

## STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH OF RESTAURANTS IN PORT HARCOURT

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### ABSTRACT

Growth seems to be the “need-not-be-written” aspiration of every organization. Small businesses aspire to get bigger, while large corporations aspire to get even larger and metamorphose into a conglomerate. Interestingly, growing a firm to a substantial size involves strategic activities. Consequently, this paper explores the relationship between strategy implementation and organizational growth in restaurants in Port Harcourt. The study made use of structure questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents. Using the Krejcie and Morgan’s Sample size determination table, a sample size of 203 was drawn from the 437 government registered restaurants operating in River State (See the latest edition of Rivers State Yellow Pages Directory). The simple random sampling technique and Boyle’s appropriation formular was employed in the distribution of copies of the questionnaire to respondents. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the relation between the study variables. The result of the analysis revealed a significant positive association between strategy implementation and organizational growth. Specifically, top management support was founded to be strongly linked with turnover/sales and moderately linked to employment. Effective leadership was found to be significantly associated with turnover/sales, but its relationship with employment was weak. It was concluded that small business owners should pay more attention to the level of support and the kind of leadership they provide for employees when they come up with new courses of action. The study recommends that owners and managers of restaurants should: make organizational training an ongoing process for their employees by providing timely refresher training and career progression; repeat key information about the business’ strategy, to help the implementers retain and recollect the most important aspects of the strategy; commit to developing their workforce through daily coaching and strike a balance between pushing workers to achieve set goals and actually fostering the development of skills required to achieve those goals; and lead by example, by making personal sacrifices in ensuring the actualization of set goals and objectives.

**Keywords:** Strategy Implementation, Top Management Support, Effective Leadership, Organizational Growth, Turnover/Sales, Employment

## Introduction

The concept of growth in organizations, especially small businesses, has enjoyed enormous and continuous research interest from scholars over the years (e.g. Coad, 2007; Davidsson *et al.*, 2010; Gilbert *et al.*, 2006). Perhaps this is because of the overall impact small businesses have on economic development and employment generation. Growth seems to be the “need-not-be-written” aspiration of every organization. Small businesses aspire to get bigger, while large corporations aspire to get even larger and metamorphose into a conglomerate (Amadi & Oparama, 2020). Organizational growth could be described as a change in size during a determined time span (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007). Organizational growth is the product of an internal process in the development of an enterprise and an increase in quality and/or expansion (Penrose, 2006). According to Hakkert and Kemp (2006), organizational growth is an increase in certain attributes such as sales, employment, profit of a firm between two points in time.

In line with the definition of Hakkert and Kemp (2006), several factors have been used to measure growth in organization, some of which include increase in turnover or sales, employment, profit, market shares, assets, etc. Interestingly, extant studies show that of the various measures of growth in organizations, increase in sales and employment are the most used (e.g. Davidsson *et al.*, 1991; Delmar, 1997; Zhou & de Witt, 2009). This is predicated on the fact that data on sales and employment growth are easy to obtain and they are a reflection of both short and long term variations in a firm (Delmar, 1997; Zhou & de Witt, 2009). This paper will also employ sales growth and employment growth as measures of organizational growth. Sales growth involves the increase in amount of revenue by a firm over a defined period (Omondia, 2017), while employment in this paper refers to growth or increase in staff strength or number of employees (Zhou & de Witt, 2009).

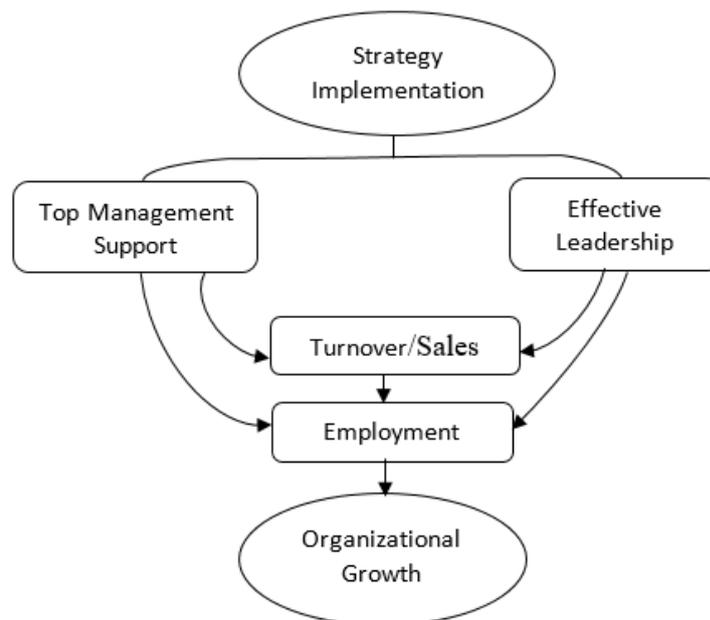
Several factors have been given as predictors of organizational growth by scholars. For instance, Amadi and Oparama (2020) argued that a relationship exist between manpower training and organizational growth. They reasoned that this relationship can either trigger employees, and firms to quality, quality management and customer care. Training is expected to be directly associated with performance. Firms that are strongly motivated to grow will also expect to cope with change, hence training the workforce to accommodate the growth to exceed their job requirements and stay committed to the organization or vice versa. According to Wright and Stigliani (2012), position in personal career may affect growth. In fact, highest growth expectations are linked to the start of career which may coincide with age as young people have great expectations in growth (Davis & Shaver, 2012; Navaretti, 2014). Other scholars have also argued that innovation and market structure determine growth. Daunfeldt and Elert, (2013) noted that there is a great probability that small innovating firms grow faster than big firms that shun innovations. According to Teruel-Carrizosa (2010) market structure has an influence on the firm’s growth capacity, especially service ones which are more heterogeneous and tend to grow less than industrial firms.

Interestingly, Hitt *et al.* (2001) revealed that growing a firm to a substantial size involves strategic activities. In other words, businesses must be able to engage in certain strategic routines and strategic decision making in order to identify new frontiers and resources combination that will drive growth. An important aspect of strategy management process is strategy implementation. Njagi and Kombo (2014) described strategy implementation as making strategic plans actionable and ensuring that the expected result is achieved. It is the translation of strategic goals into action in a bid to achieve them. Although several predictors of organizational growth have been put forward by scholars (see Amadi & Oparama, 2020; Davis & Shaver, 2012; Daunfeldt & Elert, 2013; Navaretti, 2014; Teruel-Carrizosa, 2010;

Wright & Stigliani, 2012), there appears to be little or no academic exploration on strategy implementation as a predictor of organizational growth, especially within the context of restaurants in developing climes like Nigeria and Port Harcourt in particular. Consequently, this study explores the association between strategy implementation and organizational growth of restaurants in Port Harcourt.

### Statement of the Problem

Ideally small businesses like restaurants should thrive, because every human being must eat in order to survive, grow and stay healthy. However, restaurant businesses are folding up really fast, with several known outlets being shut down. Several factors can be attributed to this, which include continuous changing taste and preferences of customers, especially with the recent heightened sensitivity and awareness about health sharpened by the COVID-19 pandemic scare. There is also the increase in new entrants into the industry occasioned by technological advancement and emerging popularity of home delivery services. Customers now prefer to order for food and food items online for it to be delivered to them in the comforts of their homes. This new challenge has largely affected the traditional restaurants and requires some form of strategic thinking to match the stiff competition from their increasingly successful virtual counterparts. However, while coming up with a strategy to outwit competitors seems easy, it is more challenging to effectively implement (Njagi & Kombo, 2014). It is on this premise that this study is seeks to ascertain the relationship between strategy implementation and organizational growth in restaurants in Port Harcourt.



**Figure 1:** A Conceptual Model of Strategy Implementation and Organizational Growth

**Source:** The dimensions of Strategy Implementation and measures of Organizational Growth were adapted from Shah (1996) and Delmar (1997), respectively.

### Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Top management support does not have any significant relationship with turnover/sales.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between top management support and employment

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Effective leadership has no significantly correlation with turnover/sales

**H<sub>04</sub>:** No significant relationship exist between effective leadership and employment

## **Literature Review**

### **Strategy Implementation**

To stay competitive organizations develop strategic plans, and to achieve these plans, they must be strategically executed. Making strategic plans actionable and obtaining results therefrom is referred to as strategic implementation (Njagi & Kombo, 2014). In other words, strategic implementation can be described as translating the strategic goals of an organization into action in order to achieve them. According to Vijay (2017), strategy implementation is the way in which an organization creates, leverages on, and integrates organizational structure, control systems, and culture to follow strategies that lead to competitive advantage and improved performance.

Emphases have been laid on the importance of strategy implementation because it is pivotal to strategic management success, albeit uneasy to make happen (Njagi & Kombo, 2014). In order to achieve strategic plans, two important aspects of strategy implementation have been identified in literature, which are operationalizing strategy and institutionalizing strategy (Njagi & Kombo, 2014; Simon & Ronoh, 2017; Vijay, 2017). In operationalizing strategy, managers and owners of businesses will ensure the effective mobilization and allocation of resources, structuring of authority and responsibility, the flow of task and information, and the establishment of policies, evaluation and control (Vijay, 2017). On the other hand, Thompson and Strickland (1993) had averred that people do not automatically change their innate behaviours because of the announcement of a novel strategy. In the same vein, Vijay (2017) pointed out that a well-designed and lucidly articulated strategy does not translate into general acceptance or effectiveness, thus top managers and leaders must be front liners in the promotion and defense of a new strategy. This can be achieved through institutionalizing strategy, which involves communicating the strategy to members, driving strategy acceptance through leadership, organizational culture, and rewards systems.

### **Top Management Support**

Extant literature reveals that researchers appreciate the key role to management support play in the attainment of organizational strategy objectives (Fang & Zhao, 2014; Young & Jordan, 2008; Yunus et al., 2013). Top management support could be described as the participation and commitment of top management in the execution/implementation of strategic plans. Top management refers to the top officials and executives in an organization such as the chief executive officers (CEOs), Chairmen, Business owners and managers, Managing Directors, Chief Operating Officers, Vice Presidents, Unit heads, etc. The success of strategic changes and management programmes is heavily reliant on the level of involvement, dedication and commitment of top management (Abebe, 2010; Billing et al., 2010; Young & Poon, 2013; To et al., 2015). Workers perception of top management support will largely determine their own level of involvement and commitment towards the implementation of set plans. The role of

top management is vital in the implementation of strategies or change programmes, because they are in position to provide the needed environment, resources and facilities necessary for the execution of set goals (King'OO, 2017).

### **Effective Leadership**

Leaders are able to influence others to take certain actions they ordinarily may not take. Leaders are effective when they can create a high level of commitment and motivation for employees, display some level of personal sacrifice, and inspire members into actively participating in the achievement of a vision or plan (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). Effective leaders are able to provide a clear vision or direction to their workers, and to also lead them to commit to their jobs and to collaborate as a group towards the attainment of organization strategies (Wasim & Imram, 2010). Leaders are effective because of their ability to be a role model for followers, make a difference, build efficient teams, inspire and support them, develop efficient policies and strategies and to be able to achieve organizational objectives (Virkus & Salman, 2020). Summarily, effective leaders' dispositions substantially impact on their followers.

### **Organizational Growth**

According to Penrose (2006), growth is the product of an internal process in the development of an enterprise and an increase in quality and/or expansion. Growth is a change in size during a determined time span (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007). According to Janssen (2009a), a company's growth is essentially the result of expansion of demands for products or services. It first results in a growth in sales and consequently in investments in additional production factors to adapt itself to new demands (Janssen, 2009b). However, Achtenhagen *et al.* (2010) researched entrepreneurs' ideas on growth and listed the following: increase in sales, increase in the number of employees, increase in profit, increase in assets, increase in the firm's value and internal development. Internal development comprises development of competences, organizational practices in efficiency and the establishment of professional sales process. This was the most important index for entrepreneurs that participated in the research. However, increase in the number of employees was not necessarily considered a sign of growth.

The growth phenomenon of small enterprises had been widely analyzed within entrepreneurship. One motive is that most fail to expand during their life span (Davidsson *et al.*, 2010; McKelvie & Wiklund, 2010) and small businesses refrain from growing (Doern, 2009). Notwithstanding, growth is an important phenomenon in small enterprises. In fact, their survival essentially depends on their power to participate in the market with other big companies. Growth decreases the possibility of closing small businesses (Machado, 2016; Rauch & Rijskik, 2013).

### **Turnover/Sales**

Sale growth involves the increase in amount of revenue by a firm over a defined period. This could be as a result of price increase, inflation adjustment and therefore not due to real sales growth, but if costs remain low then it contributes to the real growth of sales. Increase in the number of products sold also represents sales growth which could be as a result of geographical expansion, growth in new branches, or increase in the number of products and services (Omondia, 2017). Turnover/sales was employed in this study as a measure of organizational growth because most scholars are of the opinion that increase in sales is the most important growth measure in SMEs, since it is a more accurate and easily accessible

growth indicator than other accounting measures (Delmar, 1997; Omondia, 2017; Zhou & de Witt, 2009). Sales growth is measured as:

$$\frac{\text{Sales}_{t+1} - \text{Sales}_t}{\text{Sales}_t}$$

Where “Sales” indicates the nominal naira value of total annual sales generated for the financial year,  $t$ .

### **Employment**

No doubt, once there is increase in demand, more departments and outlets will spring up to handle the demands and these departments will require workers to run them. Employment as used in this study implies growth or increase in staff strength or number of employees. Therefore, as businesses grow in size and activities, the resultant effect is growth in employees. Furthermore, as firms increase their revenues, they can afford to hire more staff and may wish to do so, in order to expand their businesses. This is in line with Sherman’s (1997) observation that one of the various changes that come with growth/expansion and increase in revenue (which are all indicators of growth) is the need to hire new employees to handle new responsibilities. While some scholars have argued in favour of increase in the number of staff as a sign of growth (Ardishvili et al., 1998; Davidsson et al., 1991; Delmar, 1997; Wiklund, 1998; Zhou & de Witt, 2009); others have argued that employees in and of themselves, cost money (Chandler et al., 2009; Shepherd & Wiklund, 2009). At such, a better employee-based measure of growth is change in company or departmental revenue or profit generated per employee.

### **Methodology**

The study made use of structure questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents. Using the Krejcie and Morgan’s Sample size determination table, a sample size of 203 was drawn from the 437 government registered restaurants operating in River State (See the latest edition of Rivers State Yellow Pages Directory). The simple random sampling technique and Boyle’s appropriation formular was employed in the distribution of copies of the questionnaire to respondents. The dimensions (Top Management Support/Commitment and Effective Leadership) of strategy implementation were adapted from the work of Shah (1996), to suit the Nigerian context. Examples of the items used in measuring Top management Support/Commitment include: *“Willing to put great deal of effort,” “Allocating resources at appropriate time,” “Giving adequate support to implementation process,”* and *“Responding quickly to implementer’s suggestion.”* Effective leadership had items like, *“Communicating implementation guidelines,” “Managing crisis efficiently,” “Guiding subordinates continuously,” “Motivating subordinates for better performance,”* and *“Encouraging subordinates to take initiative and making them independent in thinking and action,”* The internal consistency of the items in relation to the study area was determined via a test re-test approach which yielded satisfactory composite alpha value of .86 (Nunnaly & Bernstein, 1994). Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the relation between the afore-stated hypotheses.

## Results and Discussion

### Bivariate Level Analyses: Test of Hypotheses

This section is concerned with testing stated hypotheses, using Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient statistical tool and the p-values obtained.

**Table 1:** Test of relationship between Top Management Support and Turnover/Sale, and Employment ( $H_{01}$  &  $H_{02}$ )

			Top Management Support	Turnover /Sale	Employment
Spearman's rho	Top Management Support	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.733**	.640**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.001
		N	203	203	
	Turnover/Sale	Correlation Coefficient	.733**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	203	203	203
	Employment	Correlation Coefficient	.640**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	
		N	203	203	203
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows the relationship between top management support/commitment and the measures of organizational growth (turnover/sales and employment). The analysis revealed a rho-value of .733 and .640, respectively. Test on hypothesis 1 showed a significant positive relationship, and test on hypothesis 2 revealed a moderate positive relationship.

**Decision:** The null hypotheses 1 and 2 are rejected, therefore:

- i. Top management support has a significant positive relationship with turnover/sales.
- ii. There is a moderate positive relationship between top management support and employment.

**Table 2:** Test of relationship between Effective Leadership and Turnover/Sale, and Employment (H<sub>03</sub> & H<sub>04</sub>)

			Effective Leadership	Turnover /Sale	Employment
Spearman's rho	Effective Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.843**	.321**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	203	203	
	Turnover/Sale	Correlation Coefficient	.843**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	203	203	203
	Employment	Correlation Coefficient	.321**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
		N	203	203	203
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows the relationship between effective leadership and the measures of organizational growth (turnover/sales and employment). The output showed a rho-value of .843 and .321, respectively. Test on hypothesis 3 showed a strong positive relationship between effective leadership and turnover/sales growth; while test on hypothesis 4 showed a weak relationship between effective leadership and employment growth.

**Decision:** The null hypotheses 3 and 4 are rejected, therefore:

- i. Effective leadership has a positive correlation with turnover/sales.
- ii. A relationship exists between effective leadership and employment, but it is weak.

### Discussion of Findings

The outcome from the analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the dimensions of strategy implementation and organizational growth. Specifically, the test of hypothesis one showed that top management support significantly correlates with increase in sales. This implies that workers tend to improve on their performance when top management gives them the support they need in pursuit of a strategy or vision. This corroborates with Fang and Zhao's (2014) study which revealed a positive association between the support of top management and the improvement in supply chain management in manufacturing firms in China. Similarly, Yunus *et al.* (2013) averred that a key element in the success of an organization's strategic plans and vision is support and commitment showed by top management. Therefore, this study further aligns with the scholarly position of the relationship between top management support and organizational growth, specifically increase in sales.

The test of hypothesis two indicated that there is a moderate positive relationship amid top management support/commitment and growth in staff strength. This is in tandem with one of Shah's (1996) observation that one of the ways top management support the implementation of strategy is by being open to bringing in more competent hands to help already existing employees drive the organization's vision. This willingness to bring in more competent hands

to ease the burden of work associated with increasing demand, and expansion in business activities, is perceived by workers as support. Broadly speaking, top management willingness to bring in more hands leads to increase in staff quality and strength. Hence this study empirically affirms the association between top management support and employment.

Furthermore, test of hypothesis three depict that effective leadership has a significant association with increase in sales. This synchronizes with the assertions that a leader's approach has an effect on employees' attitudes and behaviours, which ultimately impacts on the growth or failure of organizations (Ingram et al., 2005). In their works, Evans *et al.* (2007) and Rigopoulou *et al.* (2012) had opine that the behaviour of workers, which significantly determine the performance and growth of organizations, can be explained by certain controllable organizational factors like closeness of supervision, clarity of goals, and training and feedback, all of which fall within the purview of effective leadership. Hence, it is not out of place to aver that effective leadership influences turnover/sales growth. We therefore, align with this scholarly position.

Lastly, the outcome with respect to the test of hypothesis four revealed a weak link between effective leadership and growth in staff strength. While there may be no direct correlation between effective leadership and employment as used in this paper, one may argue that effective leadership could lead to other factors that would ultimately lead to increase in staff strength. For instance, Northouse (2009) stated that leaders who possess strong leadership have the strength to influence others to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Where such goals and objectives include expansion, the need for more employees will arise. Consequently, through effective leadership organization's expansion strategy could be achieved, which will result in growth in employment. This study proposes a further study on other moderating factors that could impact on the association between effective leadership and growth in employment in organizations.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Given the outcome of the study and the discussion of the outcome, the growth of organizations can be explained by how effectively strategies are implemented. More so, small business owners should pay more attention to the level of support and the kind of leadership they provide for employees when they come up with new courses of action. To this end, it is recommended that:

- i. Small company owners and administrators should make organizational training an ongoing process for their employees by providing timely refresher training and career progression.
- ii. Owners of small businesses should repeat key information about the business' strategy, to help the implementers retain and recollect the most important aspects of the strategy.
- iii. Owners of small businesses should commit to developing their workforce through daily coaching and strike a balance between pushing workers to achieve set goals and actually fostering the development of skills required to achieve those goals.
- iv. Small business owners should lead by example, by making personal sacrifices in ensuring the actualization of set goals and objectives. This will have a positive impact on the perception of the employees regarding the importance of a strategy.

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