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# **International Academy Journal of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurial Studies**

## **S p e c i a l   E d i t i o n**

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*Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal*

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## The Effect of Product and Process Innovation Capabilities on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Quoted Banks

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**Abstract:** *The impact of globalization and rapid technological change has given rise to intense competition among firms, with firm survival and success increasingly depending on strategies adopted to increase firm competitiveness. Many organizations have used different approaches to achieve and sustain firm competitiveness, but we noticed that Nigerian banks are deeply involved in financial innovations, especially, in the years following the banking reforms that place in 2005. This study therefore examined the effect of product and process innovation capabilities on the competitiveness of Nigerian Quoted bank. The study used cross section survey method to administer structured questionnaires on 244 respondents, who are Regional managers, bank managers and operational managers of 16 Quoted Nigerian banks, operating in the six states of the South – South region of Nigeria. Based on the results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) used to analyze the relationships and effects of product and process innovation capabilities on firm competitiveness, the study concluded that these two innovation capabilities had positive and significant effect on firm competitiveness. The study recommends that banks reconfigure and modify their innovative products and processes, and make them unique, more appealing, more accessible, and operationally more effective, than those of their competitors.*

**Key words:** *Product innovation capability, process innovation capability, competitiveness, Nigerian Banks.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The landscape of today's business environment is greatly altered by forces of globalization and rapid technological change. This has tended to make competition among firms very tough and fierce. Therefore, firm survival and sustainability would increasingly depend on strategies adopted to increase firm competitiveness. Highlighting this need, Drucker (1999) posits that it is imperative that organizations deal with challenges of competition, and make firm competitiveness a major strategic goal. Understanding competitiveness is therefore of major interest to academicians, practicing managers and policy makers. Consequently, this study is an attempt in this direction to explore how firms can achieve and sustain organizational competitiveness by developing requisite innovation capability.

Every competing company in an industry desires to be superior, when compared to her competitors, with many aspiring to dominate the market and become market leaders. Competitive firms are known to exhibit higher growth rates and higher market share (Selcuk, 2016). Competitive firms also enjoy low production costs, increasing profits and market share in the face of competition (Pedraza, 2014).

The big question now is “How is firm competitiveness built, maintained and sustained?” Many scholars believe that innovation plays a major role in building firm level competitiveness, as innovation enables firms to become competitive and gain competitive advantage. A look at the activities of Nigerian banks in the last decade, will show how they are massively investing in ICT-based financial innovations. These banks believe it is financial innovations that deliver their desired competitive edge (Chijioke, 2015). But, a contrary report by Long (2011), indicated that success rate of innovation activities is low. Another contrary report by Battor and Battor (2010) noted that, about 50 percent of new products that are introduced each year usually fail. Given these disturbing contrary reports, there was the urgent need to investigate and establish the effect of product and process innovation capabilities on organizational competitiveness.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Innovation**

In recent years, innovation has become a necessary requirement for firms’ competitiveness and success. Because of this importance, innovation has generated a lot of academic and research interest, resulting in our having many definitions of innovation. Some researchers have defined innovation in terms of newness; seeing innovation as the successful introduction of a new product, procedure, organizational structure or market (Schumpeter, 1934). Innovation has also been described in terms of creating new demand; thus Schumpeter (1934) believes that innovation enables the use of an invention to create a new commercial product or service. When new innovations are brought into the market, the existing markets are destroyed, and new ones created, which will also be destroyed by the introduction of newer products or services. Schumpeter calls this process creative destruction.

This study analyzed Innovation studies carried out by Damanpour (1996), Cumming (1998) and Higgins (1995) and observed that these authors defined innovation: (1) in terms of newness- the development, and adaptation of a new idea; (2) In terms of success- the first successful application of a product or process; (3) In terms of change- here Innovation is viewed in terms of change: either a firm responds to changes in the external environment or influences changes therein. But a more encompassing definition is given by Alder and Shenbar (1990) and cited by (Rahmani & Mousavi, 2011), which defines innovation as: (1) the ability to develop products to meet the needs of market, (2) the ability to use existing technology to develop products, (3) the ability to develop new products or update existing products to meet the needs of markets, and (4) the ability to acquire new technology to create new opportunities.

### **Firm Competitiveness**

A company is said to have continuous competitiveness or competitive advantage if it is able to produce better results than competitors; and successfully create specific and lasting differentiation factors (Porter, 1985), thus every company in an industry desires to be superior, when compared to their competitors.

Firm competitiveness can be determined through various ways. Profitability, Turnover, Market share and growth have been suggested by (Ramasaamy, 1995; Lall, 2001). Pedraza (2014) believes that a firm’s capability in profitably sell marketable products. in the face of competition,



could represent competitiveness.

Porter (1987) views it in terms of a firm having competitive advantage- either cost advantage or differentiation advantage. Through cost advantage, firms deliver the same benefit at a lower cost, whereas with differentiation advantage, firms deliver unique products whose benefits exceed those of competitors. Some scholars have used financial performance to measure firm competitiveness (Panagiotis & Konstantinos, 2015). Financial indicators like Return on Sales (ROS); Return on Assets (ROA) and Turnover are commonly used. The non-financial indicators of competitiveness include market indicators like market share, market share growth, product range, and customer satisfaction.

Firm competitiveness has been linked with growth in productivity, thus having high productivity may indicate higher competitiveness (Momaya & Ambastha, 2004). Another measure of firms' competitiveness is the survival capacity of firms as Innovation is believed to enhance a firm's competitive position, whilst at the same time enhancing its potential to survive (Dosi, 1988).

In this study, two measures of firm competitiveness were used, namely Sales Growth and Product competitiveness. These are based on measurement scale developed by Yam, Lo, Tang, and Lau, (2010).

*Sales Growth:* Sales growth measures the annual growth rate of a firm, for the preceding three years. In fact, the sales growth rate is an indicator of both the sales of new and existing products, made from new and existing customers.

*Product Competitiveness:* This relates to the competitiveness of a firm's new products. Product competitiveness is a non-financial measure, thus a concept that encompasses many aspects, such as quality level, cost, market competitiveness and uniqueness of product (Yam *et al.*, 2010). Supriyadi (2014) observes that many companies engage in three aspects of innovation activities: they either invent, innovate or imitate. Through inventions they create or build a new product or process. Innovation enables firms to create a commercial product of the invention. Through Imitation, innovation activities of similar organizations are used or adapted.

### **The concept of Innovation Capability**

Innovation capability is simply a set of comprehensive characteristics of a company or organization which can be used to facilitate and support its innovation strategies. This set of characteristics consist of various competences and represent the asset, capital, and special human resources of the company, which are required in executing innovation activities (Lianto & Herlambang, 2018). The present study adapted the dimensions and measures of the two innovation capabilities from the study carried out by Calik, Calisir & Centinguc (2017). More discussions on these dimensions are presented below.

### **Product Innovation Capability**

This represents a firm's ability to create and deliver new goods or services to existing or new customers, or offering of existing goods or services to new customers (Day, 1994). To Schumpeter (1934), it represents the ability to introduce a new good, which has better quality, and one which consumers are unfamiliar with. The OECD (2005) defines product innovation in terms of new product introduction or significant improvement of existing products, in terms of technical specifications, convenience, materials used, and other functional characteristics.

Firms go into Product innovation to deal with challenges of competition, which arise from changes in customer tastes and preferences, variation in demand patterns and technological advancement.

There are two major ways to execute product innovation: radical and incremental innovation. Though radical innovation is more challenging, but it is more effective, while Incremental innovation is less demanding as it is focused on an existing market.

Some of the innovative products, which are ICT driven, being used in the banking industry include Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), telephone banking, MICR cheques, Electronic Card, Debit Card, Electronic Cash, Electronic Fund Transfer at Point of Sale, and many other electronic fund transfer technologies (Agboola, 2006). In the same vein, Irechukwu (2000) has also listed some of the banking services that have been revolutionized through the use of ICT-based innovations as including account opening, processing of transaction, and delivery of notices concerning credit cards and cheque books.

A related study by Ukpabio, Olaposi & Siyanbola (2016) indicates that the major hardware technologies acquired by Nigerian commercial banks include routers, computers, scanners, ATM, POS machines, telephone, master visa cards, and web cam. In terms of the Software technology acquisition, the study noted that surveyed banks were using: flexcube, finacle, eBBs, equinox, basis, phoenix and Globus /T24.

### **Process Innovation Capability**

This represents a firm's ability to coordinate and utilize resources, to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the firm's internal processes (Damanpour, 2010). Process innovation entails the introduction of new production method, approach or new technology, with the aim of improving production processes. Process innovation aims at waste reduction, and removal of non-value adding steps from the work flow. Process innovation capability aims at achieving lower costs and/or higher product quality (Afuah, 2003; Blaug, 1963), thus Process innovations may be invisible to the user unless it results in changes in the cost or quality of the product (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Lager (2002) summarized the major objectives of process innovation as follows: To reduce production costs, ensure higher production yields, increase production volume, and ensure recovery of product.

Some empirical studies have confirmed the link between process innovation and organizational performance. A study by Varis & Littunen (2010) among some SMEs in Finland showed a positive correlation between process innovation and firm performance.

Ilo, Ani & Chioke (2014) observed that the introduction of computers into the banking sector has enabled banks to automate their accounting processes and back office functions. The study also indicated that the automation of front office functions had improved customer service, resulting in the reduction of processing time and improve their corporate performance.

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>- There is no significant relationship between a company's product innovation capability and organizational competitiveness

H<sub>02</sub>- There is no significant relationship between a company's process innovation capability and firm competitiveness.

## METHODOLOGY

The study conducted a cross sectional survey on 244 respondents, using structured self-completing questionnaires. The respondents were made up of regional managers, branch managers and operational managers of all the Sixteen (16) Quoted banks, operating in the South-South Region of Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was also used in determining sample size proportions, and data was collected using a five (5) point Likert scale questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was carried out on each of the study variables, using frequency tables, and percentages. Inferential statistics was carried out using Structural Equation modeling (SEM). Technique. The analyses were carried out on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 software program and on IBM Amos program, Version 21 program.

Before conducting the hypotheses testing, a thorough measurement analysis was conducted to verify the survey instruments. The reliability was tested using a pilot test on some Quoted banks, and the Cronbach's Alpha value of every factor was greater than the minimum value of acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1979).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) carried out was based on Principal Component Analysis method, ensuring that the Eigen value of each factor was above 1 and the factor loadings are above 0.3 (Brown 2006). Measurement model was constructed for each of the constructs, and the model fit results are within allowable limits. Hypotheses testing relied on the results from the maximum likelihood estimation and standardized regression weighting to interpret results. Multiple indices of fit were used to specifying the overall model fit, namely CFI, GFI, NFI, RMSEA and Cmin/df. The research hypotheses were tested based on the significant level of p-value in each model. Structural models constructed to examine the relationship between the innovation capabilities and firm competitiveness are shown on Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below.

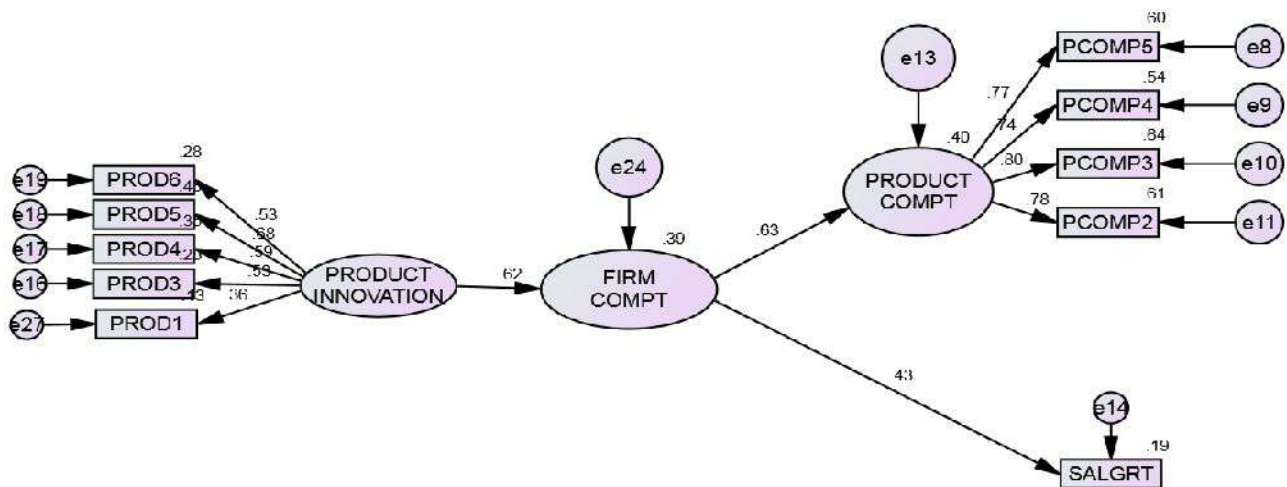


Fig. 3.1 Structural Model used in studying relation between Product innovation capability and firm competitiveness

The relationship between Product Innovation and firm Competitiveness, was investigated using the structural model, shown on Fig 3.1 above. The model fit results are as follows:

$CFI = 0.984 > 0.950$ ,  $GFI = 0.970 > 0.900$ ;  $NFI = 0.927 > 0.900$ ;  $CMIN/DF = 1.357 < 3.0$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.038 < 0.08$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.095 > 0.05$ ,

These Multiple indices are within acceptable levels as recommended by Hair et. al(2010).

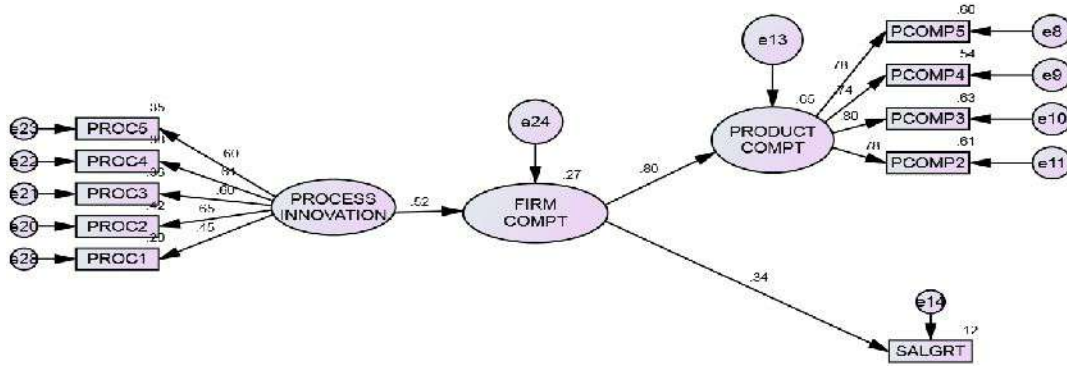


Fig 3.2 Structural Model used in investigating the relationship between Process Innovation and firm competitiveness

The structural model shown in Fig 3.2 above was also used in investigating the relationship between process innovation capability and firm competitiveness. It has the following model fit results:  $GFI=0.978>0.900$ ,  $CFI=0.994>0.950$ ,  $RMSEA=0.028>0.08$ ,  $CMIN/DF=1.195<3.00$ ;  $p=0.243>0.05$ , and also within allowable fit level.

Table 3.3 Hypotheses Testing

MODEL	Variable	Standardized Regression weight	Squared Multiple correlation ( $R^2$ )	Critical Ration	p-value	Decision
I	Product Innovation & Competitiveness	0.505	25.5%	2.208	0.027	H01 not supported
II	Process innovation & Competitiveness	0.410	16.8%	3.499	0.000	H02 Not supported

The results of hypothesis testing depicted on Table 3.3 above shows that in Model I, Product Innovation Capability has the following parameter estimates, ( $\beta = 0.505$ ,  $R^2=25.5\%$ ;  $p=0.027<0.05$ ) which shows a significant effect on firm competitiveness. With the value of the critical ratio greater than the standard value ( $2.208>1.980$ ) and probability value smaller than alpha standard of 0.05 ( $0.0027<0.05$ ), therefore, these empirical results do not support the Null hypothesis one (H01) which states that product innovation capability has no significant relationship with firm competitiveness. Therefore, this study concludes that product innovation capability has a positive and significant effect on firm competitiveness.

Also, In Model II of Table 3.3 above, Process innovation capability has the following model parameter estimates ( $\beta = 0.410$ ,  $R^2=16.8\%$ ;  $p=0.00<0.05$ ), indicating a significant and positive relationship between process innovation and firm competitiveness. Given the fact that the value of the critical ratio was greater than standard value ( $3.499>1.980$ ) and probability value smaller than alpha standard of 0.05 ( $0.00<0.05$ ), the study could not support the Null

Hypothesis Two (H02), but rather asserts that process innovation capacity has a positive and significant relationship with firm competitiveness.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

From the analysis carried out, the study concludes that product innovation capability has a positive and significant effect on firm competitiveness. Thus, when organization embark on strategies aimed at enhancing their product innovation capabilities, there tend to be a corresponding increase in firm competitiveness. This result agrees with some earlier studies, especially that of Jegede *et al.*, (2012) which concluded that innovation of products increases firms' sales revenue and profitability. This research finding is also in line with that of Damanpour (1991) and Sungjoo *et al.* (2010), which concluded that business competitiveness is associated with product innovation.

The result of the analysis on Hypothesis Two, (H02) shows that the empirical data used has confirmed that a positive and significant relationship exists between process innovation capability and firm capability. This means that when there are significant improvements in process innovation capability, this results in the enhancement of firm competitiveness. This research outcome is in conformity with the findings of Mensah & Acquah, (2015) and Kiveu (2017).

Further analysis shows that the combined effects of the two innovation capabilities accounted about 21.6% of firm competitiveness. This implies that other factors account for 78.4% of variations in firm competitiveness. This means that developing innovative products and processes do not on its own guarantee firm competitiveness. This finding in line with the observations made by Alejandra, & Arias-Pérez (2017), who studied the effect of product and process innovations on the financial performance of manufacturing firms in Colombia, and noted that companies that developed greater product and process innovation capabilities do not always exhibit the best business results, particularly when you talk about market share, or growth in sales. These researchers believe that the development of product and process innovation capabilities may be insufficient to obtain a better financial performance, and suggest that banks complemented these two innovation capabilities with development of marketing and organizational innovation competences.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of this study show that the development of innovative products and processes has positive and significant influence on the competitiveness of Nigerian quoted banks. It is therefore recommended that the development of these two innovation capabilities should form an important component in the overall strategy of banking operation, as these innovative products and processes guarantee speed, convenience, and accurate services. The findings of this study indicate also that product and process innovation capabilities have little impact on firm competitiveness. This may be attributed to the fact that all the Quoted banks are using the same kind of financial innovation and ICT applications. These seemingly highly innovative products tend to lose their appeal as a competition tool for attracting and retaining customers as a result of their being universally available. There is therefore nothing unique about having them since all the other banks have them as well. For these quoted banks to derive optimum benefits from investing in these innovative products, the banks must take additional steps to make their services more appealing, accessible, and operationally more effective than the ones offered by their competitors. Given the fact that the effect of innovative products and processes on firm competitiveness is not much compared to the impact of other innovation capabilities, firms should therefore, develop their marketing and organizational capabilities in order to derive



expected benefits from investments in innovative products and processes. it is also suggested that they combine their ICT investment with complementary investment in human capital development, and firm restructuring.

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# Talent Management and Competitiveness of Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State

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**Abstract:** *This paper examined the relationship between talent management and competitiveness in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State. Data was gathered from 36 top and middle level managers of the aforementioned companies through a well-structured questionnaire and was analyzed using univariate and bi-variate analytical tools such as the mean score and the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient to test the study hypotheses. The analysis of this paper was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and after analyses, the results revealed that talent management is positively and significantly correlated with competitiveness in terms of flexibility and innovation. Thus it was concluded that talent management is a precursor to competitiveness and it was therefore recommended among other things that oil drilling and well servicing companies should put more emphasis on the human capital approach to gain competitive advantage in their industry because 'human capital' represents an inimitable asset of any organization.*

**Key words:** Talent Management, Competitiveness, Flexibility, Innovation

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## INTRODUCTION

The modern business environment is highly competitive and as a result, the concept of competitiveness has gained much attention in recent business literature. Competitiveness spans across different disciplines including economics, political science, sociology, management, marketing and biology (Dubra, 2012; Alnidawi, Alshemery & Abdulrahman, 2017; Kareska & Marjanova, 2012; Greenwood, 2013; Kimemia, Gakure & Waititu, 2014). Competitiveness can be viewed from different perspectives depending on the discipline where it is discussed but in terms of business, it is measured by flexibility and innovation (Roman, Piana, Lozano & Mello, 2012). According to Van der Weerd (2009) flexibility is good for modern organizations as firms through flexibility can integrate internal adaptive managerial capabilities with the external dynamic business environment to act, react and evolve with markets and outwit competitors. Organizations that possess high level of motivation to innovate and therefore situate themselves in climates that would allow and encourage innovative ideas are exactly those that will innovate quickly and successfully and benefit thereof an achieved competitive advantage

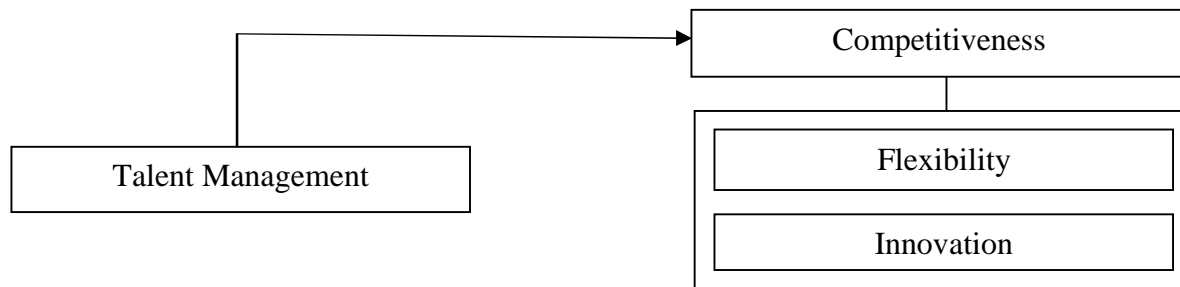
(Popa, Preda & Boldea, 2003). In the past, competitiveness in the organizational setting have been researched to determine its relationship with other variables such as ‘knowledge management’ (Antonova, 2010) and ‘conflict’ (Okoro, Okonkwo, Eze, Chigbo & Nwandu, 2018). This paper however differentiates itself from others by associating competitiveness with talent management because it is believed that organizations can develop their human capital through talent management to achieve competitive advantage.

Oil drilling and well servicing companies constitute a sector of the oil servicing industry in Nigeria that is highly competitive with these companies all vying for limited contracts to survive. It is therefore imperative that any of such companies with incompetent managers, technicians and successors are already doomed for failure. Therefore, it is important for these companies to understand the concept of talent management in order to prevent those who do not possess the skills, ability and behaviour that are required to lead, utilize information and (or) make rational decisions from occupying critical positions in the organization (Beheshtifar & Nekoie-Moghadam, 2011; Ahmadi, Ahmadi & Abbaspalangi, 2012; Tetik, 2016, Wahba, 2016). This paper was premised on the view that competitive oriented organizations should consider their current and prospective flexibility and innovative levels in relation to how they are affected by talent management policies and practices. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between talent management and competitiveness in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State. Drawn from the purpose of this study, the specific objectives were; ‘to examine the relationship between talent management and flexibility in Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State’ and ‘to examine the relationship between talent management and innovation in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State’.

### Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between Talent Management and Flexibility in Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between Talent Management and Innovation in Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State?

The conceptual framework showing the relationship between talent management and competitiveness is displayed in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of Talent Management and Competitiveness

**Source:** (Desk Research, 2020)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The baseline theory that underpins the variables of this paper is the Resource-Advantage Theory of Competition. This theory was proposed by Hunt (1995) and was drawn from the resource-based view of the firm. Implicit in this theory is that; competitive advantage of the firm is derived from resource heterogeneity and that; the value of a resource to a firm is seen in terms of its potential to yield competitive differentiation to enhance performance outcomes (Hunt, 2000). Griffith and Yalcinkaya (2010) indicates that organizational resources which are capable of influencing competitiveness and performance are of two categories which are the 'tangible entities' and the 'intangible entities'. The tangible resources therefore include financial resources, physical resources and legal resources while the intangible resources include human resources, organizational resources, informational resources and relational resources. All the above mentioned resources are important to achieve competitive advantage but the human resources according to Griffith and Yalcinkaya (2010) are considered the most important because they are action oriented and they stimulate the use of other resources. To make the most out of the human resources, there exists a number of techniques that can be adopted, of which talent management does not fall short.

### **Talent Management**

The awareness of talent management has grown substantially over the last two decades due to changing trends in the corporate world; it is now considered as one of the most future-oriented practices by human resource researchers and practitioners (Ganaie & Haque, 2017). The term talent management was defined by Rothwell (2008), as a process of attracting the best people, developing the best people and retaining the best people. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009), talent management is the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing individuals to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent people and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization. The concept of talent management is one that is difficult to discuss without addressing its model which systematically involves talent acquisition, talent development and talent retention (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2012; Tetik, 2016; Wahba, 2016; Ganaie & Haque, 2017).

**Talent Acquisition:** Talent acquisition is a strategic approach to identify, attract and absorb top talents into the organization to efficiently and effectively meet dynamic business needs (Tripathy, 2014). Talent acquisition is characterized by certain elements which include planning & strategizing, workforce segmentation, employment branding, candidate audiences, candidate relationship management, metrics and analytics and creating an organizational recruiting culture. Due to the short supply of substantial talents, many organizations are competing to acquire the best that is available. What will therefore differentiate organizations will be their ability to use these acquisition elements to identify, attract and absorb top talents. This is why the talent acquisition process is dubbed 'the war for talent' (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2012; Wahba, 2016; Tripathy, 2014).

**Talent Development:** After acquiring the most valuable people, a new challenge is born; how to develop them and increase their capacity to perform (Tetik, 2016). Talent development focuses on the planning, selection and implementation of development strategies for the entire talent pool to ensure that the organization has both the current and future supply of talent to meet strategic objectives. In an attempt to align talent development with organizational practices, organizations make significant investments in career management and in focusing the competence of their employees through training and development.

**Talent Retention:** The shortage of qualified labour as a result of an ageing workforce and the growing scarcity of highly skilled workers are common challenges organizations face in the modern business environment. In the midst of these challenges, companies that wish to enhance their performance note that allowing a high potential employee turnover is not an option; this is why talent retention is so important to organizations today. Talent retention is therefore the capability of a company to keep its talented employees from leaving (Maphisa, Zwane & Nyide, 2017). The major concern of talent retention is therefore to mitigate the negative effects of job turnover through employee engagement and organizational commitment. There are several consequences of talent management. One of such consequences which is the focus of this study is competitiveness.

### **Competitiveness**

Competitiveness which is demonstrated in “competitive advantage” relates to the strength that an entity has to take advantage of identified opportunities within its environment, such that its sustainability is quite assured and better than that of its rivals (Roman et al., 2012). According to Kareska and Marjanova (2012), competitiveness can be viewed from different perspectives such as “macro-competitiveness which involves inter-country or inter-industry relations and “micro-competitiveness which is at the organizational level and is the ability of an organization to participate and win in the field of global or local offers of particular products or services. Organizational competitiveness is a decisive factor for survival in the business world and can be achieved by setting priorities which could involve flexibility and innovation and which are two measures of competitiveness (Roman *et al.*, 2012).

### ***Flexibility***

Flexibility is a firm’s capacity to adjust to change and/or exploit opportunities resulting from environmental changes (Dreyer & Grønhaug, 2004). In short, flexibility is ‘the capacity to adapt’ (Metzner, 2010). Flexibility is of major importance for firms to survive and prosper in turbulent environments. According to Dreyer and Grønhaug (2004), flexibility is considered a necessity in business because product life cycles are becoming shorter, customers’ preferences are changing faster, competition has become increasingly fiercer and the development in information technology has become more rapid. Metzner (2010) posited that flexibility in organizations are in two forms which are ‘employee flexibility’ and ‘organizational flexibility’. According to Metzner (2010), employee flexibility is the ability for workers to make choices influencing ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘for how long’ they desire to engage in work-related tasks, while organizational flexibility relates to the numerical, functional, financial, temporal and locational characteristics that offer adjusting opportunities for organizations (Reilly, 1998; Atkinson, 2002). As much as flexibility is necessary for organizations to achieve competitive advantage, innovation is also important.

### ***Innovation***

Innovation means looking for new ways to do things and adapting to public (customer) demand (Anyanwu, 2013). Kiveu (2017) defined innovation as being critical in the improvement of firm process, products/services, marketing and organizational systems that makes the firms competitive. From this definition, we derived three aspects of innovation which includes product/service innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation.

**Product Innovation:** Product innovation could be in three forms viz; it could be in form of “mild review” to change the colour or package of the product; it could be a “greater review” which would require a change in the mode or pattern of consumption; or it could be a “novel product” such as a new invention that require a complete change in consumer behaviour (Anyanwu, 2013). This kind of innovation is done with the aim of creating new markets/customers and/or to satisfying current markets/customers.

**Process Innovation:** Process innovation is the introduction of a new method of production, not yet tested in the industry (Schumpeter, 1934). It includes new procedures, policies, organisational forms and knowledge embodied in products, distribution channels, applications as well as customer expectations, preferences and needs (Rosli & Sidek, 2013).

**Marketing Innovation:** Marketing innovations involve the marketing mix and market offerings that are made to satisfy customer’s needs while responding to market opportunities. Marketing innovations focus on better addressing customer needs, opening up new markets and positioning a firm’s product in the market, with the objective of increasing the firm’s sales. According to Johne and Davies (2000), marketing innovations increase sales by increasing product consumption leading to increase profits to the firm.

### **Talent Management and Competitiveness**

Organizations that are flexible enough to adapt to changing trends in the favour of both the organization in general and the employees specifically are the ones that will easily attract, develop and retain top talents. Managers that are flexible enough to collaborate with employees in designing workplace schedules are bound to benefit thereof higher employee morale, smarter strategies and added value to output. By offering talents a flexible working environment, the organization grants them real control which reflects in their heightened feeling of self-trust and value, thereby leading to improved performance, less absenteeism and turnover, and increased levels of engagement and productivity which are all important to gain competitive advantage.

In another light, talent development and talent retention which are basic components of the talent management model expose workers to new ideas and experiences which most of the time inspire the birth of innovative ideas among workers and ultimately reflects in improved products and/or processes (Gateau & Simon, 2016; Alma, Al-Shalabi & Aljamal, 2013). Hence, talented individuals if well managed are sources of innovation for institutions and weapons to obtain sustainable competitive advantage (Chadee & Raman, 2012). Given the empirical views of talent management and competitiveness, the following null hypotheses were outlined for examination:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Talent Management and Flexibility in Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Talent Management and Innovation in Oil Drilling and Well Servicing Companies in Rivers State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the Correlational Research Design. A correlational study is one where a researcher seeks to understand the kind of relationships naturally occurring variables have with one another (Simon & Goes, 2015). It simply means seeking to figure out if two or more variables are related and, if so, in what way. The target population of this paper comprised of forty (40) managers drawn from ten (10) oil drilling and well servicing companies operating in Rivers State in the last twenty (20) years or more. Due to the small size of the target population, this paper adopted the census sampling with the entire population constituting the study sample. The cross-sectional survey data collection method was adopted in this study with a 90% response rate. The primary data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire that featured closed-ended questions on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The research questionnaire was validated using the content validity technique while reliability was tested with the use of Cronbach's Alpha Correlation Coefficient with coefficients of talent management, flexibility and innovation as 0.866, 0.706, and 0.833 respectively. The study applied both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis with hypotheses tested with the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient with aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

#### **Univariate Results**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Talent Management**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Talent Management	36	2.67	5.00	4.093	.70648
Valid N (listwise)	36				

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output based on 2019 field survey data

Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics for talent management which has a mean score of 4.093 and standard deviation of 0.7648. This result therefore portrays respondents indicating very strong talent management practices in the companies examined.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Competitiveness**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Flexibility	36	1.33	5.00	3.43	.86781
Innovation	36	2.33	5.00	3.84	.80666
Valid N (listwise)	36				

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output based on 2019 field survey data

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics for competitiveness measured by flexibility with mean score of 3.43 and innovation with mean score of 3.84. The result therefore indicates high levels of flexibility and innovation in the companies examined.



## **Bivariate Analysis and Test of Research Hypotheses**

### ***Test of Hypothesis 1***

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no significant relationship between talent management and flexibility in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix for the relationship between Talent Management and Flexibility**

		Talent Management	Flexibility
Talent Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	36	36
Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	.667**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	36	36

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

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output based on 2019 field survey data

The result as shown in the correlation matrix in table 3 ( $r=0.667$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), reveals that talent management has a strong and positive relationship with flexibility and based on the p-value, the null hypothesis one ( $H_{01}$ ) which states that 'there is no significant relationship between talent management and flexibility in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State' was rejected.

### ***Test of Hypothesis 2***

Hypothesis 2 states that there is no significant relationship between talent management and innovation in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix for the relationship between Talent Management and Innovation**

		Talent Management	Innovation
Talent Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.636**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	36	36
Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.636**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	36	36

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

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output based on 2019 field survey data

The result as shown in the correlation matrix in table 4 ( $r=0.636$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), reveals that talent management has a strong and positive relationship with innovation and based on the p-value, the null hypothesis two ( $H_{02}$ ) which states that 'there is no significant relationship between talent management and innovation in oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State' was rejected.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This research has empirically assessed the relationship between talent management and competitiveness of oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State. It was therefore deduced that organizations that seek for future leadership and therefore engage in talent management activities invariably project themselves to adapt to changes in their internal and external environment. Given the correlation coefficient between talent management and flexibility, smart companies are beginning to customize their jobs to fit into the modern flex-time and flex-place trends (Biro, 2013). Further, the role of talent management is crucial just as innovation is a vital requirement for organizations to survive. Talent management through competency focus and training and development can therefore create, propagate and encourage the creativity potentials among people. This therefore shows the close relationship between talent management and innovation as one complements the other. This finding is in line with the views of Alma et al. (2013) which states that the practices of talent management are positively associated with improving innovation of institutional performance by playing an essential role in nurturing the appropriate conditions for channeling and motivating employees towards the improvement of innovation activities.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results generated from the tested hypotheses and study findings, it can be concluded that talent management which is positively and significantly correlated with competitiveness of oil drilling and well servicing companies in Rivers State, has a strong and predictive influence in determining how organizations demonstrate flexibility and innovation in their organizations.

Based on the conclusion of this paper, the researcher recommended that

1. Talent management should be given priority in every oil drilling and well servicing company in order to mitigate the negative effects of attrition and to enhance workers' capabilities to easily adapt to different working environments.
2. If the level of creativity among workers of any oil drilling and well servicing company in Rivers State is considered by management to be low and as such the company finds it difficult to innovate, adopting the talent management model would be a step in the right direction.

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# Technology and Market Performance of Bottled Water Manufacturing Bottled Water Manufacturing Companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the relationship between technology and market performance of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. This study adopted the cross sectional research design and data were drawn using structured questionnaire from 48 top and middle level managers of 15 bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. 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 technology and market performance of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The study thus recommends that managers of bottled water manufacturing companies should embrace technology in order to cut cost, reduce transaction time, get feed backs from customers and create brand awareness. This is because technology has a positive impact on market performance.*

**Keywords:** *Technology, Marketing Performance, Brand Awareness, Customer Retention*

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## INTRODUCTION

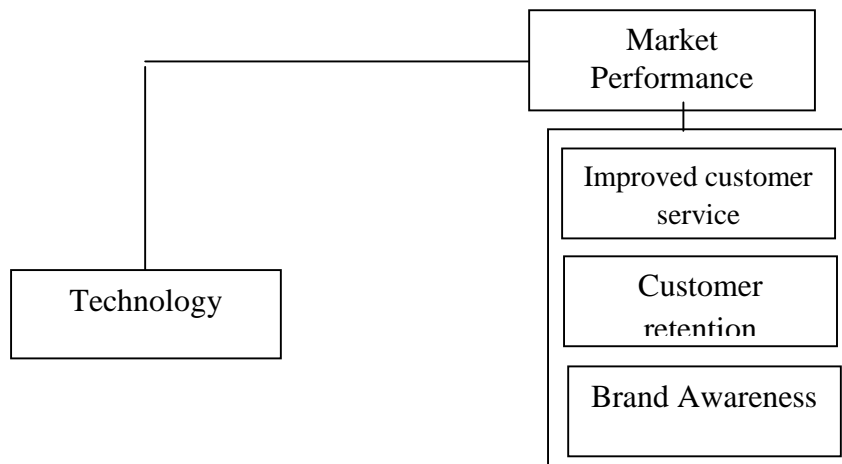
The desire of firms to improve their performance in the market is the paramount push behind all managerial decisions and strategy because the market performance of the firm is cardinal to the corporate wellbeing of the business undertakings and also determines the continued existence of the firm in the business landscape (Horsfall & Mac-Kingsley, 2002). Market performance has thus continued to enjoy very attractive investigations from practitioners and academics (Clark, 1999). Efforts have been made to determine how organizational marketing programmes affect various aspects of the market performance, thus with a view to determine the core drivers of market performance, several studies have been conducted (Ateke & Iruka, 2015; Adejoke & Adekemi, 2012; Asiegbu, Awa, Akpotu & ogbonna, 2011). Managers have realized that it is no longer enough to just provide a value offering to marketplace, and amass tangible assets; but they must also consider their brands as significant intangible assets (Liu, Hu & Grimm, 2010).

Rouse and Daellebach (2009) argued that for a firm to advance its performance, it must comprehend and ascertain its main resources that will improve its competitiveness and sustainability. The study established that a firm's skills, strategic positioning and intangible technological resources results to superior performance and that they aid the firm in formulating and implementing strategies that can improve effectiveness and efficiency of the firm. Barney and Hesterly (2010) advanced that intangible technology resources are more sustainable than tangible resources which can be acquired and duplicated by competitors. In addition, Kenneth, Anderson and Eddy (2010) pointed out that a firm has an advanced performance when it has the capability of maintaining VRIN resources for a number of years.

According to Barney (2011) a firm's performance superiority is not from one source but from a package of resources both tangible and intangible. Tangible resources such as physical building and land would only result to a temporal competitive advantage which is inadequate in the long run since the competitors are in a position to obtain crucial resources through substitutes, hence eliminating above average profitability of a firm. Technology as an Intangible resource is able to produce superior performance since they are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Costa, Cool & Dierick, 2013). Baker and Sinkula (2009) indicated that for a long time, technology has been identified as the key for commencing novel activities through risk-taking and firm proactively which results in a firm's higher performance than competitors. Firms that focus on technological advancement through innovation research and development generate above average performance (Paladino, 2009; Merlo and Auh, 2009 and Tajeddini, 2010). Firms that employ technology are known for superior performance because they believe in acquisition of new technologies for product innovation, research and development which enables the firm to produce unique products which are hard to copy (Altindag, Zehir and Acar, 2010). Basile (2012) noted that technology deserves consideration since it pursues opportunities and renewal of new market from the areas of operation that are existing to match with the changing needs of the customers in the market. This study therefore examines the relationship between technology and market performance of bottled water manufacturing bottled water manufacturing companies.

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

1. What is the relationship between technology and improved customer service of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between technology and customer retention of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between technology and brand awareness of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?



**Fig.1:** *Conceptual Framework for the relationship between technology and market performance*

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

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### **Resource Based View Theory**

The resource based view (RBV) is a management tool used to evaluate the resources available in the firm. In essence, the resource-based view is based on the idea that the effective and efficient application of all useful resources that the organization can gather helps determines its competitive advantage. It seeks to explain the internal sources of a firm's sustained competitive advantage. Its innermost proposition is that if a firm is to attain a state of sustainable competitive advantage it must obtain and control valuable, rare, inimitable, and non- substitutable (VRIN) resource and capabilities, plus have the firms in the place that can absorb and apply them (Barney, 1991).

The resource base view as a foundation for the competitive advantage of a firm is rooted primarily in the application of a bunch of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the organization's disposal (Wernerfelt, 1984). Wernerfelt in his 1984 paper titled "A resource based view of the firm" argued that the success of a firm in its product market was a result of its advantages in the factor market (or resources). Hamel & Prahalad, (1980) gave a practical approach to the resource-based view, by calling them the 'core competence of the corporation'. They also clarified that to add value to the firm, resources must be inimitable. Barney identified four characteristics of resources that would be required to generate sustainable competitive advantage to firms - resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable and non- substitutable (VRIN) (Barney, 1991).

Company's strategy is a vital part of the firm's organizational system that will play a crucial role in improving the business performance. The production of goods and services as well as wealth creation is dependent on the resources available to the organization especially the intangible assets (Husnah, Subroto, Djumahir & Aisjah, 2013). Intangible asset and effective management are sources of competitive advantage. This has pushed most firms to improve the performance of its non- monetary assets because the strategy influences the overall performance of the company significantly (Choo & Bontis, 2002). It's been argued by experts that intangible resources are more able to generate sustainable competitive advantage (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2014). Intangible resources are strategic assets to achieve SCA (sustainable competitive advantage) because it meets the criteria of Valuable, Rare, Imperfectly Imitable, non-substitutable (VRIN) (Barney, 1991).

This model relates to the study in that it illustrates how firm performance is rooted primarily in the application of a bunch of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the organization's disposal. It further relates by explaining how intangible asset and effective management are sources of competitive advantage for the firm. Furthermore, it shows how firms improve the performance of its non-monetary assets, because the strategy influences the overall performance of the company significantly.



## **Technology**

The term “technology” rose to prominence in the 20th century in connection with the second industry revolution. Bain (1937), the American sociologist wrote that “technology includes all tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instruments, housing, clothing, communicating and transporting devices and the skills by which we produce and use them”. Bain’s definition remains common among scholars today, especially social scientists. Scientists and engineers usually prefer to define technology as applied science, rather than as the things that people make and use.

Technology is also an application of science used to solve problems. But it is vital to know that technology and science are different subjects which work hand-in-hand to accomplish specific tasks or solve problems (Ramey, 2013). While Woodward (1965) viewed technology as a mediating variable between an organisation and its environment.

Many businesses are using technology to stay competitive, they create new products and services using technology, and they also use technology to deliver those products and services to their customers on time and within budget. A good example is mobile phones companies like Apple & Samsung, these mobile empires, use high-end technology to create new smart phones and other electronic devices to stay competitive. This competitive edge is gained through employing advanced technology (Ramey, 2013).

## **Advanced Manufacturing Technologies (AMT)**

The quest for lower operating costs and improved manufacturing efficiency has forced a large number of manufacturing firms to embark on AMTs projects of various types. Dramatic developments in AMT at various organizational levels can be attributed to numerous benefits that improve the competitive position of the adopting companies. AMT impact not just manufacturing, but the whole business operations, giving new challenges to a firm’s ability to manage both manufacturing and information technologies (Gunawardana, 2006). Owing to the intense global competition in manufacturing, manufacturers need to increase their level of competitiveness in the global market. Some manufacturing companies, therefore, are forced to undergo a period of transformation in order to compete more effectively. Under these circumstances, AMT is considered as a means of improving competitiveness (Gunawardana, 2006).

Baldwin (1995) defines AMT as ‘a group of integrated hardware-based and software-based technologies, which if properly implemented, monitored, and evaluated, will lead to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the firm in manufacturing a product or providing a service’.

Advanced Manufacturing technology (AMT) represents a wide variety of mainly computer-based systems, which provide adopting firms with the potential to improve manufacturing operations greatly. It is generally expected that the resultant improvement in operational performance will enhance the firm’s ability to reap the underlying marketing, strategic and business benefits for which the systems were adopted. Another definition is AMT refers to a family of technologies that include computer-aided design (CAD) and engineering systems, materials resource planning systems, automated materials handling systems, robotics, computer-controlled machines, flexible manufacturing systems, electronic data interchange and computer-integrated manufacturing systems (Gunawardana, 2006).

### **Concept of Market Performance**

Collins dictionary of business (2005) define market performance as the effectiveness of suppliers in a market/ industry in utilizing economic resource to their maximum efficiency and to the ultimate benefit of consumers. Lusch and Lacznia (1989) define business performance as the total economic result of the activities undertaking by the organization.

It has been argued that, non-financial measures such as customer satisfaction, service quality, customer retention, brand awareness are more valuable in evaluating and motivating managerial performance, which complements short-run financial figures as an indicator of progress toward firms' long-term goals and is more reflective of the overall corporate strategy (Ittner and Larcker, 2003).

Measuring performance has been a cardinal issue for enormous majority of companies (Morgan, Clark & Gooner, 2002). Business practitioners and academics have both been attracted to the topic with an insistence and intentions previously unexampled (Clark, 1999). A wide range of measurement has been adopted to operationalize performance. For example, Narver and Slatter (1994), identified key indicators as return-on-investment, market share and sales growth, Nwokah (2008), used sales growth, profit ability, and market share, and Didia and Nwokah (2015), employed sales growth, customer retention, return on investment, market share, getting valuable information, ability to secure local resource and motivating employees as proxies of business performance. This study adopts improve customer service, customer retention and brand awareness, a non-financial measures as cited in Ahiazu&Asawo (2016) as the measures of market performance.

### **Improved Customer Service**

The success of companies has for long been influenced by a number of factors, such as, the location of the company, capital, pricing system and marketing skills of the workers of the company. However, today, the quality of a company's customer service has a great impact vis-a-vis the success of companies (Atem, 2014). Customer service can be defined as "a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer's satisfaction". These activities may include the provision of assistance, advice and delivery of products by the company to its customers (Mckinney, 2014). Customer service is provided to consumers/clients/buyers of a company, before, during and after the purchase of goods and services (Bielenberg, 2006). Quality/excellent customer service is the 'ability of an organization to constantly and consistently exceed the customer's expectations'. Quality customer service is vital to a business' success as customers are the "lifeblood" for any business (Mckinney, 2014). The goal of excellent customer service is to make customers contended, in order for them to come back and to bring more customers (Ciotts, 2012).

Machando and Diggines (2013) defines customer service as the totality of what an organisation does to add value to its products and services from the perspective of customers. Lucas (2005) describes customer service as the ability of knowledgeable, capable and enthusiastic employees to deliver products and services to their internal and external customers in such a way that it satisfies identified and unidentified needs of customers, and ultimately, results in positive word of mouth advertising and repeat business. It is the interaction that takes place between somebody from the company and the customer and that it is not limited to sales, for example, but links to all tasks and functions in a company (Fogli, 2006).



Customer service is the provision of services to customers before, during and after a purchase. Essentially, customer service is any back-up service that a company provides to customers to maintain their loyalty and to secure sales. It must be kept in mind that it is not the actual service that is of importance, but rather the perception that a customer has of the service (Brink and Berndt, 2008). The role of customer service is to provide 'time and place utility' in the transfer of goods and services between buyer and seller. It follows that making the product or service 'available' is what, in essence, a company's distribution function business entails. 'Availability' is, in itself, a complex concept impacted upon by a galaxy of factors, which together constitute customer service (Christopher, 2005).

Looking at the above definitions of customer service from various authors, customer service involves meeting and exceeding the expectations of customers. In order to achieve this, a company has to determine what customers' expectations are. It is clear that providing excellent customer service is not something that can be done in an ad-hoc manner or be seen as a passing phase. It would be inefficient for a company just to focus on customer service for a short time and then consider it done. Providing excellent customer service needs to be a focal point for any company and must form an integral part of a company's total product offering, behaviour and business culture (Jeske, Chimusoro & Karodia, 2015).

Achieving excellent customer service is a continuous process that never stops. Any company that has any business sense will continuously re-design, tweak and improve its customer service. In a similar way, a company's customers' expectations will also develop and evolve over time, making it essential that service delivery coincides with those expectations. Companies must continuously make an effort to also make sure that a company asks customers about their expectations and needs to ensure that they use this information as guidelines to improve and modify their business or service model accordingly (Jeske, Chimusoro & Karodia, 2015).

### **Customer Retention**

Kotler and Armstrong (2001), state that in the past many companies took their customers for granted. Companies practiced a "leaky bucket" approach to marketing. Meaning companies could keep filling the marketing bucket with new customers without worrying about losing old customers through holes in the bottom of the bucket. However in Nigeria today, changing demographics, more sophisticated competitors, sophisticated buyers means that there are fewer customers to go around. Kotler (1999) noted that, companies are realizing that losing a customer means losing more than a single sale; it means losing the entire stream of purchases that the customer would make over a lifetime of patronage.

As customers begin to experience a better service their expectation rises; the customers begin to make conscious and unconscious comparisons between different service experiences irrespective of the industry sector. Cook (2002) states that, a company's ability to attract and retain new customers therefore is a function not only of its product or product offering but also the way it services its existing customers and the reputation it creates within and across market places. Strauss and Friege (2001) defined retention as the customer's liking, identification, commitment, trust, willingness to recommend, and repurchase intentions. Customer retention implies a long-term commitment on the part of the customer and the firm to maintain the relationship. Cook (2002), indicate underlined statistics that shows just how crucial retaining customers can be; reducing customer defections can boost profits by 25-85 per cent (Reichheld, 1996). The price of acquiring new customers can be five times greater than the cost of keeping current ones.

Retaining old customer cost less than acquiring new ones. Old customers pay less attention to competing brands and advertising, are less price sensitive and create favorable word-of-mouth (Desai & Mahajan, 1998). Customer retention has been advocated as an easier and more reliable source of superior performance (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Customer retention brings benefits such as employee retention and satisfaction, better service, lower costs (Reichheld & Kenny, 1990), lower price sensitivity, positive word of mouth, higher market share, higher efficiency and higher productivity (Zineldin, 2000). While the precise meaning and measurement of customer retention can vary between industries and firms there appears to be a general consensus that focusing on customer retention can yield several economic benefits (Dawkin & Reichheld, 1990; Reichheld et al., 1990). As customer tenure lengthens, the volumes purchased grow and customers churn, customer replacement costs fall. Finally, retained customers may pay higher prices than newly acquired customers, and are less likely to receive discounted offers that are often made to acquire new customers. All of these conditions combine to increase the net present value of retained customers. Kotler (1999) states that the cost of attracting a new customer is five times the cost of keeping the current customer happy. It requires a great deal of effort to induce satisfied customers to switch away from their current suppliers. There are two ways to strengthen customer retention, one is to erect high switching barriers and the other is to deliver higher customer satisfaction. In terms of attracting and retaining customers, firms are reminded to be aware of the different "loyalty coefficient" - the amount of economic forces needed to move different kinds of customers. The easiest to win is likely to be the one who will be the quickest to defect. According to Reichheld (1996), the customers who glide into your arms for a minimal price discount are the same customers who dance away with someone else at the slightest enticement.

### **Brand Awareness**

Brands have been used for centuries to distinguish the products or services of different companies from each other. In principle, whenever a marketer creates a new name, symbol or logo for a new product, he or she created a brand (Keller, 2008). Brand is a multi dimensional phenomenon which is traditionally defined as name, symbol, concept, sign, or some other feature (Malmelin & Hakala, 2008). The meaning of that is to distinguish the product or a service from competitors (Keller, 2008). Creating differences is what branding is all about (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Brands basically create perceptions in the mind of the consumer that it is unique and there is no other similar product or service in the market. Therefore, a brand is said to be of strong entity if it is consistent over a long period of time in providing the product or service which consumers and prospective purchasers can rely and trust, which will lead to a brand promise (Srinivasan, Park & Chang, 2005).

### **Technology and Improved Customer Service**

According to Taylor (2017), customer service is the lifeblood of any organization, and it is not just a department but must be the attitude of the entire company. Employees can be trained to provide the best service possible to the customer. However, if the technology is not adequate, customers, and employees, will quickly become disheartened and frustrated. A frustrated customer (or employee) can lead to lower company revenues through lost sales or lost productivity. Technology used properly, can help employees work more efficiently and ease customer frustrations.

Dussauge, Hart and Ramanantsoa (1992) note that “technological innovation often modifies the base of competition in a given industry and technology is, in many cases, one of the main sources of competitive advantage”. They also note that “firms can use technology to place themselves in a favourable position by deliberately upsetting the competitive environment, forcing a redefinition of the existing business and a change in the rules of the game. Also, Frank and Oluwafemi (2012) found that information technology influences customer satisfaction by reducing transaction time, improving operational effectiveness, reducing the running cost and ushering in swift response in service delivery.

### **Technology and Customer Retention**

Daneshvar and Ramesh (2010) said that information technology can help promote cost leadership by providing valuable new service inexpensively. Also, Intellitrend (2013) opines that information technology has helped many businesses to eliminate unwanted processes that delay production of products with the use of automations. Karmarka and Mangal (2007) argue further that information technology has made shopping convenience for customers as the time and efforts required to visit the brick-and-mortar had been reduced by the introduction of e-shops. Prior research by Yoon (2009) found that adoption of information technology improves business processes, ensures faster delivery to customers, thereby it impacts customers’ confidence, satisfaction and retention.

### **Technology and Brand Awareness**

According to smith (2011) technology doesn’t just give people a new way of doing things; it gives people a new way of thinking. The biggest impact of technology is the change it creates in people’s perceptions. Certainly, technology expands access speed and productivity but technology has much more far- reaching effects. Majure (2015) argue that a couple of decade ago companies looking to reach a national audience would have to spend millions on television and print advertising, direct mail or catalogues. Reaching a global audience was unthinkable for all but the largest multinational brands. All that has changed. Today virtually any brand owner large or small can reach customers and prospects around the world with minimal investment. The barriers to market entry have not merely been lowered- they have been obliterated.

The investigation of Khan, Jadoon and Tareen (2016) submit that consumers commitment toward buying, both current and future is affected by brand awareness. Zhao, Tong, Li, Ma and Wang (2016) indicated a significant positive connection exist between technology brand awareness and brand loyalty. Furthermore Tritama and Tarigan (2016) found that technology via social media has significantly impacted company’s brand awareness

From the foregoing point of view, the study hypothesized thus:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between technology and improved customer service of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between technology and customer retention of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between technology and brand awareness of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the cross sectional research design and data were drawn using structured questionnaire from 48 top and middle level managers of 15 bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. 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.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

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 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between technology and improved customer service of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Table 1: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between technology and improved customer service

Correlations			Technology	Improved customer service
Spearman's rho	Technology	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.705**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	48	48
	Improved customer service	Correlation Coefficient	.705**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	48	48

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

**Source:** SPSS Output based on 2019 field survey data

The result as shown in correlation matrix (Table 1) revealed that technology has a very strong positive relationship with improved customer service with a correlation value of  $r = .705$  and shows probability/significant value (PV) of .000 which is less than ( $<$ ) 0.05 (level of significance). Hence the previous tentative statement of no relationship is rejected. Therefore the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exist between technology and improved customer service.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between technology and customer retention of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between technology and customer retention**

		Correlations		
Spearman's rho	Technology		Technology	Customer retention
		Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.586**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	48	48
	Customer retention	Correlation Coefficient	.586**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	48	48

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

**Source:** SPSS Output based on 2019 field survey data

The result as shown in correlation matrix (Table 2) revealed that technology has a substantial and positive relationship with customer retention with a correlation value of  $r = .586$  and shows probability/significant value (PV) of .000 which is less than ( $<$ ) 0.05 (level of significance). Hence the previous tentative statement of no relationship is rejected. Hence the previous tentative statement of no relationship is rejected. Therefore the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exist between technology and customer retention.

**H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between technology and brand awareness of bottled water manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.**

**Correlation analysis showing the relationship between technology and brand awareness**

		Correlations		
Spearman's rho	Technology		Technology	Brand awareness
		Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.798**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	48	48
	Brand awareness	Correlation Coefficient	.798**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	48	48

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

**Source:** SPSS Output based on 2019 field survey data

The result as shown in correlation matrix (Table 3) revealed that technology has a very strong positive relationship brand awareness with a correlation value of  $r = .798$  and shows probability/significant value (PV) of .000 which is less than ( $<$ ) 0.05 (level of significance). Hence the previous tentative statement of no relationship is rejected. Hence the previous

tentative statement of no relationship is rejected. Therefore the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exist between technology and brand awareness.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Technology and Improved Customer Service**

The result shows there is a strong positive relationship ( $Rho (P) = .705$ ) between technology and improved customer service of bottled water manufacturing companies. This indicates that technology affects improved customer service. When put in statistical test, the result shows that there is a significant relationship between technology and improved customer service. This implies that technology increases customer service. To further buttress this finding, James (2018) found that information and communication technology has resulted in faster processing of customer requests, easy access to banking information and services, reduction of errors, provision of timely services and transaction alerts, among other benefits. Similarly Garuba (2010) found that technology by way of e-banking has led to increase customer satisfaction, improved operational efficiency, reduced transaction time, better competitive edge, reduced running cost and ushered in swift response in service delivery.

### **Technology and Customer Retention**

The result shows there is a substantial positive relationship ( $Rho (P) = .586$ ) between technology and customer retention of bottled water manufacturing companies. This indicates that technology affects customer retention. When put in statistical test, the result shows that there is a significant relationship between technology and customer retention. To explain this finding, Tsai, Chung Lin & Chang purported that information technology enhances customer's feedback, and it sets the stage for a two-way communication effort. For example, follow up with a customer after a business transaction proves to customers that the company wants to hear from them. They therefore conclude that, information technology strongly ensures customer loyalty and retention. Similarly, Prior research by Yoon (2009) found that adoption of information technology improves business processes, ensures faster delivery to customers, thereby it impacts customers' confidence, satisfaction and retention. Desai & Mahajan (1998) further suggested that, in order to retain customers, companies must continually develop their product and services so as to meet the evolving needs of customers, and this can be achieved through the adaptation of technology in the production process.

### **Technology and Brand Awareness**

The result shows there is a strong positive relationship ( $Rho (P) = .798$ ) between technology and brand awareness of bottled water manufacturing companies. This indicates that technology affects brand awareness. When put in statistical test, the result shows that there is a significant relationship between technology and brand awareness. This implies that technology increases brand awareness. To confirm this finding, the study conducted by Zhao *et al.* (2016) found a significant positive relationship between technology, brand awareness and brand loyalty. To further support this finding, Tritama *et al.* (2016) found that technology via social media has significantly impacted company's product brand awareness.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



The study concludes that technology was seen to have a significant positive relationship with market performance that is, it positively impacts; improved customer service, customer retention and brand awareness.

The study thus recommends that managers of bottled water manufacturing companies should embrace technology in order to cut cost, reduce transaction time, get feed backs from customers and create brand awareness. This is because technology has a positive impact on market performance.

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## Office Politics and Employees Commitment in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper examined the relationship between office politics and employee commitment in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was estimated to be 4067 staff in 8 Nigerian Navy formations of South-South, Nigeria. The sample size of 364 was determined 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 result obtained showed that the office politics have a significant relationship with employees' commitment level in the Nigerian Navy (NN) in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South. Furthermore, the study revealed that lobbying had a significant relationship with employees' commitment level in the Nigerian Navy (NN) in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South. The study recommends that management of Nigerian Navy Formations should actively focus on positive political behavior that will lead to employees' commitment.

**Keywords:** Office Politics, Lobbying, Employee Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment

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### INTRODUCTION

Office politics is no doubt a controversial concept. Internal politics is a common phenomenon in every organization today (Mintzberg, 1992; Ferris & King, 1991; Pfeiffer, 1992). Much has not been done about the nature, boundaries and effects of such politics on the organizations (Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980). Most authors used the concept office politics and organisational politics interchangeably.

An employee is said to be effective when he or she is focused on achievement of set goals of the organisation. Political calculations and manoeuvrings are responsible for decision making in large organisations, which may result in severe consequences for the entire organisation (Eni, 2011). The organization is a community of people as a result there is constant

formal and informal interaction on a regular basis. In the course of these constant interaction people want to promote their personal and organization interest. The promotion of personal and organization interest is what is commonly referred to as Office Politics.

Office politics is the power acquired within the organization which influenced the activities, actions, and decision-making within the organization. Office politics is engaged as a departmental and individual interest to attract the management attention to their individual or unit benefit (Bouckennooghe, Zafar & Raja, 2015). Office politics is the careful use of power by employees to satisfy their individual and the corporate objectives (Bouckennooghe, Zafar & Raja, 2015). Many of the managers resorted to used office politics within the organisation in other to gain popularity. Office politics influences the people's behaviour positively. It establishes unity and effectiveness and it is one way of resolving conflict within the organisation. Because of the selfish interest of employees of the organisation, they negatively apply it to their personal interest which eventually results to destructive outcome. Destructive outcomes are those activities of employees that result to decrease in output or low employees' commitment to overall organisational objective. The inefficient and lower turnover is caused by the destructive use of office politics (Daskin & Tezer, 2012).

Office Politics has entered into the organisation's social fabric (Abbas & Raja, 2014). Although some researchers consider office politics as a necessity for employees' effectiveness and growth, others argue that it causes organisational stressor as such negatively affects the proper functioning of the system. Office politics has also become a concern to individuals and organisations today (Rosen & Levy, 2009). The effects of office politics on organisational job outcomes is what need to be seriously considered. Office politics differs across organisational boundaries (Chang, Rosen & Levy, 2009). The way employees react to office politics is based on the organization or environment they are working and the interest or gain derived from it. Office politics is a pronounced activity within public organisations (government establishment). Office politics is said to be associated with individualism, femininity, uncertainty avoidance and low power distance (Shao, Rupp, Skarlicki & Jones, 2013).

Organisational culture contributes to the level of office politics practiced within organisations (Bamidele, 2013). The goal of any organisation is to achieve objective(s) as they continue to discharge their duties. There are many factors that may disturb the achievement of these goals which are worthy of mention. Office politics if not properly controlled and without effective policy, can prevent the organisation from functioning effectively by having internal power struggles, intrigues and personal positioning. Organisations are generally seen as the environment for business and power play which many authors described in their literature as office politics (Bana & Midere, 2011). Office politics are human activities which take place in the establishment to acquire, develop and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes (Pfeffer, 2001). Political behaviours in the organisation are those observable behaviour, open or hidden actions of employees who are ready to use the power available to them to them to influence decisions in the organisation (Emeka and Ebubechukwu, 2011). The research field of office politics is characterized by a lack of agreement in what should be included in the term, and the construct "Office Politics". This may lead to inconsistent results when evaluating the scope, content and factors that affect, as well as consequences of office politics and employees' commitment in an organisation (Buchanan, 2008). While theory and research on office politics has expanded rapidly in recent decades, there is relatively little knowledge about office politics in relation to its effects on the commitment of the employees.

There are few studies that have specifically dealt with office politics within teams or



work groups. In spite of the limited literature there is no doubt that internal politics is a common scene in every organisation. This is because politics is a common phenomenon among humans but the exact nature and boundaries of such politics established among team members, its nature of occurrence, cultural orientations and how it will contribute to employees' effectiveness may not be known. The increase in globalization and expansion of businesses has enlarged the scope of the office which now demand complex steps in organisational justice and fairness cut across cultural boundaries. Although different cultures may lead to differences in ways of reactions and practices as it affects office politics (Shao, Rupp, Skarlicki & Jones, 2013), research has shown that several studies carried out in the United States indicated that office politics enhanced employees' commitment especially in public sectors. In other parts of the world, office politics is legalized, and so an employee cannot be punished for engaging in office politics. Comparisons have also been made between those countries and Nigeria. In Nigeria, office politics is seen as a bribe given. Office politics involves persuading the people to buy your view. An office is like a business place where many customers are coming to buy. In this instance, there is need for specialized literature on comparison between the level and impact of office politics and employees' commitment in an organisation.

The few studies regarding office politics are qualitative approach and relatively small in sample size. The results are inconclusive and do not reveal certain knowledge about how politics affects commitment of workers beyond all reasonable doubt. Top officials who have power to make important decisions on behalf of the sector will play a major role in the workers' commitment. Given this important role in organisations, there is the need for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and how it affects employees' commitment. Most of the research work done on office politics show that politics leads to low performance on various dimensions, from attitudes such as lack of satisfaction and commitment to self-reports of lower performance (Hochwarter, 2003; Miller, Rutherford & Kolodinsky, 2008).

Office politics may take various dimensions, for instance, political behaviour among high ranking officers (who are also employees) may be apparent in their attempt to get their own share of available rewards. Such self-interest behaviour if not properly managed, will negatively affect the workers' effectiveness and commitment. It is one factor that may cause many employees to lose team spirit to achieve the organisational goal as its priority (Hochwarter, 2003). Team spirit enables the employees to be dedicated to their duties. With direct supervision, employees are happy to meet organisational targets as a group. Once employees begin to shift their focus from the corporate goal to individual goal, there will be bias in service delivery and greater supervision will be required to achieve little success. This apparent behaviour must be controlled in the organisation to achieve the desired objective of the office. Office politics is a way of convincing the members of the organisation to believe in your ideology and decision in the organisation. In some instances, office politics may promote obedient and selfless service. Most members of the organisation will like to serve the top management for promotion and other benefits. They tend to do so because there is no policy put in place to check the activities of staff loyalty. Office politicking may take the form of convincing the target individual with money to support your opinion. It is a corrective instrument in the hands of management which can hinder effectiveness and commitment of the employees (Mayes & Allen, 1984).

The effect of lobbying in an organisation and how it affects the commitment of employees is something that is worthy of note. Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence a rule, instruction, law or a leader in order to favour one's own interest. In the military and the Nigerian Navy inclusive, lobbying can take the form of eye service. A gossip that claims to



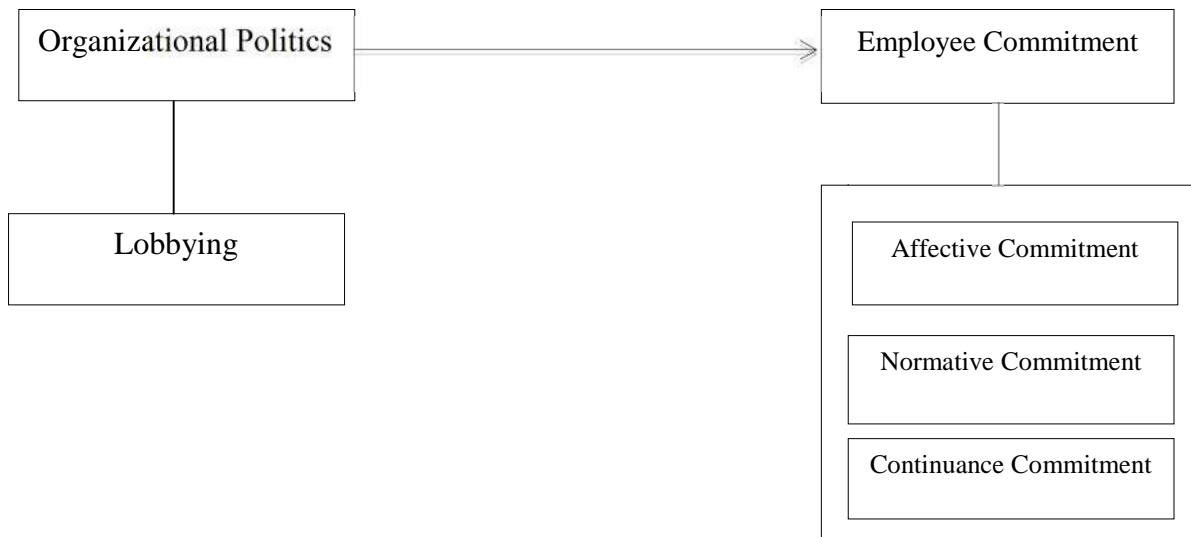
know everything about people around him or her and freely shares this information to others without a request being made for such information during lunch period or posting confidential details on social media can destroy the reputation of his or her co-employees (Milliti, 2000). When information is sent out, especially when such information is untrue, it damages the morale of the employee and will negatively affect his/her efficiency at work in the organisation. Office politics is a vehicle for communication to control rumours. Rumour is a barrier to business activities which can reduce the commitment of workers by diminishing their emotional equilibrium (Musa, 2003). If serious steps are not taken, the condition might lead to physical illness which may in turn make the employee to stay away from work for some time. When employees stay away from work due to preventable illnesses arising from poor resource allocation which is an aspect of office politics, the effectiveness of the employees will be apparently affected to the detriment of the organisation.

Office politics directly affect the decision making of the organisation, decision making is critical in any organisation especially in the military. It can make or mar an organisational success. A self-doubting leader in an establishment can make decision that may affect the level of commitment and productivity of an organisation. It is sometimes referred to as staff remorse and happens when an officer feels uncomfortable about some sort of decision. There are some decisions taken in an organisation which may be purely political in nature. Such a decision is meant to favour some group of people at the detriment of other staff. When the staff realise that a given decision is made to favour a class of employees, the disfavoured group will be dissatisfied and the level of commitment in the organisation will become drastically reduced.

Due to the inordinate ambition of some officers to be ahead of their colleagues, by indirectly usurping unmerited commendation, incentive or promotion that does not belong to them through wrong decision-making, the commitment level of the employees will be affected negatively. Some may go extra lengths to dispossess other officers of their ideas and credit, in order to form a basis for their own elevation. The psychological trauma that workers go through when their ideas or work are being stolen by a colleague through decision making is one thing that needs to be seriously considered. An employee, in an attempt to be duly promoted, may embark on hard work to ensure that the establishment achieves its goals. This hard work may take the employee some personal financial fortunes and sundry sacrifices to accomplish the task. At the end, he or she expects reward from the management which may come in the form of promotion or official commendation. If along the line, the idea was stolen from him through wrong decision-making and the reward he or she expects to receive is given to another employee, that singular act can crush his or her efficiency and sense of motivation in the establishment. As we all know, people like to be appreciated, officers of the Nigerian Navy inclusive). The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between office politics and employees commitment In Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South Nigeria.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between lobbying and normative commitment of the Nigerian Navy in South- South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between lobbying and affective commitment of the Nigerian Navy in South-South, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between lobbying and continuance commitment of the Nigerian Navy in South-South, Nigeria?



**Fig.1:** Conceptual framework for the relationship between organizational politics and employee commitment

*Source:* Author's Desk Research, 2019

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

#### Conflict Theory

The conflict theory was propounded by Karl Max. It stresses class relationship. This relationship is between upper class called the bourgeoisie (top naval officers) and the lower class or the proletariat (naval ratings) which influences the level of staff or officers' commitment. Conflicts in class originate from economic and structural inequality brought about by political intrigues (Jacoby, 2008). There is incompatibility between the upper and lower class in economic sense. The ruling class constitutes the upper class while the working class constitutes the lower class as pointed by Clinard and Meier in Eriega (2008). The lower class which in this case, comprises the naval ratings sometimes may suffer exploitation in the hands of the capitalist (senior officers) because capitalists aim at maximizing profit and minimizing cost of labour. As soon as this imbalance is made conscious among these two groups, this can make the affected officers'/employees' to be less committed (Zack, 2012). Whenever the deprived individuals feel powerless, normless, meaningless, culturally estranged and socially isolated in their place of work, these ratings'/employees' commitment level will be affected (Eriega, 2008).

#### Concept of Office Politics

Office politics is an individual self-seeking objective that focuses on securing advantage over others (Ferris, 2011). Office politics is considered as a burdening stressor that enables employees to clearly observe the uncertain working environments. It clearly defines the process of organisational decision taken by placing a leader who will carry out the policy and objectives of

the organisation. Office politics is a choice of the figure head who will direct the affairs of the organisation (Ferris, 2011).

Office politics, if not properly managed in the organisation is controversial, and a destructive or a negative use of power to fulfil personal goals (Elbanna, 2010). Elbanna (2000) opined that employees playing politics in the organisation show that there is something significant to benefit, or risk to be taken (losses). Office politics is a personal or group decision to undertake certain level of risk that will make them relevant in the organisation or form action(s) whose primary aim is to promote individual and corporate reputation or something materialistic (Ferris, 2011). Organisational politics has become a prevailing issue in industries today, employees are now shifting from the normal work process to office politics because of the recognition and power attached to it (Nyehe, 2012).

Office politics is an intricate power that controls the political, functional, financial and social behaviour of the members of the organisation (Nyehe, 2012). Office politics is useful to improve employees' commitment because of the power to command them to do work. Nevertheless, it should be properly controlled if not it will be placed in the hand of an individual who is not organisationally driven to achieve the corporate objective. In such a case, it will turn to self-interest or personal benefit at the expense of organisational objectives (Nyehe, 2012). Office politics is not supposed to be at the organisational expense, it is concerned with building a united organisation that will bring all the members of the organisation to have a common objective or to achieve the corporate goal (Chen, 2014). Because man is a rational being, there is bound to be changes in the process of time, therefore, to effectively control these leaders, there must be established culture of the organisation. These include the laws, policies and procedures. Every organisation must establish guiding principles on which the principal officers and other members of the organisation must follow to take decisions (Chen, 2014). Office politics is a sequence of activities that employees engage in to achieve both corporate and individual objectives (Chen, 2014). Office politics is not explicitly defined at the engagement level of the employees by the organisation. The individual continues to develop this ambition in the process of time. Once the individual is elected into office, he/she has the power to determine operation of the organisation based on the organisational policy (Chen, 2014). Office politics finds its way into the organisation because of human competition (Chen, 2014). Competition is the driving force in the mind of the employees to achieve their personal and organisational goal(s). As a result, they are always looking for a way to acquire power. By so doing, their behaviour tends to shape the psycho-social and informal context of the environment of the workplace (Chen, 2014). This behaviour can only be controlled based on the norms or policies formulated to guide the activities of the individuals in the organisation. Proper establishment of rules and regulations must be established to shape the politics in the organisation (Chen, 2014). Office politics is a competition mechanism. It makes the employees to be seriously engaged in their work so that they can also move to the highest level of management (Chen, 2014). It is so serious in the organisation even though it is not typically recognized by the rules and regulations, and policies of the organisation. However, they exist informally, in some contexts, it can be visible or quite obvious (Chen, 2014). Enforcing rules and regulations on the officers engaging in office politics will guide them not to go beyond the boundaries. If employees are not properly guided it will lead to poor commitment, decreased task accomplishment, lessened organisational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction (Chen, 2014).

Office politics is employees' defensive mechanism that secured them from the negative influence of management. Office politics helps management to streamline the process and

properly filter legitimate information for management consumption (Seo, 2003). These include power manipulation, trust issues and hidden agenda. Office politics functionally will benefit both the politically-skilled individual and other members of the organisation. It politically motivates majority to support the vibrant and effective leader of the organisation (Solomon & Joakim, 2010). Office politics is an inherent behaviour found in an individual in the organisation which is commonly referred to as “personality trait”. It may not be a negative behaviour even though the interest portrayed may show individual benefit. As an organisation employs the individual, the objective is to pursue the organisational goal, and as the individual continues to achieve the organisational goal, the individual’s personal goal will be achieved in the form of salaries and wages (Solomon & Joakim, 2010). Generally, an employee’s promotion is based on ability, productivity or output. Office politics ultimately demonstrates the desire of the employees to be committed to their work (Solomon & Joakim, 2010).

Politically skilled staff can successfully manage turbulent organisational situations (Emeka, 2012). The politically skilled staff acquired the aptitude to take actions that support employees’ feelings, increase trust and confidence among the employees (Emeka, 2012). Goziem (2012) opined that staff develops a set of positive political skills in an effective political environment. Office politics pave way through conflicts environment, campaigning for peace and harmonious relationship in the organisation (Emeka, 2012). Employees that have this perception of office politics command respect from staff. An officer that has this value is a key factor that influences employees’ commitment (Ladebo, 2006). Other researchers argue that politically skilled officers work towards achieving organisational objectives. Office politics is a means of facilitating organisational change. Office politics is targets to achieve an organisation’s vision and objectives. Office politics serve as a tool for coordinating teamwork and enforce confidence in employees of the organisation (Ladebo, 2006). Positive or constructive political behaviour is advantageous to the employee(s) and the organisation in general (Gotsis, 2010). Constructive political ability brings together the dissimilar interests of stakeholders of the organisation. Constructive politic behaviour set equilibrium or bases for healthy competition and enforcing motivations in the organisation (Gotsis, 2010). Butcher & Clarke (2006) argue that managers that are keenly aware of office politics are more likely to manage employees better than others that don’t have this ability. Office politics directly promote equality among members of the organisation. Organisational politics is a key leadership concept that requires those that have the ability to care, show trust, good knowledge, and have the positive mind to increase organisational productivity (Drory, 2006). These leaders are influential and efficient in carrying out organisational function according to the underlined principles (Drory, 2006).

Political strategies are the affiliation, connections, alliance-creation or even guidance to gain position in the organisation (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010). Political strategies are those processes of recognition and alliances of the employees that shaped the policies and enhance trust and are in conformity to achieving organisation's goals and objectives (Kurchner-Hawkins & Miller 2006). The researchers recognize that a liberal form of politics have positive effect on team work and also promote learning in the organisation. Office politics is an open system that allows every member of the organisation to stimulate persistent potentials towards acquiring knowledge to remain relevant in the organisation (Burgoyne & Coopey, 2000). The authors argue that an open form of politics enhances organisational flexibility, innovativeness, and interconnectivity within and outside the organisation. Mintzberg (1999) opined that office politics is a game played in the organisation. He stated that office politics pursue individual rightful ends especially in a whistle

blowing and Young Turks games. It is effective to correct irresponsible behaviours of employees in an organisation.

### **Lobbying**

Lobbying is the art of trying to influence those in authority in order to receive a favourable outcome in a particular issue or cause. Lobbying is used in most businesses and other areas of human endeavour. It is legally accepted in the United States as a process to convince potential customers to buy their product or service. Lobbying is an effective political tool used in selling opinion to the potential buyers of a product (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007). It is a major factor that determine why some people win and some lose, or why some organisations are doing well while others are not. Today lobbying has gone beyond the political arena into office and businesses (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007). Lobbying is a competitive force that boosts the employees' commitment to the organisational goal. It has now become a concern to the scholars of politics why some people win and some lose. Some organisations are now doing well while some are shutting down because of their level of lobbying. The society is now a competitive business environment where there are so many products in the market. The employees of an organisation will be most willing to work with a manager that has a track record of good lobbying ability. A manager that has a good characteristic of lobbying commands respect and people are ready to obey him or her because they always win or succeed.

Many managers possess these characteristics. It is not something you have to learn in the school but a personal trait which is inherent in the people and is eventually developed for maximum productivity. As organization and employees are exposed to some certain conditions and rewards at work place, they begin to increase their lobbying ability to gain the highly expected position in the workplace. Those that possess these characteristics devote their time to work or they are committed to their work because they know that commitment leads to promotion. It is one of the elements that promotes democratic participation and enhances decision making. It facilitates stakeholders to formulate organisational policy development and implementation. In most context people mistakenly understood lobbying as the activity of dubious people. These people that lack integrity, introduced undue influence, unfair competition and implement partial rules and regulations (partial and effective policy making) to the detriment of the organisation. Lobbying creates a level-playing ground for all stakeholders to participate in effective policy making and implementation. It improves the principles of transparency and integrity in the employees of the organisation. Lobbying creates room for a consensus opinion, solicit for support to move forward and aim to bring in the organisational objective (Persson, 2007).

Manny countries and organizations today are engaging in lobbying. It is a process of implementing rules and regulations in the society. Lobbying enhances effective governance based on the people's opinion (Persson, 2007). It is a significant step toward employees' commitment for organisational decision making. Lobbying has been a major tool to reduced cost (cost-benefit outcomes). Lobbying initiates the willingness to comply to organisational policies and encourage management to enforce discipline into the organisation. Lobbying is a means of convincing the mind of the employee to buy your opinion; the individual willingly supports the officer's view without argument (Persson, 2007). Research has shown that there is no obvious punishment for lobbying, but it must be done in accordance with the law and not with force against the individual's conscience.



### **Concept of Employees' Commitment**

Employees' commitment is based on several economic theories. The employees in the organization are working because of what they expect from the organization commonly referred to as reward or motivation. When employees are financially motivated, they tense to commitment to their work. The value of the work, have several element lime salary, recognition and fairness. Most employees are ready to add extra contribution to the organization because of how they are been recognized (Nyong, 2014).

Other researchers have shown that there is a positive relationship between office politics and organizational productivity. There are several factors that influenced employees' commitment in the organization, which included the condition of service, motivation relationship among staff and the expectation of the staff to grow (Eke, 2006). Organizations that have these conditions in place will always have their staff commitment to their duties. At the starting point of employees' engagement, there are certain things that they are expecting before accepting the offer. Organization that cannot improve the working conditions of the staff may not have committed workforce. Initiating office politics is a motivational factor that will actively staff willing to work (Eke, 2006). Zaidi (2012) highlighted some obstacles that may hinder employees' commitment as attitude of management, reward, promotion free will etc. Management that is not given the employees the free will to air their view can killed the moral of the staff. Zaidi explained that management should allow the employee to learn new skill and consequently feel a sense of control. Office politics establish a sort of communication channel between the management and the subordinate. Effective communication channel reduces the level of noise that may exist in business operation and office politics (credit theft). Nkwo (2010) argued that employees' commitment to work is a successful remedy to dysfunctional politicking. However, employee commitment is a participatory action that every levels of management need to be actively involved. Bishop (2016) argued that, there are strong indications that organizational cultures have a great influence on of employees' commitment. This is the assumptions about what comprises valuable employees' commitment and the appropriate location.

Nyong (2014) opined that employee commitment is the psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the industry Nyong (2014). It is associated with the decision making as it bind members in the industry together Nyong (2014). Rajendran (2012) added that organisational commitment is the subset of employee commitment. It comprises of work commitment, career commitment and organisational commitment. Organisational commitment plays a vital role in employee stability and better customer service, hence increases business performance (Nyong, 2014). High employee commitment towards an organisation increases job satisfaction among employees, job performance, overall productivity and sales volume (Sussmann, 2002). In the same vein, it also decreases employee turnover, Other factors that triggers employees commitment are dependability, social processes and organisational climate (Igella, 2014) These factors enhanced employees' commitment. Employee commitment is a multidimensional component (Nedebbio, 2011). Motivation and job satisfaction has the highest impact on employees' commitment and productivity (Nedebbio, 2011). The higher the level of employee satisfaction, the higher they are committed to their work (Nedebbio, 2011).

### **Measures of Employee Commitment**

#### **Affective Commitment**

Affective commitment is a key determinant that positively influenced the level of outcomes. Several researcher has contributed to the affective commitment as being emotional associated. Affective commitment generally refers to the way the employee emotionally attached to their



work (Dessler, 2005).

The organization as a community shared a strong bond between its employees. This includes the financial and non-financial benefit or psychological benefit. The organization provides opportunities to improve staff on their jobs professionally. The employees' is the active force that executes the long term growth and success of the organization. This active force must be directed to achieve the organizational goal by directly and indirectly solving the personal interest of the individual. Once organization is commitment to this individual interest, they indirectly fulfilled the organization goal (Dessler, 2005). The likelihood of affective commitment levels can be improved when the organizations are able to successfully provide such a medium for the individual employees to be committed by motivating the employees. Research has increasingly affirmed that organizational commitment is a key determinant for growth (Meyer & Allen, 1997). An employee with higher commitment is likely to be more eager and motivated to work (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Today organizations are facing major challenges such as restructuring and downsizing. To improve on this controlled factor it is necessary to understand the aspects that determine a worker's/organizational commitment as it is crucial improvement. Several factors affect personal characteristics (Mowday et al, 1970; Steers, 1977). Personal characteristics such as feeling, observation are key element in affective commitment. Allen and Meyer's hinged on the fact that organizational behaviours emulated from the individual behaviour, this means that the organization adopted the behaviours affects the three layers of commitment namely affective, continuance and normative commitment. Diverse factors are reported to significantly influence the three forms of commitment and their development (Mathebula, 2004).

### **Continuance Commitment**

Continuance commitment is the willingness to remain in the organization as a result of personal investment. The personal investment is non-transferable, so if the individual stop working he/she stands the chance of losing it. Such investment like close working relationships with co-workers, retirement investments and career investments, acquired job skills, years of service, involvement in the community, and other benefits that may be too costly for one to leave and seek employment elsewhere (Beckers, 1960) This extrinsic form of commitment is derived from instrumental principles of compliance (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Continuance commitment is initiated and maintained as a result of job security, external constraints, in the form of reward or avoiding losses (Becker et al., 1996). External constraints (i.e., rewards and punishments delivered by one self-sources), are beyond self-determined (Gagne' & Deci, 2005). It is however, important to note that while the perceived bond that underlying employees Continuance commitment exist. Employees continue to be attached to the organization even though it is not his/her mind to do so. It is a calculative attempt gear commitment the employees to work irrespective of poor motivation. It is personal perception or weighing of costs and risks associated with leaving the current Organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer & Allen (1991) further state that "employees whose primary link to the Organization is based on continuance commitment remain because of the consideration of the losses or uncertainty. Continuance commitment is a transactional attachment (Romzek, 1990). He argued that employees carefully calculate their investment and the risk based on what they have put in and what they stand to gain if they remain in the organization (Romzek, 1990). In addition to the fear of losing their investments, individuals develop continuance commitment because of perceived lack of alternatives jobs. Continuance commitment therefore reflects a calculation of the cost of leaving versus the benefits of staying.

### **Normative Commitment**

Normative commitment refers to person's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization. In other words, employees remain in the organization because they ought to do so. It is proposed that normative commitment is influenced by person's experiences both before and after entering the organization (Bergman 2006). This means that not only organizational socialization but also socialization that occurs in the families and society at large is also affects in the way employee's normative commitment develop. (Allen & Meyer 1990; Markovits, Boer & van Dick, 2013.). In a large meta-analysis it was found that the correlation between these two was 0.63 (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky 2002, 28). Therefore, almost 40 % of the variance in one is explained by the other (Bergman 2006, 646). Markovits et al. (2013) argue that "this form of commitment is deeply influenced by the socialization process, values and beliefs stemming from family, school and community environment.

### **Organizational Politics and Employee Commitment**

As noted by Bacharach (2005) politics is an essential skill in managers who wish to get things done. The art of how to get them on your side is crucial at any rank and has human resource implications. However, even today most of the studies that deal with organizational politics suggest that it is a predominantly negative phenomenon (Vigoda, 2003). Block (1988:5) states that "If I told you, you were a very political person, you would take it either as an insult or at best as a mixed blessing". Kanter (1979:166) argues that the terms "power", "force" and "politics" together create a whole whose general context is far from positive: "Its connotations tend to be more negative than positive, and it has multiple meanings." Similarly, organizational politics is often linked with terms such as cunning, manipulation, subversion, mutual degradation or the achievement of goals in improper ways (Drory & Beaty, 1991; Ferris & King, 1991). Mintzberg (1989:238) stresses that organizational politics reflect illegitimate force-relations between the organization's members. He contrasts organizational politics with "authority", (Mintzberg, 1989) which implies a legitimate force. The negative connotations of force and politics are well noted in the literature.

Kambey (2016) executed a study on the impact of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the industry in India: an examination of construct validity. The population of the study include all the workers in New Delhi, India. The sample of the study was one hundred and forty workers that were carefully selected by simple randomization. A self-made questionnaire was the instrument used to collect the data. The data was analysed with independent sample t-test. It was revealed that affective and normative commitment actually has a significant influence on the industry. On the other hand, continuance commitment does not have a significant impact on the organisation.

Farrukh, Ying and Mansori (2017) investigated the impact of five-factor model of personality on organisational commitment in the higher educational institutions of Pakistan. Quantitative methodology was adopted to measure the impact of personality on organisational commitment using a structured questionnaire. The finding show that extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively linked to affective commitment and neuroticism and openness has negative association with affective commitment, Furthermore, extroversion and agreeableness were found to be negatively linked to continuance commitment.

Based on Gandz and Murray (1980) and Bacharach (2005) many of the organizations' members also believe that political behavior is necessary in many cases, especially if someone has an interest in advancing in the organization (promotion) and being acknowledged by his co-workers and employers as a good employee or as a talented manager. In fact, some aspects of

“good” politics in leaders’ behavior, in general managerial decisions and in human resource processes may lead to constructive outcomes for the employer, the employees and the organization as a whole.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was estimated to be 4067 staff in 8 Nigerian Navy formations of South-South, Nigeria. The sample size of 364 was determined 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.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Table 1: Relationship between Lobbying and Affective Commitment**

<b>Correlations</b>				
			Lobbying	Affective Commitment
Spearman's rho	Lobbying	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.668**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	300	300
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.668**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	300	300

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

**Source: Research survey, 2019.**

Table 4.12 shows the Spearman’s correlation coefficient;  $\rho = 0.668^{**}$  and the probability Value ( $PV$ ) =  $0.000 < 0.05$  (level of significance). This is to show that there is a positive relationship between lobbying and affective commitment. Therefore, increasing the level of lobbying as a dimension of office politics will also increase affective commitment as a measure of employees’ commitment. We therefore reject the Null hypothesis which says that there is no positive relationship between lobbying and affective commitment.

**Table 2: Relationship between Lobbying and Continuance Commitment**

		Correlations	
		Lobbying	Continuance Commitment
Spearman's rho	Lobbying	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.663**
		N	.000
Continuance Commitment			300
		Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.663**
		N	.000
			300

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

**Source: Research survey, 2019.**

Table 2 shows the Spearman's correlation coefficient;  $\rho = 0.663^{**}$  and the probability Value ( $PV$ ) =  $0.000 < 0.05$  (level of significance). This is to show that there is a positive relationship between lobbying and continuance commitment. Therefore, increasing the level of lobbying as a dimension of office politics will also increase affective commitment as a measure of employees' commitment. Based on the result, we therefore reject the Null hypothesis which says that there is no positive relationship between lobbying and continuance commitment.

**Table 3: Relationship between Lobbying and Normative Commitment**

		Correlations	
		Lobbying	Normative Commitment
Spearman's rho	Lobbying	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.494**
		N	.000
Normative Commitment			300
		Correlation Coefficient	.494**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.000
			300

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

**Source: Research survey, 2019.**

Table 3 shows the Spearman's correlation coefficient;  $\rho = 0.494^{**}$  and the probability Value ( $PV$ ) =  $0.000 < 0.05$  (level of significance). This is to show that there is a positive relationship between lobbying and normative commitment. Therefore, increasing the level of lobbying as a

dimension of office politics will also increase normative commitment as a measure of employees' commitment. From the value obtained in the table above, we therefore reject the Null hypothesis which says that there is no positive relationship between lobbying and normative commitment.

## **DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

The descriptive analysis and hypotheses tested show that there is a positive relationship between lobbying and employees' commitment in Nigerian Navy formations of South-South Nigeria. This is in line with the research of Persson (2017) that those employees that possess these characteristics devoted their time to work or they are committed to their work because they know that commitment leads to promotion. They also believe that lobbying creates room for a consensus opinion, solicits for support to move forward and aim to bring in the organisational objective in focus. The analyses show that lobbying is an effective dimension that enhances employees' commitment in the Nigeria Navy formation of South-South Nigeria.

The finding reinforces previous studies by Beldona, Siu and Morrison (2006) and Amoako, Arthur, Bando and Katah (2012) found proper organizational politics leads to better performance in the public organisations. Within organizational culture, assumptions of bounded self-interest are far better representation of actual human behaviors. There are some selfish members of the organization, who mainly promote self-interests and at time, even at the expense of organization's objectives. According to Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) there is a connection between the selection of a project for new product development and the impact of organizational politics.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Office politics is described as an activity that permits people in an organization to accomplish goals without going through proper channels. Whether political activities assist or harm the organization depends on whether the goals of individuals are consistent with the goals of the organization. There is no doubt that political beliefs are an ordinary observable fact in every organization. The study concludes that office politics significantly predicts employee commitment in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South, Nigeria. Again, lobbying significantly influences employee commitment in Nigerian Navy Formations of South-South, Nigeria.

The study recommends that management of Nigerian Navy Formations should actively focus on positive political behavior that will lead to employees' commitment. Again, Nigerian Navy Formations should pursue equal promotional opportunities for building loyalty and increase employees' morale competency, to reward committed, hard working and loyal employees, to increase employees' self-development that it limits high labour turnover and to promote competitive spirit and encourage employees to acquire the skills required by the organization.

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# Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services on Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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**Abstract:** The study investigated influence of guidance and counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. The research adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 66,164 respondents. A sample size of 399 was drawn using the Taro Yamen formula. The study implied the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice/Academic Achievement Questionnaire (GCSCCAAQ)" with a four point rating scale designed to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was content and face validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation, while a reliability coefficient value of 0.74 was obtained using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. Means and Standard Deviations were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. It was found that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational, vocational and personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. The study concluded that guidance and counselling services such as educational, vocational and personal social counselling programme in school assist students to harmonize their abilities, interests and values and thereby help them to develop their full potential. The study recommended that schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of trained counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal in life.

**Keywords:** Guidance and Counselling, Services, Career Choice, Academic Achievement, Secondary School, Students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, secondary school education has been the engine room for acquiring knowledge. This is a time when students are made to understand or learn about other subjects that determine the course of study which one would want to engage in higher education after primary school as opined by Melvin (2015). Where it is placed today in the educational system depicts its relevance. Schwarzeller (2016) stated that a school is regarded as that which gives an outside view of what needs to happen in order for change to occur and also an equal opportunity for building up ones strengths and talents. In Nigeria, educational reforms always place secondary schools in the fore front. To be precise, it is seen as a strong avenue for the acquisition of skill,

experience and knowledge cum wide range of vocational prospects for youths (Ezekwesili, 2006). This is a system that is geared towards strengthening secondary school education and providing students with more practical knowledge that can make them strong and stand on their own after graduation. Individual differences exist among people which invariably has an effect on the personality of the individuals and what they are capable of doing (Kutara, 2017). Differences in the individual growth rate, intellect, school achievement, sex usually set the pace where students look at themselves in career or vocations orientation. The home, school, mosque, church and the community are very vital factors in the students' environment, thereby, having an effect or impact in their choice of career or vocation (Olawanle & Obayemi, 2010). Factors such as parental expectation, big salary, societal prestige, personal security, cordial relationship with friends, changes for advancement as well as the nature of the work itself have directly or indirectly caused or made most students who are almost graduating from secondary schools into making unrealistic career choice.

Career cum vocation as used in the field of counselling has a broad and technical meaning (Gonzalez, 2012). Technically, career refers to sequence of role or a position including works, leisure and educational pursuit that may encompass a number of occupations, vocations or jobs one engages in during his working life (Seligman, 2010). It is a job for which it is possible to advance during ones working life, so that he or she may get greater responsibility and earn more money. Career can also be said to be the total life long experience of work that has come to serve as his means of earning a livelihood (Kolo, 2011). The career choice previously was not as difficult as it is today. There were fewer job opportunities and more importantly, parents, teachers and religious bodies were aware of the existing opportunities as well as requirements for entry into them. Today, the situation is that secondary school students hardly have full knowledge of the requirement for each job and can no longer keep track with the numerous career opportunities (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). It is against this background that the guidance and counseling services was introduced in order to assist the secondary students in choosing a good career.

Counselling simply means to give advice to (a person) on social or personal problems, especially professionally and the process of assisting and guiding clients, especially by a trained person on a professional basis, to resolve especially personal, social, or psychological problems and difficulties. Counseling is a collaborative process that involves the development of a confidential professional relationship that focuses on personal problems. The objective of counselling is to help you clarify issues, gain insight into your feelings and thoughts and deal effectively with problems. The major aim of guidance counselling service is to encourage students' academic, social, emotional and personal development. To reach this aim, it helps students get to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems. The guidance and counselling services in the school refers to the range of interventions provided to students to enable them to make choices in the key areas of their personal/social lives, education and career. Gesinde (2011) opined that the school guidance services also include educational development services. Many people will at some point in their lives, find themselves in the role of a counsellor without having a true understanding of the concept of counselling or what the role of the professional counsellor entails. There is a big difference between a professional counsellor and a person who uses some counselling skills as part of their role (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). A professional counsellor is a highly-trained individual who is able to use a different range of counselling approaches with their clients. First and foremost, counsellors need to be aware that no two people are alike. No two people understand the same language in the same way; their understanding will always be linked to their personal experience of the world. The role of the counsellor, therefore, is to help

the client to develop their own understanding of their situation. They will enable the client to explore aspects of their life and feelings, by talking openly and freely (Nikweze, 2005). Talking like this is rarely possible with family or friends, who are likely to be emotionally involved and have opinions and biases that may affect the discussion. Talking to a counsellor give clients the opportunity to express difficult feelings such as anger, resentment, guilt and fear in a confidential environment. The counsellor may encourage the client to examine parts of their lives that they may have found difficult or impossible to face before. There may be some exploration of early childhood experiences to throw some light on why an individual reacts or responds in certain ways in given situations. This is often followed by considering ways in which the client may change such behaviours. Good counselling should reduce the client's confusion, allowing them to make effective decisions leading to positive changes in their attitude and/or behaviour. The ultimate aim of counselling is to enable the client to make their own choices, reach their own decisions and act upon them. There are a number of skills that are required by counsellors. Perhaps the most important are good communication skills (Navin, 2009). Counsellors therefore, need to be particularly be able to listen effectively, giving their full attention to the client. They need to be aware of body language and other non-verbal communication. Clients will often communicate far more non-verbally than verbally, so this is an important area of skill. Questioning is an important skill for counsellors, just as it is in coaching. Counsellors use questioning both to improve their understanding (as a form of clarification), and also as an active way to help expose the clients feelings and emotions. They will also use reflection to show that they have heard the client, and to validate the client's feelings and words. Counsellors also need to be able to build a certain amount of rapport with their client, but not to an extent that would allow them to become emotionally involved (Mashige & Oduntan, 2011). They also need to be empathetic. This means that they are aware of their client's feelings and emotions. Empathy goes beyond being sympathetic (which is basically feeling sorry for someone), because the root of the word means to 'feel with'. Empathy therefore means that the counsellor understands how the client feels and can therefore ask appropriate questions and lead the client to positive conclusions. The nature of empathy is rooted in helping others, and particularly in empowering them to help themselves, so this is an essential skill area for counselling is suitable to the student based on their skills and interest. Educational counselling is a field focused on the preparation of students to professionally apply the theory and principles of guidance and counselling for the personal, social, educational, and vocational development of others. As in coaching Egbochukwu (1997) opined that counselling is rooted in the principle that individuals can help themselves, provided that they receive the right kind of support. A counsellor is not there to tell their clients what to do, or how to do it, but to help them work out for themselves what they are going to do, and the best approach to take. It is, therefore, very important that individuals, person-centered, and those who provide counselling need to remember that above all. Educational counselling help students to know the value of education, educate students and parents about the various courses in education. Educational counsellors suggest the stream of course or subject, and assist students at all levels, from elementary school to college, listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional or social problems. Help students process their problems and plan goals and action, and finally, mediate conflict between students and teachers.

Vocational counselling is a set of services designed to develop the skills and ability to practice a vocation in a productive way (Seligman, 2010). Those born with physical or cognitive impairments are taught how to perform in the workplace taking into consideration their abilities



and challenges. It is a process during which a vocational counsellor helps their clients decide, in an aware and independent way, which profession or occupation they want (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). In personal social counselling, individual counseling (sometimes called psychotherapy, talk therapy, or treatment) is a process through which clients work one-on-one with a trained mental health clinician in a safe, caring, and confidential environment. Individual counseling is counseling focused on the individual's immediate or near future concerns.

Academic achievement according to Ipaye (2004) is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. It is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important whether via procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts. Furthermore, there are inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic achievement, elements such as test anxiety, environment, motivation, and emotions require consideration when developing models of school achievement. Individual differences in academic achievement have been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Students with higher mental ability as demonstrated by IQ tests and those who are higher in conscientiousness (linked to effort and achievement motivation) tend to achieve highly in academic settings. A recent meta-analysis suggested that mental curiosity (as measured by typical intellectual engagement) has an important influence on academic achievement in addition to intelligence and conscientiousness (Anyanwu, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

When considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option. The tertiary level of education is the level of education at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level while in the secondary school level. It is on this premises that this study seeks to address the problem of wrong career choices which deeply and highly influences the choice of career and academic achievement of students in secondary schools. This is because most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job. It is against the backdrop that the study was carried out to investigate the influence of guidance and counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of guidance counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent to which educational counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which vocational counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Determine the extent to which personal social counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does educational counselling services influence and career choice academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 significance level.

1. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 66,164 which comprised of all the secondary school students in Rivers State as at the period of this study. A sample size of 399 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamen formula. The study implied the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled “Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice/Academic Achievement Questionnaire” (GCSCCAAQ) with a four point rating scale designed to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was content and face validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation, while a reliability coefficient value of 0.74 was obtained using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation. Means and Standard Deviations were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Educational Counseling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Educational counseling helps students to maintain good study habit.	2.59	1.99	High Extent
2	It prepares students for academic challenges by relating educational agendas to their success in the future.	2.78	1.40	High Extent
3	It provide support to teachers by serving an important part of the complete team that addresses the educational	2.99	1.55	High Extent

goals and needs of their students.

4	Educational counsellors gather and share resources with teachers to help the staff develop their skills in classroom management and teaching effectiveness.	2.54	1.39	High Extent
5	It makes teaching and learning easy.	3.51	1.50	Very High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>2.88</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From table 1 above, the mean score of 2.59 and standard deviation score of 1.99 implies that educational counseling helps students to maintain good study habit, the mean score of 2.78 and standard deviation score of 1.40 entails that it prepares students for academic challenges by relating educational agendas to their success in the future, the mean score of 2.99 and standard deviation score of 1.55 provides that it provide support to teachers by serving an important part of the complete team that addresses the educational goals and needs of their students, the mean score of 2.54 and standard deviation score of 1.39 implies that educational counsellors gather and share resources with teachers to help the staff develop their skills in classroom management and teaching effectiveness, the mean score of 3.51 and standard deviation score of 1.50 implies that it makes teaching and learning easy, while the grand mean score of 2.88 and standard deviation score of 1.57 provides that educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Vocational Counselling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Vocational counselling makes students motivated learners and facilitate their exploration of careers.	3.55	1.41	Very High Extent
7	It prepares students for career challenges by relating vocational agenda as to their success in the future	3.50	1.72	Very High Extent
8	It identifies strengths and weaknesses of the students.	2.50	1.50	High Extent
9	It explores options for the students.	2.50	1.41	High Extent
10	It identifies the individual set goals.	3.20	1.91	High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From table 2 above, the mean score of 3.55 and standard deviation score of 1.41 implies that vocational counselling makes students motivated learners and facilitate their exploration of careers., the mean score of 3.50 and standard deviation score of 1.72 entails that it prepares students for career challenges by relating vocational agenda as to their success in the future, the mean score of 2.50 and standard deviation score of 1.50, provides that it identifies strengths and weaknesses of the students, the mean score of 2.50 and standard deviation score of 1.41 implies that it explores options for the students, the mean score of 3.20 and standard deviation score of 1.91 implies that it explores options for the students, while the grand mean score of 3.05 and

standard deviation score of 1.59 provides that vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Personal Social Counselling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11	Personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger.	3.61	1.53	High Extent
12	Increased confidence and decision-making skills.	2.65	1.30	High Extent
13	It gives the ability to change self-defeating behaviours/habit.	2.54	1.46	High Extent
14	Provides better expression and management of emotions, including anger	2.60	2.01	High Extent
15	It relieves individuals from depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions.	3.05	0.94	High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From the table above, the mean score of 3.61 and standard deviation score of 1.53 implies that personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 2.65 and standard deviation score of 1.30 entails that personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 2.54 and standard deviation score of 1.46 provides that it gives the ability to change self-defeating behaviours/habit, the mean score of 2.60 and standard deviation score of 0.94 implies that it provides better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 3.05 and standard deviation score of 0.94 implies it relieves individuals from depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions, while the grand mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation score of 1.45 provides that personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 4:** Z-test of the Difference in the Opinion of Students on the Extent to which Educational Counselling Services Influences Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Educational Counselling Services	3.91	2.94	399	397	0.05		1.103
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.87	2.65		1.96			

In table 4 above, the calculated z-value of 1.103 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** Z-test of the difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Vocational Counselling Services	3.75	2.61	399	397	0.05	0.93	1.96
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.21	2.24		1.96			

Table 5 above entails that the calculated z-value of 0.93 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in the opinions of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 6:** Z-test of the difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling influences academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Personal Social Counselling Services	3.20	2.14	399	397	0.05	1.20	1.96
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.11	2.70		1.96			

In table 6 above, the calculated z-value of 1.20 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was also found that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of

secondary school students in Rivers State. Egbochukwu (1997) supported this finding and asserted that when considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option. The tertiary level of education is the level of education at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level while in the secondary school level. It is on this premises that this study conclusively maintains that great majority of the students are deeply and highly influenced early in their lives as to career choice and most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job.

Furthermore, Navin (2009) opined that educational counselling help students to know the value of education, educate students and parents about the various courses in education. Educational counsellors suggest the stream of course or subject, and assist students at all levels, from elementary school to college, listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional or social problems. Help students process their problems and plan goals and action, and finally, mediate conflict between students and teachers.

The study also revealed that vocational counselling services significantly influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. In line with this finding Seligman (2010) opined in his study that vocational counselling is a set of services designed to develop the skills and ability to practice a vocation in a productive way. Those born with physical or cognitive impairments are taught how to perform in the workplace taking into consideration their abilities and challenges. It is a process during which a vocational counsellor helps their clients decide, in an aware and independent way, which profession or occupation they want (Issa & Nwalo, 2008).

Finally, it was found in this study that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. In personal social counselling, individual counseling (sometimes called psychotherapy, talk therapy, or treatment) is a process through which clients work one-on-one with a trained mental health clinician in a safe, caring, and confidential environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013), and that individual counseling is counseling focused on the individual's immediate or near future concerns.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that the major aim of guidance counselling service is to encourage students' academic, social, emotional and personal development. To reach this aim, it helps students get to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems. The guidance and counselling services in the school refers to the range of interventions provided to students to enable them to make choices in the key areas of their personal/social lives, education and career. In other words, guidance and counselling services such as educational, vocational and personal social counselling in schools assist students to harmonize their abilities, interests and values and thereby helping them to develop their full potentials. Counselling is a collaborative process that involves the development of a confidential professional relationship that focuses on personal problems.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that;



1. Schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of trained educational counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal in life.
2. Schools should also provide vocational counselling sessions and career programme for the students, parents and guardians and giving them information regarding the capabilities, intellectual abilities and limitation of their children as well as the need to choose a particular vocation in life.
3. Career clubs should also be introduced in schools which would make available personal social counselling services, career literature and talks from employers of labour.

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## Evaluation of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University

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**Abstract:** This study evaluated Business Education Programme in Rivers State University. Congruence Evaluation Research Design and Discrepancy Evaluation Model were adopted. The population of this study was 1674 respondents which comprised 1611 undergraduate students, 44 post graduate students, and 19 staff of the Department of Business Education of Rivers State University 2018/2019 academic session. The multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 313 fixed using the online Fluid Survey Sample Calculator. The researchers developed a questionnaire titled Evaluation of Business Education Programme (EBEP) to elicit data for the study. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The research questions were answered using means and standard deviations. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Independent Samples t-test. Results indicated that though the Business Education Programme has been partially implemented as defined with aspects of the objectives achieved; great disparity exists between the expected and actual outcomes; and that Business Education Programme is significantly inadequate as it lacked properly equipped business studios for practical experiences of the learners. It was recommended among others that the programme should be funded properly and that more lecture halls as well as studios be built to improve Business Education Programme in Rivers State University.

**Keywords:** Business Education, Evaluation, Implementation, Objectives, Programme.

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### INTRODUCTION

It has been observed today that states that thrive in all sectors of their economy did embrace education as their bedrock (Meisinger & Wagner, 2016). It is therefore not difficult to understand that a nation is as good as the kind of education system it operates. Consequently, emphasis should be placed on the quality of teaching, in order to ensure impressiveness, efficiency and productivity of education, if quality of education is to be guaranteed. When focusing on quality, the possibility of national and international level comparability should remain and improve. It is also necessary to control the quality of education by using the relevant agencies such as National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) as well as National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). These agencies were established in order to ensure the quality of education in Nigeria. The concern here is quality assurance in Business Education. Quality assurance refers to the planned and systematic activities implemented in a quality system so that quality requirements for products or services are fulfilled. Idialu (2017) described quality as standards of something as compared to other things.

That is the degree of goodness or excellence. Quality assurance generally means all the procedures, processes and systems that support and develop education which includes Business Education.

According to Idialu (2017), Business Education is a form of education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment. Business education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners thereby enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. The goal of business education is primarily to produce competent, skilful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work (Odunaike & Amoda, 2018).

Business Education entails those business programmes and courses taught ordinarily at the secondary school level. Business Education is an essential part of the preparation of youths for live and living; it is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts (1) Office Education - a vocational programme of office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and (2) General Business Education - a programme to provide students with information and competences which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business. Njoku (2009) defined Business Education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living.

Amoor (2010) noted that Business Education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. Business Education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. It is an education that provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavour. Hence, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Since the primary goal of Business Education is to produce competent, skilful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work; it can then be opined that Business Education is an impetus and sine qua non to national transformation because economic development usually engenders national transformation.

### **Business Education in Rivers State University**

In line with the Congruence Evaluation Model, this study assessed the following:

1. The extent to which Business Education Programme has been implemented as defined?
  - (a) Competency of the Business Education teachers in Rivers State University:
  - (b) Recruitment of teachers to improve the Programme.
  - (c) Establishment of E-library.
2. The extent of achievement of the under-listed objectives of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University:
  - (a) Provision of educational resources with the use of Information and Communication Technology.
  - (b) Provision of quality and flexible education.
  - (c) Reduction of challenges as well as cost.
  - (d) Provision of access to effective university education.

- (e) Provision of equality of opportunities in the department.
- 3. The level of adequacy of the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University in achieving its objectives in terms of:
  - (a) Number of lecture halls
  - (b) Location of lecture halls
  - (c) Availability of quality and effective instructional materials to improve teaching and learning.
  - (d) Power Supply
  - (e) Internet Connectivity.
  - (f) Staffing
  - (g) Funding
- 4. The level of congruence between the intended outcomes with the actual outcomes of the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University in terms of the following:
  - (a) Attainment of student target population of 600 in the first cycle (1-12 months).
  - (b) Attainment of student target population of 650 in the second cycle (13-24 months).
  - (c) Attainment of student target population of 700 in the third cycle (25-36 months).

### **Concept of Evaluation**

Evaluation means different things to different people (Tumin, 2010). First each person has different notions as to what are legitimate sources of pride and shame. Such deferring perceptions can lead to conflicts over the purposes and results of an evaluation. Tumin (2010) noted that there is a defensiveness of people about the possible results of a systematic security of their effectiveness. This defensiveness may possess a serious impediment to effective evaluation of educational programmes. Scriven (2017) has referred to this defensive by the non-ethical expression as “chicken heartedness”. The threat syndrome in evaluation is a reality. Many people feel threatened by the word “evaluation”. This apparent lack of consensus on the definition of evaluation also poses a problem in delineating the role of the evaluator. In one role, the evaluator is seen as a decision-maker; in another, the evaluator produces a description of the variables operating in a programme and a set of judgmental statements. The implicit definition of evaluation by Stake (1967) as the description and judgment of an educational programme encompasses these roles of an evaluator.

However, some scholars contend that although evaluation is a judgment process, the evaluator is not involved in decision-making. He is mainly concerned with gathering, selecting and analysing of information and make his results available to the people in decision making positions. The decision-makers take their decisions based on information so provided by the evaluator. Best known definitions reflecting this role of the evaluator are those provided by Alkin (1969) & Stufflebeam (1971). While Stufflebeam (1971) defined evaluation as the process of alienating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives, in the view of Alkin (1969), evaluation is a systematic, rigorous, and meticulous application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement, or outcomes of a programme. A more practical compromise to the evaluator’s role was however offered by Worther (2011) and Sanders (2014) as they stated that the perception about evaluation as a collaborative activity is very pertinent to the discussion of evaluation of any educational programme of which Business Education programme is not an exception. It is expected therefore that all interest groups involved in an educational programme such as the programme developers, administrators, operators and consumers should report on the worth of the programme to ensure

its effectiveness and quality.

Evaluation therefore is not the making of value judgment that is subjective, rather it is the application of formal inquiry techniques (Scriven, 2017) for data collection in order to conceptualize, refine and determine the effectiveness or worth of a programme with a view to aiding decision making as to whether to continue, modify or terminate the programme. It is both qualitative and quantitative in nature; and the process of making objective judgment is based on the qualitative and quantitative information obtained from measurement.

### **Model for Evaluating Business Education Programme**

The evaluation of an educational programme is multivariate in nature. To this end, a number of evaluation models exist for use in evaluating educational programmes. Some of them are decision-objective model (Tyler, 1958; Matfessel & Michael, 1967; Hammond, 1969; and Wormer, 1970) and course improvement model (Cronbach, 1963). Others are assessment of merit model (Scriven, 1967), countenance model (Stake, 1967), discrepancy model (Provus, 1969) decision-management-oriented model (Alkin, 1969), CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 1971), Kentucky vocational education evaluation model (Denton, 1973) and model for evaluating vocational teacher education programme in Nigeria (Okoro, 2005). A central feature, which characterises these decision-making models of evaluation, is their applicability to decision making concerning aspects of evolving programmes.

To ensure the applicability of these evaluation models, Farmer (2015) suggested that the following components of any programme should be scanned:

1. Need for the programme
2. Philosophical consideration
3. Values
4. Assumptions underlying or otherwise related to the programme
5. The degree of the programme's development in general and in local situations
6. The context for environment in which the programme functions
7. Alternative ways that the programme has been and is being implemented
8. Consequences of the programme
9. Explanations of consequences and the extent to which those consequences have been attributed to the programme

In order to take care of all the concerns expressed about past evaluation studies on educational programmes and suggestions that have been proffered for effective evaluation, the Meta-perpetual or Kernel of Truth Evaluation model was offered by Obanya (1982) and Akpe (1987) as a viable alternative methodology for the evaluation of Business Education programme.

The Kernel of Truth Evaluation model when applied to programme evaluation utilizes the degree of perceptual congruence among the various interest groups in the programme. Therefore, the measure of the Kernel of Truth in Business Education programme is also applicable. The rationale behind this perception-based model of evaluation is that consensual validation among those involved about the worthiness and quality of a programme which represents an approximation to an objective measurement (Stanton, 2007). As a participant perception-based-model of evaluation, the Kernel of Truth Evaluation model poses little or no threat to faculty members. It also highlights the areas of stress and strain that may exist in a programme and provides a near-realistic representation of the state-of-the-art of programme operation. This evaluation study is anchored on the Kernel of Truth Evaluation model.



### **Statement of the Problem**

The Business Education Programme of Rivers State University is quite an innovation and Nigeria appears utterly fertile for it to thrive because of the large unemployment rate in the country and many Nigerians seeking self-employment, self-reliance, paid employment with higher wages, higher education for better job, employers' requirements for promotion and job security, and education for its sake (knowledge, information, and power). Unfortunately, the Business Education programme of the Rivers State University is faced with problems of poor funding, inadequate instructional facility, inadequate power supply, and poor internet connectivity which cast doubts on whether the programme is meeting the purpose of its establishment.

Given the above educational and employment needs of Nigeria, which are greatly supportive of the establishment and survival of the Business Education programme of the Rivers State University, the problem is: How well has the Business Education programme of the Rivers State University achieved the purposes for which it was established. It became imperative therefore to find out how much the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has achieved its purpose and its quality.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University. In specific terms, the study sought to:

1. Evaluate the extent Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has been implemented as defined.
2. Investigate the extent Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has achieved its intended objectives.
3. Determine the extent of consistency between the intended and actual outcomes of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University.
4. Find out the objectives of the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University that should be (a) continued as they are, (b) modified, or (c) terminated.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions directed the investigation:

1. To what extent has the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University been implemented as defined?
2. To what extent has the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University achieved its objectives?
3. To what extent are the actual outcomes of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University consistent with the intended outcomes?
4. Which objectives of the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University should be (a) continued as they are, (b) modified and continued or (c) terminated?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. The undergraduate students, postgraduate students and academic staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the implementation of the Business Education Programme as defined.
2. The undergraduate students, postgraduate students and academic staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the achievement of the objectives of Business Education Programme.
3. There is no significant difference between the intended and actual outcomes of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University.
4. The undergraduate students, postgraduate students and academic staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the objectives of Business Education Programme that should be (i) continued as they are, (ii) modified and continued, (iii) terminated in their entirety.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Congruence Evaluation Research Design and Kernel of Truth Evaluation model were adopted for the study. The population of this study was 1674 respondents which comprised of 1611 undergraduate students, 44 postgraduate students, and 19 staff in the Department of Business Education of Rivers State University 2018/2019 academic session. The multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 313 fixed using the online Fluid Survey Sample Calculator, consisting of 250 undergraduates, 44 postgraduates and 19 staff. All the postgraduate students and all the academic staff of the Department of Business Education were sampled and the balance was made up of undergraduate students of the Department. The researchers developed a questionnaire titled Evaluation of Business Education Programme (EBEP) to elicit data for the study. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The research questions were answered using means and standard deviations. The null hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Independent Samples t-test.

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent has the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University been implemented as defined?

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics on the extent of Implementation of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University

S/No.	Items	Undergraduate: (n <sub>1</sub> = 250)		Postgraduates (n <sub>2</sub> = 44)		Staff (n <sub>3</sub> = 19)		Decision
		x	SD	x	SD	x	SD	
1	Competency of the Business Education lecturers in Rivers State University.	2.55	1.75	3.29	1.40	3.03	1.05	High Extent
2	Recruitment of teachers to improve the Programme	2.92	1.68	2.54	1.25	2.79	1.27	High Extent
3	Establishment of E-library.	3.01	1.19	2.81	1.62	3.35	1.49	High Extent

4	The relevance and multiple benefits (personal, social, academic) of the programme is made clear.	2.72	0.80	2.60	1.87	2.77	1.06	High Extent
	<b>Grand Scores</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>2.99</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

Total sample of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff used for the study was 313, while  $n_1$ ,  $n_2$ , and  $n_3$  are the sub-samples of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff respectively.

**Decision:** Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has been implemented as defined to a high extent: (2.50  $\bar{x}$  3.49).

Table 1 shows the extent the Business Education programme of the Rivers State University has been implemented as defined. The table presents grand means of 2.80, 2.81 and 2.99, and standard deviations of 1.36, 1.54 and 1.22 for undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff respectively indicating high extent implementation of the Business Education programme. In other words, the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University are in consensus that the Business Education programme has, to a high extent, been implemented as defined.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent has the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University achieved its intended objectives?

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics on the extent which Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has achieved its objectives.

S/No.	Items	Undergraduates ( $n_1 = 250$ )		Postgraduates ( $n_2 = 44$ )		Staff ( $n_3 = 19$ )		Decision
		x	SD	x	SD	x	SD	
5	Enhance lifelong learning as well as education for all	2.94	1.62	2.89	1.32	3.33	1.42	High Extent
6	Provision of educational resources with the use of Information and Communication Technology.	3.42	1.71	3.11	1.60	2.54	1.90	High Extent
7	The programme is worth the initial investment put into it.	3.13	1.45	2.70	1.37	3.40	1.26	High Extent
8	Provision of quality and flexible education.	2.62	1.60	2.93	1.24	2.93	1.38	High Extent
	<b>Grand Scores</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.49</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

Total sample of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff used for the study was 313, while  $n_1$ ,  $n_2$ , and  $n_3$  are the sub-samples of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff respectively.

**Decision:** Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has achieved its intended objectives to a high extent: (2.50  $\bar{x}$  3.49).

The information in table 2 shows the extent the objectives of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University have been achieved with grand means of 3.03, 2.91 and 3.05, and standard deviations of 1.60, 1.38 and 1.49 for undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff respectively which points out that the objectives of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has been achieved to a high extent. This denotes that the students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University are in accord that the objectives of the Business Education Programme have been achieved to a high extent.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent are the actual outcomes of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University consistent with the intended outcomes?

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics on the extent to which actual outcomes of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University is consistent with the intended outcomes.

S/No.	Items	Undergraduates (n <sub>1</sub> = 250)		Postgraduates (n <sub>2</sub> = 44)		Staff (n <sub>3</sub> = 19)		Decision
		x	SD	x	SD	x	SD	
9	Attainment of student target population of 600 in the first cycle (1-12 months)	2.65	1.22	2.63	1.21	3.20	1.30	High Extent
10	Attainment of student target population of 650 in the second cycle (13-24 months)	3.28	1.43	3.12	1.03	2.93	1.15	High Extent
11	Attainment of student target population of 700 in the third cycle (25-36 months)	2.54	1.72	2.57	1.41	3.11	1.28	High Extent
12	Admission procedure into the programme is less complex considering the attainment detail for the period under review.	2.57	1.07	2.94	1.50	2.78	1.26	High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>2.76</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

Total sample of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff used for the study was 313, while n<sub>1</sub>, n<sub>2</sub>, and n<sub>3</sub> are the sub-samples of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff respectively.

**Decision:** The intended and actual outcomes of the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University has been consistent to a high extent: (2.50  $\bar{x}$  3.49).

Table 3 illustrates that the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University have respectively grand means of 2.76, 2.82 and 3.01, and standard deviations of 1.36, 1.29 and 1.25 which connote high extent congruence between the intended and actual outcomes of the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University. Put differently, the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University agree that great disparity does not exist between the intended and actual outcomes of the Business Education Programme.

**Research Question 4:** Which objectives of the Business Education Programme in Rivers State University should be (a) continued as they are, (b) modified, or (c) terminated?

**Table 4:** Descriptive Statistics on the objectives of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University that should be (a) continued as they are, (b) modified, or (c) terminated.

S/No.	Items	Undergraduates (n <sub>1</sub> = 250)		Postgraduates (n <sub>2</sub> = 44)		Staff (n <sub>3</sub> = 19)		Decision
		x	SD	x	SD	x	SD	
13	Admission procedures should be modified.	3.15	1.72	3.03	1.70	3.12	1.71	High Extent
14	Improvement of E-learning.	3.32	1.60	3.12	1.63	2.98	1.33	High Extent
15	Instructional materials should be provided.	3.31	1.52	3.05	1.32	3.01	1.52	High Extent
16	Study centres in the department should be increased.	3.07	0.97	3.21	1.62	2.84	1.92	High Extent
Grand Scores		3.21	1.45	3.10	1.57	2.99	1.62	High Extent

Total sample of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff used for the study was 313, while n<sub>1</sub>, n<sub>2</sub>, and n<sub>3</sub> are the sub-samples of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and staff respectively.

**Decision:** The objectives of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University should be continued as they are, or modified and continued to a high extent: (2.50  $\bar{x}$  3.49).

The results presented in table 4 shows grand means of 3.21, 3.10 and 2.99, and standard deviations of 1.45, 1.57 and 1.62 for undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff respectively indicating, to a high extent, that the objectives of the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University should not be discarded, but some objectives would be retained as they are, while others would be modified and continued.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** The undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the implementation of the Business Education Programme as defined.

**Table 5:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the implementation of the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University as defined.

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	5.321	2	3.622			H <sub>0</sub> Not Rejected
Within Groups	81.077	311	5.291	.441	.517	
Total	86.398	313				

Table 5 shows that the computed F is 0.441 which is statistically not significant at .05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus the null hypothesis that “the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the implementation of the Business Education Programme as defined” is retained,  $F(2, 311) = .441, p > .05$ . In other words, the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of the Rivers State University are in agreement that the Business Education Programme has been implemented as defined.

**Hypothesis 2:** The undergraduate students, post graduate students and staff of Business Education Department in Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the achievement of the objectives of Business Education Programme.

**Table 6:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the achievement of the objectives of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	8.031	2	4.902			$H_0$ Not Rejected
Within Groups	92.811	311	8.132	1.501	.627	
Total	100.842	313				

Table 6 presents that the computed  $F = 1.501$  is statistically not significant at .05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that the null hypothesis that “the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the achievement of the objectives of the Business Education Programme” is not rejected,  $F(2, 311) = 1.501, p > .05$ . The implication is that the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department in Rivers State University are in a consensus that the objectives of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University have been achieved to a high extent.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference between the intended and actual outcomes of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University.

**Table 7:** Independent Samples t-test on the difference between actual and intended outcomes of Business Education Programme of Rivers State University

Sources of Variation	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Equal variances assumed	6.723	.002	22.517	311	.002	$H_0$ Rejected
Equal variances not assumed			43.702		.001	

The information in table 7 illustrates that independent samples t-test for equal variances assumed has  $F = 6.723$ , p value of .002 (Sig.),  $t = 22.517$ , degrees of freedom of 311 (df), and p value of .002 (Sig. for 2-tailed). Thus the null hypothesis that “there is no significant difference between the actual and intended outcomes of the Business Educational Programme” is rejected as  $t = 22.517, p (.002) < .05$ , (Sig. for 2-tailed). In other words, there is a statistically significant



disparity between intended and actual outcomes of the Business Educational Programme of Rivers State University.

**Hypothesis 4:** The undergraduate students, post graduate students and staff of Business Education Department in Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the objectives of Business Education Programme that should be (i) continued as they are, (ii) modified and continued, (iii) terminated in their entirety.

**Table 8:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the objectives of Business Education Programme that should be (i) continued as they are, (ii) modified and continued, (iii) terminated

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	.787	2	4.122			
Within Groups	62.301	311	5.614	.433	.545	H <sub>0</sub> Not Rejected
Total	63.088	313				

Table 8 presents a computed  $F = 0.433$  which is statistically not significant at .05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis that “the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University do not differ significantly in their mean rating of the objectives of Business Education Programme that should be (i) continued as they are, (ii) modified and continued, (iii) discarded in their entirety” is not rejected,  $F(2, 311) = 0.433$ ,  $p > .05$ . This implies that the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff of Business Education Department of Rivers State University are in accord that no objectives of the Business Education Programme should be discarded; they should be continued as they are, or modified and continued.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study evaluated the Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University and found that the programme has been implemented as defined and its objectives achieved as intended to high extents. It further found that no objective of the programme should be discarded (while some will continue as they are others will be modified and continued). However, the study revealed a significant disparity between the intended and actual outcomes of the Business Education Programme of the University.

The study revealed that the Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University has been implemented as defined. This implies that the Business Education Department of the Rivers State University is capable of providing good and quality access to Business Education and inherent benefits. This finding was supported by Lowe (2015) who after a worldwide study, concluded that the Rivers State University convincingly implemented its Business Education Programme. However, Farmer (2015) observed that the limitation of Business Education Programme of Rivers State was funding; and that if the programme was adequately funded, it would move faster to accomplish its set vision, mission, and objectives.

Further the study found that the objectives of the programme have been achieved to a high extent. Farmer (2015), in line with his study, opined that the Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University is realising its objectives of equality of opportunities in education in the University, provision of greater access to Business Education, and reduction in the cost of education.

Also found by the study was a significant disparity between the actual and intended outcomes of the Business Educational Programme. The results showed that the intended outcomes were larger than the actual outcomes. Supporting this result, Sanders (2014) asserted that the student enrolment of Business Education Programme in Rivers State University was below the expected enrolment, thereby not effectively reaching the hitherto unreached and not ensuring that all interested in, and capable of having Business Education is enrolled. The problem is associated with poor funding of the programme in particular, and Nigerian university education in general, power supply that is regularly irregular and inadequate infrastructures.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study have revealed that the Business Education Department of Rivers State University is capable of providing good and quality access to Business Education because the programme has been implemented as defined, the objectives are being achieved and no objectives are to be discarded. Although there exist some disparity between the intended and actual outcomes of the programme, it is expected that with adequate funding and provision of needed infrastructure, the actual outcome might surpass the intended out in no distant time.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the effectiveness of the Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University in actualizing the purpose of its establishment:

1. Adequate monitoring and supervision organ should be put in place to ensure that the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University is providing the needed quality Business Education as implemented.
2. Power supply in the University and specifically to the Faculty of Education (where Business Education Department is housed) should be improved. The objectives of the Business Education Programme of the Rivers State University cannot be achievement with the present state of power supply that is regularly irregular.
3. Student enrolment into Business Education Programme in Rivers State University should be made less stringent to enlarge the scope of beneficiaries of Business Education.
4. The programme should be funded properly so that more lecture halls, studios, and other infrastructures will be provided to improve the Business Education Programme of Rivers State University and ensure it meets its intended outcomes.

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# Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction: A Study of Fast Food Firms in Rivers State of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of product quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in fast food firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. Questionnaire was developed, refined, tested and used in collecting data from 249 customers of 83 fast food firms domiciled in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Data was analyzed using simple regression techniques in order to provide supporting evidence to three hypotheses regarding the concealed structure of the relationship between product quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Results sustained the hypotheses and evidently demonstrate that: product performance significantly predicts customer satisfaction; product reliability significantly predicts customer satisfaction; product durability significantly predicts customer satisfaction. The study therefore, concludes that the elements of product quality significantly predict customer satisfaction. The study recommends amongst others that the management of fast food firms should focus on their product quality dimensions to endear and sustain customer satisfaction. The major contribution of this study is that it explicates the dormant configuration of two foremost psychological constructs, product quality and customer satisfaction, that are of major concern to both researchers and practitioners. Moreover, The findings of the extrapolative investigation of this study suggest that the fast food customers' satisfaction can be improved focusing on product quality as a holistic entity.*

**Keywords:** Customer satisfaction, Fast food firms, Product quality, Rivers State.

**Paper Type:** Research paper

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's full-grown business environment, product quality is understood to be of principal importance to the continued existence and success of products (Choi & Pucik, 2005; Tellis, Yin & Niraj, 2009). Not astoundingly, firms spend extensively on product quality inventiveness to make certain the advanced quality of the products (Adam & Foster, 2000). Product quality and product cost, as dominant factors of customer satisfaction and loyalty, are important aspects in management theory and practice (Bresnahan, 2010; Eckert & Hughes, 2010; Zinn & Haddad, 2007).

The hunt for quality has developed into the frame of mind of an assortment of organizations just about the world with the optimism that the application of quality management philosophy will support in unraveling managerial problems. Quality has turned out to be the archetype for product positioning and differentiation, and businesses are projected to convey a distinctive need satisfying products that will boost customer satisfaction and achievement in the local or international market space.

More also accounted for the significance of product quality (Almansour, 2012; Carter, Lonial & Raju, 2010; Chin & Sofian). Quite a lot of scholarly inquest on product quality on customer satisfaction have built up (Xhema & Metin, 2017; Nindiani, Hamsel & Purba, 2017; Atiyah, 2016; Saleem *et al.*, 2016). These studies suggest that there should be further advancement of product quality to enhance sustained customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, their studies do not envelope Nigeria, a developing nation where there is deficiency of such investigations. This study fills the gap and domiciles its findings in the Nigerian fast food Industry.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Customer satisfaction is an important facet in appreciating a firm's performance, since it turns out to be an output in running a flourishing business (Krivobokova, 2009). This is because, in current times, better performance is a priceless vigor to press forward a firm's profit and sustainable development (Harcourt & Ikegwuru, (2020). It also develops into the most imperative focal point for global businesses. Specifically, sustainable customer satisfaction ought to be within reach, but as luck would have it, it is not the case in the Nigerian fast food industry. The set back is that the level of customer satisfaction recorded by these firms in terms of repeat purchase, loyalty, and advocacy is abysmal. Worst still, customers move to other brands and this can have long-term consequences on company's image (Nair, 2013). It is quite possible that this worrisome situation could be abated if firms enthusiastically pursue product quality in their business operations. Therefore, this study investigates product quality improvement and its effect on customer satisfaction with special reference to fast food firms in Rivers state of Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Product Quality**

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014), a product is anything that can be offered to the market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a need or want. Product quality means conformance of a product to the expectation of the consumer (Calantone & Knight, 2010). A quality product means different things to different consumer. It is a challenge to all firms to set their quality level high, and ensure that their products meet with the expectation of target market (Ebitu, 2016).

According to Suchánek *et al.*, (2014), quality is defined as perceived quality of the customer, so the main factor in measuring product quality is customer satisfaction itself. To achieve high customer satisfaction, it is important for the company to create products that meet the requirements of its customers. Moreover, according to Alex and Thomas (2012), product quality is the degree to how well the product specifications meet customers' expectations.

Successful companies stretch beyond their limits to constantly meet and exceed the desires and expectations of their actual and potential customers. To achieve this objective, the products must be novel and innovative with a leading edge attributes in order to penetrate the market.

Cutting edge products are superior, unique and new in the market that offers customers exciting features beyond the offering of competitors. Firms aim to create a superior fulfillment of customer needs in one or several product attributes in order to develop customer satisfaction and loyalty, which can often in turn be used to charge a minimum price for the products (Morshett *et al.*, 2006).

According to Dean & Evans (1994); Sashi & Stern (1995). A firms must seek to create a perception in the minds of customers that their products or services possess superior characteristics that are unique from those of its competitors in terms of image and reputation, reliability, design features and quality. A firm creates this perception by incorporating real qualitative difference in its products and services, engaging in advertising programs, marketing techniques, and charging premium prices (Miller, 1986). According to Acquaah & Ardekani (2006), differentiation firms are able to achieve competitive advantage over their rivals because of the perceived uniqueness of their products and thus, gain leadership of that product in the industry.

Garvin (1984) encouraged managers to reify quality and proposed "eight critical dimensions of product quality" as a "framework for strategic analysis. These dimensions are:

- (1) Performance: the primary operating characteristics of the product.



- (2) Features: special supplements to the primary operating characteristics of the product.
  - (3) Conformance: the degree to which the product's design and operating characteristics meet predetermined standards.
  - (4) Aesthetics: how the product looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes.
  - (5) Durability: the amount of usage the product offers before it must be replaced.
  - (6) Serviceability: the speed, courtesy, and competence of service people and the speed and ease of repair of the product.
  - (7) Reliability: the probability of the product failure within a specified time frame.
  - (8) Perceived quality: quality as seen by the customer inferred from the marketer's reputation and image.
- In line with Garvin (1984), this study adopts product performance, product reliability and product durability as the dimensions of product quality.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Daniel (2001) sees customer satisfaction as the consciousness of incentive received by the customer after making the forfeit of acquiring a product.

Belin (2002) locates satisfaction as a psychological state trailing the purchase of a product or aiming at a service explained by a momentary feeling ensuing from the variation amid the customer prospect and the definite realization, being analogous with the pervious point in time with the service.

Hasselin and Wiele (2004) distinguish satisfaction as having an affirmative impact, by evaluating all the characteristics of a relation with customer.

Kotler and Armstrong (2013) defined customer satisfaction as the extent to which customer alleged product or service performance matches their expectations. Hansemark and Albinson (2004, 233) defined customer satisfaction "as an overall attitude of customers towards a service provider or an overall emotional reaction to the difference between customers expectation and what they receive towards the fulfillment of some needs, desire or goals." Fossi, Neili, Philp and David (2003) perceived customer satisfaction as the total percentage of customers whose acknowledgement of an experience with a company, its products and service rating exceeds their precise satisfaction requirements or aspirations. Customer satisfaction is therefore, an essential portion that turns out to be a key to manage a thriving business, since customers' satisfaction with product and service offerings engenders repeat purchase, loyalty, and advocacy for the concerned firm.

### **Repeat Purchase**

Repeat purchase can be visualized as the arrangement of a series of orders by a consumer from a discrete company. It can also be alleged as the buying of a product or services by a consumer of the same brand. Repeat purchase customers comprise customers who append satisfied emotional, intellectual, physical association to a firm's product offering which outshines their consideration. It is also referred to as re-patronage intentions, which Wirtz and Lwin (2009) refer to as the fondness of a customer to re-patronize a company. A repeat purchase is a measure of a consumer loyalty to a definite brand, whose outcomes ushers in brand loyalty, which significantly influence market performance (Harcourt & Ikegwuru, 2018). This is exactly the prime goal a company can go all-out for in business. Repeat purchase is an acceptable manifestation of a long-drawn-out tenability and remuneration in commerce, given that it is associated with the direction of needs satisfying products and services to the customer, it can also be supposed as the buying of a product or service by a consumer of identical brand repeatedly.

### **Previous Empirical Studies**

Nindiani, Hamsel and Purba (2017) analyzed customer satisfaction on product and service quality of a bakery situated in Bekasi. The study used Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) to determine the status of indicators connected to product and service quality, to provide contributions to management in making strategic actions. The results indicate that the precedence of improvement is the taste indicator for product quality. On the other side, courtesy indicator is the main concern for service quality that occupies position in Quadrant A, and so, the bakery should highlight those indicators as enhancement priorities.



Xhema and Metin (2017) investigated the impact of product/service quality and corporate image on customer loyalty. The study gathered primary data by means of questionnaire distributed to a sample of 100 selected firms and based its statistical analysis on numerical data, correlation and regression using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). It was revealed that service/product quality and corporate image have a positive impact on customer loyalty.

Atiyah (2016), studied product quality and its impact on customer satisfaction using a model built to establish the nature of the relationship and its impact between the dimensions of the independent variable (the product of the performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability quality, level of service, product beauty, and received quality), and the measures of the dependent variable (market share, customer retention rate, Attract new customers, cost-effectiveness and the number of consumer products) The study found that the quality services provided to customers have a positive effect and that there is a strong relationship between the quality of services and the rate of return of the customer of the institution.

Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed (2015) examined product perceived quality and purchase intention with consumer satisfaction by collecting data individually through 122 questionnaires by using the convenience sampling technique. The result demonstrates that product perceived quality and purchase intention have positive significant relationship with consumer satisfaction.

Cruz (2015) examined relationships among product (vehicle) quality, product cost, product safety, and consumer satisfaction.. Data were collected from a random sample of 77 U.S. automobile users. Analysis was conducted via simple and multiple linear regressions, and the study found a significant statistical relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction. Conversely, neither the product safety nor product cost assisted in mediating the relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction.

Hajjat and Hajjat (2014) assessed the effect of product quality dimensions on organizational performance in some Arab companies, using product dimensions, intrinsic and extrinsic value, and two others to represent organizational performance, internal and external. The study developed a model to point up the product development stages from conception to distribution. A questionnaire was used in collecting data from 198 managers from various companies. Data was analyzed by means of structural equation modeling techniques in order to supply sustaining evidence to five hypotheses on the subject of the latent structure of the association between product quality dimensions and organizational performance. The outcome hold up the hypotheses and evidently make obvious that: first, value delivered by product quality dimensions is made up of two components, extrinsic and intrinsic value; and second, organizational performance is made up of two components, external and internal performance. Further, the effect of extrinsic value is more on external performance than internal and that the effect of intrinsic value is more on internal performance than external.

Molina-Castillo, Munuera-Alema'n, and Calantone (2011), investigated product quality and new product performance: The role of network externalities and switching costs. The study used a model that relates product quality, network effects, and switching costs to short-term/long-term new product performance, by means of data collected from 255 innovative products. The result indicates that network effects, and consumers' switching costs, can modify previous findings with regard to the isolated product quality consequences concerning new product performance.

Based on the review of literature, the following research model was formulated:

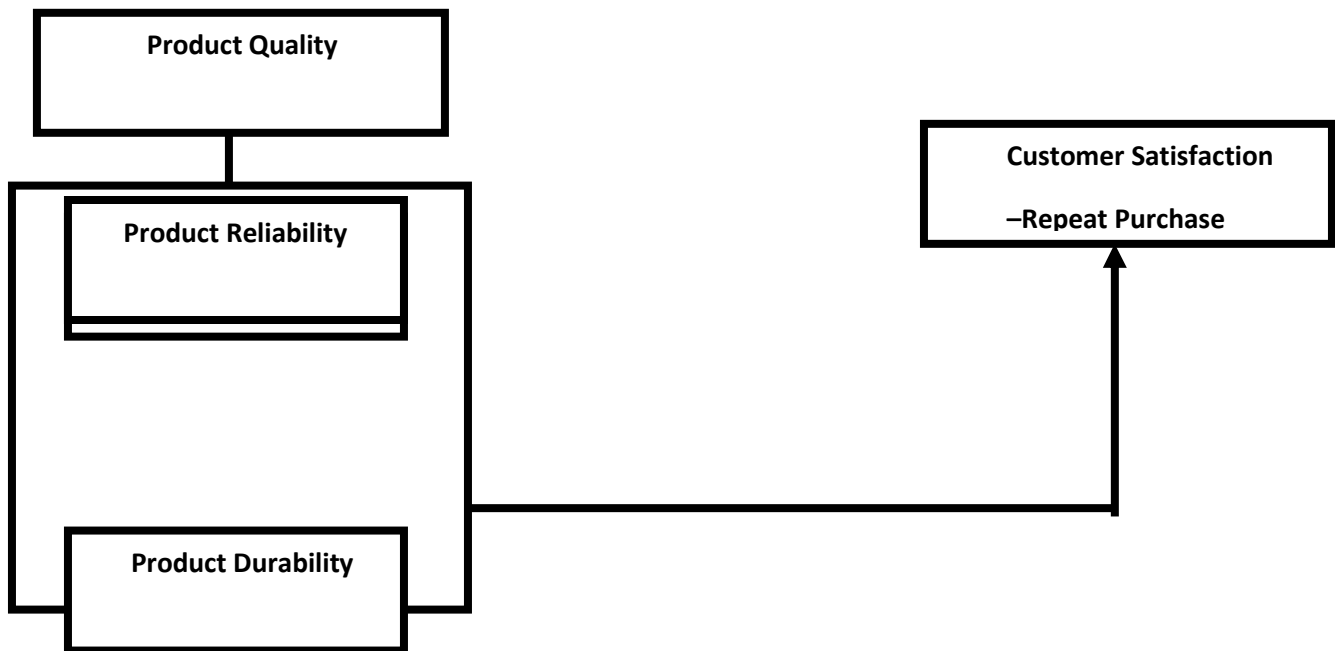


Figure 1: Research Model of Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction  
Source: Designed by the Researchers, (2020).

From the research model, the following hypotheses were raised:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Product performance does not significantly predict repeat purchase

Ho<sub>2</sub>: Product reliability does not significantly predict repeat purchase.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: Product durability does not significantly predict repeat purchase

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Purpose of this study was to explore the effect of product quality on consumer satisfaction of fast food firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. The initial sampling frame was obtained from a database listing the most innovative fast food firms in Rivers State. The fast food sector was selected because it pays special attention to product quality. The study identified 249 customers of fast food firms through the business directorate of the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Port Harcourt.

### **Population and Sample**

In this research paper the sample size of 249 customers of 83 fast food firms in Rivers State were targeted to collect data about their perception of product quality of fast food firms they patronize and how much they are satisfied with that brand quality.

### **Questionnaire Design and Measurement**

This paper contains two sections about measurements; the first section is about product quality, in which we measure the customer point of view before purchasing the product, what they perceive about product. And the second section is about customer satisfaction, after purchasing the product. A research questionnaire is used in order to examine the product quality and purchase intention with customer satisfaction. These items are measured in 5 likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1), agree (2), Neutral (3), disagree (4) strongly disagree (5), on a 16 item questionnaire in 3 variables on the bases of conceptual framework. These questions to measure product quality were taken from the questionnaire of (Ailwadi *et*

al., 2001; Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Rao et al., 1999). , and the items concerning customer satisfaction were taken from questionnaire used by (Oliver, 1999).

### Data Analysis

The questionnaire items were analyzed with mean, standard deviation and regression though or with the aid of the SPSS statistical tool.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Model of the Components of Product Quality and Repeat Purchase (n=249)**

S/n	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	t-value	f-value	p-value	Results
1.	.987	.974	.974		91.009	8282.601	0000	Reject
2.	.950	.902	.902		5.276	2003.463	0000	Reject
3.	.959	.919	.918		5.721	2457.331	0000	Reject

Source: SPSS Window Output, 2020.

The Simple Linear Regression was used to examine the first, second and third hypotheses a linear regression was conducted to assess if components of product quality scores predict customer satisfaction. The results of the linear regression were significant, ( $F(8,283) = .987, p < .001$ ;  $F(2,003) = .950, p < .001$ ;  $F(2,457) = .959, p < .001$ ) respectively, suggesting that product performance, product reliability and product durability accounted for ((R<sup>2</sup>) 97.4%; R<sup>2</sup>) 90.2% and R<sup>2</sup>) 91.8%) of the variances in customer satisfaction. Components of product quality significantly predict repeat purchase, suggesting that for every one unit increase in product quality, repeat purchase increased by 0.26 units, 0.98 units and 0.82units.

The first, second and third null hypotheses can be rejected, indicating that components of product quality are significant predictors of repeat purchase. The finding of this study shows that product performance, product reliability and product durability predict repeat purchase. All hypotheses were accepted on the basis of above results as product quality dimensions have direct positive influence on repeat purchase. Each indicator has its weight, and the method can give direction to the firms in realizing repeat purchase. Our findings support the findings of Atiyah (2016) who found that quality service provided to customers have positive effect on the rate of return of customers, and Saleem et al. (2015) who discovered that product perceived quality and purchase intention have positive significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this present research was to assess the relationship of product's quality dimensions (product performance, product reliability and product durability) on customer satisfaction (repeat purchase) in fast food firms in Rivers of Nigeria. Toward this end, the meanings of product quality and customer satisfaction were explicated. The finding of positive relationship among these variables has confirmed that the customers of fast food firms in Rivers State of Nigeria are quality conscious; they give preference to quality products. They assess product quality in term of its performance, reliability and durability. The study therefore, concludes that the elements of product quality significantly predict customer satisfaction through repeat purchase.

### **Managerial Implications**

With respect to practical contribution, the result of this study can be used as a guideline by management of fast food firms to improve on their product quality. Specifically, the blueprint and organization of product quality may be improved upon if managers stress on the finding of this study. This study confirms that product quality is an important contributor in customer satisfaction in fast food firms in Rivers State of Nigeria.

### **Research Recommendations**

The study recommends that the management of fast food firms should focus on their product performance to endear and sustain repeat purchase.

Management of fast food firms should enhance customers' satisfaction evaluations of their products to influence customers' perceptions of their product performance, reliability and durability.

It is recommended that researchers focus on studies that try to understand the relationship among customer loyalty, switching cost, trust and dedication.

### **Contribution of Research**

The major contribution of this study is that it explicates the dormant configuration of two foremost psychological constructs, product quality and customer satisfaction, that are of major concern to both researchers and practitioners. For the first time to the best of our knowledge, some product quality dimensions (performance, reliability and durability) that were projected three decades ago by Garvin (1984) are being elucidated theoretically and empirically in the context of fast food firms in a developing country such as Nigeria.

Moreover, substantiation was made available that these standards can be seen as previous circumstances to customer satisfaction. The findings of the extrapolative investigation of this study suggest that the fast food's customers' satisfaction can be improved focusing on product quality as a holistic entity.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this research study pertained to the generalizability, credibility, legitimacy, and consistency of the three hypotheses scrutinized in this study making use of a simple linear regressions, to establish the predictive effect of product quality on customer satisfaction measured by repeat purchase.

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## Market Orientation and Business Success of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Port Harcourt

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**Abstract:** *In theory, marketing orientation (MO) represents an established concept using a wide spectrum of approaches, methods, and tools and it may be considered as a strategy achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Although this concept has been thoroughly examined in various studies there is a research gap regarding the business success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt and its environment. This paper aims to examine and evaluate the degree of marketing orientation in businesses from SMEs in Port Harcourt and its environs. Thus, to identify relationships between their marketing orientation and business success, a meta-analysis was used to explore the behavioral perspective for marketing orientation measurement using MARKOR scales as a base. It was shown from the Meta-analysis that, marketing orientation of businesses and their success on the market via chosen business performance indicators will exhibit better financial, economic, respectively market results. These findings will help businesses identify beneficial elements of marketing orientation that could be implemented to improve business success and position on the market. It was then recommended amongst others that managers should endeavor to foster a market orientation in their organizations while paying close attention to the selection of target markets and the allocation of effort among competing opportunities to maximize the potential for sales growth, customer retention, market share, and profitability. Thus, to overcome the shortcomings, future researchers should present empirical evidence, especially on a large data set on market orientation and SMEs' performance in Nigeria.*

**Keyword:** *Market Orientation, Business Success of SMEs*

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### INTRODUCTION

Market orientation has become a center of attention for over 30 years according to (Parasuraman, 1983, Whyte, 1985). Market orientation has an important effect on business profitability (Narver & Slater, 1990). SMEs have been described as a catalyst for economic growth and development in many countries, including developing countries (Buke & Myers, 2007). However, the performance of Most SMEs in Nigeria remains less satisfactory as many folds as soon as they open for business. It is important to encourage SMEs to adopt market orientation to enhance their performance (Sales Growth, Profit Growth, Market Share growth, etc.). Market orientation can be defined as a set of beliefs that shapes particular attitudes and culture of business or as an implementation of the marketing concept (McCarthy and Perreault, 1990).

Business success is a financial reward that comes from being successful in business and success is the feeling of satisfaction and completion you have when your business career is over. A marketing orientation construct is a construct that is considered vital to the implementation



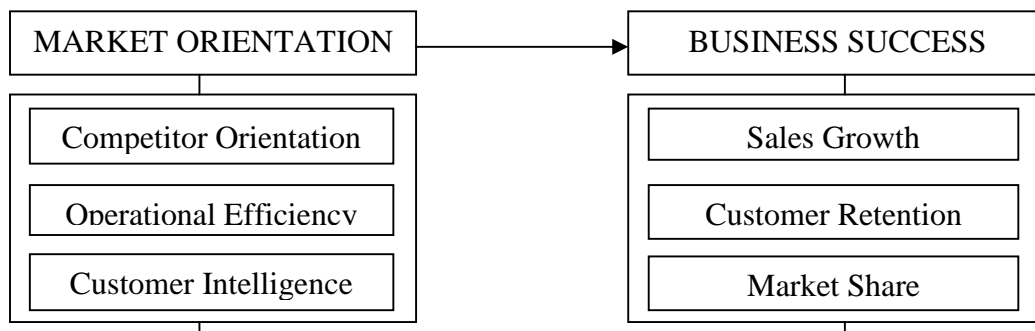
framework. It is a range of techniques, plans, strategies motivated by demand or expectations of customers which a firm should adopt to be in tune with its customers by understanding the desired customer *value*. In scientific literature, the term of market orientation is frequently confronted with the term of market orientation. Some authors equate these two terms, others refer to one of them. On the other hand, Kohli and Jaworski (1996) defined marketing orientation from the behavioral perspective defining activities for the marketing oriented business, which are gaining information about market regarding current and future needs of the customer, disseminating this information across all departments of an organization and organizations ability to respond to this information. Kohli and Jaworski (1993) predominantly see the consequences of marketing orientation in customer satisfaction, employee loyalty, and the financial performance of the business. Waris (2005) revealed a proportional relationship between employees' commitment and marketing orientation and explained that their loyalty acts as an incentive for employees to be *aware* of customer needs and *the actions* of competitors. Although some studies suggested a negative or non-significant relationship between market orientation and business performance (Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998), Most findings indicate a positive relationship between market and business performance (Slater and Narver, 2000). In this study, however, MO will be discussed from the perspective of Competitor Orientation, Operational Efficiency, and customer intelligence.

The importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to the economic growth and development of a country cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, SMEs have been described as a catalyst for economic growth and development in many countries, including developing countries (Asikhia, 2010a; 2010b; Oke, Burke. & Myers, 2007; Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria SMEDAN, 2010). Due to this important role, successive Nigerian governments have implemented different policies to encourage the establishment of new SMEs and ensure the success and long-term performance of existing SMEs. Most of these policies are financially aimed at improving Inc access of SMEs to low-cost capital (Asikhia, 2010a Sanusi, 2003). For example, a survey of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria in 2015 by SMEDAN in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) estimated the population of MSMEs to be about 37 million (SME Online, 2016). The survey indicated that the MSMEs accounted for 48% of Nigeria's GDP and 60% of jobs (SME Online, 2016). These MSMEs spread across all the sectors-industrial, commercial, Agricultural and service - of the Nigerian economy. However, the performance of Most SMEs in Nigeria remains less satisfactory as many fold up as soon as they open for business. For example, a survey showed that 80% of SMEs in the country folded up before their fifth anniversary (SMEDAN, 2008 cited in Asikhia, 2010a). This suggests thin access to funds is not effective in guaranteeing the performance of SMEs in the country (Arninu, Olayinka, Akinkunmi, Salau, & Odesaiiya, 2015; Asikhia, 2010; Sanusi, 2003). Rather, it is important to encourage SMEs to adopt market orientation (MO) to enhance their performance (sales growth, profit growth, market share growth, and others) in the highly competitive market involving numerous large and aggressive firms. In line with this, one study noted that being market-centric is seen as a permanent solution to a business problem of becoming More profitable (Asikhia, 2010a). A study argued that, given the limitations of funding and technology of SMEs, need to focus More on customers, monitor competitive trends, and react appropriately to market intelligence (Mahmoud, 2011). All of these are some of the components of MO as identified by pioneer scholars of the subject (Jaworski & Kohli. 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990).

### Statement of the Problem

Organizations are ready to adopt the market orientation construct but observed inadequacies involved in the implementation frameworks which have prevented them from doing so effectively. In the service sector, the consumer and the producer are likely to be in direct personal contact as most is desired; therefore the use of construct is expected to be more relevant in service organizations that have created a vacuum. The implementation is inadequate with the special requirements of service firms and therefore different to operationalize. The concepts appear invincible for the true needs of the SMEs service firms and little research has only been made available for the framework in the service industry.

Generally, there is much emphasis on marketing in large organizations with marketing in new and small ventures facing some problems (Hills & Hultman. 2006; Kraus. & Fink, 2010). The failure of SMEs in Nigeria is identified as a factor contributing to the Marketing gap (Aminu et al., 2015; Asikhia, 2010a). In the marketing gap, lack of MO by SMEs is a significant factor. Stokes and Blackburn (1999) affirmed this when they noted that SMEs do not adopt MO. MO is defined as a culture in which organizations strive to create value for their customers and superior performance for the business by focusing on customer needs and long-term profitability (Narver & Slater, 1990). MO enables a business to have a good understanding of its customers, competitors, and environment (Kara, Spillan, & DeSheilds, 2005), all of which affect profit and other objectives of the business. Narver and Slater (1990) identified five key dimensions of MO- customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, long-term focus, and profitability. Unfortunately, the marketing activities of many SMEs in Nigeria are devoid of all or most of these key dimensions of market orientation, in tandem with the observation of stokes and Blackburn (1999). For example, many SMEs in the country find it difficult to compete with their large counterparts in their target markets and due to the economies of scale advantage of these large organizations, many SMEs resign to fate and show little or no interest in collecting competitive intelligence, consistent with the views of Wilson and Gilligan (197). Consequently, the performance of many SMEs in Nigeria has been undermined, leading to a high rate of SMEs' failure in the country. There is considerable research on MO within the context of developed countries covering all types and sizes of companies, there are few studies in developing countries. The bulk of these studies targeted large firms. In Nigeria, only a few studies have examined the MO of SMEs. In light of this, the need for a proper study became eminent hence this study.



Adapted from: Michael. L.; Maktoba. O. & Robert, W. (2011). Market Orientation and Innovators' Success: an Exploration of the Influence of Customer and Competitor Orientation, *Journal of Technology Management & Market orientation*, 6(3) 4861.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general aim and objectives of this study are to contribute to the body of market orientation in the area of business success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt and its environment. Specifically, it sets out:

1. To establish the extent of the relationship between competitor orientation and customer retention.
2. To ascertain the extent of the relationship between market dynamism and customer referral.
3. To investigate the extent of the relationship between customer intelligence and market share small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Knowledge-Based Theory**

The solid foundation of this study is on Resource-Based Theory and Knowledge-Based Theory.

**Resource-Based Theory (RBT):** It is considered relevant to the arguments raised in this study. It was propounded in 1817 by David Ricardo as the resource-based view of the firm and reinvented in the marketing literature in 1991 by Barney. It rests on two assumptions (1) Different firms possess different bundles or resources (2) that these resources are immobile and cannot be easily acquired.

**Knowledge-Based Theory:** It considers knowledge as the most strategically significant resource of the firm. It argues that because knowledge-based resources are usually difficult to imitate and socially complex. Heterogeneous diversity in character or different diverse knowledge bases and capabilities among firms are the major determinants of sustained competitive and superior success and performance.

### **Conceptual Review**

**Competitors' orientation:** according to (Narver and Slater, (1990)), It is an element of market orientation which means seller understanding the short term strength and weakness of key current and potential competitors.

#### **Market Orientation and Business success**

Market orientation, as corporate culture, characterizes an organization's disposition to continuously deliver superior value to its customers (Stater and Narver, 1994). To create superior customer value entails an organization-wide commitment to continuous information-gathering and coordination of customers' needs, competitors' capabilities, and the provisions of other significant market agents and authorities (i.e., suppliers and regulators) (Slater & Narver, 1994; Slater & Narver, 1995). The eventual outcome, according to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), is an integrated effort by individuals and across departments within an organization, which, in turn, gives rise to superior organizational performance. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) define market orientation in terms of three dimensions:

1. The generation of market information about the needs of customers and external environmental factors
2. The dissemination of such information among organizational functions
3. The development and implementation of strategies in response to the information

The major elements, in short, are continuous and systematic information-gathering customers and competitors, cross-functional sharing of information, coordination of activities, and responsiveness to changing market needs (Day, 1994).

Kirsner (2001) places heavy reliance on the critical role of information, the value of which is maximized when it is shared among all functions in an organization, and is acted on in a coordinated manner. Narver and Slater (1990) however, advance three behavioral components of market orientation:

- I. Customer orientation
2. Competitor orientation
3. Inter-functional coordination

Each of these components is concerned with intelligence generation and dissemination and with responsiveness to the collected information. Hence, the three core behavioral components are posited as being equally important in formation value. In sum, market orientation scholars forward market-oriented corporate culture as prescriptive of superior customer value and business success. For this study, Narver and Slater's (1990) scale is preferred for three reasons. First, it incorporates the essential aspects of Kohli and Jaworski's constructs of intelligence gathering, dissemination, and responsiveness, while assessing organizational cultural factors (Hooley, Greenley, Cadogan, & Pithy, 2005; Ellis, 2006; and Gebhardt et al., 2006). Second, researchers (Hooley et al., 2005; Kills, 2006) have noted that Kohli and Jaworski's constructs more accurately reflect marketing concept than market orientation (a concern about customers and competitors has been reflected in Narver and Slater's construct). Third, some empirical studies, which attempt to develop parsimonious versions of a market orientation scale on the basis of a synthesis (using a factor analysis) of individual items from Narver and Slater, Kohli and Jaworski, and other scales, find that the synthesized versions draw more items from Narver and Slater's instrument (Peigham, 2000). A number of researchers have examined the link between market orientation and performance. Most of the studies suggest a positive relationship Narver and Slater, 1990; Eboreime, 2000; Pelham, 2000; Ellis, 2006; Osuagwu, 2006. Narver and Slater (1990) suggest that the logic of expecting a strong link between market orientation and performance is based on the concept of a sustainable competitive advantage. A few researchers report mixed results (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Han, Kim, & Strivastava, 1998). Research findings in Nigeria on the market orientation and market performance relationships imply that focal firms are better than their competitors in terms of their marketing competencies. However, none of the previous studies have explicitly focused on marketing competencies as an intermediate (endogenous) variable in linking market orientation and business success.

### **Market orientation (MO) and components**

It is important to examine MO and its various component before attention is shifted to MO-SMEs performance nexus. There are different definitions of MO. MO referred to "the creative

culture that Most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and thus continuous superior performance for the business” (Narver & Slater, 1990). MO is seen as ‘the organization-wide generation dissemination, and responsiveness to market intelligence (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990, p. 3). MO is concerned with the implementation of the marketing concept (Jaworski & Kohli 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kotler, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Narver & Slater, 1990), which has been described as “a cornerstone of marketing discipline” (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). The changing customer needs and expectations demand that firms must regularly track and respond to these changing needs (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). As a result, almost all companies see MO as crucial for their decision-making activities (Kasaganabai, 2008) because it provides them with a better understanding of their customers and other stakeholders in the market and increases their performance (Ogunsiji & Adewunmi. 2015). MO is affected by several factors, which include top management (emphasis and risk aversion), interdepartmental dynamics (conflict and connectedness), and organizational systems (formalization, centralization, departmentalization and reward systems) (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

Narver and Slater, (1990) have identified different components of MO. These include customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination (behavioral components) and profit objective and long-term focus (decision criteria): intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and responsiveness (Nwokah. 2008; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990); and target market, customer needs, coordinated marketing and profitability (pillars of marketing concept) (Kotler, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Due to its exhaustiveness and popularity among scholars, Narver, and Slater’s components of MO are adopted in this paper. A brief review of the components follows. Customer orientation According to Narver and Slater (1990), a firm is customer-oriented if it sufficiently understands its target market and consistently creates superior value for it. A customer-oriented firm obtains intelligence from the market and acts accordingly (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). To be successful in a competitive market organization, including SMEs in all sectors must exhibit strong customer orientation (Aminu et al., 2015).

For optimal performance SMEs in Nigeria need a good market’ intelligence system to collect information about their customers, identify their needs, and use the information to effectively and efficiently serve them better than the competitors consistent with Kotler’s (2003) view. They need to get customers’ feedbacks to determine their level of satisfaction or otherwise with, the firm’s offerings. Competitor orientation is concerned with obtaining and disseminating intelligence, across the business, about competitors in the target market (Narver & Slater, 1990). A market-driven approach to marketing should strike a balance between a firm’s responsiveness to customers’ needs; and monitoring of competitors’ activities (Wilson, 1988). Gathering and using market and competitive information is critical to the understanding of customers’ requirements and learning about competitors’ strategies (Calantone, di Benedetto, & Bhoovaragaran, 1996). The key personnel across the departments in the firms should continually identify, discuss and compare competitors’ strengths, weaknesses, and strategies Inter-functional coordination Inter-functional coordination referred to “the coordinated utilization of company resources in creating superior value for customers (Narver & Slater, 1990).

This is referred to as coordinated marketing by Kotler (2003). Inter-functional coordination involves marketing and all other personnel across the firm to collaborate to deliver value for customers (Kotler. 2003; Narver & Slater, 1990). Effective coordination of functional competencies that centers on customers enhances a firm’s market competitiveness (Asikhia, 2010b). Then, is no doubt that SMEs in Nigeria that promotes coordinated working relationships



among their departments and units would be in a position to better serve their customers. Unfortunately, many SMEs are not properly organized in Nigeria; some of them do not have a marketing department, resulting in none marketing professionals overseeing marketing activities; and poor market performance. This situation is at variance with the observation of Pelham (2000) that SMISs enjoy a sustainable competitive advantage because of their simpler organizational structure and term focus. Narver and Slitter (1990) argue that a firm should adopt a long- term perspective to cope with the intense competition in the market place. They advocated for the implementation of a range of tactics and investments that would provide value for customers in the long term. The profit objective is identified by the authors as an important aspect of a long-term focus.

A market-oriented company must focus on customers and long-term profitability (Narver & Slater, 1990). Profit is “appropriately perceived as an objective of business” (Narver & Slater, 1990, p. 22). Profit is a consequence of market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1999) and of creatively solving customer problems more than competitors can do and results from effective targeting, proper identification of customers’ needs, and adequate integrated marketing Kotler, and 2003). This suggests that a market-oriented SME should sacrifice a short-time profit objective (many will have the temptation of pursuing this) for a long-term objective, which involves developing and delivering long-term value for customers and other stakeholders. There is a vast literature that relates MO to firm (including SME) performance. This section reviews the literature on MO and SMEs. It is posited that a strong market-oriented culture enables SMEs to adapt to the changing business environment (Hajipour & Ghanaviti. 2012). Provides them with a competitive advantage over their larger competitors (Pelham, 2000; Suliyanto & Rahab, 2012) and enhances their performance (Aliyu. 2014; Mahmoud, 20W Narver & Slater, 1990).

The sustainable competitive advantage enjoyed by small enterprises (such as Esther barbing saloon at 77 Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, Johnson textiles shop 13 Creek Road, Port Harcourt, Super king Restaurant 77 Ikwerre mad Port Harcourt) is due to simpler organizational structure, greater flexibility and a greater tendency for speed and market orientation. Conceptually, though. Operational efficiency is the capability’ of the enterprise to deliver products or services to the customer in the most cost-effective manner while ensuring the quality of its products service and support operational is achieved. Customer intelligence is to know the secret of delivering in a personalized marketing action. Therefore, it is the process of gathering and analyzing information regarding customer and their detail and activity to build customer relationships and improve decision to build customer relationships and improve decision making. It is about producing insight into a customer that is both smart and useful. The company must draw multiple sources. Sale growth is the parameter used to measure the performance of the sales term to increase the revenue over a predetermined period.

Customer retention refers to the activities and actions of companies and organizations take to reduce the number of customer defections. The goal of the customer retention program is to help companies retain as many customer s as possible often through customer loyalty and brand loyalty initiative. Market share represents the percentage of an industry or markets total sales that are earned by a particular company over a specified period of tune. It is calculated by taking the company sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the industry over the same period.

### **Empirical Review**

The empirical research of Suliyanto and Rahab (2012) in the Banyumas Regency in Indonesia revealed that MO has no positive effect on SME's performance. One study in Malaysia found



that one of the components of MO. inter-functional coordination is not positively related to the performance of SMEs in the country (Muzjan & Md Sallek 2012). Another study found that none of the measured components of MO (e.g. customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-function coordination) has a direct and significant relationship with the performance of the organization, including small and large organizations (Johnson, Dibrell, & Hansel, 2009). Using specific measures of performance found a negative relationship between MO and one or 'non-measures of performance.

Using the More objective measure of market share, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) found that MO is negatively related to performance in the U.S. Slater and Narver's (1993) study did not also find a positive relationship between MO and sales growth. The foregoing review suggests that studies on market orientation and SMEs performance in Nigeria are very scarce, thus justifying this presents paper. Therefore, this paper contributes to extend the frontier of knowledge in SME development in the 11 countries. This is important as governments, at all levels, are developing and supporting initiatives, financial and non financial (with little or no emphasis on marketing) towards SMEs development and effective performance. Conclusion MO is an important marketing strategy that significantly impacts the performance of organizations, irrespective of their size. However, the lack of MO by SMEs in Nigeria has constrained the performance of SMEs (Asikhia, 2010a, 2010b). While several studies, especially in developed countries have examined the MO-large organization performance link, only a few companies have examined the MO-SMEs performance nexus. This paper extends existing literature and reviews literature on this important topic. The paper noted that a strong market-oriented culture enables SMEs to adapt to the changing business environment (Hajipour & Ghanaviti. 2012), provides them with a competitive advantage over their larger competitors (Pelham, 2000; Suliyanto & Rahab, 2012) and enhance their performance (Aliyu, 2014; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Mahmoud, 2011, Narver & Slater, 1990).

It notes further that the sustainable competitive advantage enjoyed by SMEs, due to simpler organizational structure, greater flexibility, and a greater tendency for speed market orientation (Pelham. 2000). In this regard, the paper concludes that the implementation of the different elements of MO (customer orientation, competitor orientation, orientation, coordination, long-term perspective, and profitability) will positively and considerably impact SMEs' performance in Nigeria. Customer orientation will focus SMEs on customer needs identification and satisfaction; competitor orientation will make them monitor competitor activities, react promptly to any competitive attack and outsmart competitors; inter-functional coordination will result in effective coordination of SMEs personnel and activities for optimal performance; long-term focus will help SMEs to emphasize enduring, long-term activities and investment that will deliver and communicate value to customers, the firms themselves and all other stakeholders; and finally, profit objective will be realized and it provides justification for all the investments SMEs make over time. Based on this conclusion, it is strongly recommended that, in addition to providing financial support and increased access of SMEs to low-cost funding, stakeholders should make deliberate and sustained effort to encourage SMEs in Nigeria to adopt and implement MO to enhance their success and performance.

For example, Slater and Narver (1993) empirical research in the U.S. showed that MO is positively related to sales growth. Slater and Narver (1996) cited in Kasaganabai (2008) found a positive relationship between ROA, sales growth and new product successes. Besides, Pelham (2000) found that MO has a positive relationship with growth/share, marketing/sales effectiveness, and gross profits in small and medium-sized manufacturing firms. Blesa and

Ripollés (2003) found that entrepreneurial proactiveness had a positive effect on market orientation, which in turn affect business performance in terms of profitability and sales growth. A study of market orientation in a large Midwestern town at Tennessee, Chattanooga, USA showed that SMEs that exhibited strong market orientation had their sales and profit increased significantly over the preceding three years than those that are less market-oriented (Becherer, Halstead, & Haynes, 2001). On the negative side, research has found no positive relationship between MO and SMEs performance.

### **Cap in Literature**

MO may have a strong or weak impact on firm performance depending on environmental conditions, which include market turbulence and competitive intensity. Similarly, results of empirical studies on 9 MO and SMFs performance are mixed. While most studies found a positive relationship between MO and SME performance, few others found a negative relationship. For example, one study found some positive relationship between MO and performance in 33 of the 36 studies investigated (Dawes, 2000). In each of these categories, some studies used performance as a standalone dependent variable and those that used specific measures of performance such as sales, profit, market share, market orientation, customer satisfaction, and loyalty as dependent variables. In the category of the 4udies that used performance as a dependent variable include (Aliyu, 2014; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Mahmoud, 2011). In the U.S., Jaworski and Kohli (1993) found that MO is significantly related to business performance if overall performance is assessed using subjective measures. In the U.K., a positive relationship between MO and SMEs is also reported by Appiah-Adu and Singh (1908). Another study that investigated customer and competitor orientation.' on firm performance in the U.S. found that only customer orientation has a positive arid significant impact on business performance (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Mabmoud (2011) found a significant and positive relationship between MO and SMEs performance in Ghana. In Nigeria, Aliyu (2014) also found that MO is positively and significantly related to performance. In this and next paragraphs, studies that relate MO to specific measures of performance are examined. Some studies indicated that "companies with higher market orientation obtain better economic and commercial value (Lack. Maydeu Olivares, 2000). The better economic and commercial value here refers to higher market performance reflected in several measures such as higher sales, profit, return on assets (R.OA), and market share.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was based on secondary research and information for the study was generated using books, journal articles, conference proceedings, workshop materials, seminars, and other works of previous researchers, etc.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Based on the literature of previous researchers; market orientation affects both return on investment (ROI) and sales growth. The results suggested that measures in market orientation taps behaviors in business and has greater sales growth and return on investment (ROI).

Findings from works of previous researchers like white (1985) indicate that market orientation behavior is related to business success and performance. Cravens (1997) opined that the orientation of many studies that focus on a strategic approach, in decision-making perspective, in market intelligence, and in cultural perspective, (Teck, 2012) also supported this assertion. Matsuno (2002) has proved the existence of a strong relationship between market

orientation and business success. Other researchers like Han (1998) do not support a positive relationship.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the observations of MO of many studies that focused on the strategic environment, MO is a companywide culture that places customers at the center of a successful business. It is based on collection and dissemination of market intelligence that can help a business understand and satisfy customers' needs better than competitors; it coordinates all the business internal functions, delivers long-term values to the customer, business and other stakeholders in the business. Market orientation has a positive relationship with business success.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- I. SME in Nigeria should monitor and analyze the competitor's activities and strategies.
2. Managers should try to foster a market orientation in their organizations while paying close attention to the selected target market, and allocation of effort among competing opportunities to maximize sales growth, sales retention, market share, and profitability.
3. Future researchers should present empirical evidence, especially on large data on market orientation and SME's performance in Nigeria.

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