
IMPACTS OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE IN SOME SELECTED HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN BAUCHI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The anxiety about the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic has negatively affected employees economically, socially and psychologically. Employees are faced with retrenchment, pay cut, risk of being infected and stigmatizations which raise negative emotions. The objective of the study is to determine how and the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic affect employees' performance in some selected higher institutions of Learning in Bauchi state. To achieve this objective, four (4) research questions and four hypotheses were formulated; Data were collected from both primary and secondary source judgmental sampling method was used to select 20 higher educational institutions, in which 200 employees were interviewed via a questionnaire, were utilized, while descriptive statistics, correlation matrix and panel data analysis (Random-effect GLS regression techniques) were utilized as analytical tools in the study with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected employees' performance, morale, and service delivery, negatively among the employees within the age bracket of 50-64. It is recommended that, to cushion the impact of the pandemic, the management of higher institutions of learning in Bauchi state should provide some form of compensation for employees coming to work during the pandemic, equally to boost their morale, provision of free protective gears to most venerable employees should be sustained and special hazard allowance. Also, electronic gears such as laptops, palmtops and modem etc should be provided as well as the implementation of virtual work practices to assist the employees in service delivery. The adoption of these findings will further alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' performance in higher educational institutions of Bauchi state.

Key Words: COVID 19, Employee, Productivity, Pandemic, Performance, Morale, service delivery

Introduction:

The Corona virus disease also called COVID-19 emerged sometime in December 2019 in Wuhan city of Hubei province of China (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). The novel corona virus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7th 2020 as a new strain, had not been previously identified in humans. Little was known about it, although human-to-human transmission has been confirmed (Ogunode N.J et al., 2020).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), corona viruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. The name corona virus comes from the Latin word corona, meaning crown or halo. At the emergence of the disease, it was uncertain as to how the COVID-19 was transmitted, although most medical researchers and Centers for Disease Control noted that it was transmitted via a fluid contact with an infected person (Kim, 2020, Addi et al, 2020, Bai, Yao, Wei, Tian, Jin, Chen & Wang, 2020, NCDC, 2020). They further noted that symptoms of the disease on an individual includes, sore throat, dry cough, fever, shortness of breath, and in the worse stage acute pneumonia and death. According to NCDC (2020), the incubation period for COVID-19 is between 2-14 days. Bai et al (2020) asserted that the reason for the high level of the spread of the virus on individuals across the globe is as a result of the symptomatic and asymptomatic nature. Failure to identify and properly manage both symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 cases by mass/wide COVID-19 testing or screening of the population puts the race at risk (Addi et al, 2020), also this would significantly affect the way of life of people, as well as businesses across the globe. Countries around the world are scrambling to halt the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. This outbreak of COVID-19 became a global health emergency, the WHO said on January 30 2020, raising the alarm further on March 11 2020 when it declared the crisis a pandemic (Ogunode N.J et al, 2020). On 27 February 2020, Nigeria confirmed its first case in Lagos State, an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria had returned on 25 February 2020 from Milan, Italy through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, fell ill on 26 February 2020 and was transferred to Lagos State Bio-security Facility for isolation and testing (Ogunode N.J et al., 2020).

Education as the process of imparting and transmitting knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another, plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals and is also beneficial to the society. Hence, the goal of every educational institution is to impart knowledge, values, and skills to learners for the overall development of the society. This industry was seriously affected globally by the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to the temporal shutdown of schools to contain the spread of the virus. In similar vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the temporal shutdown of all educational institutions. In order to contain the spread of the virus in Nigeria, on March 19th 2020, the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Education directed all educational institutions in Nigeria to shut down and allow students to go home as cases of reported COVID-19 increased. Millions of students from crèche to tertiary were forced to stay at home to practice social distancing until the pandemic was brought under control. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Sonny Echono, told reporters on 19 March 2020, that the directive was part of the country's overall strategy to contain the spread of the virus. Nigeria joins the growing list of countries in Africa which have closed schools and universities. Before the official announcement by the permanent secretary, most universities had already sent their students home (Wikipedia, 2020). Various circulars emanated from the office of the Head of Service of the Federation directing civil servants from grade level 1 to 11 to work from home while senior civil servants from grade

level 12 to 17 were required to work at the office with strict observations of guideline from the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC). These circulars were issued at intervals that indicate a critical analysis of situations as it affects the well-being of workers in the country. As at Saturday 16th January 2021, Nigeria have total confirmed cases of 108,943 with 22,156 considered as active while 85,367 have been discharged and 1420 deaths recorded (NCDC, 2021).

With the world currently dealing with the reality of the Corona virus (COVID-19) Pandemic which has led to a huge economic loss for thousands of businesses across the globe, the loss is out rightly attributed to the government's order of shutting down business operations (Tashanova, Sekerbay, Chen, Luo, Zhao & Zhang, 2020). In Nigeria, it is the same scenario as the major economic hub States went on lockdown as a result of the upsurge of the virus. This lockdown features the restriction on transportation of people and goods, significantly disrupt of outputs and exports, hinders the growth of the private business by undercuts in the investments due to the loss of investors' confidence in the market (Jung, Park, Hong & Hyun, 2016).

Against the backdrop of government lockdown and a halt of business activities, private businesses financial and non-financial performances would be affected. A sharp decline in sales would subsequently lead to insufficient cash flow in carrying out various operations, financing and investing activities. Inventory will become obsolete and lead to a loss in economic value.

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Amid the current outbreak of the covid-19 virus, many workers were isolated or directed to work from home as directed by the government to reduce the spread of this virus. However, many organizations continue to operate in the form of shifts or virtual work setting which has altered the work environment setting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced higher institutions to change their work environment setting, such as working on shift and from home, doing their work virtually which exposed them to the challenges of digital inequalities, family-work conflict, stress, sleeping problems. With the pandemic not ending or even increasingly spreading, the ending of strict isolation measures and the lack of adequate measures indicate that the impact of Covid-19 on working life will persist and can be even more extensive.

This is a challenge for the higher institution facing the corona virus pandemic on how to maintain employee performance at work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

It is therefore the objective of this study to analyze and proffer solution on the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic to workers performance with particular reference to the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi. To this effect, this study has the following specific objectives:

- a. To determine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on workers performance in higher institution

- b. To determine how effective are the implementation of NCDC guidelines in higher institution
- c. To determine the vulnerability of workers and measures put in place to reduce the risk
- d. To examine consequences of corona virus to productivity of workers in higher institution

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What is the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on workers performance?
- ii. How effective are the guidelines for prevention of COVID-19 in higher institution?
- iii. What are the moderating factors of COVID-19 pandemic to employees of higher institution?
- iv. What are the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic to higher institution?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on the Michigan Model, and Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory.

The Michigan Model is based on a framework established by French and Kahn at the University of Michigan in 1962, and is sometimes known as the ISR model (Institute of Social Research), the Social Environment Model, or the Role Stress Approach. Like the P-E fit model (French et al., 1982) the Michigan Model (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, Pinneau, 1975) also places much emphasis on the individual's own subjective perceptions of stressors. Environmental stressors, such as role ambiguity, conflict, lack of participation, job security, workload, lack of challenge etc, are subjectively perceived, and personality variables, demographics, and social support moderate these perceptions to lead to health outcomes (Moeno-Jimenez et al., 2009). Role issues, such as role conflict, role ambiguity and role expectations are particularly central stressors, also known as the Role Stress Approach which the Covid 19 pandemic has impact on the employees via alternating work settings (Alkubaisi, 2015).

The model was refined by Hurrell and McLaney (1988) from the U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to result in what is known as the NIOSH model, which as well as specifying examples of how stressors, individual differences, acute reactions, and illness outcomes occur, also focuses more on the role of objective workplace factors in the a etiology of work stress coursed by the covid-19 pandemic (Huang, Feurstein, &Sauter, 2002). In the field of management, workplace stress can be exhibited through work load, work place conflict, work ambiguity which are the core of research as the costs to organizations and employees (Arshadi and Damiri, 2013; Webster et al., 2010). Farler and Broady-Preston (2012) suggested that a work-place is a community of its own, hence employees derive their sense of identity and belongingness from it. Stress in the workplace would therefore affect employees significantly and ultimately the performance of the entire organization would also be at stake (Ahmad Ezane et al., 2012). It is on this premise the current study will adopt Michigan Model to expound the relationship between work load, work conflict, work ambiguity and employee performance in the public sector in Kenya.

ABRAHAM MASLOW HIERARCHY OF NEEDS THEORY

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory states that people have a pyramid hierarchy of needs that they will satisfy from bottom to top. He proposed that motivation is the result of a person's

attempt at fulfilling five (5) basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory remains relevant in every sector of our business today as it best analyzes Maslow's hierarchy of needs where the lower order needs (physiological and safety needs) may be linked to employee performance. Every new organization passes through this lower order stage in which they struggle with their basic survival needs. At the third level of the Maslow's hierarchy, social needs would correspond to the formation of organized roles within the organization into distinct units, depicting the human resource management function which resonates according to the tone set by organizational culture. This study finds this theory relevant in studying the influence of job security and employee performance in the public higher institution of learning.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

COVID-19 pandemic creates a great crisis for the whole world. This pandemic develops a conflict between earnings and safety. All the organization has to stop its regular schedule and introduce a new system to communicate as well as to conduct its daily work. Managers have to take a critical decision in this crisis to save the organizations and their employee's interests (Van der Meer et al., 2017; Van Zoonen & Van der Meer, 2015). The situation from June or July started to become normal but still, we have to live with COVID-19. This is a great challenge for the management to conduct daily work as per the 'new normal' schedule with various new rules for everyone's safety purpose. Organizations taking the help of technologies to communicate but only white-collar and professional employees are effective to do so (Karin et. al., 2020). For the employees working in manufacturing or Banks, customer services, or any position where direct communication is required were hampered heavily because of COVID-19. These employees around the world are the most dangerous situation. Even education sectors are also affected by COVID-19 (Wang C. et al., 2020). Work from home even doesn't go well often. Conducting work at the same time take care of family and children creates role conflict. These issues hampered the overall performance of employees. There are several changes imposed by the government to maintain safety, people at workplaces must be equipped with masks, physical distance, washing hands, and use hand sanitizer all along (Wolor et.al, 2020).

Employees' performance also depends on employees' mental condition. During COVID-19 pandemic employees were most concerned about safety. Hamouche (2020) mentions in her article about employee's mental health specifically stresses and depression. Employees are most concerned about safety, risk of virus, social exclusion, financial loss, and job insecurity. These are the main reason for employees' stress and loss of performance at the workplace. The organization needs to assure the safety of employees' health, social distance, financial security, and job security to reduce stress and enhance employee's performance (Sasaki et.al, 2020). Hasanat et. al. (2020) has research on the impact of COVID-19 on E-business. This article explains that pandemic heavily affected small and medium-sized retailers due to the low footprint on consumers, and also consumers' buying behavior also affected heavily by the novel corona virus. Not only small and medium-sized businesses but also manufacturing, education, and others also affected by a coronavirus. COVID-19 impacted all types of businesses, all around the world. The economy goes down for that reason. But the world cannot run like this. Everything started to open and organizations are prepared for physical works under 'new normal' rules. Work from home and digitalization of the workplace during COVID-19 was a good initiative but not for a long time because of digital inequalities. Elisabeth et al. (2020) worked on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and digital inequalities where it was explained that technological differences, ethnicity, and differences of other staff

create these inequalities. Employees from rural or remote places won't have the fastest internet to conduct work from home tasks; family members' interference will disturb works during work from the home period. According to İnce, F. (2020), employee's performance during COVID-19 has been decreased compared to the condition before COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, employees have to work from home and it has negatively impacted employee's productivity. Hence employee performance reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the research is aimed at understanding the basic effect of COVID-19 on workers performance in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi. It reviews relevant literatures that seek to link the relationship between COVID-19 and work performance in an organization with respect to the key factors inherent on the dependent variables such as: Changes in work practices, Job Loss, Virtual work, Limited Training Opportunity, Work from Home, Public Health Safety, Economic Hardship, Social Distancing, Closure of Schools, etc. All these are factors the researcher wished to explore in understanding the extent of relationship between the research variable.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), corona viruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. SARS, for instance, was transmitted from civet cats to humans while MERS moved to humans from a type of camel. Several known corona viruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans. The name corona virus comes from the Latin word corona, meaning 'crown' or 'halo'. Under an electron microscope, it looks like it is surrounded by a solar corona. The novel Corona virus disease also called COVID-19 emerged in December 2019 in China in Wuhan city in Hubei province of China (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). This pandemic has spread across 210 countries and territories around the world and 2 international conveyances (Worldometers, 2020). Following the outbreak in China, the virus has recorded new epicentres for its outbreak, the United States of America, Spain, Italy, France and Germany, having confirmed cases of over a hundred thousand (Worldometers, 2020).

The corona virus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7th 2020 is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans (Wikipedia, 2020). Chinese health authorities have determined the origin of the virus, which was said to have likely come from a seafood market in Wuhan, China where wildlife was also traded illegally. On February 7th 2020, Chinese researchers said the virus could have spread from an infected animal species to humans through illegally-trafficked pangolins, which are prized in Asia for food and medicine. Scientists have pointed to either bats or snakes as possible sources of the virus. According to the WHO, signs of infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure, and even death. Current estimates of the incubation period - the time between infection and the onset of symptoms - ranging from one to 14 days. Most infected people show symptoms within five to six days. However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptoms despite having the virus in their systems (Wikipedia, 2020). Amidst, the risk posed by this virus on public health, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared it as a global pandemic and calls for health sectors of the world and government to take it seriously (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020).

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) first declared COVID-19 a world health emergency in January 2020, there has been a global public health and economic crisis that has affected the \$90 trillion global economy beyond anything experienced in nearly a century (James K. Jackson, et al (2020)). As a result, Organizations have been attempting to address the public health crisis and economic considerations with a view to balancing competing policy objectives and achieving set goals. In this regard, policymakers and financial and commodity market participants generally have been hopeful of a global economic recovery starting in the third quarter of 2020, assuming there is not a second wave of infections (James K. Jackson, et al (2020)). Sequel to this, organizations are contending that without a quick resolution of the health crisis, the economic crisis may persist longer than most forecasters have assumed. However, with social distancing guidelines and close down businesses that had opened opening as a result of a rise in new confirmed cases of COVID-19, emphasis is at the moment being placed on the building of an organizational structure with a clear mission and vision, including a strategic plan to adapt to the global challenges associated with COVID-19 with a view to increase the level of efficiency in organizations beyond the COVID 19 pandemic.

On 27 February, Nigeria confirmed its first case in Lagos State, an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria had returned on 25th February from Milan, Italy through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, fell ill on 26th February, and was transferred to Lagos State Biosecurity Facilities for isolation and testing. Presently, Nigeria is having 165,233 confirm covid-19 cases, with 7,789 active, 155,381 discharged and 2063 deaths recorded (NCDC,5/5/2021).

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is tracking the impact of the pandemic on education. As of March 30, they estimate that 87 percent of the world's students? —that is 1.5 billion learners? —have been affected by school closures. The bulk of these students are enrolled in primary and secondary schools, but there are also millions of students affected at the pre-primary and tertiary education levels. More than 180 countries have shut school doors nationwide, while others have implemented localized school closures. Specifically, in Nigeria the following have been identified as the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on higher institutions: they include, but not limited to the following;

- a. Reduction of international education,
- b. Disruption of academic calendar of higher institutions,
- c. Cancellation of local and international conferences,
- d. Teaching and learning gap,
- e. Loss of workforce in the educational institutions, and
- f. Cut in budget of higher education.
- g. Suspension of examinations

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from both primary and secondary source judgmental sampling method was used to select 20 higher educational institutions, in which 200 employees were interviewed via a questionnaire, were utilized, while descriptive statistics, correlation matrix and panel data analysis (Random-effect GLS regression techniques) were utilized as analytical tools in the study with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

FINDINGS

The data presentation and analysis revealed the following findings.

1. The results indicated that COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affect employees' performance, morale, and service delivery, negatively among the employees within the age bracket of 50-64.
2. The closure of schools was effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19 to the organization, thereby sparing the health and well-being of both workers and students that may be exposed from the virus.
3. The "Work from Home" of the government was effectively complied with thereby ensuring that limited number of people converge in one place to conduct organizational activities.
4. The social distancing was however, fairly complied in the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi as data analysis indicates a balanced response between those affirming and those denying the strict compliance. However, a negligible response admitted to occasional compliance.
5. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi did not require the lay-off of staff as it's a public organization that draws its funding from the Federal Government purse.
6. The Federal Polytechnic Bauchi did not experience financial hitch because its major source of funding comes from the federal Government. The area that was affected was its internal source of revenue which was hampered because of the closure of institutions from COVID-19 pandemic.
7. The study also revealed that the category of staff most vulnerable to the virus are those at the age of 45 years and above.
8. Difference in climate is believed to influence the spread of COVID-19
9. The mortality rate of COVID-19 in the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi is below 5, as only one staff was believed to have died of the virus.
10. There were no measures put in place by the Management of the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi to cushion the effect of the pandemic on workers as they equally relied on the Federal Government for relief.
11. The Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, like all public institutions have complied with the guidelines of the NCDC, though there is no strictness in compliance.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of these findings will further alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' performance in higher educational institutions of Bauchi state.

Notwithstanding the unknowns, it is obvious that COVID-19 will be recognized for changing the way we work in fundamental ways. For example, COVID-19 abruptly accelerated the speed of changes associated with working outside of co-located offices.

Virtual work practices are likely to spread as organizations realize the cost-savings from structuring labor with fewer full-time employees and more contractors connected technologically (Spreitzer, Cameron & Garrett, 2017) – and perhaps with less office space in light of the health risks known to be associated with conventional open-plan offices (Pejtersen et al., 2011). The challenges for individuals working in this manner are clear: more of us will need to learn to work in ways far different than how people did in previous generations. In this respect, COVID-19 makes clear how vulnerable we are as employees and employers. As many businesses around the world will be restructured or disappear due to the pandemic, workers will be retrained or laid-off and the economic, social-psychological, and health costs of these actions are likely to be immense. Indeed, the impacts of the pandemic will affect some groups of workers more strongly than others, for example, based on their age, race and ethnicity, gender, or personality.

RECOMMENDATION

The study however, proffers the following recommendations;

1. It is recommended that, to cushion the impact of the pandemic, the management of higher institutions of learning in Bauchi state should provide some form of compensation for employee coming to work during the pandemic, equally to boost their morale, provision of free protective gears to most venerable employee should be sustained and special hazard allowance.
2. Also, electronic gears such as laptops, palmtops and modem etc should be provided as well as the implementation of virtual work practices to assist the employees in service delivery
3. The government should increase the funding of higher institutions in next year budget to allow them manage all the damages caused by the COVID-19 school close down.
4. The government should immediately embark on the integration of all higher institutions into online education.
5. The Nigeria government should direct all the higher institutions to extend physical teaching and research activities to the online network, conduct teaching seminars online, jointly solve new problems that may arise in the teaching process.

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