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COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND OFFICE MANAGERS' RESPONSIVENESS: CASE STUDY OF BAYELSA STATE DUE PROCESS BOARD

BY

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Abstract

This investigation seeks to espoused COVID-19 Pandemic and Office managers' responsiveness empirical association. Covid-19 was treated as a mono construct, whereas Office managers' responsiveness was operationalized by Technology Deployment, Health Risk Management, and Work-From-Home. Ninety-one respondents were surveyed, and data collected was subjected to statistical test-Spearman's Ranking Order Correlation Coefficient analytical tool. investigation reveals a significant relationship between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Technology Deployment, Health Risk Management, and Work-From-Home – all of which are coping strategies of office managers amidst the Pandemic in the sector under investigation. Recommendations from the study suggest further innovation and deployment of adequate technology to keep offices running. Health and safety measures and regular staff testing are also encouraged to tackle the spread of the virus. Also, Work-From-Home is advised with regular virtual meetings aided by necessary technology to help boost productivity in the organization.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Office Manager's Responsiveness, Health Risk Management, Technology Deployment, Work-from-Home.*

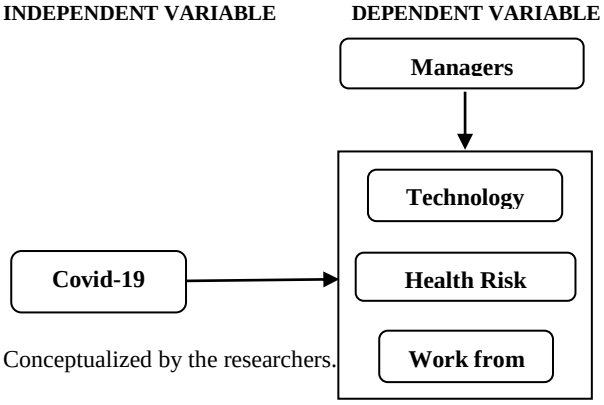
1. INTRODUCTION

Report from World Health Organization (WHO) elucidates, first case of the pandemic to have been publicly conveyed by Chinese government on December 8, 2019. Following this emergent it was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th of January, 2020. Currently, the eminent virus COVID-19 has taken a toll globally with over 50 million confirmed cases across continents with the USA, Spain, and Italy recording highest cases (Worldometer, 2020). Nigeria earmarked its first case involved with an Italian who worked in Nigeria and had returned from Milan, Italy, on February 25 2020 with the ailment's symptoms, in Lagos state as reported by the Federal Ministry of Health. The virus sporadically spread within days to other regions of the country which the number of confirmed cases has steadily increased from 211000 daily.

Nigeria, like other underdeveloped countries with poor medical facilities coupled with greater percentage of unschooled populations unaware of the Pandemic's magnitude contributes significantly to its spread. The Pandemic has gravely weakened the already wobbly economy of Nigeria. The government imposed coping strategy of lockdown generally halted trade activities including foreign exchange. Andam et al., (2020) predicted 34.1% Nigeria loss on her Gross Domestic Product due to trade deficit in course of the pandemic. On the other hand, all the educational institutions, offices, factories, and markets were closed.

These forestalling strategies were rather inimical to organization actor's world over, considering also the risk of uncertainty and breadth of the ailment's tremor, industrial psychologists immediately needed to riff practical field-based knowledge to help individuals and corporate bodies curtail the pandemic's risks while deploying sustained solutions for the Pandemic.

Conceptual Framework



Conceptualized by the researchers.

1.3 Study Objectives

The focus was to ascertain the empirical link between COVID-19 Pandemic and Office Managers' responsiveness. Specifically, the study is out to:

1. Determine the relationship between COVID-19 and Technological Deployment
2. Ascertain the link between COVID-19 and Health Risk Management

Examine the relationship between COVID-19 Pandemic and Work-From-Home.

1.4 Research Questions

Below were the research questions that provided direction for the investigation.

1. To what extent is COVID-19 Pandemic and Technological Deployment related?
2. To what extent is COVID-19 Pandemic related to Health Risk Management?
3. What is the significant extent COVID-19 Pandemic related to Work-From-Home?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null H0 hypotheses was statistically tested.

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 Pandemic and Technological Deployment.

$H0_2$: COVID-19 Pandemic does not significantly relate to Health Risk Management.

$H0_3$: COVID-19 Pandemic and Work-From-Home have no significant link

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1.1 Covid-19 Pandemic

Prior to the current Epidemic, the world had experienced different chains of Coronavirus outbreak riffing from China; 2002 and 2003 witnessed Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), in 2012 Middle East of Nigeria and some countries in other regions were faced with Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (Zhong et al., 2003). However, other outbreaks were not overwhelming, causing only mild infections in people with a compromised immune system.

Zhu et al., (2020) avers that COVID-19 belongs to a novel Coronavirus family (SARS-CoV-2). Bawazir et al., (2020) opined that this is the record time humans are plagued with this classic Coronavirus. More than 155 countries have experienced the pandemic from the inception outbreak, with severe illness and death (Wu et al., 2020). As of May 14, 2020, over five million cases of COVID-19 were recorded, with over one hundred thousand deaths, representing about 2.15% those infected. Deaths allied across continents from May 14, 2020, exposed 2504 mortalities in Africa, 5119 in South-East Asia, 62,221 in America, and 21,413 in Europe. As at October 2021 a year after, the COVID-19 Pandemic world confirmed cases rose to thirty-five million, with 1,030,738 (2.96%) deaths (WHO, 2020a; 2020b).

Office Managers Responsiveness

It is always daunting for employees to maintain work and nonwork domains boundaries (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). This became more prevalent with obligatory quarantine of workforces amid the pandemic. While it may be comforting to Work-From-Home, the absence of a clear definition between one's vocation and home front, and the dearth of commuters to strike balance in these spheres is arduous.

Gartner (2020) noted conversely that the Epidemic would fast-track inclinations and innovation toward telecommuting, the various flexible working arrangements adopted by corporate bodies for distance working outside of traditional working environment prompting budding concentration amongst researchers.

Technology Deployment

Mak and Kozlowski (2019) stressed the relevance of growing virtual teams, and how gratifying it is to identify the multi-faceted dimensions which Hoch and Kozlowski, (2014) espoused to be physical dispersal of team members and the relative asynchronous e-communication.

Equally, COVID-19 fast-tracked the surge of cybernetic teams. The need for scholars to identify and revolutionize such teams for optimum functionality cannot be overemphasized. For instance, the synergy between remote work and COVID-19 brought in new questions about how emotions should be transferred and controlled amongst cybernetic team of which work concern is socio-emotionally laden (Lindebaum et al., 2018). Similarly, DeRosa et al., (2007) prior investigation underpinned that cybernetic work teams are more effective barnstormers than on-sight teams.

Health Risk Management

COVID-19 triggered the closure of most sectors of the economy especially pertains hospitality, sporting, and entertainment industries leading to millions of people in the US, for example, filing for unemployment claims. As though losing their source of income is not enough, unemployed individuals are susceptible to undergoing psycho-stress-associated ailments (Wanberg, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the social disconnect of laid-off staff and workers instructed to telecommute has less noticeable effect of COVID-19; although, earlier investigations submits good and effective social connections as paramount for mental and physical wellbeing (Mogilner, Whillans & Norton, 2018).
The doubt and worries brought by COVID-19 have mandated organizations to take actions that consider employee health and wellness.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This empirical exercise used a cross-sectional survey design amongst 91 respondents randomly sampled from Bayelsa State Due Process Agency. Choice of sampling procedure was informed by Inegbedion et al. (2019) position. Data generated electronically through primary and secondary sources in compliance with the Pandemic protocol on 5point Likert-scale questionnaire item were validated content-wise by experts in the field and subjected to Cronbach Alpha reliability test according to 0.70 threshold of Nunally (1978), obtaining a least reliability score of 0.83**.** This mollify the items to be

internally consistent, and the instrument deemed to be reliable. Result from fieldwork was gotten through an inferential analysis of hypotheses utilizing Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Rho) tool with the aid of SPSS.

5. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

below is the results of the field report analyzed.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

No. of questionnaires administered	No. of questionnaires retrieved	No. of invalid questionnaires	No. of valid questionnaires	% of valid questionnaires retrieved
91	82	6	76	83.5%

Field report 2021

Table 4.1 indicates 91 questionnaires distributed, 82 returned, out of which 76 were valid, representing 83.5%.

Analysis of Research Questions

Table 4.2: Technology Deployment

Technology Deployment		**Response**					
S/No	**Item**	**SA**	**A**	**MA**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**
1	Virtual Teams improved workers productivity in the pandemic	46 (61%)	22 (29%)	3 (4%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	76 (100%)
2	Virtual Teams increased access to vital digital tools for job performance enhancement	49 (64%)	21 (28%)	- (0%)	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	76 (100%)
3	Technology closed the vacuum of isolation created through social distancing	38 (50%)	37 (49%)	- (0%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
4	Technology brought about the inclusiveness of employees in job progress	23 (30%)	48 (63%)	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)

Source: 2021 Survey Data

The above Table 4.3.1 on Technology Deployment shows that majority of the respondents approved of technology deployment. The table shows that the first item with 61%, the second with 64%, and the third with 50% strongly agree, while the fourth item agrees with 63%.

Table 4.3: Health Risk Management

Health Risk Management		**Response**					
S/No	**Item**	**SA**	**A**	**MA**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**
1	Physical distancing slowed down the spread of the virus in the workplace	52 (68%)	22 (29%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
2	The provision of handwash and sanitizers was helpful	40 (53%)	33 (43%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
3	Nose and face masks were helpful in keeping the organization running	23 (30%)	45 (59%)	- (0%)	6 (8%)	2 (3%)	76 (100%)
4	Regular COVID-19 Tests helped in maintaining the productivity of the organization	24 (32%)	50 (66%)	- (0%)	2 (3%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)

Source: 2021 Survey Data

Table 4.3.2 Health Risk Management shows the responses of respondents. From the table, the first and second items with 68% and 53% respectively strongly agreed while items three and four Agreed with 59% and 66% respectively.

Table 4.4: Work-From-Home

Work-From-Home		Response					
S/No	**Item**	**SA**	**A**	**MA**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**
1	Home-working reduced spread of COVID-19 in the organization	55 (72%)	14 (18%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	76 (100%)
2	Work-From-Home increased productivity in the organization	20 (26%)	53 (70%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
3	Work-From-Home brought safety to family members of staff	51 (67%)	18 (24%)	4 (5%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	76 (100%)
4	Work-From-Home was a positive response from managers to help curb COVID-19 danger on employees	32 (42%)	38 (50%)	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	1 (5%)	76 (100%)

Source: 2021 Survey Data

From the above Table 4.3.3 Work-From-Home, respondents' responses show 72% of the first item and 67% of the third item strongly agree, while 70% of the third item and 50% of the fourth item respectively agree.

4.5: Covid-19 Pandemic Impact

Covid-19 Pandemic Dangers		Response					
S/No	**Item**	**SA**	**A**	**MA**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**
1	Covid-19 Pandemic greatly affected productivity in the organization	56 (74%)	18 (24%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
2	The pandemic affected communication flow in the organization	19 (25%)	48 (63%)	7 (9%)	2 (3%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)
3	Covid-19 influenced mandatory leave and work from home in the organization	32 (42%)	26 (34%)	12 (16%)	2 (3%)	4 (5%)	76 (100%)
4	Covid-19 brought health risk to staff	49 (64%)	24 (32%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	- (0%)	76 (100%)

Source: 2021 Survey Data

Table 4.3.4 above shows the responses of respondents on the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The table shows the first item with 74%, third with 42%, and fourth with 64% respectively, being the highest percentage of the individual items strongly agree while the third item agrees with 63%.

Test of Hypotheses

Detail report of the hypothetical testing are below

Hypothesis One

$H0_1$: COVID-19 Pandemic and Technological Deployment are not significantly correlated.

			Tech. Deployment	COVID-19 Pandemic
Spearman's rho	Tech. Deployment	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.854**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	76	76
	COVID-19 Pandemic	Correlation Coefficient	.854**	1.000

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	76	76

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS
Significant correlation between Technology Deployment and Covid-19 Pandemic with r=0.854 and p=0.00<0.01 was seen from the investigation, as displayed in the above table. This means the null hypothesis was rejected and establishes a significant relationship between Technology Deployment and Covid-19 Pandemic.

$H0_2$: COVID-19 Pandemic does not significantly relate to Health Risk Management.

			Health Risk Mgt.	COVID-19 Pandemic
Spearman's rho	Health Risk Mgt.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.843**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	76	76
	COVID-19 Pandemic	Correlation Coefficient	.843**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	76	76

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS
The above data shows a significant relationship between the two items, Health Risk Management and Covid-19 Pandemic, at r=0.843 and p=0.00< 0.01. Therefore, hypothesis two was rejected because there is a significant relationship between Health Risk Management and COVID-1p Pandemic.

$H0_3$: COVID-19 Pandemic and Work-From-Home are not significantly correlated

			Work from Home	COVID-19 Pandemic
Spearman's rho	Work-from-Home	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.932**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	76	76
	COVID-19 Pandemic	Correlation Coefficient	.932**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	76	76

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS 2021
Having obtain a r=0.932, it's obvious there is high correlation between Work-From-Home and COVID-19 Pandemic significant at p=0.00<0.01. Hypothesis three is forthwith rejected due to the high relationship between Work-From-Home and COVID-19 Pandemic.

Presentation of Findings

The study establishes a strong relationship between Technology Deployment and Covid 19 Pandemic. This is corroborated Mak and Kozlowski (2019) earlier investigation output that cybernetic teams are rising in number and relevance and it behooves on researchers to categorize the numerous cybernetic teamwork that have been prod on workers via COVID-19. In another study by DeRosa et al. (2007) prior investigation underpinned that cybernetic work teams are more effective barnstormers than on-sight teams; this result further substantiates this study, hence shedding more light on the already established relationship between Technology Deployment and COVID-19.

Furthermore, the test shows a significant relationship between Health Risk Management and COVID-19 pandemic. The result is in line with research by Meister J. (2020), which revealed that the Pandemic has considerably increased unemployment, job tension, psychological stress, and distant attitude toward work. More extreme than social disconnections created by the COVID-19 Pandemic as it

relates to health, the loneliness which results from individuals' innate disposition towards unsatisfied social personal gratifications (Cacioppo et al., 2006).

Finally, the study shows a significant relationship between Work-From-Home and COVID-19 Pandemic. Supporting Gartner (2020) investigation on HR practitioners which confirmed about 80% of them were telecommuting in the first wave of the pandemic. Telecommuting need was expedient as response to the Pandemic which as equally caused a surge recently on remote working trends enabled by telecommunication technologies. In contrasting, Crosbie and Moore (2004) resolved that home-working was not cure for modern working life. Closer attention should be given to the aspirations and personality skills of those who are thinking of working from home the tendency of being still productive and maintain barrier amongst various domains of life.

5. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Summary of Findings

The current research in summary found that;

1. There is a significant link between Technology Deployment and COVID-19 Pandemic.
2. The study also found an evidential relationship between Health Risk Management and COVID-19 Pandemic.
3. The study found the fundamental relationship between Work-from-Home as an effective managerial tool and the COVID-19 Pandemic in the organization in view.

Conclusion

This study auspicates the relationship between COVID-19 Pandemic and Office Managers' Responsiveness. The research work done here was broken into three essential questions, which helped to determine the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic from the data gathered and analyzed, which established a positive and significant relationship between COVID-19 Pandemic and Office Managers' Responsiveness. Hence, the study substantially concludes that Office Managers' Responsiveness is required to ease the bearings of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Adequate technology should be deployed and encouraged in carrying out office tasks and keeping business going. Technological innovations should also be engaged to tackle any challenges that may arise from technology deployment.
2. Health and safety measures such as hand sanitizers, face/nose masks, handwash basins, and water should be accentuated to tackle the Pandemic spread. Also, regular testing and temperature readings should be carried out in the office. The well-being of staff should be paramount for the organization to function at optimum.
3. Work-From-Home should be encouraged, and adequate provisions made for workers' technological needs, such as virtual teams and regular virtual meetings, as these are known to boost productivity in organizations.

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