ISSN: 2141 – 106X
Volume 14, Number 2, 2024
International Journal of Management Science and Humanities Innovations

MANAGER EMPLOYEE SELF PORTAL AND STAFF FLEXIBILITY OF OIL FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the relationship between manager employee self portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Port Harcourt. The objectives of the study were to determine how manager employee self portal, relate with and staff flexibility. The study adopted the explanatory cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study consisted of Twenty-Three (23) registered and licensed Oil Firms operating in Port Harcourt metropolis only. The sample size of the study consisted of the entire population since the population is small. Thus, the study adopted the census method of sampling. The study adopted the primary source of data. After validation by the supervisor and two other experts in Management and Test/Measurement, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to test the reliability of the instrument. A total of One Hundred and Eighteen (118) copies of the validated questionnaires were distributed to the targeted audience. The researcher was able to retrieve One Hundred and Three (103) copies and was used for the analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis; Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis, while the multivariate analysis was done using Partial Correlation with the aid of SPSS version 23.00. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between manager employee self portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that investing in a robust employee information system is a strategic move for oil firms aiming to enhance their workforce's ability to withstand and recover from unforeseen challenges. Therefore, it was recommended amongst others that management of Oil Firms should ensure that their onboarding process include comprehensive training on safety protocols, company culture and job specific skills to help new employee integrate smoothly and perform effectively; Management of Oil Firms should create a customizable dashboard for different stakeholders that display relevant human resource metrics and insight in a format that meet their specific needs.

Key words: Manager Employee Self Portal, Staff Flexibility, Retention Rate

INTRODUCTION

Manager/employee self-service portals are crucial tools that enhance operational efficiency, improve employee engagement, ensure data accuracy, provide flexibility in remote work settings, and contribute to cost savings within organizations. A **manager/employee self-service portal** is a digital platform that allows both employees and managers to access and manage various HR-related tasks and information independently, without needing to go through HR personnel for routine activities (Luenendonk, 2017). These portals are a crucial part of modern Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS) and are designed to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility within an organization. ESS portals create transparency in various HR processes. For instance, when an employee submits a leave request through the portal, they can track its status in real-time. This visibility reduces

uncertainty and unnecessary follow-up inquiries, allowing both employees and managers to have clear expectations regarding timelines and approvals. As remote work becomes increasingly common, ESS portals provide essential flexibility for employees who may not be physically present in the office (Rehab, 2018). These web-based platforms allow employees to access necessary information and perform tasks from anywhere at any time, facilitating seamless operations regardless of location. The portal provides managers with access to HR analytics, allowing them to make data-driven decisions regarding staffing, training needs, and performance management (Cho, *et al.,* 2020).

According to Nthiga and Samson (2024), manager and employee self-service (ESS) portals significantly streamline administrative processes within organizations. By allowing employees to manage their own HR-related tasks such as updating personal information, submitting leave requests, and accessing pay stubs these portals reduce the administrative burden on HR departments. This automation minimizes manual data entry and processing time, enabling HR professionals to focus on more strategic initiatives that contribute to the organization's success. Self-service portals empower employees by providing them with direct access to the information they need at any time. This autonomy fosters a sense of ownership over their work-related tasks, leading to increased job satisfaction. Employees appreciate being able to handle routine inquiries without waiting for HR responses, which can enhance overall engagement levels within the workforce. Managers can approve leave requests, shift changes, and other HR-related tasks directly through the portal, speeding up decision-making and reducing bottlenecks (Audeh & Mansour, 2018). Direct input by employees and managers reduces the likelihood of errors in HR data, ensuring that records are up-to-date and accurate. Managers can use the portal to monitor attendance, track work hours, and manage shifts, which helps in optimizing resource allocation and ensuring that projects are staffed appropriately.

Research Hypothesis

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between manager/employee self-service portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Rivers State.

Manager/Employee Self-Service Portal

According to Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2020), manager and employee self-service (ESS) portals is a digital platform that enables managers/employees to access and manage HR-related tasks and information related to their teams, such as leave requests/approval, managing performance reviews, and overseeing employee record and other HR-related data. Implementing an ESS portal can lead to significant cost savings for organizations by reducing the need for paper-based processes and minimizing administrative overheads associated with traditional HR functions. The digital nature of these systems also supports sustainability efforts by decreasing paper usage (Haider, *et al.,* 2021). Oil firms often have a large workforce spread across multiple locations, including remote and offshore sites. A self-service portal allows employees and managers to manage HR-related tasks efficiently without needing to rely on centralized HR teams. Automating routine tasks such as leave requests, shift scheduling, and payroll management reduces the administrative burden on HR staff and allows them to focus on strategic initiatives. Employees and managers can access the portal at any time, which is particularly important in an industry where work often takes place in different time zones and non-traditional hours. Immediate access to information such as policy changes, safety protocols, or urgent announcements ensures

that all employees are informed and can act quickly (Hameed, *et al.,* 2020).
Arif and Rahma (2019) posited that automating HR processes, the portal reduces the need for extensive administrative staff, leading to cost savings. Managers can monitor and manage overtime more effectively through the portal, helping to control labor costs. Employees working in remote or offshore locations can easily access HR services without needing to visit a physical office, which is especially important in the oil industry. The portal can be customized to meet the specific needs of employees working in different environments, such as offshore rigs or field operations. The portal helps ensure compliance with labor laws, safety regulations, and industry standards by maintaining accurate and easily accessible records. All actions taken within the portal are logged, providing a clear audit trail that can be invaluable during regulatory inspections or audits (Okpokwasili, 2018). Employees can access training resources and development opportunities, helping them advance their careers within the company, which is crucial for retaining skilled workers in a competitive industry. Managers can conduct and track performance reviews through the portal, ensuring that feedback is timely and that development plans are in place. Portal usage metrics and employee engagement are used here as indicators of manager/employee self-service portal.

Portal Usage Metrics: Portal usage metrics are quantitative measures that track and analyze the interactions users have with a portal, such as a web-based application or platform. These metrics provide insights into user behavior, engagement levels, and overall performance of the portal (Audeh & Mansour, 2018). By monitoring these metrics, administrators can understand how effectively the portal meets user needs, identify popular content or features, and make informed decisions for improvements. Portal usage metrics serve as essential tools for evaluating the effectiveness of a digital platform by providing actionable insights into user interactions and preferences.

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement in oil firms refers to the level of involvement, enthusiasm, and emotional commitment that employees have towards their work and the organization. It encompasses how connected employees feel to their roles, the company's mission, and their colleagues within the oil industry. Engaged employees are not only productive but also contribute positively to workplace culture and safety, which is particularly critical in high-risk environments like oil extraction and production (Cho, *et al.,* 2020). In the oil sector, where operational efficiency and safety are paramount, employee engagement plays a crucial role. Engaged employees tend to be more vigilant about safety protocols, leading to fewer accidents and incidents. They are also more likely to innovate and suggest improvements that can enhance productivity or reduce costs. Given the volatile nature of the oil market, having a committed workforce can help firms navigate challenges more effectively.

Staff Flexibility

In today's competitive labor market, flexibility has become a key factor in attracting top talent. A significant percentage of job seekers prioritize work-life balance when considering employment opportunities. So to say, Lundvall (2012), staff flexibility is the ability of the workforce to adapt to various changes and demands within the industry, including role adaptability, geographical mobility, schedule flexibility, technological adaptability, and more. It is essential for maintaining efficiency, resilience, and competitiveness in the dynamic and

often unpredictable oil and gas sector. Flexibility in the workplace significantly contributes to employee well-being. When staff members have the ability to adjust their work schedules or environments, they can better manage personal commitments alongside professional responsibilities. This balance reduces stress levels and leads to higher job satisfaction. Flexible work arrangements empower employees to work during their most productive hours and in environments where they feel comfortable. This autonomy leads to increased engagement and productivity; engaged employees can be up to 22% more productive than their less engaged counterparts. When employees feel trusted and valued through flexible policies, they are more motivated to contribute positively to the organization (Volberda, *et al.,* 2010).

Staff flexibility in oil firms refers to the ability of the workforce to adapt to changing conditions, roles, tasks, and environments within the industry. This concept is vital in the oil and gas sector, where operations are often influenced by fluctuating market demands, technological advancements, regulatory changes, and environmental factors (Siggelkow, 2002). Flexibility allows employees to take on new responsibilities or roles outside their usual scope of work without feeling overwhelmed by rigid schedules. This adaptability fosters an environment where employees can develop new skills and grow professionally, making them more valuable assets to the organization (Hamel & Prahalad, 2015). When organizations demonstrate trust in their employees by offering flexibility, it boosts morale across teams. Employees who feel valued are more likely to remain with the company long-term, reducing turnover rates and associated hiring costs. Flexibility enables staff members to better juggle personal obligations such as childcare or education while maintaining their professional duties. This support for work-life balance is increasingly important as modern workers seek fulfillment both at home and in their careers (Barrett & Spencer, 2021). Cross-training and job-rotation are used here as indicators of staff flexibility.

***Cross-training*:** Cross-training refers to the strategic practice of equipping employees with a diverse set of skills and knowledge that enable them to perform multiple roles within the organization. This approach is particularly valuable in the oil and gas industry, where operational flexibility and adaptability are crucial due to the cyclical nature of the market and the rapid changes in technology and regulations (Ugbaka, *et al.,* 2021). Cross-trained employees can seamlessly transition between various roles, allowing companies to respond swiftly to shifting workforce needs or project demands. For instance, if a drilling engineer is cross-trained in safety protocols or equipment maintenance, they can step into those roles when necessary, minimizing downtime and maintaining productivity. By promoting skill transferability among employees, oil firms foster an environment of knowledge sharing. Employees with diverse expertise can collaborate more effectively across different functional areas, driving innovation and enhancing problem-solving capabilities. This collaboration is essential for addressing complex challenges that arise during operations (Luc, 2022).

Empirical Review

Arif and Rahma (2019) studied the effect of information system on employee performance in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the application of information systems on employee performance in PDAM Tirtawening. Descriptive analysis and verification methods were used to answer the problem formulation in this study. This research was conducted at a regional drinking water company in Bandung, namely

Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum (PDAM) Tirtawening. Respondents in this study were 114 PDAM Tirtawening employees who used the application in customer mutation activities, meter recording, billing systems, and digital asset mapping. Regarding population, the sampling used in this study was saturated sampling. To test the hypotheses, quantitative analysis methods used with Structural Equation Model analysis techniques or commonly known as SEM (Structural Equation Model). Based on the results of the study, it is known that the variable application of information systems (X) as a whole have a positive effect on employee performance (Y). From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Information System has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient of 0.68, meaning that the better the information system, it will create good employee performance as well.

Okpokwasili (2018) sought to determine the information systems application skills required of secretaries for job performance in public parastatals in Rivers State. A research question and null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 1,200 Secretaries and Office Technological infrastructure and Management (OTM) lecturers with sample size of 370 respondents selected using stratified random sampling from higher institutions of learning and public parastatals in Rivers State. A structured and validated instrument titled "Information Systems Application Skills Need of Secretaries for Job performance Questionnaire (ISASNSJPQ)" was used for collection of data for the study. Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and it produced a coefficient of 0.78 which shows that the instrument was reliable. Mean and Improvement Need Index (INI) were used to analyse the responses from the research question, while the null hypothesis was tested using the independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that Microsoft suits are highly needed with positive improvement need index. All these skills needs were statistically significant at .05 alpha level. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were given among others: that Secretaries in the public service should be given awareness by their employers on the need to acquire information systems application skills and Training institutions should develop programmes that would assist secretaries update their skills at confidence time and space.

METHODOLOGY

The explanatory cross sectional survey research design was adopted for this study. The accessible population of the study consisted of Twenty-Three (23) registered and licensed Oil Firms operating in Rivers State metropolis only. The researcher visited the Port Harcourt office of Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NURC) (formerly known as Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) to obtain this information. However, when the researcher embarked on a tour of Port Harcourt Metropolis for preliminary interaction with their managers, the researcher discovered that most of the registered Oil Firms are not operating. The sample size of the study consisted of the entire population since the population is small. Thus, the study adopted the census method of sampling. Structured questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. A total of One Hundred and Eighteen (118) copies of the validated questionnaires were distributed to the targeted audience. The researcher was able to retrieve One Hundred and Three (103) copies and was used for the analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis while the bivariate analysis was done using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of SPSS Version 23.0. Multivariate analysis was done using Partial Correlation.

RESULTS

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between manager/employee self-service portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Rivers State.

Correlation between Manager/Employee Self-Service Portal and Staff Flexibility

			Manager/Employee Self-Service Portal	Staff Flexibility
Spearman's rho	Manager/Employee Self-Service Portal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.**845****
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	103	103
	Staff Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	. **845****	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	103	103

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

Source: Survey Data, 2024.

Table 1 above indicates r value of 0.845 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating manager/employee self-service portal and staff flexibility. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) which states that there is no significant relationship between manager/employee self-service portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Rivers State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (Ha1). This implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between manager/employee self-service portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses and discussion of findings, the study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between manger employee self portal and staff flexibility of Oil Firms in Port Harcourt. Investing in a robust employee information system is a strategic move for oil firms aiming to enhance their workforce's ability to withstand and recover from unforeseen challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management of Oil Firms should deign portals with a user-friendly interface that allow easy navigation.
2. Management of Oil Firms should ensure that their portals are mobile-responsive so that managers and employees can access them from any devices including smartphones and tablets.
3. Management of Oil Firms should provide manager with real-time data on employee performance attendance and project status to enable them make informed decision..

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