Full Length Research

Influence of Utilisation of Information and Communication Technology for Staff Recruitment on the Quality of Staff Recruited In South-West Nigeria

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The utilisation of emerging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has challenged the traditional processes of Human Resource Management (HRM) in general, and staff recruitment functions in particular. Previous studies on utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment have focused largely on the benefits derivable and challenges associated with utilisation of information technologies. This study, therefore, filled this gap by investigating the influence of utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment functions on the quality of staff recruited in South-West Nigeria. The study, anchored on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory, was conducted among 1052 Human Resource Management Practitioners selected through total enumeration. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire administered on 1032 HRM Practitioners and the conduct of 20 in-depth-interviews. Quantitative data were analysed at both univariate and bivariate levels using inferential and descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were content analysed. Findings from the study revealed that utilisation of ICT for staff recruitments had positive influence on the quality of staff recruited in terms of better computer knowledge and skill (56%) (X^2= 131.283 (.074)); staff with wider experience and exposure (54.9%); staff with diverse background (52.9%: (X^2 =71.263 (.000); and multi-functional staff (54.3%). The paper concludes that utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment had positive influence on the quality of staff recruited and recommends that Human Resource Management Practitioners in Nigeria should increase their level of utilisation of ICT for their staff recruitment functions.

Key words: Recruitment, Human Resources, Organisation, Utilisation, Quality

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically or in a digital form. For example, personal computers, digital television, email, robots. So ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or reception of digital data. Importantly, it is also concerned with the way these different uses can work with each other (Al-Gore 2000; Awodun et al, 2001; Omolawal, 2015). In business, ICT is often categorized into two broad types of product: - (1)

the traditional computer-based technologies (things you can typically do on a personal computer or using computers at home or at work); and (2) the more recent and fast-growing range of digital communication technologies (which allow people and organisations to communicate and share information digitally).

Recent advances in the ability to communicate and process information in digital form - a series of developments sometimes described as "IT revolution" - are reshaping the economies and social lives of many countries around the world. Improvements in the early 1990s in computer hardware, software, and telecommunications have caused widespread improvements in access to information and expansion on economic opportunities around the world. These advances have facilitated gains of efficiency in all sectors of the economy. Information Technology (IT) provides the communication network that facilitates the expansion of products, ideas, and resources among nations and among people regardless of geographical location. Creating efficient and effective channels to exchange information, IT has become a catalyst for global integration. The tools and connectivity of the digital age now give people a way to easily obtain, share and act on information in new and remarkable ways (Gates, 1999; Onimode, 2000; Obilor, 2004; Bolade, 2017).

The emerging tools such as Websites, chat rooms, instant messaging systems, e-mail, electronic bulletin boards and other Internet-based communication systems have made it much easier for people with common interests to find each other, exchange information, and collaborate with each other. They have also transformed the way organisational activities are conducted and in particular, they have transformed the way Human Resource Management function of recruitment, selection and placement (otherwise simply referred to as staff recruitment) are conducted. Staff recruitment is a vital organisational function handled with all seriousness because the success and survival of organisations depend, to a great extent, on the quality of the workers and the process through which they are brought into organisations. In the past, this function was conducted using simple technologies such as handbills, local radios and televisions, manual typewriters among others. However, the new technologies such as the computer, internet, and web have taken over the processes through which this function is conducted. The process of using the more sophisticated aspects of modern information and communication tools for staff recruitment functions is referred to as e-recruitment or online recruitment (Etomi, 2002, Azeez, 2017).

The sophisticated aspects of information and communication technology (e-recruitment), allow Human Resources professionals to post open positions in detail so that applicants can review the data with ease and at their own convenience, thus minimizing the time

requirements by the Recruiter on this phase of the recruitment process. Organisations typically have, at minimum, a website which allows them to conduct part of their business on-line. Some include a career section with on-line recruiting system to store information on open positions, employee benefits to entice potential applicants and an application process (Elkington, 2005; Stacey, 2010; Omolawal, 2015). Online employment recruitment provides a quick and easy way to sort out the qualified applicants from those less qualified thereby saving time, efforts and money. In all, ICT offers a lot of benefits for HR practitioners in terms of time saving, cost and general efficiency of service. On the other hand, it is expected that the utilisation of ICT should have positive effect on the quality of staff recruited. According to Torington et al, (2005) and Lee (2005), in more developed societies, online recruitment provides a platform for both recruiter and applicants to interact more efficiently. Anderson (2003) also argues that it provides recruiters with the opportunity of employing capable hands in terms of computer skill and interface. According to Depardieu et.al (2008), advertising open positions on the internet also facilitates the recruitment of local, national and international job candidates thereby enhancing workplace diversity. All these seem to suggest that online recruitment has positive influence on the quality of staff recruited.

Statistics abound in the more developed societies on the increasing level of utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment in organisations, and how the massive growth of information and communication technology has helped business organisations in more developed countries to enhance productivity and business growth (Gill, 2001; Greenspan, 2003; Lee, 2005; McCurry, 2005; Aitchison, 2006; Reilly et.al, 2006), but same can not be said about business organisations in Nigeria and other African countries. This is so, because modern information and communication technologies are being diffused from more technologically developed countries to developing countries like Nigeria, which have limited capacity for adoption, and a cursory look at the global rating in terms of adoption and utilisation shows that Nigeria and other African countries are lagging behind. For example, Africa has 15.3% of the world population but only 7.0% of internet connectivity measured in terms of number of Internet hosts and 15.3% Internet users in the world. Nigeria has a total internet users of 98,391,456 which represents 50.2% of the Nigerian population (Internet World Statistics, 2017). Consequently most African countries including Nigeria have not been able to reap the abundant benefits of the global information society and the information economy in areas such as e-recruitment, e-commerce, e-business, education, health and so on.

The utilisation and effects of ICT in different segments of human endeavours such as politics, media, education,

banking, small scale businesses, health as well as organisational performance, and organisational activities have been documented (Awodun et.al, 2001; Woherem, 2001; Jagboro, 2003; Adesope et al, 2005; Ajuwon, 2006; Sesan, 2006; Imhonopi, 2010; Olanrewaju, 2011). But there is little attention on human resource management, and this study was therefore designed to fill this gap by investigating the influence of the utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited in South-west Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory. Diffusion of Innovations is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. It stresses that innovation flows through certain channels over time among members of a social system. Diffusion of innovation model reveals that individuals must pass through certain stages in adopting new technology (awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption or rejection (Rogers, 1983, 2003).

Rogers, (1962) synthesized research from over 508 diffusion studies and produced a theory for the adoption of innovations among individuals and organisation. He proposed four main elements that influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system. Rogers categorizes the five stages (steps) of adoption as knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. In the Diffusion of Innovation, Rogers lists three categories for consequences: desirable vs. undesirable, direct vs. indirect, and anticipated vs. unanticipated. Adoption of innovations has both benefits and costs. The benefits of an innovation refer to the positive consequences, while the costs refer to the negative. In practical terms in Nigeria, telecommunication services are receiving rapid diffusion irrespective of country characteristics. For example, taking one indicator, Cellular phone lines increased dramatically from less than 1,000,000 in August 2001 to nearly 30 million at the end of 2006. By January 2011, the number of active lines has increased to 89.8 million with an impressive teledensity of 64.79. The subscriber teledensity as at July 2017 stood at 79.39%, while the mobile internet subscription was 91.4 million (NCC, 2011, 2017) and the diffusion is not limited to the large towns and cities alone but as well as the rural areas of the country. Same trends are observable with other components of ICT in the country. Available statistics have shown that the diffusion of ICT in Nigeria is widespread. This could be linked to the validity and applicability of Rogers' diffusion of innovation based on the variables relating to the intrinsic characteristics of innovations, diffusion patterns, costs and benefits, all of which facilitate technology diffusion.

METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive in nature and adopted a cross sectional survey research design. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were combined in the study. The study was conducted in South West Nigeria which comprises Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti states. The zone was chosen because it occupies a vital and leading position in the link with other nations of the world through early adoption of Western education and technology. The population for this study comprised Human Resource Management Practitioners in the public service, organised private sector and recruitment agencies based in the study location. The membership register of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN), the foremost body licensed to develop, promote and regulate the practice of HRM in Nigeria, provided the sampling frame for the study. The study was conducted on a sample size of 1052 HR practitioners, representing a total population of registered Human Resource Practitioners in the study location. The researcher used a combination of two instruments for the purpose of primary data collection: A total of 1,032 copies of the study questionnaire were administered while 20 In-Depth Interviews (IDI) were conducted with participants purposively selected by virtue of their cadres and positions in their various organisations and the CIPMN. Two methods of data analysis were adopted for this study: these were quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed at both univariate and bivariate levels while the qualitative data obtained through the IDIs were content analyzed. The qualitative data were used to complement the quantitative data in the course of data presentation and analysis. Relevant ethical issues were observed to protect the respondents and the information they provided for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, majority of them, (78.3%), were male compared with their female counterparts. In terms of the age of the respondents, majority (51.3%) fell within the age bracket 40-49 years. On the marital status of the respondents, majority of them, (71.5%) were married, while others were single, divorced, separated or widowed. With the majority here, it is expected that the study respondents would be mature in terms of orientation to life and work life balance. On educational qualification, majority of the respondents, (80.2%) had university qualifications. This is very revealing and suggests a high level of educational attainment among the respondents. This will in no small measure account

for their statuses and positions in their various organisations. On the nature of employment, majority of the respondents, (80.6%) were in paid employment, while the rest were self employed. Among the respondents in paid employment, 72.4%, representing the majority were in the private sector. Among the respondents in the private sector, 70.8% were in public liability companies, while the others were in limited liability companies (19.85%) and multinational companies (9.4%). Among the 200 respondents who were in self employment, majority of them (51%) were recruitment agencies while others were either management consultants or HR consultants. The three categories are closely related together as they are all regarded as specialists in HR functions. Among the total respondents, a narrow majority (49.5%) was in the manufacturing sector closely followed by those (48.5%) in the service sector.

The table 1 presents data on the influence of the utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited.

From the table 1, majority (70%) of the respondents indicated that utilisation of ICT leads to recruitment of high quality staff, 22.4% indicated otherwise while a significant others (7.6%) made no comment. The numbers of those who responded in the negative and those who made no comment were too significant to be disregarded, it could therefore be implied that since they did not utilise the more sophisticated aspects of ICT for their staff recruitment functions, they may likely have difficulty in assessing whether it was capable of enhancing a high quality staff for their organisations. It is however noteworthy that as many as 70% of the respondents indicated that the use of e-recruitment was capable of leading to recruitment of workers with high quality in terms of expertise, computer knowledge and so on. This supports the view of Torrington, et al (2005) and Mathis et.al (2006) who argue that the use of the internet for recruitment purposes is undoubtedly the most striking recent development in the field of recruitment as a result of the ability to attract the best quality of staff across the globe among other factors.

Majority of the respondents (56.9%) also indicated that e-recruitment leads to recruitment of experienced and skilled workers in terms of computer knowledge, meaning that using ICT for staff recruitment produces staff who have good knowledge of the computer. This is further evidenced by the chi square result (X^2= 131.283 (.074)) which shows that there was association between engagement in e-recruitment and employing staff with high quality in terms of knowledge, skill and attitude. This was expected considering the fact that for them to have been employed, they must have made use of the computer, the internet and other aspects of ICT for the recruitment processes, and obviously such knowledge will be displayed in the course of their official functions. This was buttressed by a 54 year old HR Practitioner who

has been involved in HR practices for about 22 years as follows:

> In our organisation, we have noticed that staff recruited through the modern techniques (e-recruitment) have better computer skills than others and they make use of the skills in the course of their official responsibilities.

Another participant corroborated the above. His words

> Yes, we get a lot of very skillful workers when we throw our net wide open through online recruitment. This has greatly contributed to the efficiency and service delivery we enjoy in this company.
> KII/Male/HR Practitioner/Oyo State

This finding supports IRS (2002b), Oni (2003) and Torrington et al (2005) who argue that utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment facilitates the recruitment of right type of people with the required computer skills and that such employees constitute good assets to organisations because such workers could easily work in all computerized areas of organisations. Such workers are said to be multi functional in many areas of the Organisational operations. This finding is supportive of Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory where people adopt a particular technology as a result of the benefits they will derive from it.

Furthermore, a simple majority, (54.9%) indicated that the use of ICT for staff recruitment leads to recruitment of experienced staff with wide exposures. This may also likely impinge positively on the efficiency of organisations that use ICT for staff recruitment functions. This is consistent with Imonhopi's (2010) finding, in his study, that internet utilisation has improved the quality of the teaching and research outputs among academic staff in south-west Nigeria, and this shows the pervasiveness of the emerging ICT in all human endeavours. A 50 year old male who has been an HR Manager for about 18 years in Lagos buttressed this finding during an IDI session with him. His words:

> It is expected that hiring employees through sophisticated tools and processes will generate employees who are skilled, resourceful and experienced. They will bring their skills to bear upon the Organisational performance and add value.
> (IDI/Male HR Practitioner/Lagos)

This suggests that using the modern ICT tools for staff recruitment, selection and placement will bring about workers from various environments where they must have gained experience and exposure that will equip them better for their new jobs. According to Ososami (2003), successful companies are going after particular

Table 1: Frequency distribution on the influence of utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited

From your experience, does the use of ICT for staff recruitment lead to recruiting a higher quality staff?	Freq N=1032	%
No	231	22.4
No comment	78	7.6
Yes	723	70
Does it lead to recruitment of staff with better computer knowledge and skill?	**Freq**	**%**
No	169	16.4
No comment	276	26.7
Yes	587	56.9
Does it lead to acquisition of staff with wide experience and exposure?	**Freq**	**%**
No	214	20.7
No comment	252	24.4
Yes	566	54.9

Source: Field survey

kinds of people in this globalizing era. These people are:

> Able to learn: People who will be able to adopt new skills as strategies change.
> Diverse: not only of race and gender, but also age, language, thinking style and culture.
> Technology-Savvy: People who understand the strategic value of IT and can help make it a reality.
> Flexible: People who can quickly change to meet new strategic demands.

E-recruitment provides opportunities for recruiters to target specific applicants with specific skills through the use of categories, information and other variables (Chapman et.al, 2001). Neveu (2002) also explained that the newer systems (applicant tracking systems) don't just screen out candidates, but also discover hidden talents. Calandra (2004) also argues that electronic screening sorts out the serious job contenders from the numerous applicants and provides high ability to identify specific skills, experience and attitude that determine the quality of applicants. From these views, it shows that the utilisation of the modern methods of recruitment is capable of leading to employment of workers with varied experience and exposure, qualities capable of enhancing the attainment of organisational goals and it supports the theoretical framework adopted for the study.

The table 2 presents more data in respect of the influence of the utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited.

From the table 2, a total of 52.9% respondents indicated that the use of ICT for staff recruitment functions leads to recruitment of staff with diverse backgrounds in terms of culture, skill, ethnicity,

orientation. The chi square test conducted also supported this finding (X^2 =71.263 (.000). This position was buttressed by a respondent during an IDI session who stated as follows:

> Diversity of workers is an emerging challenge HRM need to prepare for these days. ICT utilisation for staff recruitment is a major factor promoting such diversity among workers.
> (IDI/Male HR Practitioner/Ota)

This was further buttressed by another participant who explained as follows:

> One of the reasons we adopted e-recruitment for certain categories of workers is that it
> enables us to harvest a crop of diverse staff with different background and orientation. This
> assists us in our organisation.
> (IDI/Male HR Practitioner/Akure)

This finding supports Elkington (2005), Dauda (2007) and Onipede (2012) who argue that e-recruitment is promoting recruitment of workers from different backgrounds thus making workers diversity to become an important emerging HR issues in modern organisations and this needs to be properly managed towards attainment of the organisational goals. Organisations in the contemporary world are beginning to experience the presence of workers with various backgrounds such as culture, ethnic origin, skill, attitude, orientation and other factors. Diversity management is about acknowledging differences and adapting work practices to create an inclusive environment in which diverse skills,

Table 2: Frequency distribution on the influence of utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited

From your experience, does it lead to diversity of workers in terms of culture, ethnicity, and other background?	Freq N=1032	%
No	229	22.2
No comment	257	24.9
Yes	546	52.9
Does it lead to recruitment of multi-functional staff?	**Freq**	**%**
No	384	37.2
No comment	88	8.5
Yes	560	54.3
Does it lead to acquisition of staff with high propensity to remain long with the Organisation?	**Freq**	**%**
No	454	44
No comment	346	33.5
Yes	232	22.5

Source: Field Survey

perspectives and backgrounds are valued. It is about understanding the individual differences in the people we work with that arise from a broad range of backgrounds and lifestyles, and recognizing the value of using those different perspectives, ideas and ways of working to enhance the quality and outcomes of work and it builds on the principles of equal employment opportunity (EEO) which is well respected in organisations in the more developed societies (Allen, Dawson, Wheatley, and White, 2004). Diversity management has become a big challenge in the contemporary world, and HR practitioners are beginning to realize the benefits derivable from effective diversity management which include greater bonds among workers, increasing tolerance and so on. For a multi cultural society like Nigeria, workers' diversity in both public and private organisations could contribute to greater tolerance and re-orientation among workers. It may also function as helpful attributes that promote the attainment of the goals and objectives of the organisation, increased adaptability, broader service range, and variety of viewpoint (Esty, Griffin & Schorr-Hirsh (1995).

The study also shows that utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment leads to recruitment of multifunctional staff as indicated by 54.3% of the respondents, but a significant others indicated otherwise. Multi-functional staff are individuals who because of their computer skill can function in several areas of organisational activities. Multi-functionality has become a part of what employers expect from their workers in the contemporary business world. When workers are multi-functional, they become important assets to organisations and they are said to be technology savvy. This was captured in the words of a

participant

> With good computer knowledge, such workers become multi-functional and most time, multi-tasked. They are special assets and they make our job rotation much easier.
> (IDI/Male HR Practitioner/Ado Ekiti)

Furthermore, on whether the use of ICT leads to recruitment of workers with high propensity to remain with organisations for a long time, majority of the respondents, (44%) indicated 'No'; as many as 33.5% made no comment while only 22.5% indicated 'Yes'. The percentage of those who made no comment was seen as significant and could be an indication of their having no knowledge about this particular issue. The majority view is that the use of ICT does not lead to recruitment of staff with high propensity to stay for long on the job thereby promoting high labour turnover in organisations and this supports available literature. Scholars such as Adegboyega (2004) have argued that increasingly, there are emerging cosmopolitan/ knowledge/ multi-skilled workers and professionals who consider themselves capable of crossing corporate boundaries and able to take care of their own interest without relying on the union or other interest groups. Such groups of people rely on their self intellectual development and skill acquisition as vital tools needed to compete anywhere in the world and are ready to leave at the earliest opportunity.

Also, the growth of service and knowledge industries with special emphasis on computer skills has contributed a premium on mobility, flexibility and multi functionality of workers: Mobility in the sense that it provides them with

quick opportunities to move from one job to another; flexibility in the sense that they can easily adapt to work changes as introduced by organisations; and multi-functionality in the sense that they can easily work in many areas of the organisational operations. Although such people may be good assets to the organisation, they could also cause unnecessary labour turnover by their ability to secure other jobs and leave more easily (Hodgetts, 2004). What this implies is that such groups of workers may not have the propensity to remain long with any organisations. Their knowledge of the computer puts them ahead of others and may likely continue to put them on constant move. Such mobility may however not be too good for organisations.

Findings from this study justify the theoretical approach adopted for this study in the sense that it provides information on the fact that the decision to adopt technologies is largely based on a careful analysis of the benefits expected to be derived. When the benefits are seen to be more than the costs, decisions on acceptance are taken.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study set out to investigate the influence of utilisation of ICT for staff recruitment on the quality of staff recruited in South-west Nigeria. The study showed that utilizing ICT for staff recruitment, selection and placement offers a number of benefits for Human Resource Practitioners, but more importantly, it has positive influence on the quality of staff recruited in terms of recruitment of staff with good computer knowledge and skill, staff with wide experience and exposure, workers with diverse background and multi-functional staff, and people who are technology savvy, that is, who understand the strategic value of IT and have gone ahead to master its intricacies and deployment in organisations irrespective of the nature of service of organisations. The study therefore, recommends that Human Resource Practitioners in Nigeria should increase their level of utilisation of ICT for their staff recruitment functions and they should be prepared to invest in ICT tools and skills. Such tools include procurement of relevant facilities, software, while the training and development processes must take adequate care of ICT skill and knowledge. There is also the need to constantly upgrade such tools and skills as newer technologies emerge. In a related manner, they must have an understanding of the Internet access and proficiency levels amongst target groups and stakeholders in staff recruitment, selection and placement.

The study contributes to existing body of knowledge and literature not only on the level of adoption and utilisation of the emerging ICT tools for staff recruitment, selection and placement but also on the benefits

derivable especially as it leads to recruitment of high quality employees which organisations need for productivity and survival in the contemporary business world.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIPMN: Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria
HR: Human Resource
HRM: Human Resource Management
ICT: Information and Communication Technology
IDI: In-Depth-Interviews
IT: Information Technology

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