INFLUENCE OF PREJUDICE ON THE APPLICATION OF MODERN OFFICE AUTOMATION AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract
The present study investigated the influence of prejudice on the application of modern office automation among civil servants in Imo State. Three research questions and a hypothesis guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out the study. A sample of 250 civil servants was drawn from the entire population of civil servants in the State through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a researcher made 4-points type questionnaire titled "Influence of Prejudice on Application of Modern Office Automation (IPAMOA)". The instrument had reliability coefficient of 0.81 determined using cronbach's alpha formula. The data generated were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistical tool. The result of the study revealed the prejudices among civil servants to include; Reduction in self-esteem, fear of redundancy, Bias in adapting to new changes, Getting emotional with new changes, Fear of stereotype, Discrimination and Being skeptical about automation. The result also revealed that, prejudice among civil servants irrespective of their gender, influenced the application of modern office automation to a very high extent in Imo State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, Management of organizations should encourage training and retraining of civil servants to reduce prejudice and enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the working environment.

Keywords: Prejudice, civil servants, office, modern automation.

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a lot of advancements both in science and technology. These advancements have been growing rapidly since the end of the Second World War both in manufacturing, aviation, medicine, engineering, finance and administration, such advances have greatly affected life in all aspects. This technological advancement includes the modem office automation which we use in our day to day activities in the business organizations. However modem automation in all works of life does not exempt workers' (office professionals) productivity. This can be seen as there are continuous changes and more sophisticated machines are being introduced in the office.

In recent times, due to the changes that occur in the productivity level of organizations and the more sophisticated machines introduced in the office, office is now seen beyond a place where only clerical activities are carried out. It is now obvious that office activities can be carried out anywhere outside a specific office space e.g. in the car, in the airplane, at home etc., with the use of information communication technology tools, made possible by service providers such as MTN, Glo, Airtel, etc. Due to the changes in the office environment which has reflected changes in the definition of an office, all office activities are now carried out through the use of office automation.

According to Adeniyi (2014) automation is referred to as the varied computer machinery and software used to digitally create, collect, store, manipulate, and relay office information needed for accomplishing basic tasks and goals. Raw data storage, electronic transfer, and the management of electronic business information comprise the basic activities of an office automation system.

In addition, office automation refers to the use of computer systems and applications to increase the productivity of the workforce in the organization, thereby reducing the need for the extensive use of human beings. Automation plays an important role in the development of any organization and industry and helps increase labour productivity (Haigh, 2006).

On the other hand, a civil servant is a person employed in the public sector by a government department or agency or public sector undertakings. Civil servants work for central government and state government.

Office automation has a greater effect on the civil servant at the operational levels of organizations. This is true in the sense that work in the operational level tend to be routine, repetitive and tedious in nature. Middle management are affected by office automation to some extent but has little or no effect on those at the strategic level of the organization (AzmaFereydoon, Izanlou, Mostafapou, & Mohammad, 2012). People at the top or strategic level are not affected by office automation since they are engaged in decision making, and planning of the organisation. Their role of planning and management often need different tools available at the operational level of the organization (Khalil, 2014).

Nevertheless, office automation has several advantages including the elimination of having to go over repetitive and tedious tasks, more control and flexibility in task completion, increased skill level and tasks variety. On the other hand office automation has several disadvantages to office professionals at the operation level; among them are lowering job satisfaction, loss of control and influence, lower self-esteem and lower personal communication skills etc, (Khalil, 2014) which causes prejudice.

Prejudice is an unreasonable dislike or preference for a person, group, custom, system etc. especially when it is based on race, religion, sex, etc. (Hornby, 2018). The New International Webster dictionary (2010) defined prejudice as prejudgement opinion founded on bias. Relating prejudice to the application of modern office automation is the dislike of its application. It is the hatred some office workers exhibit in adopting and handling of modern office automation. This hatred exists because despite the gained merits of office automation to office professionals, such office workers have not come to terms with it. Omolaran (2012) stated that it has also contributed to high rate of unemployment as men are now replaced by machines. He further stressed that with office automation, certain levels of management, such as the middle managers, are now eliminated and replaced with machines.

An automated office, undoubtedly, offers new roles and responsibilities to office professionals, such new roles presuppose that additional training and qualifications are required from all office professionals and office workers at large.

Imo State is characteristically, a civil service driven economy. As such, most activities in the agricultural and service sectors derive their living from the operations of those manning the activities of the ministries and parastatals in Imo state. This therefore presupposes that automation in the office will in no small measure facilitate the operations of other subsidiary sectors and subsectors. This can be achieved in the way of training more workers in the ministry and parastatals towards meeting the challenges of operating an environment driven, by modern office automation. This study thus, focuses on the influence of prejudice on the application of modem office automation with the view to highlighting the technical challenges facing such process as well as the prospects therein.

Statement of Problem
Development is often driven by innovation and any organization or individual that does not link up with innovation definitely will remain stagnant. In every modern office aiming to measure up with the demand of the 21st century, innovation must be its watch word. Modern day offices have witnessed a lot of innovation through the introduction of new and modern technologies that should aid in the execution of office duties. Such technologies aim at saving time, creating speed, bringing about job satisfaction, increases effectiveness and efficiency, calls for more skilled technical labourers. Unfortunately, most people in the civil service who were there before the introduction of office automations are not ready to line up with the new innovations. On the contrary, they resort to prejudice on those who have acquired the required skills and adopted the use of modern day office automation in the work place. The purported prejudice on the other hand results in rancor, malice and

hatred among the workers. This study is therefore set out to investigate the influence of such prejudice in application of modern office automation among Imo State civil servants.

Purpose of Study
This study was carried out to investigate the influence of prejudice in the application of modern office automation among civil servants. Specifically, the study ascertained.
1. The prejudice associated with application of modern office automation among civil servants in Imo State.
2. The extent prejudice has influenced the application of modern office automation among Imo State civil servants.
3. The difference between the response mean of gender civil servants on the influence of prejudice on the application of modem office automation among Imo State civil servants.

Research Questions
In carrying out this study, the following research questions were raised to guide the researcher:
1. What are the prejudices associated with the application of modem office automation among civil servants in Imo State?
2. To what extent has prejudices influenced the application of office automation in civil service in Imo State?
3. What is the difference between the mean responses of gender civil servants on the influence of prejudices on the application of modern office automation in Imo State civil service?

Hypothesis
The following null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance:
Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of gender civil servants on the influence of prejudice in the application of modem office automation among Imo State.

Method
The descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out the study as it required the opinion of civil servants towards the influence of prejudice in the application of modern office automation. The population of the study consists of all the civil servants in Imo State. The stratified simple random sampling technique was use to select a sample of two hundred and fifty (250) civil servants which included one hundred (100) males and one- hundred and fifty(150) females. The instrument for data collection was a researcher made 4-points scale 14 items questionnaire titled "Influence of Prejudice on Application of Modern Office Automation (IPAMOA)". The instrument was divided into two parts, part A dealt with respondents demographic variables, while part B dealt with items related to the objectives of the study. The responses on the instrument ranged from Strongly Agree(SA)=4point, Agree(A)=3points, Strongly Disagree(SD)=2points and Disagree(D)=l point. The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by 2 experts in measurement and evaluation and an expert in Business Education from Alvan Ikoku Federal College of

Education Owerri. They were required to determine the appropriateness of the language used and the ability of the instrument to satisfy the objectives of the study. Their inputs guided the reconstruction of the instrument where necessary. To determine the reliability of the instrument, 25 copies were handed to civil servants with the same characteristics as the sample but were not members of the sample for the study. Their responses gave a reliability coefficient of 0.81 determined using Cronbach's alpha method. The instrument was administered to the respondents on face-to-face basis by the researcher after explaining the purpose of the instrument and assured them of the confidentiality of the information tendered on the instrument. The respondents were allowed to take home the instrument and return it the next day however, those that were completed were collected on the spot. The researcher recorded 100 percent recovery of the instrument of 2.50 was accepted administered as the exercise lasted for four days. The data generated were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, any item response mean within or above the criterion mean was accepted as a prejudice while any below was rejected. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistical tool.

Results
Research Question 1: What are the prejudice associated with the application of modern office automation among civil servants in Imo State?
Table 1: Summary of civil servant responses on prejudices of modern office automation

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Reduction in self-esteem	3.12	0.82	Accept
2	Fear of redundancy	3.54	0.65	"
3	Bias in adapting to new changes	3.01	0.91	"
4	Getting emotional with new changes	2.85	1.05	"
5	Fear of stereotype	2.75	1.10	"
6	Discrimination	3.35	0.66	"
7	Being skeptical about automation	2.61	1.21	"
Grand Mean = 3.03				

Table 1 shows that all the items were accepted as the prejudices associated with the application of modern office automation among civil servants as, they had response mean greater than the criterion mean(2.50). Also the standard deviation shows the spread of the responses. The grand mean of 3.03 also indicates acceptance of the prejudices.
Research Question 2: To what extent has prejudices influenced the application of modern office automation in civil service in Imo State?

Table 2: Summary of responses on prejudice influence on application of modem office automation

		Males			Females		
S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Rmrk	Mean	SD	Rmrk

1	Negative self-esteem among civil servant inhibits application of modern automation	3.02	0.85	Accept	2.94	1.10	accept
2	Application of modern automation is affected by fear of being redundant among civil servants	3.37	0.75	"	3.23	0.66	"
3	Most civil servants are biased in adapting to new changes in the office such as modern automation	2.90	1.02	"	3.22	0.71	"
4	Civil servants get emotional with new changes in the office when they are not compliant with the new situation.	3.21	0.68	"	3.35	0.81	"
5	The fear of stereotype among civil servants inhibits application of modern automation in the office.	2.72	1.15	"	3.00	1.00	"
6	The discrimination associated with non-compliance with modern automation among civil servants affects its application in the office.	3.14	0.83	"	2.82	1.05	"
7	Most civil servants are skeptical about modern automation in the office and this retards its application.	2.86	1.30	"	3.06	0.94	"
	Grand Mean	**3.03**	**0.94**		**3.09**	**0.90**	

Table 2 shows that all the items were accepted for both male and female civil servants as they had mean responses greater than the criterion mean of2.50 with the standard deviation indicating how the responses vary. This implies that the prejudices as earlier identified have influence on the application of modem automation in civil service in Imo state. The grand mean of 3.03 and 3.09 for male and female civil servants implies that the prejudices influence the application of modern office automation in civil service to a very high extent.

Research Question 3: What is the difference between the mean responses of male and female civil servants on the influence of prejudices on the application of modern office automation in Imo State civil service?

Table 3: Summary of male and female civil servant responses on the influence of prejudices on the application of modern office automation

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Difference in mean
Male	100	3.03	0.94	0.06
Female	150	3.09	0.90	

Table 3 shows that male civil servants had response mean of 3.03 with standard deviation of 0.94 while their female counterparts had response mean of 3.09 with standard deviation of 0.09. These gave a difference in mean response of 0.06 in favour of the female civil servants.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female civil servants on the influence of prejudice in the application of n modern office automation in Imo State.

Table 4: Summary oft-test analysis

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-0.05	Decision
Males	100	3.03	0.94	248			
Females	150	3.09	0.90		0.500	1.96	NS

Table 4 shows that, t calculated value of 0.5 00 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom 248. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is upheld.

Summary of Findings
The findings of this study are as indicate bellow;
1. The study revealed that, Reduction in self-esteem, fear of redundancy, bias in adapting to new changes, getting emotional with new changes, Fear of stereotype, discrimination and being skeptical about automation are the prejudices associated with the application of modern office automation among civil servants Imo State.
2. The study also revealed that prejudices influenced the application of modern office automation in civil service to a very high extent.
3. Finally, the study indicated a slight difference in the mean responses of male and female civil servants on the influence of prejudice on the application of modern office automation. However, further statistical analysis indicated no significant difference between male and female civil servants.

Discussion of findings
The present study was carried out to investigate the influence of prejudice on the application of modern office automation among civil servants in Imo State. The result of the study indicated that the prejudices associated with civil servants with respect to modern office automation includes, Reduction in self-esteem, fear of redundancy, bias in adapting to new changes, getting emotional with new changes, fear of stereotype, discrimination and being skeptical about automation. This was verified through civil servants mean responses which were above the instrument criterion mean. This result is in line with Weedmark (2019) who indicated that any change in a daily routine can increase stress and increase apprehension, and this is often magnified when new technologies are involved.

The study also revealed that, civil servants prejudice influenced the application of modern office automation in civil service to a very high extent. This was verified through their mean responses which were all above the instrument criterion mean. Also, the grand mean was high above the criterion mean which was a confirmation of the high extent prejudice influence the application of modern office automation. This result is in agreement with the opinion of Sigal (2007) which pointed out that an emotional revolution has occurred in the past 30 years as both academics and managers discovered that employees' emotions play an integral role in what goes on in organizations. She also outlines that these emotions can be contagious and one person's negative attitude towards their job or some aspect of it can spread throughout the team and affect the team's performance as a whole.

Finally, the study revealed that, male and female civil servants had a slight difference in their mean responses on the influence of prejudice on the application of modern office automation. The difference was in favour of the female civil servants however, further statistical analysis indicated no significant difference between both groups. This implies that both male and female civil servants in Imo State are of the same view on the influence

of prejudice on the application of modem office automation. This result is in disagreement with the report of UK essay (2019) on gender relationship with technology which stated that Both male and female respondents were equally addicted to technology and Female respondents tended to be more anxious and avoidant as compared to male respondents.

Conclusion
The findings of the study revealed the prejudices which are associated with civil servants in Imo State to include, Reduction in self-esteem, fear of redundancy, Bias in adapting to new changes, Getting emotional with new changes, Fear of stereotype, Discrimination and Being skeptical about automation. These prejudices among civil servants influenced the application of modern office automation to a very high extent in Imo State.

Recommendations,
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;
1. Government should provide necessary office automations to allow efficiency and effectiveness of their workers.
2. Management of organizations should encourage training and retraining of civil servants to reduce prejudice and enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the working environment.
3. Those involved in recruiting of staff in any organization should make computer literacy a basic requirement so as to make sure that before any office worker is employed, he/she should be well trained and ready to fit into the organization.
4. Induction programme carried out by experts should be a must to all organization using one office automation or the other.

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