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EXTENT OF APPLICATION OF DIGITALIZATION PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING SCHOOL PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent of application of digitalization practices for enhancing school personnel management in private secondary schools in Anambra State. In the study, three research questions were formulated and answered while three null hypotheses were tested at 5% Alpha level. The survey descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 686 principals of the 686 private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Proportionate and convenience sampling procedures were used to draw 446 secondary schools, as well as their respective principals as the sample for the study. The instrument titled 'Digitalization Practices for enhancing School Personnel Management Scale' (DPSPMS) was used for the data collection. The instrument's reliability test was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha method, and with a coefficient of 0.74, was considered satisfactory for the study. The researchers administered the instrument together with the help of 5 research assistants. Mean was utilized as the descriptive statistical parameter to present and interpret results that answered the research questions while z-test was employed in testing the null hypotheses. The study found among others that the extent of digitalization practices for personnel performance management was high. The study concluded that to a high extent, digitalization practices have for enhancing personnel management in private schools in the State. The study recommends that sole proprietorship should be sponsoring their principals and admin staff for digital trainings that are relevant for management of staff of the schools.

Keywords: Application, Digitalization Practices, School Personnel Management, Private Secondary Schools.

Introduction

In today's digitalized world, the education industry has become one of the beneficiaries of digitalisation, as the various aspects of educations are becoming technologically enabled. Based on this, the Nigerian educational system is being gradually modernized, with the traditional chalk and manual method of operations gradually paving way for more innovative and flexible way of executing programs, activities and curriculum in the school system. In the phase of such innovations, Isiaka, Amaechi and Etoh (2022) asserted that the education industry has not been left behind in terms of innovation over the last decade, as there have been a lot of digitalized inputs into the system, for the education system to remain relevant. Understandably, Nigeria's educational system requires significant digitalisation to stand any chance of competing with those of advanced countries. There is no denying the fact that the Nigerian education would not progress toward cutting-edge innovation unless all levels of education in the country are digitalized, including the secondary schools.

Digitalization practices in schools involves the application of electronic platforms which include, but are not limited to, Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Meets, Google Hangouts, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or FaceTime, where learning may be done synchronously or asynchronously online into the various aspects of school operations for innovative effectiveness (Daniel & Ray, 2020). Similarly, Bejinaru (2019) and Onyia (2020) viewed digitalization as the conversion of text, pictures, video, and music into digital format utilizing technologies such as a laptop computer, the internet, mobile devices, a scanner, a digital camera, a projector, and a printer, among others, that may be played by a computer. Based on their views, digitalisation in education could be considered as the conversion of text, pictures, video, and music into digital format utilizing technologies such as a laptop computer, the internet, mobile devices, a scanner, a digital camera, a projector, and a printer, among others, that may be played by a computer. The essence being to promotes effective teaching and overall management of the school system. With digitalisation, the management of secondary schools, including physical facilities, students, finance, time and personnel/staff become innovative and enhanced.

Personnel management is the planning, organizing, compensation, integration, and maintenance of people to contribute to organizational, individual, and societal goals (Sharma, 2023). This implies it is the process of managing employees in organisations, including the school system. These include, but are not limited to tasks such as drafting of job analysis, recruitment and selection, training, development, compensation, performance evaluation, discipline and sanctions, which are elements of personnel management. With the introduction of digitalised practices, such as automated screening, online job portals, applicant tracking systems, online assessments, improved matching and placement and real-time updates into the personnel management system, especially in the private secondary schools, one expects improved system of administration (Esie, 2023). Esie argued that most private schools in Nigeria seem to incorporate and utilize digital platforms in their management and instructional operations, so as to be perceived by the public as being more innovative and proactive than their public-school counterparts.

However, the extent of application of such digital facilities and platforms by private schools into their operations, especially in Anambra State seem to become a source of concern. Ukozor and Muhammad (2024) observed that poor funding, shortage of digital facilities, power problem, poor internet connection, high cost of digital facilities, poor digital skills and knowledge and shortage of digital experts, poor implementation problem, resistant to change have become the major problems that have militated against full digitalization of school in Nigeria, with the private school not exempted. This was supported by Ngmenkpieo, Tseer and Chirani (2023), who reported inability to fully adopt and utilize digital facilities in the Nigerian school system is punctuated by formidable impediments, notably encompassing deficiencies in formal ICT training and expertise, financial limitations, suboptimal internet infrastructure, erratic power supply, and non-intuitive ICT tool interfaces. On the other hand, Esie (2023) decried the lack of clear job descriptions for teachers and lack of adequate training and development opportunities for teachers, especially in private schools as part of the factors limiting effective personnel management system. It is also worrisome that there is dearth of empirical studies on the application of digital resources in managing staff related matters in private schools in Anambra State, as most studies, opinionated and empirical, tend to pay more attention to public secondary schools. In response to the need for empirical studies to address this, the study examined the extent of application of digitalization practices for enhancing school personnel management in private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

All over the world, digitalization has become a familiar operational tool for advancing and enhancing different aspects of organizational operations, including the private school system. It is often perceived as a welcomed innovation that spurs managerial and operational effectiveness, including those of personnel management. But, the extent of involvement of digitalization in private school operations seem to be hampered by shortage of digital facilities, unstable power supply, poor internet connection, high cost of digital facilities, poor digital skills and technical know-how, shortage of digital experts, poor implementation problem, resistant of staff to innovative system, deficiencies in formal ICT training and expertise, financial limitations, suboptimal internet infrastructure, and non-intuitive ICT tool interfaces. There is also issue of lack of clear job descriptions for teachers and lack of adequate training and development opportunities for teachers. It is also worrisome that there is dearth of empirical studies on the application of digital resources in managing staff related matters in private schools. All these seem to have conspired to limit the extent of application of digital resources in the management of personnel in private secondary schools. Therefore, the problem of this study is put is an interrogatory manner, thus: to what extent are digitalization practices for enhancing school personnel management applied in private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Research Questions

The study answered the research questions drafted below:

1. To what extent are digitalization practices applied for personnel performance management in private

secondary schools?

2. To what extent are digitalization practices put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools?
3. In what ways are digitalization practices utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools?

Hypotheses

The study tested the null hypotheses stated below at 0.05 Alpha level:

1. There is no significant difference between mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools.
2. The mean ratings of principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools did not differ based on gender.
3. The mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools are not significantly different.

Methods

The survey descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 686 principals of the 686 private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Proportionate and convenience sampling procedures were used to draw 446 secondary schools, as well as their respective principals as the sample for the study. The sample was comprised of 300 male principals and 146 female principals. The instrument titled 'Digitalization Practices for enhancing School Personnel Management Scale' (DPSPMS) was used for the data collection. The instrument's reliability test was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha method, and with a coefficient of 0.74, was considered satisfactory for the study. The researchers administered the instrument together with the help of 5 research assistants. Mean was utilized as the descriptive statistical parameter to present and interpret results that answered the research questions while z-test was employed in testing the null hypotheses. Since the likert scale was based on four-point rating, an item with the average rating of 2.5 was considered as high extent while any item with mean rating below 2.5 was considered as low extent. For the test of hypothesis, any one with the value of z-critical greater than z-calculated led to the null hypothesis being rejected, whereas any hypothesis with z-critical was less than z-calculated led to the null hypothesis being rejected.

Result Presentation and Interpretation

Research Question 1: To what extent are digitalization practices applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools.

S/N	Items	Male principals (n=300)		Female principals (n=146)	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1.	Digital systems ensure consistency in performance evaluations by using standardized criteria and rubrics, thereby promoting fair	2.80	HE	2.82	HE

	appraisal				
2.	Digital platforms can generate customized performance reports for each staff member, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations for professional development	2.67	HE	2.70	HE
3.	Digitalization of performance appraisal aids in gathering data automatically, thereby providing a comprehensive and objective basis for appraisals	2.87	HE	2.79	HE
4.	Digitalization of schools facilitate 360-degree feedback by allowing input from multiple sources, including peers, students, parents, and administrators, for a well-rounded view of staff performance	2.64	HE	2.65	HE
5.	Digital platforms allow for the setting of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals, enhancing tracking of performance objectively	2.89	HE	2.92	HE
	Grand Mean	**2.77**		**2.78**	

On Table 1, it is observed that the Mean ratings of male and female principals on each of the items, 1 to 5 is greater than or equal to 2.50. This means that both genders to a high extent are in agreement with regard to their responses on the subject matter. With the cluster mean ratings being 2.77 for the male principals' category and 2.78 for the female principals' category, it means that all or majority of the research items were rated as high extent. This means that to a high extent, digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: To what extent are digitalization practices put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools.

S/N	Items	Male principals (n=300)		Female principals (n=146)	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1.	Digitalization of school's schedules helps in managing staff timetables, ensuring smooth and timely execution of responsibilities	2.94	HE	2.89	HE
2.	Digitalization of the school system can ensure that staff are aware of and comply with school policies and procedures through regular online updates that keep staff informed of school's rules	2.79	HE	2.84	HE
3.	Digitalization of a school helps to truancy in check and control	2.80	HE	2.82	HE
4.	With automation of payment of salaries and other pecuniary benefits of both teaching and non-teaching staff, controlling and disciplining staff become due to the common perception of its fairness	2.84	HE	2.78	HE
5.	Effective tracking of staff attendance to school and lesson delivery is better done through automated technology	2.78	HE	2.90	HE
	Cluster Mean	**2.83**		**2.85**	

Result on table 2 pointed out that all the items, 1-5 were rated as high extent by both male and female principals, as the mean index of each item was found to be greater than or equal to 2.50. It should be recalled that the benchmark for acceptance or rejection of any item is 2.50. It is also understandable the cluster or grand mean

for each category of principals (male and female) are 2.83 and 2.85, respectively. This implies that, to a high extent, at least majority of the items were agreed with by both categories of principals. Therefore, to a high extent, digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 3: In what ways are digitalization practices utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools.

S/N	Items	Male principals (n=300)		Female principals (n=146)	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1.	School's social media handles help members of staff to relate more friendly and cordially, thereby easing undue tension	2.78	HE	3.70	HE
2.	Digital platforms such as email, instant messaging apps, and intranets facilitate quick and efficient communication between staff members, administrators, and other stakeholders	2.64	HE	2.58	HE
3.	Digitalization of the school system can facilitate the documentation and tracking of conflicts among members of the school's staff, providing an avenue transparency in conflict resolution	2.79	HE	3.52	HE
4.	Digital collaboration tools such as shared documents, virtual meeting platforms, and team tasks enable school staff to work together more effectively, regardless of their physical location	2.70	HE	2.64	HE
5.	School's digital surveys and feedback tools allow staff to provide input on various aspects of the school environment, for informed decisions to improve the work environment	2.73	HE	2.50	HE
	Cluster Mean	**2.73**		**2.79**	

Table 3 shows that all the items, 1-5 were rated as high extent by both male and female principals, as the mean index of each item was found to be greater than or equal to 2.50. It should be recalled that the benchmark for acceptance or rejection of any item is 2.50. It is also understandable the cluster or grand mean for each category of principals (male and female) are 2.73 and 2.79, respectively. This implies that, to a high extent, at least majority of the items were agreed with by both categories of principals. This indicates that to a high extent, digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools.

Table 4: z-test for mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools.

Variables	N	X	SD	z-crit	z-cal	DF	∞	Remark
Males	300	2.77	1.00	1.96	1.56	444	0.05	Not rejected
Females	146	2.78	1.03					

Table 4 showed that z-critical is 1.96 while z-calculated is 1.56 at 444 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that z-crit (1.96) is greater than z-cal (1.56). This leads non rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant difference between mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: The mean ratings of principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools did not differ based on gender.

Table 5: z-test for mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools.

Variables	N	X	SD	z-crit	z-cal	DF	∞	Remark
Males	300	2.83	1.19	1.96	1.43	444	0.05	Not rejected
Females	146	2.85	1.21					

A close observation of Table 5 revealed that the theoretical or critical z is 1.96 while calculated z is 1.43 with the degree of freedom and level of significance being 444 and 0.05, respectively. It is understandable from the table that the z-critical, 1.96 is greater than the z-calculated, 1.43. Consequently, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that the mean ratings of principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools did not differ based on gender.

Hypothesis 3: The mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools are not significantly different.

Table 6: z-test for mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools.

Variables	N	X	SD	z-crit	z-cal	DF	∞	Remark
Males	300	2.73	0.22	1.96	0.40	444	0.05	Not rejected
Females	146	2.79	0.24					

Table 6 points to the fact that the z-critical is 1.96, and z-calculated is 0.40 at 444 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. By implication, the z-critical is greater than the z-calculated, hence, the null hypothesis is not being rejected. This implies that the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools are not significantly different.

Discussion of Findings

In the study, as reported, the extent of application of digitalization practices for personnel performance management in private secondary schools includes: digital

systems ensure consistency in performance evaluations by using standardized criteria and rubrics, thereby promoting fair appraisal; digital platforms can generate customized performance reports for each staff member, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations for professional development; digitalization of performance appraisal aids in gathering data automatically, thereby providing a comprehensive and objective basis for appraisals; digitalization of schools facilitate 360-degree feedback by allowing input from multiple sources, including peers, students, parents, and administrators, for a well-rounded view of staff performance, and digital platforms allow for the setting of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals, enhancing tracking of performance objectively. The report further indicated that there is no significant difference between mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are applied for personnel performance management in private secondary schools. Similar to report of this study is the work of Daniel and Ray (2020) which pointed out that digitalization practices in schools involves the application of electronic platforms which include, but are not limited to, Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Meets, Google Hangouts, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or FaceTime, where learning may be done synchronously or asynchronously online into the various aspects of school operations for innovative effectiveness.

In furtherance of the report, the study revealed that digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools to a high extent as follows: digitalization of school's schedules helps in managing staff timetables, ensuring smooth and timely execution of responsibilities; digitalization of the school system can ensure that staff are aware of and comply with school policies and procedures through regular online updates that keep staff informed of school's rules; digitalization of a school helps to truancy in check and control; with automation of payment of salaries and other pecuniary benefits of both teaching and non-teaching staff, controlling and disciplining staff become due to the common perception of its fairness, and effective tracking of staff attendance to school and lesson delivery is better done through automated technology. In a similar report, though in public secondary schools, Tagbo (2024) revealed that computer and cloud storage are the main digital system in school record for enhanced effective administration in public senior secondary schools in rivers state. There was a report too, that the mean ratings of principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are put to use for the management of personnel discipline and compliance in private secondary schools did not differ based on gender.

The study advanced that the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools is high and are as follows: school's social media handles help members of staff to relate more friendly and cordially, thereby easing undue tension; digital platforms such as email, instant messaging apps, and intranets facilitate quick and efficient communication between staff members, administrators, and other stakeholders; digitalization of the school system can facilitate the documentation and tracking of conflicts among members of the school's staff, providing an avenue transparency in conflict resolution; digital collaboration

tools such as shared documents, virtual meeting platforms, and team tasks enable school staff to work together more effectively, regardless of their physical location, and school's digital surveys and feedback tools allow staff to provide input on various aspects of the school environment, for informed decisions to improve the work environment. It was also reported that the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel relations in private secondary schools are not significantly different.

Conclusion

The study concluded that to a high extent, digitalization practices are being deployed for enhancing personnel management in private schools in Anambra State. For instance, digitalization was found to have utilized in by private secondary schools in Anambra State to enhance personnel performance management; personnel discipline and compliance management, as well as personnel relations' management. In this regard, male and female principals did not share different perception on extent to which digitalization practices are utilized for the management of personnel performance, personnel relations, as well as discipline and compliance in private secondary schools in the State, statistically put. Hence, data analysed provided enough evidence to state that digitalization practices are being used by private secondary schools in the state to advance the aspect of personnel management treated in the study.

Recommendations

Due to the findings of revealed, the study recommends the following:

1. Sole proprietors should be sponsoring their principals and admin staff for digital trainings that are relevant for personnel performance management in the school. With improvement in the principals and admins' ability to utilized digital apparatuses better, there will be transparency in appraisal of staff performance.
2. With effective deployment of digital tools aim at ensuring staff discipline and compliance, such as truancy and attendance tracking system, the school will become better positioned in maintaining a crop of staff, who are sensitive and responsive to the tasks they signed up for. Achieving this in a more effective manner demands that the principal, ICT officers and other staff understand the operations of the tracking system.
3. Digitalization has provided schools with social medial platforms that promote team work, workplace bonding, healthy work life, and opportunities for members of staff to keep in touch steadily, without location and time standing in the way. It will profit the schools more to train and encourage members of staff to make the most of such platforms to improve team work, communication and promotion of the school's values, programmes and achievements, as a way of advancing personnel relations.

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