A study on the impact of paperless office initiatives on the efficiency of organisational activities.

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Abstract- **A paperless office, where all the organizational activities are digital, is something today's organizations are aiming at. Organizations have been dependent on a very traditional method of working, where paper has been used for many important business activities despite digitalization of the business era. Paperless offices are also considered to be environment friendly, as it reduces the usage of paper significantly. Readily available applications, software and digital storage platforms organizations to go paperless. But, transition to a completely paperless office do come with challenges. This study deals with investigating the impact of implementing paperless office practices on the day-to-day activities of an organization. The results of the study show that paperless office practices helps in sustainability, cost-effectiveness and productivity in the contemporary workplace.**

Key Words- **paperless office, digitalization, digital tools.**

INTRODUCTION

The rapid degradation of the environment has resulted in organisations to implement environment friendly measures in the functioning of organisations. This can be achieved by green practices of employees in an organisation (Fawehinmi, O,2020).Green Human Resource management of organisations have been gradually receiving attention in today's world(Zhang, Y,2019).The idea of a paperless workplace has gained popularity since the 1980's as the dependence on computers have resulted in papered documents become obsolete. Recently, a large portion of paper documentation has been replaced by digital documents aiming to contribute to the environment. Although paperless office might never become a reality, the digital shift has reduced the dependence on paper significantly(Kim, J,2021). Going paperless is an ideal way in this digital era where there are several advantages of being time efficient, eco-friendly & efficient management of documents. Paperless offices is a concrete way to reduce the use of trees for papers(Prastyo P. H,2020). Since many years cutting down of trees have been adopted to fulfil the demand of paper which has resulted in the issue of global warming(Nayyar, N,2019). The paperless workspace can truly show the path though digital modelling of documents, workflows, and reorganization of space upon dematerialization. Having a paperless office space results in saving money, time and space through improved workflows. Reskilling and upskilling the current employees can make them prepared for a future paperless office(Stateler, K,2021). Environmental sustainability has become a major issue in today's world(Yalina, N,2020). The paperless office is considered as an ideal situation with respect to the managerial aspects of an organisation. There have been studies conducted in the past on paperless offices(Shah, S. Shah, S,2010). The whole concept of a paperless office has remained a myth in the past years. A paperless office, requires more than just IT resources. The shift towards a paperless office requires organisational support. Apart from organisational support, a positive attitude from employees in adapting to a paperless office is also required(Obeidat, M. A,2015). Change in habits which are embedded in social structures do take time. In some regions of the world, the myth of a paperless office is now slowly becoming a reality(Smart, K. L,1995).The entire concept of paperless office can truly show a path to success with correct planning through modelling digital document management and workflows. Upskilling and reskilling of the current employees does lead to preparedness of future job roles(Stateler, K,2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paperless workplace inconsistencies, which claimed that advances in technology would decrease paper use but instead increased it, is discussed in the article. Yet the author provides recent data demonstrating that paper usage worldwide is starting to level off and in several places has started to decline. The author attributes this to enhance movement technology like cell phones and internet access via mobile devices as well as the time it took for individuals and companies to embrace these innovations and actions. The essay addresses the consequences for environmental technology like renewable energy while drawing comparisons to other shifting technologies(Sellen, a. J,2003).Security measures of documents is a huge problem since it is more difficult to trace details on paper. Additionally, it is a known truth that businesses all over the world are susceptible to their most crucial data leaving the building in a briefcase. A digitized storage and retrieval system is crucial to preventing these problems because it saves the documents on secure servers and makes them more private than paper by allowing only those with permission to access them(*Ragnet , 2008*). It says about the two socio-ecological paradoxes that are covered in this essay. It draws attention to the fact that advancements in resource utilization and replacements may not always result in decreased resource use but instead occasionally lead to greater usage. Environmental problems could not be resolved by technological advancements alone; rather,

adjustments to social and economic structures might be required to effectively conserve natural resources. The study highlights how complex economies are and the necessity of all-encompassing strategies to address resource use and sustainability(York, R,2006).The deployment of a paperless documents control system is discussed in the article as a way to stop corporate losses brought on by physical paper files. It investigates numerous technologies, such as OCR and indexing, to efficiently arrange and search digital materials. According to the study, employing as per OCR SDK increases keyword identification rates, especially with documents of greater resolution. The research also suggests an effective data retrieval and indexing technique that makes use of Adobe Reader and improves the speed and precision of document retrieval following marking(Ugale, M. K 2017).The idea of a paperless workplace is discussed in the article, along with some of its potential benefits, such as rapid access to data and large cost savings from digital paper. Even if an office without paper might not be feasible, technological improvements, notably the falling cost of desktop computers, have opened up the possibility. It emphasizes how important e-mail and document storage systems are to increasing productivity, making better use of corporate forms, and enhancing data accessible through better indexing. The study focuses on how a paper-free work environment will redefine document management and transform corporate procedures(Connolly,1993).This topic covers the advantages of becoming paperless in businesses, such as greater data accessibility and expense savings. The change, however, may be hampered by employee reluctance brought on by an absence of training and experience with digital technology. Companies have to deal with concerns raised by staff members, include them as part of the process, and offer sufficient assistance and training for converting to digital processes if they are to succeed(CDIA, a. S,2013).In contrast to a fully "paperless" workplace, the paper examines the notion of a "less paper" workplace as a more practical objective. It provides case studies of two firms who tried to use technological advances to cut down on paper consumption, with one succeeding and the other failing. In order to gradually transition to electronic processes and lessen dependency on paper, the study underlines the necessity for a three separate phases implementing approach: acceleration, which is transition, and transformation. It comes to the conclusion that, when used wisely, technology may reduce paper consumption while improving effectiveness, productivity, and cost savings(Smart, K. L,1995).The myth of an office without papers is discussed in the article, despite the fact that technology improvements have boosted paper use. The paper-free workplace is examined, with an emphasis on staff behaviours toward technology that is digital. The study, conducted using quantitative methods and structured surveys, discovered that user assistance and training are crucial for achievement while IT leadership and support affect technology adoption. The study advises management and IT to take a proactive role in employee motivation and training to ensure an effortless switch to a paperless workplace (Obeidat, M. A,2015).The article explores the idea of a without papers which despite developments in PC technology is still not a reality. It focuses on how tablet computers, especially the Apple iPad, may help minimize the amount of paper used in academic settings. The exploratory study speaks with academic employees who routinely use iPads and discovers that although tablets do help reduce paper consumption, their drawbacks have prevented them from fully achieving a paperless workplace. The study offers recommendations for how businesses may utilize training to solve these restrictions and make sure tablet are utilized to their fullest potential to minimize paper consumption(King, K,2014).The article discusses the Green HRM paradigm and its application while examining Green Human Resource Management in the hospitality sector. It underlines how crucial it is for human resource managers to be knowledgeable about green HRM techniques including recycling, cutting back on paper use, and energy saving. According to the research, staff must have a sustainable vision that takes into account financial, ecological, and social factors to ensure the long-term viability of the organization (Palguna, I. G. R, 2021).The article discusses the benefits and drawbacks of implementing a paperless work environment in Extension. A lot of organizations particularly Extension agencies, have not fully embraced paperless methods despite extensive debates. Due to financial and environmental considerations, the article underlines the necessity to revaluate the use of hard copy papers. While there are productivity and financial advantages to paperless technology, paper will still be used in conjunction with electronic tools, necessitating considerable organizational adjustments for effective paperless plans(Ashby, L,2011).

METHODOLOGY

For the study, Qualitative Research technique was used under the Primary Research. Survey Questionnaire were developed by referring to Literatures , News Articles and Reports , and these questions were test using CronBach Alpha to check their reliability. As the CronBach Alpha value obtained were more than 0.7 , Questionnaire was developed and responses were collected using both the offline and online - Google form. 254 responses were collected from the professionals working in various corporate companies. Descriptive Statistics and Cross Tabulation was used to understand the relationships.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research primarily aims at investigating the effect of implementing paperless office practices on the day-to-day activities of an organization.

Table No.1.1

Do you work in an organisation that has implemented paperless office policies ? * How often do you print documents in your workplace ? Crosstabulation

Count

		How often do you print documents in your workplace ?				Total
		Never	Often	Rarely	Sometimes	
Do you work in an organisation that has implemented paperless office policies ?	No	1	2	10	18	31
	Yes	12	45	18	148	223
Total		13	47	28	166	254

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.749[a]	3	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	14.417	3	.002
N of Valid Cases	254		

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.59.

Figure No.1.1
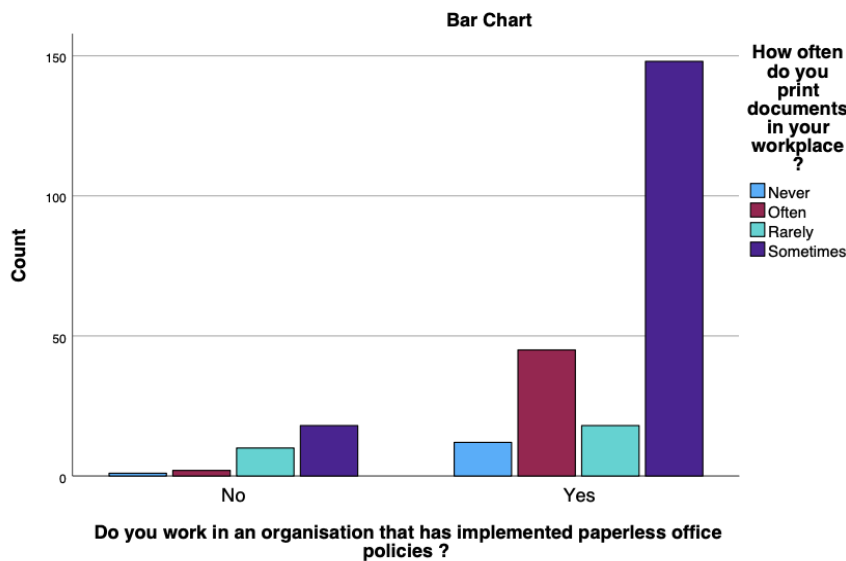
The above cross tab analysis shows the relationship between respondents who work in organizations where paperless office initiatives are followed and how often do the respondents print documents at the work place. From the Chi-Square test conducted, it is seen that the significance value is less than 0.5, which indicates that there is significant relationship between the two questions.

FINDINGS

According to the data, the companies of the respondents have adopted paperless office policies. Organizations are taking proactive measures by adopting digital solutions to reduce paper usage and promote sustainability. The perceived benefits of paperless office policies are recognized by employees who are familiar with them. According to respondents, digital documents help save costs by removing the need for paper expenses. Using digital tools for data storage and sharing makes them feel comfortable and secure, leading to improved efficiency and productivity. Paperless tools help respondents save time and enhance productivity, according to their feedback. Employee workflows and performance are positively impacted by digital transformation. The cross-tabulation confirms that there is a significant relationship between the implementation of paperless office policies and the perceived benefits reported by employees. This emphasizes how policies affect employee practices and

attitudes. In summary, the findings of the research paper endorse the efficacy and adoption of paperless office policies in organizations. Employees are familiar with and supportive of these policies, recognizing the environmental benefits and cost savings associated with digital document management. Employee comfort, efficiency, and productivity have all been enhanced by the paperless approach, which allows them to utilize digital tools for data storage and sharing. The significant relationship between the adoption of paperless office policies and reported benefits indicates that these policies play a meaningful role in shaping employee practices and perceptions. The results emphasize the significance of paperless projects for encouraging sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and productivity improvement in the contemporary workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS
For organizations to effectively use paperless office practices, the following initiatives can be used-

1. Organizations should conduct workshops, training sessions and informative campaigns in order to raise awareness about paperless office policies. By educating employees, organizations can embrace digitalization in the day-to-day activities of the functioning of the business.
2. Emphasize the financial advantages of paperless policies to both employees and management. Quantify the cost savings associated with reduced paper usage, eliminating related expenses, and adopting premium digital tools. This will serve as a compelling incentive for embracing paperless practices.
3. Address employees' security concerns by investing in robust digital infrastructure and data protection measures. Assure employees that their data will be safeguarded from unauthorized access and security breaches.
4. HRM should regularly monitor the impact of paperless policies on employees' productivity. Collect feedback from employees and assess any changes in their efficiency and performance. This information will help HRM make data-driven decisions to enhance productivity.
5. Tie the adoption of paperless policies to the organization's broader sustainability goals. Highlight how reducing paper usage aligns with the company's commitment to environmental responsibility. Implement incentives or recognition programs to encourage employees to actively contribute to sustainable practices through paperless initiatives.
6. Stay up-to-date with the latest advancements in paperless tools and software. Regularly update the digital infrastructure and consider adopting new tools that can further streamline HRM processes and improve collaboration among employees.
7. Ensure that all employees can access and use digital tools without facing barriers. Consider the needs of differently-abled individuals and provide alternative methods for accessing and interacting with digital content.

By following the above recommendations organizations can contribute towards reducing the carbon footprints , and also upskill employees to use the digital technologies to improve their productivity and shift from paper to paperless documentation.

CONCLUSION
A paperless office is a workplace in which the usage of paper to meet the day-to-day activities of an organization is completed entirely or reduced to the minimum. Paperless office is achieved primarily through converting documents into digital form. This concept of a paperless office is not very easy to achieve as many organizations are still dependent on paper for certain business activities. A completely paperless office is still not completely a reality. Despite the rapid growth of technology, there are still a few tasks that are not digitalized and are dependent on paper. Organizations today are working towards going paperless. In this digital era, organizations today, are in the need to shift to a more digitalized method of performing the organizational activities on a day-to-day basis. Digital tools that are available in the market today, have made digitalization a reality. Organizations can document, organize and store data digitally which is considered to be much more efficient in terms of usage and also saves time. The usage of paper for the purpose of documentation is time consuming and inefficient. When documentation is digitalized and organizations adapting paperless initiatives within the organization, there can be huge costs that can be saved. Organizations can complete their tasks efficiently and effectively. But adapting to a complete paperless office can be challenging as employees need to get trained on using digital tools to perform their tasks. This shift can be challenging as organizations have employees working from different generations, culture and mindsets. All the employees might not be comfortable in going completely paperless. Adequate training and instructions need to be provided for a completely paperless office to be a reality.

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