Strategy Context as a Predictor of Employee Productivity in Manufacturing Companies in Port Harcourt

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between strategy context and employee productivity in manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a cross sectional survey method. The study population was four hundred and fifty one (451) employees of five selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The sample size of the study was determined by Taro Yamane sample size determination formula, the sample size was two hundred and twelve (212) employees that were randomly selected. Primary data was obtained using questionnaire as the research instrument. The inferential and descriptive statistical tools were used in the analysis of data for the study. The internal reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and only items that have an alpha reading of 0.70 and above were considered. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient. The study findings confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between strategy content and employees' productivity of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The study concludes that strategy context bears a positive and significant influence on employee productivity manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The study recommended that the successful process strategies should be integrative and should also be inclusive in that avenues and platforms should be enabled to allow employees and relevant stakeholders to be actively involved in the process as this would facilitate improvements to productivity.

Key Words: *Strategy Context, Employee Productivity, Employee Output, Timely Delivery, Work Quality*

Introduction

Every organization performs its task with the help of resources as men, machine, materials and money. Except manpower other resources are non-living but manpower is a live and generating resource. Manpower utilizes other resources and gives output. If manpower is not available then other resources are useless and cannot produce anything. Out of all the factors of production manpower has the highest priority and is the most significant factor of production and plays a pivotal role in areas of productivity and quality. In the case or instance of lack of attention to the other factors, those are non-living and may result in reduction of profitability to some extent; however, ignoring the human resource can prove to be disastrous (Armstrong, 2006; Bloisi, 2003).

Olajide (2000) notes that in a country where human resource is abundant, it is a pity that they remain under-utilized; this is as individuals within organizations comprise a large number of individuals of different sex, age, socio-religious group and different educational or literacy standards. These individuals in the work place exhibit not only similar behaviour patterns and characteristics to a certain degree but also they show much dissimilarity. Technology alone, however, cannot bring about desired change in economic performance of the country unless human potential is fully utilized for production. The management must therefore be aware not only organization but also employees and their needs.

Similarly Bloisi (2003) opined that the principal component of an organisation is its human resources or `People at work'. Human resources have been defined from the national point of view as, the knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes obtained in the population: whereas from the view point of the individual enterprise, they represent the total of the inherent abilities, acquired knowledge and skills as exemplified in the talents and aptitudes of its employees. These resources are most often referred to as `human factors' which comprise a whole consisting of inter-related, inter-dependent and interacting physiological, psychological and ethical components. It is this human resource which is of paramount importance in the success of any organisation because most of the problems in organizational settings are human and social rather than physical, technical or economic. Failure to recognise this fact causes immense loss to the nation, enterprise and to the individual.

The concept of strategy has developed as an important aspect of management due to the dynamics and complexity of the world as well as an increasingly turbulent business environment (Kibicho, 2015). Strategy encompasses the process, organizational restructuring and the outcomes of chosen long-term directions (which can either be conscious, planned or a series of events), which lead to a desired objective. It also involves the evaluation of the impacts of both the external and internal organizational environments on the long-term goals of the organization (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998).

According to Njagi and Kombo (2014), the modern business environment has become very competitive, making it necessary for firms to practice strategic management, which consists of the analysis, decisions and actions an organization takes in order to develop and sustain competitive advantage. Davenport (2007) argues that executing a strategy, no matter how brilliant, requires a planned approach. Njagi and Kombo (2014) agree, saying that in order to achieve intended results strategies have to be properly implemented. Strategic management process involves organization, management and the environment as a whole. Burnes (2009), posts that link between strategic management process and performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes such as financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment), product market performance(sales, market share) and shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added).Within corporate organizations, there are three primary outcomes analyzed including financial performance, market performance and shareholder value performance,(Pearce and Robinson, 2007).

While many people believe that formulating an innovative and unique strategy is critical and by it sufficient to lead a firm to success in today's business world, ensuring that such a strategy works is equally as important. Executives should pay careful attention to the implementation of strategies to avoid common pitfalls that result in failure. A number of approaches that greatly enhance the effectiveness of strategy implementation can be employed. Indeed, good strategic management is a function of people actively considering strategy as they make day-to-day decisions in an ever-changing world.

Strategies are formulated and executed within a specific strategic context (Okumus, 2001). Strategic context here refers to the set of circumstances under which both the strategy content and organizational processes are determined (Maas, 2008). It is assumed that, over the short term at least, organizations have little control over the variables in this grouping. However, both Yip (1992) and Okumus (2003) acknowledge the importance of these factors in shaping or influencing the crucial organizational processes that affect a company's ability to effectively create and implement strategy. Consequently, it is imperative for management to take the internal context into account as a means of managing the challenges associated with implementation (Okumus, 2003). The target of this study therefore is to examine the relationship between strategy context and employee productivity of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. It also seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- **i.** What is the relationship between strategy context and employee output of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?
- **ii.** What is the relationship between strategy context and timely delivery of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?
- **iii.** What is the relationship between strategy context and work quality of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt?

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

The underpinning theory for this study is the Goal Setting Theory. Research in the area of Strategy, effectiveness, productivity and organizational goal is observed to draw significantly from aspects and presumptions of the goal setting theory as put forward by Locke and Latham (2002). The major premise of the goal setting theory follows the believe and assumption that most organizations define, structure and adopt organizational patterns which can be considered as being in congruence or agreement with their specific goals and objectives. This is to say, that activities, relationships as well as the systems and policies which guide and coordinate the processes and behaviour of organizations are actually mechanisms and tools designed based on the pre-emptive identification of specific goals and objectives which serve as standards and benchmarks of the organizations growth and development.

Much of the goal-setting theory aligns with the theory of management by objectives provided by Drucker (cited in George, 1981) which aligns activities and functions sequentially with stipulated objectives. However, the main difference lies in the approach and adoption of systems involved. Whereas the goal setting theory offers a more holistic and comprehensive analysis of the organization and its adapting capacities with respect to the internal and external expectations, the management by objective theory streamlines this activity to that of the management with regards to control and directing of functions. The goal-setting theory bases its proponents on Locke and Latham (2002) who state that motivation and productivity are higher when individuals set specific goals, when goals are difficult but acceptable and when there is also feedback on productivity. They reveal that goals have a pervasive influence on employee behaviour, productivity and even the policies in organizations and management practice (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Strategy Context

The 'Context' aspect focuses on the pressures from within the environment. This includes pressures from both the internal and external environment. The 'Context' aspect identifies the motivation of organizations behind the investments in information security, business drivers, and stakeholders. A decision to invest in change involves various stakeholders such as the management and technical team. Therefore, in case of a conflict between the stakeholders, there will be a cost associated with conflict of interest between the stakeholders. Dess, Lumpkin & Taylor (2005) have modelled the conflict of interest between stakeholders. The cost of conflict of interest between a principal (for instance, a senior manager) and an agent is known in economics as an agency cost.

Okumus (2001; 2003) distinguishes between two components of an organization's strategic context: the external context and the internal context. We shall delve into deeper discussion of each of these components below.

External Context

The external context comprises the organization's external environment and the degree of uncertainty and changes in it (Okumus, 2003); in this case it means the political, economic, social, technological and competitive environments (Ivančić, 2013). An organization's external environment plays a fundamental role in shaping the future of businesses and entire industries and in order to keep abreast of competition, managers must continually adjust their business strategies to reflect the trends and conditions in their operating environment (Ansoff, 1965; Porter, 1985). Consequently, most organizations incorporate an external environment scanning phase at the start of the strategy review process, using frameworks and models such as SWOT, PESTLE, and Porter's five force analysis to analyse the environment (ibid, 2013).

According to Bhasin (2015), in order to make strategy work, it is important that both the development and execution be appropriate to the context of the firm carrying out the strategy implementation exercise. The external environment is dynamic and evolving, creating situations that force an organization to constantly change and adapt. Whereas Ivančić (2013) acknowledges that there is no specific solution to address environmental uncertainty, the need to anticipate the changing circumstances is very important. Thus, a strategic plan needs to be flexible enough to allow the organization to adapt to the changing environment. Management needs to design effective communication and information flows during implementation to facilitate continuous scanning and monitoring of the environment for changes, which will allow quick and agile response by the organizations (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000). Ivančić (2013) further cites management's failure to anticipate the changing environment and consequently undertake the necessary defensive action to overcome adversity as one of the key reasons why even the best designed strategies don't achieve their intended outcomes. She argues that the essence of good strategy formulation is to build a flexible yet strong position to ensure successful performance despite the impact of unforeseeable and unanticipated changes in the external environment.

Internal Context

Having an internal organizational context that is receptive to change is crucial in ensuring the successful implementation of strategy. According to Okumus (2003), the characteristics of an organization's internal context include the organizational structure, culture and leadership.

i. Organizational Structure

Organizational structure refers to the configuration of tasks and activities in an organization (Skivington and Daft, 1991). Okumus (2003) further elaborates organizational structure and points to a description of shape, division of labour, job duties and responsibilities, prescriptions of authority, distribution of power, and decision-making procedures and hierarchies in the organization. Much research has been carried out on the relationship between an organization's structure and its strategy. For many years, the topic of interest was whether the strategy determined structure or structure determined strategy. Alfred Chandler (1962), one of the earliest authors on this perspective, stipulated that a new strategy required a new or at least a refashioned structure if the new enterprise was to operate efficiently. Over time, emerging research suggested that each affects the other simultaneously (Rajapakshe, 2002). Thus, according to White (1986) and Slater and Olson (2001), the fit between business unit strategy and the firm's internal organizational structure inherently affects the performance of a business unit. These authors argue for an organizational structure that is mostly dependent on the type of strategy that emerges.

An empirical study carried out by Skivington and Daft (1991) established a correlation between strategy process and an organization's structure. As they examined the effect of organizational framework and process modalities on implementation of strategies, they noted that longer-term strategic changes were associated with significant changes in the structural configuration of the organization, i.e. jobs and departmentation. This was in contrast to smaller, short-term, discrete strategic decisions that required minimal recalibrations of structure.

ii. Organizational Culture

Cole (1995) describes organizational culture as the sum of shared values, assumptions, visions, philosophies, perspectives and modes of behaviour that constitute an organization. Lund (2003) further alludes to culture as the shared ideologies, expectations, attitudes and norms that typify the organization. Research shows that organizational culture is a key source of sustained competitive advantage and a key factor to organizational effectiveness (Ahmadi, Salamzadeh, Daraei and Akbari, 2012).

According to McNeal (2009), culture forms in response to the need for external adaptation and survival, as organizations aim to find a niche to enable them cope with changes in the environment. Organizational culture also forms in response to the need for internal integration, typified through the development of language, concepts, groups, power, status, rewards and punishment in order to establish and maintain effective working relationships among members of an organization.

The relationship between the organizational culture and its effect on strategy process has been a topic of considerable interest in the field of research. Strategies are often formed and implemented within the context of an organization's culture. It is therefore crucial to achieve alignment between the cultural norms and behaviours of the organization and the actions required to execute strategy in order for it be implemented successfully. Strategic initiatives that match the culture and competencies of an organisation can ensure rapid and successful implementation (Saunders et al., 2008). For example, a firm that wants to execute a cost-leadership strategy needs to embrace a culture of frugality and thrift, whereas a company pursuing a differentiation strategy based on innovation and technology leadership would require a culture that embraces creativity and innovation, collaboration and the willingness to embrace change (ibid, 2008).

iii. Leadership

Although the strategy process involves the collective effort of every member of the organization, the overall responsibility of implementing strategy rests with top management, who are ultimately accountable for the performance of the organization (Shah, 2005). Leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the pursuit and achievement of organizational goals (O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz and Self, 2010). In the context of Okumus' framework, leadership refers to the actual involvement, support and backing of the CEO and other senior executives in the strategy formulation and implementation process (Okumus, 2003).

Several researchers have emphasized the role of effective leadership in strategy process and implementation (Schaap, 2006). Shah (2005) notes that effective leadership is required at all levels of the implementation process not only for decision-making, but also to guide, support and motivate the people involved in the process. Similarly, Harrington (2006) points to leadership as crucial in utilizing the organizational process factors and also in manipulating the internal context to create an operating environment that is supportive of the change.
Brinkschröder (2014) concurs, asserting that it is the responsibility of top management to ensure that the rest of the organization stays committed throughout the strategy formulation process. They are expected to convince employees that a new strategy is important by creating a shared meaning and understanding of the strategy. They are also expected to deal with resistance in the organization, allocate the appropriate resources towards the process and create consensus. Such consensus is critical in ensuring leaders at the lower levels reinforce strategy and align the entire workforce towards a single compelling direction (O'Reilly et al., 2010).

Employee Productivity

Productivity can be defined as a measure in relating the quality and quantity of output against the input provided by individuals to produce said output. The normal measure for productivity is to link a rand value against hours worked or tasks accomplished. The definition of productivity according to Robbins and David (2006) is the output of an employee that is measurable against the employee's effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of the set goals or job tasks. Productivity is the driving force behind an organization's growth and profitability. It is the relationship between output of goods and services of workers of the organization and input of resources, human and non-human, used in the production process. In other words, productivity is the ratio of output to input. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the productivity (Burnstein & Fisk, 2003). Productivity has been defined as the measure of how well resources are brought together in organization and utilization for accomplishment of a set result. It is reaching the highest level of performance with the least expenditure of resources (Robbins & David, 2006). According to Caldwell (2001), having the technical knowledge and ability does not guarantee that employees will be efficient and effective in their job tasks. To get effectiveness and efficiency in the work environment one also needs to provide the necessary resources that are required in accomplishing the task, have a supportive management structure and lead with vision, which is in alignment to the employees' goals and objectives.

Measures of Employee Productivity

Work Output

According to Armstrong (2006), productivity is the relationship between output of goods and services and input of resources, human and non-human, used in the production process. In order words, productivity is the ratio of output to input. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the productivity. Thus, productivity can be applied at any level, whether for individuals, for work unit, for the organization. Productivity is a measurement or calculation between input and outputs. Inputs are the amount of resources such as human resource, money, time, physical, technological and effort spent working in the organization, while output are the result. If the inputs are equivalent to the outputs, the worker is considered productive.

Timely delivery

When the employees are productive, they accomplish more in a given amount of time. In turn, efficiency saves their company money in time and labour. When employees are unproductive, they take longer time to complete projects, which cost employee's more money due to the time lost (Olajide, 2000). The importance of higher productivity of the employees in public enterprise cannot be overemphasized, which include the following; Higher incomes and profit; Higher earnings; Increased supplies of both consumer and capital goods at lower costs and lower prices; Ultimate shorter hours of work and improvements in working and living conditions; Strengthening the general economic foundation of workers (Banjoko, 1996).Armstrong (2006) stated that productivity is the time spent by an employee actively participating in his/her job that he or she was hired for, in order to produce the required outcomes according to the employers' job descriptions. As suggested by Bloisi (2003) the core cause of the productivity problems in the South African society are people's motivation levels and their work ethics.

Work Quality

The term work quality refers to the positive and decent work outcome of an employee, work quality of an employee enables employee to enhance his or her job performance in the organization. The expected quality and quantity of task performed is according to Nwachukwu (2010) determined by the job standard, organizations according to him monitors an employee's job performance by comparing it to accepted work measurements, often at various intervals. Besides evaluation of production, these demonstrations provide employers with opportunities to refresh a worker's job skills or address behavioural factors. There are several ways of demonstrating the quality of work of employees, some of them include: demonstrating products, reviewing sales records, skills testing and performance evaluation.

Strategy Context and Employee Productivity

Strategy context which is concerned with the various stakeholders and the existing interactions/relationships in the workplace, their backgrounds and expectations; how the organization socializes, manages operates in terms of satisfying (Raps & Kauffman, 2005) holds a central position in the Strategy of the organization, away from the traditional model of tangible resources. It is important that Strategy contexts emphasize on shared values which are the core or fundamental set of values that are widely shared in the organization and serve as guiding principles of what is important; vision, mission, and values statements that provide a broad sense of purpose for all stakeholders particularly employees of the organization (Raps & Kauffman, 2005).

All members of the organization share some common fundamental ideas or guiding concepts around which the business is built. This may be to improve performance of their organisation or to achieve excellence in a particular field. These values and common goals keep the employees working towards a common destination as a coherent team and are important to keep the team spirit alive. The organisations with weak values and common goals often find their employees following their own personal goals that may be different or even in conflict with those of the organization or their fellow colleagues (Raps & Kauffman, 2005). Hence, effective Strategy process processes must take cognizance of existing values and seek to strengthen its outcome through an emphasis on the factors and values which pervade the organizations context.

From the foregoing understanding this study hypothesised thus:

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and employee output of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and timely delivery of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_3$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and work quality of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

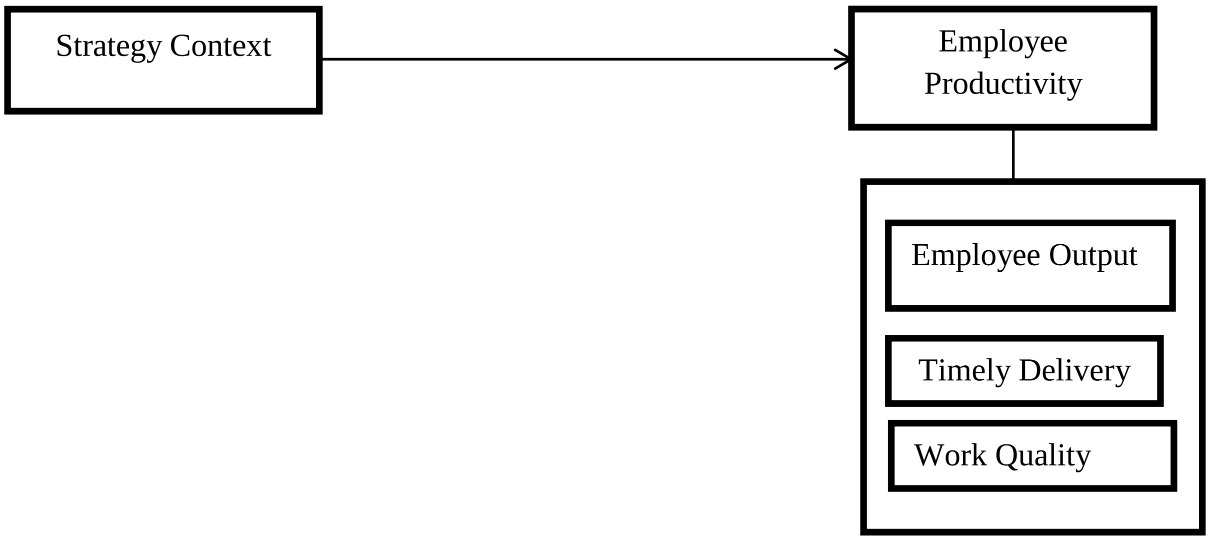

Fig.1: Operational Framework for the hypothesized relationship between strategy context employee productivity.
Source: Author's Desk Research, 2017

Methodology

The study adopted a cross sectional survey method. The study population was four hundred and fifty one (451) employees of five selected manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. The sample size of the study was determined by Taro Yamane sample size determination formula, the sample size was two hundred and twelve (212) employees that were randomly selected. Primary data was obtained using the structured questionnaire as the research instrument. The inferential and descriptive statistical tools were used in the analysis of data for the study. The internal reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and only items that have an alpha reading of 0.70 and above were considered. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alphas of the Study Variables

No. of Items	Variables	Alpha (α)
3	Strategy context	0.910
3	Employee output	0.904
3	Timely delivery	0.900
3	Work quality	0.890

Source: SPSS Output based on 2017 field survey data

Results and Discussions

Bivariate Analysis

The secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover hypotheses Ho_1 to Ho_3 which were bivariate and all stated in the null form. We have relied on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to undertake the analysis. The 0.05 significance level is adopted as criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ($p>0.05$) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ($p<0.05$).

We shall commence by first presenting a proof of existing relationships.

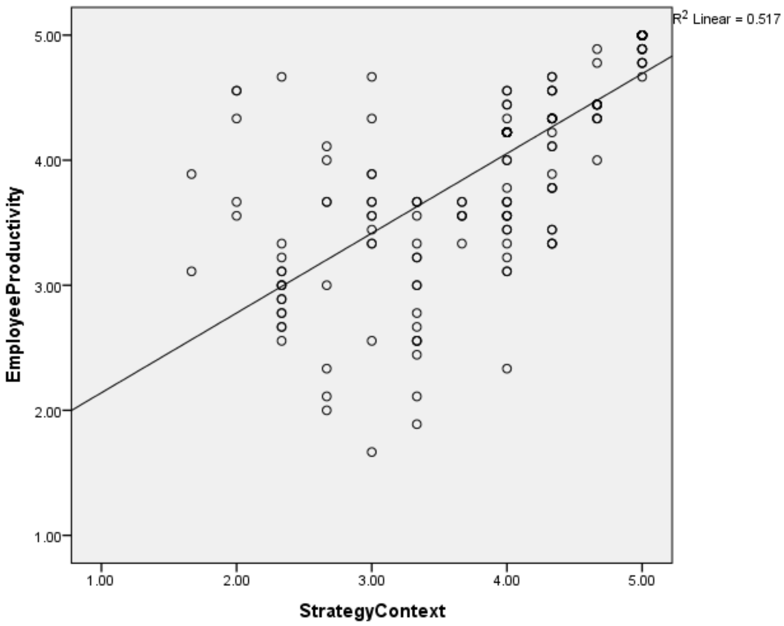

Figure 1: scatter plot relationship between strategy context and employee productivity

The scatter plot graph shows at R^2 linear value of (0.465) depicting a very strong viable and positive relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in strategy context simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of employee productivity. The scatter diagram has provided vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship among the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

Table 2 Correlations strategy content and measures of employee productivity

			Strategy Context	Employee Output	Timely Delivery	Work Quality
Spearman 's rho	Strategy Context	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.728**	.668**	.738**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Employee Output	Correlation Coefficient	.572**	1.000	.539**	.731**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Timely Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.728**	.668**	1.000	.738**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Work Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.728**	668**	.738**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	192	192	192	192

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

Source: Research Data 2017, (SPSS output version 21.0)

Table 2 illustrates the test for the three previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for

Ho$_4$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and employee output of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

From the result in table 4.11, it is obvious that there is a positive relationship between strategy context and employee output. The *rho* coefficient 0.728 indicates that the relationship is strong and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between strategy context and timely delivery of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_5$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and timely delivery of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

From the result in table 4.11, it is obvious that there is a positive relationship between strategy context and timely delivery. The *rho* coefficient 0.666 indicates that the relationship is a moderate one and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between strategy process and employee output of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_6$: There is no significant relationship between strategy context and work quality of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

From the result in table 4.11, it is obvious that there is a positive relationship between strategy context and work quality. The *rho* coefficient 0.738 indicates that the relationship is very strong and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between strategy context and work quality of manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

The relationship between Strategy content and employee productivity was revealed to be significant at a 95% confidence interval. The result indicates that Strategy context is critical to enhancing the productivity of the employees within the selected organizations. The evidence from the analysis offers support for the position that the Strategy context of the organization enhances the productivity of the workers within the organization. The finding of this study substantiates Kamanda (2006) opinion that Strategy relationships are fundamental to the outcome of organizational goals and objectives. This is the context of Strategy decisions and activities are revealed by this study to be integral and significant to facilitating quality output and timely delivery of services within the selected organizations of the study. The evidence also lends credit to the assertions of Brown (2005) that organizations achieve and are able to sustain their performance as a result of context-bound interactions, between management and employees, between stakeholders and the organization and also between co-workers in the organization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Strategy encompasses the process, organizational restructuring and the outcomes of chosen long-term directions (which can either be conscious, planned or a series of events), which lead to a desired objective. It also involves the evaluation of the impacts of both the external and internal organizational environments on the long-term goals of the organization (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998). In conclusion, the findings of this study affirm to the role of Strategy context in the enhancement of employee productivity within manufacturing organizations in Port Harcourt. Consequently, Strategy context is significantly associated with employee productivity and therefore enhances productivity measures such as output, timely delivery and work quality.

From the foregoing conclusion therefore, following, recommendations are here proffered:

- **i.** The successful process strategies should be integrative and should also be inclusive in that avenues and platforms should be enabled to allow employees and relevant stakeholders to be actively involved in the process as this would facilitate improvements to productivity.

- **ii.** The Successful process of strategies should also be premised on constructive and well advised frameworks and content based on feedback and learning experiences of the organizations.

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