
ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND SURVIVAL OF FAMILY OWNED BUSINESSES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

Family businesses today have been faced with various competitions and turbulences which have affected their survival rate. Various financial institutions have given business owners access to funds with the expectation that these businesses would survive over generations. Irrespective of these funds, family businesses keep going moribund. Therefore, this study explores how organizational learning as a strategic component that involves family business owners, managers and employee on the option to learn and acquire knowledge. This study has established the relationship between organizational learning and survival of family owned businesses (F.O.B) in Rivers state. Hypotheses developed in the study were tested with a sample size of sixty-five (65) comprising of business owners and managers of F.O.B. Results from the distribution of questionnaire were analyzed using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient through the use of SPSS V 20.0. The outcome of the analyses showed that knowledge sharing positively impacts survival of F.O.B. and similar with hypotheses two. In line with the result, the study deduced that organizational learning is a major prerequisite for every F.O.B as it plays a major role for its survival. Consequently, we recommend the establishment of a network upon which knowledge can be shared and furthermore, there is need for open mindedness within the business as this will create room for learning within the organization.

Keywords: *Organizational Learning, Knowledge Sharing, Openness, Survival of Family Owned Business (F.O.B).*

INTRODUCTION

In times of business turbulence and stiff business challenges, organizations clamour for corporate or organizational survival which is paramount during such period. The ability to survive most times is not solidly dependent on owners or managers but on employees

(Oke, & Olughor, 2014). One major objective of every corporate entity is their survival (Adewale, Abolaji & Kolade, 2011). Therefore, organization or businesses strive for survival and longevity while looking for relevance and key positions in the industry (Nwambuzu, Nwuche & Anyanwu, 2017).

Gross (1968) posit that organization who have refused to accept survival as one of its main objective should reconsider. He stated that the goal of organizational survival surpasses every other objective of that firm. Therefore, the concept of survival can be best referred to as an unwritten law for every business organization (Gross, in Gunu & Oladele, 2016).

Extant empirical literature have been examined in this area either as dependent or independent variables (E.g. Nwambuzu, Nwuche and Anyanwu, (2017); Oke and Olughor, (2014); Kiziloglu (2015). Based on the studies that have been examined, not many of these studies have been examined within the family businesses context while few of the studies that have investigated the association between the study variables have done that in different sectors hence creating a lacuna in literature which this study intends to fill.

Therefore, the survival of firms relies upon the ability to adapt effectively to an evolving domain. To achieve survival, appropriate strategies and ways are established (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992). Consequently, this study investigates how organizational learning can be a fitting strategy in achieving the survival of family businesses in Rivers state.

Statement of Problem

Irrespective of this economic development potentials, family owned business (F.O.B) has been known for its alarming deteriorating survival rates. According to Ibrahim, Dumas, and McGuire (2001), 33% of these family businesses survive transition from the originator/owners (first generation) to the second generation. Moreover, only about 33% survives the transition from the second to third generation of ownership (Muriith, Waithira & Wachira, 2016).

Similarly, the Nigerian business environment has been faced with inadmissible problems ranging from high unemployment rate amongst youth, low industrial productivity, followed by decrease in demand (Oginni & Adesanya, 2013). Based on the above challenges, it is impossible for businesses to attain their aim of profit maximization and survival (Gunu & Oladele, 2016).

Therefore, Ouma and Kombo, (2016) posit that organizational learning has been set out as a vital strategic assets for value creation in which if applied will lead to an increase in knowledge and thereby influence the firms performance positively and enhance survival. It is against these backdrop that this study intends to examine the relationship between organizational learning and survival of family owned businesses.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objective of the study which are to:

1. Establish the relationship between knowledge sharing and survival of family owned businesses in Rivers state.
2. Examine the relationship between openness and survival of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is significant relationship between knowledge sharing and survival of F.O.B in Rivers state.

Ho₂: There no significant relationship between openness and survival of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

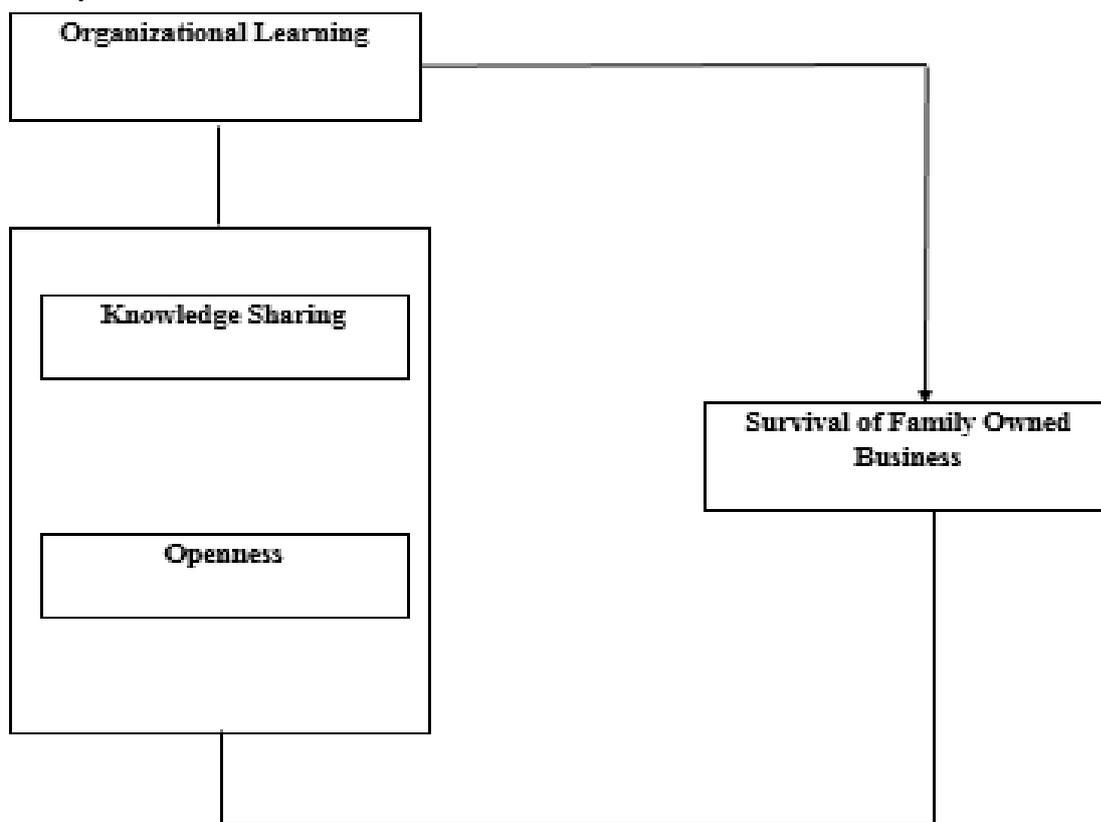
The theory that underpins this study is the complexity theory which was pioneered by Henri Poincaré in the 1880's. The theory emanated from the general system theory and cybernetics in the second half of the 20th century.

The theory postulates that "organizations are open systems which face chaos and difficulties that are caused by the evolutionary and revolutionary adjustments that take place within their environments". Periodic changes that occurs around our environment ranging from changes in customers tastes and preferences, political instability as well as inappropriate policies have made organization to develop an adaptive means in order to have lived for a very long time (Gunu & Oladele, 2016).

Also, as trends in market conditions, competition, customer demands, technology, and other environmental areas evolve, companies, too, must rejuvenate and reinvent themselves for long-term survival and success (Leavitt, 2014). Indeed, Azmi (2008) claims that learning is a top priority in today's business world because it contributes to competitive advantage through enhancing organizational performance and effectiveness. Essentially, if organizational members share their tacit knowledge with others in their workplace, this becomes one powerful resource that competitors cannot replicate.

Conceptual

Review



Source: The independent variable was adopted from the work of [Salim and Sulaiman \(2011\)](#); [Jerez-Gomez et al., \(2005\)](#). While the dependent variable was adopted from the study of [Gunu & Oladele \(2016\)](#); [Lee, Masno, Malrouu \(2005\)](#); [Ehmed-Sreih & Djourhourian, \(2006\)](#).

Organizational Learning

Our present day managers from a broader perspective have come to genuinely discover that firm cannot rely on financial sources and technology any longer and that improvement and development ought to be searched in human’s brains and thoughts (Saadata & Saadatb, 2016). In other for firm to continue to survive, which is their main stay in this stiff and vulnerable environment, firms and individuals need to rely on the ability to learn (Edmondson & Moingeon, 2015).

Organizational learning is a study of the cognitive and social process of knowledge of an organization which needs to be integrated into an organizations work practices (Boff & Antonello in Gomes & Wojahn, 2017). Researchers in the 90’s implemented such strategy when they saw the need for the utilization of knowledge in organization (Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003; Bapuji & Crossan, 2004 in Gomes, & Matte, 2017).

Argote (2013) posit that Organizational learning occurs in a context, which includes the organization and the external environment in which the organization is embedded. The

environmental context includes elements outside the boundaries of the organization such as competitors, clients, educational establishments, and governments. The environment can vary along many dimensions, such as volatility, uncertainty, interconnectedness, and generosity. The environmental context affects the experience the organization acquires. The organizational context includes characteristics of the organization, such as its structure, culture, technology, identity, memory, goals, incentives, and strategy. The context also includes relationships with other organizations through alliances, joint ventures, and memberships in associations.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is among key elements of knowledge management. It has become the most important prerequisite for every organization (Asrar-ulHaq & Anwar, 2016). Anwar, (2016) stated that amongst other processes of knowledge management, knowledge sharing (K-SHARNG) is the most fundamental process.

Knowledge sharing is the extent to which one shares knowledge with others across an organization. Shim (2010) “stated that knowledge sharing refers to the provision of task information, know-how, and feedback regarding a product or procedure through both verbal and nonverbal communication”.

There are a number of reasons why knowledge sharing is imperative to organization (McNeish & Mann, 2010). These include improvements to the “alignment to missions, vision and values, and strategy, joint team accountability, process focus, stronger awareness of customer and competition, a collaborative team environment, and decentralized decision making but consistent with corporate direction” (Tiwana, cited in Anwar, 2016).

According to Witherspoon, Bergner, Cockrell, and Stone (2013), it represents a building block for the successes of the organization. Hence it has been adopted as a survival strategy. In terms of team building, it further leads to team performance (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). It is fundamental to a set of behaviours necessary for exchange in possession. It therefore helps in developing of sound learning environment within the organization.

Openness

Openness refers to the level of transparency in sharing task-relevant information (Schein 2010). It encourages goals attainment and help team members to achieving a common and mutual understanding of the project scope (Laurie, & MacDonell cited in Ghazinejad, Hussein, & Zidane, (2018). Open and adequate communication improves shared understanding, improves the atmosphere of the relationship, fosters commitment, ensures that deadlines are respected, and enhances trust between the partners (Dyer & Chu 2003; Bstieler 2006; Zidane et al. 2016).

Anwar, (2016) stated that openness is linked to active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, and preference for variety, intellectual curiosity,

originality and independence of judgment. Individuals with high levels of openness are curious about both inner and outer worlds and are willing to consider new ideas and unconventional values, and they experience both positive and negative emotions more keenly than individuals who score low on openness (Matzler, Renzl, Müller, Herting, & Mooradian, 2008).

Survival of Family Owned Businesses (F.O.B)

Small and medium scale (SMEs) enterprises are seen to make considerable contribution to the world's economy with regards to job creation, technological development, growth and wealth creation (Longenecker, Moore, Petty & Palich 2006; Kuratko & Hodgetts 2007).

According to (Stokes & Wilson (2006) 90% of these SMEs make up for businesses in developing and developed countries. Irrespective of their significant contribution, it has been noticed that most of these SMEs are F.O.B. Therefore, Muriithi, Waithira, and Wachira, (2016) have acknowledged that virtually all SMEs around the world originated from family enterprises.

Large number of definitions have been proposed and they incorporate all aspects of ownership and management, family involvement, interdependent subsystems and generational transfer. Venter Boshoff and Maas, (2005) examines it as one which is owned by family members with the sole aim of shaping or pursuing the vision of the business with their goal of ensuring that the business is handed over to the next generation or rather handing over the business to a relative to oversee or control.

Survival according to Boal and Schultz (2007) is the level upon which an organization has gained satisfactory performance in the past, proceeds to the present and is relied upon to perform better in the future. Bartuseviciene and Sakalyte, (2015) , as cited in Oshi, Hettey and Akaibe, (2018) opined that survival is a function of the extent to which organizational goals and objectives are attained and/or the degree of acceptance of firm's products and services by end-users (customers and society at large). Thus, scholars have argued that to survive, organizations/businesses must continuously adjust and readjust their structure, methods and processes to better handle internal and external exigencies towards the accomplishment of set goals (Adeoye, 2012).

Korunka, Frank, Lueger and Mugler, (2003) argues that the survival of these businesses rely on the belief of the founders and the structure that was put in place for the growth and development upon his withdrawal from the business. The originator of this business usually show attributes of an entrepreneur which includes: need of achievement, internal locus of control, creativity, innovativeness, risk taking and social networking. Also, past research have portrayed survival as techniques that organizations required to incorporate into their organizational capabilities and business innovation, to ensure corporate survival (Namwong, Jhundra-indra, & Raksong, (2016).

Organizational learning is a critical components required in this stiff and dynamic environment. Hence, Onuoha (2016) stated that ensuring long term survival in the family enterprise is for organizations to adopt learning practices which involves developing ideas and skills within the organization

Webometric on Organizational Learning and Survival of Family Owned Business (F.O.B).

S/N	AUTHOR	TOPIC	COUNTRY	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS
1	Miralibidakhavidi (2018)	The effect of organizational learning on human resource productivity at Imam Khomeini Airport Custom	Azerbaijan	Used the Morgan table and simple random sampling method, to determine sample size sample size. SPSS and PISmart software were used in two descriptive and inferential sections (Friedman rank test and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method) to analyze information obtained from the implementation of questionnaires	Findings of the research indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational learning dimensions and human resource productivity; this means that the increase of each component of organizational learning among Imam Khomeini airport customs staff will increase the productivity of human resources.
2	Ussahawanitchakit (2011)	Strategic leadership, organizational learning, organizational innovation, and performance: evidence from electronics businesses in Thailand	Thailand	121 electronics businesses in Thailand were chosen as the sample.	The results indicate that absorptive capacity, managerial wisdom, commitment to learning, shared vision, and technical innovation definitely have a significant positive influence on performance. Surprisingly, adaptive capacity, open-mindedness and administrative innovation have no effect on performance.
3	Kiziloglu (2015)	The effect of organizational learning on firm innovation capability: An investigation in the Banking Sector.	Turkey	A regression analysis was applied to determine the effect of the organizational learning capability on the innovation performance. The SPSS package software was used for the analysis of the	It is seen that there is a positive relationship between organizational learning and innovation in general. It was also determined that there is a positive relationship between the

4	Namwong, Jhundra-indra and Raksong (2016)	The relationship between dynamic organizational learning strategy and firm survival: An empirical study of instant foods and convenience foods businesses in Thailand.	Thailand.	The data were derived from a survey of 220 managing directors or managing partners with instant foods and convenience foods businesses in Thailand. Ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis is conducted to examine all hypothesized relationships among variables.	sub-factors of the “commitment to learn”, “shared vision” and “intra-organizational knowledge sharing” that belong to the organizational learning concept, which is decisive on innovation. However, it is seen that there is no significant relationship between the “open-mindedness” dimension and innovation.
					The results indicate that the four dimensions of dynamic organizational learning strategy have partially significant positive influences on all consequences. In particular, dynamic shared-knowledge focus and adaptive system perspective emphasis have strongly influenced on all consequences

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive design that entails the distribution of questionnaire to selected respondents. The absence of records on the number of registered family businesses made us depend on the businesses registered under the Yellow Pages of Rivers state which are operating as family business. Because of the enormous number of businesses, the study concentrated on Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor L.G.A.'s in Rivers State for ease of accessibility. Three categories of businesses were selected which includes: hotels, bakeries, and pharmaceuticals. The unit of analysis was at the macro level which made us focused on the owners and managers of these businesses. Seventy-three (73) respondent were randomly selected, only sixty-five (65) responded accurately to the copies of questionnaire that were distributed. Statement items on knowledge sharing and openness was adopted from the work of: Ozan, Tepeci, and Başalp (2014); Kiziloglu, (2015) and Abu-Shanab, Haddad and Knight (2014). "E.g. The company gives rewards for knowledge sharing behaviors; I can often bring new ideas and share them in the organization". While survival of family owned businesses had its statement items adopted from the work of Venter, Merwe and Farrington, (2012). "E.g. I see our family business as a legacy to be handed over to future generations" All measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagreed to 4= strongly agreed. Content and face validity was ascertained by an expert. The reliability was determined by the Cronbach Alpha. The result of the test showed an internal consistency and they were all above the 0.70 benchmark. All information were analyzed using the Pearson moment correlation coefficient to investigate if any relationship existed between the variables

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis on Demographics of Respondents

Demographics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Demographics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age of Respondents			Educational Qualification of Respondent		
21-30 years	2	3.1	M.Sc/MBA	12	18.5
31-40 years	22	33.8	B.Sc/HND	38	58.4
41-50 years	29	44.6	OND/Diploma	15	23.1
51 years and Above	12	18.5	Length of Service of Respondent		
Gender of Respondent			5 years	26	40.0
Male	39	60.0	10years	23	35.4
Females	26	40.0	15yeras	12	18.4
Marital Status of Respondent			20 years and Above	4	6.2
Single	34	52.3	Categories of Respondent		
Married	31	47.7	Owners	24	36.9
			Managers	41	63.1

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

The table accurately summarizes the demographics of respondents which include the age, gender, marital status, educational qualifications, length of service and the respondent categories all with their respective frequencies and percentages. The age bracket revealed their different age ranges, the gender on the other hand, shows if they are males or females with their frequencies and percentages. The marital status of respondent bordered on being single or married, their highest educational qualifications, either they are M.Sc./MBA, BSc/HND, OND/Diploma, their years of operations in their business and lastly the table showed the categories of respondents in the various businesses that was selected for the study

Data Analyses

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient statistical analysis is used to test the correlations and strength of relations. Where $p < 0.05$ significant level we reject the null hypotheses and where $p > 0.05$, we accept the null hypotheses.

Relationship between knowledge Sharing and Survival of Family Owned Businesses

		Correlations	
		Knowledge Sharing	Survival of Family Owned Businesses
Knowledge Sharing	Pearson Correlation	1	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	65	65
Survival of Family Owned Businesses	Pearson Correlation	.737**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	65	65

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

Source: Survey Data, 2019

Knowledge Sharing and survival of Family Owned Businesses: Where $p < 0.05$ ($0.004 < 0.05$). The rho = 0.737, demonstrated a positive but moderate relationship between the variables. Therefore, we dismiss the null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

Relationship between Openness and Survival of Family Owned Businesses

		Correlations	
		Openness	Survival of Family Owned Businesses
Openness	Pearson Correlation	1	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	65	65
Survival of Family Owned Businesses	Pearson Correlation	.712**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	65	65

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

Source: Survey Data, 2019

Openness and Survival of Family Owned Businesses: The outcome exhibit a significant level where $p < 0.05$ ($0.001 < 0.05$). The $\rho = 0.712$, exhibiting a positive correlation between the variables. Hence the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Firstly, the results revealed that knowledge sharing has a significant and positive association with survival of F.O.B. this outcome is consistent with other extant empirical studies (Kiziloglu (2015); Namwong, Jhundra-indra & Raksong (2016); Ussahawanitchakit (2011). Secondly, the outcome was that openness significantly impact on the survival of F.O.B. Various researchers have also aligned with this studies Miralibidakhavidi (2018); while Ussahawanitchakit (2011) stated that openness is key to the survival of family owned business.

From the examination, this deduced that organizational learning has a significant impact on the survival of family owned businesses in Rivers State. This implies that family owned business that imbibes the culture of cognitive and social processes of knowledge into organizational work practices will aid the business in surviving generations after generations.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion this study recommends the following:

1. In order to encourage innovative practices and survival of the family business, knowledge sharing which is a components of organizational learning needs to be absorbed into their family business practices in Nigeria through the transfer and distribution of knowledge amongst employees, groups and organizations most especially when making strategic plans and setting goals and objectives
2. Openness brings about transparency and accountability in decision making amongst members and employee of family business. We therefore recommend that family business owners should give room for transparency in information sharing within employees and organization which will bring about commitment, trust and encourage learning in the organization.

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