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MENTORING STRATEGY AND EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORAL ADAPTABILITY OF MULTINATIONAL OIL COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between mentoring strategy and employee behavoiural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The work adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study was 10,238 employees of the 5 multinational oil firms operating within Rivers State, comprising of Shell, Exxonmobil, Chevron Texaco, Agip, and Total Exploration Nig. Ltd. The sample size of the study was 384 employees, determined using Taro Yamen formula. After validation by the supervisors and two other experts in the Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management, Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Out of 383 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 350 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis, Spearman Rank order Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between mentoring and employee behavural adaptability in multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The study concluded that in-service training is a viable tool through which organizations can strengthen the adaptability of their employees, among others. Therefore, it was recommended amongst others that multinational oil companies in Rivers State should design training programmes that cover technical skills, leadership development, safety protocols, and industry-specific knowledge, thereby boosting their cognitive and affective adaptabilities, and as well as the overall performance of the organization.

Keynote: Mentoring, Employee Adaptability, Behavourial Adaptability, Cognitive Adaptability

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing business environment, organizations face numerous challenges in adapting to new technologies, market trends, and customer demands. To remain competitive, companies must ensure that their workforce possesses the necessary skills and abilities to adapt to these changes effectively. This article aims to explore the problem of employee adaptability and workforce development, highlighting its significance and providing insights into potential solutions. In a dynamic business landscape, organizations must continually evolve and innovate to stay ahead (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2018). However, this requires a workforce that is adaptable, capable of learning new technologies, embracing change, and effectively applying their knowledge and skills (Noe *et al.,* 2017).

The rapid pace of technological advancements poses a significant challenge for employees to keep up with emerging trends. For instance, the rise of automation and artificial intelligence has led to the displacement of certain job roles while creating new opportunities in other areas. Employees who lack adaptability may struggle to transition into these new roles or may become obsolete in their current positions. (Salas *et al.,* S2012). Globalization has increased competition in many industries, requiring organizations to expand into new markets or collaborate with international partners. This necessitates employees who possess cross-cultural competence and can navigate diverse work environments effectively. Changing customer expectations and preferences demand that organizations continuously innovate their products and services. Employees need to be creative problem solvers who can identify customer needs and develop innovative solutions.

Overall, the problem of employee adaptability and workforce development is multifaceted, encompassing technological advancements, globalization, and evolving customer demands. Organizations must address this issue strategically to ensure their long-term success. Based on the expectation in the dimensions and measures of this study, the researcher attempts to bridge the identified gap between workforce development strategies and employee adaptabilities of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

While related studies have been conducted on the relationship between workforce development strategies and employee adaptability in various sectors, there is a notable gap in the literature specifically addressing how workforce development strategies relates with employee adaptability in multinational oil companies, particularly in the context of Rivers State. For example, Victor (2022) carried out a study that focused on human capital development and corporate survival of 19 selected private institutions in Rivers State; Emere and Aydin (2009) investigated the impact of personal development trainings on employee motivation (A case study from Turkish pharmaceutical sector); Oladimeji (2018) carried out an evaluation of the effect of staff training on organizational performance (A case study of first Bank of Nigeria, PLC. Wuse II Abuja); Franklin *et al.* (2014) carried out a study on the impact of training and development on employee performance at ESCON; Ekundayo (2015) assessed the impact of training and development on performance and productivity in selected oil service companies in Port Harcourt. In other studies, Sampson *et al.* (2016) examined the effect of human capital development programmes in optimizing employee performance in Abia State House of Assembly; Gabriel and Chukwuma (2016) studied human capital development and employee job performance, being a study of double diamond plastic manufacturing firm, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.

Though the above studies are related to this current study. However, none of them was specifically focused on investigating the relationship between workforce development strategies and employee adaptability in multinational oil companies in Rivers State. Here lies the gap the study wants to close, which gives it essence.

Research Hypotheses

To provide tentative answers to the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

Mentorship

In the intricate tapestry of workforce development, mentorship emerges as a powerful and integral dimension, fostering growth, knowledge transfer, and professional excellence among employees. Through personalized guidance, meaningful interactions, and experiential learning, mentorship creates a unique avenue for individuals to navigate their career paths, enhance their skills, and contribute effectively to their organizations. This essay delves into the significance of mentorship as a strategic workforce development tool, exploring its multifaceted benefits, implementation strategies, and the broader organizational impact. The success and profitability of any organisation depend on its ability to efficiently and effectively manage both its physical and human capital resources in pursuant of the predetermined corporate goals and objectives. Nowadays, changes in technology, state- of- the-art knowledge, social, political, and economic climates are presenting new challenges for organisations everywhere. These new challenges make the pursuit of excellence a worldwide slogan for organisations in their quest to boost productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction with increase pressures to reduce costs of managing. In their pursuant of excellence, organisations need employees at every level that are self-sufficient, resourceful, creative, and autonomous. These characteristics will ensure that employees can operate at higher strategic level, which makes their organisations more productive, competitive, and efficiently and effectively managed. However, many organisations are finding it difficult to recruit and retain their experienced,

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qualified and knowledgeable personnel due to competition from other organisations for the few available talented staff to fill key roles and critical positions in organisations. Similarly, organisations are facing brain drain problem because aging managers are retiring and younger workers are less likely to remain loyal to one employer for the entirety of their career.

Temporarily, organisations might be able to overcome these challenges by recruiting and training new employees. The concern is that skills gap might still exist not because new employees do not have relevant educational qualifications and nascent technical skills but because their experience is often limited and they often lack the requisite ―managerial‖ skills. Worse still, most management development programmes in organisations seem to focus on systems and growth, not survival and sustainability, certainly not managerial skills. These challenges may dampen further growth and productivity in organizations, and make managing organizations a difficult task. One of the best ways to solve this developmental gap could be through initiation of mentoring programme. Mentoring would enable an experienced person (the mentor) to assist another (the mentoree, mentee, or protégé) in developing skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person‛s professional and personal growth. Doing this is akin to employee empowerment, and could have implications for effective organizational management. For example, initiating a mentoring programme could be a cost saving option for organizations that want to implement strategic plan that includes internal recruitment, reduction of attrition of talented people, replacement of conventional and costly internal training programmes, institutionalizing corporate culture, talent management, professional development, enhanced career growth, smooth succession of leadership, communication through the organizational hierarchy, improvement in employee performance, and overall organizational performance and management. Mentoring is also a strategy that could assist in building professional, technical, and management skills, and employee confidence through cooperative and collaborative endeavours. It also reduces employees ‛fear and anxiety, and develops a culture of high performance by ensuring employees ‛supports and contributions. Mentoring also enhances an organization's ability to align employees' career development with the goals of the organisation. All these imply that an effective mentoring programme can improve the productivity and management of organisations.

Behavioural Adaptability

Behaviour have been described as the way in which a person behaves in response to a particular situation or stimulus. It is also the range of actions and mannerisms made by individuals, systems or artificial entities in their various state and environment which determines how a person control of his or her actions. It pertains to the (aggregate of) acts or reactions that an individual produce in response to a particular circumstance. It may be induced by stimuli or inputs from the environment whether internal or external, conscious or subconscious, covert or covert, and voluntary or involuntary. Behaviour is therefore a response(s) which is observed directly or indirectly. Direct observations is made possible by studying the responses of people to a work environment while indirect observations borders on the decision making processes and attitudes of each individual.

It is important to note that Organisations are composed of different individuals with different personality forms, attitudes, values, perception, motives, aspirations and abilities which determines how they adapt to work conditions hence the need to understand behaviour and how it affects or work in relation to employee adaptability because the level of, quality and capacity of an individual to adjust to new conditions is on one hand a direct consequence of the conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, and voluntary or involuntary mannerism of the person. With respect to employee adaptability, behavioural adaptability relates to the way a person manages his or her behavioural dominance, influence, steadiness and conscientiousness in relation the work environment they find themselves (). It is a person’s willingness and ability to adjust their personal work ethic to meet the work needs of the organization and the work situation at hand.

Thus, it is an adjustment in attitudes, patterns, or habits of an individual worker relating to the use of adaptive skills towards complete obedience or otherwise and the willingness to being adaptable which enables each worker to interact more productively with other workers thus helping to avoid conflict.

Thus, behavioural adaptability is one which focuses on what individuals do with respect behaviours and performance in the workplace; if these behaviours lead to successful performance, they are considered adaptive. For instance, how employees respond to changes in their work content and how well the workers generalize and transfer knowledge and skills to match with the changes or how employees adapt to new work roles and new work processes all boils down to the behavioural aspects of adaptability. Hence, behavioural adaptability directly defines individual adaptability as the potential underlying adaptive behavior and performance (Griffin et al., 2007). In all, behavioural adaptability as a changes response mechanism provides greater resilience and quicker recoveries and diminish the impacts of workplace changes when there is proper mindset reorientation and alignment to the change and its outcome. Behavioural adaptability serves as a challenge tester (a situation that tests your abilities or is seen as difficult), adaptive mechanism first, to a change outcome (to a new or different situation) and secondly a novelty (an original or unusual situation) and thirdly an uncertainty (an unsure or unknown situation) that arises from resilient behaviour that help overcome threat (a situation likely to cause damage or danger), an adversity (a difficult or unpleasant situation) and confrontations (hostile or argumentative situations). In all, individual behavioural adaptability (IBA) is basically concerned with the adaptive performance of employees as they adapt to their current work environment and condition and match their work behaviour with that concerning organizational change, workplace change, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, uncertainty, or even conservation of resources. Thus, IBA is the quality of being able to change and adapt behaviour to the demand of an inclusive work organization, the ability to manage change transitions and requirements at work, as well as being able to effectively manage change related stress through behavioural competencies that enable each employee to manage themselves in relation to the demands of conformity and/or change in particular situations (Park & Park, 2019; Piórkowska, 2016).

Mentorship and Employee Adaptability

Mentorship plays a significant role in enhancing employee adaptability by providing mentees with valuable resources, knowledge, and guidance. Mentors can share their experiences and expertise, helping mentees develop new skills and competencies that are essential for adapting to changing work environments. Through regular interactions and feedback, mentors can help mentees identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to focus on areas that require improvement.

According to Zachary, et'al (2019) mentors can also provide mentees with exposure to new opportunities and perspectives. By introducing mentees to different aspects of the organization or industry, mentors broaden their mentees' horizons and enable them to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This exposure enhances the mentees' adaptability by fostering a mindset that is open to change and new experiences. Furthermore, mentorship provides a supportive environment for mentees to take risks and step out of their comfort zones. Mentors can offer guidance and encouragement during challenging times, helping mentees build resilience and confidence in their abilities. This support system enables mentees to embrace change more readily and view it as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat.

Research has shown that mentorship positively influences employee adaptability. A study conducted by Allen et al. (2019) found that employees who had access to mentoring relationships reported higher levels of adaptability compared to those without mentors. The study also highlighted that the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship significantly influenced the level of adaptability exhibited by employees.

Social Capital Theory

One of the key scholars associated with social capital theory is Robert D. Putnam. In his influential book "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" (2000), Putnam explores the decline of social capital in the United States and its implications for civic engagement and community development. He argues that the weakening of social networks and trust has led to a decline in participation in civic organizations, which has negative consequences for democracy and social cohesion. Another important figure in the development of social capital theory is Pierre Bourdieu. In his book "The Forms of Capital" introduces the concept of social capital as one of three types of capital, alongside economic and cultural capital. He highlights how social capital can be converted into other forms of capital, such as economic advantages or educational achievements.

The relevance of social capital theory to workforce development lies in its recognition of the significance of social relationships and networks in shaping individuals' access to employment opportunities, job information, and career advancement. Social capital can provide individuals with valuable resources such as job referrals, mentorship, and access to influential contacts within industries or organizations.

A study by Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn (1981), examined the role of social capital in job search processes among young adults. The findings indicated that individuals with higher levels of social capital were more likely to find employment quickly and secure higher-quality jobs compared to those with lower levels of social capital.

Furthermore, Nahapiet and Ghoshal ((1998).) propose a framework for understanding how social capital operates within organizations. They identify three dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive. Structural social capital refers to the patterns of relationships and connections within a network, relational social capital focuses on the quality and strength of relationships, and cognitive social capital pertains to shared norms, values, and trust within a network. The authors argue that these dimensions of social capital influence knowledge sharing, innovation, and collaboration within organizations.

In the context of workforce development, social capital theory suggests that fostering strong social networks and relationships can enhance individuals' employability and career prospects. Building social capital can be achieved through various means, such as participating in professional associations, attending networking events, engaging in mentorship programs, and leveraging online platforms for professional networking. Overall, social capital theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of social relationships and networks in workforce development. It highlights the importance of investing in social connections and trust-building activities to enhance individuals' access to resources and opportunities in the labor market.

The social capital theory emphasizes the importance of social relationships, networks, and trust in fostering economic development. It suggests that social connections and networks can provide individuals with valuable resources, information, and opportunities for skill development. According to this theory, investing in social capital leads to increased collaboration, innovation, and productivity within organizations and communities.

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was the cross-sectional survey research design because the study examined several variables, and sought ways to collect data at a particular point in time and analyze the data to generate findings.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was 10,238 employees of the 5 multinational oil firms operating within Rivers State, comprising of Shell, Exxonmobil, Chevron Texaco, Agip, and Total Exploration Nig. Ltd as obtained from the Respective HR Departments (2023) and the firms were extracted from Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (2023), Nigeria. The units of measurement for the study therefore comprised of a total of 10,238 staff of the oil companies.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique
The respondents in the study were the staff at all levels in the firms. The sample of the study was 384 employees. This was determined by the use of the Taro Yamen formula. Random sampling techniques was used in this study because it cut-across different multinational companies from different locations.

Instrumentation and Measurement
The instrument used in the study was questionnaires. The questionnaire was arranged in a manner to collate relevant information that helps provide answers to research hypotheses postulated.

Method of Data Analysis
The study made use of mean and standard deviation for the univariate analysis, while the bivariate analysis was carried out using Spearman rank order correlation in SPSS Version 22.0. Multivariate analysis was carried out using Partial Correlation. Hence, Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was computed.

Results
Ho_5: There is no significant relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

Correlations

			Mentorship	Behavioural Adaptability
Spearman's rho	Mentorship	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.587**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	350	350
	Behavioural Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.587**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	350	350

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

The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .587 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The rho = .587 implies that there is a moderate positive relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

Mentorship and Behavioural Adaptability
The result of hypotheses five reveals that there is a moderate positive relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .587 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between mentorship and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. Similarly, Victor, and Uchenna (2022) this study examines the relationship between mentoring and organizational effectiveness. Mentoring in the workplace is a comprehensive business strategy that utilizes the skills and expertise of more experienced employees as resources to those who are new to the company or those who are less experienced in certain areas within the company. The paper after a critical review of the available literature revealed a significant relationship between mentoring and organizational effectiveness. Based on the above conclusion, the paper recommend that: There

should be more organized formal corporate mentoring programs supported by relevant policies and management will power; Management should develop a program advisory team on mentoring with defined objectives, regularly evaluating their performance against set standards and correcting unhealthy deviations from standards where such exist.

CONCLUSIONS

From the empirical analyses engaged in the study, it suffices to conclude that mentoring strategies, is a viable tool through which organizations can strengthen the adaptability of their employees, among others. These strategies empower employees to improve their affective adaptability by managing emotional responses to organizational changes, behavioral adaptability by adjusting actions to new environments, and cognitive adaptability by fostering innovative problem-solving capabilities. Through consistent mentorship and coaching, employees gain personalized guidance that enhances their ability to navigate complex industry challenges, while in-service training equips them with the technical and soft skills required to stay competitive. This finding of the study underscores the strategic importance of investing in comprehensive workforce development programs as a means to build a resilient, agile workforce capable of adapting to the evolving demands of the oil sector, ultimately driving organizational success and sustaining competitiveness in a volatile industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. techniques to support employees in achieving their goals and enhancing their performance.
2. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should create an organizational culture that values adaptability, encourages innovation, and embraces change.
3. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should regularly assess the skills and competencies of employees to identify training needs and gaps.
4. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should collaborate with universities and technical colleges to develop customized training programs that meet industry requirements.

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