

SOCIO-CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF FASHION DESIGNERS FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between socio-cultural influences and organisational performance of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt. This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The population of the study was 10 selected fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt as retrieved from anyservice.com (2024). 3 managers were selected from each firm multiplied by 10 firms gives us a total of 30 respondents. Structured questionnaire was used in data collection. The result of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test indicates .804 which is above .70 which implies that the items are reliable. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses using SPSS (statistical package social sciences). The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt. There is a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that socio-cultural influences correlate with organisational performance. The study recommends that fashion designers firms should create programs that promote cultural awareness and workshop among designers and fashion designers firms should support socioeconomic development initiatives.

Keywords: *Socio-cultural influences, cultural norms, socioeconomic status, organisational performance, innovativeness, efficiency.*

INTRODUCTION

The interplay between social and cultural influences significantly shapes individual behaviors, preferences, and choices across various domains, including fashion. In the context of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, fashion designers are not only influenced by global trends but also by local cultural norms and socioeconomic status. These dimensions play a crucial role in determining the styles that resonate with consumers and influence purchasing decisions. Understanding these factors is essential for fashion designers aiming to create collections that appeal to their target market while remaining culturally relevant.

Cultural norms encompass the shared beliefs, values, and practices that characterize a particular group or society. They dictate what is considered acceptable or desirable within a community. For instance, in Port Harcourt, traditional attire may hold significant value during cultural festivals or ceremonies. Fashion designers must navigate these norms to ensure their designs honor local traditions while integrating contemporary elements (Harrison & Kahn, 2020). This balancing act can enhance brand loyalty among consumers who appreciate designs that reflect their cultural identity.

Socioeconomic status (SES) further complicates the landscape of fashion consumption. SES influences individuals' purchasing power and access to various fashion products. In Port Harcourt, where economic disparities exist, designers must consider the financial capabilities of their clientele when pricing their collections (Okwu & Okwu, 2021). A designer targeting high-income consumers may adopt luxury materials and exclusive designs; conversely, those catering to lower-income groups might focus on affordability without compromising style.

Moreover, the relationship between cultural norms and socioeconomic status can lead to unique fashion trends in Port Harcourt. For example, as urbanization increases and more individuals migrate to cities for better opportunities, there is a blending of traditional styles with modern

aesthetics (Nwankwo & Nwankwo, 2022). This fusion creates a dynamic fashion scene where local designers can innovate while still respecting cultural heritage. Such trends highlight how social-cultural influences are not static but evolve alongside societal changes.

Fashion designers in Port Harcourt also face challenges related to globalization. While exposure to international trends can inspire creativity and innovation among local designers, it may also lead to conflicts with traditional values (Eze & Ezeani, 2023). Designers must be adept at discerning which global influences align with local tastes and which might alienate potential customers. Thus, understanding both cultural norms and socioeconomic contexts becomes paramount for successful design strategies. social-cultural influences particularly cultural norms and socioeconomic status are critical dimensions shaping the fashion industry in Port Harcourt. Designers who successfully integrate these factors into their work are more likely to resonate with consumers who seek authenticity in their clothing choices. As such firms continue to grow within this vibrant cityscape, they will need ongoing research into these dimensions to remain competitive while honoring the rich tapestry of local culture.

Statement of Problem

Organizational performance is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various dimensions, including innovativeness and efficiency. In the context of fashion design firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, these dimensions are significantly influenced by socio-cultural factors. Innovativeness refers to the ability of an organization to develop new ideas, products, or processes (Tidd & Bessant, 2018). In contrast, efficiency pertains to how well an organization utilizes its resources to achieve its goals (Neely et al., 2005). The interplay between these two measures can be complex, particularly when socio-cultural influences come into play.

The socio-cultural environment in Port Harcourt presents unique challenges and opportunities for fashion designers. Cultural norms and values shape consumer preferences and behaviors, which directly impact the innovativeness of fashion firms. For instance, local traditions may dictate certain styles or materials that are deemed acceptable or desirable (Hennigs et al., 2013). Consequently, designers must navigate these cultural expectations while striving to introduce innovative designs that resonate with their target market. This balancing act can hinder organizational performance if not managed effectively.

Moreover, the efficiency of fashion designers firms is often compromised by socio-cultural factors such as labor practices and resource availability. In many cases, traditional practices may lead to inefficiencies in production processes (Kumar & Singh, 2019). For example, reliance on artisanal skills passed down through generations may limit the adoption of modern manufacturing techniques that enhance productivity. As a result, firms may struggle to compete not only locally but also on a global scale where efficiency is paramount. Socio-cultural influences can affect the strategic decisions made by fashion designers regarding market entry and expansion. Designers may be hesitant to explore new markets due to fears of cultural misalignment or backlash from local consumers (Cova & Cova, 2002). This reluctance can stifle innovation and limit growth opportunities for firms in Port Harcourt. Furthermore, understanding the cultural landscape is essential for effective marketing strategies; failure to do so can lead to poor brand positioning and diminished organizational performance.

The relationship between socio-cultural influences and organizational performance specifically innovativeness and efficiency—poses significant challenges for fashion design firms in Port Harcourt. Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of both local culture and global trends in the fashion industry. Firms must adopt strategies that leverage their cultural heritage while embracing innovative practices that enhance efficiency.

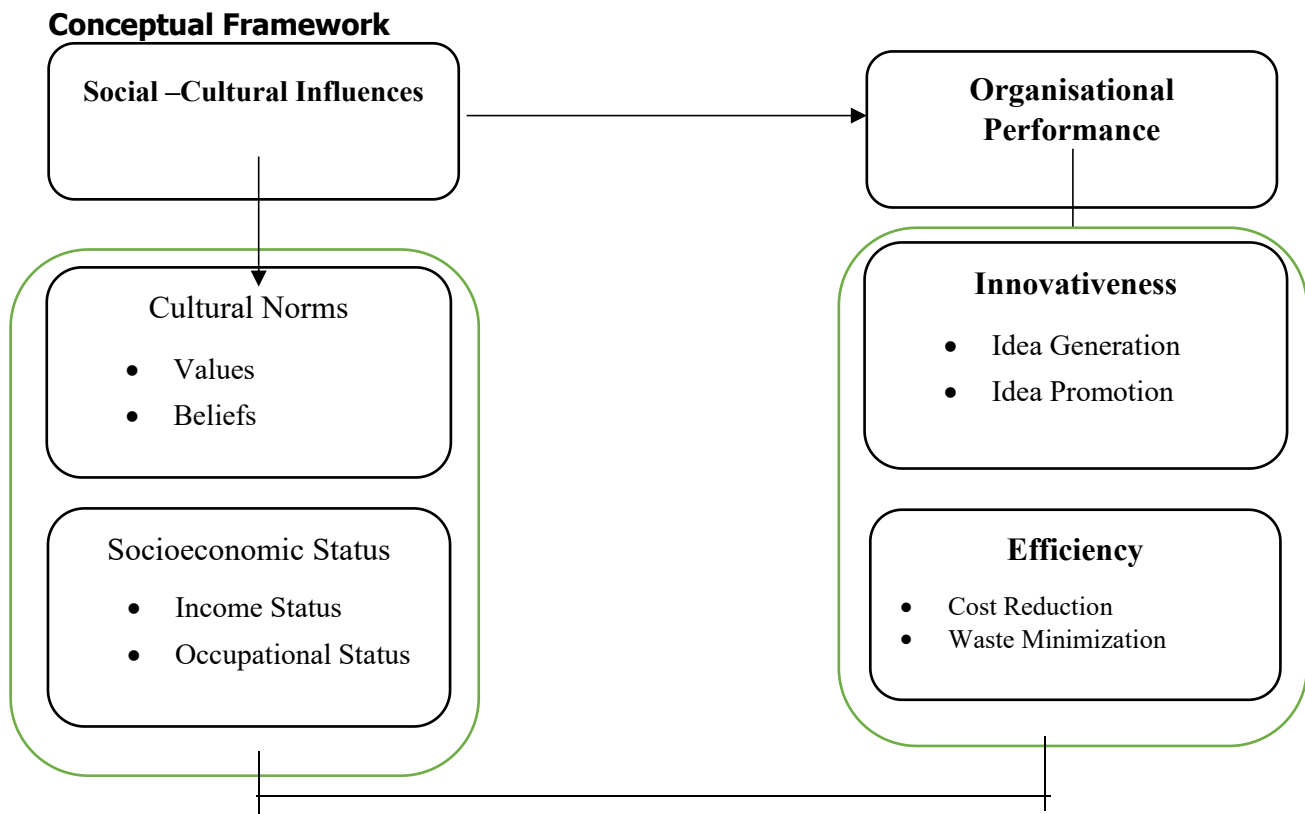


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on social-cultural influences and organisational performance in fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt

Source: Adopted from Kahn-Harris, Keith (2008), Hills and Jones (2017)

Aims & Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between socio-cultural influences and organisational performance of fashion designers firm in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- 1) Determine the relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.
- 2) Examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

- 1) What is the relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt?
- 2) What is the relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a significant level of 0.05.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.

Significance of Study

The significance of studying socio-cultural influences on organizational performance is multifaceted and impacts various stakeholders, including employees, managers, business owners,

policymakers, and researchers/academics. Understanding these influences can lead to enhanced organizational effectiveness, improved employee satisfaction, and better alignment with community values.

Employees: For employees, socio-cultural factors shape their work experiences and job satisfaction. A workplace that acknowledges cultural diversity fosters an inclusive environment where employees feel valued. This inclusivity can lead to increased motivation and productivity. Moreover, understanding the socio-cultural backgrounds of employees allows organizations to tailor their management practices to meet diverse needs effectively.

Managers: Managers play a crucial role in interpreting and implementing socio-cultural insights within the organization. By recognizing the cultural dynamics at play among their teams, managers can develop strategies that enhance communication and collaboration.

Business Owners: For business owners, awareness of socio-cultural influences is vital for strategic decision-making. These influences affect market trends, customer preferences, and overall business sustainability.

Policymakers: Policymakers benefit from understanding the socio-cultural context of organizations as it informs regulations that promote fair labor practices and equitable economic growth. Policies that consider cultural diversity can lead to more effective workforce development programs and initiatives aimed at reducing disparities in employment opportunities.

Researchers/Academics: For researchers and academics, studying the intersection of socio-cultural influences and organizational performance contributes to the body of knowledge in fields such as sociology, management studies, and organizational behavior.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is discussed under content scope, geographical scope, and unit of analysis.

Content Scope: The content scope of the study is limited to the predictor's variable as socio-cultural influences and organisational performance. Discussions on socio-cultural influences is restricted to cultural norms and socioeconomic status; while organisational performance as the criterion variable is measured and discussed through innovativeness and efficiency

Geographical Scope: The geographical scope is limited to registered fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt

Unit of Analysis: The unit of analysis of the study is at the macro level since the study is interested in the organization rather than the employees.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews various extant literatures related to the study under investigations under the headings of conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Social-Cultural Influences

The concept of socio-cultural influences refers to the ways in which societal and cultural factors shape individual behaviors, beliefs, and values. These influences encompass a wide range of elements, including family dynamics, educational systems, religious beliefs, and community norms. Socio-cultural influences are critical in understanding how individuals navigate their social environments and make decisions. For instance, research indicates that cultural background significantly impacts communication styles, conflict resolution strategies, and even perceptions of authority (Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, socio-cultural contexts can affect mental health outcomes; individuals from collectivist cultures may experience different stressors compared to those from individualistic societies due to varying expectations regarding social support and personal achievement (Cheng et al., 2019).

In addition to shaping personal identity and interpersonal relationships, socio-cultural influences also play a pivotal role in broader societal issues such as inequality and access to resources. For example, systemic factors such as socioeconomic status can dictate the quality of education

received by individuals within different communities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Furthermore, socio-cultural influences can perpetuate stereotypes and biases that affect marginalized groups' opportunities for advancement (Sue et al., 2009). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at promoting equity and inclusion across diverse populations (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Thus, recognizing the interplay between culture and society is vital for comprehensively addressing contemporary social challenges.

Dimensions of Social-Cultural Influences

Cultural Norms

Cultural norms represent the shared expectations and rules that guide behavior within a specific cultural group. These norms are integral to the social fabric of societies, influencing individual actions, interpersonal relationships, and community dynamics. They encompass a wide range of behaviors, from everyday practices such as greetings and dining etiquette to broader societal values like respect for authority or communal responsibility. Cultural norms are not static; they evolve over time in response to various socio-cultural influences, including globalization, technological advancements, and shifts in demographic patterns (Hofstede et al., 2010). As individuals navigate their cultural environments, they internalize these norms, which subsequently shape their identities and worldviews.

The impact of cultural norms extends beyond individual behavior; they play a crucial role in shaping societal structures and institutions. For instance, educational systems often reflect the prevailing cultural norms regarding knowledge transmission and authority. In multicultural societies, differing cultural norms can lead to tensions or enrich community interactions depending on how well these differences are understood and respected (Berry et al., 2006). Furthermore, the interplay between cultural norms and socio-economic factors can influence access to resources and opportunities within communities. Understanding these dynamics is essential for fostering social cohesion and addressing issues related to inequality (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various dimensions, including income, education, and occupational prestige. It serves as a significant determinant of individuals' social experiences and opportunities within their cultural contexts. SES influences access to resources such as healthcare, education, and social networks, which in turn shape individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and overall well-being (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011). The implications of SES extend beyond mere economic factors; it also interacts with cultural norms and values that dictate social mobility and community engagement. For instance, individuals from lower SES backgrounds may face systemic barriers that limit their participation in cultural activities or access to quality education, thereby perpetuating cycles of disadvantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Moreover, the intersectionality of SES with other social categories such as race, gender, and geographic location further complicates its role in shaping social-cultural influences.

Concept of Organisational Performance

Organizational performance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions of an organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and overall success in achieving its goals. It is often measured through a combination of financial metrics, operational outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). The Balanced Scorecard framework proposed by Kaplan and Norton emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational activities with the vision and strategy of the organization while monitoring performance across four perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). This comprehensive approach allows organizations to assess their performance not just in terms of profitability but also in terms of how well they are serving their customers and developing their internal capabilities.

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of organizational culture and leadership in driving performance outcomes. For instance, Schein (2020) argues that a strong organizational culture fosters employee engagement and commitment, which are critical for enhancing productivity and innovation. Similarly, research by Wang et al. (2021) indicates that transformational leadership positively influences organizational performance by inspiring employees to exceed their own self-interests for the sake of the organization. These findings underscore the interconnectedness between leadership styles, cultural dynamics, and performance metrics within organizations. As such, understanding organizational performance requires a holistic view that integrates various elements including strategic alignment, cultural factors, and leadership effectiveness.

Measures of Organisational Performance

Innovativeness

Innovativeness is increasingly recognized as a critical measure of organizational performance, reflecting an organization's ability to develop new ideas, products, and processes that enhance its competitive advantage. According to Tidd and Bessant (2018), innovativeness encompasses not only the creation of novel products but also the implementation of innovative practices that can lead to improved efficiency and effectiveness within an organization. This multidimensional construct includes aspects such as product innovation, process innovation, and organizational innovation, all of which contribute to overall performance metrics. The relationship between innovativeness and organizational performance is supported by empirical studies indicating that firms with higher levels of innovation tend to achieve better financial outcomes, increased market share, and enhanced customer satisfaction (Damanpour & Aravind, 2012).

Moreover, the role of a supportive organizational culture in fostering innovativeness cannot be overstated. A culture that encourages risk-taking, collaboration, and continuous learning is essential for nurturing innovative capabilities (Schein, 2010). Organizations that prioritize innovation often implement strategic frameworks that align their resources toward research and development activities while simultaneously promoting an environment conducive to creativity.

Efficiency

Efficiency is a critical concept in evaluating organizational performance, as it reflects the ability of an organization to maximize outputs while minimizing inputs. In essence, efficiency can be understood as the ratio of useful output to the total input used in a process (Drucker, 2007). This measure is particularly significant in competitive environments where organizations strive to optimize their resources and enhance productivity. According to Neely et al. (2005), efficiency not only encompasses operational aspects but also extends to strategic dimensions, influencing how well an organization aligns its resources with its goals. The focus on efficiency encourages organizations to streamline processes, reduce waste, and improve overall effectiveness, thereby contributing to enhanced performance metrics.

Theoretical Review

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory was primarily developed by sociologists W. Richard Scott and John W. Meyer in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While various scholars contributed to its evolution, Scott's work in particular has been instrumental in shaping the framework of institutional theory. Institutional theory posits that organizations are influenced by the social, cultural, and regulatory environments in which they operate. It emphasizes that organizations do not exist in isolation but are embedded within a broader context that shapes their structures, practices, and behaviors. The theory suggests that institutions defined as established laws, practices, norms, and rules provide stability and meaning to social life, influencing how organizations function and evolve over time.

Relevance of Socio-Cultural Influences on Organizational Performance: Socio-cultural influences play a critical role in shaping organizational performance through several mechanisms: Legitimacy,

Cultural norms, institutional isomorphism Arises from formal or informal pressures exerted by other organizations or societal expectations. Adaptation to change: organizations must adapt to changes in socio-cultural contexts (e.g., shifts in consumer preferences or regulatory changes) to maintain competitiveness and performance.

Assumptions of the theory

1. **Interdependence:** Organizations are interdependent with their environments; changes in one can significantly affect the other.
2. **Cultural Embeddedness:** Organizational practices are deeply embedded within cultural contexts; thus, understanding local culture is essential for effective management.
3. **Dynamic Nature of Institutions:** Institutions are not static; they evolve over time as societies change, impacting organizational strategies.
4. **Resource Dependency:** Organizations rely on external resources (financial support, human capital) shaped by socio-cultural factors; thus, performance is contingent upon navigating these dependencies effectively.

Implications of the Theory

1. **Strategic Alignment:** Organizations must align their strategies with socio-cultural expectations to achieve better performance outcomes.
2. **Change Management:** Understanding socio-cultural dynamics aids organizations in managing change effectively while minimizing resistance from stakeholders.
3. **Innovation Adoption:** Organizations may need to innovate or adapt their practices based on cultural trends or shifts within their institutional environment.
4. **Policy Development:** Policymakers can utilize insights from institutional theory to create frameworks that support organizational adaptation and resilience amid socio-cultural changes.

Empirical Review

Ojo, and Abiola, (2019) carried out a study on the impact of cultural values on organizational performance in Nigeria. This study aimed to investigate how cultural values influence organizational performance in Nigerian firms. Objectives included identifying specific cultural values that affect employee productivity and assessing the relationship between these values and overall organizational success. Descriptive survey design. Employees from various sectors including banking, manufacturing, and telecommunications in Lagos State. 300 employees selected through stratified random sampling. Primary data collected through structured questionnaires. Content validity was established through expert reviews. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, yielding a reliability score of 0.85. Questionnaires were distributed personally by researchers to ensure high response rates. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, employing descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The study found a significant positive correlation between cultural values such as collectivism and organizational performance metrics like employee satisfaction and productivity levels. Cultural values play a crucial role in shaping organizational performance in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for organizations to align their practices with local cultural norms. Organizations should incorporate cultural training programs to enhance employee understanding of organizational goals aligned with local values.

Shettima et'al (2022), presents an investigation of the impact of socio-cultural factors on the performance of multinational companies in Nigeria with a cursory look at a Shoprite Kano Branch. Socio-cultural environment is a combination of economic, political, legal, social, cultural and technological factors. The socio-cultural factors are one of the main environmental factors that significantly affect the economic activity of multinational companies and their performance as well. The study adopts multi- stage random sampling techniques to selected 112 respondents from the

three (3) units of the company namely top management unit, middle level managers, lower-level workers of Shoprite Kano. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources, the primary data were collected through questionnaire and personal interview while the secondary data were collected from journals, text books and other relevant literatures. One-sample T-test and simple frequency percentage tables were used for data analysis. The study effectively formulated and tested two hypotheses with the aid of Chi-square (X²) method of analysis. The Findings of the study revealed that socio-cultural factors significantly affected the performance of multinational companies in Nigeria. The study recommend and among other things that Government should develop a holistic approach to provide adequate training and workshops/seminars for the business owners so as to update them with the socio-cultural factors of the Nigerian nation.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design as it seeks to determine the relationship existing between two variables. The population of the study consisted of 10 registered fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt as retrieved from Encyclopedia of anyservice.com 20143 managers were selected from each firm multiplied by 10 firms gives us a total of 30 respondents. Structured questionnaire was used in data collection. The reliability of empirical measurement is indicated by the internal consistency, one of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results were used in computation using Cronbach's alpha test of reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.804	6

Source: Researcher Computation via SPSS Version 25

The result of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test indicates .804 which is above .70 which implies that the items are reliable. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses using SPSS (statistical package social sciences).

DATA ANALYSIS

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in in Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Correlations on Cultural Norms and Innovativeness

		Cultural Norms	Innovativeness
Cultural Norms	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Innovativeness	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

Table 2: Correlations on cultural norms and innovativeness revealed there is a significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt where R. 656 = .000 leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Correlations on Socioeconomic Status and Efficiency

		Socioeconomic Status	Efficiency
Socioeconomic Status	Pearson Correlation	1	.711**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Efficiency	Pearson Correlation	.711**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

Table 3: Correlations on Socioeconomic Status and Efficiency revealed there is a significant relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt where $R. .711 = .000$ leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Correlations on cultural norms and innovativeness revealed there is a significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt where $R. .656 = .000$ leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt. Table 3: Correlations on socioeconomic status and efficiency revealed there is a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt where $R. .711 = .000$ leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt.

The analysis of data in respect of hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant relationship between cultural norms and innovativeness of fashion designer firms in Port Harcourt. This finding collaborates with the earlier position of Ojo, and Abiola, (2019) carried out a study on the impact of cultural values on organizational performance in Nigeria. The study found a significant positive correlation between cultural values such as collectivism and organizational performance metrics like employee satisfaction and productivity levels. Cultural values play a crucial role in shaping organizational performance in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for organizations to align their practices with local cultural norms.

The analysis of data in respect of hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and efficiency of fashion designer firms in Port Harcourt. This finding collaborates with the earlier position of Shettima et'al (2022), posit that the findings of the study revealed that socio-cultural factors significantly affected the performance of multinational companies in Nigeria.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the study concluded that socio-cultural influences correlate with organisational performance of fashion designers firms in Port Harcourt..

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn from the findings of the study for fashion designers firms:

1. Fashion designers firms should create programs that promote cultural awareness and workshop among designers.
2. Fashion designers firms should support socioeconomic development initiatives

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