

Human Resource Technology and Organizational Survival of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria

¹Susan N. Isaac, ²Austin O. Oparanma, ³Lawrence I. Nwaeke and ⁴Justin M. O. Gabriel

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences

Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between Human Resource Technology and Organizational Survival of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria. The unit of data-generation was the organization and the corresponding level of analysis was the macro-level. The theoretical framework of this study was anchored on Resource Dependency Theory. The philosophical paradigm adopted for this study was positivism, a dimension of epistemology that tilts towards the exclusive use of nomothetic (quantitative) philosophical framework. In accordance with the subset of research design, this study was a hypotheses testing research. The study population was four telecommunication firms with 39 top management staff as respondents cutting across the four organizations. The study adopted the entire population as the sample size making it a census study. Data were collected through questionnaire, using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS); descriptive statistics were computed on the study variables at the primary level (univariate) of analysis. Subsequently, inferential statistics was used at the secondary level (bivariate) of analysis, such as Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The rho values were calculated in order to ascertain the nature of the proposed relationship and for testing the stated hypotheses. The study found that, Human Resource Technology has significant and positive relationship with organizational survival of telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Consequently, the study concluded that, Organizational survival can be enhanced by employing Human Resource Technology. The study recommended that: the Management and HR managers of telecommunication companies should continue investing towards improvement of the human resource information systems with a view to enhancing their service delivery such as investing in online recruiting tools, e-payroll platforms and e-performance management tools.

Keywords: *HR Technology, Organizational survival, Adaptability, Innovation*

Introduction

The heightened rate of change in the business environment and its influence on organizations has given rise to new business practices that are aimed at meeting environmental needs. Human resource management practices and policies are not left out as professionals in this field are steadily faced with the challenge of meeting environmental needs in order to achieve higher performance for the organization to remain relevant. Hence, adoption of innovative human resource practices (IHRP) such as human resource technology. Technology helps the way HRM activities are organized and executed especially in this era when technology is very useful to organizations because it speeds up organizational processes, reduces cost, and improves quality (Samma, Madeeha, Amna, Mubbasher & Talat, 2019).

Today, the quality of HRM is determined by the application of technology and improving HR performance is the bedrock of innovative human resource management (Batool, Shengbin & Batool, 2020). Human resource technology is referred to as the application of information technology in HR functions. HR technology is the use of Information Technology in the design, communication and implementation of HR functions in the organization. HR technology can also be referred to as Electronic human resource management (E-HRM). Some benefits of E-HRM which include: the reduction of task load, solves routine administrative problems, provides more efficient and effective ways of executing both employees and management task. The existence of HR technologies has effect on the ability of the organization to be adaptive, innovative and maintain high performance standard, as the organization makes its expectations and goals clear to its members. Hence, the level of human capital is developed and optimized (Koster & Benda, 2020) for organizational survival.

Accordingly, survival is very crucial at this period of business turbulence; it is the primary goal or objective of every organization (Adewale, Abolaji & Kolade, 2011) while seeking relevance and key positions in the industry. Organizational survival (OS) is referred to as the ability of a firm to realize and actualize its outcome and expectations in line with its mission, goals and objectives despite the prevailing environmental conditions (Samuel & Amah, 2018). Jones and Bartlett

(2008) posit that, survival and growth of organizations are contained in its goals which require investment of resources. As a result, firms are deliberate in creating a culture that promotes innovation and are also adopting innovative practices as a bundle or coherent set that will perpetuate them.

It is not weird to argue that organizations that are performing so well today are doing so because of their ability to adapt to the changes in the business environment. Over the years, organizations have faced these environmental challenges that threaten their survival, invoking scenarios where there are job losses, uncertainty and companies are folding as is the case in this period of Covid-19. The telecommunication firms in Nigeria are not left out as they are conducting businesses today in an exceptionally challenging economic environment on the account of increasing customer dissatisfaction with existing services, economic down turn, high rate of inflations, market uncertainty, aggressive competitors in the already saturated limited market space, capital intensive manpower expenditures, bandwidth commoditization, inflexible IT infrastructures maintenance, government policy fluctuation, unpredictable human induced disasters like vandalism, theft and fraud admittances (Nkordeh, Bob-Manuel & Olowononi, 2017). To this end, this study seeks to establish the empirical link between HR technology and organizational survival of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are: (i) To examine the association between HR technology and Adaptability (ii) To examine the association between HR technology and Innovation.

Based on the purpose of the study stated above, the following research questions were put forward:

- i. What is the association between HR Technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the association between HR Technology and Innovation of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria?

Conceptual Framework

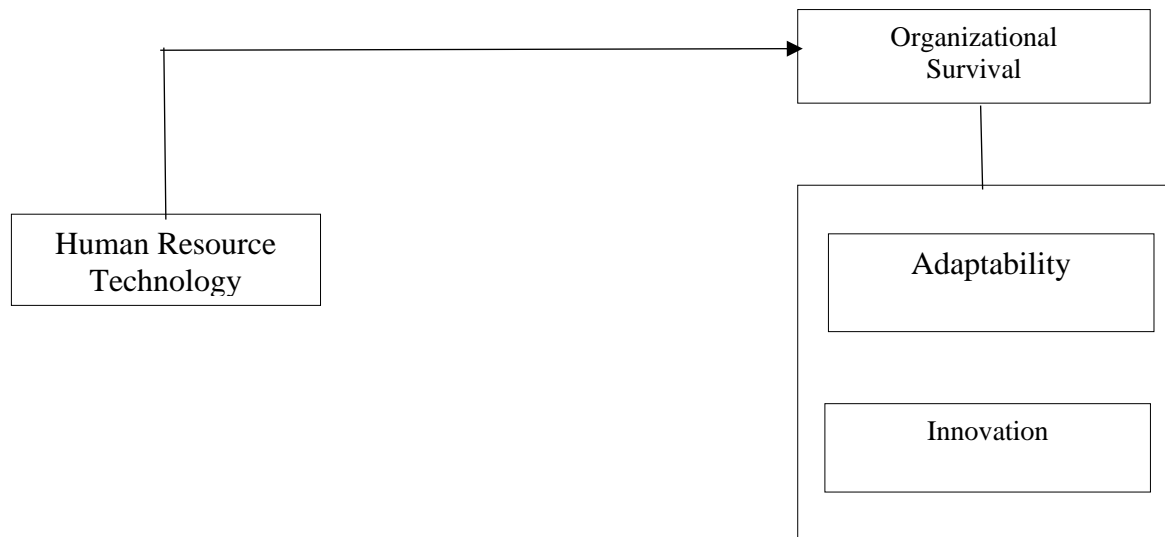


Figure 1: The Conceptual Model for the Study

Theoretical Foundation (Resource Dependency Theory)

Resource dependency theory is a framework for understanding the relationship between the organization and the environment. The proponents of this theory were Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) in their work 'the external control of organizations: a resource dependency perspective'. They integrated similar works by other scholars who attempted to establish a link between organizations and the environment (Emerson, 1962; Pfeffer, 1972; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Thompson, 1967). Since then, this theory has become very influential in the study of organizational theory and strategic management. RDT is premised on the assumption that organizational behaviour is influenced by environmental forces and that organizations have to pay attention to the demands of the environment if they must perpetuate (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This implies that organizations are not self sufficient, they depend on the environment for resources needed for survival. Because organizations are open systems, it creates scenarios of interdependence between organizations in a bid to acquire and build their resource base. Flink, Edelman, Hatten, and James (2006) noted that organizations strategies in addressing changes in their environment is usually in the direction of obtaining resources and this increases their level of dependence on the environment.

This theory has implication in HR technology and organizational survival, in that, it stresses the need for organizations to be aware of the happenings in the environment and respond to them accordingly for them to survive. The concept of organizational change considers the organizations as an open system where change in one unit results in change in other units. Hence, as the organization is responding to change it also adapts the HR technologies for the design and communication of HR functions and practices in response to their external environment (Koster, 2019). The focus of HR technology is basically on how organizations align or adapt their policies and practices to environmental changes. The contention here is that firms that are aligned to their environment are likely to perform better compared to those who are not environmentally fit (Koster & Wittek, 2016; Som, 2012; Subramony, 2006). The resource dependence theory explains why firms employ HR technology, which is the need for organizations through the human resource management to innovate characteristics that enable them to adapt their HR policies and practices in order to establish a better fit to the environment and survive.

The Concept Human Resource Technology

HR technology is the use of Information Technology in the design, communication and implementation of HR functions in the organization. HR technology can also be referred to as Electronic human resource management (E-HRM). The integration of social technology into the life cycle of employees and organization is an aspect of HR technology which ranges from recruitment, skills development, and employee engagement to employee exit, enables the organization to perform and thrive better in this era of stiff competition (Vas, 2013). Human resource functions today are enriched by the presence of social media, from administrative activities to engaging business partners that contributes to the effectiveness of an organizations workforce and their ability to meet strategic target. Another aspect of HR technology that makes HRM innovative and exciting that organizations can leverage to maximize their human resource management is the introduction of cloud computing and mobility, artificial intelligence and automation.

Today, HR departments and professional are leveraging the social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. for different purposes such as, recruitment, communication, branding, promotion events, background checks, employee actions, benefit communication, periodic HR blogs, employee recognition, research etc. (Bennett, 2013; Bhattacharyya & Biswas, 2013). More specifically, researchers have developed E-HRM packages available in flexible, web based modules for efficient and effective execution of human resource functions such as, E-recruitment, E-appraisal (performance management software), Training and Development, Goal allocation and Tracking, Multi-Rater Feedback, Performance linked bonuses, gamification, etc. (Vas, 2013; Bennett, 2013). These are innovative HR management Technology intended to advance the efficient and effective delivery of HR functions by improving the abilities, motivating and creating opportunities where employees can readily find expression.

The Concept of Organizational Survival (OS)

The notion of survival even if not written is a critical aspect of most businesses. Scholars opined that any business that neglects the issue of survival as its main objective should have a re-think. This implies that organizations ought to treat the concept of survival as an essential element irrespective of whatever interest they are out to pursue. The concept of Organizational survival is a multiple dimensional concept with no common definition. This may be due to the many criteria used to measure it and the many definitions available for the concept. Amah (2017) defines it as the ability of a firm to realize and actualize its outcome and expectations in line with its mission, goals and objectives despite the prevailing environmental conditions. Organizational survival as a business objective embraces every other goals. Adewale, Abolaji and Kolade (2011) echo this by maintaining that organizational survival contributes greatly to the attainment of other organizational goals. Thus, Amah (2017: 67) stated that ‘organizational survival is concerned with organizations members pulling their efforts towards achieving organizational goals which has so many potential benefits, including the following: economies of scale, increased profitability, sales increment and adaptability, innovation, hiring the best employees and increased prestige and employee satisfaction.’

Measures of Organizational Survival

Adaptability

Dalziell and McManus (2004) define adaptability as the ability of the system to respond to changes in its external environment and to recover from damage to internal structures within the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose. Organizations as an open system, respond to the changes in the environment, to survive and make profit, organizations need to adapt continuously to the different levels of environmental uncertainty (Amah & Baridam, 2012). Organization adaptability is necessary, given that their failure and success is determined by their ability to adapt. Adaption is a crucial decision made by organizations in their learning process where the feedback from the environment is evaluated and decisions on how to align organizational practices are taken (Cyert & March, 1963). Organizational adaptation refers to organizations searching for new opportunities relating to their environment. They adapt through evolutionary process of developing resources and capabilities or through experiences garnered to advance recognition and action (Eggers, 2012; Ahuja & Katila, 2004). The adaptive capacity of a firm is its ability to always design solutions to combat and exceed the environmental needs that are necessitated by changes.

Innovation

Schumpeter (1949) introduced the concept of innovation. In his postulation he argued that every growth oriented venture is a function of innovation and that innovation plays a key role for the survival of firms. In entrepreneurship literature, innovation is seen as effort focused on the discovery new opportunities and solutions (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005). Howell and Boies (2005) describe it as individuals’ creative ability, to discover new things and sell the idea to the organization for acceptance and support to ensure sufficient resources are released for development. Moreover, the implementation of new business process is influenced by advancement in organization which also results in the specification of employee responsibilities, internal and external decision making are also identified (Le Bas, Mothe & Nguyen-Thi, 2015) and interpersonal relationship with other firms are also spelt out. On the contrary, according to several studies conducted on innovation, if a firm is not willing to be innovative (Armbruster *et al.*, 2008) there is a high tendency that its internal and external descriptive power is reduced and it has less chances of success and survival. Hence, in this cutthroat competitive environment, it expected that every organization should develop innovative responses and dynamic organizational scenario to be able to survive.

Human Resource Technology and Organizational Survival Telecommuinactions Firms in Nigeria

HR technology plays an effective role in meeting the present requirements of achieving organizational efficiency and survival. It helps in managing the organization's tangible and intangible assets with high efficiency, which has made it essential and has also transformed the nature of its work. Findings have revealed that the adoption of Human resource Technology as innovative human resource practices is crucial for organizational survival. Malkawi, (2018) did a study entitled ‘using electronic human resource management for organizational excellence-case study at social security corporation – Jordan. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire distributed to (97) middle and senior management levels in the institution, from which (82) valid questionnaire was recovered for analysis. The primary data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while path model regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that there

is a significant statistical effect of electronic human resource management on organizational excellence as a whole and on all its indicators in Social Security Corporation- Jordan. the researcher opined that E-HRM require a non-traditional methods for various functions, related to human resources management from planning, recruitment, selection, appointment and others.

In line with the aforesaid, the core function of HRM is to provide the organization with the required competence that will be responsible for achieving organizational goals, as well as to carry out the tasks and responsibilities associated to human resource functions such as planning, attracting and training, and establishing a system of wages, rewards and fair incentives and evaluating their performance which must be supported electronically through electronic HR applications, hence, the association between HR technology and organizational survival. Also, Ahmed (2019) investigated E-HRM practices and its impact on organizational performance: A study on the manufacturing industry in Bangladesh. The sample of the study consists of 223 employees from all over Bangladesh working in the manufacturing industry. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and interview. The fitted regression model was used to examine the relationship between the E-HRM and Organizational performance. It was found that there is a significant relationship between E-HRM practices and Organizational performance. This implies that, due to availability of HR technology, HRM activities are now more efficient, productive, innovative and supports strategic goals for overall performance of the organization (Lengnick-hall & Moritz, 2003). It also has many benefits for the organization such as operational efficiency, enhanced quality of HR processes, cost reduction, and transformation of HR activities into strategic functions eventually leading to organizational performance and survival. The hypotheses are stated thus:

Ho₁: There is no significant association between HR technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no association between HR technology and Innovation of Telecommunication in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted Positivism which is a dimension of epistemology that tilts towards the exclusive use of nomothetic (quantitative) philosophical framework. In accordance with the subset of research design, this study was a hypotheses testing research. The population of this study was the four large telecommunication firms in Nigeria, going by NCC (2021) listing as: MTN, Globacom, Airtel and 9mobile. The researcher focused on the regional offices of MTN, Glo, 9Mobile and Airtel all situated in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Going by this, a total number of thirty-nine (39) management staff cutting across the four main telecommunication firms in Nigeria were our study respondents while the entire respondents of the four telecommunication firms were adopted as the sample size, making it census study. The study which is quantitative in nature, adopted the structured questionnaire in the generation of data. A pre-test study was carried out to determine reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha. Data collected were categorized and coded thematically and entered into the data editor of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Frequencies were computed to show the sample characteristics (demographic profile) and descriptive statistics was computed on the variables, described through means scores and standard deviation at the primary level (Univariate) of analysis. Subsequently, an inferential statistical tool such as the Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used and facilitated by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Response Rates and Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource Technology

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In this organization, the human resource functions are digitalized.	33	1	5	3.03	1.531
The organizations have attracted talented employees through social media platforms.	33	1	5	2.94	1.345
The organization leverages on E-HRM to prepare employees to adapt to changes in the business environment.	33	1	5	3.21	1.495
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Source: SPSS Output

The data (table 1) illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of performance-based reward which is a dimension of innovative human resource practices. The construct examined the context and manifestations of performance-based reward within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents' perception of performance-based reward through its indicators. The results affirm to all three indicators of performance-based reward within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response ($SD < 2.00$).

Organizational Survival

In generating the data on the operationalized variables, the study used a 5-point Likert scale instrument. Therefore, in interpreting the mean values, the study is relying on Asawo's (2016) categorization of responses with mean (\bar{x}) thus: $1 < \bar{x} \leq 2.5 =$ low; $2.5 < \bar{x} \leq 3.5 =$ moderate; $3.5 < \bar{x} \leq 4.5 =$ high and $4.5 \geq \bar{x} =$ very high. In order to ascertain the responses on organizational survival, the measures, namely; adaptability and innovation were measured on a set of multi-item instruments; all scaled on a five points Likert scale and are as presented.

Table 2: Response Rates and Descriptive Statistics for Adaptability

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
This organization can change its strategies and operations with ease in order to respond to the demands of the external environment.	33	1	5	3.21	1.453
In this organization, members communicate and relate effectively both internally and externally to get job done well.	33	1	5	3.27	1.506
In this organization, members have the information and knowledge they need to respond to change.	33	1	5	3.06	1.298
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Source: SPSS Output

The data (table 2) illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of adaptability which is a measures of organizational survival. The construct examined the context and manifestations of adaptability within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents' perception of adaptability through its indicators. The results affirm to all three indicators of adaptability within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response ($SD < 2.00$).

Table 3: Response Rates and Descriptive Statistics for Innovation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In this organization new products and services are launched continually to perpetuate the organization	33	1	5	3.03	1.531
In this organization, new production and service delivery methods are always introduced to enhance the productivity.	33	1	5	3.21	1.453
This organization initiates innovative marketing strategies that promotes the products/services in order to gain competitive edge	33	1	5	3.52	1.679
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Source: SPSS Output

The data (table 3) illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of innovation which is a measures of organizational survival. The construct examined the context and manifestations of innovation within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents'

perception of innovation through its indicators. The results affirm to all three indicators of innovation within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response (SD <2.00).

Human Resource Technology and Organizational survival Measures

Table 4 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for human resource technology and measures of organizational survival. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 4: Correlations Matrix for Human Resource Technology and Organizational Survival Measures

		HR Technology	Adaptability	Innovation	High Performance Standard	
Spearman's rho	HR Technology	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.669**	.582**	.892**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	33	33	33	33
	Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.669**	1.000	.968**	.924**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	33	33	33	33
	Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.582**	.968**	1.000	.883**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	33	33	33	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output version 23.0

RQ1: What is the association between human resource technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria?

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 4 was used to answer research question one. Table 4 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.669 on the relationship between human resource technology and Adaptability. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in adaptability was as a result of the adoption of human resource technology. Therefore, there is a positive and strong correlation between human resource technology and Adaptability of telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Ho1: There is no significant association between human resource technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria.

Similarly displayed in the table 4 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 4, the sig- calculated is less than significant level (p = 0.000 < 0.05). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between human resource technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria.

RQ2: What is the association between human resource technology and innovation of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria?

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 4 was used to answer research question two. Table 4 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.582 on the relationship between human resource technology and innovation. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in innovation was as a result of the adoption of human resource technology. Therefore, there is a positive and strong correlation between human resource technology and innovation of telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no association between human resource technology and Innovation of Telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Similarly displayed in the table 4 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 4, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between human resource technology and Innovation of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings as presented in table 4 revealed the test of first set hypotheses 1-2 which indicated for hypothesis one that there is a very strong positive significant relationship between HR technology and Adaptability of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria. Hypothesis two revealed that there is a moderate positive significant relationship between HR technology and Innovation of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria. These findings are corroborated with the work of Parry (2011) who reported that HR technology, increases efficiency that is expected to increase employees' productivity. Similarly, the study agrees with Samma *et al.* (2019) who found a positive relationship between HR technology and organizational innovation. Also, the study validates the study of Terek *et al.* (2018) who found a strong relationship between information technology and employees' performance. In the same vein, the study agrees with Igbal *et al.* (2018) whose study on link between E-HRM and organizational outcomes found that operational, relational and transformational dimensions of HR technology have a significant impact on HR service quality and employee productivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from summary of discussion, we conclude thus: human resource technology significantly and positively predicts adaptability and innovation of Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria. This implies that in the contemporary business environment, effective use of human resource technology has an important role to play in the performance and success of organizations. Competitive pressures have encouraged organizations to be proactive in diagnosing HR problems and to adopt more human resource technology since this is no longer a matter of trend, but rather of survival. In an era of heightened competition, effective human resource management (HRM) can no longer be content with simply executing a standard set of practices. There is need to constantly employ human resource technology so as to remain competitive. Therefore this study recommends that:

The Management and HR managers of telecommunication companies should continue investing towards improvement of the human resource information systems with a view to enhancing their service delivery such as investing in online recruiting tools, e-payroll platforms and e-performance management tools.

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