

Organizational Learning and Employee Performance of Selected Private Universities in Southwest, Nigeria: A Moderating Role of Strategic Leadership

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Abstract

Performance of employees of private universities across the globe has been worrisome as observed in poor academic performance of students, low research output, low commitment of employees among others. Private universities face challenges in dealing with pressure from global educational changing environment and also find it difficult to learn from the environment, create information and knowledge. This study investigated the moderating effect of strategic effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and performance of selected private universities in Nigeria. This study adopted the survey research design. The population that was used in this study included the academic and non-academic staff of private universities in southwest region, Nigeria which was a total of 3886 employees. Cochran sample size determination method was employed to determine the sample size of 676 staff. The data gathered was analysed using inferential (multiple regression analysis) statistics. From the data analyses, there is a significant moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria (Adj. $R^2 = 0.611$; R^2 change = 0.003; F change $_{(6,570)} = 4.117$; $p < 0.05$). This study concluded that strategic leadership significantly moderate the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that private universities should adopt strategic leadership in terms of management commitment, constructive criticism, effective communication, motivation and trust in management to achieve employee performance.

Background to the Study

Performance of employees of private universities across the globe has been worrisome as observed in poor academic performance of students, low research output, low commitment of employees among others. Hika, Feleke and Alemtshay (2017) asserted that private universities face challenges in dealing with pressure from global educational changing environment and also find it difficult to learn from the environment, create information and knowledge. Analyzing the private universities in terms of its design and ability to process information and learn constitutes an important approach to interpreting certain aspects of institutional activities towards its objectives. Today, private universities face increasing challenges posed by a competitive and dynamic business environment. This has led to disruptive changes that have forced universities to change their course in order to survive. To develop and sustain a superior competitive advantage, private universities have resorted to managing their knowledge resources. Universities around the globe are going through a time of unprecedented changes in terms of unstable government policies, external environmental forces rise in customer expectation and competitive challenges hindering the process of organisational learning and performance Alando, (2016). Similarly, Kaburu and Embeywa (2014) emphasized that institutions are faced with continuous environmental challenges which determine their employee performance and commitment.

Relatively, Faboyede *et al.* (2017) emphasized that private universities in Nigeria are open to globalization which has resulted in drastic changes in the institutional education environment in terms of competition and dynamic customer preferences and this has forced private institutions/universities in Nigeria to manage employee performance in order to survive and succeed. These changes have occurred not only in the external environment such as products, services, and technologies, but also in the internal environment, like the way people think, their visions, values, and goals (Bhaskar & Mishra, 2010). In order to be empowered to deal with these changes, private universities focus on organisational learning and employee performance management (Yasar, Ahmed & Emhan, 2014). In fact, Oyeniyi (2011) asserted that a successful institution learns faster and adapts more quickly than its competitors. This is why attention to concepts of organisational learning has grown and been emphasized more strongly in recent years among private universities in Nigeria.

The practices of human resource management in private universities are vital elements in the achievement of employee goals and performance as they contributed towards the achievement of private universities performance. Jung and Yoon (2016) added that to achieve this organisational performance, organisational operating in the service industry have to increase focus on employee satisfaction, productivity, attitude and creativity. Lee (2016) also agreed that by viewing employees as the organisation's most valuable asset and treating them as internal customers, organisations hope to achieve its objectives and gain a competitive advantage in the current unexpected business environment. But in Nigeria, most private universities employee according to Aluko (2014) experienced teaching overload and suffer from poor continuous learning, team

learning, system thinking and employee mentoring that is why employee's commitment and productivity is low. Ouma (2016) pointed that the increase in the number of private universities failed to cater for the increase in demands of education due to hike in the price of private universities in Nigeria.

Munene (2016) asserted that most private universities are characterized by institutional bureaucratic structure which poses a serious challenge for organisational learning in terms of continuous learning, team learning, personal learning, system thinking and employee mentoring and thus enhanced demotivated workforce. This means that such a workforce being demoralized would fail to effectively and efficiently discharge their duties leading to low employee performance and productivity levels. Supporting this assertion, Faboyede *et al.* (2017) emphasized that most private universities employee face challenges of task overload pressure and organisational learning which have resulted to poor employee performance in terms of productivity and commitment. Relating to these aforementioned issues of organisational learning experienced by private universities in Nigeria and their employee, this study was examined the effects of organisational learning on employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Private universities institutions in Nigeria found themselves in greater competition with one another as globalization and deregulation weaken geographic boundaries and encourage cross-border knowledge among universities. Diverse scholars such as Akhtar, Arif, Rubi and Naveed (2012), Azizi (2017), Idowu (2013), Mylse (2014), Mrisha, Idua and Kingi (2017), Odoyo (2014), Ogbonna and Harris (2015), Ouma (2016), Namada (2017), Njoroge (2017) among others had investigated the link between organisational learning and firm performance but most of these studies did not consider how organisational learning affects employee performance in selected private universities. The review of past literature shows that most of these past studies have not addressed the problem of organisational learning, unsupportive institutional bureaucratic structure and employee performance among universities in Nigeria. This serves as gap in this study. Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu and Osinowo (2017) established that most private universities in Nigeria experienced unsupportive institutional bureaucratic structure which poses a serious problem for organisational learning among universities institutions in Nigeria and thus had reduced academics and non-academics performance.

Kola, Gana and Olasumbo (2017) further emphasized that institutional bureaucratic structure creates institutional flexibility and organisational learning problems. All these problems of bureaucratic structure practice experienced by private universities in Nigeria have caused declined in academics and non-academics performance and productivity (Faboyede *et al.*, 2017).

Several researchers such as Graham and Nafukho (2007), Cania (2014), Maryan (2012), Shoid and Kassim (2013) examined leadership and organisational learning: accounting for variances in small-size business enterprises; the impact of strategic human resource

management on organisational performance; analysis of the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantages in Jordanian banks; leadership and organisational learning. There is very little-known research literature that had been conducted on the link between organisational learning dimensions (continuous learning, team learning, personal learning, system thinking and employee mentoring) and employee satisfaction of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Omar, Salessi and Urteaga (2017) that there are millions of research works rotting away in libraries of both private and public higher education institutions throughout Nigeria which has caused declined in employee performance among private universities in Nigeria. Ewanset *al.* (2017) established that notable or effective connection between the academia and industry is clearly lacking. Ouma (2016) asserted that in Nigeria, the problem of no connection between academia and industry have enhanced poor employee performance of private academic staff towards research because most of their research outcomes are not utilize in the industry and this poor connection have also increased unproductivity and poor performance among private academic staff employee in Nigeria. Furthermore, Iruonagbe, Imhonopi and Egharevba (2015) and Okoro and Agugum (2017) emphasized that private universities experienced declined in employee performance due to poor organisational learning by private universities in Nigeria. This study filled the gap in knowledge as most of past studies (Omoniyi, Salau & Fadugba, 2014; Ogbonna & Harris, 2015; Okebukola, 2010; Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2010; Omar, Salessi & Urteaga, 2017) have not examined the moderating effect of strategic leadership between organisational learning and employee performance of private universities. Based on these problems discussed and knowledge gap identified, this study investigated the effect of organisational learning dimensions on employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organisational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Research Question

The research proposes to answer the following questions;

What moderating role does strategic leadership have on the relationship between organisational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria?

Relating strategic leadership practice with employee performance has been viewed to be important factors for nowadays organisational performance (Kogo & Kimencu, 2018). This argument has been genuine due to the dynamic environments in which most organisations operate. Schippers, Edmondson and West (2014) revealed that the utilisation of strategic leadership measures is positively and significantly correlated with the strategic alignment of workers, which consequently influences organisational performance. Kogo and Kimencu (2018) further showed that top management ethical

leadership significantly predicts ethical climate, firm level organisational citizenship behavior and firm financial performance. Van der Haar, Segers, Jehn and Van den Bossche (2015) positively contends that through organisational learning an organisation can groom their employees which ultimately leads to employee creativity and generates maximum revenue. Idowu (2013) revealed that organisational learning components such as system orientations, organisational climate for learning orientation, knowledge acquisition and utilization orientation, information sharing and dissemination orientation and financial performance are positively related. Mrisha, Ibusa and Kingi (2017) revealed that there exists a positive and significant relationship between continuous learning, collaboration and team learning and organisational performance. Furthermore, they established that there was a positive and significant relationship between employee empowerment and organisational performance while inquiry and dialogue, embedded systems, systems connection and strategic leadership had a positive and strong relationship with organisational performance. On the other hands, Ratna, Khanna, Jogishwar, Khattar and Agarwal (2014) further concluded that there is no significant relationship between corporate growth and corporate adherence to rules and regulations. Also, Koskei, Katwalo, and Asienga (2015) found that there was a positive relationship but not significant between strategic leadership capability and performance of organisations. There are little empirical evidences that have investigated how strategic leadership affect the relationship between organisational learning and employee performance among universities institutions in Nigeria. Based on these scanty studies, the study hypothesized that;

Ho: There is no significant moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria

Literature Review

Organizational Learning

Learning is defined as a way to understand others as well as one-self (Tohidi, Seyedaliakbar, & Mandegari, 2012). It provides an opportunity to the individuals to discover and understand themselves. Learning process actually starts from feedback and response from others leading to the organisational improvement and performance (Hsu & Sabherwal, 2012). The concept of organisational learning has been the subject of a fast-growing body of literature (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). Organisational learning has been defined by several authors and researchers. Lopez and Esteves (2013) defined organisational learning as the capacity or processes within an organisation to maintain or improve performance based on experience. According to Mbengue and Sané (2013), organisational learning is the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding. Organisational learning can be described as an area of leaning towards the study of cognitive and social processes of knowledge in organisation that are imbibed in work practices" (Boff& Antonello, 2011: 184).

Wang, Han, Fisher and Pan (2015) suggested that the great commitment towards learning in organisation could compel organisation to achieve their goals more easily. Organisations should develop mechanisms and practices that support or promote the

creation of organisational knowledge. These mechanisms include socialization, internalization and externalization, as well as all the management practices that establish a climate conducive to learning (Mbengue & Sané, 2013). These practices are the essence of the organisational learning capability, which can be defined as the set of management practices that facilitate the learning process, or, as a set of mechanisms that increase the organisation ability to maintain and improve their performance (Alegre & Chiva, 2008; Mbengue & Sané, 2013). Organisational learning, as the source of knowledge creation and knowledge as a unique, inimitable and infinite resource (Kocoglu, *et al.*, 2011), is emphasized as an important factor for realizing firm's competitive advantages. It is also considered as a key factor for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage and enhanced firm performance (Wang, Han, Fisher & Pan, 2015).

Characteristics of a Learning Organisation

Wang *et al.* (2015) noted that there is little consensus on what a learning organisation might look like. Garvin (2000) argues that most discussions of organisational learning do not get to the heart of how to make it happen in organisation, focusing is on high philosophy and grand schemes, sweeping metaphors rather than the gritty details of practice.

Wael (2017) argued that a learning organisation; creates continuous learning opportunities; promotes dialogue and inquiry; promotes collaboration and team learning; empowers people to evolve a collective vision; establishes systems to capture and share learning; connects the organisation to its environment; and provides strategic leadership for learning.

In an attempt to identify the core aspects of Organisational Learning, several authors have proposed different categorizations of its underlying components which are described further.

Single Loop Learning and Double Loop Learning:

Argyris and Schon (1978) originated two views regarding learning, namely Single-Loop Learning (SLL) and Double-Loop Learning (DLL).

They define single loop learning as "learning that changes strategies of actions or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged", and double loop learning as "learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions" (Argyris & Schon, 1996: 20). Single Loop Learning involves putting into effect goals, rules and plans and not trying to question them. On the other hand, Double Loop Learning includes questioning and speculation of established rules. It enables improvisation in terms of reframing a problem which can result into radically different potential solutions (Kim, 1993).

Know-how" and "know-why":

Learning has two meanings: know-how and know-why. Practical knowledge that is gained while doing a task can lead to "know-how" knowledge. (Sanchez & Heene, 1997). Repeatable patterns of action impact how a task can be performed better. Know-why knowledge is attributed to the type of learning that involves analysing a task. This results in the comprehension of why a task is accomplished by certain actions. It is a result of more insightful investigation or inquiry into those actions or tasks (Heimeriks, Schijven, & Gates, 2012).

Individual, Group and Organisational Level:

Organisational learning is a set of dynamic processes that allow movement of knowledge from individuals to organisations based on organisational information activities (Lopez & Esteves, 2013; Koskei, Katwalo & Asienga, 2015). Organisational Learning is described to take place at various levels- individual, group and organisation (Lin & Wu, 2014; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Cegarra-Navarro and Sabater-Sánchez, 2005; Hsu & Sabherwal, 2012). Moreover, there is a consensus that learning takes place at all these three levels (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010).

Dimensions of Organisational learning:

Jyothibabu, Farooq and Pradhan (2010) have developed an integrated scale to measure organisational learning. This scale was based on Watkins and Marsick's Dimensions of the Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ) (elaborated by Watkins and Marsick (2003) and Bontis, Crossan and Hulland (2002)). The combination of their study results revealed that there were seven dimensions of learning that affected organisational outcomes:

Continuous Learning: Organisational effort to facilitate continuous learning opportunities to all of its members.

Inquiry and Dialogue: Fostering a culture of questioning, feedback and experimentation by an organisation.

Team Learning: Collaborative work promoted by an organisation so as to achieve desired tasks.

Employee Mentoring: The concern for an organisation to consider the collective vision of its employees/members about the gap between the current state of affairs and the futuristic vision.

Embedded System: Presence and efforts to establish systems to capture and share learning.

System Thinking: Connection of an organisation to its internal and external environment.

Employee Performance

Employees are a primary source of competitive advantage in service-oriented organisation (Odoyo, 2014). Employee performance plays an important role for organisational performance. Employee performance is originally what an employee does or does not do. Performance of employees could include: quantity of output, quality of output, timeliness of output, presence at work, cooperativeness (Anitha, 2014). Anitha (2014) further pointed that improved individual employee performance could improve organisational performance as well. Ahmad and Shahzad (2011) stated that employee performance can be define as the record of outcomes achieved, for each job function, during a specified period of time. If viewed in this way, performance is represented as a distribution of outcomes achieved, and performance could be measured by using a variety of parameters which describe an employee's paten of performance over time. On the other hand, Al-adaileh, Dahou and Hacini (2012) said employee's performance is a rating system used in many corporations to decide the abilities and output of an employee. Good employee performance has been linked with increased consumer perception of service quality, while poor employee performance has been linked with increased customer complaints and brand switching.

Performance criteria need to be unambiguous, clearly explained, relevant to the work tasks undertaken by employees and achievable. The criteria should not include factors beyond the control of the individual employee. Supervisors also need to be trained to provide regular, meaningful and constructive feedback. Employees should also be provided with appropriate training and development opportunities to overcome weaknesses in performance identified through the appraisal process. The assessment of individual employee performance also needs to focus on evaluating employee behavior and work performance and not the personality of the employee (Ali & Hawryszkiewicz, 2014). The performance of lecturers is directly linked to process and product of education. Therefore, the performance of lecturers is emphatic for the improvement of education. Obilade (1999) stated that lecturers job performance can be described as the duties performed by a lecturer at a particular period in the university system in achieving organisational goals. Ali and Hawryszkiewicz (2014) added that job performance is determined by the worker's level of participation in the day to day running of organisation. There are some factors which contribute to a lecturer's performance. Some of such factors are: (i) Satisfying the learners through his teaching style and quality, (ii) Apart from teaching, performance of other assignments as assigned by the head of department, (iii) Management of class discipline, students' motivation and improvement of their achievement, (iv) Performance of his/her duties in a regular way, and (v) Interaction with students', parents, colleagues and other academic and non-academic officials (Ali & Hawryszkiewicz, 2014).

Strategic Leadership

The role of leadership in ensuring high performance organisations and employee organizational commitment cannot be overemphasized (Murad & Gill, 2016; Ullah, 2013). Leadership takes an important role in a learning organisation where the leader

motivates the individuals towards a shared vision, changes the mental model and fosters an environment of learning. Leadership enables the achievement of objectives by influencing the group's commitment and compliance to the objectives, group maintenance and identification and the culture of the organization (Yukl, 2002). As the definitions indicated, leadership can be referred to as an attribute of a person or as a social process involving influence and persuasion. Therefore, leaders play a key role in the individual or group performance and the achievement of goals. The success or failure of a group and the organization depends on the qualities of the leader. Strategic leadership is seen to boost organizational performance and improve customer service delivery (Edoka, 2015; Mathew, Esowe & Ajagbe, 2016).

To lead the present-day workforce and organisations which are faced with a rapidly changing environment requires a leader who brings out the best in followers, leadership which is more adaptive and flexible. To achieve this, leaders could influence followers through their own extraordinary behavior and personal attributes of charisma or through reward/punishment. The leader can initiate lower order improvement, that is changes in degrees or marginal improvement, through an exchange process: a transaction in which follower's needs are met if their performance measures up to the explicit or implicit contracts with their leader. This is transactional leadership. However, leaders can also initiate a higher order improvement, such as changes in attitudes, beliefs, values and needs through innovative or revolutionary ideas and a vision of future possibilities (Edoka, 2015).

At institutional level in the university sector, vice-chancellors, presidents and rectors must have the ability to inspire the hearts and minds of hundreds, even thousands, of followers yet have little opportunity for face-to-face interaction with most of them. 'The leadership at this level requires three characteristics: the right person for the context, the conviction of the leader and the dynamics of credibility over time and tenure' (Leavy & Mckiernan, 2009). The lecturer's role is manifest by the leader helping others to see the big picture. The leader helps others understand the reality of the current situation and the vision of the organization; filling the gap that lies between these two paradigms and creating a learning environment where that can occur is the focus of effective leaders (Sadler, 2003). The manager plays a critical role in establishing the learning environment for his or her employees. Creating an effective learning environment will allow people to draw upon resources, make sense out of things and construct meaningful solutions to problems. This will emphasize the importance of meaningful, authentic activities that help the learner to construct understanding and develop skills relevant to solving problems. Applying the concepts of a learning organization to an operating company is difficult for both academics and practitioners (Albert, 2005). Learning organisations do not happen automatically but require a deep commitment to building required skills throughout the organisation (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). They indicated that a long-term commitment must be made at the absolute pinnacle of the organisation. The learning organisation will remain a distant vision until leadership capabilities they demand are developed (Senge, 1990).

According to Suzanne (2013), strategic leaders are executives who have overall responsibility for organisations, their characteristics, what they do, how they do it and the overarching impact of such on the triple bottom line of such organisation. This definition explained the scope of strategic leadership to include CEOs, the heads of business units, top management teams, board of directors, and dominant coalitions that may exist in such organisations. Senior management and formal leaders such as —Chief Executive officers, Presidents, and Chiefs of Staff, sets the tone for organisational learning but middle management (line managers), such as divisional chiefs and unit leaders play a more important role in encouraging and supporting practical experiments and ensuring psychological safety to acknowledge and rectify individual and system issues (Conway & Weingart, 2014).

Organizational Learning and Employee Performance

Hernaus, Dimovski and Škerlavaj (2014) investigated relationship between organisational learning and employee performance: the case of Croatia. The study employed survey design because survey encompasses measurement procedures used to measure different relationships and hypothesis with clearly defined information. Data obtained from primary source was analysed using regression and correlation analysis because the study sought to establish the effect and relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study. Likewise, Mehrabi, Soltani, Alemzadeh and Jadidi (2013) studied explaining the relationship between organisational structure and dimensions of learning organisations. The study used exploratory design. This design is appropriate because it searches through the study's underlying situation to provide insights and understandings and also to fish out current happenings. In addition, this design tests derived concepts before putting them into practice. Factor analysis was employed to assist in identifying possible viable factors, classify them and develop/refine research questions to ensure meaningful results are gotten. Similarly, Wiseman (2007) studied the institutionalization of organisational learning: a neo-institutional perspective. The study employed exploratory design because it sought to search through the study's underlying situation to provide insights and understandings and also to fish out current happenings. Also, Škerlavaj, Song and Youngmin (2010) studied organizational learning culture, innovative culture and innovations in South Korean firms. The study made use of exploratory research design because the study sought to test derived concepts before putting them into practice.

Moderating effect of strategic leadership between organizational learning and employee performance

Higgins, Ishimaru, Holcombe and Fowler (2017) investigated examining organisational learning in schools: the role of psychological safety, experimentation, and leadership that reinforces learning. The study employed survey research design because the survey obtains stronger data representation and better approximation with the reality experienced. As descriptive, the possibility of analyzing how the data relates with other elements gains great relevance. It encompasses measurement procedures used to measure different relationships and hypothesis with clearly defined information. Data

obtained was analyzed using descriptive analysis/statistics. This method is appropriate because descriptive statistics assisted in fitting responses into particular categories. Apart from being easy to interpret, percentages were also used to show comparisons between categories of responses. Also, Kiani, Montazeralfaraj, Zadeh and Zadeh (2016) studied the mediating role of strategic leadership in the relationship of organisational learning and organisational agility. The study employed survey research design because the survey obtains stronger data representation and better approximation with the reality experienced. Data gathered through questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics in order to categorize the response into mean, standard deviation, percentages and charts.

Organisational learning has been a hotspot research subject which has been analysed and put profound importance upon in order to boost firm performance. In a study carried out by Wujiabudula and Zehir (2016) to determine the relationship between organisational learning and firm performance through the mediating effects of strategic leadership. The study found out that strategic leadership plays mediating effects on the relations between organisational learning and firm performance. Similarly, Hailekiros and Renyong (2016) carried out a research titled 'the effect of organisational learning capability on firm performance: mediated by technological innovation capability' and leadership using a survey data from 243 small and medium manufacturing firms in Ethiopia. The study discovered that technological innovation capability and leadership have a mediating role on the relationship between organisational learning capability and firm performance. Moreover, it has a direct positive effect on firm performance. The study also revealed that organisational learning capability has strong positive effect on both technological innovation capability and firm performance.

Theoretical Review

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory is divided into "old" and "new." Selznick (1996) wrote the foundational work on old institutional theory, in which he conceived of organisational as organisms that adapted to environmental threats. He regarded the formal and informal structures within organisational as being in tension; these together were in tension with their larger institutional environment. The foundational pieces of new institutional theory include Meyer and Rowan's 1977 work that argued that formal structure emerges in organisational as these organisational adhere to institutional norms and beliefs from their larger organisational environment. According to institutional theorists, regularized organisational behaviors are the product of ideas, values, and beliefs that originate in the institutional context (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer, Scott & Deal, 1983).

Institutional theory holds that conformity to social expectations contributes to organisational success (North, 1991). The theory looks at the role of social influence and pressure for social conformity in shaping organisational actions (Oliver, 1997). It provides a theoretical framework that explains organisational phenomena such as

processes, strategies and competencies as they emerge from patterns of social interaction and adaptation (Leaptrott, 2005). Oliver (1997) argues that organisations operate in a social framework of norms, values and assumptions about what constitutes appropriate or acceptable economic behaviour. Impliedly, institutions influence resource decisions since economic choices are constrained by technological, informational and human limits (North, 1991; Oliver, 1997). This study focused on firm-level of analysis which perpetuates institutionalized structures and behaviours. It sheds more light on the role of firm-level institutions by looking at how they impact on the relationship between creating a learning environment and employee performance.

The Resource Based view (RBV)

Resource Based View (RBV) was articulated into a coherent theory by Wernerfelt (1984). The theory stated that the organisational resources and capabilities are rare, valuable, non-substitutable, and imperfectly imitable form the basis for a firm's sustained competitive advantage. RBV suggests that the firm can secure a sustained competitive advantage through facilitating the development of competencies that are firm specific, produce complex social relationship; are embedded in a firm's history and culture, and generate tacit organisational knowledge (Lee, 2016). The resource-based view of the firm has long provided a core theoretical rationale for Human resources' potential role as a strategic asset in the firm (Wright & McMahan, 1992). The basic argument of the RBV, as explained by Barney (1991) is that the firm's Human resource confer enduring competitive advantage to a firm to the extent that they remain scarce or hard to duplicate, have no direct substitutes and enable companies to pursue opportunities. This view of the firm infers that firms create competitive advantage by implementing unique combinations of resources and business practices that are difficult for competitors to imitate. Human resource practices may provide significant competitive advantage when they are used to create a unique or difficult to imitate organisational culture that institutionalizes organisational competencies throughout the organisation (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

To sum up, the RBV has been criticized as being conceptually vague and tautological, lacking consideration of market dynamism, and with limited attention to the mechanisms by which resources are converted to competitive advantage (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Mosakowski & McKelvey, 1997; Priem & Butler, 2001).

Supporting this theory, the RBV theory pays attention to the role of resources and skills in determining the boundaries of the firm's activities, both at the corporate and business strategy levels (Grant, 2001; Olawoye, 2016). According to Grant (2001), the resources and capabilities of the firm form the foundation of the firm's long-term strategy because they provide the basic direction for a strategy and constitute the primary source of profits for the firm. The resource-based view suggested that valuable firm resources are usually scarce, imperfectly imitable, and lacking in direct substitutes (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). Thus, the trading and accumulation of resources becomes a strategic necessity.

In this study, learning clarified how knowledge resource can contribute to better employee performance. Thus, theoretical work on the resource-based view of the firm supports the notion that organisational learning may be an important source of employee performance.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the effect of organisational learning on employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. This design was appropriate for this study because it extensively described the effect and relationship between the study variables. The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted in order to obtain information from the focus population concerning the current status of the phenomena through primary data collection. The survey research technique enabled the researcher to describe the situations in details about the focus group as they exist.

The population that was used in this study included the academic and non-academic staff of private universities in southwest region, Nigeria. The southwest states were Ekiti State, Lagos State, Ogun State, Ondo State, Osun State and Oyo State. The universities included Babcock University, Covenant university, Bowen university, Ajayi Crowther university, Achievers university and Caleb university. These private universities were selected based on their year of establishment and they are the leading universities in the Southwest region, Nigeria. The southwest geo-political zone was selected because, the zone recorded the largest number of private universities in Nigeria (Faboyede, Faboyede & Fakile, 2017; Okebukola, 2006). The total population for this study was 3,886 staff.

Sample size and Sampling technique

The sample size for this study was determined by applying the Cochran (1997) formula. This is the standard method of randomization and it identified the limits of errors considered as the most essential items in the survey. This helped the researcher to obtain the sample and used the results to make sampling decisions based on the data.

The formula is:

$$n = \frac{Nz^2pq}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2pq} \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = Total number of selected private universities staff (N=3,886)
- Z = 95% Confidence Interval (Z = 1.96),
- p = 0.5
- q = 1 - p
- d = degree of accuracy or estimation (d = 0.04)

Therefore;

$$n = \frac{3,886 (1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)}{(0.04)^2 (3,886 - 1) + (1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)} = 520$$

In order to compensate for the non-response and for wrong filling of questionnaires, the sample of 520 was increased by 156, or 30% of the total sample which equal 676. This was as recommended by Zikmund (2000).

The sample size of 676 was distributed in proportions as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of selected university population}}{\text{Total number of all the selected universities population}} \times \text{Sample Size.}$$

Table 1: Study Population and Sample Size

Universities	No. of Academic Staff	No. of Non-Academic staff	Total Staff	Sample
Babcock University	511	633	1,144	199
Covenant University	520	588	1,108	193
Bowen University	259	454	713	124
Ajayi Crowther University	113	328	441	77
Achievers University	118	136	254	44
Caleb University	107	119	226	39
Total Population			3,886	676

Source: Human Resource Department of the Various Universities (2018)

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample from the working population of this study. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to choose the samples in stages until the required sample was arrived at using the most appropriate methods of estimation at each stage and applying the Cochran (1997) formula. The first stage involved stratified sampling technique in the selection of private universities in Southwest region, Nigeria. The second stage is the proportional distribution of the sample of the selected private universities. The proportional distribution was employed as a means of representing and identifying some characteristics of the study population (Asika, 2004).

The last stage involved the use of random sampling method in selecting the final respondents for each of the selected private universities in Southwest region, Nigeria. The respondents from the selected private universities in Southwest region, Nigeria consisted of both academics and non-academics staff. Random sampling method was adopted in

order to give potential respondents in the study equal chance of being selected and included in the sample population.

Method of Data Collection

The primary data source was used in this study. The primary data was collected through administering of questionnaire. It is a research instrument consisting of a set of specific questions and items that are designed and used by the researcher for the purpose of gathering information from the subjects or respondents (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The study adopted closed-ended questions with the quantitative section of the instrument utilizing an ordinal scale format. The questionnaire instrument was used to collect data on organisational learning (independent variable) measured by continuous learning, team learning, personal learning, system thinking, and employee mentoring and the dependent variable is employee performance measured with employee productivity, employee creativity, employee attitude, employee commitment and employee satisfaction with strategic leadership as the moderating variable. The researcher employed three research assistants and they were properly trained to assist in the distribution and collection of the research instruments.

Research Instrument

The instrument that was used for this study was close-ended and well-structured survey questionnaire. In this study, the questionnaire was adapted and divided into three sections. Section A dealt with demographic variables in which the respondents were asked to provide some basic background information of the respondents of selected private universities in Southwest region, Nigeria. Section B was on the multi-dimensional variables of organisational learning such as continuous learning, team learning, personal learning, system thinking, and employee mentoring which served as the independent variables. Section C was focused on employee performance measured with employee productivity, employee creativity, employee attitude, employee commitment and employee satisfaction with strategic leadership as the moderating variable respectively. Finally, section D dwelled on moderating variable; strategic leadership. For both dependent and independent variables, a six points modified Likert scale type was used to elicit responses from every question in the questionnaire and this covered; Very High (VH) - 6; High (H) - 5; Moderately High (MH) - 4; Moderately Low (ML) - 3; Low (L) - 2; Very Low (VL) - 1. This modified scale increased the reliability of the responses and also gained more effective result from the respondents.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire on 68 private universities staff (10% of the sample size) which were randomly selected from the sample across other private universities in North Central region of Nigeria that are not part of this study. In this study, North Central state like Kwara State was selected for pilot study because, the state is closer to Southwest region. The private universities selected for pilot study in Kwara State were Landmark University and Al-Hikmah University. The result of the pilot study indicated that the research instrument was reliable, since the Cronbach's alpha

of the scale for all the variables were greater than 0.70. In this study, the KMO test was greater than 5% and Bartlett test of Sphericity result was less than 5% indicating that statements that comprised the research instruments of each variable actually measured what were intended.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Variables	Number of Questions	Cronbach Alpha	KMO	Bartlett test of Sphericity	Average Variance Explained
Employee Productivity	6	0.712	0.712	0.001	0.801
Employee Creativity	6	0.722	0.762	0.000	0.793
Employee Attitude	6	0.710	0.713	0.002	0.783
Employee Commitment	6	0.843	0.720	0.000	0.762
Employee Satisfaction	6	0.881	0.742	0.000	0.832
Continuous Learning	6	0.795	0.849	0.002	0.810
Team Learning	6	0.921	0.754	0.000	0.864
Personal/ Individual Learning	6	0.812	0.762	0.001	0.721
System Thinking	6	0.762	0.851	0.000	0.801
Employee Mentoring	6	0.825	0.709	0.000	0.793
Moderator: Strategic Leadership	7	0.792	0.791	0.001	0.783

Source: Researcher's Computation (2019)

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was done using inferential analysis. Inferential analysis was the analysis of the responses on the quantitative data and the relationships. This was carried out using statistical tools of hierarchical regression method of analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences software version 22.0 to test the moderating effect of strategic leadership between organizational learning and employee performance.

The regression model for this study is thus;

$$Y = f(X)$$

$$Y = f(XZ)$$

Y = Dependent Variable

X = Independent Variable

Z = Moderating Variable

Y = Employee Performance (EPER)

X = Organisational Learning (OL)

Z = Strategic Leadership (SLP) = Moderating Variable

$Y = f(X, XZ)$

$EPER = \beta_0 + \beta_2 SLP + \beta_1 OL + \beta_{12} OL * SLP + \epsilon_i$

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

Restatement for Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

In order to test the hypothesis, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed. In the analysis organizational learning dimensions were transformed to form a composite index of organizational learning. Also, employee performance sub-variables were combined to form composite index of employee performance. Strategic leadership was standardized to remove multicollinearity problem from the analysis. Table 3 present the regression results.

Table 3: Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis on effect of Strategic Leadership on the relationship between Organizational Learning and Employee Performance

3a) Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.764 ^a	.584	.583	7.83959	.584	805.843	1	575	.000
2	.781 ^b	.611	.609	7.58684	.027	39.948	1	574	.000
3	.783 ^c	.613	.611	7.56633	.003	4.117	1	573	.043
a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Learning									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Learning, Strategic Leadership									
c. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Learning, Strategic Leadership, Organizational Learning*Strategic Leadership									

3b)		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	32.076	3.039		10.556	.000
	Organizational Learning	.749	.026	.764	28.387	.000
2	(Constant)	27.400	3.032		9.036	.000
	Organizational Learning	.677	.028	.691	24.241	.000
	Strategic Leadership	.566	.090	.180	6.320	.000
3	(Constant)	62.610	17.615		3.554	.000
	Organizational Learning	.365	.156	.373	2.338	.020
	Strategic Leadership	-.971	.763	-.309	-1.273	.204
	Organizational Learning*Strategic Leadership	.014	.007	.685	2.029	.043

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Researcher's Field Results (2019)

Table 3(b) outlines hierarchical multiple regression results of Strategic leadership has a significant moderating effect between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria. The results in Table 3, Model 1 shows that correlation coefficient $R = 0.764$, coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.584$ and $[F(1,575) = 805.843, p = 0.000]$. The value of R^2 indicates that 58.4% of the variance in the employee performance can be accounted by organizational learning. The Results of Model 2 in Table 3 revealed that $R = 0.781$, $R^2 = 0.611$ and $[F(1,574) = 39.948, p = 0.000]$. The value of R^2 indicates that 61.1% of the variance in the employee performance can be accounted by both strategic leadership and organizational learning. Model 3 in Table 3, shows the results when the interaction term (strategic leadership and employee performance) was added into the model. Table 3 illustrates that the inclusion of the interaction term resulted into an R^2 change of 0.003, $[F \text{ Change} = 4.117, p = 0.000]$ showing that the moderating role of strategic leadership is strong and statistically significant. From the results in Table 3, the moderating effect of strategic leadership produces 0.003% variance in the employee performance, above the variance by organizational learning and strategic leadership. This variance is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. This implies that strategic leadership has significant moderating effect on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance. The estimated regression model from the relationship is presented as follows:

$$OL = 32.076 + 0.365OL + (-0.971SL) + 0.014OL*SL \dots\dots\dots eq 2$$

Where: EP = Employee Performance; OL = Organizational Learning; OL*SL= interaction of Organizational Learning and Strategic Leadership.

The regression equation illustrated in Table 3.1 has established that taking all factors into account (organizational learning, strategic leadership, and interaction of organizational learning and Strategic leadership) all other factors held constant employee performance decreased by 32.076. The result also indicates that for a unit change in the organizational learning of selected private universities, employee performance is projected to have a variance of 0.365, given that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and interaction of organizational learning and strategic leadership are held constant. Moreover, the result also shows that a unit change in strategic leadership would result in 0.971, decreases in employee performance. The interpretation of the regression coefficient for the interaction term shows that there was increase of 0.014 between the slope of employee performance and organizational learning, among private universities in South West, Nigeria with high organizational learning and those with low organizational learning. All the variables were significant ($p > 0.05$), therefore there is a significant moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance in the model. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that strategic leadership has no significant moderating effect between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria was rejected.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to determine the moderating effect of strategic leadership between organizational learning and employee performance. The study revealed that strategic leadership has significant moderating effect between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria. Various studies, Aripin, Tower, Taylor, Tower and Taylor (2014), Laatikainen (2014), Mohamedbhai (2014), Ouma (2016), Namada (2017) showed that organizational learning have a significant impact on employee performance. They also revealed that strategic leadership determine organizational learning and employee performance. Furthermore, Aghaei, Ziaee and Shahrbanian (2012), Palladan, Abdulkadir and Chong (2016), Njoroge (2017), Nguyen *et al.* (2014), Noor (2013), Ogbonna and Harris (2015), and Yasar, Ahmed and Emhan (2014) revealed that leadership significantly moderate the link between organizational learning and employee performance. They further established that strategic leadership significantly affects the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance.

On the other hand, Akhtar *et al.* (2011) identified that organizational learning dimension such as continuous learning, team work, embedded systems, empowerment and leadership were insignificant in relation to the employee commitment. Ewans *et al.* (2017) established that organizational learning dimensions negatively affect employee performance. It has been shown that majority of past empirical findings revealed that organizational learning has positive and significantly affect employee performance, therefore this study rejected the null hypothesis (H_{0c}) that strategic leadership has no significant moderating effect between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria

Knowledge base theory supported our finding by ascribing that organizational learning is a continuous process through which organization responds to its environment by utilizing various skills, knowledge, enhance employee commitment and capacities aimed at achieving employee commitment and competitive advantage. Considering both theoretical and past empirical finding support, this study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that strategic leadership has no significant moderating effect between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in South west, Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the effect of organizational learning (continuous learning, personal learning, team learning, system thinking and employee mentoring) and employee performance (employee productivity, employee creativity, employee attitude, employee commitment and employee satisfaction) and moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance. From the data analyses, there is significant moderating effect of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria (Adj. $R^2 = 0.611$; R^2 change = 0.003; F change _(6,570) = 4.117; $p < 0.05$). The empirical findings of this study concluded that strategic leadership significantly moderate the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Finally, the outcome of this study is in line with the knowledge base view theory that organizational learning serves as the means for organizations to attained employee performance. Private universities should adopt strategic leadership in terms of management commitment, constructive criticism, effective communication, motivation and trust in management to achieve employee performance.

Limitation of the Study

The study experienced some shortcomings that limited the presentation, interpretation and generalization of the findings and as such served as the basis for suggestions for further studies. The major limitation of this study is the general perception of most respondents of not responding to questionnaire created a big challenge for both researcher and research assistant, as most of the university's management were very hostile, it was very difficult to get employees to fill the research instrument. The researcher and the research assistants had to make several calls and repeated visits to the companies before permission was finally granted. In survey research design, confidentiality is always an issue for respondents; most respondents tend to reject or not fill the questionnaire because they were not sure of the outcome of the research.

Suggestion for Further Studies

To overcome the limitations of the study the researcher suggests the need for further investigations. Further study should examine the effect of organizational learning dimensions on employee performance of selected public universities in South-West region, Nigeria. Future study could expand to cover other private universities in other

part of region in Nigeria in order to generalize findings. Future researchers could employ longitudinal survey research design to capture the dynamics of organizational learning components and employee performance dimensions.

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