Employee Sustainability Strategies and Organizational Survival of Selected Building Construction Companies in Rivers State

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Abstract

The research examined employee sustainability strategies and organizational survival of building construction companies in Rivers State. The aim was to determine the relationship between dimensions of employee sustainability strategies (recognition of employee effort and employee health) and measures of organizational survival (profitability and expansion). Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Cross sectional survey design was used for the study. The accessible population derived was 30 building construction companies which give total respondents of 78 through the census technique. However

instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Reliability of the research instrument was obtained using cronbach alpha with threshold of 0.70. Univariate and bivariate analysis was carried out using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance. The instrument was validated. The data retrieved was analyzed. Results shown that dimensions of employee sustainability strategies has a significant influence on profitability, and expansion. Therefore, the study concluded that dimensions of employee sustainability strategies enhance measures of organizational survival. Thus, the researcher recommended that Management of building construction companies should adhere to opportunity for career development, recognition of employee effort and employee health that foster survival.

Keyword: Employee sustainability strategies, recognition of employee effort, employee health, organizational survival, profitability and expansion.

Introduction

Building construction firms in Rivers State operate within a dynamic economic background influenced by factors such as global market trends, local demand for infrastructure, and regulatory policies. The economic viability of these firms is intricately tied to their ability to adapt to market fluctuations, maintain project continuity, and achieve long-term sustainability. Smith et al. (2018) highlighted that in an increasingly competitive global market, organizations are faced with challenges that can impact their long-term survival. Building construction firms in Rivers State face challenges related to sustainable sourcing of materials, waste management, and minimizing the ecological impact of their projects. Embracing sustainable practices can enhance the firms' reputation, reduce costs, and ensure compliance with evolving environmental regulations. Garcia (2019), argue that effective leadership, characterized by clear communication, role modeling, and support for employee initiatives, can foster a culture of sustainability within the organization. This, in turn, enhances the organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and

ensure long-term survival through opportunity for career development, recognition of employee effort and employee health programs. Moreover, government incentives and policies that encourage sustainable practices can influence the firms' adoption of strategies aimed at both compliance and long-term organizational sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

Building construction firms in Rivers State are facing a significant challenge related to high turnover rates among employees, leading to a shortage of skilled and experienced workers. This not only disrupts on-going projects but also hampers the firm's ability to deliver quality work on time. The lack of proper employee sustainability strategies contributes to this issue, and without effective measures to retain and develop skilled workers, construction companies struggle to maintain operational efficiency, profitability, expansion and meet client expectations.

Secondly, the construction industry in Rivers State is susceptible to economic downturns and market fluctuations, affecting the stability of building construction firms. During times of economic instability, construction projects are postponed or cancelled, leading to financial strain for firms that are not adequately prepared for recognition of employee effort and employee health programs. The absence of strategies to ensure employee sustainability worsens this problem, as the workforce may be cut down in an ad hoc manner, and rehiring and retraining costs can become a burden when the market improves.

Lastly, building construction firms in Rivers State are struggling to adapt to these changes due to a lack of skilled employees who are well-versed in these technologies. The absence of strategies to foster continuous learning and up-skilling of the workforce inhibits the firms' ability to stay competitive, deliver projects efficiently, and attract clients who seek modern construction practices. Empirically, there are not much attention on employee sustainability strategies and organizational survival. Hence the study on employee sustainability strategies and organizational survival of building construction firms in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework on the Relationship between employee sustainability strategies and Organizational survival.

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization from Review of Related Literature (2023).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent of relationship between employee sustainability strategies and organizational survival of building construction companies in Rivers State. More specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Ascertain the relationship between recognition of employee effort and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State.
ii. Ascertain the relationship between recognition of employee effort and expansion of building construction companies in Rivers State.
iii. Know the relationship between employee health programs and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State.
iv. Determine the relationship between employee health programs and expansion of building construction companies in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Based on the specific objectives, research questions are hereby stated:

i. What is the relationship between recognition of employee effort and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State?
ii. What is the relationship between recognition of employee effort and expansion of building construction companies in Rivers State?
iii. What is the relationship between employee health programs and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State?
iv. What is the relationship between employee health programs and expansion of building construction companies in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

We propose the following null hypotheses that guided the study

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between recognition of employee effort and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between recognition of employee effort and expansion in commercial Banks in Rivers State.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between employee health programs and profitability of building construction companies in Rivers State.

H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between employee health programs and expansion of building construction companies in Rivers State.

Significance and Scope of the Study

The study on employee sustainability strategies and organizational survival of building construction companies hold significant importance on management, managers and students as a point of reference in the contemporary study background. This study focused on first scope which is the relationship between employee sustainability strategies (recognition of employee effort and employee health programs) and organizational survival (profitability and expansion). The study was carried out in 30 building construction companies in Rivers State. Unit of Analysis; The level/unit of analysis is the organization macro level while the measurements are the manager, head of department and supervisor respectively.

Conceptual Review

Employee Sustainability Strategies

Marques et al. (2011), Employee Sustainability strategies refers to the commitment and involvement of employees in an organization's sustainable practices, where

employees actively participate in sustainability initiatives and are aligned with the organization's sustainability goals. Klassen and McLaughlin (2016), Employee sustainable strategies refers to the on-going investment in employees' skills, knowledge, and well-being within the context of environmental and social sustainability, aiming to create a workforce capable of contributing to sustainable business practices.

Shrivastava & Hart (2006), Employee sustainability strategies refers to the empowerment of employees to take the initiative in identifying and implementing sustainability improvements within the organization, harnessing their creativity and knowledge. Employee sustainability strategies refer to the practices, policies, and initiatives implemented by organizations to engage, empower, and support their employees in contributing to sustainability goals. Employee sustainability strategies in the 2000s evolved as organizations sought to align their workforce with sustainability objectives, aiming to create a synergy where employee well-being, company profitability, and environmental stewardship intersect (Taylor, 2018).

Dimensions of Employee Sustainability Strategies

Recognition of employee effort

Recognition of employee effort often includes the practice of rewarding and reinforcing high-performance behaviors and outcomes. Recognition programs and practices are a reflection of an organization's culture, values, and commitment to appreciating its employees' contributions (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Employee recognition refers to the formal and informal practices employed by organizations to acknowledge and appreciate employees' positive behaviors, accomplishments, and contributions within the workplace (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Chen and Silverthorne (2005) argue that recognition is the duty of supervisors in affecting the employee motivation. It explores the psychological and motivational benefits of being recognized for one's efforts. Nelson and Economy (2011), delves into the practical aspects of employee recognition, explaining its importance and offering strategies for effective recognition programs. Ghosh and Das (2014), explores how employee recognition contributes to building trust and commitment among employees in the organization.

Employee health programs

Smith (2003), Employee health programs encompass a range of policies and practices designed to improve the health and safety of employees. An organized set of activities and interventions designed to promote and support the physical, mental, and social well-being of employees within an organization. Williams (2002), employee health program is a systematic approach to identifying and mitigating workplace hazards and promoting the physical and mental health of employees to ensure a safe and healthy working environment. Davis (2001) employee health program is a confidential counseling and support service offered by employers to help employees deal with personal and work-related issues that may impact their well-being and job performance. Employee health programs are organizational efforts to create a healthier and more productive workforce. Robinson (2004), employee health program is a program that provides employees with incentives, such as rewards or discounts, to encourage them to engage in health-promoting behaviors and activities. These programs often include various activities, services, and incentives designed to improve employees' overall health, reduce health-related risks, and enhance job satisfaction and productivity.

Concept of Organizational Survival

Kortmann et al. (2014) opined that managers or organizational leaders must ensure the engagement of dedicated and motivated employees that will work diligently towards achieving and sustaining profitability. To achieve this, managers are devising strategies to improve performance and ensure survival amidst all the disturbances encountered in the organization. The responsibility of achieving competitive advantage does not rest on the managers or leaders alone, but with the employees (Olughor & Oke, 2014). According to Aguinis (2013), human beings are vital to the success of any business; and this is accomplished through motivated and talented employees who render excellent service to customers. Therefore, efforts should be made in getting them engaged and drawing necessary inputs in the advantage of the organization. Lee (2006), for any organization to survive in a competitive and vibrant business environment, depends on how effective the organization learn to adapt itself to the environment, as well as take advantage of its human and material resources.

Measures of Organizational Survival

Profitability

Organizational profitability is viewed as the ability of a company to generate returns for its shareholders, often measured by metrics like return on equity (Alfred, 2000). Profitability refers to the ability of a business to generate profits based on its financial statements, such as income statements and balance sheets (Charles, 2000). Profitability takes into account both explicit and implicit costs to measure a firm's true economic profit (Michael, 2000). Profitability focuses on the core operations of a business and measures how efficiently it generates profits from its day-to-day activities.

Expansion

Business expansion refers to the process of a company extending its operations to new geographic locations, either within the same region or internationally (Hitt et al., 2009). This involves a company introducing new products or services to its existing offerings, aiming to reach a broader customer base (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Business expansion can also refer to increasing online presence and sales through e-commerce, digital marketing, and other internet-based strategies (Chaffey et al., 2006). Business expansion refers to the strategic process of increasing a company's operations, such as its production capacity, geographic reach, or product offerings, to achieve growth and profitability (David, 2007). Business expansion can involve the deepening of market penetration by capturing a larger share of existing markets through increased marketing efforts or competitive strategies (Philip, 2000). Business expansion includes franchising as a growth strategy, where a franchisor grants the rights to operate its business model and brand to franchisees in exchange for fees and royalties (Michael, 2004).

Recognition of employee effort and Organizational Survival

Harter et al. (2002) found that engaged employees, who feel recognized and valued, have a direct and positive impact on organizational outcomes, including profitability and survival. **Oswald et al. (2015)** found a strong positive relationship between employee well-being and firm performance. Recognizing and rewarding employee effort contributes to their well-being and, in turn, can enhance organizational survival. Their studies consistently show that organizations with

high levels of employee recognition and engagement tend to have better financial performance and are more likely to survive and thrive in competitive markets.

Employee health programs and Organizational Survival

Roberts and Sage (2018) discuss the legal and regulatory aspects of employee health programs. Compliance with laws and regulations is essential for an organization's survival, and this research sheds light on the legal considerations associated with these programs. Pfeffer (2010) suggests that employee health programs contribute to a positive organizational culture, which can attract and retain top talent. A positive corporate image as a health-conscious employer can enhance the organization's reputation and competitiveness. Ray et al. (2013) emphasizes that health programs can improve employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to stay with an organization, reducing turnover costs and maintaining organizational knowledge, which is crucial for long-term survival.

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory: **Edward Freeman (1984)**

Stakeholders' theory assumes that organizations should not focus exclusively on maximizing shareholder wealth but should also recognize and address the concerns and interests of all parties who have a stake in the company. These stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and more. By doing so, organizations can create long-term value and sustainable success.

Stakeholder theory's relevance to organizations is profound. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of various stakeholders and the impact they have on an organization's performance. The theory acknowledges that a company's success is not solely dependent on satisfying shareholders but also on managing relationships with a diverse set of stakeholders who can influence and be influenced by the organization. This perspective encourages a more holistic approach to decision-making, which can lead to enhanced reputation, better risk management, and long-term financial viability. As a result, stakeholders such as employees and customers may become more engaged and loyal, suppliers more reliable, and communities more supportive, all of which can contribute to an organization's competitive advantage and overall success in the long run.

Corporate Social Responsibility Theory: **Archie B. Carroll in (1979).**
Corporate social responsibility theory assumes that argued that businesses should not only focus on maximizing profits for shareholders but also consider the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community. This theory emphasizes the importance of a company's relationships with various stakeholders and suggests that long-term success is contingent on maintaining a balance of interests and fulfilling social responsibilities.

These CSR theories are highly relevant to organizations today. This theory underscores the importance of building positive relationships with various stakeholders and aligning business strategies with their interests. This can lead to increased trust, customer loyalty, and long-term success. Carroll's pyramid serves as a practical framework for organizations to assess their CSR activities, ensuring that they fulfill their obligations not only to shareholders but also to the wider community and environment. Embracing these theories can help businesses navigate the complex landscape of corporate social responsibility and create a positive impact while achieving their strategic goals.

Empirical Review
Several empirical works were reviewed but few where taken.
Biriowu and Augustin (2020) studied on employee engagement and organizational survival of an organization. The paper examined the association of employee engagement and organizational survival, with organizational culture as the moderating variable. The paper is a theoretical review of extant literature on employee engagement, organizational culture and organizational survival. The finding of paper showed that when employees were given the power to participate in the decision making, they feel valued, trusted and will go beyond the demands of the job and ensure that organizational goals are accomplished. The paper concluded that employee engagement predicts organizational survival, while organizational culture influences both variables.

Robert et al. (2014) studied the impact of corporate sustainability on organizational processes and performance. The study investigates the effect of corporate sustainability on organizational processes and performance. Using a

matched sample of 180 U.S. companies, we find that corporations that voluntarily adopted sustainability policies by 1993—termed as high sustainability companies—exhibit by 2009 distinct organizational processes compared to a matched sample of companies that adopted almost none of these policies—termed as low sustainability companies. The boards of directors of high sustainability companies are more likely to be formally responsible for sustainability, and top executive compensation incentives are more likely to be a function of sustainability metrics. High sustainability companies are more likely to have established processes for stakeholder engagement, to be more long-term oriented, and to exhibit higher measurement and disclosure of nonfinancial information.

Nwokolo and Chima (2021) studied survival strategies and organizational success of insurance firms in Port Harcourt. This study examined the relationship between Survival Strategies and Organizational Success of Insurance Firms in Port Harcourt. The study used quasi-experimental research design involving managers, and supervisors. Primary data was obtained using self-administered, structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 140 from 10 purposively selected insurance company in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 102 was adopted using the Taro Yamen formula and the simple random technique was used. The study findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between survival strategies and organizational success. The study recommends that insurance firms should implement policies that guide the formation, development, adoption and implementation of survival strategies.

Methods

This study adopted a cross sectional research survey design. The target population of the study was 30 building construction companies (BUA Cement Depot, Ponticelli Nigeria Limited, Expert Paint Advice, Em'omas Global Services Ltd, BAM Design Consults, Liscon Geotechnical Limited, Simba Industries Limited, Amvile Services Company Limited, Chuksen Engineering, Windrush Investment Limited, Astro Vera Global Limited, Fuwa Nig. Ltd, Omorine Global Resources Limited, Ezemaco Designing Concept, Julius Berger Nigeria Limited, Monier Construction Company Nigeria Limited, Ace'Cohort Atelier Limited, Eddieson Resources Nigeria, Candix Engineering Limited, Ceepron Copnstruction

Company Limited, Asphalt Unity Construction Limited, Beks Kimse Nigeria Limited, Dorman Long Engineering Ltd., Duxflux Engineering Limited, Kabin City Nigeria Limited, Tegxcent Nigeria Limited, etc) in Rivers State. however, census technique was adopted taken Manager, Head of administration and Supervisor, respectively. Amounted **78** respondents as the sample size for this study. The instrument was structured questionnaire, validated and the accepted forms of reliability of 0.70. A test was carried out using the Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance based on the adoption of a 95% confidence interval through SPSS version.

Table 1: Response Rate to Questionnaire

Construction Firms	NUMBER DISTRIBUTED	NUMBER RETURNED	% RATE OF RESPONSE
Total	**90**	**78**	**87%**
30 construction firms	**90**	78	**87**%

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The research survey shows total number of thirty construction firms that the study was carried out on a total of ninety (90) questionnaires were distributed, seventy-eight (78) number were completed and returned. This means 87% of respondents are used in this analysis.

4.2 Status of Respondents

The status of the respondents is presented in the table below. 3 were selected from each construction which includes manager, head of department and supervisor respectively. See table below.

Table 3: Status of respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Managers	30	38 %
Heads	30	38%
Supervisors	18	24%
Total	**78**	**100%**

Source: survey data, 2023.

Statistical Testing of the Hypotheses

The conceptual model has enabled the testing of three main hypotheses. Correlation analyses were conducted to test hypothesis one to three, (HO_1 – HO4) of this study. Tested hypotheses are described as follows.

HO_1: There is no Significant Relationship between recognition and profitability.

Nonparametric Correlations

Correlations

			Recognition	**Profitability**
Spearman's rho	Recognition	correlation coefficient	1.000	.789**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Profitability	Correlation coefficient	.789**	1,000
		Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

The table above indicates that there exists a positive relationship between recognition of employee effort and profitability. The rho indicates a value of .789 at a significant value of 0.000. Since it falls within the 0.05 level of our preferred level of significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. This implies that recognition of employee effort has a significant effect on profitability. The correlation coefficient of 0.789 indicates that there is a strong positive correlation.

There is no significant relationship between recognition of employee effort and expansion

H_{o2}: There is no Significant Relationship between recognition of employee effort and expansion
Nonparametric correlation

Correlations

			Recognition of employee effort	**Expansion**
Spearman's rho	Recognition of employee effort	correlation coefficient	1.000	.802**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Expansion	Correlation coefficient	.802**	1.000
		Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

The above shows that there exist positive and significant relationships between recognition of employee effort and expansion. The rho values is 0.802 at a significant value of .000 falls within the critical value at a 0.05 level of significant; hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted.

H_{o3}: There is no Significant Relationship between employee health programs and Profit
Nonparametric Correlation

Correlations

			Employee health programs	**Profit**
Spearman's rho	Employee health programs	correlation coefficient	1.000	.810**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Profit	Correlation coefficient	.810**	1,000
		Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

The above table shows that there exists a statistical significant relationship between the variables. The significant value of 0.000 showed higher value and lies within the preferred critical value of 0.05 (95%) confidence level, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted. Hence employee health programs have a significant effect on profit. The coefficient of correlation R shows a 0.810 (95%) value implies that there is a high and positive correlation. This means that the variables are moving in the same direction.

H_{o4}: There is no Significant Relationship between employee health programs and Expansion

Nonparametric Correlation

Correlations

			Employee health programs	**Expansion**
Spearman's rho	Employee health programs	correlation coefficient	1.000	.768**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	78	78
	Expansion	Correlation coefficient	.768**	1,000
		Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.
		N	78	78

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

The above table shows that there exists a statistical significant relationship between the variables. The significant value of 0.000 showed higher value and lies within the preferred critical value of 0.05 (95%) confidence level, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted. Hence employee health programs have a significant effect on expansion. The coefficient of correlation R shows a 0.768 (95%) value implies that there is a high and positive correlation. This means that the variables are moving in the same direction.

Discussion of the Findings

Recognition of employee effort and Measures of organizational survival

Finding of hypothesis one to two shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between recognition of employee effort and measures of organizational survival of building construction companies in Rivers State. When employees feel that their hard work is acknowledged and appreciated, they tend to be more motivated and engaged in their work. Motivated employees are more

likely to go the extra mile, which can lead to increased productivity, efficiency, and innovation. This, in turn, can support expansion efforts by driving higher output and performance. Employee recognition plays a crucial role in retaining valuable talent. When employees are consistently acknowledged and rewarded for their efforts, they are more likely to stay with the company. Reduced turnover means that the organization can maintain a stable and experienced workforce, which is crucial during expansion, as new hires and training can be costly and time-consuming. This finding agreed with the study of Gold and Nwibaedee (2023).

Employee health programs and measures of organizational survival

Findings of hypothesis one shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between employee health programs and measures of organizational survivial of building construction companies in Rivers State. Employee health programs, such as wellness initiatives and fitness programs, can lead to improved employee health and well-being. Healthy employees are generally more productive, as they experience fewer sick days and are better equipped to handle job-related stress. Higher productivity directly contributes to the achievement of organizational survival. Health and wellness programs can help reduce absenteeism due to illness or stress-related issues. When employees are healthier and less stressed, they are more likely to come to work regularly. This decreased absenteeism contributes to better team performance and helps the organization meet its objectives. This finding agreed with the study of Timothy et al. (2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, employee sustainability strategies are not only ethical and responsible but also essential for organizational survival. They create a virtuous cycle where engaged and satisfied employees drive productivity, innovation, and resilience, ultimately leading to long-term success in an ever-changing business landscape. Organizations that prioritize their workforce's well-being and development are better positioned to adapt, thrive, and remain competitive, ensuring their continued survival and growth in the years to come.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations made:

1. **Management** should prioritize training and development programs to enhance employee skills and knowledge.
2. **Building construction firms should e**ncourage a healthy work-life balance to prevent burnout and promote overall well-being.
3. **Building construction firms should** implement eco-friendly practices and reduce the organization's carbon footprint.
4. **Building construction firms should** invest in employee health and wellness programs.
5. Management should keep employees informed about the company's sustainability goals and progress.

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