Examining the Moderating Effect of Organizational Climate on the Relationship Between Corporate Leadership and Strategy Implementation in Selected Hotels in South-South, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study examined the moderating effect of organizational climate on the relationship between corporate Leadership and Strategy Implementation of 4-star Hotels in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey/correlation cross sectional research design. The major research instrument was the questionnaire. Analysis was done at the macro level. The population of study consists all 15 four star Hotels operating in South-South Nigeria. The study postulated two hypotheses, the postulated hypotheses were tested for bivariate and moderating relationship using the partial correlation analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0. The results of the tested hypotheses show a positive relationship between all the variables of study. Deriving from the findings, the researcher concluded that a very strong correlation existing between the mean score of the indicators of corporate Leadership and those of successful Strategy Implementation. However the result further indicated that organizational climate does not moderate the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation in the hotels in south-south Nigeria. Deriving from the same findings, the researcher recommends that Leadership system thinking in the hotels should be geared towards improving the chosen strategy for the organization. These should include developing new operational procedures for the hotels that will be satisfactory to clients and other stake holders. Harmonising the existing method of operations in such a manner to achieve improve service quality. Thinking globally and cultivating local contents into the operations of the hotels.

Keywords; *Organizational Climate, Strategy* Implementation, Leadership, Leadership Vision, Hotels

Introduction

In order for organization to align their operations to the dynamic operational environment, they have to constantly formulate and implement strategies (Johnson & Scholes, 2008). A strategy is an important component of organization planning towards the attainment of organizational objectives. The strategy translates plans into actions and the intended results so as to deliver on organizational objectives. Failure to achieve the set targets signifies weak strategy which has been poorly operationalized (Rajaseker, 2014). Well implemented strategies promote overall organizational performance while poorly implemented strategies manifest themselves in poor performance results – these outcomes are also well expressed and manifested by hotel organizations.

Effective strategy implementation by hotels serves to boost their performance and competitiveness, as it enables them achieves their plans and goals within their various markets. George (2001) observed that while it is important to match strategies and plans within the industry with those obtainable within the global or international lens, it is yet still necessary that strategy implementation is anchored and well hinged on the environment of the hotel and also is fully cognizant of the disparities in demographic characteristics (e.g. religion and economic stratifications) that may distinguish one context or market from another.

In assessing the environment and market of any organization, George (2001) opined that while political, technological, cultural and social factors are important, other factors such as the legal and eco-based frameworks for businesses are also essential. Successful businesses are those that are able to balance their economic and social values in a manner that not only supports their own gain and development, but also identifies with the position of their various stakeholders, and the significant parties that constituent the environment of the organization. In this way strategy implementation could differ across contexts owing to the dynamic nature of contexts or markets and the different factors and characteristics that define and separate on context from another one. Hence strategy implementation can be described as going beyond just the internal features of the organization, as it would involve the organizations behaviour and actions in addressing external parties or factors within its environment (Oladele, 2011; Andrews, 2012).

Studies describe strategic implementation as an important factor behind the success of the organization (Pearce, Robinson & Richard, 2007; Oyedijo, 2004). In this way, it can be described as specifying the link between the organizations goals and its capacity for achieving them. Oladele (2011) reported strategic implementation as being one of the major issues in hotel management and success in Nigeria. According to Rahimnia (2009), strategic implementation offers a positioning on the competitiveness of these hotels and describes their capacities for adapting their behaviour and operations to match the changes and development within their environment. Unfortunately, the growing frustration and failure of these hotels expresses their challenges in effectively implementing strategies that are necessary and imperative for their success, competitiveness and continuity. However, as Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) argued, organizational change is fundamentally linked to the leadership of the organization.

Linking leadership, especially that which is strategic such as the corporate leadership – to the strategic implementation offers a centrality to decision-making and change initiative that falls on the shoulders of the corporate leadership of the organization and in its capacity to engage the rest of the members of the organization and channel their actions and efforts towards the achievement of that desired change or state of the organization (Oyedijo, 2004). Corporate leadership in this way harmonizes the efforts and activities within the organization in a way that advances its meaningfulness to the organization. Nwanchukwu (2006) argued that corporate leadership charts the course of the organization and specifies its future and strategic goals. By this, it is therefore concerned with the key decisions that ensure the survival of the organization and also its ability to achieve long-terms goals.

Every organization has a personality uniqueness or climate of its own. Among the various interactions taking place in the college system, the interaction between the principal and the teachers decides or contributes to a large extent in determining the atmosphere or the climate. Thus, climate affects the behaviour of the individual living and working in the environment which in turns influences their performance. Thus, the environment of an organization is an important factor, which influences the behaviour and activities of the role participants (Corboy & O'Corrbui, 2014).

According to Schapp (2006), leadership should be participative and allow for the involvement of various levels of staff in the decision-making process, especially since these workers often have front-line experiences that may be useful to the activities related to strategy implementation.

This study is intended to address the moderating role of organizational climate on the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation of hotels in the south-south of Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses: The study postulated and tested the following hypotheses.
H$_{01}$:   There is no significant relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation in the Hotels in South-South Nigeria
H$_{02}$:   Organizational climate does not moderate the relationship between corporate leadership and Strategy implementation in the Hotels in South-South Nigeria.

Empirical Review
Several studies have been conducted on issues pertaining to challenges faced by organizations during strategy implementation. However, a search of the literature shows that little or minimal attention has been given to the role of corporate leadership in the strategic implementation process in service or hospitality firms such as hotels with regards to Nigeria. Studies carried out on leadership involvement in strategic outcomes reveal that leaders are defined by it and have different decisions or actions for different change events (Thach et al 2007); show the competence to craft vision and set goals (Bennis 1987; cited in Thach et al 2007); understand and know how to use power (Hardy 1996); devise more efficient ways to present change to employees (Svetlik, 2005); apply their technical, human and conceptual skills (OECD, 2002).

Trinka (2004) studied leadership behaviour and they found out that leaders should have situational leadership style behaviours for different change events. In other words, different strategic changes will be effective with the appropriate leadership style. In this regard the leadership behaviours that will support a change

initiative in the longer term are those that inspire, stimulate, or instil a sense of purpose within the employees. The shaping of behaviour aligned to strategy implementation programmes can therefore be an effective strategy to improve strategy implementation success. Bennis (1987; cited in Thach et al 2007) carried out a study on leadership competencies argues that amongst the competency clusters, leaders should be able to craft a strategic vision and set goals.

Mackenzie et al (2001) also postulated that effective leaders implement change through articulating a vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, providing individualised support and intellectual stimulation and clarifying performance expectations. A research by Larkin and Larkin (1996) concluded that leaders should find more precise and efficient ways to present change to employees and be able to describe the appropriate communication channels to use. They also further argue that groundless rumours can undermine chances of success, so it is important to choose appropriate media and to begin to communicate at an early stage in the strategy implementation process to avoid misunderstandings.

Trinka (2004) and OECD (2002) in their research on leadership competencies concurred that commonly referenced competencies for successful Strategy Implementation include; integrity/honesty, communication, technical competence, diversity consciousness, developing others, results orientation, change management, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, decision making, political savvy, strategic/visionary thinking, customer focus, business skills, team leadership, influence skills, conflict management, emotional intelligence, social and environmental responsibility. The failure to identify one's competence and use such or a combination thereof dampens the quality and success of strategy implementation programmes. A leader without power or who does not know how to use power will fail in strategy implementation for such a leader will not be in a position to influence individuals to perform. Hardy (1996) argues that power has a central role in strategy implementation and studied how the use of power can guide an organisation and its members throughout a strategy implementation process. Jackson and Carter (2000) presented that there are two kinds of forces in an organisation; power and authority. They identified the forces of power as being "the ability to get someone to do something that he or she does not particularly want to do". However, Hardy (1996) further reasons that in order to use power it is necessary to understand what it involves before actual application on employees.

Thinking strategically and differently is necessary for modern leaders when it comes to their role, capabilities and how to improve themselves in order to lead their organization to long-term success (Thompson, Strickland and Gamble, 2010). Dinwoodie, Quinn and McGuire (2014) indicates that, through leadership strategy, the potential of individuals and groups is unleashed throughout an organization and assists an organization achieve success. However, most leadership efforts of senior executives in organizations are not connected to strategy process. This creates a disconnect that prevents organizations from enacting and identifying wise strategies. Leaders in organizations are faced with tremendous pressures and forced to make short term numbers to make immediate wins. As a result, these leaders have adopted operational leadership which has been seen as a lack of focus where leaders have been seen to run in various directions. Although leaders are able to solve short term targets, solving functional problems seen to be far reaching and complex may make leaders feel paralyzed and unsure (Beatth, 2010). Leaders are then forced to move from operational leadership and adopt corporate leadership.

Corporate leadership is a key driver to an organization's success to strategy implementation according to Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2013) which is broadly recognized as one of the main drivers of effective strategic execution where corporate leaders play an important role in promoting competitive advantage of an organization over long term (Marriott, Du Plessis, Manichith & Sukumaran 2014). This type of leadership has been seen to assist organizations deal with the global economy (Zoogah, 2011). Center for Creative Leadership (2004) points out corporate leaders as leaders that develop and discover strategies and grip it in a continuing state of formulation, implementation, reassessment and revision. These leaders do not however come easily in organizations and according to Forbes, only 10 percent of leaders exhibit strategic skills which is an inadequate number considering the demands of organizations today (Beatty, 2010). Beatty points out that strategic skills are not only required in time of growth but also in difficult times in an organization when resources are tight to ensure that resources in organization are focused in the right areas (Beatty, 2010).

Daft (2011) indicate that the selection of the top leader of an organization is determined by the success and competitive advantage of the organization. Strategic and top leaders have the responsibility of understanding their organization environment considering what may happen in their next years. This is because corporate leaders are key people that look forward to a set of direction for the future pushing their employees to move in the same direction (Marriott et al. 2014). However, corporate leaders have encountered problems of strategic planning in the area of strategy implementation. Implementing a strategy has proven to be more difficult than formulating a consistent strategy which has been seen to be fairly easy (Hrebiniak, 2006). To deal with these challenges in strategy implementation backing it up with effective leadership is very important.

Organizational climate is a concept that deals with staff members' perceptions of the working environment. This climate is directly influenced by administrators which in turn affects the motivation and behaviours of the entire staff. More specifically, climate is a relatively enduring quality that is experienced by teachers, influences their behaviour, and is based on their collective perceptions (Corboy & O'Corrbui, 2014). Organizational climate is the study of perceptions that individuals have of various aspects of the environments in the organization" (Owens, 1987). Organizational climate has obvious implications for improving the quality of work life. Organizations that are characterized by a great deal of togetherness, familiarity, and trust among teachers will be more effective.

The leader's behaviour has an important influence on organizational climate. It seems that even with all other things equal the leader can make a big difference in the climate of a group, for instance by changing an open, cooperative climate to one that is perceived as being closed and repressive. Other factors are also important. For example, the degree to which the organization is mechanistic or bureaucratic, in other words, the degree to which employees are urged to "stick to the chain of command," adhere to rules and procedures, and carry out highly specialized tasks -- will contribute to whether or not employees perceive the group's climate as closed and confining or open and supportive.

Cooper (2003) describes organizational climate as people's perception of their working environment with regard to caring and friendliness." In other words, the interaction of workers and management should create a healthy organizational environment. It means that organizational climate is subject to the perceptions of leaders and their subordinates. Litwin and Stringer (1998) maintain that "organizational climate is a set of 'measurable properties of the work environment', based on the collective perceptions of the people who live and work in the environment, and whose behaviour is influenced by their perceptions. Therefore, one can say that organizational climate plays important role in setting the atmosphere conducive for a particular organization. It is achieved through the interaction between the leaders and subordinates, between teachers and students and between the principal and students. The social interaction compels the principal, teachers and students to discuss mutually in area of planning, decision-making, problem solving and control.

Methodology

This study adopts the cross-sectional survey design. The accessible population for this study comprises of 15 four- and five-star hotels in the south-south of Nigeria. 152 key referents (proprietors and managers) are identified from each hotel through phone and physical correspondence with hotel contacts and personnel. They serve as representatives and respondents to the items on the research instrument. As such a proprietor or general manager is selected, and six other unit managers comprising departments such as floor managers, human resources, finance, marketing, services (restaurant and bar), storage and maintenance etc. Thus, addressing key referents or units from each hotel. Hotels are selected based on their recognition and listing on two popular international hotel databases – the hotels.com and the booking.com. The listing of these hotels on these databases offered a cross-validation of their four- and five-star categories and also evidence of their international recognition.

Results

Table 1; moderating effect of organizational climate on the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation

Control Variables		Corp. Leader	Strategy imp.	organization climate
-none-[a]	Correlation	1.000	.989	.244
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.006
	Df	0	123	123
	Correlation	.989	1.000	.260
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.003
	Df	123	0	123
	Correlation	.244	.260	1.000
	Significance (2-tailed)	.006	.003	.
	Df	123	123	0
	Correlation	1.000	.989	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
	Df	0	122	
	Correlation	.989	1.000	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
	Df	122	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.
Source; Researcher's Desk, 2020

In the table above, the Partial Correlations table shows both the zero-order correlations(correlations without any moderating variables) of all three variables and the partial correlation of the first two variables controlling for the effects of the third variable (organizational climate).

The zero-order correlation between corporate leadership and strategy implementation, indeed, is very strong positive relationship (0.989) and statistically significant.

The partial correlation controlling for organizational climate, however, is a low positive correlation (0.244) and statistically significant (p = .006.)

One interpretation of this finding is that the observed strong positive relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation is due to underlying relationships between each of those variables and that organizational climate does not moderate the relationship between the two variables.

Therefore, comparing the correlation coefficients rs, we notice that the r of corporate leadership and strategy implementation (.989) is greater than the r of organizational climate (.244). This shows that organizational climate does not have any moderating effect on the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation; hence we accept the null hypothesis which infers that organizational climate does not moderate the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation of 4-star hotels in south-south Nigeria. The zero order correlation has equally helped us to achieve the purpose of the study. With a coefficient correlation of 0.989 we can conclude that there is a very strong positive relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation in 4-star hotels in south-south Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

In order to understand the moderating role of organizational climate on the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation of 4-star hotels south-south, Nigeria, the partial correlation equation was adopted. The Partial Correlations findings shows both the zero-order correlations (correlations without any moderating variables) of all three variables and the partial correlation of the first two variables controlling for the effects of the third variable (trust climate). The zero-order correlation between corporate leadership and strategy implementation, indeed, is very strong positive relationship (0.989) and statistically significant. The partial correlation controlling for organizational trust climate, however, is a low positive correlation (0.244) and statistically significant (p = .006.)

One interpretation of this finding is that the observed strong positive relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation is due to underlying relationships between each of those variables and that trust climate does not moderate the relationship between the two variables.

Therefore, comparing the correlation coefficients rs, we notice that the r of corporate leadership and strategy implementation (.989) is greater than the r of trust climate (.244). This shows that trust climate does not have any moderating effect on the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation; hence we accept the null hypothesis which infers that trust climate does not moderate the relationship between corporate leadership and strategy implementation of 4-star hotels in south-south Nigeria.

Existing literature also present basic studies relating to organizational climate and other variables. Katz and Kahn (1996) say that "the climate in an organization which reflects the type of people who compose the organization, the work processes, means of communication and the exercise of authority within the individual organization." Further, they recognize that it is easy to detect differences in the climate of organizations but it is difficult to name the dimensions of these differences. They further explain that Climate is atmosphere in which individual help, judge, reward, constrain, and find out about each other. It influences moral attitude of the individual toward work and his environment. The climate of an organization is thought to represent the perception of objective characteristics by organizations members. As an example, the size of an organization is objectives but a person's feelings about that size is subjective, it is the perception of these objectives that is represented by the climatic of an organization. Cooper (2003) describes organizational climate as people's perception of their working environment with regard to caring and friendliness." In other words, the interaction of workers and management should create a healthy organizational environment. It means that organizational climate is subject to the perceptions of leaders and their subordinates.

As a crucial facet of organizational climate, has several conspicuous features: 1) It is subject to the perception of the behaviours of other salient people, policies of the organizations and entrenched institutions; 2) It is characterized as a subjective perception; 3) It plays a critical role in shaping individuals' perception and interpretation of the events that take place around them. Since organizational climate measures a diffusive feeling toward the focal environment, it combines the perception of multiple referents. Accordingly, a comprehensive understanding and measurement of organizational climate entails incorporating the relevant important parties of the working settings. Kanter (1988) wrote that "innovation-rate" studies are "suspect without information about the organizational context

that produces the definition of that rate" and that "the organizational context itself should be the object of analysis, not individual innovation projects. This study is influenced, in part, by Ekvall's (1996) conceptualization of the innovative organizational climate, where "climate is regarded as an attribute of the organization, a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings and behaviors which characterizes life in the organization.

Ekvall's (1996) study used "climate" as part of an intervening variable affected by organizational resources such as human capital, buildings, knowledge, funds, and ideas, and having effects on organizational quality, productivity, job satisfaction, well-being, profit, and, of course, innovation. The effects on these organizational factors, in turn, are cyclical in nature and can have effects on the organizational resources and the organizational climate itself. This study deviates somewhat from Ekvall's (1996) model in that aside from conceptualizing an innovation climate, a linear regression model will also be employed to see how a set of variables affect the innovation climate.

Martin (2002) viewed organizational climate as the manifestation of practices and patterns of behaviour rooted in the assumptions, meanings and beliefs that make up the culture. In a similar vein, organizational creative climate can be conceived as a set of shared attitude, value and beliefs about the organization which affects employee attitudes and behaviour towards innovation (Ferris, Arthur, Berkson, Kaplan, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1998). Ekvall (1996) proposed a theoretical model of organizational creative climate by conceptualizing the construct as an objective property of the organization separate from the collective perceptions of employees.

Essentially, a climate that is supportive of innovation is conducive of organization-level innovation. Climate affects the results of an organization's operations as it 'influences organizational processes such as problem-solving, decision-making, communications, coordination, controlling, and psychological processes of learning, creating, motivation, and commitment' (Ekvall 1996). Organizations that are 'identified as innovative in terms of products, services, methods, policies, etc., should accordingly differ in climate from deliberately conservative or unintentionally out-distanced organizations. Through a meta-analysis of previous organizational climate studies, Hunter, Bedell, and Mumford (2007) have shown that various climate dimensions are effective predictors of creative performance, especially in turbulent, high-pressure, competitive environments wherein innovation was necessary for organizational success. Moreover, they add that well-developed, standardized measures of climate (including Ekvall's survey) showed stronger relationships than locally developed measures and surveys. Thus, this present study had observed that the hotels in south-south Nigeria, organizational climate does not moderate the relationship between corporate leadership mechanism and strategy implementation.

Conclusion
We conclude this study with the hope that within south-south, Nigeria and its environment (especially in the hotels and the hospitality industry) understanding the factors related to successful strategy implementation would receive attention in future research. Findings from present study indicate that corporate leadership mechanisms are highly significant in relation to Strategy implementation in the Hospitality industry and that organizational climate does not moderates the relationship between corporate leadership mechanisms and strategy implementation.

Recommendations
Deriving from the findings, the study recommends that Leadership system thinking in the hotels should be geared towards improving the chosen strategy for the organization. These should include developing new operational procedures for the hotels that will be satisfactory to clients and other stake holders. Harmonising the existing method of operations in such a manner to achieve improve service quality. Thinking globally and cultivating local contents into the operations of the hotels.

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