upon the communication strategy used and how the vision and strategies are communicated. Communication should be impactful and aimed at addressing employees' concerns to ensure that they are constantly motivated to ensure optimal performance.

Sageer et al. (2012) posited that communication and changes in the organization are inseparable processes. Communication is a critical device in change management and a vital factor in evolving change ideas and executing such.

The efficacy of Kotter's method has been broadly supported in the literature

(Kang et al., 2020). Notwithstanding its wide acceptance, Kotter's process was criticized on the grounds that the model with similar change management methods define the necessary actions needed without offering much explanations on how to realize them and no distinct criteria for determining success of change (Rajan & Ganesan, 2017). It has also been criticized for not providing adequate details to guide change management in all circumstances (Appelbaum et al., 2012).

The literature review presented above shows that there is a gap in the literature on this subject. There was no known study of the impact of changes management on employee performance in the Nigerian electricity industry. The Nigerian electricity sector continued to be bedevilled by a myriad of problems that have inhibited its efficiency. A study of the impact of change management on the performance of employees of the regulator of this industry threw light on the changes necessary for an improvement in the performance of the sector.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted at the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja and its employees formed the population study on whom the research was based. This research was essentially descriptive and using quantitative data, the researcher set out to determine the impact of change management on the performance of Commissions' workforce.

To achieve the purpose of this research, the researcher produced research questions that formed the basis for analyzing the issues of this study. With a staff population of one hundred and forty-four (144), eighty (80) questionnaires were issued to staff out of which sixty (60) were completed and returned and used as study sample. This sample size is justified following the submissions of Suskie (1996), Nardi (2003), and Neuman (2007) who suggested that for populations under 1000, a minimum ratio of 30 percent (300 individuals) is advisable to ensure representativeness of the sample.

The study was guided by research questions which were derived from the literature review and the research objectives, as follows:

To what extent does technological change affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

To what extent does organizational restructuring affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

To what extent do new communication strategies affect employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja?

The research questions led to the formulation of following research hypotheses:

H0[1]: Technological change has no significant impact on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

H0[2]: Organizational restructuring has no significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

H0[3]: New communication strategies have no significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

4. Data Analysis & Discussion of Findings

4.1. Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected using questionnaires issued to employees of the Commission online. The statistical research was conducted based on a Likert-scale questionnaire which was adopted for the research. The questionnaires which were distributed to employees are consistent with the structured questions used by Isanda (2020) in his study. The respondents comprised of staff of the Commission in various parts of the country who were issued the document online for them to complete and return to the researcher after some time.

The questionnaire which was generated in English language was derived from the literature review. The questionnaire is divided into three segments/categories to elicit responses from employees on such factors as technological changes in the Commission and its effect on staff attitudes, communication strategies and its impact on personnel performance as well as the influence of changes in the organizational structure on the performance of staff of the Commission.

Secondary data was collected from the publications of the Commission. Such publications included the Commission's Regulations, Orders and Resolutions as well as Commission's Strategic Plan 2021-2023 (NERC Strategic Plan 2021-2023, 2021).

A pilot test was implemented prior to the distribution of the questionnaire while the research was processed with the statistical package, SPSS.

4.2. Data Analysis

Based on the questionnaires distributed and interviews, data was generated and investigated with the use of descriptive statistics. Subsequently, responses from the respondents were coded, analyzed and correlations established.

Data generated from the questionnaire was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0). Quantitative data was analyzed by use of correlations and multiple regressions to test hypothesis. Multiple regression was used to establish the relationship between Change Management Practices and Employee Performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

4.3. Descriptive Analysis of the Variables in the Study

The study involved a descriptive analysis and an assessment of various structures in the Commission such as technological, organizational structure and communication strategy changes and how they relate to employee performance. Likert-type five-point scale that ranges from such statements as 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree, 3) Undecided, 4) Disagree to 5) Strongly Disagree were asked for respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statements.

To measure the changes in the Commission and their impact on the dependent variable, a set of eight statements were developed and employees requested to indicate their level of agreement with each of them. The results were subsequently subjected to a regression analysis using the tool pack.

4.4. Discussion of Findings

In this chapter, results of the analysis and findings which are essentially derived from the objective of the study which is aimed at establishing a relationship between Change Management on Employee Performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Abuja, Nigeria will be discussed. In the main, the study evaluated the effect of change in organizational structure, changes in technology and communication strategies on employee performance in the NERC. To arrive at empirical findings and results, descriptive and inferential analysis was done. After collecting data using questionnaires, they were coded and analyzed on the basis of the independent variables with the use of Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

This study administered 80 questionnaires to employees of the Commission out of which 60 were successfully filled out and returned to the researcher by the respondents. Thus, the response rate to the questionnaire stood at 75% of the total questionnaires. For the purposes of this study, this rate of response was considered good enough to base objective conclusions and recommendations.

The *P*-value on the regression platform was used to test the hypothesis bearing in mind the significance level of 0.05. A *P*-value of less than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis must be rejected; since it signifies that the independent variable's impact on the dependent variable is statistically significant. When the scenario is otherwise, the null hypothesis is accepted to indicate a not statistically significant impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Ho[1]: *Technological change does not exert a significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.*

The result presented in **Table 1** shows the relationship between Technological

Table 1. Effects of technological change on employee performance in Nigerian electricity regulatory commission.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	*P*-Value
Intercept	−4.71411	7.189326	−0.65571	0.55881
X	1.283828	0.375838	3.41591	0.041968**
Diagnostic statistics				
R-squared	0.795479			
Adjusted R-squared	0.727306			
F-statistic	11.66844			
Significance of F	0.041968**			

Source: Field Survey, 2021. **Significant at 5%.

change and employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. The relationship has an R-square of 0.795479, implying that 79% change in the dependent variable is explained by the model. This relationship is positive and statistically significant at 5% confidence level (P-value = 0.041968). This implies that a unit increase in technological change causes a significant increase in employee performance in the commission by a factor of 1.283828 and vice versa. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This research finding is in line with Kute and Upadhayay (2014) whose findings indicated that technological changes affect employee performance in the areas of redundancy, employee turnover and level of motivation.

Ho^2: There is no significant relationship between organisational restructuring and employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The finding of the study presented in **Table 2** indicated a positive and statistically significant (at 5% confidence level, P-value = 0.036621) relationship between organisational restructuring and employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. This result has a coefficient of determination (R-square) of 0.812492 which indicates that 81% change in the dependent variable is explained by the regression model. This implies that a unit increase in corporate restructuring measures will substantially increase employee performance in the commission by a factor of 1.230978 and vice versa. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This finding is consistent with Hao, Kasper and Muehlbacher (2012) results that supported the critical position of organisational structure on performance.

Ho^3: New communication strategies have no significant effect on employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The regression analysis presented in **Table 3** has established a direct relationship between new communication strategies and employee performance in Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. The result has an R-square of 0.831525, which indicates that the regression model used has explained 83% of the variation in the dependent variable. The relationship between the variables is statistically

Table 2. Effects of organisational restructuring on employee performance in Nigerian electricity regulatory commission.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	P-Value
Intercept	−3.83423	6.619193	−0.57926	0.603045
X	1.230978	0.341421	3.605459	0.0366218**
Diagnostic statistics				
R-squared	0.812492			
Adjusted R-squared	0.74999			
F-statistic	12.99934			
Significance of F	0.036621**			

Source: Field Survey, 2021. **Significant at 5%.

Table 3. Effects of new communication strategies on employee performance in Nigerian electricity regulatory commission.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	*P*-Value
Intercept	−13.0685	8.218916	−1.59005	0.210045
X	1.811496	0.470768	3.847957	0.030983**
Diagnostic statistics				
R-squared	0.831525			
Adjusted R-squared	0.775366			
F-statistic	14.80677			
Significance of F	0.030983**			

Source: Field Survey, 2021. **Significant at 5%.

significant at 5% (*P*-value of 0.030983) confidence level. The implication is that a unit increase in new communication strategies increases employee performance in the commission by a factor of 1.811496 and vice versa. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to investigate the impact of change management on employee performance in NERC; hence, the research objectives were developed and hypothesis formulated and subsequently tested, using appropriate analytical tools, for the study to arrive at conclusions.

The dimensions of change management were technological changes, communication strategy and organizational restructuring.

The first objective of the research clearly shows that technological change wields a significant impact on employee performance in the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission. A preponderance of the respondents believed that their performance is affected by technological changes in the Commission. Organizational changes and change in communication strategy of the Commission were found to positively impact on employee performance in the Commission.

Suggestions for Further Research

Organizations with visionary leadership must aspire to embrace change and manage same in a way that it becomes easily acceptable and useful in enhancing employee performance. Further research will be needed on the best strategies that would incentivize staff to accept changes for optimal performance on their jobs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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