CHALLENGES IN THE UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS (IRS) FOR HUMAN RESOURCE (HR) FUNCTIONS AT THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NYSC) HEADQUARTERS, ABUJA

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Abstract

This research unraveled the Challenges in the Utilization of Information Retrieval Systems (IRS) for Human Resource (HR) functions at the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja. One research question guided the study as what are the Challenges faced by Staff of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja when Utilizing Information Retrieval Systems for HR Functions? The study adopted the Quantitative Research Methodology with descriptive survey as the design. The Population of the study comprised 47 staff cutting across the junior, senior and management cadres. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The findings identified challenges in the utilization of information retrieval systems for human resource functions as poor integration with other systems, obsolete technology, and data migration problems. Resistance to change and low levels of digital literacy were brought forward as human-related issues. Financing, weak policy frameworks, poor power supply, and unstable Internet supply are the constraints on the organisational and physical environment. In conclusion, the study on the Challenges in the Utilization of Information Retrieval Systems (IRS) for Human Resource (HR) Functions at the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja, has highlighted that while the adoption of technology is critical for modern administrative efficiency, significant hurdles remain. The findings reveal that the effective deployment of IRS within the NYSC is largely hampered by Technical Challenges, Human-Related Challenges, Organizational Barriers and Environmental Challenges Affecting IRS Use. It was recommended that there should be training of staff to deal with the issue of technophobia, budgetary allocations to secure advance technology, provision of Internet and constant supply of power amongst others.

Keywords: Challenges, Utilization, Information Retrieval Systems, Human Resource, Functions

Introduction

The core Human Resource (HR) processes in an organization are the activities that aim at managing the human resources to achieve strategic objectives. Such activities as recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and employee relations are part of HR processes (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Ochieng, 2023). HR can also be seen as a procedure that ensures the needed human resource is availed, developed, and retained in an organization as per the set objectives (Swanson, 2022). Some researchers contend that the HR department is still the administrative part of the staff in public-sector bodies and it is only in that capacity that it performs its functions (Ochieng, 2023). In contrast, other scholars argue that the evolution of HR means that it has extended to the areas of knowledge management and organizational learning (Podgorodnichenko, Edgar, & McAndrew, 2020). A non-uniform application of HR practices across different contexts has been noticed, and hence, their execution is dependent on the institutional capacity, governance structures, and the availability of supporting technologies.

One of the most talked-about subjects in the area of HR and management is the incorporation of information systems in HR functions. Information Retrieval Systems (IRS) are platforms that put in place, structure, and enable the easy access of organizational data to support decision-making and improve the operational side of things (Joseph & Ravana, 2024; Panda & Mohanty, 2020). Additionally, in HR, these systems are used to maintain personnel records, monitor employee performance, facilitate recruitment, and support training programs (Mohammed, 2021; Bal, Bozkurt, & Ertemsir, 2022). Several studies support the advantages of the implementation of these types of systems, highlighting the elimination of administrative delays and the accuracy of the data as few of the advantages (Rainer et al., 2020; Bussler & Davis, 2002). Nevertheless, opponents conceive that public organizations may confront challenges when they attempt to adopt IRS. The challenges may stem from poorly equipped infrastructures and a shortage of competent staff (Hamouche, 2023; Alzoubi, 2022). It is thus deduced that while IRS can greatly improve HR functions, the actual extent of their effectiveness relies on the organization's preparedness and workforce abilities.

Statement of the Problem

The efficiency and strategic alignment of Human Resource (HR) functions within a large public institution like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja, are fundamentally dependent on the timely, accurate, and systematic retrieval of personnel data and policy information. Modern HR management dictates the use of sophisticated Information Retrieval (IR) Systems, often integrated within a Human Resource Information System (HRIS), to transition from administrative record-keeping to strategic decision-making (Byars & Rue, 2004; Paramita, 2020). Despite significant global investment in these systems to enhance efficiency and compliance (Ali, Wiblen, & Grant, 2020), their utilization in the Nigerian public sector, particularly in government agencies like the NYSC, is consistently reported to face distinct challenges that undermine their potential (Chinyuka, 2018; Musopero & Lee, 2021).

The problem, therefore, is the persistent sub-optimal utilization of the Information Retrieval Systems intended for HR functions at the NYSC Headquarters, Abuja, which leads to inefficiencies, compromised data integrity, and hindered strategic HRM. This sub-optimal state is observable in the following critical areas: Technical and System Challenges: The IR systems may suffer from integration hurdles with other crucial NYSC systems, or experience poor data quality and integrity issues (Strohmeier, 2001). This inability to retrieve complete

and reliable records compromises the accuracy of payroll, compliance reporting, and workforce planning, which is a common challenge in public institutions where poor records management capacity hinders effective HR. Human and Organisational Challenges: There is a high likelihood of resistance to change and low user adoption among HR staff, compounded by a lack of skilled personnel and adequate training to operate the advanced features of the system (Kovach & Cathcart, 1999).

This results in staff resorting to inefficient manual processes, or only using a small, transactional portion of the system, thus failing to leverage its strategic capabilities (Bilgic, 2020). Infrastructure and Support Constraints: The utilization of the systems is often constrained by inadequate IT infrastructure, limited technical support, and the high cost of sustaining and upgrading the system, which is a pronounced challenge in many African public sector organizations (Heeks, 2006). Ultimately, the failure to fully utilize these systems results in delayed HR service delivery, compromised decision-making, and an inability to shift the HR function from a reactive, administrative role to a proactive, strategic partner in achieving the NYSC's mandate. This study is therefore necessary to diagnose the specific factors (technical, human, and organizational) that constitute the major challenges to the effective utilization of Information Retrieval Systems for HR functions at the NYSC Headquarters, Abuja.

Research Question

What are the challenges faced by Staff of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja when utilizing Information Retrieval systems for HR Functions?

Literature review

Historically, technical challenges have greatly limited the opportunity for IRSs-based efficiency and user satisfaction in human resource management. With frequent system downtime, poor internet connectivity, and an underdeveloped technological infrastructure persistently being pointed out as problems in many institutions with limited digital preparedness, an IRS essentially requires the infrastructure of communication technology coupled with good servers and capacity to store high volumes of HR data. If any of these components are lacking, information retrieval via any IRS will take time and sadden users, thereby reducing HR efficacy. As emphasized by Lu (2025), unreasonably low infrastructure responsiveness on digital HR platforms inhibits their consistent use.

Dahlbom et al (2020) further support that even organizations with advanced IRS capacities face challenges when integrating with existing suboptimal infrastructures. The operational failure of technical infrastructure exists more as a challenge against any scalability or reliability, thus making it difficult for IRS to support real-time decision-making. The above constraints point to perpetual ICT infrastructure investment as an imperative to have IRSs that are reliable and usable; without these investments, technical challenges stay as a moderator damaging the connection between IRS deployment and HR efficiency.

Funding problems also constrain the IRS deployment and sustainability of HR challenges. The burden associated with purchasing new systems, licensing, associated training, and maintenance is hard sometimes impossible for many institutions to carry. Digital transformation has rigid budgetary systems and competing priorities that normally do not favor allocation of funds; hence, Ochieng (2023) observes that such challenges are more rampant among public sector organizations. More than the startups that establish initial costs for system

acquisition are recurrent liabilities of cost involved with software upgrades and technical support.

Sobolieva (2025) notes that failure to plan financially for system upgrades usually results in underrated IRS platforms falling obsolete with time, thereby losing their viability in transforming HR. Roul et al (2024) have likewise noted that organizations by and large tend to place urgent operational imperatives before technology investments, thereby incurring debts to obsolete systems unable to adjust to the evolving HR requirements. These sets of financial challenges will delay any IRS implementation while denying any institution the opportunity of exploiting IRS advances. Hence, financial sustainability remains another variably critical impediment in determining the usefulness of IRS applications in HR management.

The human factor challenge constitutes another limitation to the use of IRS. Staff members' resistance to change, lack of ICT skills, and general illiteracy in using systems severely hold back the proper acceptance of information retrieval technologies. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2023), digital transformation in HR has got to do also with behavioral and cultural changes, which staff must adapt to regarding new ways of working. However, one major reason why employees resist change is that they feel their jobs could become redundant, or they lack confidence in being able to use the digital platform.

Heslina and Syahruni (2021) further argued that low ICT competencies reduce employee engagement with HR systems, as staff members prefer manual processes they are familiar with. In addition, Jayadeva, Shikhare, and Verma (2022) highlight that user training is often superficial, focusing only on initial orientation rather than sustained capacity building. Such underprepared staff, in turn, shy away from IRS platforms and their adoption suffers. These barriers related to human factors further demonstrate that the effectiveness of IRS is influenced not only by technical design but also by the readiness and adaptability of its users.

Organizational challenges further complicate the use of IRS in human resource management. Bureaucratic structures and the slow adoption of innovations, especially in public institutions, hinder timely decision-making and implementation of systems. Hamouche (2023) has observed that organizations with rigid hierarchies often experience lengthy approval processes for technology investments and thus miss opportunities for digital transformation. Belcourt et al (2022), argue that the inability of companies to respond with agility to market demands slows down the integration of IRS into HR practices, with many companies still bound by age-old administrative processes.

Bureaucracy impacts the procurement processes too, where protracted chains of approval decelerate the acquisition and installation of IRS platforms. Another issue is the overly cautious attitudes of public institutions towards technological innovations, relying on traditional systems that they feel are less risky. Such organizational hindrances contribute to the underutilization of IRS by waning institutional commitment, necessary for successful adoption. Bureaucratic inertia does indeed act as a big moderating force limiting IRS ability to produce intended HR outcomes.

Finally, IRS at full potential development is assured by some impediments like data protection and security, privacy-related issues, and sustainability challenges. Factors such as data breaches, unauthorized access to data, and not complying with data protection laws create a level of hesitation when it comes to digital platforms for HR. According to Kumar et al

(2024), since IRS systems handle sensitive employee information, for a sustainable trust the need to guarantee privacy by using encryption and blockchain frameworks. Bernard and Balog (2023) also emphasized the need for accountability and transparency in IRS design from the angle that any ethical issue can erode an institution's credibility.

Besides security considerations, sustainability challenges come into the picture when the organization does not secure long-term funding for IRS enhancement and becomes heavily dependent on external consultants for system maintenance. An observation by Vrontis et al (2023), claims that an overreliance on outside expertise deteriorates institutional capacity building, thus creating vulnerability in system continuity. The lack of sustainable strategies leads to circumspect systems with diminished user trust. Within the framework of the conception, these challenges will serve as moderating variables in shaping the relationship between IRS adoption and efficiency within HR, weakening or thwarting the intended outcomes. These challenges then require a holistic approach by all the parties that bring technical, financial, human, organizational, and security-related aspects together.

Research Methodology

The quantitative research methodology was used for this research with the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 47 staff cutting across junior, senior and management staff. Total enumeration sampling technic was used for this study because the population is small and manageable. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentages presented in tables for easy comprehension

Results and Discussion

Research Question: What are the challenges faced by Staff of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja when utilizing Information Retrieval systems for HR Functions?

The study sought to investigate the challenges faced by staff of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja when utilizing Information Retrieval Systems for Human Resource functions. Table 1 to Table 4 gives the result of this survey.

Table 1: Technical Challenges Associated with IRS Use

S/No	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Poor system integration	17	41.5
2	Outdated technology	15	36.6
3	Data migration issues	9	22.0
	Total	**41**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As seen in Table 1, poor system integration (41.5%) and outdated technology (36.6%) are the most pressing technical challenges affecting IRS use at the NYSC Headquarters, while 22.0% cited data migration issues. In fact, these issues demonstrate that legacy infrastructures and fragmented systems do not allow for optimal performance. These were similar findings by Dahlbom et al. (2020), who argued that integration gaps and outdated software limit the potential of HR analytics and IRS systems. This finding is similar to Memon et al., (2022), who found out that insufficient technological upgrades to often lead to inefficiencies in HR data management systems, these outcomes also apply.

Table 2: Human-Related Challenges Affecting IRS Use

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Resistance to change	20	48.8
Limited digital literacy among HR staff	21	51.2
Total	**41**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table 2, 51.2% of the respondents said that digital illiteracy among HR staff was the most important impediment; 48.8% of cases referred to the resistance to change. These results show that human factors profoundly limit the implementation of IRS. This outcome goes with Hamouche (2023), in which he found that employee resistance and inadequate IT competency usually delay the digital transformation in HR units. It also supports Heslina and Syahruni (2021), emphasizing that the outcome of technology performance would be mostly directed by the human resource competency.

Table 3: Organizational Barriers Hindering Effective IRS Utilization

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Insufficient budget allocation	24	58.5
Weak policy frameworks	17	41.5
Total	**41**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to the findings in Table 3, 58.5% of respondents mentioned underfunding as the first organisational hindrance, followed by 41.5% who indicated underwhelming policy frameworks. Overall, this conveyed that IRS expansion was constrained on fiscal and regulatory grounds. Such findings agree with Sobolieva (2025), who reported that strategic investments and well-defined governance structures were essential for successful digitalisation of HR. It also echoed with Mohammed (2021), highlighting that even the best possible HRIS would not give enduring efficiency if not supported by proper policy.

Table 4: Environmental Challenges Affecting IRS Use

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor power supply	25	61.0
Unstable internet connectivity	16	39.0
Total	**41**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table 4, 61.0% of respondents indicated poor power supply as one of the environmental challenges, whereas 39.0% reported unstable internet connectivity as the other major challenge. These infrastructural deficiencies are common constraints in public sector digitisation. This is in line with findings by Vahdat (2022), who noted that power and connectivity problems severely disrupt IT-based HR functions in developing contexts. Likewise, Lu (2025) asserted that sustainable IRS deployment within HR departments requires reliable infrastructure.

Conclusion

The study on the Challenges in the Utilization of Information Retrieval Systems (IRS) for Human Resource (HR) Functions at the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Headquarters, Abuja, has highlighted that while the adoption of technology is critical for modern administrative efficiency, significant hurdles remain. The findings reveal that the effective deployment of IRS within the NYSC is largely hampered by Technical Challenges, Human-Related Challenges, Organizational Barriers and Environmental Challenges Affecting IRS Use. Furthermore, human capital challenges such as a lack of technical training for HR staff and a palpable resistance to shifting from manual to digital processes continue to undermine the system's potential. Additionally, administrative and funding constraints play a major role. The study indicates that insufficient budgetary allocation for system maintenance and software upgrades, coupled with bureaucratic bottlenecks, prevents the NYSC from maintaining a state-of-the-art information retrieval environment. Therefore, for the NYSC to fully leverage Information Retrieval Systems for optimal HR management, there must be a holistic overhaul that addresses not just the procurement of hardware, but also the consistent training of staff and the improvement of supporting infrastructure. Addressing these challenges is not merely a technical necessity but a strategic imperative to ensure the scheme can effectively manage its vast network of staff and corps members in a timely and secure manner.

Recommendation

In order to overcome the challenges unraveled by the study, it is recommended that NYSC solve these technical and organisational impediments through the provision of expeditious budgetary allocation for technological upgrades, improved system integration, stronger policy frameworks, and robust ICT infrastructure with reliable internet connectivity, power supply and training of its staff. These will provide a conducive environment for effective IRS utilisations and sustainable HR operations at the NYSC Headquarters.

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