

# ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND RESILIENCE: A CASE OF FAMILY BUSINESSES IN RIVERS STATE

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## **Abstract**

*This study ascertained the relationship between organizational learning and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State. A sample size of one hundred and eleven (111) was determined using the Taro Yamene from a population size of one hundred and fifty-four (154). Out of the one hundred and eleven (111) questionnaires that were distributed, eighty-one (81) were retrieved and used for the study. The Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (Rho) was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of an SPSS statistical package. Findings from the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between organizational learning and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State. Based on the findings generated from this study, the following recommendations were made: (i) owners and managers should create a forum or training section where knowledge of the business can be shared amongst other entrepreneurs. This will help them build their knowledge on the business and further help them stand firm in unpredictable circumstances; (ii) it is important for family businesses to employ techniques that will help members to determine their core values, core purposes and envision the desired future of the business.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Learning, Knowledge Sharing, Shared Vision, Resilience of Family Owned Businesses

## **Introduction**

Looking at today's world there are increasing economic, social and environmental challenges, turbulences and uncertainties which cause disturbances and discontinuities in businesses (Bhamra, 2011). Organizations struggle and continuously adapt in order to flourish despite these disturbances, be they man-made or natural (Stephenson, Seville, Vargo, & Roger, 2010). Also, Alastir (2010) in Umoh, Amah and Wokocha (2014) asserts that the aim of building resilience is to remove or reduce the exposure of organizations to threats and hazards by developing protective measures which aim to reduce the likelihood and consequences of a disruptive event, by preventing when possible, responding effectively and efficiently when an event occurs, and by recovering as quickly and completely as possible.

Family owned businesses play important role in the economy of any nation. Their significance for societies is widely recognized and this aspect of business have attracted a lot of research attention in recent years. Various studies have raised questions on family business responses to disturbing environmental occurrences and this have brought about the concept of resilience or organizational resilience in family business as it is mostly regarded as the answer to unforeseen critical situations (Somers, 2009).

The term resilience does not have a single universally accepted definition and the complexity of defining the construct resilience is broadly recognized (Fatoki, 2018). Sutcliffe and

Vogus (2003) note that the concept of resilience, whether used in the context of individuals or organizations, is generally founded on the notion of performing well, combined with the idea of difficult circumstances threatening to jeopardize such performance. Madni (2007) views resilience as the ability to anticipate a perturbation, to resist by adapting and to recover by restoring the pre-perturbation state as much as possible. Further viewed as the capacity of an organization to foresee, plan for, react and adjust to incremental change and sudden interruptions keeping in mind the end goal which is to survive and thrive (BSI Group, 2017).

Various researchers have examined resilience of family owned businesses (e.g.: Ingram & Głód, (2018); Fatoki, (2018); Chrisman, Chua and Steier, (2011); Amanna and Jaussaud, (2011); Essen, Strike, Carney and Sapp, (2015); Richard, Robert, Deneise, Anja and Sarah (2014). Therefore, in spite of the various study that have been examined, there have been a lack of empirical study in the area of examining organizational learning as a framework to overcome breakdown most especially in family owned business in Rivers state, hence creating a gap in literature which this study intends to fill. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study intends to examine the relationship between organizational learning and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Cho, Okuboyejo and Dickson, (2017), family businesses, most of which fall within the small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), are at the center of growth in most developing countries. They are seen as the engines of employment, alleviating poverty and improving equality (Okpukpara, 2009; Ayyagari, Demircuc, & Maksimovic, 2011).

Likewise Ingram & Głód, (2018) posit that families control 95% of the businesses in Asia, the Middle East, Italy, and Spain. In France and Germany, over 80% of the companies are family owned businesses. In the United States, with its strong public stock markets, families control 60–70% of the country's commercial organizations (Kets de Vries et al., 2007). 36% of companies in Poland have been declared as family businesses, which are able to produce 18% of GDP (Instytut Biznesu Rodzinnego, 2016). For comparison, in the United States and Canada, family businesses

account for 80% to 90% of companies, and in the European nation, about 75%. This in essence means that there is a strong global economy, new technologies, increasing market opportunities and the participation of a new generation of family members which have come together to encourage an increased vitality of family businesses (Ingram & Głód, 2018).

Family-owned and managed businesses have not been an exemption to the issues that plague the existence of family enterprises around the world, given that they face a considerable number of challenges ranging from their initiation to management and high level of competition, consequently their lifespan and most a times unpredictable occurrence. And most times such businesses close down irrespective of their resilient nature and quick responses to these events (Cho, Okuboyejo & Dickson, 2017; Ingram & Głód, 2018). Studies have shown that a more resilient organization have the ability to achieve organizational goals and organizational commitment. But what happens in situations where the organization and the employees are not able to cope with these failures and setbacks, hence they are likely to underperform and bring about lack of commitment (Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Meneghel, Martinez, & Salanova, 2016; Coutu, 2002).

Therefore, it is in the interest of organizations to identify organizational factors and mechanisms like organizational learning which can help employees and organizations to build resilience. It is therefore based on these highlighted problem that this study intends to examine the extent to which organizational learning enhance resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state. Specifically, the objectives are:

- (i) Determine the relationship between knowledge sharing and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state.
- (ii) Evaluate the relationship between shared vision and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between shared vision and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Organizational Learning***

Richard Cyert and James were the first persons in 1963 to introduce learning as part of an organizational phenomenon. This was made possible by putting two words (Asghar, Danaee & Yakhkeshi, 2015). Learning they say is characterized as how (organizational members engaging in a process designed to transfer and/or improve existing skills and routine) and why (organizational members inquiring into causality using diagnostic skills (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1996 in Arumugam, Idris & Munusamy, 2015).

From an organizational learning perspective, an organization is considered an entity, where its actions can be observed and modified to improve its performance by creating new knowledge (Phang, Kankanhalli, & Ang, 2008). Organizational learning is important for the long-term performance and survival of organizations. Failing to learn may lead to poor processes within the organization, which lead to poor implementation and sharing of new knowledge (Yukl, 2008).

According to Hayes (2002) organizational learning is viewed as a vital component for effective organizations and it is related to the whole organization; from top management to each level of organization. Hence, organizational learning is a medium to enhance organization's productivity and performance. More organizations are now adopting strategies such as developing learning organization in order to improve performance (Shamsul & Ahmad, 2013).

Muafi, and Uyun (2018) stated that organizational learning is an interesting study to investigate because it can improve organizational performance and competitive advantage in facing the global market. Information and knowledge possessed by individuals will be better and more useful when individuals in organizations interact and exchange ideas so that they can work in synergy (Islam, Khan & Bukhari, 2016). Also, as a source of the competitive advantage and a key to future organizational success, it has been subject of some studies (Chiva, Alegre & Lapiedra, 2007; Hult & Ferrell, 1997; Jerez-Gomez et al., 2005).

### ***Knowledge Sharing***

Many argue that knowledge is a lasting resource of competitive advantage for organizations and research in the field of knowledge management

(KM) is important because it helps organizations to think through how they can compete effectively in a knowledge-based economy (Stewart, 2002; Cooper, 2006). Sri and Suparjo (2015) in their study examined various definitions to knowledge where Bragdon (2006) defined sharing of knowledge as a process of self-development and organization into a better direction in order to achieve sustainability objectives and finally together with other organizations can provide benefits for the lives of all mankind. Also, Hoff and Ridder (2004) view knowledge sharing as a process of individuals exchanging their knowledge (both tacit and explicit knowledge), and finally they are able to create new knowledge. At the heart of knowledge sharing lie two types of individuals: knowledge seekers—those who are looking for knowledge, and knowledgesources—those who either have the knowledge the seeker needs or who can point the seeker to another knowledge source. Effective knowledge sharing occurs when appropriate connections are built between these parties (Albena & Elissaveta, 2007).

Matzler, Renzl, Julia, and Mooradian (2008) described that sharing knowledge is very important for organizations to be able to develop the skills and competencies, increase the value to the organization, and to maintain competitiveness, because innovation is obtained from the knowledge shared between the people in the organization.

### ***Shared Vision***

Celik, Emre and Akgemci, (2016) posit that Shared vision can be viewed simply as the answer to the question "What do we want to create?" Just as personal visions are the pictures and representations people carry in their minds, shared vision is likewise the representations employees carry in their minds. These images create a feeling of commonality (Senge, 1990).

Shared vision is a process that is formed and shaped by the team members. Shared vision is regarded to be the most important mission of the twentieth century leaders. Pearce and Ensley (2004) define shared vision as "a common mental model of the future state of the team or its tasks that provides the basis for action within a team" Another definition suggests that shared vision is the ideas, language, culture and norms that is common among the group members and organizational units and governs the actions,

decisions and behaviors of the members (Colakoglu, 2012 in Celik, Emre & Akgemci, 2016).

Preston and Karahanna (2009) mention six mechanisms that are essential to create shared vision. Those are shared business language, visioning network hierarchy, educational leadership, commonalities, strategic knowledge and relational capital.

### ***Resilience of Family Owned Business***

It is a known fact that organizations operate in dynamic, highly competitive, and unforeseen as well as an unstable environment. This environment is created and shaped by institutions, markets, trends and sometimes by natural disasters (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). One of the concepts created recently, that focuses on organizational features and processes allowing quick response to disasters, is organizational resilience, (Ingram & Głód 2018).

According to Quendler, (2015) the concept of 'resilience' as a formal paradigm of organizations is still relatively young, but continues to gain momentum in academia. Traditionally, resilience refers to the ability of an organization to carry out its functions and return to a stable state after major disturbance or stress by considering the before and during (Cumming et al. 2005; Gunderson 2000; Hearnshaw, 2013). In other words, resilience is about ensuring that an organization is still able to achieve its core objectives in the face of adversity, before and after. McManus et al, (2008) asserts that the numerous concepts that emerge from definitions of organizational resilience include knowledge of the environment, level of preparation, anticipation of perturbations, adaptation, capacity to recover, etc. The ability of organizations to absorb shock or develop resistance in the face of turbulences within its environment is a reflection of how prepared the organization can be.

Salisu and Hashim, (2017) posit that a resilient organization should be able to absorb disturbances or stresses through resistance or adaptation; maintain its basic services during a disturbance and; 'bounce back' after such a disturbance. Resilience is not only about building back better, but also about transformation thereby requiring both innovation and creativity (Maguire, Cartwright 2008).

Kachaner et al. (2012), clearly argue that family businesses, in most cases, are strongly focused on creating resilience capabilities and long-term performance. They direct their attention to controlling expenses by not spending more than they earn, they frequently carry limited debt, acquire fewer and smaller companies, diversify their activity to the higher extent than larger companies, are very ambitious in regard to internationalization, and focus on retaining best employees (talents) more frequently than large organizations (Ingram, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Social Learning Theory***

The Behaviourist Albert Bandura's propounded the social learning theory of 1977 and this theory has become the most influential theory of learning and development. According to Bandura (1977) social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Crossan, Lane and White (1999) posit that there are three levels of learning, namely individual, group and organizational learning. In a broad vision Huff (1990) suggests that individuals develop cognitive maps from their context while at the same time these maps affect what part of the context is selected and interpreted. This conception is compatible with the concepts of social cognitive theory previously called theory of social learning and later changed to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1982, 1986), which proposes a more comprehensive explanation of individual learning.

Bandura posits that "learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learning observationally through modeling; from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. Basically there are three social learning concepts which are at the heart of social learning theory. First is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next is the idea that internal mental states are an essential part of this process. Finally, this theory recognizes that just because something has been learned, does not mean that it will result in a change in behavior.

### **Empirical Review**

Asghar, Danaee and Yakhkeshi, (2015) examined organizational learning and organizational resilience knowledge management as a mediator in public organizations of Iran. The study adopted a cross-sectional design to collect data used to carry out mediation analysis. Twenty-eight public organizations in Iran were selected as the samples of this study. The SPSS V20.0 was used to test the data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. For the inferential statistics, the correlation coefficient, multiple regression coefficient and MedGraph technique of josa (version 3) were used to test the relationship. The result from the analysis revealed that there are positive relationships among organizational learning and organizational resilience. The results also indicate that organizational learning is significantly related to organizational resilience. Furthermore, that there are positive relationships among knowledge management and organizational resilience, also organizational learning and knowledge management, learning and knowledge management would significantly impact on organizational resilience.

Asghar, Hasan and Fard (2015) in more study examined the relationship between knowledge management and organizational resilience in Iranian Public Organizations. The statistical population of this study is 28 Public organization of Iran. The sample for the Study determined 270 Middle and senior Managers that selected by simple random sampling. Data analysis was performed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics. Using descriptive statistics, demographic characteristics were examined. Pearson correlation coefficient used for answers to research hypothesis. The study was performed using the statistical software SPSS20. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between knowledge management and organizational resilience. Specifically, knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization, were revealed to have a positive and significant influence on organizational resilience. Hence, concluded that knowledge management specifically knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization, enhances organizational resilience in Iranian public organizations.

Jaja and Amah, (2014) analyzed the relationship between mentoring and organizational resilience:

A study of manufacturing companies in Rivers state. A total of 140 employees were randomly drawn from employees of the 31 manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. While only a total of 93 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed. Spearman's Rank Correlation Statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that Mentoring is significantly related to Organizational Resilience. Based on these findings we concluded that Mentoring has significant influence on Organizational Resilience.

Mafabi (2012) analyzed the relationship between knowledge management and organizational resilience: Organizational innovation as a mediator in Uganda parastatals. The purpose of the study was to report the findings of the mediating effect of innovation in the relationship between knowledge management and organizational resilience. The study adopts a cross-sectional design to collect data used to carry out mediation analysis. Findings from the study revealed that Innovation had an effect on organizational resilience. Knowledge management did not have a direct effect on organizational resilience, except through the full mediation of innovation. This suggests that without organizational innovation, parastatal organizations may not improve their level of resilience.

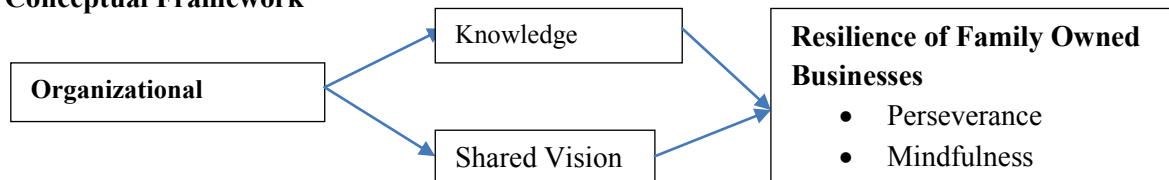
Muafi and Uyun (2018) ascertained the influence of Islamic HRM practices on organizational learning and its impact on environmental, social and religious performance. This study focuses on the importance of Islamic HRM Practices (IHRP) in improving the performance of SMEs Batik, especially environmental, social and religious performance which mediated by organizational learning (OL). The sample of study is mostly the owners/managers of SMEs Batik which scattered from all SMEs Batik in 18 villages. The purposive sampling technique was conducted after the researcher had done the proportional stage of random sampling by taking 17 SMEs in each district. Completed questionnaires totaled 170 respondents. Statistical techniques using Partial Least Square (PLS). The result explains that organizational learning able to mediate the effect of Islamic HRM practices on environmental, social and religious performance.

Obioma, (2017) analyzed technology as a moderating variable on knowledge management

and organizational resilience of manufacturing firms. The study objects comprised one hundred and twenty eight (128) employees from the thirty four manufacturing companies registered with the manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Rivers State Council. The study utilized both quantitative data (questionnaire) and qualitative data (interview). The Spearman' rank order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) and partial correlation were utilized for the analysis of data. Findings revealed

a positive and significant relationship between knowledge management and organizational resilience, also technology was found to have had a significant moderating influence on the relationship between the variables (knowledge management and organizational resilience); more specifically, knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization were revealed to have a positive and significant influence on organizational resilience.

### Conceptual Framework



**Source:** Onağa, Tepeci & Başalp (2012); Alsabbagh & AL Khalil (2017); Amir & Standen (2012).

### Methodology

In this study, the cross-sectional research design of the quasi-experimental research design was used because of the descriptive nature of the study.

### Population

The target population for this study consists of over 1200 small and medium scale businesses that are registered in Rivers state (Yellow Pages of Rivers state). As a result of the non-availability of records on the number of registered family-owned businesses in Rivers State the researcher therefore limited the study to 100 small and medium scale businesses which cut across manufacturing, professional, and services firms that are family owned business which becomes the accessible population for this study. The sample elements for this study consist of the 45 owners, 53 managers, and 56 supervisors of these various businesses. Summing up to be a total of 154 respondents selected for the study

### Sampling Technique/Sample Size Determination

The study adopted the convenience sampling technique in the selection of the sample elements. The Taro Yamane's formular was employed to determine the sample size from the population which was one hundred and eleven (111).

### Data Collection Method

The major source of data collection for this study was the use of questionnaires. A total of one hundred and eleven (111) questionnaires were distributed to respondents for this study which

comprise of owners of businesses, managers and supervisors of various businesses. Out of the distributed number of questionnaires that was distributed, only eighty-one (81) were retrieved and used for the study.

### Measures of Variable

Organizational learning represented the independent variable which was measured by knowledge sharing and shared vision. Knowledge sharing statement items were adopted from the work of Abu-Shanab, Haddad and Knight (2014) (e.g.: The company gives rewards for knowledge sharing behaviors). While that of shared vision was adopted was adopted from Calantone, Cavusgil & Zhao (2002); Chan, Lim & Keasberry (2003) (e.g.: There is total agreement on our organizational vision across all levels functions and divisions). The dependent variable which is resilience of family owned businesses was adopted from the work of Titus, (2013); Baklaieva, (2016) (e.g.: I continually motivate and rally others not to give up). All items were rated using a 5-point Likert-scale labeled as follows: 1= strongly disagreed, 2= disagreed 3= undecided, 4= agreed, 5= strongly agreed.

### Data Analysis Technique

The Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient were used analyze the hypotheses with the use of an SPSS.

**Demographic Analysis**

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	58	71.6
Females	23	28.4
<b>Age</b>		
21-30 years	7	8.60
31-40 years	25	30.9
41-50 years	34	42.0
51 years and above	15	18.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	34	42.0
Married	47	58.0
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
SSCE/WAEC	6	7.40
Diploma/OND	7	8.60
HND/B.Sc.	54	66.7
PGD/Masters	14	17.3
<b>Duration of business</b>		
10yrs & below	55	67.9
11-20 years	24	29.6
21yrs & above	2	2.50

Study revealed that 58 (71.6%) of the respondents were males, while 23 (28.4%) were females. Analysis shows that majority of the respondents were married 47(58%) while 34 (42%) respondents were not married. Majority of employees were between the age ranges of 31 – 40 years representing 25 (30.9%). Participants who were between 41-50 years totaled 34 (42%). This was followed by age brackets of 51 years and above representing 15 (18.6%) of respondents, and lastly, those who were within the ages of 21-30 which was 7 (8.6%) of the respondents. Analysis shows that 6(7.4%) respondents indicated having only secondary School degree; 7 (14.8%) had Diploma/OND; 54(66.7%) were HND/BSc holders; while 14(17.3%) have PGD/Master’s degrees. Lastly, analysis shows that the business has been on operation between 10years and below 55(67.9%), 24 (29.6%) respondents revealed that the business had existed within 11 – 20 years and 2 respondents revealed that the business had been in existence within 21years and above.

Source: Researcher, 2021.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state.

**Correlation between knowledge sharing and resilience**

		Knowledge Sharing	Resilience
Knowledge Sharing	Pearson Correlation	1	.654**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	81	81

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis above reveals that the P value is less than 0.05. This therefore means that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge sharing and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis two:** There is no significant relationship between shared vision and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State.

**Correlations between shared vision and resilience.**

		Shared vision	Resilience
Shared vision	Pearson Correlation	1	.547**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis reveals that there is a weak correlation but a positive and significant relationship between shared vision and resilience. This is evident where  $p < 0.05$  showing the positive and significant relationship between shared vision and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the above study revealed a strong and positive relationship where the  $Rho = 0.654$  and the P value is less than the significant value 0.05. This therefore means that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State. This result in line with the studies of Asghar, Hassan, & Fard (2015); Nwankwo, Ogamba, Anyanwu & Onu, (2016); Obioma, (2017).

Based on the analysis which revealed a correlation value  $Rho = 0.547$  and a P Value which is less than the significant value of a 0.05. Therefore, the result reveals that there is a significant relationship between shared vision and resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers State. The result of this study follows up with the study of Asghar, Danaee and Yakhkeshi (2015); Celik and Akyazi, (2016); Mafabi (2012).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of this study is that organizational learning significantly have a positive relationship with resilience of family owned businesses in Rivers state. This means that organizational learning which is an organizational factor and a mechanism can help family businesses to cope with various setbacks that could hit the businesses. Therefore, organizational learning can help owners, managers and supervisors build their resilience in their business.

Based on the above conclusion, this study therefore recommends that:

1. Owners and managers should create a forum or training section where knowledge of the business can be shared amongst other entrepreneurs. This will help them build their knowledge on the business and further help them stand firm in unpredictable circumstances.

2. It is important for family businesses to employ techniques that will help members to determine their core values, core purposes and envision the desired future of the business. This will instill perseverance into members of this family business.

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