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Artificial Intelligence Adoption and Employee Performance in Nigerian Universities: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption is increasingly reshaping higher education administration, academic work, human resource management and employee performance. In Nigerian universities, the growing relevance of AI is visible in teaching support, research assistance, records management, recruitment support, performance monitoring, data analytics, workflow automation and staff development. However, the relationship among AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable human resource management remains insufficiently theorised within the Nigerian university context. This paper examines AI adoption as a strategic enabler of employee performance and sustainable HRM in Nigerian universities. This study employs a conceptual and framework development method based on the Technology Acceptance Model, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory, socio-technical systems theory and sustainable HRM theory. The paper contends that artificial intelligence can boost employee performance when adoption is promoted by perceived utility, ease of use, conducive conditions, AI literacy, ethical governance and human-centric implementation. The paper further claims that sustainable HRM is not just achieved through digital automation, but also through the proper integration of AI in staff development, employee well-being, workload management, inclusion, green administration and long-term employability. This study presents an AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework to describe the impact of AI adoption on task performance, adaptive performance, contextual performance and innovative behaviour through sustainable HRM practices. The report indicates that Nigerian universities require a balanced approach to AI governance that balances digital transformation with employee dignity, capability development, transparency, and institutional sustainability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence Adoption; Employee Performance; Sustainable Human Resource Management; Nigerian Universities; Digital Transformation; Higher Education.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has become one of the most influential technologies shaping the future of work, education and organisational management. Its applications now extend beyond science and engineering into administration, communication, human resource management, research support, teaching, student services and decision-making. In higher education institutions, AI is increasingly used for learning analytics, academic advising, plagiarism screening, automated feedback, administrative workflow support, research assistance, records management and performance-related analytics (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

The growing presence of AI in universities is not only a technological issue; it is also a human resource issue. Universities depend on academic staff, administrative staff, technical staff and professional support personnel whose

performance determines institutional quality, research output, teaching effectiveness, student support and organisational reputation. The introduction of AI in such a workplace may change job procedures, skill needs, workload patterns, performance expectations and employee interactions (Tambe et al., 2019; Vrontis et al., 2022). The growing needs for digital transformation, research productivity, quality assurance, efficient administration and global competitiveness amplify the relevance of AI deployment in Nigerian universities. Universities are under pressure to improve service delivery under the restrictions of limited funds, inadequate infrastructure, excessive workloads, bureaucratic processes and uneven digital competency. AI solutions may increase staff productivity by providing better access to information, decreasing repetitive work, enabling data-driven decision-making, and enhancing administrative efficiency (Jarrahi, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). But merely adopting AI does not necessarily result in better employee performance. If employees do not consider technology as beneficial, easy to use, or institutionally supported, then technology may remain underutilised. Technology adoption is driven by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions according to the Technology Acceptance Model and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). These variables are particularly pertinent in universities, where technological acceptance can be influenced by staff autonomy, academic freedom, age differences, disciplinary cultures and workload demands.

The performance of employees in universities is complex. It comprises task performance (e.g. teaching, research, administration and technical duties); contextual performance (e.g. collaboration, mentoring and institutional citizenship); adaptive performance (e.g. learning new technologies, and responding to change); and innovative performance (e.g. improving processes, developing new knowledge, and supporting institutional transformation) (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Koopmans et al., 2014). Artificial intelligence is able to support these characteristics, but can also raise issues about surveillance, algorithmic bias, deskilling, employment insecurity, privacy and ethical misuse (Jobin et al., 2019; Tambe et al., 2019). Sustainable human resource management offers a useful lens for addressing these tensions. Sustainable HRM emphasises long-term human capability, employee well-being, fairness, inclusion, employability, ethical work systems and the alignment of people management with institutional sustainability (Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014). In this sense, AI adoption should not be reduced to automation and efficiency. It should be integrated into HRM in ways that develop employees, protect dignity, improve performance and support the long-term sustainability of university work. This paper therefore examines Artificial Intelligence adoption, employee performance and sustainable human resource management in Nigerian universities. It develops a conceptual framework explaining how AI adoption can improve employee performance when mediated by sustainable HRM practices and moderated by ethical governance, AI literacy and institutional support. The paper contributes to higher education management, HRM and digital transformation literature by connecting AI adoption to employee performance through a sustainability-oriented HRM perspective.

The Nigerian university system is progressively functioning in an environment that requires digital competency, administrative efficiency, research visibility, quality assurance and increased staff productivity. But many colleges still struggle with issues related to manual processes, fragmented records, delayed administrative workflows, restricted staff development, inadequate digital infrastructure and uneven adoption of emerging technology. These constraints impede employee performance and decrease institutional responsiveness (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). The proliferation of AI has the potential to provide opportunities for improved decision-making, workflow efficiency, research assistance, instructional support and HR analytics. The introduction of AI at universities, however, is associated with significant people challenges. Employees may worry about job relocation, greater surveillance, unfair performance monitoring, loss of autonomy or degradation of professional judgement. Studies on AI in HRM reveal that artificial intelligence can increase efficiency and quality of decisions, but it can also replicate bias, decrease transparency and weaken trust when poorly managed (Jobin et al., 2019; Tambe et al., 2019).

Another concern is that the deployment of AI is generally framed as a technology endeavour, and not as a sustainable HRM challenge. If properly trained, guided ethically, implemented with the participation of people and protections for employee well-being, the introduction of AI could boost performance rather than increase stress. For sustainable HRM, technological innovation should enhance long-term employability, inclusivity, justice, work-life quality and human capabilities development (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014).

The gap our paper addresses is therefore conceptual and contextual. The literature on technology adoption, employee performance, AI in HRM and sustainable HRM is available, but there is little research on the integrated relationship between AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable HRM in Nigerian universities. What is needed is a paradigm for how standard artificial intelligence can be ethically embraced to improve employee performance while protecting human dignity, staff development and institutional resilience.

This paper aims to examine Artificial Intelligence adoption, employee performance and sustainable human resource management in Nigerian universities to develop a conceptual framework for responsible and performance-enhancing AI integration.

1. Clarify the concepts of AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable human resource management in the
2. university context.
3. Examine how AI adoption can influence academic, administrative and support staff performance in Nigerian
4. universities.
5. Analyse the role of sustainable HRM in mediating the relationship between AI adoption and employee performance.
6. Develop a conceptual framework linking AI adoption, sustainable HRM practices and employee performance.
7. Propose research propositions and practical implications for Nigerian universities, policymakers and HR practitioners.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How can AI adoption be understood within the context of Nigerian universities?
2. What dimensions of employee performance are relevant to AI-enabled university work?
3. How can sustainable HRM support responsible AI adoption in universities?
4. What conceptual relationship exists among AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable HRM?
5. What practical and policy measures can improve human-centred AI adoption in Nigerian universities?

Conceptual Clarification



Figure 1: The Proposed AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework. Source: Authors' Construct (2026)

Artificial Intelligence Adoption

Artificial Intelligence adoption refers to the acceptance, integration and use of AI-enabled tools, systems and processes within organisational work. In universities, AI adoption may include the use of generative AI for research and writing

support, learning analytics for student performance monitoring, chatbots for student services, HR analytics for workforce planning, automated records systems, decision-support tools and digital platforms for administrative efficiency (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). AI adoption is not the same as AI availability. A university may purchase or access AI tools, but adoption occurs only when employees understand, accept and use them meaningfully in their work. Technology adoption theories emphasise that employees are more likely to use a technology when they perceive it as useful, easy to use, socially supported and backed by adequate organisational resources (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to behaviours and outputs through which employees contribute to organisational goals. In universities, employee performance includes academic duties such as teaching, research, supervision and community service; administrative duties such as records management, communication and service delivery; and technical duties such as ICT support, laboratory management and infrastructure maintenance. Performance therefore includes both measurable outputs and behavioural contributions (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Koopmans et al., 2014). This paper conceptualises employee performance in four dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance and innovative performance. Task performance refers to core job responsibilities. Contextual performance refers to supportive behaviours such as teamwork, mentoring and citizenship. Adaptive performance refers to the ability to adjust to new technologies and changing work demands. Innovative performance refers to the generation and application of improved methods, processes and services (Koopmans et al., 2014; Pulakos et al., 2000).

Sustainable Human Resource Management

Sustainable HRM refers to the design of human resource systems that support organisational performance while preserving employee well-being, long-term capability, fairness and social responsibility. It extends strategic HRM by asking whether HR practices are economically viable, socially responsible and supportive of long-term human development (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014). In universities, sustainable HRM may include continuous staff development, fair workload allocation, inclusive digital training, employee well-being support, transparent performance management, ethical data use, green administrative practices, participatory governance and long-term employability. Sustainable HRM therefore provides a human-centred lens for evaluating AI adoption because it asks whether AI improves work without damaging employees or weakening institutional values (Ehnert et al., 2016; Renwick et al., 2013).

Nigerian Universities

Nigerian universities consist of federal, state and private institutions with mandates in teaching, research, innovation, community service and national development. They operate within regulatory, financial, infrastructural and labour-related constraints that influence digital transformation. AI adoption in this context must therefore be examined not only as a technological trend but as an institutional change process shaped by infrastructure, policy, staff capacity, governance and ethical culture (UNESCO, 2021; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

AI Adoption in Higher Education

Advances in machine learning, natural language processing, generative AI and learning analytics have contributed to a dramatic increase in AI application in higher education. AI tools are being used more and more for automated feedback, tutoring support, academic writing support, research discovery, administrative decision-making, and student support services. UNESCO (2023) emphasises that generative AI presents prospects for education and research, but also demands explicit governance, openness, oversight by humans, and protection of academic integrity. The impact of AI adoption in universities is on both academic and non-academic work. Artificial intelligence can help academic personnel in literature search, data analysis, course design, student feedback and research efficiency. Artificial intelligence can help administrative workers manage records, schedules, communication, facilitate recruitment and analyse performance. However, institutional rules are required for AI adoption, as unregulated use

might lead to issues of privacy, plagiarism, bias, data security and uneven access (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

AI and Employee Performance

Automation and Augmentation: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Employee Performance. Automation is about replacing or removing repetitive tasks, and augmentation is about supporting human decision-making and enhancing employee skills. This is what Raisch and Krakowski (2021) refer to as an automation-augmentation conundrum in which a balance between efficiency and human judgement and learning is required. This is vital in institutions since both the academic and administrative tasks demand technical efficiency and expert discretion. Reduce time spent on mundane administration to boost performance, enables workers access information more quickly and support data-driven decisions. It can be beneficial to boost adaptive performance by inspiring employees to develop new digital skills and to adjust to the evolving needs of the job. It may boost innovative performance through faster analysis, knowledge discovery, and process improvement. However, these benefits depend on employee competency, trust, ethical governance and enabling execution (Jarrahi, 2018; Tambe et al., 2019).

AI in Human Resource Management

AI is increasingly applied in HRM through recruitment screening, employee analytics, performance management, learning recommendations, workforce planning and engagement monitoring. Tambe et al. (2019) argue that AI can support HR decisions but also presents challenges related to data quality, bias, opacity and employee acceptance. Vrontis et al. (2022) similarly observe that AI and advanced technologies are reshaping HRM, but their effectiveness depends on how organisations manage ethical, technical and human factors. In Nigerian universities, AI-enabled HRM can support staff records, promotion documentation, training needs assessment, attendance systems, workload analysis and performance review. Yet the use of AI in HRM must be carefully governed. If employees believe that AI systems are unfair, intrusive or poorly understood, adoption may reduce trust rather than improve performance. Ethical AI governance is therefore essential for sustainable HRM (Jobin et al., 2019; Kramar, 2014).

Sustainable HRM and University Work

Sustainable HRM emerged as a response to the limitations of short-term performance-oriented HRM. It argues that organisations should manage people in ways that support long-term human capability, social responsibility, employee well-being and organisational continuity (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014). In universities, this is important because staff are not merely resources to be used; they are knowledge workers whose well-being, autonomy and intellectual development are central to institutional quality. Sustainable HRM connects directly with AI adoption because technology can either support or undermine sustainability. AI can support sustainability by reducing paper-based administration, enabling flexible work, improving training access and supporting evidence-based HR decisions. It can undermine sustainability when it increases surveillance, workload pressure, algorithmic unfairness or exclusion of digitally disadvantaged staff (Ehnert et al., 2016; Renwick et al., 2013).

AI Literacy, Training and Employee Adaptability

AI adoption needs AI literacy. Employees need to be trained not just on how to utilise AI technologies but also how to assess their outputs, protect data, identify bias and exercise professional judgement. AI tools can be abused or resisted without training. Adoption is influenced by the perceived ease of use according to the Technology Acceptance Model, while UTAUT takes into account enabling factors and social impact (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). AI literacy ought to be included in Nigerian universities' staff development programs. Academic professionals need training in the ethical use of AI in teaching, research and supervision. Training in AI-assisted workflow, data management and service provision for administrative staff. HR departments need training in AI governance, employee analytics and digital well-being. This form of capacity building is consistent with the sustainable HRM idea of long-term employability (Kramar, 2014; UNESCO, 2023).

The literature examined shows that the use of artificial intelligence can impact work processes, that employee performance is multifaceted and that sustainable HRM is needed for long-term organisational health. But the current debates tend to segregate these problems. Research on AI adoption focuses on acceptance of technology, research on

employee performance focuses on work outcomes, and research on sustainable HRM focuses on well-being and long-term capabilities (Ehnert et al., 2016; Vrontis et al., 2022).

The conceptual integration of AI deployment, employee performance and sustainable HRM in Nigerian colleges is restricted. The objective of this article is to fill this vacuum by offering an AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework. The methodology shows how AI adoption can boost employee performance when applied through sustainable HRM practices and backed by ethical governance, AI literacy and institutional preparedness.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model explains that technology adoption is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). Applied to Nigerian universities, the model suggests that employees are more likely to adopt AI if they believe it improves teaching, research, administration or service delivery, and if they find it easy to use. If AI tools are difficult, unreliable or poorly explained, staff may resist them regardless of institutional pressure.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

UTAUT extends technology adoption theory by emphasising performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This theory is relevant because university staff adoption of AI will depend not only on individual attitudes but also on leadership support, training, infrastructure, peer influence and institutional policy. Facilitating conditions are especially important in Nigerian universities where power supply, internet access and device availability may affect technology use.

Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Theory

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory explains that employee performance improves when workers have the ability to perform, the motivation to perform and the opportunity to participate. Applied to this paper, AI adoption can improve performance only when employees are trained, motivated and allowed to use AI responsibly in their roles. Sustainable HRM provides the HR practices through which ability, motivation and opportunity can be strengthened (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Jiang et al., 2012).

Socio-Technical Systems Theory

Socio-technical systems theory argues that organisational effectiveness depends on the joint optimisation of social and technical systems. AI adoption should therefore not be implemented as a purely technical project. It must consider employee roles, work design, organisational culture, governance, training and ethical accountability. This theory supports the argument that AI should augment university employees rather than reduce them to passive users of technology (Bostrom & Heinen, 1977; Jarrahi, 2018).

Sustainable HRM Theory

Sustainable HRM theory argues that people-management systems should support organisational performance while preserving employee well-being, long-term employability and social responsibility (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014). In the context of AI adoption, this theory insists that efficiency should not be pursued at the expense of employee dignity, fairness, privacy or development. It provides the ethical foundation for linking AI adoption to employee performance through human-centred HRM.

Analytical Approach

This paper adopts a conceptual and framework-development approach. It does not present primary survey or interview data; therefore, it does not claim empirical findings. Instead, it synthesises relevant literature from AI adoption, employee performance, technology acceptance, sustainable HRM and higher education management to construct a testable conceptual framework. A conceptual approach is suitable because the relationship among AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable HRM in Nigerian universities remains underdeveloped in the literature.

The analytical procedure follows four steps. First, the paper clarifies the major concepts. Second, it reviews literature on AI adoption, employee performance and sustainable HRM. Third, it applies relevant theories to explain the proposed relationships. Fourth, it develops a conceptual framework and research propositions for future empirical testing. This approach is consistent with framework-building scholarship that seeks to clarify constructs and relationships before empirical measurement.

Conceptual Framework and Propositions

The proposed AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework shifts the perspective from viewing AI as a standalone technical integration to treating it as a human-centred capability-building process. We posit that AI adoption influences employee performance primarily through the catalyst of Sustainable HRM practices.

The Theoretical Logic Flow:

Independent Variable (Antecedents): AI Adoption Factors (Perceived Utility, Effort Expectancy, AI Literacy).

Mediator (The Catalyst): Sustainable HRM Practices (Well-being focus, Inclusive Training, Ethical Governance).

Dependent Variable (Outcomes): Employee Performance (Task, Adaptive, Innovative).

Moderators (The Contextual Buffers): Institutional Cultural Context (Nigerian regulatory/cultural norms) and Ethical Governance Frameworks.

Proposed Research Propositions:

P1: AI adoption positively relates to employee performance in Nigerian universities when mediated by Sustainable HRM practices that emphasise human-centred capability over mere automation.

P2: Sustainable HRM practices (e.g., inclusive training, fair workload design) act as the primary mediator between AI adoption and realised Task, Adaptive, and Innovative performance.

P3: The Nigerian Institutional Context (infrastructure, cultural receptivity to digital directives) significantly moderates the relationship between AI adoption and the effectiveness of Sustainable HRM practices.

P4: Ethical governance frameworks significantly strengthen the positive link between AI adoption and employee trust, thereby reducing resistance and enhancing adaptive performance.

P5: Improved employee performance resulting from AI-enabled Sustainable HRM contributes positively to the long-term institutional sustainability and resilience of Nigerian universities.

Discussion

The proposed framework shows that AI adoption should not be treated as an isolated digital transformation project. In universities, AI affects people, tasks, roles, skills, values and institutional culture. Its success therefore depends on whether employees are prepared, supported and protected within the adoption process. This is consistent with socio-technical thinking, which emphasises the joint design of technology and human systems (Bostrom & Heinen, 1977; Jarrahi, 2018).

For Nigerian universities, the most immediate benefit of AI adoption may be improved task performance. Staff may use AI to reduce repetitive administrative work, draft communications, organise data, support research search, analyse reports and improve decision-making speed. However, this benefit may be uneven if some employees lack access to devices, internet connectivity or training. Sustainable HRM therefore requires inclusive digital capacity-building (Kramar, 2014; UNESCO, 2023).

AI adoption may also improve adaptive performance. University employees are increasingly required to adjust to digital teaching platforms, online records systems, virtual meetings, AI-assisted research tools and automated administrative processes. Employees who develop AI competence may become more adaptable and productive. However, adaptability should not be forced without support because unsupported technological change can increase anxiety and resistance (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The relationship between AI and innovative performance is also important. AI can help staff generate new ideas, analyse large information sets, identify patterns and improve processes. Academic staff may use AI to support course design, research brainstorming and literature organisation, while administrative staff may use it to improve service delivery. Yet innovation requires professional judgement. AI outputs must be evaluated, contextualised and ethically used (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

The paper also shows that sustainable HRM is central to responsible AI adoption. A university may introduce AI to improve efficiency but damage staff morale if implementation is perceived as surveillance or a threat. Sustainable HRM shifts attention from technology deployment to employee development, fairness, dignity, well-being and long-term employability. This makes AI adoption more legitimate and less disruptive (Ehnert et al., 2016; Jobin et al., 2019).

Ethical governance is a major condition. AI systems may reproduce bias if their data are incomplete or poorly designed. They may also create privacy risks where employee data are collected without transparency. Nigerian universities should therefore establish clear policies on acceptable AI use, data protection, human oversight, appeal mechanisms and accountability. Such governance aligns with global AI ethics principles of transparency, fairness, responsibility and human-centred design (Jobin et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

For university management, the study implies that AI adoption should be integrated into strategic HRM rather than left to individual experimentation. Universities should develop institutional AI policies, training programmes, staff support systems and ethical guidelines. AI should be introduced as a tool for improving work quality and reducing unnecessary burden, not as a mechanism for replacing human judgement (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Tambe et al., 2019). For HR departments, the framework suggests that AI can support recruitment documentation, staff records, workload analysis, training needs assessment and performance support. However, HR departments must ensure that AI tools are transparent, fair and explainable. Employees should know how AI-related decisions are made and should have opportunities to question or appeal outcomes where necessary (Jobin et al., 2019; Vrontis et al., 2022). For employees, the implication is that AI literacy has become part of professional competence. Academic, administrative and technical staff need skills in prompt use, data ethics, output verification, privacy protection and responsible application. Staff should not treat AI outputs as final authority; rather, they should use AI as an assistant that supports but does not replace professional expertise (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

At the policy level, Nigerian university regulators and institutional leaders should recognise AI adoption as a governance issue. Policies should address data privacy, academic integrity, HR analytics, employee monitoring, training, infrastructure and ethical use. Without clear policy, AI adoption may become fragmented, risky and inconsistent across departments and staff categories (UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Universities should also invest in AI capacity-building as part of staff development. Training should be differentiated for academic staff, administrative staff, HR officers, ICT personnel and institutional managers. A one-size-fits-all approach may not work because different staff groups use AI for different tasks. Sustainable HRM requires equitable access to training and support across categories of employees (Kramar, 2014; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Policy should also protect employee dignity. AI-enabled performance systems should not be used to intensify surveillance or punish employees unfairly. Instead, they should support coaching, learning, workload fairness and evidence-based HR decisions. This aligns with the sustainable HRM position that performance management must be balanced with employee well-being and social responsibility (Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014).

One major challenge is infrastructural readiness. AI adoption depends on electricity, internet connectivity, devices, software access and data systems. Where these are weak, adoption may favour employees with personal resources while excluding others. Such inequality may undermine sustainable HRM because it creates uneven access to performance-enhancing tools (UNESCO, 2021; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Another challenge is ethical uncertainty. Employees may not know what forms of AI use are acceptable in teaching, research, assessment, administration or HRM. Without guidelines, staff may either misuse AI or avoid it completely. This uncertainty can reduce performance benefits and increase institutional risk (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

A further challenge is the possibility of deskilling. If employees rely heavily on AI without understanding underlying processes, their professional competence may weaken over time. Sustainable HRM should therefore promote human-AI collaboration rather than passive dependence. Employees should be trained to verify, interpret and improve AI outputs using their professional judgement (Jarrahi, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). This paper is limited by its conceptual design. It does not present primary empirical data from Nigerian universities. The proposed framework and propositions require empirical testing through survey, interview, case study or mixed-method research. Future studies may test the model among academic staff, non-academic staff or HR managers across federal, state and private universities.

Conclusion

This paper examined Artificial Intelligence adoption, employee performance and sustainable human resource management in Nigerian universities. It argued that AI adoption can improve employee performance by supporting

task efficiency, adaptive capacity, innovation behaviour and administrative responsiveness. However, such benefits are not automatic. They depend on employee acceptance, AI literacy, ethical governance, facilitating conditions and sustainable HRM practices (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). The paper further argued that sustainable HRM provides the necessary human-centred foundation for responsible AI adoption. AI should not be introduced merely to automate work or intensify control. It should be used to strengthen employee capability, improve well-being, support fair workload management, reduce administrative burden and promote long-term institutional sustainability (Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014). The proposed AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework contributes to higher education management and HRM scholarship by explaining how AI adoption can influence employee performance through sustainable HRM practices. For Nigerian universities, the message is clear: AI can improve performance only when the technology is embedded within ethical, inclusive and development-oriented human resource systems. The future of university work is not AI alone, but responsible human-AI collaboration.

Suggestions

1. Nigerian universities should develop clear institutional policies on AI adoption, covering teaching, research, administration, HR analytics, data privacy and ethical use.
2. University HR departments should integrate AI literacy into staff development programmes and ensure that training is inclusive across academic, administrative and technical staff categories.
3. AI adoption should be linked to sustainable HRM objectives such as employee well-being, fair workload, long-term employability, inclusion and transparent performance management.
4. Universities should establish ethical AI governance committees or units to review AI-related risks, staff concerns, data protection issues and accountability mechanisms.
5. AI-enabled HR systems should be used to support coaching, training and decision quality rather than punitive surveillance or opaque performance control.
6. Future researchers should empirically test the proposed AI-enabled Sustainable HRM Performance Framework using Nigerian university samples and appropriate statistical models such as structural equation modelling.

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