

RELATIONAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE SKILLS MALLEABILITY OF AIRLINE OPERATORS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This work examined the relationship between relational capital development and employee skills malleability in Airline Operators in Rivers State. Objective of the study was to examine how relational capital development relate with measures of employee skills malleability such as problem solving and critical thinking. The targeted population of the study consisted of (303) full-time staff of sixteen (16) Airline Operators in Rivers State. The entire population of three hundred and three (303) staff was used for the study without sampling. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data after due validation, and ascertaining the reliability of the instrument at 0.74 using Crombach alpha. The researcher was able to retrieve 282 copies of the distributed questionnaire. SPSS Version 20.0 was used to run the analysis. Spearman Rank Order was used for the Bivariate analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State; there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State. The study concluded that relational capital development is a veritable tool with which organizations such as Airline operators can build their employees' skills malleability through problem solving, critical and other relating skills. Amongst other things, the study recommended that employees of Airline Operators and other sister organizations should relate healthily with fellow employees and learn new skills from one another that will spur them towards problem solving and critical thinking.

Keywords: *Relational capital development, employee skills malleability, problem solving, critical thinking.*

INTRODUCTION

The business organizations of today have embraced a world of increasing uncertainty and abrupt changes. Consequent upon this, their business environments are unpredictable due to globalization, rapid technological advances, and aging trends that further complicate the current day business environments. In the midst of such turmoil, an employee's ability to be tactful while satisfying ever-changing business and customer needs has become a pivotal asset for an organization's survival and success. The concern for organizations' continuous survival has made their leaders increasingly pay attention to making them sustainable. Such corporations positively elect society in terms of economic, environmental, and human aspects (Heinze, 2020).

Researchers in human resources have become interested in the impact on efficacy of employees' sustainable skills malleability in their work. Hence, currently, job performance demands skills malleability - a situation where employees can adjust to the changing work demands and still work effectively. Bhattacharya et al. (2015) defined employee skills malleability as the capability of an employee to easily adapt to a new job role, work environment, customer/clients, etc. Researchers' keen interest in improving employees' ability to handle fast-paced tasks and deal with uncertain work situations is growing more than ever. However, little research has sought to identify the core attributes and characteristics of employee skills malleability (especially of Airline Operators) and what organizational variables influence an employee's skills malleability and performance in

business settings. From the researcher's desk, the measures of employee skills malleability entail problem solving and critical thinking.

Problem-solving is a calculated and deliberate mental process that involves discovering, analyzing and solving organizational problems (Bill, 2020). The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and finding solutions to problems, especially by using a scientific or analytical approach. Problems are unavoidable in the organization regardless of the nature of activities being undertaken therein. A good problem solving skill is a pivotal employment prerequisite that shows employee's competencies like logic, creativity, resilience, imagination, lateral thinking, diligence and determination. Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas (Tammy, 2017). Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. They will always seek to determine whether the ideas, arguments and findings represent the entire picture and are open to finding that they do not. Thus, problem solvers must be critical thinkers. It therefore means that an employee who is always interested in problem solving is one who, among other things, is inquisitive and constantly in critical thinking mood. However, such manner of employee could be produced by reason of the positive influence gotten from relationships created within and outside the organization. More explicitly, relational capital development is a veritable machinery with which an organization can utilize to influence their employees' skills malleability, that is, enhancing their flexibility/adaptability skill.

Relational capital development is the development of relationships with internal and external associates of the firm, including customers, employees, suppliers, strategic alliance partners, stakeholders and industry associations (Awais & Asad, 2014). The main focus of relational capital is the level of mutual understandings, trust and respect, the friendship that arises out of close interactions, between external and internal factors. Thus, in the context of internal and external stakeholders, it can be argued that relational capital of the enterprise is a relationship among employees with customers and suppliers. Relational capital is the aggregate of all assets which arrange and manage organization's relations with the environment. The customers, employees, suppliers, strategic alliance partners, stakeholders, industry associations, etc. become the inspiration an organization gets through which they compete favourably by building on their employees' skills and other factors of change in the organization. In other words, the relationships an organization builds with all of its external and internal stakeholders are capable of directly and indirectly influencing the employees towards developing skills malleability, among other things. Notwithstanding, Airline Operators in Rivers State and other States of the country are yet to understand and judiciously utilize the values that accrue relational capital development. A lot of them have refused to upgrade in their service provision, in spite of the relationships they have with other Airline Operators within and outside the country. Their employees still find it very tough to adjust to changing job roles; flexibility/adaptability in the workplace is still rocket science to them. Airline Operators in Port Harcourt have built social capitals across many other nations of the world, but have really not learnt from them, as their service provisions are still not of very high standard as it should be (Anddison & Tambari, 2019). This is an issue that needs to be taken care of among Airline Operators in Rivers State.

Another banging issue that has provoked this research effort is the lack sufficient literature hitting on the influence of relational capital development and employee skills malleability, especially in Rivers State. This is worrisome and requires urgent attention. For instance, Anddison and Tambari (2019) did a study on relational capital development and firm's resilience among travel agencies in Port Harcourt. Awais and Asad (2014) carried out a study on relational capital and performance: a case of brand developing firms. In the same vein, Tomasz and Kijek (2008) studied relational capital and its impact on performance in Poland enterprises. It is obvious at this point that research on the relationship between relational capital development and employee skills

malleability in Airline Operators in Rivers State is yet to gather sufficient research effort. Upon these backdrops, the researcher deems it very necessary to carry out this research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

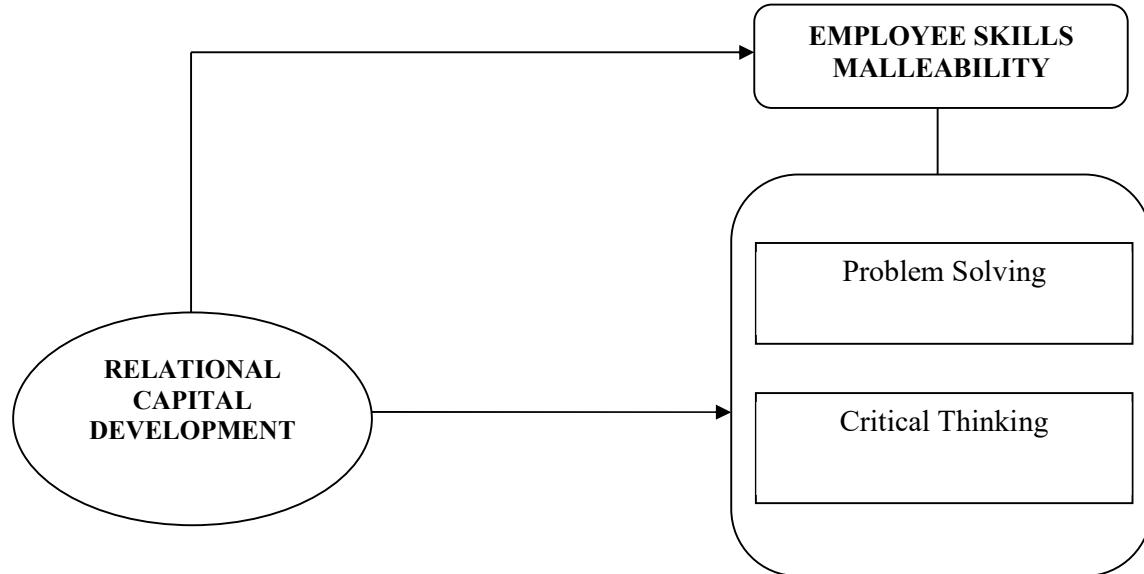


Fig. 1.1: Conceptual framework showing relationship between dimension of relational capital development (independent variable) and measures of employee skills malleability (dependent variable).

Source: Desk Research, 2022.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁: Relational capital development does not significantly relate with employee skills malleability with regard to problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State.
- Ho₂: Relational capital development does not significantly relate with employee skills malleability with regard to critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work was based on Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam Social Capital Theory in the 1980s.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory examines how social relationships once formed can benefit individuals and organizations beyond their original context of creation. Social capital is a metaphor from other types of capital, an investment to be made, consisting of trustworthy networks and social relations that enable collaboration and other benefits. The value of social capital lies in its ability to transfer and facilitate other forms of capital beneficial for individuals and organizations. Social capital is beneficial only once it is mobilized, and as a system, it feeds on itself: trusting relationships help build other trusting relationships.

Social Capital Theory has been argued to be the most significant way of theorizing the nature of connection and cooperation between organization (Adler & Kwon, 2012; Starkey & Tempest,

2014). It helps to characterize an organization's complete set of relationships, whilst its focus on the flow of resources between organizations enables the explanation of performance differences between organizations (Koka & Prescott, 2014). Social Capital Theory suggests that actors gain access to different kinds of resources due to their engagement in various types of relationships. The various relationships contributes to building employee skills malleability. In other words, employees in Airline Operators can learn to solve new problems and as well as think critically through their relationship with other internal and external stakeholders of the organization. An employee could directly and indirectly be an encouragement to a fellow employee through their relationship such that the other employee learns new skills that will help them be flexible in discharging their duties.

This view emphasizes social capital as a resource that can be actively generated and transferred across firm boundaries. Social capital is similar to other forms of capital in that it has productive value and enables organizations to achieve goals that would not be possible in its absence social capital but it is a complex to identify and therefore manage in the context of a business relationship. The intangible relationship and nature of social capital have implications on its transferability in that it cannot be traded easily and it is therefore uniquely tied to the relationship from which it was created, interpersonal trust and shared understandings are not something that can readily be passed from one relationship to another (Burt, 2016).

The justification of the socio-technical theory as an additional theory for this study is based on the fact that the theory talks about how the interrelationship between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders can help build on the organization's growth factors. Just like relationships among humans can help build their capacity, the same happens among an organization and its stakeholders. It therefore becomes pertinent to adopt a theory such as this since the work is aimed at getting empirical evidence on how relational capital development interacts with employee skills malleability.

CONCEPT OF RELATIONAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Relational capital is defined as all relationships, which include market relationships, power relationships and cooperation established between firms, institutions and people, which stem from a strong sense of belonging and a highly developed capacity of cooperation typical of culturally similar people and institutions (Wikipedia, 2020). Relational dependency may be vertical or horizontal, either up or downstream, shaping different types of cooperative, collaborative or competitive mechanisms in different ecosystem (Khavand & Khavandkar, 2013). There are major conceptual differences between industrial and regional economists in their views towards relational capital. There have been research studies applying quantitative, empirical, and econometric techniques in an effort to verify the existence of relational capital and its importance to the innovation activity in firms. Proxies are found to represent the channels through which knowledge develops at the local level and therefore indirectly of relational capital.

Relational capital, also known as relational resources, refers to the assets created and leveraged through relationships rooted in trust, solidarity norms, and identification (Anddison & Tambari, 2019). The relational perspective suggests that organisations will derive complex, personal, noneconomic satisfactions and engage in social exchange from harmonious relationship with its stakes, particularly customers. It can be assessed by the degree of mutual respect, trust and close interaction that exists between actors in the relationship (Cousins et al., 2005). These assets are in effect embedded in the relationships and bonds between actors, and this concept is not new to the strategic management but it has lacked extensive application and testing. According to Dyer and Singh (2015), in the relational view of the firm, relational capital acts as an important governance mechanism embedded in relationships and as a form of capital which is inherently difficult to measure.

In another view, Meritum (2012) argued that relational capital refers to all resources that are linked with an external relationship of the firm; it covers both institutions and business, this includes customers, suppliers, research and development, partners, and public institutions. Thus, a good characterization of relational capital is that it refers to the quality and sustainability of the external stakeholders and also the potentiality of generating new agents in the future. These aspects are vital to the success of a company. Relational capital consists of the link a company has with its competitors and other institutions in the market (Anddison. & Tambari, 2019). It is the value derived from harmonious links with alliances, which also covers image, loyalty, satisfaction, commercial power, environmental activities and so on expressed in goodwill.

Relational capital development is the building of knowledge embedded in the relationships with customers, suppliers, industry associations or any other stakeholder that influence the organization's life (Cabrita & Bontis, 2018). It is seen by Awais and Asad (2014) as the development of relationships with internal and external associates of the firm, including customers, employees, suppliers, strategic alliance partners, stakeholders and industry associations. The main focus of relational capital is the level of mutual understandings, trust and respect, the friendship that arises out of close interactions, between external and internal factors. The trust is composed of organizational confidence on internal interconnections and the environment, which binds the organization to maintain the long term relationships. Thus, in the context of internal and external stakeholders, it can be argued that relational capital of the enterprise is a relationship among employees with customers and suppliers. Relational capital is the aggregate of all assets which arrange and manage organization's relations with the environment. This kind of capital includes the relations with customers, suppliers, consultant clients, the retailer.

Relational capital is composed of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, negotiating capacity, company image and interaction with suppliers and employees, distribution channel, supplier channels and licensing agreements (Awais & Asad, 2014). Relational capital is the knowledge attained by the firm as a result of its interactions with parties and the potential to exchange knowledge to work in the future. The value of the firm is directly related to the accumulated knowledge of relationship with third parties. One of the elements of relational capital is the relationship with customers that often are referred to the market orientation concept, for the purpose of feedback. Market orientation is generated from market intelligence related to the current and future needs of customers (Baxter & Matear, 2014).

Finally, the role of relational capital in development process has been given focus by different scientist of the world. Kohil & Jaworski (1990) argue that in order to get feedback, the elements of relational capital such as costumer's relationship are often referred to the market orientation concept. Market orientation is the most important aspect of performance and is related to the current and future needs of customers. Market orientation is also the creations of market intelligence. According to Ordonez (2013), the external and internal associations of firm with organization relation is known as relational capital. This includes customer, suppliers, employees; strategic alliance partner's stakeholders, and industry associations. Tomasz and Kijek, (2008) argue that the interactions of external and internal factors create trust and respect, the level of the friendship based on mutual understandings, which is the main focus of relational capital. The trust within the organization creates internal interconnections and environment bond for long term relationships and confidence. Thus, in the internal and external stakeholder framework, it can be argued that the relationship among employees with customers and suppliers is the concern of enterprise relational capital.

CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE SKILLS MALLEABILITY

Skills malleability is the ability to rapidly learn new skills and behaviours in response to changing circumstances (Wheatley, 2020). It is also the ability of a person to change his actions, course or approach to doing things in order to suit a new situation. Malleability in the workplace means being flexible and able to change in order to become successful. It therefore behooves on management

of organizations to teach their employees the ability to be malleable in their skills when they are faced with varying work environments, new job roles, new clients, new bosses/supervisors, etc. It will be detrimental to the employee and also to the organization when an employee is rigid in their skills or takes him so much time to adjust to suit the new work environment or role.

From the foregoing, Bhattacharya et al. (2015) defined employee skills malleability as the capability of an employee to easily adapt to a new job role, work environment, customer/clients, etc. The nature of work environment demands that employees be equipped with the ability to quickly adjust to changing work system. The sophisticated work environment of this dispensation requires that employees learn to adjust swiftly to the varying needs of the work environment. Skills malleability can be generated in two different ways (Bhattacharya et al., 2015). First, firms may have employees who possess a set of broad-based skills and are capable of using them under different demand conditions. Broad-based skills are valuable because they generate output streams for existing requirements and are also capable of producing output for possible alternative requirements. Skills possessed by employees but not currently used may open up new opportunities of business for the firm, and indeed, may influence strategic choices (Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 2016). Second, firms may employ a wide variety of "specialist" employees who provide flexibility by allowing the firm to reconfigure skill profiles to meet changing needs. With this flexibility, when the need arises, the firm may reorganize its employees (e.g., through project teams) to achieve the desired skill profile to fit with the changed demand (Neuman & Wright, 2014). Thus, a wide range of employee skills contribute to flexibility. This wide range can be gained by having a smaller number of employees with broad-based skills or a larger number of employees with more narrow, specialist skills.

Broad-based skills are even more complex and difficult to imitate because these refer to a wider array of skills generated by a larger number of diverse experiences. At the organizational level, firms develop their own combination of skills with the variety of Human Resource applications they implement over a number of years. A firm may develop skill malleability through processes such as job rotation, cross-functional teams, and project-based work arrangements, all of which generate broad skill configurations specific to the firm that are not easily replicable. This suggests that the higher the level of employee skill malleability, the more likely employees are to exhibit higher performance.

MEASURES OF EMPLOYEE SKILLS MALLEABILITY

Problem Solving

Problem-solving is a calculated and deliberate mental process that involves discovering, analyzing and solving organizational problems (Bill, 2020). The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and finding solutions to problems, especially by using a scientific or analytical approach. Problems are unavoidable in the organization regardless of the nature of activities being undertaken therein. This is because organization is a social setting, operating in a social environment and controlled by social beings which are socially insatiable. The dissatisfaction nature of these social forces constitutes an endless cause of problem for organizations. The destructive nature of these problems heralded the need for them to be properly resolved. Solving of problems within an organization is majorly the responsibility of the employees in that organization. Every employee is responsible for the problems in that organization inasmuch as the problems can be resolved internally.

Problem solving is a vital everyday skill needed for personal and professional life (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, 2020). A good problem solving skill is a pivotal employment prerequisite that shows employee's competencies like logic, creativity, resilience, imagination, lateral thinking, diligence and determination. It is an essential skill for all employees serving in any capacity, those with good problem-solving skills are a valuable and trusted asset in their team, they are the people who think of new ideas, better ways of doing things, make it easier for people to understand things or help save customers time and money. They are proactive

thinkers who like to get things done and can help you progress more quickly and boost career opportunities. When employers talk about problem-solving skills, they are often referring to the ability to handle difficult or unexpected situations in the workplace as well as complex business challenges.

Critical Thinking

Devoid of critical thinking, an employee cannot be said to be creative. To effectively deal with any situation, one must critically think it through. By so doing, results are bound to be achieved in most cases. Supportively, Gerrard (2020) asserted that no difficult situation has ever survived critical thinking. This implies that no matter how entangled the situation might be, when it encounters critical thinking, it will have no choice but to bow. This involves objective deep mind engagement to find the way around a situation. Deeply engaging the mind to run through every situation critically is bound to rear position fruition most of the time.

Conceptually, critical thinking is that mode of thinking about any subject, content, or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them. Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas (Tammy, 2017). Critical thinking has been the subject of much debate and thought since the time of early Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates and has continued to be a subject of discussion into the modern age, for example the ability to recognise fake news. Critical thinking might be described as the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking.

In essence, critical thinking requires you to use your ability to reason. It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information. Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. They will always seek to determine whether the ideas, arguments and findings represent the entire picture and are open to finding that they do not. Critical thinkers will identify, analyse and solve problems systematically rather than by intuition or instinct.

RELATIONAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE SKILLS MALLEABILITY

Relational capital development covers the development of all necessary internal and external relationships of the firm, which include relationships with customers, suppliers, research and development, partners, and public institutions. All these relationships have ways in which they influence the performance of the employees and the organization. Relational capital development in the organizations encourages knowledge transfer and direct and indirect inspiration from other organizations, employees, clients/customers, etc. A relationship an organization develops with other organizations has the capacity to spur the employees of that organization to develop emerging skills such as malleability skill. In other words, an employee, through his relationship with other employees in the organization and other sister organizations, can get really inspired to be malleable (i.e flexible) in their skills. Problem solving as a dimension of employee skills malleability can be developed by an employee just by the relationship he develops with other employees. Employees learn from one another. By learning, they transfer knowledge to one another, and such knowledge can enhance their problem solving ability.

A good characterization of relational capital is that it refers to the quality and sustainability of the external stakeholders and also the potentiality of generating new agents in the future. These aspects are vital to the success of a company. Relational capital consists of the link a company has with its competitors and other institutions in the market (Anddison & Tambari, 2019). It is the value derived from harmonious links with alliances, which also covers image, loyalty, satisfaction, commercial power, environmental activities and so on expressed in goodwill. Problem solving is an essential skill for all employees serving in any capacity. Those with good problem-solving skills are a valuable and trusted asset in their team; they are the people who think of new ideas, better

ways of doing things, make it easier for people to understand things or help save customers time and money (Bill, 2020).

Relational capital development in an organization such as Airline Operating Company can as well encourage critical thinking. Some organizations today would not have been doing competitively well if they had not seen through their relationship, how other organizations are soaring. This, in most cases, inspires the organization to feel challenge and therefore encourage their employees to do better. As a result, they subject their employee to diverse soft skills such as critical thinking, communication skills and similar others. Critical thinking might be described as the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. In essence, critical thinking requires you to use your ability to reason (Tammy, 2017). It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information. Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. The relationships employees develop with their fellow employees, clients/customers, managers, etc. within and outside the organization can drive their performance. Employees can learn the act of being flexible or adaptive to new job roles, work environment, bosses/supervisors, etc. such that they ignite critical thinking. By an employee being critical in their thinking, they can deal with a lot changing job roles or environment. And the root of this critical thinking ability in an employee might be the inspiration he got from fellow employees within or outside the organization. In tandem with this, Anddison and Tambari (2019) averred that the relational capital organizations develop go beyond just developing social capital for themselves, but also shed positive light on inspiring their employees to develop competitive skills that will help grow their organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The cross sectional exploratory survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of three hundred and three (303) full-time staff of sixteen (16) Airline Operators in Rivers State. The entire population of three hundred and three (303) staff was used for the study without sampling. Thus, the study was a census research which entails using the entire population. 282 out of the questionnaires sent out, were retrieved.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was applied in the data analysis using the statistical tool: the test of hypotheses was done using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The Spearman's (rho) correlation was used to analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variables at $P < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

RESULTS

H_0 : Relational capital development does not significantly relate with employee skills malleability with regard to problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State.

Relational Capital Development and Problem Solving

		Relational Capital Development	Problem Solving
Pearson r	Relational Capital Development	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	282
	Problem Solving	Correlation Coefficient	0.858**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	282

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2022.

Column two of the above table shows r value of 0.858 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating relational capital development and

problem solving. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states relational capital development does not significantly affect employee skills malleability with regard to problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State.

H_0 : Relational capital development does not significantly relate with employee skills malleability with regard to critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State.

Relational Capital Development and Critical Thinking

		Relational Capital Development	Critical Thinking
Pearson r	Relational Capital Development	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	282
	Critical Thinking	Correlation Coefficient	0.862**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	282

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2022.

Column three of the above table shows r value of 0.862 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating relational capital development and critical thinking. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that relational capital development does not significantly affect employee skills malleability with regard to critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The test of hypothesis one revealed that there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and problem solving in Airline Operators in Rivers State. This implies that the relational capital developed by an organization can thereafter lead to inspiring their employees to develop problem solving skill. Sometimes in life, one only picks challenge to do better when another is seen doing exceptionally well in that area. The same happens even in the workplace. Employees sometimes relate with other employees or even customers/clients who later inspire them directly or indirectly to deal with diverse new work challenges. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Anddison and Tambari (2019) which revealed that the social capital that employees develop helps them to spur one another towards healthy competition by building on the skills of their employees which later reflect on the performances of the employees and the organizations. This turns out that employees sometimes become agents of change in the organization through the inspiration the organization and the employees get from relational capital. An employee, through his relationship with other employees in the organization and other sister organizations, can get really inspired to be malleable (i.e flexible) in their skills. Problem solving as a dimension of employee skills malleability can be developed by an employee just by the relationship he develops with other employees. Employees learn from one another. By learning, they transfer knowledge to one another, and such knowledge can enhance their problem solving ability.

The test of hypothesis two revealed that there is a very strong positive relationship between relational capital development and critical thinking in Airline Operators in Rivers State. This implies that relational capital development can drive employees towards the ability to think critically and be problem solvers in the long run. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Tomasz and

Kijek (2008) who found that one of the reasons organizations relate with external stakeholders is to find out their secrets that will spur them to better their performance and productivity by building employees who among other things, are critical thinkers. Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. The relationships employees develop with their fellow employees, clients/customers, managers, etc. within and outside the organization can drive their performance. Employees can learn the act of being flexible or adaptive to new job roles, work environment, bosses/supervisors, etc. such that they ignite critical thinking. By an employee being critical in their thinking, they can deal with a lot changing job roles or environment. And the root of this critical thinking ability in an employee might be the inspiration he got from fellow employees within or outside the organization. In tandem with this, Anddison and Tambari (2019) averred that the relational capital organizations develop go beyond just developing social capital for themselves, but also shed positive light on inspiring their employees to develop competitive skills that will help grow their organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown that relational capital development aids organizations to develop social capital that turn out to be backbones and as well as spurring agents in the positive lane. Organizations through their managers and employees now develop relationships with other sister organizations, managers, employees, customers/clients, and other stakeholders that motivate them to compete healthily, and therefore build their employees' capability such that they become malleable in their skills. In the light of these, this work therefore concludes that relational capital development is a veritable tool with which organizations such as Airline operators can build their employees' skills malleability through problem solving, critical and other relating skills. Airline Operators that undermine the development of relational capital might risk employee skills malleability and other accruing benefits that it stands to bring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Airline Operators in Rivers and other States should make judicious use of the social capital they develop through relational capital development by allowing these relationships spur them towards building the skills of their employees for better business competition.
2. Employees of Airline Operators and other sister organizations should relate healthily with fellow employees and learn new skills from one another that will spur them towards problem solving and critical thinking.
3. Employees in Airline Operators and other sister organizations should deliberately make beneficial enquiries from their fellow employees within and outside their organizations, as these will help enhance their problem solving and critical thinking abilities.

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