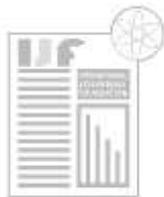


ELECTRONIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND GHOST WORKERS SYNDROME IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SELECTED LGAs IN IMO STATE



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ABSTRACT

This study focused on ghost workers syndrome and electronic human resource management in local government areas in Imo state. The study took a descriptive survey approach and data was sourced from the 164 completed and returned five point likert scale questionnaire administered on the senior human resource management staff of sixteen selected local government areas in Imo state. The data gathered was analyzed with MannWhitney test (U) using the 20.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The result revealed that hypotheses 1 and 2 showed 0.012, and 0.009 significant levels respectively which were all below the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypotheses were rejected. From the findings, the researchers conclude that the maladies that have infested the Nigerian local government system can be tackled through the effective deployment of E-HRM and that this will result to the reduction in the personnel cost which will help position the LGAs for effective and efficient grassroots service delivery. Sequel to the results and conclusions it was recommended that; The LGAs as a matter of strategic urgency develop policy framework for the use of e-HRM systems in public service, Government should enforce the use of e-HRM in order to reduce personnel cost effectively and that Human resource officers should be trained on the needed skill to effectively utilize e-HRM systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

The structure of the Nigerian government places the local government as the grassroots government i.e the government closer to the citizens. This projects the LGAs as development centers that are expected to fast-track the delivery of national and state developmental programmes and projects to the ordinary citizens. Despite this expected laudable roles, the local government system in Nigeria today are facing serious service delivery burden. While many scholars argue that the greatest albatross of Nigerian LGAs is their lack of independence from the strings of state governors who appears to have annexed the LGAs as an extension of the governor's office, thereby appropriating the right to manage its resources and administrative structures without recourse to enabling laws. Others argue that the lack of proper management of the LGAs especially in the areas of staffing has turned the LGAs to a shadow of its self. Most Nigerian politicians see the LGA as poverty alleviation centers where their cronies are dumped without first identifying the human resource needs of the local government areas, this has led to over-bloated wage bill, thereby crippling the LGAs from performing its constitutional role of taking development to the grassroots.

On this narrative, the traditional paper and pen approach to the management of human resource at the LGA level appears to have failed since the system could not support and sustain the attainment of its primary goal(s). It is not unusual to see the names of retired and/or dead staff on the payroll of the local government, in many cases non-existent names are inserted in the payroll and multiple salaries are paid to one person. This has today created a "monster" regarded as "ghost workers syndrome". Different Governments in Nigeria are initiating public service reform programme targeted at "fishing out ghost workers" and reducing the wage bill especially at the LGA level, how well this adhoc reforms has helped to create a sustainable platform for a creative human resource administration at the LGA level leaves much to be desired. There is therefore the need to obtain process efficiency and reliable data system that supports optimum human resource decision making through the adoption of electronic human resource management system (e-hrm), this confers both strategic and competitive advantages; LGAs who do not follow this trend therefore may struggle to survive in this information age.

Marler (2007), defined e-HRM as an enterprise-wide strategy that uses scalable, flexible, and integrated technology to link internal processes and knowledge workers directly to the business objectives of the organization. In addition, Olivas-Lujan, Ramirez, & Zapata-Cantu (2007) define e-HRM as the application of any technology that enables managers and employees to have direct access to HR and other workplace services for communication, performance appraisal, reporting, team management, knowledge management, and learning of administrative applications. According to Strohmeier (2007), e-HRM is the planning, implementation and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities. The import of the definitions above is that e-HRM uses technology to promote human resource information management and knowledge sharing in the organization with the aim of efficient organizational performance

Statement of the Problems

That ghost workers syndrome leads to wasteful organizational practice in the public service is apparent. However, the challenge has shifted to identifying sustainable strategic solutions to curtailing and possibly weeding out of this creation of maladministration. The government has at various times used

physical personnel audit approach to identify workers; this however has proven to be a failure because of its herculean nature and failure to cover the entire human resource landscape. While practitioners canvass the adoption of e-HRM to resolving this age-long problem, the challenge of dearth of skill, deliberate process sabotage by those who benefits from the old order, lack of policy direction etc seems to vitiate the benefits of e-HRM adoption.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this paper is to examine the impacts of electronic human resource management in combating ghost workers syndrome. The following specific objectives were investigated;

- i) The impacts of e-HRM in the identification of non-existent staff.
- ii) The impacts of e-HRM in the tracking of fictitious compensation.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions;

- i) Does e-HRM impacts on the identification of non-existent staff.
- ii) Does e-HRM impact on the tracking of fictitious compensation.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: e-HRM does not have significant impacts in the identification of non-existent staff.

H₀₂: e-HRM does not have significant impacts in the tracking of fictitious compensation.

Conceptual Review

Electronic Human Resource Management (E-HRM): The understanding of E-HRM varies depending on specific perspectives each researcher wants to focus on and there is little agreement on definitions of E-HRM (Bondarouk & Ruël 2009). Some prefer the transactional functionality which merely refers to what the system does. Kettley and Reilly (2003) see E-HRM as "the application of conventional, web and voice technologies to improve HR administration, transactions and process performance". Voermans and Van Veldhoven (2007) share the same point when stating that it is "the administrative support of the HR function in organizations by using internet technology" and emphasize the importance of understanding that the introduction of E-HRM may lead to change in content and positioning of the HR function.

Other researchers such as Strohmeier (2007), view E-HRM as the planning, implementation and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities. E-HRM is also known as "the application of any technology enabling managers and employees to have direct access to HR and other workplace services for communication, performance reporting, team management, knowledge management and learning...in addition to administrative applications..." (Watson Wyatt 2002). The clear similarity among definitions lies in the reference of a "fully integrated, organization-wide electronic network of HR related data, information, services, databases, tools, applications and transactions" (Foster 2009). A final group of definitions aims at a more strategic approach to E-HRM stressing what technology enables and E-HRM is now considered as a way of performing HRM rather than a collection of technologies. Bondarouk and Ruël (2009)

conclude that E-HRM is an umbrella term covering all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and information technologies, aiming at creating value within and across organizations for targeted employees and management.” It suggests the integration of four aspects: the content of E-HRM (focus on the type of HR practices and IT used, and the math between them), the implementation of E-HRM (focus on the process of adoption and appropriation of E-HRM by organizational members), targeted managers and employees who are actively involved in using E-HRM applications and finally EHRM consequence (Bondarouk & Ruël 2009). This definition will be used throughout the thesis because it seems to include not just the administrative elements of e-HRM but also the wider strategic outcomes, which cover adequately the themes of this study. By all means, E-HRM can be seen as an intersection between HRM and IT.

Benefits of E-Human Resource Management

The main benefits of *e-HRM* as advanced by Jovita (2010) are;

Standardization: By standardizing the system used within the group and by providing employees with direct access to records, particularly leave records, the company can achieve a significant reduction in employee queries and reduce the need for HR to undertake data entry of employee records.

Ease of recruitment, selection and assessment: *e-Recruitment* can be one of HR's nightmares. With e-recruitment the company gets an additional possibility besides the normal application by paper to recruit people over the web in an online-application process. Although this, and like processes, will always need significant human intervention. *E-HR* systems can streamline the process and reduce errors.

Ease of administering employee records: Whether be it leaves, benefits, personal details, accident and discipline reports, etc., it is generally accepted that once everyone can overcome the initial it phobia, HR and employees will experience fewer headaches and efficiency will rapidly increase.

Reductions to cost, time and labour: Reduced duplication, reduced time spent fixing errors, reduced labour costs through ESS, reduced or no hard-copy entry. Not only manpower can be saved, the processing time can also be shortened. With this *e-HRM* reaches the prime objective of cost effectiveness.

Access to ESS training enrolment and self development: *e-Training* can enable employees to search for and enroll in training programmes on-line and validating course availability. This can streamline the training administration process enabling employees to access computer based training. Cost and pace can be individualized as well.

Cost and ESS: ESS reduced the workload of HR department by more than 50%, for instance in the traditional method the employee has to type in a formal leave application get approved from his/her direct boss who will send it to the HR department for further approval which would consume lot of time to be processed. On the other hand, with *eleave*, the employee needs only to log in and make his/her leave application and his/her boss will be alerted to approve. Upon approval the leave balance is automatically updated and this is just one aspect.

Location and timeliness: With ESS, the employee could log in online anywhere and anytime without being in the office and without the leave card could be sitting at the boss' table for a few days, lost or buried.

Functions of E-HRM

e-HRM covers all the activities in the traditional human resource management practice. Zafar (2012), however discussed the functions of e-HRM to include;

E-Employee Profile: The E-Employee Profile web application provides a central point of access to the employee contact information and provides a comprehensive employee database solution, simplifying HR management and team building by providing an employee skills, organization chart and even pictures. E-Employee profile maintenance lies with the individual employee, the manager and the database manager. E-Employee profile comprise of the following: Certification, Honor/Award, Membership, Education, Past Work Experience, Assignment Skills, Competency, Employee Assignment Rules, Employee Availability, Employee Exception Hours, Employee Utilization, Employee tools, Job information, Sensitive job Information, Service Details, Calendar, Calendar Administration, Employee Locator easy and to make decisions with less cost and speedy time.

E-Recruitment: Organizations first started using computers as a recruiting tool by advertising jobs on a bulletin board service from which prospective applicants would be contacted by the employers. Some companies began to take e-applications. Today the internet has become a primary means for employers to search for candidates and for applicants who look for a job. As many web based job portals are there were the employers will post their vacancy position in the job search web portals to stimulate the applicants to apply for that particular job. And this websites help in review resumes of various types. E-HRM is online recruitment. It refers to posting vacancies on the corporate web site or on an online recruitment vendor's website, and allowing applicants to send their resumes electronically via e-mail. It also includes the active search of the internet and the location of resumes. However, there is always the danger of resume overload, as well as low reputation and effectiveness of various web sites and databases, not to mention its questionable effectiveness for senior executive positions.

E-Selection: Most employers will recruit their employees from the online job search engines and new selection process are keeping tests online by testing their level of knowledge, behavior, attitude all those the employer will recruit it properly by conducting all the test online by using strong IT which helps to reduce the cost.

E-Learning: E-Learning refers to any programme of learning, training or education where electronic devices, applications and processes are used for knowledge creation, management and transfer. E-Learning is a term covering a wide set of applications and processes, such as web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual class room, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio-and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD – Rom, and more.

E-Training: Most companies start to think of online learning primarily as a more efficient way to distribute training inside the organization, making it available "any time", "anywhere" reducing direct costs (instructors, printed materials, training facilities), and indirect costs (travel time, lodging and travel expenses, workforce downtimes).e-learning can offer a solution to training in remote or disadvantaged locations as well as tailor-made learning that fits the particular needs of the learner (Mumford, 2003), but it can also create barriers to learning, due to lack of hardware, fear of technology and learner isolation.

E-Performance Management system: A web-based appraisal system can be defined as the system which uses the web (intranet and internet) to effectively evaluate the skills,

knowledge and the performance of the employees which reduces the money. E-HRM can also provide managers with information on how to conduct performance appraisal, the specific criteria and measurements of given positions and roles as well as examples and models of effective appraisals.

E-Compensation: All companies whether small or large must engage in compensation planning. Compensation planning is the process of ensuring that managers allocate salary increases equitably across the organization while staying within budget guidelines. As organizations have started expanding their boundaries, usage of intranet and internet has become vital. The usage of intranet and internet for compensation planning is called E-Compensation Management which reduces the money.

Eliminate Majority of HR Paperwork: With the growing awareness for environmental sustainability, many companies are looking for ways to “go green.” Implementing a HRIS will help reduce almost all of the paperwork associated with HR tasks we can save money and time. It helps to reduce the cost by defining the work force in advance and to review the past data records of the employee leave.

Ghost Workers

The concept of ghost workers is such that is well known especially within the public service sector, however, it has received little attention from researchers hence the dearth of literature in this field. In its meaning, it is used to represent a fraudulent practice of mostly top civil servants over bloating the wage bill of ministries, departments and Agencies under their watch. Association of certified fraud examiners Brisbane chapter opined that a ghost employee is someone recorded on the payroll system but does not work for the business. The ghost can be a real person who knowingly or not is placed on the payroll or a fictitious person invented by a dishonest employee. The fraud attacks the payroll system with false employees.

In Nigeria, the ghost workers syndrome has assumed diverse dimension, even the act of retaining employees who either through death, retirement or summary dismissal on the payroll of the government. This has created inflated wage bill and has reduced the employment opportunities as government cannot effectively track and determine when and where manpower is required in order to make effective recruitment decision.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study took a descriptive survey approach and data was sourced from the 164 completed and returned five point likert scale questionnaire administered on 10 selected human resource management staff of 16 selected local government areas across the three senatorial zones in Imo state. The data gathered was analyzed with Mann Whitney test (U) using the 20.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Mann Whitney test is expressed thus;

$$U_1 = R_1 - \frac{n_1(n_1 + 1)}{2}$$

Where R_1 = Rank of the sample size, N_1 = sample size and U = Mann whitney test. The decision rule is to reject H_0 if p-value (Asymp sig) < 0.05, otherwise we accept H_0 .

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The SPSS output of the data used in this study is presented below;

H₀₁: e-HRM does not have significant impacts on the identification of non-existent staff.

SPSS OUTPUT FOR HYPOTHESIS ONE

```

NPAR TESTS
  /M-W= EHRMandINS BY RANKS(5 1)
  /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVES
  /MISSING ANALYSIS.
    
```

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
EHRMandINS	25	32.5600	16.78809	4.00	60.00
RANKS	25	3.0000	1.44338	1.00	5.00

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks				
	RANKS	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
EHRM andINS	1.00	5	3.10	15.50
	5.00	5	7.90	39.50
	Total	10		

Test Statistics ^a	
	CEandPI
Mann-Whitney U	.500
Wilcoxon W	15.500
Z	-2.514
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.008 ^b

a. Grouping Variable: RANKS
 b. Not corrected for ties.

Discussion: The SPSS output shows that the p-value (Asymp sig) is 0.012 which is less than the level of significance (0.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that e-HRM platforms can effectively predict and identify the presence of non-existent staff in the payroll of LGAs.

SPSS OUTPUT FOR HYPOTHESIS TWO

H₀₂: e-HRM does not impact significantly in the tracking of fictitious compensation.

```

NPAR TESTS
  /M-W= EHRMandFC BY RANKS(5 1)
  /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVES
  /MISSING ANALYSIS.
    
```

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
EHRMandFC	25	32.8000	17.99769	5.00	69.00
RANKS	25	3.0000	1.44338	1.00	5.00

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Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks				
	RANKS	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
HER MandFC	1.00	5	3.00	15.00
	5.00	5	8.00	40.00
	Total	10		

Test Statistics^a

	CEandPI
Mann-Whitney U	.000
Wilcoxon W	15.000
Z	-2.627
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.009
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.008 ^b

a. Grouping Variable: RANKS
 b. Not corrected for ties.

Discussion: The SPSS output shows that the p-value (Asymp Sig) is 0.009 which is less than the level of significance (0.05), hence we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and conclude that corporate entrepreneurship sufficiently predicts product innovation in the organizations under study

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This paper based on the sixteen LGAs surveyed reveals that electronic human resource management can be a pragmatic way of curbing the ghost workers syndrome in Nigerian LGAs especially as it affects detection of non-existent names on the payroll, retaining the names of dead/disengaged workers on the payroll and payment of fictitious and multiple salaries to an identified personnel.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings in this study, the researchers conclude that the maladies that have infested the Nigerian local government system can be tackled through the effective deployment of E-HRM and this will result to the reduction in the personnel cost which help position the LGAs for effective and efficient grassroots service delivery

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to the results and conclusions as follows, this paper recommends that;

- i) The LGAs as a matter of strategic urgency develop policy framework for the use of e-HRM systems in public service.
- ii) Government should enforce the use of e-HRM in order to reduce personnel cost effectively.
- iii) Human resource officers should be trained on the needed skill to effectively utilize e-HRM systems.

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