**REVITALIZING SMEs IMPACT OF High-Performance Work System ON Sustainable Organizations’ Performance- A Review**

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**Abstract**

Managing performance is quite easy, but sustaining that performance is the real challenge for organizations in the 21st century. This research main objective is to review the impact of high-performance work system on sustainable organizational success. Moreover, for global business organizations to succeed innovation must be involved. Therefore, the study reviews how innovative work behaviour mediated the study. This review will encourage managers to invest in workers so that employees can work successfully and display creative actions to achieve sustainable organisation. This study adds to the scientific management literature by exploring the phenomena of sustainable lens innovation and high-performance work. It is also good reading for small and medium-sized practitioners in the service industry.

**Keywords:** High Performance Work Systems; Innovative Work Behaviour; Sustainable Organizational Performance; Small and Medium Enterprises.

1. **Introduction**

In today’s globalized economy and dynamic environment, organizations are saddled with the responsibility of satisfying all stakeholders and as well as enhance all dimensions of their performance. Managing performance is quite easy, but the sustainability is the obvious challenge in the 21st century. Sustaining the higher performance is possible through continuous effective monitoring and measurement of a company’s performance. A famous saying of Fazzari Fazzari, Hubbard, and Petersen (1996); Kaplan and Norton (1992) that ‘What you measure is what you get’ or ‘What gets measured gets attention’ has been widely acknowledged by both practitioners and academia. Sustaining performance is a challenge for every organization, regardless of the industry in which it operates and the nature of its business. Therefore, organizations need to constantly keep an updated performance measurement system that constantly reflects the levels of performance output and identifies any gaps that interrupt the system. However, the service industry is more vulnerable and more competitive than other industries. More specifically, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are facing a greater challenge in sustaining performance because of the lack of management expertise or resources (Bititci, Garengo, Dörfler, & Nudurupati, 2012; Garengo, Biazzo, & Bititci, 2005; Garengo & Bititci, 2007).

According to the repositories of literature, Eniola (2018); Eniola and Olorunleke (2020) organizational performance is generally measured in two dimensions, the financial and non-financial performance. Kaplan and Norton (1992) as well as Siddiqui (2001) asserted that some managers in the industries are more financial centric by focusing mainly on financial measures on one hand while others on the other hand, is on non-financial measures, given the logic that financial results will follow automatically. In fact, it is not prudent to consider a single measure as a benchmark and expect that it will generate the desired outcomes in critical business areas. Therefore, it is an intense need that managers focus on balance scorecard that propagates to emphasise on both the financial and non-financial performance measures for optimal results. Hence, this study considers both financial and non-financial performance measurement of the organizations.

Financial performance can be measured through: cash flow, increased market share and Returns on Earnings (ROE), sales growth and operating income by division, percentage of sales from new products, share of key account purchases. While non-financial performance can be measured through ranking by key accounts, on-time delivery (defined by customers), a number of cooperative engineering efforts, manufacturing geometry vs. competition, new product introduction vs. competition, and percent of products that equals 80% sales. Non-financial measures deal with the internal process, improvement, innovation, customers satisfaction while the financial performance measures the report regarding actions which are already taken by the organization.

This research particularly focuses on sustainability of non-financial performance, that is, improving internal processes, continuous improvement in services and customers satisfaction, and innovation. Continuous improvement is considered to be one of the most crucial elements in services industries due to the fact that 21st century organizations are facing cut-through competition in a dynamic globalized environment, and their survival is directly proportionate on the organizational capability to become persistently innovative.

Furthermore, SMEs in Nigeria plays a very predominant role in boosting the economy as they contribute more than 48% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country out of which 7.3% earnings come from service-oriented SMEs (NBS/SMEDAN, 2017) Although, SMEs contribute a lot towards GDP of the country and the overall economy, the SMEs sector remains disregarded (Eniola, 2014, 2018, 2020a, 2020b). However, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) is making efforts to develop SMEs in the country (Eniola & Entebang, 2014; NBS/SMEDAN, 2017). Very limited research has been conducted to understand the real needs and requirements of SMEs, especially in terms of innovations and sustainable performance. Thus a wide gap exists in the service led SMEs of Nigeria, which this study attempts to address.

This study adopted desk review as the methodology because of its critical role in scholarship. Science remains, first and foremost, a cumulative endeavour whilst literature reviews are essential as highlighted by Paré & Kitsiou (2016) as identifying what has been written on a subject or topic; determining the extent to which a specific research area reveals any interpretable trends or patterns; aggregating empirical findings related to a narrow research question to support evidence-based practice; generating new frameworks and theories; and identifying topics or questions requiring more investigations. This study thus attempts to review how organizations achieve sustainable performance through either individual led innovation or the innovative work behaviour that is being triggered by High performance work systems (HPWS) implemented in the organizations.

1. **Conceptual Review**
   1. **Sustainable Organizational Performance**

Performance of a firm plays decisive role in business success. There are many factors which affect organizational performance and it can be predicted in different ways, such as market share, sales volume, profits and many internal factors, including improvements in organization systems (Augustie & Saad, 2019; Frega, Ferraresi, Quandt, & da Veiga, 2018; Teece, 2007). There are different approaches for measuring organizational performance. Innovation at the organizational level, including innovation in terms of new product/ service development, administrative and marketing, process of knowledge development, developing creative capabilities and enhancing origination performance through innovation by differentiation is a few that organizations undertake (Ferrier & Lyon, 2004; Siddique, Procter, & Gittell Jody, 2019). Basically, organizations need to adapt to changes through innovation management to meet the changing needs of the market and the environment (Baker & Sinkula, 2002; Balkin, Markman, & Gomez-Mejia, 2000; Ferrier & Lyon, 2004; Wolfe, 1994).

Organizational performance can then be described in three scenarios: First, shareholders enjoy a higher share of profits while employees are treated as burdens and liabilities, consequently, the firm loses a good reputation in terms of employee relations, thereby going through serious legal and environmental concerns. Second, the firm is very famous among community and has won the best employer award three times in the past ten years but financial performance is precarious. Third, the firm slogan is “being green” but in reality, it is bearing a heavy financial cost due to green advertising campaigns and increase manufacturing costs. These are different scenarios which craft clear picture of multi-faceted existence of organizational performance. It becomes even more complex if relying upon the expectations of stakeholders.

* 1. **High Performance Work System and Sustainable Organizational Performance**

A large body of research as well as the meta-analysis of this literature (such as Bamber, Hoffer Gittell, Kochan, & von Nordenflycht, 2009; Gittell, Seidner, & Wimbush, 2010; Hoffer Gittell, 2016; Siddique et al., 2019), however, argued that certain human resource (HR) practices which enhance performance of the organizations are referred to as high-performance work systems (HPWS). The phenomenon of HPWS propagated the adoption of a group of key human resource (HR) practices that enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA’s) of employees’, can facilitate organizations high performance achievement and create value for the organization (Siddique et al., 2019; Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007).

HPWS has its roots in management history as organizations have always been striving for improving performance through effective management of people and resources. It has its roots throughout in scientific management, industrial democracy, human relations movement, the evolution of management and job enrichment (Nonaka, 1998; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The concept has been used in Japanese Lean Production systems in 1970’s in the production industries. Recently the concept has been seen in offshoring to China and India for low cost production. Work related to HPWS can contribute to the existing HRM literature in two ways: first by addressing the diversity existing at workplace and secondly by developing understanding about what strategies are suitable for a particular business, called the “best practices or “High Performance Practices”.

Human Resources Management HRM has been considered as an important function and it has been found that it affects the organization in terms of different outcomes, out of which organizations’ performance is an important component. In recent years HRM outcomes have been wrapped up around HPWS. Finlay, Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg (2001); Walsh et al. (2004), wrote in their book titled “*Manufacturing advantage*” that the terms High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) had not only been used in academia only, but, has also been widely practiced in the industrial context. The term has become widespread not only in industry but has also been widely practiced by the ministries of different governments, trade unions and professional associations in developed countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, high performance working has been used in official reporting (see UK Commission for Employment and Skills 2010). The term high performance workplace programs” has been used in Australia by Queensland government to help manufacturers lift their performance (Queensland Government, 2010). In New Zealand, it has also been used as high-performance working partners (Tran & Tookey, 2011).

The performance of the SMEs, especially service-oriented SMEs can be enhanced, if they focus on motivating their employees to be more innovative by implementing HPWS in organizations. HPWS will lead SMEs towards sustainable performance in presence of innovative work behaviour that comes through employees’ active engagement in their work. In today’s globalized economy, the industry is highly dependent on the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA’s), and commitment of employees. Therefore, an investment on employees should not be treated as an expense; since, they are the source of firm’s competitiveness. Hence, the efficiency and effectiveness of systems can be gained through well competent workforce acquired by an organization.

The review of the literature made it clear that HPWS has a relationship with firm performance and also an impact on the innovative work behaviour of employees. Stakeholder theory explains the whole model in the light of resource-based view (RBV) (Gamage, 2020) . HPWS aims at creating a holistic culture of employees’ commitment, employees’ engagement, excellence and a commitment to continuous improvement. According to Gamage (2020) and Timiyo (2014), researchers have explored HPWS and summarized it into different practices so as to gain competitive advantage, survive in the market and sustain performance. However, Pfeffer (1998) reduced sixteen HPWS into seven. First, organizations that ensure a sense of security among their employees and build trust between them, are more committed towards success. Second, organizations that focus on selective hiring and hire employees based on specific skills and aptitude requirements suitable for a particular kind of job are better off than others hiring people based only on academic qualifications. This in turn improves long term employees’ orientation and turns these companies into great rather than just being good. Third, decentralized decision making creates a sense of empowerment among employees and results in increased customers’ and employees’ satisfaction leading to higher firm performance.

Fourth, compensation system in which employees at all levels are rewarded results in satisfaction and better performance. Fifth, training employees on problem solving, quality initiatives and linking these training programs with organizational vision, goals and strategies lead to better performance. Sixth, encouraging the culture of high trust would lead organizations towards success by nurturing people in spite of controlling them. Employees are valued at all levels of organization policies, practices and rewards system which provokes dignity and respect among them. Seventh: if employees have all kinds of necessary information available at all levels of the organization, this will strengthen their trust and create a sense of ownership among them. Organizations need to assimilate all these seven practices and develop an integrated employees focused structure in order to sustain performance.

This research focuses on seven key human resource practices that help to achieve higher organizational performance – selective staffing, comparatively high compensation, flexible job assignments, teamwork, performance appraisal, training and development, and clear communication (Huselid, 1995). These practices are considered to engage employees in innovative work behaviour by enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s) and motivate them to ultimately contribute to the competitiveness and sustainable performance of the organization.

* 1. **High Performance Work System, Innovative Work Behaviour and Sustainable Organizational Performance**

Innovative work behaviour is all about generating, presenting and applying new ways of doing things at work for performing work roles with intentions towards improvements in terms of individual and organizational performance (Dediu, Leka, & Jain, 2018). Innovation work behaviour is carried out in sequential steps. An individual generates a new idea or solution for work related issues and if the idea is novel he/she needs support for the acceptance of the idea, idea promotion and implementation of the idea (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Van der Vegt & Janssen, 2003).

An innovative work behaviour usually revolves around work related issues and problems, fulfilling needs of individuals (de Jong & den Hartog, 2010), knowledge sharing, finding solutions of existing problems and new ways of dealing with the problems (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). In today’s competitive business environment, organizations encourage work related innovativeness which is a key to survive in the competitive climate. Many researchers have explored the impact of leadership, groupings and organization climate in determining innovative employees’ behaviour and it was confirmed that supportive and empowering leadership, smooth communication and organization climate are positively linked with innovative employees’ behaviour (Bakhshi, McVittie, & Simmie, 2008; Gamage, 2020; Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Yidong and Xinxin (2012) proposed their multilevel model and found the influence of ethical leadership on employees’ innovative behaviour via intrinsic motivation as a mediator at both group and organizational levels. Innovative work behaviour is associated with individual and group ethical leadership, while intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship. According to the Innovation theory; innovation is not only restricted to the generation of ideas, but it also embedded its worth and implementation. To get desirable results from innovative behaviour, it is necessary to accept and implement the new ideas, and organizations need to provide all the necessary support and resources to get maximum benefits from innovation. Innovation is considered as an important element in attaining and maintaining competitive advantage, which leads towards sustainable organizational performance.

The performance of an organization is influenced by innovation (Damanpour & Evan, 1984; Damanpour, Szabat, & Evan, 1989). The concept of innovation is not limited to finding new ways of creating products and providing services by companies, it also includes new and diverse ways of managing people (Shin, Kim, & Yang, 2018; Siddique et al., 2019; Sindakis & Kitsios, 2014; Tajeddini, Trueman, & Larsen, 2006). Innovation is at the pinnacle for attaining competitive advantage, managing the environmental change and implementing the change management process (Wang & Chung, 2013). The role of innovation also depends on the type of business, that is, innovation is more important for high-tech firms as compared to low-tech firms (Laforet, 2009). Innovation has a significant positive relationship with market orientation in both small and medium size enterprises (Alhakimi & Mahmoud, 2020; Kirner, Kinkel, & Jaeger, 2009). Whilst a number of studies confirm that innovation has positive effects on new product development (Farrelly & Quester, 2003; Handiwibowo, Nasution, Arumsari, & Astuti, 2020; Yu, Duan, & Fan, 2020).

Innovation is very important for organizational performance if it is carried out with an appropriate plan of action. It also depends on the firm’s orientation (Dibrell, Craig, & Hansen, 2011; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Prifti & Alimehmeti, 2017). Innovative and creative organizations have access to a larger pool of opportunities as compared to those that are not highly innovative (Adeyeye,Udogwu, Bello, & Araga (2019). Many researchers have precedent that there is a significant relationship between innovation and performance along with a perceived level of associated risks (Frega et al., 2018; Pisano & Teece, 2007; Zehir, 2019). Organizations need to develop their innovation strategy within the general business strategy to attain a stable base for attaining an ultimate level of performance (Rosenbusch, Brinckmann, & Bausch, 2011).

Many researchers have also linked innovation with organizational performance and concluded that there exists a positive relationship between them (Afriyie, Du, & Ibn Musah, 2019; Damanpour & Evan, 1984; Damanpour et al., 1989; Kitsios & Grigoroudis, 2020; Prifti & Alimehmeti, 2017). Despite the fact that the research of Prifti and Alimehmeti (2017) found a positive relationship between innovation and performance. The researchers affirm that innovation is not a strong determinant of organisational performance. However, most of the researchers were of the view that innovation is related to the development of new products. Organizational performance is difficult to measure, particularly when it is fluctuating at a rapid pace. The scope of measurement of sustainability has been widened by different concepts of sustainability, but there is a lack of consensus via specified reporting standard. It is necessary to simplify and conceptualize sustainability in order to measure it.

The relationship between innovation and performance is stronger in large organizations due to availability of more resources and investment. Innovation has been studied in production firms and very few studies are available that deals with services sector. A number of studies are conducted on organizational performance; yet few researchers have investigated the relationship between innovative behaviour and high-performance work practices in the context of sustainable organisation performance. It is very useful for researchers and practitioners to measure the impact innovation management in relation to organizational performance.

1. **Methodology**

This examination embraces a scoping survey technique for the desk review. According to Paré and Kitsiou (2016), review takes two major forms. Firstly, it gives a hypothetical establishment to the proposed study, prove the presence of the exploration issue, legitimize the examination as one that contributes something new to the cumulated information, or approve the techniques and ways to deal with the proposed study. Secondly, which is the focal point of this article, establishes a unique and significant work of exploration all by itself instead of giving a base to a scientist's work. This makes a strong beginning stage for all members of the community to be interested in a particular area or topic.

1. **Conclusion**

The major contribution of this research towards management and entrepreneurship literature and practices, by reviewing the issues of sustainable performance has service-oriented SMEs operate in Nigeria. SMEs are largely contributing towards Gross Domestic Product of the country and the overall economy. This research will help many SMEs at global level, as well as attract greater networking opportunities because people have a keen interest in SMEs research especially the service sector in developing countries. This review can be generalized among all the countries especially developing economies that share the same characteristics.

Researchers are yet to comprehensively explore sustainable organizational performance through innovative work behaviour, especially when organizations bring that innovative work behaviour out of employees by engaging them towards their work or by giving them a sense of wellbeing by implementing High performance works systems in the organizations. The current review study has taken the innovative work behaviour as mediator between high performance work system and sustainable organisation performance because employees will never show positive and innovative behaviour until they feel that organization is doing something for their well-being. But once they are convinced that the organization cares for their well-being, innovative work behaviour will start to set into the daily routines and will eventually lead the organizations towards sustainable organizational performance.

Evidence from research has precedent that HPWS are useful investment of time and resources. Managing Human Resources in way to value them and consider them as owners motivates them, adds value and leads the organization towards better performance. There are seven most common and famous practices that are key components of HPWS which help in evolving the sense of partnership among employees. HPWS influences the relationship between management practices and performance directly. However, recent studies are focused on diverse outcomes and investigate the mechanisms through which HPWS affects organizational performance.

The limitation of this work is that it dwell more on conceptualization. While, future study should embrace empirical study to be able to compare results and expand scope quantitatively.

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