

Full Length Research

Health Care Human Resource Management in the Era of COVID 19 in Nigeria

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Abstract

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way human resource management is being conducted. The challenges managers face vary with their hospital's location and size, but it is clear that many private healthcare facilities will have to tighten their belts. Instead of laying off workers or slashing wages, some facilities are seeking alternate corporate strategies such as using technology to support telemedicine, work-from-home or reviewing costs to stretch the budget. Employees look up to leaders for reassurance, especially in times of instability. It is important that those in leadership roles communicate clearly with managers and staff and demonstrate a clear commitment to employee health and business sustainability. The study reviewed the inherent challenges bedeviling the health care institutions with emphasis on the aspects of human resource and its management, health care human resources skills requirements and health care human resource challenges during COVID-19. At the end of the review the study proffer recommendations as a way forward towards militating the negative impact of COVID-19 as it affects human resource management in health care institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: COVID-19, Telemedicine, Leadership, Human resources

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource management is the most critical and most important element in any organization (Merch & Debra J. 2020). Health care human resource planning is one of the six building blocks of the health system (2017). Health workforce is one of the six building blocks of health system (WHO 2017) Therefore, for an efficient and effective health care organization there is the need for a quality human resource management. This even more necessary in the era of COVID 19 pandemic. A Virus is a very small living thing that causes infectious illnesses. There are different types of viruses that humans have had to contend with from time immemorial and with medicine, man had been able to develop vaccines with which he is able to survive these viruses and some that are bacterial infections. In the later end of the year 2019,

a virus was heard of to have started in China and killing humans within days. It started like a rumor, something to watch on the news, but suddenly, it has become a world issue with countries shutting down their gates in order to curtail the spread! What then is this Corona virus also called COVID-19.

The health care human resources skills requirements

A manager must exercise a unique set of skills. Similarly at various levels you require different types of skills. Let us start by mentoring the skills required at the technical skill, human skill, conceptual skill, leading skills, planning level, organizing skills, controlling skills, decision-making skills. These skills refer to the personal ability put to use by the manager in specific position that

he or she holds in the organisational hierarchy.

As one moves up in the hierarchy of the managerial positions, the responsibility increases. The fundamental functions of a manager such as planning, organising, leading, controlling and decision-making are the skills required to be mastered by the managers.

Let us understand the skills first and then see how much each skill is used at various levels of managerial hierarchy and what importance each has in the career growth of a manager.

i. Technical Skill

It is the ability to work with resources in a particular area of expertise. A surgeon must know how to do Surgery. An accountant must know how to keep the accounts. Without the technical skill, one is able to manage the work effectively. The first line supervisor in a manufacturing industry needs greater knowledge about the technical aspects of the job compared to the top boss. In a small manufacturing organisation, even the top boss who owns the company needs to know a lot of technical skills.

In an age of specialisation, technical skill is perhaps the most familiar one, required of the greatest number of people. Katz pointed out that mostly the vocational and on-the-job training programmes are concerned with developing this specialised technical skill. In your desire to become an efficient operation. As a supervisor of a set of workers, you would like to ensure if your workers have sound grounding in the principle, structure and processes of their individual speciality along with actual practice and experience during which your workers are watched and helped by you as a superior. This appears to be the best way to develop the technical skill. A workshop superintendent knows how to ensure that his or her technician is well equipped with the technical skill required for the work. An office superintendent ensures that persons work with him or her are having adequate technical skill.

ii. Human Skill

Human skill is the managers' ability to work effectively as group members and to build cooperative effort within the team he or she leads. Every managerial level requires integration with other people, whereas technical skill is primarily concerned with working with things (processes or physical objects). The first level manager is involved on a regular basis with the personal problems and life events of many non-managers. It is therefore natural that he or she must be able to work through these personal situations and effectively lead subordinates. He or she has to perceive and reorganise the perception of his or

her superiors, equals and subordinates and his or her own behaviour subsequently.

iii. Organisations Skills

As you have seen, planning specifies the future course of direction of an organisation. The organizing process follows the planning process. While planning specifies what will be achieved when, organising specifies who will achieve what and how it will be achieved.

iv. Time Management Skills

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals. The set encompass a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organising, scheduling, and prioritising. Initially time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term broadened to include personal activities also.

COVID-19: Definition and Origin

A corona virus is a kind of common virus that causes an infection in your nose, sinuses, or upper throat. Most corona viruses are not dangerous. COVID-19 is a disease that can cause what doctors call a respiratory tract infection. It can affect your upper respiratory tract (sinuses, nose, and throat) or lower respiratory tract (windpipe and lungs). It is caused by a corona virus named SARS-CoV-2.

SARS-CoV-2 is one of the seven types of corona virus, including the ones that cause severe diseases like Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The other corona viruses cause most of the colds that affect us during the year but are not serious threat for otherwise healthy people.

In early 2020, after a December 2019 outbreak in China, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified SARS-CoV-2 as a new type of corona virus. The outbreak quickly spread around the world. It is normal for a virus to change, or mutate, as it infects people. A Chinese study of 103 COVID-19 cases suggests the virus that causes it has done just that. They found two strains, which they named L and S. The S type is older, but the L type was more common in early stages of the outbreak. They think one may cause more cases of the disease than the other, but they are still working on what it all means.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected

person coughs or sneezes, so it is important that everyone also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available?

The origin of covid-19 pandemic:

Corona virus was first originated in Wuhan, China in late 2019. The story of how the novel corona virus emerged in Wuhan, China, has produced a nasty propaganda battle between the United States and China. The two sides have traded some of the sharpest charges made between two nations since the Soviet Union in 1985 falsely accused the CIA of manufacturing AIDS.

U.S. intelligence officials do not think the pandemic was caused by deliberate wrongdoing. The outbreak that has now swept through the world instead began with a simpler story, albeit one with tragic consequences: The prime suspect is "natural" transmission from bats to humans, perhaps through unsanitary markets. But scientists do not rule out that an accident at a research laboratory in Wuhan might have spread a deadly bat virus that had been collected for scientific study.

On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009. Illness caused by SARS-CoV-2 was recently termed COVID-19 by the WHO; the new acronym is derived from "corona virus disease 2019." The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus's origins in terms of populations, geography, or animal associations.⁷

On February 11, 2020, the Corona virus Study Group of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses issued a statement announcing an official designation for the novel virus: severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

The CDC has postulated that this situation could result in large numbers of patients requiring medical care concurrently, resulting in overloaded public health and healthcare systems and, potentially, elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. The CDC advises that non pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) will serve as the most important response strategy in attempting to delay viral spread and to reduce disease impact.

Mode of transmission /global spread OF COVID 19

According to the (WHO) the COVID-19 respiratory tract infections can be transmitted through droplets of different sizes; according to current evidence COVID- 19 virus is primarily transmitted between people through respiratory droplets and contact routes. Droplet transmission occurs when a person is in close contact (within 1m) with

someone who has respiratory symptoms (e.g. coughing or sneezing) and is at risk of having his/her mucosa (mouth and nose) or conjunctiva (eyes) exposed to potentially infective respiratory droplets.

The virus can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure, septic shock, and death. Many COVID-19 complications may be caused by a condition known as cytokine release syndrome or a cytokine storm. This is when an infection triggers your immune system to flood your bloodstream with inflammatory proteins called cytokines. They can kill tissue and damage your organs.

What is community spread?

Doctors and health officials use this term when they do not know the source of the infection. With COVID-19, it usually refers to someone who gets the virus even though they have not been out of the country or have not been exposed to someone who has traveled abroad or who has COVID-19.

Global spread of COVID- 19

The COVID - 19 is called a pandemic because it has spread globally; to the extent that WHO refers to it as a global health emergency. The COVID 19 has become global health crises overtime and the greatest challenge we have faced. The pandemic is still an ongoing phenomenon with wide spread across the world, in some cases with fatalities. United States of America, China in Asia, European countries of France, Spain, Italy and United Kingdom are worst hit.

Health care human resource challenges in the era OF COVID -19

i. Health care organizational restructuring

Organizations have been going through one form of restructuring or another, health care organizations are not an exception. This brings about the need for increased health care work force.

ii. Reduction in employee

However, there is also increase cost of personnel due to upsurge in allowances. Most health care institutions have stopped admitting people for fear contacting COVID 19. Also people do not like to visit hospitals also to avoid getting contaminated and infected. The suspension of elective procedures and decline in visits to our primary care practices and urgent care centers have resulted in financial challenges which has drastically reduced the number of employees.

iii. Layoffs and downsizing

The federal government of Nigeria has announced that over 30million employees may lose their Jobs due to COVID 19.This is coming on the possibility of Nigeria

entering recession and due to low level of economic activity.

iv. **Technological challenge**

In this era of COVID -19 Health care human resource are expected to be adequately technologically competent .The technical skills will facilitate the implementation of Tele-Medicine, Tele-Consultation, Electronic Medical records, Mobile health information communication and technology, virtual meetings and webinars. Recently the federal government of Nigeria has made it compulsory for the Directors in the Federal civil service to have Information and communication technology (ICT) as a condition for promotion to the post of permanent Secretaries.

v. **Personnel redundancy**

According to Olubukola and Joshua (2020) As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate the global economy, employers in large and small private hospitals are faced with a dreadful conundrum on whether to let their staff go, cut their hours, or declare them redundant.

vi. **Mental health**

Medical staff caring for COVID-19 patients face, mental stress, physical exhaustion, separation from families, stigma, and the pain of losing patience and colleagues. In Africa, where the pandemic is escalating, there are major gaps in response capacity, especially in human resources and protective equipment. (Chersich M.F, Gray G, Fairlie, L. *et al.* 2020).

vii. **Risks of infection among healthcare workers**

In Nigeria, dozens of health workers have already tested positive for the virus and hundreds of others have been exposed, forcing them to self-quarantine. (Chukwuma 2020). Risks of infection in healthcare workers appear to be high in Nigeria and could be tied to hand hygiene, lack of enough Personal Protective Equipment among other factors. Water supplies for hand-washing, however, may be limited or unavailable in some parts of Nigeria.

viii. **Mortality rates among healthcare workers**

According to Ren LL, Wang YM, Wu ZQ, et al. (2020). Mortality rates among healthcare workers who become infected may be especially high in many parts of Africa given the limited number of critical care beds. Moreover, the large geographical distances pose tremendous practical difficulties in transferring ill healthcare workers from rural areas to secondary- or tertiary-level facilities in urban centres.

ix. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

This is one of the areas where health care workers are struggling the most. Masks, gloves, and other protective equipment are not readily available, and even though some care givers are able to purchase individually, this is not enough. At some public hospitals, patients are being asked to provide PPE before being treated or diagnosed. (Akindare 2020)

x. **Personnel & welfare**

Nigeria already had a shortage of Healthcare workers before COVID-19 hit. Akindare (2020) further stressed that since the pandemic hit, healthcare workers have been raising some issues relating to hazard allowance, non-implementation of any of the promised welfare packages to health care workers by the government and harassment by the Nigerian Police Force.

CONCLUSION

Health care human resource management is the most important asset of the organization and forms one of the six building blocks of the health systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about serious challenges affecting management of health care human resource. This has to do with internal and external environmental factors bedeviling the organization. Above submission is in line with the opinion of David (2020) that, human Resource departments are facing a challenge unlike any they have before. This situation has highlighted many problems, from how healthcare organizations operate from a business perspective to how understaffed many are in facing this crisis. Healthcare as an industry has long faced a staffing problem. In the midst of a pandemic, the industry faces perhaps its biggest challenge yet. Busy hospitals in places where COVID-19 has hit the community hard are coping with difficult circumstances. The pandemic has caused the cancellation of voluntary and non-emergency procedures, an important revenue generator for hospitals who now need money for everything from PPE to increased staff hours. This has left leaders with difficult decisions and Human Resources departments trying to keep the workforce engaged and able to fight burnout. The COVID-19 has shaped all spheres of human endeavors most negatively. The negative impact of COVID-19 requires the need for efficient and effective prescriptions in form of recommendations to help mitigate the problem of health care human resource issues accordingly.

Way forward

- i. There should be increased capacity building to improve the efficiency of the health care human resource.
- ii. Credit facility to the employees that have loss jobs would help them to get back to other forms of business, especially the Agricultural sector.
- iii. Employee welfare and incentives to serve as an inducement to the health care human resource.
- iv. Health care institutions should be robust on technological competence to provide a great team of technical efficiency required of COVID 19 era which most of business activities are based on information and communication technology(ICT).
- v. Employee need to be effectively monitored to avoid redundancy at work.

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