Employee Competence Planning and Corporate Vitality of Indigenous Oil and Gas Companies in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between competence planning and corporate vitality of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design with primary data generated through a structured5-point Likert scaled questionnaire. The population of the study consists of 33 indigenous oil and gas companies with a total number of 132 respondents. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The bivariate hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0.The tests were carried out at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between competence planning and corporate vitality of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, the study concludes that when indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria encourage competence planning by identifying through competence planning, the critical competencies existing with high performing employees, it would enhance their vitality in terms of growth, resilience and adaptability. It was thus recommended that the management of indigenous oil and gas companies should assess whether there are available employees with key already identified competencies who will be needed in the future by establishing expectations for performance excellence, resulting in a systematic approach to professional development, improved job satisfaction, and better employee retention.

Keywords: *Competence Planning, Corporate Vitality, Growth, Resilience, Adaptability*.

Introduction

Vital organizations are not just those that are healthy or energized but those who can identify and engage competent employees that can fit into their roles; withstand challenges and adjust to unforeseen circumstances in order to achieve firm vitality. Corporate vitality is the business and economic health of an organization that drives its going concern. Akpotu and Konyefa (2018) posits that corporate vitality is the firm energy reproduced in its resources, capabilities and competences to enable it compete favourably, survive and achieve competitive advantage. Thus, the vitality of an organization refers to the equipped strength of the workplace that is sustainable for the firm's growth and survival. Bishwas (2015) opined that the vitality of a firm is largely dependent on the employees' competence and strategic knowledge management. Thus, a firm's vitality is the operational strength of the workplace that is sustainable for the company's growth and survival. Therefore, it is important for all organizations irrespective of sizes and relative sectors to have sustained vitality that will ensure the continuous health and sustainability of the company (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). However, the vitality of the firm is largely dependent on the employees' competence and strategic knowledge management (Bishwas, 2015). Effectively managing the firm's competence, developing staff knowledge base will ensure corporate vitality. This is because human capital is the most important asset of the firm, and all other resources of an institution are subservient to the employees at work (Bishwas, 2015). To effectively achieve vitality, organizations must invest adequately in its most valued human assets through competence planning.

Competence planning is one of the dimensions of employee competence management. It's about the human resource executives setting forth goals and prescribing ways of achieving the right competences of employees in the workplace. Employees' competence, which is having the right skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours at work must be carefully planned by the human resource manager from the stage of recruitment and selection of the workforce (Stoner, Gilbert and Freeman, 2013). Hence, the required type and number of the workforce, departments and functions of the organization should be carefully planned by management. Again, management should define the qualifications, knowledge and skills set that should join the organization's workforce (Alsabbab & Ibrahim, 2014). Thus, the management of the organization should determine the potential employees that have the right attitudes and behaviours, such employees should be identified and be given opportunities in their various functional areas or departments (Kupczyk & Stor, 2017).

The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between competence planning and corporate vitality in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. The following research questions guided the study:

i. What is the relationship between competence planning and growth of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?
ii. What is the relationship between competence planning and resilience of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?
iii. What is the relationship between competence planning and adaptability of indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

Conceptual Framework

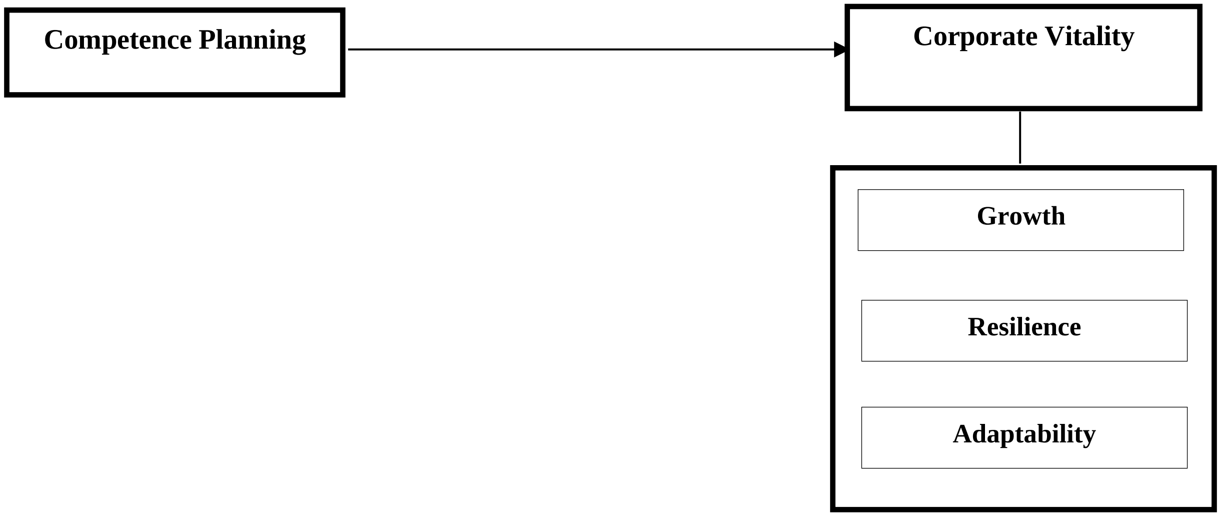

Figure 1: Conceptual model for the relationship between competence planning and corporate vitality
Source: Desk Research, 2021

The Concept of Competence Planning

Employee Competence planning should permeate all employees and departments, irrespective of ranks, positions and job roles, The competence of all employees, potential and existing should be effectively and efficiently planned for the proper discharge of employee's duties and responsibilities (Kupczyk & Stor, 2017; Evwierhurhoma & Oga, 2020). Importantly, employee competence planning is the take off point for all competence management activities and this stage should be carefully managed by human resource practitioners and management of organizations (Alsabbah & Ibrahim, 2014; Zeb-Obipi, 2017). The competence of employees should be carefully planned by the human resources (HR) department of the company without planning of the workforce competence; things will generally fail for the organization (Asghari, Salchi & Niazazari, 2018). Thus, competency planning is the proper way the organization will improve organizational agility. Therefore, worker competence planning should be given the first attention before responding to other competence management variables. This is because, planning is the beginning of all employees activities including other activities of the firm, planning is the genesis of the organization (Asghari *et al.*, 2018). It is imperative for all organizations irrespective of size or industries of operation to carry out planning of their workforce competences.

The Concept of Corporate Vitality

The success of an organization in the face of a changing business environment requires the institution of a vital corporation. Corporate vitality is the energy that drives a firm's competitiveness and achievement of goals and objectives (Akpotu & Konyefa, 2018). Afema (2014) opined that corporate vitality is the collective energy relating to organization competences, capabilities and systems that guarantee strategic actions targeted at increasing competitive advantage. It is the activated pool of energy across the organization's functions, strategic business and support systems that enhance the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. Bishwas (2015) posits that corporate vitality is the ability to develop prudence corporate mission, or purpose, interactions between teams, functional values and the volume of shared information among others in organizations. Corporate vitality is the strength of the company and requires all institutions irrespective of sizes and industries to sustain continuous health and energy (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020).

Corporate vitality makes available the needed capacity and competences that drive actions at goals. It also looked at the ability of corporate management to harness resources that are needed for industry competitiveness. It therefore means that a vital organization should be able to meet the firm's stakeholders needs and at the same time make modalities that ensures total goal attainment for the company (Jeruz, 2014). The focus of corporate vitality is to initiate, prosecute and sustain action at goals and objectives. The characteristics of the firm's vitality are resourcefulness, responsiveness and practice of innovativeness. These are the pillars upon which a vital organization can remain focused and competitive in the industry.

Growth

The concept of growth is one of the measures of corporate vitality in this study. Growth is the quantitative improvement of the organization in terms of size of the firm; total number of employees, branch networks, number of subsidiaries including overseas subsidiaries, market share, market capitalization etc (Stoner *et al.*, 2013). Hence, when these variables are increasing in an upward trajectory, it means there is growth of the organization. Again, growth can also mean the improvement of a company's sales, profit growth, return on investment, return on asset, productivity etc (Hanaysha, 2016). According to Keh, Chu and Xu (2016), growth is the general increase in the performance or productivity of the company in terms of sales volume, profitability, book value of the company, growth in assets etc. When the organization experiences an increase in these factors, the organization is said to be experiencing growth. It is important to note that growth measurement variables are usually used for decision, marketing and for productivity measurement (Keh *et al.*, 2016). Thus, measurement of growth of an organization is highly imperative, it is a way of checking the progress or otherwise of the company.

Growth of an organization according to Jayamaha and Mula (2011), is the quantitative increase of the company in factors such as production, sales, profit, market share, market capitalization. When these factors improve in the workplace, growth of the firm has been achieved. Hence, the numerical progress of the factors drives the growth of the organization. It is expected of company executives to work on these variables through the human resource efforts so that the growth of the organization can be guaranteed. People at work should execute their functions to improve the organization's growth variables like sales, profit, market share, customer satisfaction, capitalization etc. The marketing department, sales unit and other organization's functions should work collaborating in order to increase growth variables of the firm.

Resilience

Every organization is unique as an entity. This entity is evident in organizations exposed to challenges or adverse experiences. There exist wide variations in the way companies respond to stress. Some organizations appear to be relatively unaffected, while others develop a variety of behavioural, psychological and physical consequences (Hormor, 2016). Hence, resilience is the process of adapting an organization well in the face of adversity, trauma and threat, or even a significant source of stress such as business relationship problems, workplace financial stress. It means the capacity to withstand and bounce back from unstable experiences and challenges while remaining unbroken as well as progressive (Hormor, 2016; Gabriel & Zeb-Obipi, 2019). According to Hormor (2016), resilience is a dynamic construct. It could be defined as the overcoming of adversity or stress by the organization. It encompasses the resistance to environmental risks. Resilience also means the capacity of the firm to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threatens the organization's stability, viability and development. In business practice especially in developing country contexts like Nigeria, the environment is associated with high risks and challenges facing companies in different sectors. The resilient organization is that firm which is able to survive in the face of these significant adversities. When the company overcomes adversity and becomes successful, such an organization is resilient.

Building resilience by organization is a laudable effort since a firm's business environment is full of challenges, risks and stress facing the workplace. According to Hegney, Ross and Baker (2018), resilience could be defined as the capacity of an individual or organization to cope with stress, overcome adversity and adapt to change. Thus, Oparanma and Elezie (2019), asserts that the ability of organizations to absorb shock or develop resistance in the face of perturbances within its environment is a reflection of how prepared the organization can be.It also encompasses the ability of the company to bounce back from negative experiences. Therefore, resilience is very important as it helps individuals. Organizations, communities and nations to overcome adversities which are always inherent.

Adaptability

An important measure of corporate vitality construct is the concept of adaptability i.e. the ability of the company to adjust to changes in the internal and external business environment (Kother & Keller, 2012). Thus, the business environment presents changes in the form of opportunities and threats, the proactive organisation should be adaptive to changes in the factors that shape business conditions in the environment (Kother & Keller, 2012; Mehran & Morteza, 2013). Hence, adaptability is the ability of the organisation to adjust itself in the face of changing internal and external business factors; economic, socio-cultural, political, legal, competition, geo-physical factors etc (Zorlu & Hacioglu, 2012).

Adaptability to industry and environmental dynamics is an important topic of organizational studies which is very crucial for every firm irrespective of the size and industry (Uhl-Ben & Arena, 2018). Adriana (2013) also defined adaptability as the ability to positively react to the requests of clients. A vitality seeking organization should be able to adapt to conditions which may crop up in the firm's external or internal environment (Aljohani, 2016). The rapidity and swiftness with which organizations operate can be attributed as a function of its adaptability (Tamunomiebi & Adim, 2019). Due to the ever-changing nature of the business environment, there is a need for corporate leaders to periodically and continuously innovate for the purpose of crafting a competitive advantage that will lead to survival (Hauschildt, Sören, Carsten & Alexander, 2016). Hence, changing the firm's strategy, programs and culture to be in line with the demand of the business environment can be said to be the concept of adaptability. Adaptable organisations should develop adaptive features to manage risks which presently birth opportunities and threats. As opportunities present themselves in the industry, managers are expected to adapt by taking rational or calculated risks which are measurable in order to take advantage of the emerging opportunities. Lack of adaptation framework in the organisation may lead to corporate or institutional failure (Olannuye & Eremafuro, 2016). Effective adaptive framework at work will guide managers to make significant analysis of every venture before committing resources to projects.

In the present day business, if adaptation in the business world is not well handled, it could affect the ability of the human resource department of the firm to improve the business of creating and maintaining competitiveness and competitive advantages. No wonder scholars have given growing interest to this construct through their various words as the end of competitive advantage McGrath (2013) adaptability: The new competitive advantage (Reeves & Deimler, 2011). For an active decision to be taken, leaders should consciously consider factors that facilitate change such as skills, attitude, knowledge, commitment and resources (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Leaders should empower employees to take reasonable risks, experiment, build new competences, be fearless and adjust their behaviours towards change and share experiences with their colleagues (Adriana, 2013). According to Hacioglu *et al* (2012), adaptability is the management efforts in adapting the company and its operations to the changing business environment. Management is expected to make significant investment on products and services, human resources etc in order to adjust itself in the environment and take advantage of emerging opportunities while adjusting itself to the vagaries imposed by the environment. Without adopting the operations of the firm to the environment businesses may likely go into failure or dismal performance. It is expected that corporations adapt their business activities to the environment to ensure business success.

Business managers when developing new products or services in the industry should study the business environment through SWOT and PESTEL analysis. The essence is for management to make rational decisions in the face of changing environmental conditions (Rashad, 2018). Thus, John-Eke & Bayo (2021) posit that any firm that wants to be sustained and remain relevant in business must continually adapt to all the factors of their operational environment.Top echelon management should take calculated and rational decisions in adapting the business to the economic, legal, competition, social and cultural environment. This will ensure success for the firm and its stakeholders. Therefore, commitment of resources to achieve the firm's goals in the face of opportunities in the environment is highly laudable. Adaptability is the construct in bridging the gaps between the firm and the environment.

Competence Planning and Corporate Vitality

The planning of employee competence in the work organization improves corporate vitality. This position is validated by the study of Kupczyk and Stor (2017), the scholars studied competence management and business improvement. The study made use of quantitative research design, specifically, the Pearson Product

Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used. The findings of the study is that staff competences are key capital for enterprise development. This findings corroborates the works of Trinder (2018), who investigated the nexus between competence planning standards and workplace performance. The study employed the spearman rank order correlation coefficient and the findings is that competence standards significantly improves organizational performance. Employee competence planning enhances corporate productivity performance. This foregoing was validated by Zeb-Obipi (2015), study employed quantitative, co-relational, interrogative, cross-sectional, and field survey. Spearman rank was used in testing the hypotheses and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient using SPSS. The findings revealed that competence mapping task in workers' competence planning affects the product an organization could offer, the SKA gap analysis task in competence planning results in cost and waste minimization for an organization and that personal development plans by workers as a part of competence planning affect output levels, cost minimization and waste minimization.

Competency planning as a dimension of competency management was investigated with performance. This foregoing was studied by Lekshmi and Radhika (2016), study made use of quantitative research design and the findings is that, the dimensions of competency management; competency planning significantly improves organizational performance through the mediating influence of organizational structure. This findings is highly supported with the study of Brans and Hondeghem (2015), which studied the correlation between competence framework and corporate vitality in the context of the Belgian public sector. The study employed the regression analysis and the findings of the study is that, the competence framework as a planning tool improves organizational vitality in the context of Belgian governments.

Employee competence planning as a sub-variable of employee competence management is a laudable predictor of organizational agility. Zhou and Cai (2014), studied the relationship between competence planning and organizational agility. The study employed a correlation investigation with the help of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings of the study is that employee competence planning is positively and significantly relates with organizational agility through the mediating influence of IT alignment. The findings is also in line with the empirical study of Asghari *et al* (2018), the authors discovered a strong relationship between competence planning and organizational agility.

From the expositions above, employee competence planning implemented by the indigenous oil and gas companies in the South-South, Nigeria organizations in Nigeria will bring about corporate vitality of such firms. The researchers therefore state the following hypotheses.

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and growth in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and resilience in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and adaptability in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design with primary data generated through a structured 5-point Likert scaled questionnaire. The population of the study consists of 33 indigenous oil and gas companies with a total number of 132 respondents. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The bivariate hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for competence planning and corporate vitality. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 1 Correlations Matrix for Competence Planning and Corporate Vitality Measures

			Competence Planning	Growth	Resilience	Adaptability
Spearman's rho	Competence Planning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.547**	.567**	.843**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	115	115	115	115
	Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.547**	1.000	.730**	.638**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	115	115	115	115
	Resilience	Correlation Coefficient	.567**	.730**	1.000	.634**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	115	115	115	115
	Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.843**	.638**	.634**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	115	115	115	115

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output

The result in table 1 shows the correlation for competence planning and measures corporate vitality.
RQ1: What is the relationship between competence planning and corporate vitality in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 1 was used to answer research question 1. Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.567 on the relationship between competence planning and growth. This value implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in growth was as a result of the adoption of competence planning in the studies in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a positively moderate correlation between competence planning and growth in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and growth in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Similarly displayed in table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence planning and growth in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

RQ2: What is the relationship between competence planning and resilience in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

Similarly, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.547 on the relationship between competence planning and resilience. This value implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in resilience was as a result of the adoption of competence planning in the studies in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a positively moderate correlation between competence planning and resilience in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and resilience in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Also displayed in table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 4.18, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence planning and resilience in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

RQ3: What is the relationship between competence planning and adaptability in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria?

Furthermore, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.843 on the relationship between competence planning and adaptability. This value implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in adaptability was as a result of the adoption of competence planning in the studies in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a positively moderate correlation between competence planning and adaptability in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between competence planning and adaptability of the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Also displayed in table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between competence planning and adaptability in the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between competence planning and the measures of corporate vitality in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South, Nigeria. This finding agrees with previous various studies done by Kupczyk and Stor (2017), and found that staff competences are key capital for enterprise development. The present finding also corroborates with the works of Trinder (2018), who investigated the nexus between competence planning standards and workplace performance and found that competence standards significantly improves organizational performance. Employee competence planning enhances corporate productivity performance.

This study was also validated by the earlier study of Zeb-Obipi (2015), whose finding revealed that competence mapping tasks in workers' competence planning affects the product an organization could offer. Also the finding agrees with Lekshmi and Radhika (2016), whose finding revealed that the dimensions of competency management; competency planning significantly improves organizational performance through the mediating influence of organizational structure. This finding also supports the study of Brans and Hondeghem (2015), who studied the correlation between competence framework and corporate vitality in the context of the Belgian public sector and found that the competence framework as a planning tool improves organizational vitality in the context of the Belgian governments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Therefore, the study concludes that when indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria encourage competence planning by identifying through competence planning, the critical competencies existing with high performing employees, it would enhance their vitality in terms of growth, resilience and adaptability. It was thus recommended that the management of indigenous oil and gas companies should assess whether there are available employees with key already identified competencies who will be needed in the future by establishing expectations for performance excellence, resulting in a systematic approach to professional development, improved job satisfaction, and better employee retention.

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