

## **CORPORATE LEARNING AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examines corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in the Rivers State. The cross sectional survey design was used in the study. The targeted population comprised 227 employees drawn from different categories of hotels in Rivers State whose study sample was derived through census based on the focus of the study. Data was analyzed and results presented in tables showing the mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between corporate learning and employee development using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. The study concludes that Corporate Learning: Continuous Learning, Collaborative Learning, and Knowledge Sharing significantly influences employee development of the hospitality industry. It was therefore recommended that the hospitality industry should use the tested attributes of corporate learning in the study to drive the development of employees in the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Keywords:** Corporate Learning, Continuous Learning, Collaborative Learning, Knowledge Sharing Innovativeness, Proactivity

### **INTRODUCTION**

Proactive organizations anticipate and act on potential challenges and opportunities before they arise. This means having a clear vision of where you want to go and a plan. Proactive organizations are forward-thinking and constantly seeking to innovate and improve. As a result, they are often leaders in their industry, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. Some salient characteristics of proactive organizations include the willingness to innovate, take risk, a focus on long term and a culture of continuous improvement. Their goal is to continuously improve products, services, and processes, and they are always open to customer and employee feedback. What better way can the quest for continuous improvement be achieved if not through organizational learning and the development of employee skills? An organization's capability to learn has been linked to a fundamental source of competitive advantage (Albrecht, 2003), which is why Alrefaai & Khalil (2019), insisted that organisational learning helps to improve an organisations competitive advantage as well as responsiveness to change. According to Maier, Prange & Von Rosenstiel, (2003), interestingly, business executives and intellectuals have come to realize that knowledge assets and intellectual capital can best serve as a source of competitive advantage in comparison with the total dependence of traditional factors of production. This lends a support to the fact raised by Argyris (2009,). Over three decades ago, that the value of a firm's organizational learning capabilities and knowledge assets is frequently several times that of its material assets.

According to Alrefaai & Khalil (2019), the first to introduce the concept of organizational learning into the literature were Kurt and March. However, another study has it that (Espejo & Flores, 2021) were the first to introduce the topic of organizational learning with empirical analysis. Be that as it may, the quantum of debate on whether organizational learning should be conceptualized as a change in cognitions or behaviour has greatly reduced in recent times

Albrecht (2003), owing to the great acceptance in recent literature that learning involve both a change in cognition as well as change in behaviour. In other words, it is almost a universal postulation that learning involves both cognition and doing. Organisational learning is defined as a change in the organisation's knowledge base that occurs due to past experience (Espejo & Flores, 2021). Learning organisation has been described as an outcome or product of organisational learning, which is complex and multidimensional in approach. That is why Mohamed (2017) views organisational learning as a process going on in the learning organisation. According to Alrefaai & Khalil (2019), the creation of knowledge, the retention of knowledge, and the transfer of knowledge, which altogether can be classified as organisational learning, can be conceptualized as formal activities which are a function of experience. Organisation learning is hereby conceptualized as a multilevel process where members individually and collectively acquire knowledge by acting together and reflecting together (Albrecht, 2003). Weed-Schertzer (2020) mentioned that an organization learns by processing information with an objective to collect useful knowledge, and maintain the data.

### **Baseline Theory**

The baseline theory underlining this study is the organizational learning theory basically because the theory focuses on the creation of knowledge and the use of that knowledge within the organization. Key aspects of the organizational learning theory are that learning happens when co-workers interact while finding and solving problems. The theory stresses the importance of developing a learning culture within the organization. The theory urges organizations to develop a culture that prizes knowledge sharing. Take time to learn the lessons that failure can teach. Encourage employees at all levels to engage in lifelong learning and to allow individuals and teams to challenge the status quo of the organization.

### **Continuous Learning**

Given the importance of continuous learning for individuals and the organizations, the topic demands attention. Since the workplace environment is so dynamic and every employee has unique attributes, continuous learning involves a combination of several things, and means different things to different people. When factors facilitating continuous learning are identified, organizations can benefit by implementing those factors to optimize continuous learning. As organizations struggle to survive and prosper in the increasingly competitive environment, continuous learning is becoming an important component within an organization. The ability to learn and develop one's skills is becoming a core career competency. Individuals are increasingly responsible for their own career path that often requires varied skill sets and knowledge bases. This shift has radically changed the process of learning and the ability to continuously gain new skills and to improve on existing ones has become an essential recipe for career success (Maurer & Weiss, 2010). The workplace activities and job requirements can have a deep impact on an employee's professional development.

### **Collaborative Learning**

Despite the fact that the term of collaborative learning (CL) has been used in a wide variety of ways across different disciplines and fields, there is a lack of consensus upon definition of the term, according to (Jenni, & Mauriel, 2004). While there is no consensus on what CL is, there are some underlying features that will be identified. Collaboration has become a twenty-first-century trend. The need in society to think and work together on issues of critical concern has increased (Austin 2000) shifting the emphasis from individual efforts to group work, from independence to community (Leonard, & Leonard, 2001). Collaborative learning

is an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. In the CL environment, the learners are challenged both socially and emotionally as they listen to different perspectives, and are required to articulate and defend their ideas. In so doing, the learners begin to create their own unique conceptual frameworks and not rely solely on an expert's or a text's framework. In a CL setting, learners have the opportunity to converse with peers, present and defend ideas, exchange diverse beliefs, question other conceptual frameworks, and are actively engaged (Srinivas, 2011).

### **Knowledge Sharing**

To sustain their competitive advantage, organizations need to promote a culture that encourages knowledge sharing behaviors among colleagues. This culture requires support from top management as this would encourage knowledge-sharing behavior amongst employees. Acquiring knowledge, keeping knowledge, using knowledge, and sharing knowledge are essential accomplishments to be achieved by organizations that adopt an open environment and promote a positive learning system. Change is inevitable, every day we hear about a new technology or read about a new market which results in new challenges and fierce competition for organizations. To survive in this fast-changing environment, organizations need to increase their capacities of learning, improve their knowledge systems and be flexible to adapt to market changes and competition. Knowledge management is a process of capitalizing on the knowledge capital of organization. Therefore, it can lead to competitive advantage if organizations utilize their knowledge to improve the effectiveness of its core processes, increase the value of its business through improved knowledge of suppliers and customers, and ultimately differentiate the organization from its competitors.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This study adopted census survey method where all 227 employees drawn from different categories of hotels in Port Harcourt were surveyed. Thus, 227 employees were investigated. The study utilized the structured questionnaire as a means of generating primary data from the respondents of the study. Structured questionnaire was used to enable the researcher find out the attitude, knowledge and feelings of respondents on questions asked with respect to the study variables in order to enable the study derived very relevant responses. To ensure the internal reliability, the survey instrument was assessed by means of Cronbach alpha coefficient, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Hence, only the items that returned alpha values of 0.7 and above were considered. Cronbach's alpha was used for the coefficient of reliability (or consistency). To empirically evaluate the hypothesized relationships, the spearman's rank order of correlation coefficient (RHO) was adopted. The multivariate analysis which examines the moderating effects of technology and organizational culture on corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State was tested using the partial correlation techniques at 95% confidence interval. The results were presented with the help of SPSS version 23.0 software.

**Table 1: Reliability Results**

S/No	Dimensions/Measures of the study variable	Number of items	Number of cases	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Continuous Learning	5	185	0.937
2	Collaborative Learning	5	185	0.939
3	Knowledge Sharing	5	185	0.941
4.	Innovativeness	3	185	0.905
5.	Proactivity	3	185	0.778
6.	Technology	3	185	0.842
7.	Organizational Culture	3	185	0.856

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

### RESULT

The study proposed eight research hypotheses to seek explanations for any existing relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry as well as the moderating influence of innovativeness and proactivity in such relationship. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was calculated using the SPSS 23.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. Correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation while the value of +1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation. In testing hypotheses one to eight, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicated levels of significance (\* or \*\*) as calculated using SPSS were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient r value, we reject our alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study. Table 2 below shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for continuous learning and employee development. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to generalize our findings to the study population.

**Table 2: Correlations Matrix for Continuous learning and Innovativeness**

			Continuous Learning	Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Continuous Learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.862**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	185	185
	Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.862**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

The result in table 2 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.862 which indicates a positive and very strong relationship between continuous learning and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between continuous learning and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 2 is the statistical test of significance ( $p$  - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is  $(0.000) < (0.05)$  level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between continuous learning and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Correlations Matrix for Continuous learning for Proactivity**

			Continuous Learning	Proactivity
Spearman's rho	Continuous Learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.853**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	185	185
	Proactivity	Correlation Coefficient	.853**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

Table 3 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.853 which indicates a positive very strong relationship between continuous learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between continuous learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 3 is the statistical test of significance ( $p$  - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is  $(0.000) < (0.05)$  level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between continuous learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Correlations Matrix Collaborative learning and Innovativeness**

			Collaborative Learning	Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Collaborative Learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.846**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	185	185
	Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.846**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

Table 4 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.846 which indicates a positive and very high relationship between collaboration learning and innovativeness of the

hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between collaboration learning and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 4 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between collaboration learning and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Correlations Matrix for Collaborative learning and Proactivity**

			Collaborative Learning	Proactivity
Spearman's rho	Collaborative Learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.797**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	185	185
	Proactivity	Correlation Coefficient	.797**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

**Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023**

Table 5 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.797 which indicates a positive and strong relationship between collaborative learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between collaboration learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 5 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between collaboration learning and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 6: Correlations Matrix for Knowledge sharing and Innovativeness**

			Knowledge Sharing	Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Knowledge Sharing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.798**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	185	185
	Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.798**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

Table 5 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.798 which indicates a positive strong relationship between knowledge sharing and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a strong correlation between knowledge sharing and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 5 is the

statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and innovativeness of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 6: Correlations Matrix for Knowledge sharing and Proactivity**

			Knowledge Sharing	Proactivity
Spearman's rho	Knowledge Sharing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.787**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	Proactivity	N	185	185
		Correlation Coefficient	.787**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	185	185

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

**Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023**

Table 6 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.787 which indicates a positive strong relationship between knowledge sharing and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a strong correlation between knowledge sharing and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 6 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and proactivity of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

**Table 7: Correlations Matrix for Corporate Learning and Employee Development moderated by Technology**

Control Variables			Corporate Learning	Employee Development	Technology
-none- <sup>a</sup>	Corporate Learning	Correlation	1.000	.955	.486
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		Df	0	183	183
	Employee Development	Correlation	.955	1.000	.518
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		Df	183	0	183
	Technology	Correlation	.486	.518	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		Df	183	183	0
Technology	Corporate Learning	Correlation	1.000	.941	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		Df	0	182	
	Employee Development	Correlation	.941	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		Df	182	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

**Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023**

Table 7 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.955 which indicates a positive relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State and same shows Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.941 which indicates a positive effect of technology on the relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State moderated by technology. Similarly displayed in table 7 is the statistical test of significance ( $p$  - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is  $(0.000) < (0.05)$  level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that technology does significantly moderate the relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.



**Table 8: Correlations Matrix for Corporate Learning and Employee Development moderated by Organizational Culture**

Control Variables			Corporate Learning	Employee Development	Organizational Culture
-none <sup>a</sup>	Corporate Learning	Correlation	1.000	.955	.536
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		Df	0	183	183
	Employee Development	Correlation	.955	1.000	.544
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		Df	183	0	183
	Organizational Culture	Correlation	.536	.544	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		Df	183	183	0
Organizational Culture	Corporate Learning	Correlation	1.000	.937	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		Df	0	182	
	Employee Development	Correlation	.937	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		Df	182	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

Table 8 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.955 which indicates a positive relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State and same shows Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.937 which indicates a positive effect of organizational culture on the relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State moderated by organizational culture. Similarly displayed in table 8 is the statistical test of significance ( $p$  - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is  $(0.000) < (0.05)$  level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that organizational culture does significantly moderate the relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State.

## DISCUSSION

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Port Harcourt as well as the moderating role of innovativeness and proactivity. The major finding of this study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This reinforces previous studies carried out by Dowding (2002) whose results showed that learning is therefore part of life which takes place at all times and in all places. The results

from the tests of hypotheses revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between collaborative learning and measures of employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This finding agrees with the views of Golub (2008) indicated that the collaborative learning produces intellectual synergy of many minds coming to bear on a problem, and the social stimulation of mutual engagement in a common endeavour. This mutual exploration, meaning-making, and feedback often leads to better understanding on the part of students, and to the creation of new understandings for all of us. Johnson *et al* (2009) showed the use of collaborative learning because we believe it helps students learn more effectively, many of us also place a high premium on teaching strategies that go beyond mere mastery of content and ideas.

The results from the tests of hypotheses revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between knowledge sharing and the measures of employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. This finding agrees with the views of Bocks and Kim (2013) posits that process to accumulate shared knowledge among members. The emphasis lies in the kind of social interaction among people. Knowledge, unlike information and is locked in the human mind and part of human identity. Frappaolo (2006) claimed that knowledge sharing is about “*how people share and use what they know*”. In addition, Tasmin & Woods (2007) asserted that knowledge sharing as a social system that supports collaboration and integration which is normally facilitated by technology. Knowledge practitioners like Dalkir also supported the defined notion that knowledge sharing is to be associated with “appropriate mix” of technological channels for optimizing knowledge exchanges. Creating and exchanging knowledge are intangible activities that can neither be supervised nor imposed. They happen only when people cooperate voluntarily. This exchange of knowledge can lead to the creation of new knowledge, which can be an important source of competitive advantage. Recent researches have shown that sharing knowledge is often unnatural. People will not share their knowledge as they think their knowledge is valuable and important. While other scholars agreed that the knowledge sharing practice are motivated and executed mainly at the individual levels (Park & Im, 2003; Tasma & Woods, 2007; Frappaolo, 2006).

The results from the tests of hypotheses revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between corporate learning and employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State moderated by technology. This finding agrees with the views of Lyles (2013) affirmed that there are new ways of communicating, and the fact that information can increasingly be accessed from anywhere, have changed how broadcast organizations choose to communicate. Social media and instant messaging services, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, are gaining popularity. Snowden (2002) has showed that companies that fail to respond to these trends could soon find themselves at a disadvantage, both in terms of how they communicate with their clients, and in terms of how they are perceived by existing and potential audiences. This finding agrees with the views of Cummings and Worli (2009) who posited the organizational culture and the lessons learnt from other successful organizations is imperative for the growth of the organizations. In general, the culture of a society comprises the shared values, understandings, assumptions, and goals that are learned from earlier generations, imposed by present members of the society, and passed on to succeeding generations (Deresky, 2008). Organizational culture consists of norms, goals and values shared by people and groups in an organizational environment and that influence the way they interact with each other (Hill & Jones, 2009). In a broader perspective the societal culture is acquired knowledge which

people use to interpret experiences and generate social behavior. Organizational culture is the collection of norms and values shared by people and groups in an organization and that which controls the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization. These norms and values are embodied into organizational processes and day-to-day's practices (Dowding, 2002; Deresky, 2008; Hills & Jones, 2009).

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that corporate learning positively enhances employee development in the hospitality industry in Rivers State. It is evident that investing in corporate learning initiatives directly contributes to the growth and enhancement of employees' skills and competencies in this specific sector. Specifically, also and in line with the objectives of this study, the study concludes that continuous learning significantly influences employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Also, collaborative learning significantly influences employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Furthermore, knowledge sharing significantly influences employee development of the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Finally, Technology and organisational culture positively moderate the relationship between corporate learning and employee development in the hospitality industry in Rivers State. Based on the discussion and conclusion above, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. Organizations within the hospitality industry should actively promote and cultivate a culture of continuous learning among their employees.
- ii. Organizations within the hospitality industry should encourage and facilitate opportunities for employees to engage in peer-to-peer learning. Create formal or informal learning groups where employees can share their knowledge, experiences, and best practices with each other.
- iii. Organizations within the hospitality industry should create dedicated platforms, both online and offline, to facilitate knowledge sharing among employees.
- iv. Organizations within the hospitality industry should embrace modern learning technologies such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual reality training, e-learning platforms, and mobile learning apps.
- v. Organizations within the hospitality industry should develop an organizational culture that values and promotes continuous learning and development.

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