



POST COVID-19 AND PERFORMANCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS OF THE MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract: The study was to evaluate post COVID-19 and performance of human resource managers of the manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to: examine the relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria; evaluate the relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria; and investigate the relationship between COVID-19 and human resource manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. The study used the survey approach. The primary sources were personal interview and the administration of questionnaire. The population of the study was two thousand, eight hundred and eighty-four (2884) staff. A stratified sampling method was adopted. The adequate sample size of 340 was determined using Freund and William's statistic formula. 318 staff returned the questionnaire and accurately filled. That gave 94 percent response rate. Pearson correlation coefficient, (r) was used to test the hypotheses, determine the nature, and strength of the research variables. The findings indicated that there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria, $r(95, n = 318) = .588, p > 0.05$, there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria, $r(95, n = 318) = .897, p > 0.05$ and there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and human resource managers keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria, $r(95, n = 318) = .878, p > 0.05$. The study concluded that COVID-19 had significant relationship with leadership, decision making and human managers keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. The study recommended that manufacturing firms need to implement the use of telecommunication/internet connectivity in handling jobs, to empower their employees to work remotely from home or elsewhere when it is not convenient to operate from the office (please, you may wish to consider the highlighted items).

Keywords: Post COVID-19, Performance, Human Resource Managers

I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak caught the world by amazement and attracted the attention of academics, entrepreneurs, politicians, medical professionals and experts from a range of scientific disciplines around the

world. The role of human resource managers in the functioning of any organisation employing people is extremely important. The managers of human resources make important contributions to the culture, productivity and effective staffing of the organization (Heathfield, 2019). The primary objective of human resource managers

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is to optimize their organisation's performance by maximizing its employees' effectiveness. The human resource managers are responsible for leading the team members in the appropriate direction and helping them execute strategic plan that may have an impact on the entire organisation (Kanhai, 2017). Human resource managers are at the forefront of employers' reaction to the COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 crisis is forcing almost every business to develop, adapt or improve policies and procedures for remote **work immediately**. While human resource managers work to keep employees safe and updated, they proceed to think about what changes will be more lasting and how employees and organisational leadership will be driven by those changes (McElgunn, 2020).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2020) outlines that quantitatively and qualitatively, COVID-19 will have negative effects in the world of work. Recently, organisations around the world have changed their approaches of managing employees. COVID-19 pandemic is not a significant reflection of the values. The likelihood of contracting the virus, being tested, and the available treatments are greatly affected by people's economic status, role and race. Nearly all the front-line staff required to keep the economy running through the recession are among the lowest paying areas of society. Businesses did not wait to see what support provisions would be made by government. Twenty million Americans were fired and one-third of all British residents under 25 years old lost their jobs. Companies can now be evaluated by how they serve their people's interests, their customers, their shareholders and the environments they operate within (Collington, 2020). Based on this background, the present study is prompt to evaluate post COVID-19 and performance of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The human resource managers' core role is to ensure that the organisation's purpose, culture and values fully connect stakeholders; a corporate culture that distributes value to its customers, employees and investors and provides an economic advantage to the world, an enterprise that interacts with the cultures in which it works and contributes to the inclusion of diversity; and belonging and to social mobility through its hiring and career development programmes and that the voice of the employee is listened to and advocated for in each decision made by the organisation.

Remote jobs, jobs hour changes, cuts in training and growth programmes, restriction on **recruitment** pose a great challenge to the performance of human resource managers; and means to promote activities that help maintain performance or facilitate teamwork and communication in remote work times are still unanswered. The challenges and decline on human resource managers' performance in post COVID-19 pandemic are means of handling remote works as a permanent feature, nurturing culture in dispersed workplaces, critical talent acquisition and retention, engaging a remote workforce, accommodation and compliance, additional resource regarding COVID-19, and how to keep themselves and the team safe and managing remote employees.

Post COVID-19 has really dealt with the performance of human resource managers of manufacturing firms and those hurdles militating against their performance needed to be addressed, which failure to handle could affect the leadership style employed, decisions made, and relationship between **employees** and managers.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to evaluate post COVID-19 and performance of human resource managers of the manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:



- i. Examine the relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. Evaluate the relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.
- iii. Investigate the relationship between COVID-19 and human resource manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between COVID-19 and human resource manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria?

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

The following alternate hypotheses guided the study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study on post COVID-19 and performance of human resource managers of manufacturing firms will be of great benefit to organisations as a result of improvement in the performance of human resource managers in integrating employees with the organisational culture and objectives. Also, managers of human resources will benefit as their performance will increase. In addition, the study will be of immense benefit to prospective researchers, working insimilar and other related fields. areas to commend and fill up.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Post COVID-19

The sensational virus, Covid-19, has led to unprecedented disruptions affecting all markets and economies worldwide. Nigeria is experiencing a bigger challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic than most countries in Africa due to her position as Africa's largest economy. While ongoing efforts are being made to curb the spread of the virus, as we still hope and await the production of a vaccine, the economic uncertainties and disruptions, present a real threat. With this dangerous health emergency developing in the world, the economic impact of COVID-19 was projected to be profound for Nigeria, especially with the drop in crude oil prices (which greatly affected government revenues) and the general downturn in major sectors in the Nigerian economy (Onoja,2020). Every manufacturing firm that wants to survive the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to source their raw materials locally, renegotiate loans and stay liquid and use tech-driven investment platforms. This is particularly essential as the foreign exchange will remain volatile for a long while after the pandemic, affecting businesses that depend on imported materials for their productions (Okwumbu, 2020).



2.1.2 Performance

Performance is measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed, in executing a given task. In a collective bargaining agreement, performance is deemed to be the fulfillment of an obligation, in a way that releases the performer from all contractual liabilities. Performance is achieved through items such as piloting, evaluation, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality (Omar and Zineb,2019). The determinants for performance are profitability performance, growth performance, market value performance, customers' satisfaction, employees' satisfaction, environmental performance, environmental audit performance, corporate governance performance and social performance (Murugesan, Gayathri, Vasanth and Lingaraja, 2016).

2.1.3 Human Resource Manager and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted organisations and caused human resource managers to think differently about their role as they adjust to social distancing practices and a new work environment they might never have imagined (Lewis,2020).HR managers can innovate with work schedules and assignments by allowing flexible scheduling parameters and being creative in how the work gets done. In post COVID-19, human resource managers are expected to spread out the density of employees throughout a workday, have teams work through teleconferencing and/or internet meetings, avoid or postpone group face-to-face celebrations, allow or expand flex-time opportunities for the majority of position, postpone all work-related travel and tell employees to stay home/self-isolate if they are ill, coming down with something or have had a known exposure to COVID-19(Wanda,2020).

2.1.4 Human Resource Manager Leadership on COVID-19

The current crisis involving the COVID-19 pandemic is different from anything that has confronted organisations in over a century, one that looks to be a protracted and

potentially existential challenge. Effective leadership is absolutely necessary for an organisation and its people in a prolonged crisis with such serious consequences, and requires physical, psychological and emotional force. Effective leadership is focused on the adaptive capacity of a manager, described as "an almost mystical ability to overcome adversity, with all its associated stresses, and emerge stronger than before". In this pandemic crisis, resilient leaders must react and adjust to dynamic organisational circumstances in an environment that changes day by day and hour by hour (Andre, Kimberly and Shawn,2020).

2.1.5 Decision Making of Human Resource Manager on COVID-19

Decision-making regarding human resource managers involves finding the most effective ways to invest in people. It involves determining where to use money and resources to boost the performance of businesses and employees (Wicks,2020). Human resource managers are expected during COVID-19 pandemic to recognize susceptibility to decision fatigue, that is the ability to make good choices deteriorates in quality after an extended period of critical decision-making. Under prolonged stress and fatigue, functions such as judgment, strategic thinking and even rationality can deteriorate and cloud complex decisions. It is not shocking that many leaders still fail to understand (or accept) the real effect and expense of exhaustion during a crisis. Ironically, the common belief that crisis leadership requires tireless commitment and unceasing efforts as decision-makers can directly contribute to reduced effectiveness (Andre, Kimberly and Shawn,2020).

2.1.6 Keeping Employee Relations by Human Resource Manager on COVID-19

The key problem that human resource managers have is to explain to their employees the position of the company on the COVID-19 situation. Several inconsistent news sources spread false or unverified information about the



online pandemic which increases employees' sense of panic and fear. Given that offices across the world now work remotely, the organisation is unable to connect face-to-face with its employees, which may raise the sense of isolation from the top management, and therefore, from what the organisation really considers. Another area of importance is that of maintaining the morale of employees. Without physical proximity it is no longer possible to hold activities such as team events or open discussions with senior executives. This somewhat erodes the personal touch, making it harder for employers to connect with their teams and help boost their spirits. There is the risk that employees feel lonely because they work alone away from the rest of the team in their homes (Abhishek,2020).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Dynamic Capabilities (DC) Theory

Dynamic Capabilities (DC) Theory arose as both an alternative to and a reaction to the resource-based view (RBV)'s inability to understand resource creation and reconstruction and capacity to tackle rapidly evolving environments. Dynamic capability is the ability of a firm to adapt, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to meet rapidly evolving environments. The DC theory goes beyond the idea that the sustainable competitive advantage is based on the acquisition of valuable, rare, inimitable and non-replaceable (VRIN) resources by a firm. The basic premise of the framework for dynamic capabilities is that core competencies can be used to adjust short-term competitive positions which can be used to create competitive advantage in the longer term. It is responsible for enabling organisations to integrate, marshal, and reconfigure their resources and capabilities to adapt to rapidly changing environments. Thus, DCs are processes that enable an organisation to reconfigure its strategy and resources in a rapidly changing environment to achieve sustainable competitive advantages and superior performance (Abbas and Abdel, 2018).

2.3 Empirical Review

Menazel, Ahmar, Ali and Madher (2015) conducted a research on Leadership management and human resource perspectives, empirical evidence from Jordanian banks. The study investigated the relationship between human resource management and leadership, from the point of view of managers of the human resource departments, financial managers, and credit facilities managers in Jordanian Banks. The study used an inferential descriptive analysis. The study found that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between leadership and planning and decision-making. There was no statistically significant relationship between leadership and creativity, communication, the ability to solve problems, and feedback. The study recommended the use of high-efficiency programmes by managers in particular, meant to increase the efficiency of managers and employees in general, planning and decision-making.

Ololo (2017) conducted a research on Leadership and Human resource development. The study objective was to determine the relationship between leadership style and human resource development as well as the attainment of organisational goals. The methodology implied in the study was systematic random sampling technique. Three branches of CBN were purposely selected: Abuja, Lagos and Enugu. 180 questionnaires were distributed and 150 were filled and returned. The study found that there are significant relationships between leadership styles and human resource development as well as staff performances and attainment of organisational goals. The study concluded that coordinated democratic leadership style in this organisation has affected positively towards the development of its human resources. The study recommended that for organisations to thrive in this globalized and competitive society there is need to develop a leadership style that is strongly oriented to the subordinates, relying on training and retraining of human



resources for effective and efficient performance towards the achievement of stated goals.

Zirra, Ogbu and Ojo (2017) conducted a study on the Impact of Recruitment and Selection Strategy on Employees' Performance: A Study of Three Selected Manufacturing Companies in Nigeria. The study examined the recruitment and selection strategy on the employee performance in the real sector, using descriptive survey research design. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study revealed that the use of recruitment agency and internal employee recommendation in the recruitment and selection process enables organisations to recruit committed and productive employees while the recruitment through the influence of host community leads to organisational inefficiency. The study concludes that organisation's strength or weakness comes from the caliber of its employees and a good recruitment strategy enables organisations to get suitable and qualified employees that can enhance performance. The study therefore, recommends that Organisations can make use of employment agencies in the act of recruitment and selection but should be open to disclose the job description and responsibility to them.

Salima (2020) conducted a research on COVID-19 and employees' mental health: stressors, moderators and agenda for organisational actions in Dubai. The study examined the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on employees' mental health, specifically psychological distress and depression. The study was a literature review. The search for articles was made in Google scholar, Web of Science and Semantic scholar. The study used a combination of terms related to the coronavirus or COVID-19, workplace and mental health. Due to the paucity of studies on the COVID-19 impact on employees' mental health, the study had to draw on studies on recent epidemics. The study found a negative impact of COVID-19 on individual's mental health. Stressors include perception of safety, threat and risk of contagion,

infobesity versus the unknown, quarantine and confinement, stigma and social exclusion as well as financial loss and job insecurity. The study concluded that the coronavirus is new, and is in a rapid progress.

3.0 Methodology

The study was based on the Post COVID-19 and Performance of human resource managers of the chemicals and pharmaceuticals manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria and members of Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN). South East states are one of the six geopolitical zones in the country. The target population of the study consisted of management and senior staff of the selected chemicals and pharmaceuticals manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. Enugu: A.C. Drugs; Juhel Pharmaceutical Company; Ceenek Pharmaceuticals Products. Imo: Afrik Pharmaceuticals Plc. Anambra: Chazmax Pharmaceuticals Industries; Saclux Industries Nigeria Limited; Orient Oil and Gas, Aguleri; Markson Chemicals Industry Limited.; Drugfield Pharmaceuticals Limited and Abia: Korama Clover Industries Limited. The study used the survey approach. The primary sources were personal interview and the administration of questionnaire. The population of the study was two thousand, eight hundred and eighty-four (2884) staff. A stratified sampling method was adopted. The adequate sample size of 340 was determined using Freund and William's statistic formula. 318 staff returned the questionnaire and accurately filled. That gave 94 percent response rate. The validity of the instrument was tested using content analysis and the result was good. The reliability was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). It gave a reliability co-efficient of 0.81 which was also good. Data was presented and analyzed by mean score (3.0 and above agreed while below 3.0 disagreed) and standard deviation using Sprint Likert Scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient (r) statistics tool.



4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 The relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria

Table 4.1.1: Responses to Research Question One on the relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria

		5	4	3	2	1	Σ FX	-	SD	Decision
		SA	A	N	DA	SD		X		
1	Employees are laid off because of COVID-19.	450	588	102	52	21	1213	3.81	1.132	Agree
		90	147	34	26	21	318			
		28.3	46.2	10.7	8.2	6.6	100%			
2	There is need to review costs to the stretch the budget of the organization	645	164	123	36	89	1057	3.32	1.683	Agree
		129	41	41	18	89	318			
		40.6	12.9	12.9	5.7	28.0	100%			
3	Workers' salaries/wages are slashed to maintain the organization	540	140	123	34	117	954	3.00	1.733	Agree
		108	35	41	17	117	318			
		34.0	11.0	12.9	5.3	36.8	100%			
4	There are issues of using technology to support from-home-like network failure, power supply etc.	510	216	72	74	101	973	3.06	1.687	Agree
		102	54	24	37	101	318			
		32.1	17.0	7.5	11.6	31.8	100%			
5	Leadership reassurance of business sustainability is a challenge	360	440	123	46	72	1041	3.27	1.470	Agree
		72	110	41	23	72	318			
		22.6	34.6	12.9	7.2	22.6	100%			
Total grand mean and standard deviation								3.292	1.541	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 4.1.1 indicates that 237 respondents out of 318 representing 74.5 percent agreed that employees are laid off because of COVID-19 with mean score of 3.81 and standard deviation of 1.132. There is need to review costs to the stretch the budget of the organisation with 170 respondents representing 53.5 percent agreed with mean score of 3.32 and standard deviation of 1.683. Workers' salaries/wages are slashed to maintain the organisation

with 143 respondents representing 45 percent agreed with mean score of 3.00 and standard deviation of 1.733. There are issues of using technology to support from home, like network failure, power supply, etc. with 156 respondents representing 49.1 percent agreed with mean score of 3.06 and standard deviation 1.687. Leadership reassurance of business sustainability is a challenge with 182



respondents representing 57.2 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.27 and standard deviation of 1.470.

4.2: The relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria

Table 4.2.1: Responses to Research Question Two on the relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria

		5	4	3	2	1	$\sum FX$	-	SD	Decision
		SA	A	N	DA	SD		X		
6	The manufacturing firm revamped their leave policies in response to the outbreak.	340	416	108	90	65	1019	3.20	1.451	Agree
		68	104	36	45	65	318			
		21.4	32.7	11.3	14.2	20.4	100%			
7	There is offer of paid sick leave on a permanent basis in the company	390	324	144	92	65	1015	3.19	1.472	Agree
		78	81	48	46	65	318			
		24.5	25.5	15.1	14.5	20.4	100%			
8	Employees are supported by established norms and implementing a defined remote work policy that sets clear expectations.	445	280	144	92	65	1026	3.23	1.503	Agree
		89	70	48	46	65	318			
		28.0	22.0	15.1	14.5	20.4	100%			
9	The employees have sure technology they need to perform tasks expected of them.	30	612	144	90	66	942	3.96	1.238	Agree
		6	153	48	45	66	318			
		1.9	48.1	15.1	14.2	20.8	100%			
10	The employees were given some breath room to adjust to their new lifestyles	225	376	141	90	87	919	2.89	1.446	Agree
		45	94	47	45	87	318			
		14.2	29.6	14.8	14.2	27.4	100%			
Total grand mean and standard deviation								3.294	1.422	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 4.2.1 shows that 172 respondents out of 318 representing 54.1 percent agreed that the manufacturing firm revamped their leave policies in response to the outbreak with mean score of 3.20 and standard deviation of 1.451. There is offer of paid sick leave on a permanent

basis in the company with 159 respondents representing 50 percent agreed with mean score of 3.19 and standard deviation of 1.472. Employees are supported by established norms and implementing a defined remote work policy that sets clear expectations with 159



respondents representing 50 percent agreed with mean score of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.503. The employees have sure technology they need to perform tasks expected of them with 159 respondents representing 50 percent agreed with mean score of 3.96 and standard

deviation of 1.238. The employees were given some breath room to adjust to their new lifestyles with 139 respondents representing 43.8 percent agreed with a mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation of 1.446.

4.3 The relationship between COVID-19 and human resource manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.3.1: Responses to Research Question Three on the relationship between COVID-19 and human resource manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

		5 SA	4 A	3 N	2 DA	1 SD	ΣFX	- X	SD	Decision
11	Employees create their own schedules for what works best for them.	665 133 41.8	140 35 11.0	144 48 15.1	92 46 14.5	56 56 17.6	1097 318 100%	3.45	1.561	Agree
12	Employees determine what works best for them and families	80 16 5.0	608 152 47.8	144 48 15.1	92 46 14.5	56 56 17.6	980 318 100%	3.08	1.235	Agree
13	There is coordinator to manage office policy surrounding COVID-19	255 51 16.0	528 132 41.5	144 48 15.1	90 45 14.2	42 42 13.2	1064 318 100%	3.33	1.274	Agree
14	Employees are educated about transmission risks of COVID-19	805 161 50.6	88 22 6.9	147 49 15.4	90 45 14.2	41 41 12.9	1171 318 100%	3.68	1.514	Agree
15	A healthy work environment is maintained in my company	745 149 46.9	160 40 12.9	144 48 15.1	50 25 7.9	56 56 17.6	1155 318 100%	3.63	1.546	Agree
Total grand mean and standard deviation								3.434	1.426	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 4.3.1 indicates that 168 respondents out of 318 representing 52.8 percent agreed that employees create their own schedules for what works best for them with

mean score of 3.45 and standard deviation of 1.561. Employees determine what works best for them and families with 168 respondents representing 52.8 percent





concluded that there is **significant** relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of

manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.588$, $p<.05$).

4.4.2 Test of Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.4.2: Pearson Correlation on there is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

Pearson	COVID-19		COVID-19	
	Decision making	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 318	Decision making .897(**) 000 318 1
		Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2 tailed) N	.897(**) 000 318	318

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4.4.2 is the Pearson correlation matrix on COVID-19 has positive relationship with decision making showing the correlation coefficients, significant values and the number of cases. The correlation coefficient shows 0.897. This value indicates that correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed) and implies that there is significance relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria ($r=.897$). The computed correlations coefficient is greater than the table value of $r = .195$ with 879 degree of freedom at alpha level for a two-tailed test ($r=.897$, $p<.05$).

Decision Rule

The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the computed r is less than the tabulated r otherwise, reject the null hypothesis.

Decision

The computed $r = 0.897$ is greater than the table value of .195, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that there is significance relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.897$, $p<.05$).



4.4.3 Test of Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.4.3.1: Pearson Correlation on there is no significant relationship between COVID-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria.

Pearson	COVID-19		COVID-19	
	Keeping employee relations	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 318	Keeping employee relations .878(**) 000 318 1
		Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2 tailed) N	.878(**) 000 318	318

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4.4.3 is the Pearson correlation matrix on COVID-19 has positive relationship with keeping employee relations showing the correlation coefficients, significant values and the number of cases. The correlation coefficient shows 0.878. This value indicates that correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed) and implies that there is significance relationship between covid-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria ($r=.878$). The computed correlations coefficient is greater than the table value of $r = .195$ with 879 degree of freedom at alpha level for a two-tailed test ($r=.878$, $p<.05$).

Decision Rule

The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the computed r is less than the tabulated r otherwise, reject the null hypothesis.

Decision

The computed $r = 0.878$ is greater than the table value of .195, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.878$, $p<.05$).

Discussion of Findings

In test of hypothesis one, the computed $r = .588$ is greater than the table value of .195, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and leadership of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.588$, $p<.05$). In support of the result of hypothesis one, Ololo (2017) found that there are significant relationships between leadership styles and human resource



development as well as staff performances and attainment of organisational goals.

Hypothesis two indicated that the computed $r = 0.897$ is greater than the table value of .195, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and decision making of human resource managers of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.897$, $p<.05$). In support of the result above, Menazel, Ahmar, Ali and Madher (2015) found that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between leadership and planning and decision-making.

Furthermore, in the result of hypothesis three, the computed $r = 0.878$ is greater than the table value of .195, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that there is significant relationship between COVID-19 and human manager keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of ($r=.878$, $p<.05$). In support of the above result, Zirra, Ogbu and Ojo (2017) revealed that organisation's strength or weakness comes from the caliber of its employees and a good recruitment strategy enables organisations to get suitable and qualified employees that can enhance performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that COVID-19 had significant relationships with leadership, decision making and human managers keeping employee relations of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. Human resource managers are at the forefront of employers' reaction to the COVID-19 crisis. The role of human resource managers in the functioning of any organisation employing people is extremely important. The managers of human resources make important contributions to the culture, productivity and effective staffing of the organisations. COVID-19 pandemic is not a significant reflection of the values.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered based on the findings of the study:

Manufacturing firms need to implement the use of telecommunication/internet connectivity to assist their employees in handling jobs and assignments remotely.

Organisations should source their raw materials locally in order to avoid importing from infected **countries** and products.

Human resource managers should always have their **face-masks** on when relating with the employees.

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