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# The Impact of Employees' Competence Management on Organizational Agility of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to determine the relationship between employee's competence management and organizational agility of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted using questionnaire as the research instrument. The population of the study was made up of five (5) managers from strategic departments of the nineteen (19) DMBs operating in Rivers State, Nigeria vis-à-vis human resource department, operations department, public relations department, marketing department and finance department. Therefore, the population of the study consists of 95 managers of the 5 identified departments of the nineteen (19) DMBs operating in Rivers State which were also used as the sample size. Collected data was analyzed using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 within a significance level of 0.05. The findings showed that employees' competence management has a strong and significant influence on organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. We therefore recommended among others that for DMBs to adapt effectively to changes that may occur in the future; they must recognize and determine the needed competences in the organization through effective employees' competence management.*

**Keywords:** *Competence; Employees' Competence Management; Organizational Agility*

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## INTRODUCTION

The business world of today is a world full of consistent changes, development and volatility which significantly influences the operations of all organizations, be it private or government owned enterprise. These changes are as a result of swift developments and advancement in technological factor of production, political instability as well as emergent interest in environmental issues that affect the performance of the organization (Kubaisi, 2013). The technological changes are not only limited to the tools or machineries used in the production of goods and services but also include the procedures, methods and processes involves in production. By reason of the unpredictable, intricate, as well as uncertain nature of these changes, the traditional way of managing organization is currently failing (Kotter, 2012). Hence, the need for business firms to become more agile in other to align themselves appropriately with these changes whichever means directly or indirectly to ensured continued existence of the firm (Ebrahimian & Jelodarzadeh, 2011). Thus, business organization might not be able to attain long success and performance until they become

agile enough to align themselves with environmental changes (Mahmoudvand, 2011) since change is one phenomenon that must surely occur.

Agile firms meet the desires of their customers by thinking out of the box that is they are very innovative. They do not just offer products, but proffer answer to satisfying the actual consumers' needs as well as know that goods or services can never be perfect enough to satisfy customers need, as such to enhance customers' preference and satisfaction they constantly create value by enriching their produced goods or services continuously (Lahafi, 2011). Agile organizations think beyond mere adaptation to changes, so that they tend to utilize very well any prospect opportunities found in the business environment through the acquisition of a particular niche in the market using their competence and innovativeness (Armstrong, 2000). Thus, organization depends so much on their available competences to be able to fully align to environmental changes. Employee competence management has become very significant and a must in today's unstable business environment if the organization is to be competitive in its operations; this is because it enables managers to effectively manage one of organization's most significant assets. Frequent changes in the environment have made worker competence very significant to organizational agility; this is because by having capable, knowledgeable and skillful employees, organizations are able to successfully respond to changes, thus effective management of this significant resource is needed. In other words, when employees' competence are effectively and efficiently managed in the organization, employees will have the propensity to better meets customers needs on time, possess flexible attitude to work as well as possess the capability to adapting to the complex and changing environment.

Competency is a combination of motivations, attributes, attitudes or values, content, knowledge, skills, or any individually measurable or custom-designed attribute (Asghari, Salehi & Niazazari, 2018). It can also be referred to as sets of behaviour, skill, knowledge, attitude, and personality traits that is significant to performance success, which lead to service excellence and give the worker a chance to do a successful job and achieve optimal organizational results (Tiraieyari, Khairuddin, Azimi & Jegak, 2010). The aim of employee competence management is to effectively and efficiently manage the competence of employees in a logical manner that will bring about an enhanced performance in the organization. The purpose is to make sure employees understood clearly the performance required of them and that the employees are well trained and developed and that competence is maintained or improved over time towards accumulating capacity to quickly respond to unanticipated changes that affects organization's success. Competences management further assists in providing a common knowledge of the needed and sought-after behaviours to achieving organizational goals.

If truth be told, how organizations can attain organizational success and prosper amidst today's frequent changes emanating from the business environment especially the external environment is one of bane of management of today's business organization including Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) in Rivers State Nigeria. Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the relationship between employee competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research questions that covers the study is; what is the relationship between employee competence management and organizational agility of

DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria while the hypothesis to be tested in the course of the study is there is no significant relationship between employee competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study will be very important because knowing the relationship between worker competence management and organizational agility is of topmost significance to nowadays business environment which is very dynamic, volatile and complex for different reasons: it would benefit managers because understanding organizational agility and what influences it is the first step for knowing how to manage business environment to achieve agility. Also, linking worker competence management and organizational agility will assist to unfold the rationalization for business firms to motivate their employees to possess the right skill and knowledge. More so, since the study focused on DMBs in Rivers State, the study hopes to offer facts empirically on the correlation between worker competence management and organizational agility in Rivers State.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Resource based theory is used as the theoretical framework of this study and it express that organization must be able to effectively and efficiently use their internal resources in other to be successful (Raduan, Jegak, Haslinda & Alimin, 2009). It holds that organizations should exploit and maximize the differences in their resource endowments, capabilities and competencies at their disposal as bases to designing strategies that will enable them properly align to changes that might emerge from the business environment so as to attain higher competitive advantage (Raduan *et al.*, 2009). However, for these resources to help organizations achieve competitive advantage on a sustainable basis, they must possess and exhibit certain characteristics like rareness, significance, and uniqueness (Barney, 1991). Thus, organizations can attain agility and lasting advantage competitively through effective management of the organization's resources (that is organization's workforce competences). In other words to become more agile in today's business environment, organizations must effectively and efficiently manage as well as judiciously utilize the human resource competences at their disposal.

### **Concept of Employee Competence Management**

Competence as a concept has been given different definition by various scholars because of its difficult nature. In regards to this Winterton, Delamare-Le and Stringfellow (2005) opined that there is lots of confusion and debate in regards to its meaning and how to reconcile all the various views. In the same vein, Mulder (2007) explains that the word competence is connected with twofold connotation vis-à-vis capability in form of skills and ability; and authority which emphasize the permission to utilize possessed capabilities. More so, every day usage of the word competence which most of the time used interchangeably with knowledge and skill has also brought a lot of confusion to understanding the meaning of the concept. This led Clarke and Winch (2006) to call this confusion conceptual inflation due to the ambiguity associated with its understanding. In regards to the above ambiguity

associated with the concept, several attempts have been made to stabilizing its meaning which has even become more complicated because of the way it is used in diverse fields and countries. McMullan, Endacott, Gray, Jasper, Miller, Scholes and Webb (2003) summarized the debate to include: (1) the behavioral view which sees competence to mean a depiction of actions that can be demonstrated as well observed or evaluated; thus their view point emphasize that successful performance can only be achieved when the necessary and basic knowledge as well understanding are at hand. (2) The generic perspective sees competence as wide collection of capabilities, like knowledge or capacity for thinking critically, acting together to promoting the execution of works. This approach does not pay attention to the situation, but assuming that any given ability can serve well in any circumstances or context and (3) the holistic perspective which merge qualities of the practitioner with the context in which they are applied and it incorporate ethics and values as elements in competent execution of a given task. More so, Zeb-Obipi (2007) expressed that competence is the expertise needed to executing a given task which involves a distinctive combination of knowledge, skill and attitude. In other words, it involves the capacity to execute a given task in the organization. Employee competences are the inputs that bring about the needed performance (that is outputs) in the organization.

Furthermore, employee competence management has to do with all-inclusive human resource approach that involves the identification and building of appropriate knowledge, skill and attitude needed for effective execution of a given task so as to enhance the performance of the employee and that of the organization (Lekshmi & Radhika, 2016). It focused on the practices of identifying, aligning as well optimizing worker job roles through skill, knowledge and ability management to enhance organizational performance. It is a way of judiciously using the competences of organization's employees to attain higher performance through the identification, aligning and the optimization of employee job roles, skill, knowledge and ability. Employee competence management has to do with more than standard performance but more of a change in the direction of employee self-leading, direction and accountability as well the drives to achieve excellence through properly managing their skills, knowledge and abilities (Horton, 2000a). The underlining distinction between competency management and performance management of employees that is traditional view of employee management is that competency management focused on inputs as well as behavioral features of employees, while performance management is about outputs or outcomes of a given job to be perform by employee (Horton, 2000a). Even though there is similarity in the growth of employee competence management, misunderstanding about its terminology affects its development which is based on the diverse way in which the United States and the United Kingdom approach it (Lodge & Hood, 2005). In the United Kingdom, the world competence which has the plural form competences used to means the array of principles associated with performance of an occupation- which has to do with the capability to use skills, understanding and knowledge to attain performance effectively based on the set standards in the organization (Horton, 2000b). In the United States, the world competency which has the plural form competencies emphasized the significance of the identification as well the improvement of person's behavioural characteristics that

differentiate him or her to excellently perform a given job (Horton, 2000b). The basic variation of the United States and United Kingdom view is that while the US view is on the basis for drives for excellence and exceptionality, the UK was to identify the skills and knowledge required to execute a given task that are observable, and can be evaluated therefore, can be developed (Lodge & Hood, 2005). When the right competent employees are chosen to execute a given task it affects the performance of that task.

### **Organizational Agility**

Organizational agility is the capability of an organization to swiftly sense changes from the business environment and quickly capitalize on it to improve performance. Sharifi and Zhang (1999) defined agility as an organization's capacity to adjust to changes that are unexpected from the environment as well as to continue to exist in the midst of threat from the environment, and use those changes as opportunities to increase performance. It involves the organization's capability to react on time to unanticipated opportunities and the development of solutions to satisfy needs of customers (Tsourveloudis & Valavanis, 2002). Further, Alberts and Hayes (2003) expressed that agile organizations are edge organizations with characteristics of autonomy, decentralized decision making process, capacity to share information for quick and appropriate decision making. Edge organizations possessed the characteristics of speed and operate at a reduced cost. The objective of agile firm is to satisfy customers and maintain the commitment of employees as well the sustenance of its market share (Javanmardi, Zanjirchi, Karbasian & Khaboshabani, 2011). More so, agility gives the firm capabilities to react successfully to nonstop alteration in the business environment. Thus, firms that have agilities are able to effectively operate in hyper competitive business environments by persistently aligning to environmental changes. Additionally, agility represents management's ability and the implementation of effective knowledge, so that the organization is able to prosper and flourish in changing and unpredictable business environment. In other words, not only is agility the capacity to adapt to irregular changes but also a conscious action based on knowledge management (Dove, 2005). Hence, it is the adoption of knowledge abilities as well as technological abilities to take advantage of opportunities in a changing environment.

Furthermore, an organization with an agile orientation essentially has a yearning for learning and is willing to embrace change. These organizations are very inquisitive to acquiring new information as well very innovative in trying to respond to business opportunities. This brings about behavioural change in them that enhances improvement. Individuals in any organization can adopt an agile mindset. This is a personal quality which will help them to adequately react to changes, take advantage of opportunities as well as better adapt to situations. More so, the organization's mission must focus on the ability of the organization to be agile at all time and at all levels. When clear objectives are established, organization will be able to assign resources to accomplish the stated objectives. The culture will then evolve to support the mission. Also, agile organizations have the capability to swiftly rearrange priorities and the alteration of work practices. They focused on workers empowerment, teamwork/collaboration, they welcome various innovative ideas,

encourages mistake, proactively making enhancement and interpreting customer needs. To attain agility, it requires the right employees with the right skills and knowledge. It requires commitment from the organization to promote flexible employee behaviour which may involve redesigning facet of jobs like descriptions of employee's job, recruitment practices, reward packages as well as the general performance management processes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We used correlational vis-à-vis cross sectional research design which examines the relationship between employees' competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State; therefore, research survey design was used adopting questionnaire as the research instrument which consist of four respond choices with 5 Point Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 indicating strongly disagree, disagree, indifference, agree and strongly agree respectively. Face and content validity was also used for the validity of the research instrument while the reliability of the research instrument indicates a Cronbach Alpha value higher than 0.7; specifically the values for employees' competence management = 0.825 while that of organizational agility = 0.961. The predictor variable is employee's competence management and it is used as a uni-dimensional variable while the criterion variable is organizational agility which was also used as single variable without measures. The population of this study was made up five (5) managers from strategic departments of the nineteen (19) DMBs operating in Rivers State, Nigeria vis-à-vis human resource department, operations department, public relations department, marketing department, and finance department. Therefore, the population of the study consists of 95 managers of the 5 identified departments of the nineteen (19) DMBs operating in Rivers State which were also used as the sample size. From the 95 questionnaire distributed, 89(93.68%) copies of questionnaire were retrieved while the remaining 6(6.32%) were not retrieved. More so, out of the 89 number of questionnaire retrieved, 2(2.28%) copies was not useful because it was not filled properly while the remaining 87(97.72%) copies of the retrieved questionnaire were filled correctly which were used for data analysis. The data derived were analyzed through the use of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient Statistical as well as t-statistics to test the relationship between the variables of the study through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 25 within a significance level of 0.05.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The Strength of the Relationship between Employee's Competence Management and Organizational Agility

Table 1 shows that a very strong and positive significant relationship exist between employees' competence management and organizational agility with a ( $\rho = 0.941$ ) and a  $PV = 0.000$  which is less than 0.05. In other words positive relationship exists between the variables and effective management of employees' competence enhances organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State.

**Table 1:** Correlation between employee’s competence management and organizational agility

			Employees’ Competence Management	Organizational Agility
Spearman's rho	Employee’s Competence Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.941**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	87	87
	Organizational Agility	Correlation Coefficient	.941**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	87	87

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** SPSS v25: Output, 2020.

The degree to which employee’s competence management influences organizational agility is further shown in the below table 2:

**Table 2: the degree of effect of employee’s competence management on organizational agility**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.941 <sup>a</sup>	.885	.827	.47219

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee’s Competence Management

**Source:** SPSS v25: Output, 2020

Table 2 above reveals the degree to which employees’ competence management influences organizational agility with regression result (R-val. 0.941), the value implies that employees’ competence management has a strong influence on organizational agility. The  $R^2=0.885$  implies that employees’ competence management explain 88.5% variation in organizational agility while the remaining 11.5% could be due to the influence of other factors not included in this study. The relationship is further tested applying t-statistics as shown in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: T-value result on employees’ competence management and organizational agility**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.528	.615		13.248	.000
	Employees’ Competence Management	.590	.058	.491	8.695	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Agility

**Source:** SPSS v25: Output, 2020

From Table 1 shows a PV of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and Table 3 shows  $\beta= 0.590$ ;  $t\text{-cal.} = 8.695 > t\text{-crit.} = 1.96$  at 0.05% which means that the relationship between employees’

competence management and organizational agility is statistically significant. We therefore reject the null stated hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, thus there is significant relationship between employees' competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

The empirical finding reveals a positive and significant relationship between employee's competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The above finding is in line with the findings of Bi, Zhou and Cai (2014); Asghari *et al.* (2018) who also concluded that competency management significantly affects organizational agility positively. Also, Van Schaardenburgh & Van Beek (1998) expressed that organizations normally initiate employees' competence management as means to leverage changes. Organizations rely greatly on the competences of workers in developing capabilities in effectively reacting to environmental changes (Ferguson & Reio, 2010; Crocitto & Youssef, 2003). Due to this, business firms are consistently using employee competence management practices or tools in ensuring that across the organization, employees have required skills as well as the capabilities to execute given task reliably and effectively which gives the organization the ability to manage changes and take advantage of opportunities therein. Hence, it is a means of transforming a traditional bureaucratic organization into a more flexible one. Employees' competence management is very important in bringing about behavioural changes in the employees as well as the improvement of organizational adaptability, entrepreneurship and flexibility (Hondeghem, Horton & Scheepers, 2005). More so, the purpose of employees' competence management in the organization according to Trinder (2008): Hondeghem *et al.* (2005) include: emphasizing of employees as important to the organization's success and longevity, provision of flexibility in reacting swiftly to needs of customers and the business environment, giving the workers opportunities to build and develop new skills, attitude and knowledge in executing their given task, enhance the process of recruitment, identify employee's training needs that will enhanced efficiency. All these provide the momentum and the ability for organization to exist and flourish in the business environment that is full with continuous changes that are unpredictable.

Furthermore, Ngai, Chau and Chan (2011) observed that employees' competence management has a significant influence on organization's supply chain agility. They further observed that competence is a set of behaviour, skill, knowledge, attitude and personality traits which are very significant to the success of the organization. In organizations where employees have desirable qualities, skills, knowledge and attitude lead the organization to growth and excellence and increase its performance. Thus, its effective management assists in the identification and assessment of the qualities and quantities of competences of workers in the firm in planning and developing workers growth (Hondeghem *et al.*, 2005) which provide momentum for the organization in ensuring that the organization survive over time, especially in turbulent situation. Also, Dyer and Shafer (2003) suggest that effective employee competence management provides the required information necessary for achieving agility in the organization through monitoring changes in the market and responding appropriately.

More so, Brans and Hondeghem (2005) observed that employees' competence management enhances the adaptability of the employees as well as their present and future efficiency. In carrying out the operation of the firm amidst rapid environmental changes, the competence of the employees help to better shape the firm through the reduction of uncertainty which can bring about survival of the firm (Horn, 2004). Employees' competence management provide stability, and continuance in the organizational processes as well improves the productive capacity of the organization through the enhancement of efficiency and the reduction of mistakes given that right employee with the right competence is executing a given task (Trinder, 2008), thus bring the capability to manage changes that are unpredictable as well as to take advantage of opportunities in these changes. Therefore, effective and efficient employees' competence management ensure that the organization has the capability to continue to exist in the midst of frequent environmental changes by quickly responding to customers' needs and delivering goods and services quicker than competitors.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our analysis revealed that a significant and positive relationship exist between employee's competence management and organizational agility of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria; thus we conclude that employee's competence management is an essential tool to attain and enhance organizational agility. One of the most important strategies that an organization can implement is the investment in and nurturing of its human capital through proper management of their competences. Investing on employee's competences in the organization can pay off in myriad of ways, from productive employees who stay with the organization, to high-performing teams, to improved financial resource of the organization. Successfully implementing such a strategy by identifying, defining and communicating the competences that are needed for the organization to be successful both now and in the future, the organization can better achieve its goals and provide the momentum and ability needed for organization to attain longevity and flourish in today's business environment of continuous changes. The emerging view in this era is that to build a successful organization able to survive over time; an organization must concentrate its energies on both economic and social performance, and invest in promoting employee with right knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude. The proper management of employee's competence through effective planning, training, mentoring, coaching and monitoring will assist in the alignment of employee performance with that of the organization's objectives which bring about improvement in communication between the managers and the organization's employees that will enhance agility of the organization (DMBs in Rivers State). We therefore recommend the following:

1. To become agile in today's dynamic environment, DMBs must enhanced productivity across the organization and to achieve this, require effective and efficient management of workers competence in the organization.
2. More so, for DMBs to adapt effectively to changes that may occur in the future; they must recognize and determine the needed competences in the organization as well as develop and monitor same through effective employees' competence management.

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