

WORK CENTRALITY AND CORPORATE AGILITY IN THE FAST FOOD AND RESTAURANT SECTOR

¹Akpotu, Christopher, ²Godwill, Sele Duke

¹Department of Management, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Amassoma

Email: chrisakpotu4@yahoo.com

²Department of Management, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Amassoma

Abstract: Getting employees to be consistent in showing positive work behaviour as a means for attaining strategic goals is a dominant discourse contemporarily. This study therefore examined work centrality orientation among employees as predictor of corporate agility in the fast food and restaurant sector in Port Harcourt. The study through a cross-sectional design, used the questionnaire instrument to generate data from a sample of 143 respondents that were selected primarily with stratified random sampling method. The instrument was validated and showed reliability Cronbach alpha of 0.73. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson Statistic. The results indicate that work centrality relates positively and significantly with corporate agility especially in rapid response to market needs. The study therefore conclude that work centrality elicit extra role that strengthen and facilitate strategic attempt at prompt and timely service delivery. It was recommended amongst other that managers should ensure work climate that instigate a psycho-social behaviour that consistently support efforts at goals.

Keywords: Work Centrality, Agility, Customer interaction, Resource Reprioritization, Rapid Response.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are consistently initiating and crafting measures that provide capacity to gain competitive advantage as competition amongst firms attains exponential momentum. The competition intensity requires that customers are attendantly served with quality and done promptly Overby, Bharadway, Sambamurthy, 2006; chi, Ravichanchara & Andrevski, 2010). Simply, agility which means attending to market needs and allied environmental changes speedily is fast constituting the strategic thrust for organizational competitiveness. This being the case, management of organizations are faced with the challenge of not just getting employees to undertake tasks but to also create a committed workforce that will voluntarily undertake tasks beyond assigned duties and responsibilities (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Messner & Schafer, 2012). Indeed, a body of knowledge is fast being developed and evolving in strategic management literature relating to corporate agility (Goldman, Nagel & Preiss, 1995; Miller, 2008; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). However, the conceptual latitude on the discourse has been largely limited to definitions and theoretical compositions of the concept. This scenario requires further incursion to provide indepth understanding that fills the gap in literature relating to determinants of corporate agility especially as it relates with the employees who are expected to operationalize the corporate agility focus of the organization towards gaining competitive advantage. Employee willingness to undertake extra tasks beyond assigned responsibilities accentuates a strategic drive towards goals. Willingness to exceed work schedule as assigned has been conceptualized as work centrality which make accomplishing work tasks a dominant cognitive subject in employees workplace behaviour. While the theoretical and empirical search lasts on determinants of corporate agility, work centrality is seen as having the potential to stemming corporate agility. Against this backdrop, this study is an empirical attempt at examining the relationship between work centrality and organizational agility in the fast food and restaurant sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Centrality Defined

The concept of work centrality though nascent has found space in positive organizational behaviour literature (Luthans & Youseff, 2004; Luthans, Avolio & Fred & Weixing, 2005; Swaminathan & Jawahar, 2013). Some scholars have sandwiched it conceptually within extra-role discourse (Gull & Doh, 2004; Gawin & Mason, 2004; Fisher & Mansell, 2009). However, Ugwu and Igbende (2017) have recently provided a hyper conceptual focus that offers it a distinct conceptual domain and validity. Work centrality according to the authors connotes a general commitment to work. Granger and Belly (2010) defines work centrality as individual disposition and ideological inclination to work as a significant aspiration for positive end points. These definitions underscore a positive work attitude towards work roles by individuals with work centrality orientation. Kappal (2015) argues that work centrality is a virtue that provides a seamless commitment to work schedule by work centralists. They offer voluntary work hours beyond formal work schedule and view work as central to their lives (Naeem, Malik & Bono, 2014). The work centrality discourse is based on individual employee feeling of what positive contributions he can make voluntarily to enhance organizational attempts at attaining goals. According to Arvey, Hargaz and Liao (2004) they posit that work centralists do not necessarily look up to pecuniary or other tangible rewards and will be willing to work even when they are eligible for retirement. It is a clear demonstration of passion for the well-being of the organization.

The Concept of Corporate Agility

Conceptual contributors on the corporate agility concept have been aggressive, reminiscent of the imposing competition and change in the global business environment (Goldman, Nagel & Preiss, 1995; Miller, 2008; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). The battery of contribution notwithstanding, it is clear that the thematic focus on the concept is the renewed vigour to respond promptly to the market place and adjust to the emerging dynamics of the environment. Corporate agility has been defined by Vokurka and Flidner (1998) as firms ability to produce and market successfully abroad range of low-cost, high quality products with short lead times to varying lot sizes which provide enhanced value to customers through customization.

McGayphey (1999) defined agility as ability of firms to respond quickly and successfully to change. A more lucid and comprehensive view was offered by Goldman (2003) as he viewed corporate agility as a comprehensive response to business challenges resulting from rapidly changing environment through fast innovative and market sensitive approaches and resource deployment. The changes associated with the environment are consciously assessed proactively through continued customer interaction. Agility entails a comprehensive analysis of the value chain for prompt service delivery. It requires capacity to intelligently, rapidly proactively seize opportunities and react to threats within the external environment of firms (Meredith & Francis, 2000). Commonly, as competition amongst firms turn hyper (Oversby, 2000) organizational operators initiate strategic actions that are targeted at identifying inherent opportunities while at same time identify internal capabilities that leverage capacity. In order to attain this, corporate agility reinforce link with existing markets while at same time explore new ones. It stretches to reprioritizing resources into exploiting new identified opportunities. These attributes are exemplified in Narasimhan et al (2006) position that corporate agility ensures effective change in operation and response to uncertain and changing demands in the market.

A synthesis of definition of the concept shows the search for the business customer and integrating functions for prompt attention to change is central. It is also emphasized that responding speedily and truly to the identified customer should be strategically undertaken therefore a reprioritization of resources to effectively and efficiently produce for the market. Indeed, Kosonen (2008) posits that corporate agility refers to making fast turns and being able to transform and renew the organization without losing opportunities.

Workplace Centrality and Corporate Agility

The concept of work centrality amidst multi conceptualization has a common position that views it as extra-ordinary commitment to work (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008; Ugwu, 2012; Ucanok & Karabati, 2013). Work centrality emphasizes work responsibilities as being far from mere agency commitment rather an ideal that should involve mobilization and mustering of both cognitive psychological and ethical energies to achieve end points. Sharma (2011) defined work centrality as employee innate belief in the significance and values of work, therefore, the epicenter of their day to day existence. Hirschfield and Field (2000) argues that individuals with work centrality ideology find happiness in assigned work roles showing extra care and willingness that transcend established performance parameters. Sharma (2011) noted that work centrality detracts from time bound job hence would prefer an expanded time

latitude that though retired, will still show interest in work not necessarily for monetary gains. Further, work centrality activates extra-role and commitment behaviour that expectedly provide for functional outcomes. The growing literature on the construct has linked it with some outcomes like organizational citizenship behaviour, employee job satisfaction, cohesiveness (Rego, Ribeiro & Cunha, 2010; Ucanak & Karabati, 2013; Ugwu & Igbende, 2017). This notwithstanding, work centrality undoubtedly, has the potential to vitally commit to strategic initiatives and operations of the organization and ensure functional outcomes. Ugwu (2012) observed that work centrality when exhibited at the management level ensure intensive scrutiny of all strategic plans, actions and implementation processes. At the lower level of the firm, work centrality phenomenally ensure successful work operations and strategy implementation. This simply means that employees that are ideally work centrality oriented are likely to show more commitment to the realization of strategic actions aimed at gaining competitive advantage. As organization gets involved in agile strategic orientation towards service delivery, it is believed that a workforce with work centrality orientation can likely fast track customer service in the most qualitative and prompt manner. Ugwu and Igbende (2017) has found a relationship between work centrality and organizational citizenship behaviour and this was also the case in Rego et al (2010) study which found a relationship between work centrality and affective commitment using organizational incentive structure as moderating factor. While these studies established a positive and significant relationship they are essentially organizational behaviour related which will make it difficult to predict its relationship with core and strategic organizational actions like agility. The implication is, a theoretical gap exists which is the focus of this study therefore, it is hypothesized that *work centrality relates with organizational agility*.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is non-experimental type rather it conducted using a cross-sectional survey design that allows a wider coverage allowing for generalization for study outcomes (Creswell, 2000). The study unit level of analysis is micro therefore had used the questionnaire instrument to obtain data from the individual employees. It took into consideration managers and other employees. Notably, the employees of the studied sector work beyond the conventional eight hours of work that starts from 8am to 4pm. The service they provide ensures early to work and closing late scenario therefore we had judgmentally got a sample of 84 participants. Eleven research assistants were appointed to serve the research instrument. Participants were allowed thirty working day to respond and were also retrieved by the research assistants appointed. A total of 72 of the instrument were retrieved.

Measures

The different scales deployed for this study were rated on five-point likerts types ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree).

Work Centrality: Assessing the construct required developing appropriate scale following relevant psychometric theory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) 11 academic and practicing experts were requested to evaluate the instrument by scrutinizing its clarity, comprehensiveness and representativeness (Balo, 2011). Content validity ratio (CVR) of Leaushe (1975) was used to assess the experts position on the instrument. The process eventually gave a 16 item scale whose CVR were higher than 0.49. It was further examined for reliability and was found to satisfy reliability standard with Crobnach alpha of 0.81 (Nunnally, 1978; Garson, 2010).

Corporate Agility: This was measured with Schultz and Khinsman (2015) 12 item scale adapted from market agility and competitiveness questionnaire where respondents are expected to specify their extent of agreement with question items like – my company generate much market information for prompt customer response ranging from 5 – Strong Agree to 1 – Strongly Agree. The Cronbach alpha of the present study is 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Demographical Profile

The sample is made up of 43% and 57% females and makes respectively while, 24% of the respondents have served their firms for up to 10 years and 37% of participants have served in the firms for up to 7 years. 30% of them have been with their firm for up to 5 years.

4. RESULT

The Pearson result indicated a positive and significant relationship between work centrality construct and corporate agility. In the case of customer interaction and rapid response, the have $r = .643$ and $.720$ respectively which means a strong and significant relationship at $p < 0.01$. For resource reprioritization with $r = .211$ and $p < 0.01$, it is weak and significant.

Table 1: Correlation Result on Work Centrality and Corporate Agility

		WC	ICI	RR	RRes
Work Centrality (WC)	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.643**	.211**	.720**
	Sig (2-tailed)	-	.000	.004	.000
	N	72	72	72	72
Intensive Customer Interaction (ICI)	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1.000		
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	-	.000	.000
	N	72	72	72	72
Resource Reprioritization (RR)	Pearson Correlation	.211**		1.000	
	Sig (2-tailed)	.004	.000	-	.000
	N	72	72	72	72
Rapid Response (RRes)	Pearson Correlation	.720**			1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	72	72	72	72

** correlation is significant @ the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* correlation is significant @ the 0.05 level

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are profound to the extent that they have deepened the understanding of the link between behavioural actions as predictors of successful firms strategic initiatives at gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. The results of the study provide support for previous studies though negligible (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Messnera & Schafer, 2012; Ugwu, 2012; Ugwu & Igbende, 2017). The correlation outcome indicates a positive relationship between work centrality and corporate agility. Ugwu and Igbende (2017) found a relationship between work centrality and emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviour. Though their study were within the precincts of workplace behaviour, it essentially indicate the potency of work centrality to influence positive outcomes especially in rapid response at work. The findings of this study from the results elicit the fact that achieving prompt and timely response to market need equally require a workforce with work centrality orientation and beliefs attracting extra-role commitment to work goals. They show commitment gathering information customers for the purposes of adding value to products and innovating new products for markets. In the sector studied, work centrality is likely to account for quality and all-time service delivery especially as economy repositioning strategies are tilted towards full time types. Agile firms are therefore needed to acquire a workforce whose attachment to responsibilities is not necessarily based on tangible rewards but willingness to work beyond marked schedule.

6. CONCLUSION/ PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

There is renewed leap by firms to meet changing market needs and there is exacerbated attempt at enlisting employee support beyond formal engagement protocols to include self-instigated commitment that is perhaps not pecuniary rewards driven for attaining goals. This paper therefore examine employee work centrality concept as a predictor of corporate agility in the Nigerian fast food and restaurant sector. The study results illuminate the conceptual shift on the influence of behavioural exhibition on strategic competitive actions of firms. The model explains the thinking that work centrality predicts corporate agility of firms. Employee readiness to undertake roles beyond scheduled, catalyze functional realization of strategic attempt at gaining competitive advantage. The study concludes that work centrality elicit extra-role behaviour that strengthen strategic attempt at prompt and timely response to market place. What the findings of this study imply for policy and strategy crafting is, managers of work organizations should ensure a work climate that builds the employee self-efficacy and belief in the organization. A commensurate, fair and equitable incentive structure and practice will no doubt reinforce the psycho-social asset of employees thereby ensuring work centrality orientation among work members, thereby ensuring organizational goal attainment.

Suggested for Further Studies

The constructs examined in this study can be tested within the Nigerian Public Sector against the backdrop of government renewed policies to reposition the sector for competitiveness.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chi, L., Ravichandran, T., Andreverki, G. (2010). Information technology, net-work structure and competitive action, *Information Systems Research*, 21(3), 543-570.
- [2] Fisher, R. & Mansell, A. (2009). Commitment across cultures: A meta physical approach. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 40(8), 1339-1358.
- [3] Garson, G.D. (2010). Scales and standard measures, start notes from North Carolina State University, Available at <http://facility.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/standard.htm> (assessed 11 March, 2017).
- [4] Gavin, J.H. & Mason, R.O. (2004). The virtuous organization: The value of happiness in the workplace. *Organizational Dynamics*, 33(4), 379-392.
- [5] Goldman, S.L., Nagel, R.N. & Preiss, K. (1995). *Agile Competitors and Virtual Organization*. New York: van Nostrnel Renihold.
- [6] Gull, G.A. & Doh, J. (2004). The 'transmutation' of the organization: Toward a more spiritual workplace. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 13(2), 128-139.
- [7] Hirschfield, R.R. & Field, H.S. (2000). General commitment to work, *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 21, 789-800.
- [8] Luthans, F. & Yousef, C.M. (2004). Human, social and now positive psychological capital management: Investing in people for competitive advantage, *Organizational Dynamics*, 33(2), 143-160.
- [9] Luthans, F.; Avolio, B.J.; Fred, O.W. & Weixing, L. (2005). The psychological capital of Chinese workers: Exploring the Relationship with performance, *Management and organization Review*, 19(2), 249-271.
- [10] Messner, W. & Schafer, N. (2012). *The ICCA Facilitator's Manual: Intercultural Communication and Collaboration Appraisal*, London: Createspace Pub.
- [11] Meyer, J.P. & Allen, N.J. (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace, Theory, Research and Application*, California: Sage Pub.
- [12] Miller, J. (2008). Critical incident stressed briefing and social work: Expanding the Frame. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 30(2), 7-25.
- [13] Naeen, B., Malik, M.E. & Bano, N. (2014). Nurturing organizational citizenship behaviour by optimism subculture: Empirical evidence from Pakistan, *Pakistan Economic and Social review*, 52, 175-186.
- [14] Nunnally, J.C. & Bernstein, I.H. (1994). *Psychometric Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [15] Oerby, E., Bharadwaj, A. & Sambamurthy, V. (2006). Enterprise agility and the enabling role of information technology. *European Journal of Information System*, 15(2), 120-131.
- [16] Rego, A., Ribeiro, N. & Cunha, M.P. (2010). Perceptions of organizational virtuousness and happiness as predictors of organizational citizenship behaviours. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93, 215-235.
- [17] Sharma, R.R. (2011). An empirical investigation into the role of emotional intelligence competencies in mental well-being, *Vision*, 15, 177-191.
- [18] Swaninathan, S. & Jawahar, P.D. (2013). Job satisfaction as a predictor of organizational citizenship behaviour: An empirical study. *Global Journal of Business Research*, 7(1), 71-80.
- [19] Talon, P.P. & Pinsonneault, A. (2011). Competing perspectives on the link between strategic information technology allignment and organizational agility: Insights from a mediation model, *MIS Quarterly*, 35(2), 463-486.
- [20] Ucanok, B. & Karabati, S. (2013). The effect of values, work centrality and organizational commitment on organizational citizenship behaviours: Evidence from Turkish SMEs. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 24, 89-129.
- [21] Ugwu, F.O. & Igbende, D.A. (2017). Going beyond borders: Work centrality, emotional intelligence and employee optimism as predictors organizational citizenship behaviour, *Cogent Psychology*, 4, 1-10.
- [22] Ugwu, F.O. (2012). Are good morals often reciprocated? Perceptions of organizational virtuousness and optimism as predictors of work engagement. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1, 188-198.