



### THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE SURVIVABILITY OF FAMILY BUSINESSES

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**Keywords:** Organizational culture, family owned business, survivability

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#### Introduction

Though not certain or might be a bit exaggerating, but the development, pattern and consolidation of organizational culture in corporate enterprise has since been in the forefront of research in the past two decades, for effective management (Peters & Waterman 1982; Sorensen 2002; Lee & Chen 2005 ). Indeed, the culture of organizations have maintained their



grandstanding within the domain of management and social scientists (Ogbonna & Harris 2002; Ravasi & Schultz 2006). In the same vein, Schein (1996) posits that culture is one of the most powerful and constant forces that dictate work in organizations. Culture also influences income generation through effective business operations by organizations (Denison 1984), in their internal development (Cox et al. 1991) and in strategic success (Bluedorn & Lundgren 1993). Any firms with intent to form merger most consider the organizational culture that must suit both sides (Fairclough, 1998). Unfortunately, little research has been carried out to study of organizational culture in family firms within the academic community. (Gallo, 1993, 1995); This current study will contribute significantly to the body of literature on the family owned business, based on the relevance of organizational culture in gaining competitive advantage over other enterprises. (Barney, 1991; Ogbonna, 1993; Ogbonna & Harris, 2000).

A considerable number of enterprises in Nigeria and particularly in South-eastern Nigeria, are privately owned and a most part of the business are family owned, which contribute immensely to the economy of South-Eastern Nigeria. Oyeyinka posits that 95% of the businesses in Nigeria are indigenous businesses which are equally owned by the indigenous families (Oyeyinka, n.d). This was even confirmed by the Economic Intelligence Unit in Nigeria, which stated that 51.5% of the 200 largest listed companies are all owned and managed by indigenous families. Thus, streamlining it down to South-Eastern Nigeria, Most major markets, shopping plazas and cities in Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Abakaliki and Owerri are dominated by family owned businesses that contribute toward South-eastern economic and infrastructural development through tax and rates payments.

Sadly, just a small fraction of these businesses were able to survive the next two generations. Family Business Consulting report stipulates that only 30% of family owned business made it to second generation, while 12% of the businesses were able to maintain viability in the third generation and only about 3% scaled through into fourth generation and subsequent generations (Bessant, 2003). The percentage might be a bit higher in South-Eastern region of Nigeria, considering the fact that the people are entrepreneurial and business-oriented. However, the untimely death of family owned business can be related to lots of challenges, such as; poor succession planning, financial constraints, poor management, improper organizational culture and so on. Of all these aforementioned factors, organizational culture has a significant



contribution towards effective management and subsequent survivability of family owned business. Organizational culture organization's behavior pattern, ideals, norms, experiences, philosophy, and values that guide employees' and management behavior, and it is expressed in employees' self-image, work ethics, employees relationships and interactions with the external environment, and actualization of business objectives. Thus, culture centered on shared attitudes, norms, tradition, beliefs, customs, and which can be documented or orally pronounced, but can be modified from time to time.(The Business Dictionary, n.d). Needle posits that culture equally encapsulates organization's vision, modus operandi, values, norms, systems, ideals, language, assumptions, attitude, and lifestyle (Needle, 2004). Thus, organizational culture can be said to be the way and manner things are properly done within an organization" (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). While the above definitions explain organizational behavior in workplace, other definitions emphasizes on employee behavioral mechanism, and how organizational culture significantly affect the behaviors of employees in an organization.

Therefore integrating this definition to family business, organizational culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, attitude, manners and ideals that guide what happens in family owned enterprises by carefully defining appropriate behavior for various circumstances (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Organizational culture affects the way both the management and employees interact and relate even with clients, and stakeholders. Also, it influences the way employees bond well with the organization (Schrodt, 2002). In business terms, it is equally referred to as; "corporate culture," "workplace culture," or "business culture." Business founders are relevant to the formulation and inculcating workplace culture in his or her employees. However, the correlation between leadership and culture is not uni-dimensional. While leaders are chief innovators of organizational culture, an established culture influences the type of leadership they adopt (Schein, 2010).

Unfortunately, despite the rate at which founders try to set long lasting organizational culture, that will aid the survivability of their family owned business, it appears the culture gets to die before the businss gets into second generation. This can be attributed to the unwillingness of the owners and founders to inculcate the business culture in potential successors and key associates that will continue managing the business after the founder's exit. As a result of Igbo traditional practices, founders are mostly encouraged to entrust the businesses to their children

and in most cases, in compliance to the Igbo patriarchal culture; the family business is mostly to the first son of the family, even when more qualified and capable hands that will handle the business better are available. Thus, due to inability of the successor, to handle their businesses, who perhaps is bereft of the organizational culture, therefore, may affect business performance and viability. It is this premise that this study is built on.

### **Objective of Study**

The main goal of this study is to investigate the influence of organizational culture on the survivability of family businesses in South –East, Nigeria. other specific aims is to;

- i. Ascertain the significance of organizational culture in family business performance
- ii. Evaluate the challenges bedeviling the integration of proper organizational culture in family business
- iii. Discover ways to mitigate the adverse effect of inappropriate organizational culture on family business growth and viability.

### **Research Questions**

Thus, the following questions will lead the direction this research will follow;

- a) Does organizational culture have any significant influence on the survivability of family business?
- b) What is the significant influence does organizational culture has on family business performance?
- c) What challenges bedevil integration of appropriate organizational culture in family business?
- d) What strategy will help ameliorate the adverse effect of inappropriate organizational culture on the growth of family business?

### **Literature Review**

#### *Conceptual Review*

Organizational culture is relevant construct that influences both the individuals and organization; the relationship that exist among these two variables, and the outcomes. In most

scientific literature, especially within the scope of organizational behavior and management science, there is no general definition given to organizational culture. (Hatch & Zilber; 2012). Most theorists within the aforementioned fields posit that culture is a very vague concept that cannot be conventionally defined. Abu-Jarad et al, (2010) concurred with their postulation that there exist different perspectives on the concept, culture. Historically, researches conducted within the domain of organizational culture, came into limelight in the 1980s. Lund (2003) confirmed that 1980s observed an increase in the research on the impact of organizational culture on organizational performance. Thus, culture is treated as an inherent subset of the organization, which allows individuals to successfully adapt and integrate well in the organization. In the second approach, the organization itself is viewed as a system of knowledge, which employees interpret individually based on one's understanding. This approach allows employees to acculturate and acclimatize with the complex social system that exist in the organization, and equally help them form corporate identity (Garcia-Torres, & Hollanders, 2009).

In other words, organizational culture can be defined as the degree to which managers' values are "integrated in the corporate system, which they mostly express unconsciously towards achieving organizational goals" (Hofstede, 1990; Tang et al., 2000). It incorporates collective values, norms, patterns, beliefs and behavioural standard acceptable by employees, which equally equip them towards tackling organizational challenges and achieving desired goals. (Adebayo, 2011; Gorondutse, & Hilman, 2019;; Daft, 2005; Goffee, & Jones, 1998). Gorondutse and Hilman (2015) grouped organizational culture into three categories, which are; supportive, innovative and bureaucratic, these are the core elements of culture that will influence employees' behaviour, actions and attitudes in the organization (Gorondutse, & Hilman, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2011; Wallach, 1983). Abdul-Halim, Ahmad, Geare and Thurasamy, (2018) asserted that the concept of innovative culture need to be understood and integrated in most small and medium enterprises in less developed countries.

Additionally, innovative culture implies organization's values, norms, ethics and policies that are susceptible to new ideas, solutions and strategies that will enable the organization achieve its set objectives. (Dzomonda, & Fatoki, 2019; Cameron, & Quinn, 2006). Unfortunately, most family owned business founders in South-eastern Nigeria, find it difficult to share ideas or solutions with their associates and employees. They prefer to keep the business



secret with them till death. Supportive culture enhances the interpersonal relationship and effective communication among employees in the organization; it is the culture that improves the cooperation and collaborations among employees in the organization.(Kraus et al., 2020). Most family businesses in South-eastern Nigeria to some extent do integrate supportive culture in their daily activities and operations. Finally, organizations that incorporate bureaucratic culture are much concerned about the structure, chain of command, hierarchies, departmentalization and communication flows among various units of the organization. The uniqueness and distinctiveness of their structure and hierarchies embodied their organizational culture. On the contrary, most family owned businesses in Nigeria, are not properly structured and that have led to the failure of most of the businesses. Thus, the inability to departmentalize their enterprise and employ competent employees to handle the newly created units becomes a big problem for the founder, because he wants to cut cost and save more money, thereby endangering the viability of his or her business.

#### *Factors that affect organizational culture of most enterprises in Nigeria*

Most small and medium enterprises in Nigeria have grown significantly in size and overtime have contributed significantly to the growth of Nigerian economy, but some of them still face challenges especially with the culture they operate with. Igbokwe (2019) argued that one of the biggest challenges that impedes the growth of the enterprises is stringent culture and ethics, which do not allow employees to exercise or express their freedom to certain extent in their workplace. Stringent policies restrict the flexibility of business operations and withhold the flow and share of ideas between employees and management. They create an autocratic system within an organization, thus, limiting the human free will, which if properly harnessed will enable the free flow of innovative ideas (Igbokwe, 2019).

Secondly, size of the enterprise affects adequate integration of organizational culture, most enterprises in Nigeria, are small firm with limited number of staff, thus, it is difficult to introduce some of the elements or types of organizational culture, for instance, the bureaucratic culture in such enterprises. Also, due to the size of the enterprise, most family business founders do not bother with organizational culture, they just carry every staff along with the dos and don'ts in the enterprise. Funsho (2016) argued that business founders cannot claim to have organizational culture in their small firm, because the organization deals not only with the



structure, but size too. Therefore, most small firms in Nigeria do not have a well defined organizational culture due to the size and capacity of their businesses.

Thirdly, Aneke (2022) equally argued that another factor that affects the integration of organizational culture is organization's workforce or manpower. The size of the staff determines whether it will establish a defined corporate culture or not. Owing to the fact that most small enterprises in Nigeria have staff size between the ranges of (2 – 25) employees makes it difficult to inculcate a well defined culture among the employees. Thus, employees depend solely on the directives from the founder, who equally act in the capacity of managing director before they act. There is no lay down rules or regulations for the employs since they all take directives solely from the founder.

Fourthly, organizational culture is quite difficult to incorporate in most family owned enterprise because founders set their core value system on a dishonest foundation, thus, breeding unethical standard in their business operations and dealings with business clients (Aneke, 2022)

### *Institutional Theory*

The theory posits that institutions especially family owned business' culture are influenced by external demands pressure from their environment, thus, adjusting organizational norms and patterns in order to handle and harness environmental pressure. (Martínez and Dacin 1999; Oliver 1991).

Most authors understand institutions to mean different thing, some see it as system which incorporate both cognitive structures and normative rules; others view it as a regulatory processes which determine their social behavior of firms. These two perspective are interrelated, in the sense that, institutions incorporates various strategies, patterns and models derived from the worldwide perspective and then narrow them down to the organization, as witnessed in most family own businesses that adapt their culture, in accordance with national economic trend, global market dynamics and international best practices (Scott 1995a). More so, employees build organizations, through a deliberate and rational process of social construction with fits well with the systemic norms and rules (North 1990; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Powell 1991). The family business takes into account the institutionalists' perspectives, which sees family business



as an economic institution build upon a systemic framework, whose culture is reinventing to suite into market dynamics (North 1990; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Powell 1991).

**Methodology**

This study is a qualitative one because the data that were used were generated from secondary source, also to further understand organizational culture of a company one need to carry out a historical analysis of the said company, in order to ascertain corporate culture that is inherent in that corporation. Thus, historical analytical technique was employed in other to study the patterns, lifestyle and activities of an enterprise in order to draw plausible conclusion about their organizational culture. This study is delineated to Jevnik restaurant, an exquisite eatery situated in Owerri, the capital of Imo state, which specializes mainly in the retailing and catering of Igbo traditional dishes within the metropolis. It is one of the most popular restaurants, with branches in mega cities in Nigeria, such as; Port Harcourt and Abuja.

*History of Jevnik Restaurant*

Jevnik Restaurant started by Mrs. Jovita Inyang , an Imo State indigene married to a Calabar indigene. She started as baker in the late 1988, selling confectionaries like cake, buns, and meat pie, just to raise money and fund her kids education. She later shifted to restaurant business, after being advised by her kinsmen, who was an undergraduate in the University of

<b>NTACHI-OSA RESTAURANT</b>	
<i>Specialty</i>	Igbo traditional Cuisines and Catering services
<i>Business Type</i>	Family owned business
<i>Location(s)</i>	Abuja, Port Harcourt, Owerri
<i>Staff Strength</i>	50 – 120 employees
<i>Management</i>	Family members and business associates
<i>Customer base</i>	1000 +
<i>Viability</i>	2000 – present

Calabar, she started the first buka business, within the school premises, after which she relocated to Port Harcourt in 1990, there she established Jevnik maiden restaurant. The business kept on growing, because of its customers’ patronage, which is attributed to the business culture, built on





good hygiene, quality delivery, efficient customer relationship management, proper time management, and courtesy. This culture attracted more customers, which led to the expansion of the restaurants to mega cities in Nigeria and within southeastern regions.

Over the years, Jevnik restaurant has maintained top-notch services in the culinary and catering service within Southeastern Nigeria and its neighboring regions. The customer satisfaction confessed by its loyal and regular customers is very high.

In order to examine their organizational culture a survey study was equally carried out among regular customers that attend the restaurant, thirty customers were conveniently sampled for the study, to ascertain their opinion on the company’s organizational culture. The mini study was carried out at their Owerri branch and it lasted for a period of two weeks. Five-item questionnaire, which contains questions measuring organizational culture, was employed for the study.

**Findings**

The data generated from the mini survey was subjected to statistical analysis using, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software version 22, frequency count and simple percentage were the statistical tool employed in analyzing the data generated. Below is the result as gotten from SPSS.

Table 1

<b>Gender</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Male	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
Female	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*



The table evinced that 60 percent of the respondents that participated in the study are males, while the 40 percent of the respondents are females.

**Table 2**

<b>Years of Patronage</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
0 – 5 years	9	27.0	27.0	30.0
6 – 10 years	16	58.0	58.0	85.0
More than 10 years	5	15.0	15.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*

When respondents were asked about the number of years they have patronized Jevnik restaurant, 27 percent of the respondents have patronized the restaurant for less than 5 years, 58 percent of the respondents have patronized the restaurants between 6 to 10 years, while 15 percent of the respondents have patronized their services for more than 10 years.

*Perception on organizational culture of Jevnik Restaurant*

**Table 3**

<b>Employees working in different department have common view about the firms ethics and values</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	19	59.4	63.3	63.3
Undecided	9	28.1	30.0	93.3
No	2	6.3	6.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*



The above table shows that when customers were asked whether employees working in different departments in Jevnik have common view about the firms ethics and values, 63 percent of the respondents responded in affirmation, 30 percent of respondents were undecided, while 7 percent of the respondents disagreed with the notion. Most of the customers agreed on the uniformity of purpose and delivery of service.

**Table 4**

<b>They have a ethical value system that help employees differentiate customers’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	21	65.6	70.0	70.0
Undecided	7	21.9	23.3	93.3
No	2	6.3	6.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*

When respondents were asked whether the restaurant have an ethical value system that help employees differentiate customers’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction, 70 percent of the respondents agreed to the notion, some stated that employees study discretely customer’s reactions and make sure they served on time to avoid dissatisfying their customers. 23 percent of the respondents were undecided, while 7 percent of the respondents disagreed with the notion.

**Table 5**

<b>The ethical conduct of the employees is seen their dress code and neatness</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	19	59.4	63.3	63.3
Undecided	11	34.4	36.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*

When respondents were asked whether the ethical conduct of the employees is seen in their dress code and neatness, 63 percent of the respondents agreed with the notion, some stated that the company’s uniform which most of the employees are adorned with, are always clean, also those



sales representatives that dish out food, cover their hair properly to avoid contaminating the food with hair strands, other stated that the cleaners carry out their duties judiciously in order to maintain the cleanliness and orderliness of the restaurant. While 37 percent of the participants were undecided, none of the respondents disagreed with the notion.

**Table 6**

<b>Employees have a strong culture of punctuality and promptness in attendance to customers’ needs</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	20	62.5	66.7	66.7
Undecided	5	15.6	16.7	83.3
No	5	15.6	16.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*

When respondents were asked if employees have a strong culture of punctuality and promptness in attendance to customers’ needs, 67 percent of the respondents agreed with the notion, rated their promptness in service delivery very high, also they acknowledge their punctuality on daily basis. 17 percent of the respondents were undecided, while 17 percent of the remaining respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Table 7**

<b>Generally employees maintain courtesy and good conduct in their relationship with customers</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	19	59.4	63.3	63.3
Undecided	11	34.4	36.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Field Study, 2023*

When respondents were asked if employees maintain courtesy and good conduct in their relationship with customers, 63 percent of the respondents agreed to the notion, some stated that they have the friendly and cordial approach sale representatives adopt in relating with customers,

others acknowledged their cute smiles, good communication skills and generally their good conduct which they maintain in relating with the customers, while 37 percent of the respondents were undecided.

### **Conclusion/ Recommendation**

The study investigated the influence of organizational culture on the survivability of family businesses in South East Nigeria. A qualitative methodology was adopted in the study, a historical analysis of Jevnik restaurant was carried out in the course of the study. The reason for the selection of the restaurant is because it is a family owned business, popularly known in Port Harcourt, Abuja and Owerri cities and has withstood the test of time over the years in business within Southeastern region. Thus, a mini survey was carried out among regular customers in order to corroborate the information gathered from the historical analysis. Thus, the finding from the study evinced that Jevnik restaurant has maintained a sound and standard organizational culture that has endeared customers and consumers far and wide to patronize their services. Also, over the years the restaurant have equally rebranded and redefined their culture as the year gone by, thereby improving their work ethics and etiquettes along the line.

Thus, based on findings, the following questions have been answered in the course of the study

- a) *Does organizational culture have any significant influence on the survivability of family business?*

Based on historical analysis of Jevnik restaurant, they have been in business operation for the past 25 years and counting, also the business has witnessed great infrastructural and organizational transformation within this timeframe, and has equally expanded its services to other environ within Southeastern region. Thus, it can all be linked to excellent customer service delivery, good core-values and customer relationship management, which are all elements of organizational culture.

- b) *What is the significant influence does organizational culture has on family business performance?*

The historical analysis evinced that Jevnik enterprise grew from a one-woman roadside business in the early 2000 and then evolved into mega popular enterprise with branches

spread across Southeastern Nigeria. One cannot dispute the relevance of their organizational culture in boosting their business performance. The ethical standard they have maintained in preparing their traditional dishes, relating with customers and ensuring excellent service delivery are aspect of their organizational culture, that has improved their general business performance over the years.

Therefore, it is evident that organizational culture plays a significant role in the survivability of family owned business, suffix it to say, organizational culture is the soul of every organization, because it defines their business operations, activities, modus operandi, ethics, vision and mission and above all it determines the productivity and profitability of the organization and enterprise.

### ***Recommendation***

To improve on the organizational culture of any enterprise, the following elements should be incorporated in the value system of that enterprise;

- i) *Honesty*: incorporating culture of honesty in all business dealings, establishes trust and loyalty from potential customers and consumers, this trust can attract referrals and recommendations from customers and consumers far and wide.
- ii) *Punctuality*: punctuality they say in is the soul of business, when business owners imbibe the culture of punctuality in their business, it will set the ground for proper business operations and activities to take place. Most business deals can be executed, if business owner come out on time for business, if not, clients will look for alternative business to invest.
- iii) *Courtesy*: courtesy oils business relationship between business owners and their potential customers, family business owners should improve on their customer relationship management, by employing competent staff with inherent human psychology or excellent communication skill that facilitate cordial relationship between business enterprise and its potential customers
- iv) *Prompt Service Delivery*: the nature and manner in which businesses deliver their services determine the degree of patronage they get from customers, therefore, family

business owners in South-East, should endeavor to deliver their services on time and avoid keeping customers waiting for so long, before being attended to.

- v) *Neatness/Orderliness*: Cleanliness is next to Godliness has they always say, therefore, business owners should endeavor to tidy up their workplace, keep their offices and departments in order, maintain neatness in their dispositions and service delivery, this culture will attract the patronage of customers and subsequent consumers.

Therefore, family owned businesses in South-Eastern Nigeria, should endeavor to integrate the aforementioned elements in their organizational culture in order for them to survive the test of time and equally enjoy the patronage of customers and consumers.

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