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RIVER'S STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival of small and medium-sized enterprises in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a cross sectional research design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was 565 employees of forty five (45) small and medium-sized enterprises within the services sector in Port Harcourt. The sample size of 234 was determined using calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The study finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival of small and medium-sized enterprises in Port Harcourt. Based on the findings it was recommended that SMEs should integrate key internet infrastructures, imbibe robust inter and intra organizational relation and to streamline best fit workflow solutions to enhance its competitiveness.*

**Keywords:** *E-Workflow, Organizational Survival, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Innovativeness, Adaptability*

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## INTRODUCTION

E-operation is fast reshaping the traditional mode of doing business. Some businesses are becoming outmoded, for not adapting to the use of online facilities to enable facilitate business operations. Of recent the term "online" usually means being connected to the internet. The global business environment is replete with online activities. Jolenko (2001) explains that, the internet is a global network of networks while the web, also referred formally as world-wide-web (WWW) is collection of information which is accessed via the internet. Another way to look at this is that the internet is infrastructure while the web is service on top of that infrastructure. In other words, the internet is infrastructure for information and communications technology such as WWW. 'If your business is not on the internet, then your business will be out of business' (Bill Gates; founder of the Microsoft in pininterest.com).

Business organizations are concerned of their survival and prosperity in the future. An organization's operations are strategically key on the grounds that most activities involve the everyday exercises in the operations function (Barney, 1991). The potential to attain long-term success or even survival is determined by the relationship between organizations' strategy and operations. Hayes, Wheelwright and Clark (2005) notes that a firm is most probably going succeed if its short term operations goals are in line with its long term organizational goals and contribute to competitive advantage. Slack et al. (2004) list five objectives of operations, they include: The capability to provide products at the lowest cost, at right quality, doing things quickly in reaction to customer demands, capability to change operations' flexibility and the level of dependability. E-service enhances such capabilities.

E-service is the utilization of IT in the development of the service delivery system (Boyer, 2002). E-service operations are an interactive information service

where services are delivered through electronic systems. Here, the service providing organizations and customers apply gathered information to develop a service system with greater experience (Boyer, Holloswell & Roth, 2002). Therefore e-service operations strategy is the application of IT to develop a service delivery system so as to align customer desire with customer perception.

Boyer (2001) notes that e-services gives an organization a unique opportunity to develop and provide new models for new service development and service design strategies. Further, if customers perceive that electronic service is offering higher value compared to other options available, then there is likelihood for them to purchase more. E-services benefits include: greater accessibility to a big customer base, minimizing entry barriers to new markets and lowering cost of customer acquisition, increasing the market reach, offering an alternative customer communication channel, improving company perceived image, enhancing services to customers, potential for increasing customer knowledge and gaining competitive advantages (Lu, 2001). Through this also a competitive firm ensures its survival.

Survival is of high importance for enterprise to attain her goal. Goal attainment is determined by an enterprise strategy. According to Porter (2001) many of the problems faced by dot-coms relates to a lack of strategic focus. Enterprising management focus to compete in the market place and market space, respond to signals, updates, forms strategic alliances and undertake various operational decisions in a bid to survive. In this information age e-operations adaptive processes stimulate the difference between the success and failures amongst online enterprises. Barnes and Vidgen (2002) observed that, e-operations are run as a discrete set of processes, with little or no integration between e-operations information systems and those of the bricks-and-mortar operations. The integration of internet and

supply chain evolve processes for an e-business operations. E-operations integrate information within the value chain to process firm and customers' satisfaction. Barnes and Vidgen (2002) admit that, 'e-operation is a strategy in e-business'. The quality of the online business plan is a necessary factor to harnessing the dividend of e-operations and a sure strategy for enterprise survival. This study therefore examines the relationship between e-workflow and organisational survival of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Furthermore, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- How does e-workflow affect entrepreneurial orientation of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State?
- How does e-workflow impact on innovativeness of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State?
- How does Electronic workflow impact on adaptability of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State?



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival**

**Source: Author's Desk Research, 2019**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Theoretical Foundation**

**Resource Dependency Theory**

Resource dependency theory conveys the base line theory of this work. It identifies with the concept of survival amidst environmental forces. Strategists analyze the effect of environmental forces on organizations. The organization being an open system is sustained by interdependence from other factors outside its internal environmental. According to Ahiazu and Asawo (2016) an organizations dependency on its environment is the most important factor to explain its internal goals. Highlighting a seminar presentation, Amy Hillman, Michael Withers, and Brian Collins (2009) posit that, resource dependency theory recognizes the influence of external factors on organizational behavior and, although constrained by their context, managers can

act to reduce environmental uncertainty and dependence. Central to these actions is the concept of power, which is the control over vital resources. Organizations attempt to reduce others' power over them, often attempting to increase their own power over others. In their publication '*The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*' Pfeffer and Salancik, (1978), provide the basis for the basic argument of the resource dependence perspective and inter-organizational relations as 1) the fundamental units for understanding interoperate relations and society are organizations; 2) these organizations are not autonomous, but rather are constrained by a network of interdependencies with other organizations; 3) interdependence, when coupled with uncertainty about what the actions will be of those with which the organizations interdependent, leads to a situation in which survival and continued success are uncertain; therefore 4)

organizations take actions to manage external interdependencies, although such actions are inevitably never completely successful and produce new patterns of dependence and interdependence; and 5) these patterns of dependence produce inter-organizational as well as intra-organizational power, where such power has some effect on organizational behavior.

According to Ahiazu and Asawo (2016), managers are vital in making decisions about resource acquisition and determining how the organization should respond to the environment pressures. Managers embark on various entrepreneurial pursuits to reduce dependence on other organizations resources, and would rather want to wield strong resource control to increase its dominance. Strategic alliances, mergers and acquisition, joint ventures, executive succession, agency theory and board of director are some measures enabling organizational power control over its environment.

Business faces strong online environmental pressures. These forces within and outside the same sectors require strategic decision to ease off the pressures. E-operations ease off some of the pressures as it involves activities overriding management of production, ordering, delivery activities for customers' needs fulfillment. E-operations processes reduce the negative impact from the environment. Automated workflows otherwise known as e-workflows associated to the e-operation is strategically interdependent automated workflows within an enterprise that enables the expediency of operations. The processes are internal for the organizations and the services offered to the environment. E-operations' consists of internal activities inbuilt within planned workflows and processes to provide external services for the fulfillment needs of customers e-business, e-commerce or e-marketing. The better the e-operation of an entrepreneur the lesser the effects of

environmental pressures and the higher the power hold over other organizations for its survival.

Organizational survival is variously predicated by the same factors that impinge from the environment. Resource dependency theory arguably laid bare these facts. Enterprises robust impact in the economy of the nations has made their relevance encouraging. External factors as lack of resource availability still plague most organization. The lack of material resources can be contained by purposeful environmental orientation, adaptability and innovativeness. Survival is a sine qua non to attaining organizational set objectives and goals.

### **E-Workflow**

A workflow is the automation of a business process, in whole or part, during which documents, information or tasks are passed from one participant to another for action, according to a set of procedural rules. A workflow management system defines, creates and manages the execution of workflows through the use of software, running on one or more workflow engines, which is able to interpret the process definition, interact with workflow participants and, where required, invoke the use of IT tools and applications. (Jonenka, 2001). A workflow management system according to, (Hollingsworth, 1995) completely defines, manages and executes 'workflows' through the execution of software whose order of execution is driven by a computer representation of the workflow logic. Workflow systems can replace current paper-based flows and information stores with an electronic version, whilst allowing future flexibility to support changes in the business environment. Consequently e-workflow provide process support like traditional workflows do, but in such a way that the system is intelligent enough to deal with the new internet business environment that is characterized by rapid, dynamic and continuous change (Ndeta, Katriou, Kerstin & Siaska, 2015). A workflow describes a rigid sequence of work activities. It can be used to enforce work

needed for a process but does not ensure outcomes. It is also costly to manage and implement requiring standardized workflows to be feasible.

According to Ndeta *et al* (2006), workflow systems embody explicit process and product models, i.e., a completely specified workflow design is required that can be modified to reflect the changes in organizations whenever they occur. A major limitation of traditional workflow systems is that they can, typically, only support simple, static and predictable processes, but not the dynamically changing and complex processes that are present in many contemporary e-business organizations (Ndeta *et al.* 2006). This drawback of traditional workflow systems is an evident fact in modern businesses where workflows are often executed simultaneously, requiring interaction between them and where problems arise during the execution of a workflow that have to be handled properly.

A workflow or workflow model is a definite description of a business process represented in such a way that it can be directly executed by a workflow management system (Russell *et al.*, 2005). Aligning e-workflow with e-process, one can deduce some differences: e-workflow involves accomplishing an organizational tasks objectives. It deals with repeatable or structured organizational activities that do not ensure outcomes, while e-process in addition to the structured provide for the unstructured organizational activities as they arise and thus assure outcomes.

According to Egnatoff (2011), organizations utilizing electronic workflow tools derive two primary benefits: greater efficiency of operation and strengthened internal controls in areas ranging from protection of sensitive content to improved procedures relating to organization asset. He point to some of the key components generally found in an effective electronic workflow system to include

routing capabilities, authorization, monitoring and alerts.

Internally improved efficiency and effectiveness may arise from the opportunity for automating administrative process (as well as) the new technology's ability to trigger off the business primary infrastructure; its core processes and the surface base that supports them. Web technology may enable a new round of re-engineering of the primary infrastructure and lead to faster turnaround of customers' orders, enhanced customer support , improvements in a product unit-cost structure and shorter time to market for new products.

Systems and infrastructures are currently being developed to support web services. The main idea is to encapsulate an organization's functionality within an appropriate interface and advertise it as web services. While in some cases web services may be utilized in an isolated form, it is normal to expect web services to be integrated as part of workflow processes. The composition of workflow processes that model e-service applications differs from the design of traditional workflows, in terms of the number of tasks (web services) available to the composition process, in their heterogeneity, and in their autonomy. Therefore, two problems need to be solved: how to efficiently discover web services—based on functional and operational requirements—and how to facilitate the interoperability of heterogeneous web services (Cardoso & Sheth, 2003).

### **Concept of Organizational Survival**

The term “survival” has many connotations that are subjective and objective. The most objective way to understand survival of organizations is to observe their continuing existence. This is problematic given the nature of mergers and acquisitions. A way of clarifying the matter is to employ a resource dependence approach. According to Sheppard (1995) an organization survives as long as it acquires inputs from suppliers and provides

outputs to a given public (customers, clients, patients, etc.). The organization fails when coalitions of resource providers cannot be induced to supply resources and the firm cannot repay resource providers for past support. Survival of an organization depends on external and internal environments and continuity of its performance. Therefore, from the perspective of the organization, formulating multidimensional constructs can help shed light on survival for organizations and help them recognize the existence of appropriate planning, adaptability to environmental changes in the organization, develop and sustain the organization.

Employing a multidimensional construct, Hanafizadeh and Rahmani (2010) assert that multidimensional construct can avail one with an insight on understanding the state of an organization. A construct whose indices are invisible or hidden variables that cannot be measured directly. A dimension is the concept used to describe a distinctive feature of the construct under study. In other words, they are invisible indices of the basic construct. A measure, or an indicator, consists of a small quantity of items through observation, interviews, or other acquisition, which can be quantified in terms of measurement tools several companies due to the lack of adaptation to environmental changes get out of the competition

But, Dargahi, Ramezani and Babai (2012) noted accordingly, the ability of businesses to identify factors affecting their survival and to respond them as fast as they can requires appropriate measures to ensure their survival (Heler,2003). Despite the large number of incorporations entering the industry each year, a considerable number of different incorporations over the stages of the lifecycle (birth, growth, maturity, and etc.) get out of the market competition and experience organizational mortality. Studies on the survival of incorporations can then be worthwhile. Organizational survival in the absence of preparation in dealing with various conditions is

threatened and sometimes may result in complete removal from competition. Therefore, organizations that need to prolong their survival of any growth, development and maturity of the organization must continually monitor the status of related competitors to survive.

Some appropriate critical survival factors include (a) Careful planning, confident leadership and solid decision-making. (b) Close partnership between contractors and their critical advisors, including accountants, banks, insurance agents and sureties. (c) Resist the temptation to travel outside their comfort zone or to try new work that they have not attempted before. (d) Networking capabilities, good mixture of different types of substantive capabilities level of compatibility with dominant players, existence of lock-in effects, and choosing the appropriate strategies for growth and business models. (e) internationalization and localization capabilities, and creativity capability to focus and high levels of growth aspirations (f) Abundance of resources such as human capital and financial resources, managerial and international experience, substantive, dynamic, and networking capabilities, and governmental support level of compatibility with dominant players in the market, (g) Existence of lock-in effects, and having the appropriate software business models and growth strategies. (h) Focusing all the efforts into getting one thing done excellently (Talibi-Mazra'eshahi and Jalal Haghighat-Monfared, 2013).

### **Measures of Organizational Survival Entrepreneurial Orientation**

In 1983 Danny Miller measured the entrepreneurial behavior of the firm according to the dimensions of innovation, proactivity and risk-taking. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to the strategy-making processes that provide organizations with a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003). They further posit that it refers to the processes, practices and decision-

making activities that lead to a new firm, a new product or technology, or a new market. They considered EO as a process construct, which is concerned with the methods, practices, and decision-making styles used by the managers.

Entrepreneurial firms are imbedded with a philosophy and decision-making processes based on values and behaviors such as innovativeness, proactiveness, risk taking, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. Innovativeness reflects firms' willingness to embrace new ideas, favor change, support creativity, and encourage experimentation. Proactiveness represents a forward looking perspective that aims to identify, anticipate, and pursue future market changes. Risk taking involves firms' availability to take risks and apply resources to pursue opportunities with uncertain outcomes. Autonomy refers to independent action aimed at advancing a business concept or vision and carrying it through to completion. Competitive aggressiveness represents a combative posture and a forceful response to competitor's actions (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003). These dimensions embody a set of values and beliefs that shape how the firm intends to conduct business and compete. They reflect a willingness to break away from the tried-and-true, take action based on early signals from the environment, accept uncertainty and risk, bring forth a vision, and overcome competitors. Entrepreneurial orientation provides organizations with a basis for entrepreneurial decisions by understanding the strategy-making processes of the firm.

The term entrepreneurship is used to illustrate new entry into a market, while entrepreneurial orientation describes how new entry into the market will be assumed (Dess & Lumpkin, 1996). For small start-up businesses and large firms alike, entrepreneurial orientation is an important tool used to discover opportunities in the external environment as well as determine the firm's level of entrepreneurship by measuring five different dimensions: autonomy ( the

ability to take action on an idea free of organizational constraints), innovativeness ( the tendency of a firm to support new ideas and engage in a creative process), proactiveness (forward-looking, anticipating future problems or demands in the market), risk-taking (how far a firm is willing to go to make resource commitments), and competitive aggressiveness (closely related to proactiveness, but focuses on a firm's competition in the market, and the ability to respond to and outperform competitive (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996)

### **Adaptability**

To adapt, a company must have its antennae tuned to signals of change from the external environment, decode them, and quickly refine or reinvent its business model and even reshape the industry's information landscape. The speed of adaptation is a function of the cycle time of decision making. Adaptability relates to the extent at which enterprises survive or exit in an environment. The environment in which enterprises exist within its sector as well the life cycle of the organization is pivotal to understanding its competence at survival. Theorists have postulated variously on this matter. Adaptationists' have been generally focusing on the theoretical developing and empirical testing of many assumptions associated with the interdependence relationship between organizations and their task (i.e., competitive) or general (i.e., society) environment." Adaptation is often associated to Darwin's 'The Origin of Species' (1859). Though controversial his position may seem, the discussion has precipitated a tentative approach at viewing organizations propensity to survive or exit within its infancy stage, which seem as the most challenging stage, given the high rate of mortality of most organizations, entrepreneurial and innovative strides. The two approaches adopted by adaptations: determinism advocated by environmentalist and that of Management behaviorism who championed the



voluntarism position paved the notion for strategic fit for a firm to survive (Gianpolo, 2012).

### **Innovativeness**

Innovativeness is a positive attitude toward changes and an awareness towards the need to innovate. An organizations overall innovative capability of introducing new products to the market, or opening up new markets, through combining strategic orientation with innovative behavior and process (Wang & Ahmed 2004). On the other side of the coin, innovativeness relates to the capacity of the firm to mesh together in innovation and managers use this innovativeness to solve business problems and challenges, thus resulting in providing survival and success pace for the firm, either for current or future, (Hult, Hurley & Knight, 2004); Micheal Porter 1990). Hult (2004) later added that, innovativeness seemed to be useful in helping firms to compete with the competitors with those new or enhanced products and verify product lines, yet expanding the range of firm's activities generally. Therefore, then comes firm's innovativeness which refers to firms' 'openness to new ideas as an aspect of a firms culture and the willingness of firms to adopt new ideas'. Innovativeness is a broad concept which can be divided and studied at different levels, for example individual-level innovativeness, firm-level innovativeness, and regional-level innovativeness, etc. The concept "company innovativeness" here in this research is at an organizational level, at which a firm is viewed as a study unit.

### **Relationship between E-workflow and Organizational Survival**

In a paper titled 'competitive advantage through e-operations' Barnes et al (2010), reported the initial stages of a research project that investigated how UK-based organizations undertaking electronic commerce sought competitive advantage through the management of their e-operations. It was widely held that success in e- business was dependent upon harnessing the increased connectivity of the internet

in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness in managing business processes that produce and deliver goods and services. This requires the integration of operations management and information systems both within the organization and with supply chain partners. Results from a cross-case analysis of seven companies (three manufacturers and four financial service companies) was reported. The investigation indicate that: (1) e- commerce investments are mainly driven by a fear of being left behind by competitors rather than a desire to improve business process performance; (2) e-commerce investments tend to automate rather than redesign existing processes; (3) e-operations are run as a discrete set of processes, with little or no integration between e- operations information systems and those of the bricks-and-mortar operations; (4) there is a lack of formal performance measures for e-commerce investments; (5) legacy systems and a lack of industry standards are major encumbrances to information systems integration.

Boyer, (2001) in 'E-operations: A guide to streamlining with the internet' examined the extent of firms adapting to the use of the Internet infrastructure. The study reveal that, pure players are companies that do not have an up-front store presence and sell products only via the Internet (Boyer, 2001). Multi-channel retailers, also called "bricks and clicks" retailers, supplement conventional stores with online services (Burt and Sparks, 2003). The internet allows manufacturers to establish relationships with and even sell products directly to end consumers, bypassing traditional distribution channels. This can provide certain advantages, such as centralized inventories (Boyer, 2001). Sullivan (2007) suggests that a better public policy programme might be needed to reduce the higher failure rate among minority entrepreneurs. Particularly for service firms, where customer contact plays a critical role (Boyer, 2001). It can be argued that service firms owned by minorities may need

public policy decisions that reduce their failure rates. It was asserted that part of the public policy programme must focus on the discrimination issues. Nowadays, XML based EDI commissioned by international standard organization on the internet for commercial affairs, is actually based on these primary networks. Stability of the chain is one of the main factors and most complicated, efficient and stable SCM, generally found in bigger commercial bodies (Boyer, 2001).

As business activities on the internet gain momentum, there are an increasing number of research efforts focusing on the impact of the Internet on existing business models. However, relatively few focus on how the internet has affected small businesses. Since then, a number of other researchers have studied different aspects of small business and internet use. For example, Fuller and Jenkins (1995) reported an experimental study on the learning and business transformation process of small business adoption. They found that the information richness of the environment in which the firm operates, the necessity to collaborate in order to compete, and the business cultures present in communicating electronically all play an important role in ongoing internet use. Poon and Swatman (1995) analyzed the government policies of countries with well-developed internet connectivity and found that all were encouraging small businesses to use the so-called information superhighway to become more effective and efficient in the global competition.

From the foregoing point of view, the study hereby hypothesized that:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between e-workflow and entrepreneurial orientation of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no relationship between electronic workflow and innovativeness of small and

medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State

- Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between electronic workflow and adaptability of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross sectional research design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was 565 employees of forty five (45) small and medium-sized enterprises within the services sector in Port Harcourt thus: (8 from computer, communication and information services; 10 from, financial consulting and professional services; 8 from hospitality and transportation services; 9 from trade and repairs; and finally, 8 from health and education).

The sample size of 234 was determined using calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation was calculated using the SPSS 23.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. Correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation while the value of +1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation. In testing hypotheses one to six, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicate levels of significance (\* or \*\*) as calculated using SPSS

were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient r value, we rejected our

alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study.

**Table 1: Correlations Matrix for E-Workflow and Organizational Survival**

	E-Workflow	Entrepreneurial Orientation	Innovativeness	Adaptability	
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.644**	.829**	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	216	216	216	216
Entrepreneurial Orientation	Correlation Coefficient	.644**	1.000	.770**	.930**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	216	216	216	216
Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.829**	.770**	1.000	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	216	216	216	216
Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.750**	.930**	.864**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	216	216	216	216

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Research Data , 2019 (SPSS output, version 23.0)**

Table 1 illustrates the test for the first previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements.

***Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between e-workflow and entrepreneurial orientation of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.***

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a strong positive relationship between e-workflow and entrepreneurial orientation. The correlation coefficient 0.644 confirms the strength of this relationship and it is significant at  $p < 0.000 < 0.01$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation between the

variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between e-workflow and entrepreneurial orientation of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.

***Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between e-workflow and Innovativeness of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.***

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a strong positive relationship between e-workflow and Innovativeness.

The correlation coefficient 0.829 confirms the strength of this relationship and it is significant at  $p < 0.000 < 0.01$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between e-workflow and Innovativeness of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.

***Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between e-workflow and adaptability of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.***

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) shows that there is a strong positive relationship between e-workflow and adaptability. The correlation coefficient 0.750 confirms the strength of this relationship and it is significant at  $p < 0.000 < 0.01$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between e-workflow and adaptability of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between e-operations and organizational survival. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between the variables using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics tool at a 95% confidence interval. This finding reinforces views of Columbus (2001) who observed that, e-operations encompass the processes of how customer commitments get fulfilled through products and services within companies. This includes procuring products, arranging shipping and transport, and handling production—in short, developing fulfilment systems for handling the business that e-marketing and e-commerce generate. The ability to fulfil orders and

having the e-operations tools in place to handle them can spell the difference between success or failure with online initiatives. One example of taking the e-operations approach first and then having the e-marketing and e-commerce areas reflect the fulfilment capabilities of a company is exemplified in the evolution of Amazon.com

It also anchors the views of Kehoe and Boughton (2001; Boyer (2001), who identified e-operation as a strategy in e-business. They reasoned that e-business strategy can be further identified as two strategies, including e-commerce, and e-marketing. They argued that when manufacturers adopt e-commerce in a supply chain operational environment, e-commerce can build a Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Customer (B2C) model to improve partner's integration and collaboration on transaction activity practice. When manufacturers adopt e-operations, e-operations can streamline partner's integration and collaboration on the supply chain production activity practice (Boyer, 2001).

According to Mieczowska *et al* (2010), e-operations are run as a discrete set of processes, with little or no integration between e-operations information systems and those of the bricks-and-mortar operations. They suggest a need to jointly consider service design and quality management. A successful website operation may need to provide the characteristics of connectivity information quality interactivity, playfulness, learning, and adoption of technology. According to, Barnes *et al*, (2003), in congruence to total quality approach to e-operations, successive phases as to planning of website operation as per designed value or standards ('Plan' phase), implementation of the advanced standards ('Do' phase), measurements of the bottlenecks of the process ('Check' phase) and redesign to improve continuously ('Act' phase) on the basis of long term commitment, continuous innovation, scientific approach, responsibility to society, education and training (both employee and customer), and

customer focusing will insure top quality web operation. The dynamics for implementation of successful e-operations is dependent on enterprise management commitments.

According to Columbus (2001), collaboratively being able to share information throughout companies, streamlining the procurement and purchasing functions, and addressing the continual need for sharing information are just a few benefits of integrating e-operations into an e-business strategy. This is the area of an e-business strategy where the greatest benefits and quantifiable gains in financial returns will be generated. With the immediacy of information made possible by the internet and the constant need for information in companies, e-operations is clearly going to dominate the direction of e-business for years to come. According to, Barnes et al (2009), an organization can be considered to have e-operations if it has information and telecommunication technology (ICT) in the management of its order fulfilment and delivery process.

In this electronic era, there is still no substitute for operations management. Whether you are running e-business or brick and Mortar Company or a hybrid of the two, you have to manage people, information, and technology on a daily basis in order to support your company's goals and to ensure a quality experience for your customers (Janenko (2001).

### **Relationship between E-Workflow and Organizational Survival**

The first, second and third hypotheses sought to examine the relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival. Hence it was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival. These hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics tool. The test of hypotheses one, two and three shows that there is a

strong positive relationship between e-workflow and organizational survival.

This current finding was also consistent with the views of Jolenko (2001), who according to her workflow management system "completely defines, manages and executes 'workflows' through the execution of software whose order of execution is driven by a computer representation of the workflow logic. Workflow systems can replace current paper-based flows and information stores with an electronic version, whilst allowing future flexibility to support changes in the business environment. Consequently e-workflow provide process support like traditional workflows do, but in such a way that the system is intelligent enough to deal with the new internet business environment that is characterized by rapid, dynamic and continuous change (Ndetta, Katriou and Siaska, 2015). They expressed the view that "workflow systems embody explicit process and product models, i.e., a completely specified workflow design is required that can be modified to reflect the changes in organizations whenever they occur." A major limitation of traditional workflow systems is that they can, typically, only support simple, static and predictable processes, but not the dynamically changing and complex processes that are present in many contemporary e-business organizations (Ndetta et al. 2006). This drawback of traditional workflow systems is an evident fact in modern businesses where workflows are often executed simultaneously, requiring interaction between them and where problems arise during the execution of a workflow that have to be handled properly.

As for Russell et al. (2005) a workflow or workflow model is a definite description of a business process represented in such a way that it can be directly executed by a workflow management system. Aligning e-workflow with e-process, one can deduce some differences: e-workflow involves accomplishing an organizational tasks objectives. It deals with repeatable or structured organizational activities

while e-process in addition to the structured provide for the unstructured organizational activities as they arise. By this it permit for the human interface for its operation.

Organizations utilizing electronic workflow tools derive two primary benefits: greater efficiency of operation and strengthened internal controls in areas ranging from protection of sensitive content to improved procedures relating to organization asset (Karl Egnatoff 2011). He point to some of the key components generally found in an effective electronic workflow system to include routing capabilities, authorization, monitoring and alerts. Internally improved efficiency and effectiveness may arise from the opportunity for automating administrative process (as well as) the new technology's ability to trigger off the business primary infrastructure; its core processes and the surface base that supports them. Web technology may enable a new round of re-engineering of the primary infrastructure and lead

to faster turnaround of customers' orders, enhanced customer support , improvements in a product unit-cost structure and shorter time to market for new products.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this age of information technology, to be in competition or beat competition it is necessary to adapt to proactive strategy appropriated through information technology infrastructures and with the e-workflow flow business paradigm to survive. The study concludes therefore that e-workflow is a significant predictor of organizational survival of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, River's State.

Based on the findings it was recommended that SMEs should integrate key internet infrastructures, imbibe robust inter and intra organizational relation and to streamline best fit workflow solutions to enhance its competitiveness.

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