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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between supervisor support and corporate performance of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 120 employees of seven (7) selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. Sampling was not used as the entire population was studied as a census. 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 Statistics 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 results from the data analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between supervisor support and corporate performance of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study recommended that managers must understand that employees in their organizations must be treated as the most liquid assets of the organization which would make the organization through effective supervisor support and relationship.

Keywords: *Supervisor Support, Corporate Performance, Growth, Service Quality, Timeliness*

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INTRODUCTION

The environment in which organizations operate is constantly changing with different factors influencing the organizations. This is because organizations are open systems that operate in environment that carries with it a myriad of challenges and uncertainties. For them to deliver efficiently, they must learn to appreciate the present challenges and cope with the increasingly competitive environment which calls on firms to rethink their strategies (Pearson & Robinson, 2005). The days when companies could wait for clients to walk to their organizations are long gone thus organizations must realize that their services and products regardless of how they are cannot sell themselves (Kotler, 2000). Iravo, Ongori and Munene (2013) state that one of the important questions in business has been why some organizations succeed and why others fail (Awino, 2011) asserts that for an organization to be successful it has to record high returns and identify performance drivers from the top to the bottom of the organization Njihia, Obara, and Mauti (2013) highlight performance measurement as one of the tools which helps firms in monitoring performance, identifying the areas that need attention, enhancing motivation, improving communication and strengthening accountability.

According to Tangen (2005), performance can be described as an umbrella term for all concepts that consider the success of a firm and its activities. Performance can refer to actual results/outputs of certain activities, how an activity is carried out, or an ability to achieve results. Atkinson (2012) defined performance as the achievement of results ensuring the delivery of desirable outcomes for a firm's stakeholders. Awino (2011) asserts that for an organization to be successful it has to record high returns and identify performance drivers from the top to the bottom of the organization. Njihia *et al.* (2013) highlight performance measurement as one of the tools which help firms in monitoring performance, identifying the areas that need attention, enhancing motivation, improving communication and strengthening accountability. Performance is equivalent to the famous 3Es, that is, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of a certain program or activity (Javier, 2007). Daft and Weick (2010) defined organizational performance as the organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources in an efficient and effective manner. Organizational performance is the ability of the organization to achieve its goals and objectives (Sok, O'Cass & Sok, 2013). This ability from the point of view of this paper could be facilitated by supervisor support.

Supervisor support is the extent to which employers value their employees' input and are concerned about the well-being of their employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Immediate supervisors gather and distribute resources required by employees to do their work and provide positive encouragement for a job well done. Supervisor support comprises emotional support and instrumental support. Emotional support is actively listening and being concerned about employees' needs, while instrumental support is where a supervisor gives tangible expertise and assistance in completing a task (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). According to Eisenberger et al (2002), employees combine the treatment they get from their supervisors and make a general interpretation on how an organization values their efforts and takes care of their welfare. As role models, experienced leaders and problem solvers at the top level, supervisors always work jointly with their employers to come up with policies plans and procedures, implement, monitor and evaluate them (Sloan, 2012). Strong support from supervisors and co-workers improve working environment by reducing employees' stress, which in turn improves job satisfaction and employees' performance.

This study therefore examined the relationship between supervisor support and corporate performance of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Furthermore, this study also guided by the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between supervisor support and growth in selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between supervisor support and service quality in selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between supervisor support and timeliness in selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the relationship between supervisor support and corporate sustainability

Source: Author's Desk Research, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study is underpinned by the Job embeddedness theory by (Mitchell*et al.,* 2001). Mitchell *et al.,* (2001) noted that job embeddedness theorizes that employees remain in the organization as long as the inducements to stay there match or exceed their expectations. Job embeddedness influences employee's decision to whether remain in the company or leave. By being embedded in a job, the individual will be less likely to leave the organization thus having a positive impact on their performance. As employees participate in their professional and community life, they develop a web of connectedness and relationships on and off the job. Organizations should ensure that their employees are job embedded as this will keep the individual from leaving the company hence resulting to employee retention. Human resource practitioners should try and ensure that employees are embedded to their jobs through the three dimensions of job embeddedness; links, fit and sacrifice.

The links dimension describes the relationship the employee has with other people in the organization. Organizations can manage links by providing employees with mentors within, design work in teams, foster team cohesiveness. Examples include co-workers, work groups, mentors friends relatives and so forth. Employees with numerous links to other in their organization and community are more embedded and would find it more difficult to leave. By having good relations in the workplace will act as a way of embedding the employee to their jobs and this can be accomplished by having a member working in teams. The second dimension fit is described as the compatibility that an employee has with their work and in the work place.

Organizations can employ realistic job preview, incorporate organization fit into employee selection as well as provide clear socialization and communication about the enterprises values and culture to realize employee fitness into their new environment. Example is an employee whose product knowledge is in that organization and any other organization has been a competitor, this employee will feel fitted into this organization exiting to counter

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the competitor. Therefore, the human resource department should ensure that the individual's needs such as career goals, personal values and plans for the future fit with the organizations goals and plans. This will ensure that the employee feels tied to the organization thus ensuring the employee is retained and have an increase in performance. Sacrifice is the third dimensions in the job embeddedness theory. Sacrifice is the loss that an employee will feel and bear when he/she decides to leave the organization. When the individual leaves the organization he/she will have to lose interesting projects, attractive benefits and compensation, working with colleagues who have grown close to as well as promotional chances. Therefore, job embeddedness is beneficial to organizations when it comes to retaining employees as it enables the firm to know why people decide to stay thus creating appropriate retention strategies that suit the organization (Mitchell et *al.,* 2001).

Supervisor Support

Ontario, (2004) stated the supervisor support is so essential to retention that it can be said that employees leave bosses, not jobs (Madiha, *et al.,* 2009). Association between workers and the boss is a significant factor that influences the employee retention as supervisors are the "human face" of the organizations. Employee's relationship with a supervisor strongly affects the employee's opinion about the organization (Eisenberger and associates, 1990). Supervisor's support is an essential factor to change the worker's propensity to quit and create high involvement in job by establishing strong relationship and free interaction with the supervisor (Mahal, 2012).

After a two year survey of more than three thousand employees in different job functions and industries demonstrated that manager, bosses and team leaders or who direct and work together with workers have a large influence on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees with their jobs. Or briefly, it can be said that employees look for other opportunities elsewhere as a consequence of "problems with the boss". Issues that exert or force the satisfaction and commitment in employees are mostly under the charge of manager, supervisor or the team leader (Kaye & Evans, 2003).

Employee development programs cannot exist without a culture that supports them. Any effective program must have strong support from people in senior management positions, and these people must also serve as positive role models to subordinates (Zenger, Ulrich, Smallwood, 2000). Managers and supervisors take on a new role when an organization gets into the business of employee development. They must become coaches to help people manage their careers and support their development efforts. Managers at Sears actually go through a workshop called Managing Career Development" to prepare them to work with employees under their career planning system (O'Herron and Simonsen, 1995). Coaching employees is valuable in helping them meet their goals, but it is also important for managers to simply show that they care. It is an intangible incentive that can make a big difference in employee motivation (Moses, 2000).

Corporate Performance

Performance is the competency of an organization to transform the resources within the firm in an efficient and effective manner to achieve organizational goals (Daft, 1997). Organizational goals vary depending on the purpose for which they are established. Business organizations, like manufacturing firms, have profit, growth and survival as the main goals. The popular ratios that measure corporate performance can be summarized as profitability and growth: return on assets

(ROA), return on investment (ROI), return on equity (ROE), return on sale (ROS), revenue growth, market shares, stock price, sales growth, liquidity and operational efficiency (Dent, 2005).

Dess and Robinson (1984) proposed two measures of return on assets and sales growth for measuring firm performance: objective (actual amount) and subjective (perception). If objective performance measures are available, they should be utilized (Dess& Robinson, 1984).

Otherwise, subjective performance measures will be the alternative due to the absence of accurate objective performance measures (Dess& Robinson, 1984).

Corporate Performance will be measured using financial measures. Financial performance is any mathematical indicator used to assess how efficiently a firm utilizes its resources to generate income over a specified period (Wang & Huynh, 2013). Financial performance is often evaluated on various indicators such as the growth in returns on asset (ROA), returns on equity (ROE) and profit (Zack et al., 2009). Financial performance has also been measured using a five point scale from no growth, a little growth, average growth, fast growth to very fast growth using a comparison of industry average during the last three years for the following three items, namely returns on asset, returns on equity and profit (Wang & Huynh, 2013)

Measures of Corporate Performance

Growth

A number of concepts of organizational growth have emerged in the various literatures, however, organizational growth connote diverse meaning to various organizations and there are diverse parameters business entities may use to measure its growth, in as much as the desired goal of firms is to add value to their business (Hauschildt & Salomo, 2011).Conner (2000) pointed out that growth is an anticipated phenomenon of efficiency and effectiveness an organization tends to achieve over a period of time. Accordingly growth is an indication of resourcefulness of the employees of a firm and can be measured in terms of profit, growth in market share, product development, revenue and expansion of the company's assets. As firm grows unit costs of production will fall, in the same vain organizations will benefit from favorable economies of scale, increased in purchasing power, ability to survive inflation rate, high revenue turnover and increased status for organizational employees.

Furthermore, Organizations are said to undergo different stages of growth in their business life cycle, from stage of entrant into the market, to the stage of survival, move to the stage of optimization and eventually decline and transferring their knowledge and talents to surviving firms (Davidsson, *et al.* 2010). Organizations all over the world struggle for survival regardless whether public or private. Small firms strive to get more revenue, while the conglomerate makes every effort for rebranding and increase in their market share (Roberts & Nick 2004). Thus, Coffman, *et, al.* 2002 and Achtenhagen, *et al*. (2010) opines that organizational growth is a yardstick to analyze how a firm is doing in terms of level of sales, product innovation, increase in revenue and its market share in relation to other firms in the same industry.

Accordingly Brush, Ceru & Blackburn (2009), in their study of organization assert that growth is an important phenomenon that is expected to take place in the life cycle of any organization. Increase in organizational growth decreases the possibility of winding-up of the business; hence firms that experiences upward movement in growth will have a higher probability of surviving in the market while employee output is essentially the result of increase in demands for their goods and services. The long run success or failure of a firm will be measure by how well a firm manages its human and materials resources in comparative to the goals and corporate intent of the organization. (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007, Janssen 2009, Headd & Kirchhoff, 2009 and Rauch &Rijskik, 2013).

Service Quality

Service quality is an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations. Service providers often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify problems, and to better assess client satisfaction. To this end, many authors agree that service quality plays a pivotal role since its inception in terms of getting positive results in a firm's performance . Offering superior level of service quality will surely enhance the firm's image and increase her chances of acquiring new customers (Siddiqi, 2011).

Johnston (1987) defines service quality with the phrase "customer satisfaction," that is the grade of correspondent between customer's expectation and perceptions of service. Further, the service attributes of perceived service quality relate to customer satisfaction (Parasuraman& Berry, 1985). Reponsiveness or dissatisfaction helps to gain information and experience with the service, which impact the perceived quality of the service. According to Zeithaml (1988) perceived quality is defined as: "Consumers' appraisal of a product's overall excellence or superiority". Previous researchers agreed that perceived service quality can be recognised as matching the customer service actual performance perceptions with the service performance expectations (Gronroos, 2006).

Service quality is defined as customer's perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithmal 1985). Service quality is often judged by customers and not by the organization itself (Abbasi, Khalid, Azam and Riaz, 2010).Martin (1999) suggested that a service is characterized by attributes such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability which delineate a service from a good which further complicates the evaluation of the performance of a service. This creates the need for an organization to develop new models or use already existing models to measure the performance of the services and the perceptions that customers have towards the company.

Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) mention that if customer's expectations are superior to the performance of the service, the service quality is deemed to be unsatisfactory which results in dissonance on the part of the customer. The service will be considered excellent if perceptions exceed expectations. Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithmal (1988) developed an instrument, the SERVQUAL model, which was among the first models used to measure service quality. The model is based on five factors reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The SERVQUAL model is built around the gap that exists between the services offered vis-à-vis the expected service quality as perceived by the customer. To measure service quality, researchers have developed various instruments that relied on their classification of the quality. It is worthwhile to say that researchers are continuing to use SERVQUAL tool that was developed by Parasuraman and Zeithaml in 1985 to measure the service quality; because SERVQUAL is considered as a reliable tool to measure service quality (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990).

Also, SERVQUAL tool has been commonly cited as one of the core consideration in measuring and assessing the service quality by many researchers (Bala, Sandhu, &Nagpal, 2011). Moreover, researchers stated that the SERVQUAL instrument relies on five primary dimensions (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) for instance:

- Tangibility (appearance of physical facilities, equipment, employees, and written materials).
- Reliability (ability of retail fast food outlets to do the promised service dependably and accurately. Once something is promised, then it should do provision of services and at the time promised).

- Responsiveness (willingness of retail bank personnel to help customers and provide on-time service).
- Assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of retail bank employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence).
- Empathy (caring, individualized attention to its clients i.e. understanding specific needs, and personal attention).

Timeliness

When the employees are productive, they accomplish more in a given amount of time. In turn, efficiency saves their company money in time and labour. When employees are unproductive, they take longer time to complete projects, which cost employee's more money due to the time lost (Olajide, 2000). The importance of higher productivity of the employees in public enterprise cannot be overemphasized, which include the following; Higher incomes and profit; Higher earnings; Increased supplies of both consumer and capital goods at lower costs and lower prices; Ultimate shorter hours of work and improvements in working and living conditions; Strengthening the general economic foundation of workers (Banjoko, 1996).Armstrong (2006) stated that productivity is the time spent by an employee actively participating in his/her job that he or she was hired for, in order to produce the required outcomes according to the employers' job descriptions. As suggested by Bloisi (2003) the core cause of the productivity problems in the South African society are people's motivation levels and their work ethics.

Timeliness is recognized as an important component of work performance (Downs, 2008) Timeliness is a way of developing and using processes and tools for maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity (Downs, 2008) It involves mastery of a set of skills like setting goals, planning and making decisions better. At the end we have better performance (Brogan, 2010). According to Thompson, *et al.* (2010), accurate and timely information about daily operations is essential if managers are to gauge how well the strategy execution process is proceeding

Time is an essential resource since it is irrecoverable, limited and dynamic (Downs, 2008) Irrecoverable because every minute spent is gone forever, limited because only 24hours exist in a day and dynamic because it's never static (Claessens, Roe &Rutte, 2009) According to North (2004) time management is the organization of tasks or events by first estimating how much time a task will take to be completed, when it must be completed, and then adjusting events that would interfere with its completion is reached in the appropriate amount of time. Effective time management is the key to high performance levels. Effective time management not only affects the performance of employees, but also helps to cope with stress, conflicts and pressure more efficiently North (2004).

Timeliness is a method managers used by managers to increase work performance (Claessens, Roe, Rutte 2009) Performance can be seen as the consistent ability to produce results over prolonged period of time and in a variety of assignments (Galbraith,2007) High performance in organizations is when an organization is so excellent in so many areas that it consistently outperforms most of its competitors for extended periods of time (North, 2004) Performance can be seen as the consistent ability to produce results over prolonged period of time and in a variety of assignments (Phillips, Jory and Mogford, 2007).

Relationship between Supervisor Support and Corporate Performance

Ontario (2004) who stated the supervisor support is so essential to retention that it can be said that employees leave bosses, not jobs (Madiha, 2009). Association between workers and the boss is a significant factor that influences the employee retention as supervisors are the "human face" of the organizations. Employee's relationship with a supervisor strongly affects the employee's opinion about the organization (Eisenberger, 1990). Supervisor's support is an essential factor to change the worker's propensity to quit and create high involvement in job by establishing strong relationship and free interaction with the supervisor (Mahal, 2012).

After a two year survey of more than three thousand employees in different job functions and industries demonstrated that manager, bosses and team leaders or who direct and work together with workers have a large influence on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees with their jobs. Or briefly, it can be said that employees look for other opportunities elsewhere as a consequence of "problems with the boss". Issues that exert or force the satisfaction and commitment in employees are mostly under the charge of manager, supervisor or the team leader (Kaye & Evans, 2003).

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

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between supervisor support and growth of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between supervisor support and service quality of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between supervisor support and timeliness of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 120 employees of seven (7) selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. Sampling was not used as the entire population was studied as a census. 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 Statistics 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.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

Secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman's rank correlation at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests covered a H_{o1} hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We based on the statistic of Spearman's rank correlation to carry out the analysis. The level of significance 0.05 was adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ($p < 0.05$).

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Table 1: Correlations for the relationship between Supervisor Support and the measures of corporate performance

			Supervisor Support	Growth	Service Quality	Timeliness
Spearman's rho	Supervisor Support	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.517**	.792**	.400**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	101	101	101	101
	Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.517**	1.000	.469**	.846**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	101	101	101	101
	Service Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.792**	.469**	1.000	.342**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	101	101	101	101
	Timeliness	Correlation Coefficient	.400**	.846**	.342**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	101	101	101	101

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

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

H_{O1}: *There is no significant relationship between relationship between supervisor support and growth of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.*

From the table above, the correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between supervisor support and growth. The *rho* value 0.792 indicated this relationship and it was significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represented a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and growth of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

H_{O2}: There is no significant relationship between supervisor support and service quality of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between supervisor support and service quality. The *rho* value 0.792 indicated this relationship and it was significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represented a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and service quality of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

H_{O3}: There is no significant relationship between supervisor support and timeliness of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between supervisor support and timeliness. The *rho* value 0.400 indicated this relationship and it was significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represented a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and timeliness of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study findings revealedthat there is positive relationship between supervisor support and the measures of corporate performance of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. This finding agreed with previous various studies of Ontario (2004) who stated the supervisor support is so essential to retention that it can be said that employees leave bosses, not jobs (Madiha, 2009). Association between workers and the boss is a significant factor that influences the employee retention as supervisors are the “human face” of the organizations. Employee’s relationship with a supervisor strongly affects the employee’s opinion about the organization (Eisenberger, 1990). Supervisor’s support is an essential factor to change the worker’s propensity to quit and create high involvement in job by establishing strong relationship and free interaction with the supervisor (Mahal, 2012).

After a two year survey of more than three thousand employees in different job functions and industries demonstrated that manager, bosses and team leaders or who direct and work together with workers have a large influence on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees with their jobs. Or briefly, it can be said that employees look for other opportunities elsewhere as a consequence of “problems with the boss”. Issues that exert or force the satisfaction and commitment in employees are mostly under the charge of manager, supervisor or the team leader (Kaye & Evans, 2003).

Employee development programs cannot exist without a culture that supports them. Any effective program must have strong support from people in senior management positions, and these people must also serve as positive role models to subordinates (Zenger, Ulrich, Smallwood, 2000). Managers and supervisors take on a new role when an organization gets into the business of employee development. They must become coaches to help people manage their careers and support their development efforts. Managers at Sears actually go through a workshop called Managing Career Development” to prepare them to work with employees under their career planning system (O’Herron & Simonsen, 1995). Coaching employees is valuable in helping them meet their goals, but it is also important for managers to simply show that they care. It is an intangible incentive that can make a big difference in employee motivation (Moses, 2000).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concluded that supervisor support significantly influences corporate performance of manufacturing companies. The study recommended that managers must understand that employees in their organizations must be treated as the most liquid assets of the organization which would make the organization through effective supervisor support and relationship.

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