

ADAPTIVE CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE CHANGE READINESS IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The inevitability of change is such that imposes on the organization to be proactive and innovative in its behaviour and actions. Organizational change is the organization's response to the emerging issues and factors that shape the environment of the organization; hence it could be considered a prerequisite for organizational wellbeing. However, its related challenges regarding workers' recognition, acceptance, and support for change in public sector organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria is such that are premised on the low emphatics placed on adaptive culture. In investigating the relationship between adaptive culture and employee change readiness, this research, based on a sample of 140 workers from 5 public organizations in Bayelsa State, identified adaptive culture as a significant predictor of the related outcomes of employee recognition of the need for change, acceptance and support for change. Findings showed that adaptive culture enhances related work conditions and frameworks that allow for co-creativity and as such stimulate workers' participation and empowerment in the organization. It was concluded that developing cultural systems that are adaptive, much depends on learning and the tailoring of cultural frameworks to effectively address the change readiness of employees for the required change outcomes.

Keywords: Organizational change, employee change readiness, adaptive culture, social cognition theory.

INTRODUCTION

Change advances significant implications for organizations. Considerations of required competencies, technologies, and networks are often emphasized at the individual and organizational levels. However, as Vogel and Rowold (2014) pointed out, organizational actions channelled toward addressing change draw primarily on the disposition of the employees toward change. This follows Smith's (2005) observation that the human resource of the organization is its foundation and primary source of capacity. Concerns of employee recognition of the need for change and support for change are such that are therefore considered important and have in recent years, due to emerging realities of change in the form of pandemics and volatility in global economic policies, garnered interest in business and academic communities (Vogel & Rowold, 2014).

Ijewereme and Olaniyi (2014) identified the public sector as significant to any nation's economic stability, wellbeing, and progress. This is as the report indicates a dwindling level of effectiveness expressed by Nigerian public organizations, despite notable recurrent and capital expenditure on the sector (Adenekan & Jimoh, 2021). Joe Abah, the Director-General, Bureau of Public Service Reforms stated that as of 2015, the Federal Government out of a population of 181 million, only had in its employ 89,511 – equating to 0.000495% of its total population (Vanguard, 2015).

Similarly, Adenekan and Jimoh (2021) described public organizations as overly dysfunctional, inefficient and marked by a growing yet ignored decay in morals and ethical leadership. These features have over the years conditioned work and workplace relationships within these organizations – crystallizing into shared realities and a culture of corruption, deviance, and the lack of commitment toward the performance or development of related organizations. Such, as Adenekan

and Jimoh (2021) noted has negatively influenced workers' disposition toward change-related actions aimed at reforming or enhancing the effectiveness and performance of their organizations. Research on employee change readiness acknowledges organizational culture as a fundamental aspect of organizational behaviour (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Lee et al, 2016). Alinejad and Alireza (2019) posited that culture is how the organization interacts internally and externally with the constituents of its environment. As such, cultural conditions and occasions the reality and norms of the organization – impose on members a shared position and responsibility toward the organization. However, distinguished between cultural forms such as bureaucratic, hierarchical, and even adaptive. According to Alinejad and Alireza (2019), these cultural forms are unique and distinct, each advancing feature necessary for channelling, coordinating, and engaging the organization's resources in a particular way.

While previous research has often approached the role of culture in employee change readiness, from a more generalistic point of view (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Shin et al, 2012; Suwaryo et al, 2015), not much has been done about the specific implications of cultural forms that are adaptive and focused on attributes such as participation and learning on outcomes of employee change readiness. This advances a vacuum in terms of knowledgeability in that regard; hence this research is a departure from previous studies – advancing empirical evidence on the role of adaptive culture in the actualization of employee change readiness in selected public organizations in Bayelsa State. The objectives of this research are to:

- i. Ascertain the relationship between adaptive culture and employee recognition of the need for change in selected public organizations in Bayelsa State
- ii. Examine the relationship between adaptive culture and employee acceptance of change in selected public organizations in Bayelsa State
- iii. Determine the relationship between adaptive culture and employee support for change in selected public organizations in Bayelsa State

Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory is also a social behavioural theory that identifies a change in behaviour and actions resulting from related social actions such as observation and interaction with the environment (Bandura, 2001). The theory proposes change is relative and as such, draws on the imperative of organizations to first interact and engage their environment, then subsequently, adapt or advance forms that can be considered as necessary or suited for addressing the concerns or issues that characterize their environment. The social cognitive theory prescribes the enactment of "adaptive forms" based on one's encounter and experience within a particular context. At the organizational level, it identifies the need for changes in organizational practices, behaviour, policies and even business approaches in addressing competitive challenges or in surmounting operational gaps (Bandura, 2001).

Carillo (2010) observed that the social cognitive theory emphasizes the unique and subjective; rather than the shared position or climate of events that are often manifested in most industries. Given its historical development and emergence as a theory in psychology, Hoffman et al (2015) argued that learning, although a social action, begins with one's cognition or interpretation of the environment or context in which they find themselves. Thus, learning begins with the perceptions or understanding offered in line with one's engagement and interaction with their social context and therewith the development, adaptation, or modification of features to mirror such context and effectively enhance the individual or organization's positioning and operations (Carillo, 2010). The subjectivity involved in such cognitive action is premised on its unique translation of its experiences and its reconfiguration of behaviour and attributes for improved social relations and outcomes.

The social cognitive theory provides a suitable framework for predicting the outcome of the relationship between adaptive culture and employee change readiness, in the sense that it expatiates on the imperatives of tailoring or aligning organizational values and practices with the

overarching or pervading factors in the environment. Cameron and Quinn (2006) posited that the culture of the organization is its identity. Culture is an integral aspect of the organization as it shapes and determines the organization's choices, actions, and how it interacts with its internal and external constituents. Cultural changes are essential in bridging the differences between the organization and its environment. This is because, culture serves as the medium through which the organization can interface with its environment, market, or context (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Adaptive Culture

The concept of culture is both descriptive and prescriptive. By culture, one describes the behaviour, beliefs, norms and values of the organization (Zhao et al, 2018). In the same vein, culture also prescribes what is suitable and appropriate for the organization. Thus, culture permeates various aspects, functions, processes and attributes of the organization. It affects and significantly influences the organization's structure, tendencies, and preferences. Umrani et al (2017) described adaptive culture as that form of culture which is innovative, supportive of learning, focused on synchronizing the organization with its environment and most importantly and emphatic, inclusive and empowering of the organization's employees. According to Cheung et al (2012) the process of adaptation is most critical at the stage where it affects or relates to the tangible and observable behaviour of the organization – particularly that of the junior and frontline staff-related actions of the organization. Related experiences and creativity at this level are crucial and reinforce the foundation of the organization's change plans or goals.

Employee Change Readiness

This describes the perceptions and disposition of the organization's workers toward change events. Eby et al (2000) posited that change often comes with modifications to existing relationships, roles, plans, and processes – most of which affect or impact the worker's direct environment and experience. Thus, some find change threatening and as such are averse to change. Such aversion to change could be problematic for the organization as the required support and drive for such may become illusional. Self and Schraeder (2009) argued that employee change readiness is critical to the effective implementation of policies and change outcomes.

Robbins and Judge (2009) stated that change readiness occurs at various levels – at the organizational level, the dyadic, group or functional level and also at the individual level; however, it is change at the group level that is most sensitive and pivotal. This is because once ideas have been sold to the individual; and adopted by significant others in the organization, it spreads, embroidering relationships, processes, and the entire organization as it becomes an ideology and value; accepted and emphasized by the organization (Madsen et al, 2005; Palmer et al, 2009). For this research, three forms of employee change are identified, namely: employee recognition of the need for change, employee acceptance of change, and employee support for change. These according to research (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Shin et al, 2012) provide the yardstick for measuring the individual or employees' disposition and readiness toward organizational change.

Adaptive culture and employee recognition of the need for change: Culture is considered crucial as it embodies both idealistic and symbolic values of the organization. For these reasons, the culture of the organization could be repressive as well as empowering (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Adaptive culture according to Bigliardi et al (2012) is constantly driving the organization toward learning and knowledge development thus, demonstrating possible functional or operational deficiencies in the organization and how much can be addressed. Such focus stimulates awareness and recognition across levels in the organization – providing substantial justification for innovation and change. Unfortunately, research in Nigeria has scarcely addressed the role of adaptive culture

in outcomes of employee recognition of the need for change. This follows Ijewereme and Olaniyi's (2014) observation that one of the concerns of public organizations in Nigeria is shared inertia apparent in their behaviour. Such stifles innovation and as Ijewereme and Olaniyi (2014) noted, cripples otherwise effective policies in the organization. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between adaptive culture and employee recognition of the need for change in public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Adaptive culture and employee acceptance of change: The acceptance of change, according to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) describes a perception of change as not only inevitable or necessary but also healthy and beneficial to the organization. This means workers or employees do not perceive change as a threat but embrace change. This is only possible where workers are involved and are clarified about the nature and implications of change in the long run. Schuld et al (2020) argued that one of the key features of an adaptive culture is that it is empowering and as such allows for co-creation across the organization.

Suwayo et al (2015) reiterated the views of Albrecht and Travaglione (2003) in stating that one way organizations could motivate and address their worker's disposition toward change is by communicating and involving them in the decision-making and change process of the organization. Notwithstanding, organizations differ and it is that difference in terms of experience and context that is considered most critical in developing employee involvement and empowerment approaches, necessary for driving the goals of the organization. (Albrecht & Travaglione, 2003) This follows a reciprocal behaviour in which organizations, such as those in Nigeria can advance functional frameworks suitable for their change initiatives or goals. Thus, the following hypothesis is stated:

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between adaptive culture and employee acceptance of change in public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Adaptive culture and employee support for change: Change support is important for the successful implementation of strategies, policies, and preferred change outcomes. Not only is it essential that employees recognize and accept change, but they must also be willing to support and play their parts in the change process (Saragih et al, 2013). Participation in change is important for engaging and garnering employee change support. Lee et al (2016) observed that the culture of the organization also shapes the nature and features of decision-making and the value placed on employee input or views in the organization. This agrees with Suwayo et al (2015) observation that a culture that values and is empowering of its' workers – can draw from their experiences and capacities. Lee et al (2016) also noted that organizational change narratives change when employees are actively involved and allowed to contribute toward change. Yet still, the role of adaptive culture in enabling and facilitating employee support for change has scarcely been addressed in public organizations in Nigeria; this gap occasions uncertainties as regards the relationship between the variables; hence, this research hypothesizes as follows:

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between adaptive culture and employee support for change in public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This research anchors on a positivist ideology and a quantitative methodology (Saunders et al, 2011). The strategy adopted is the deductive strategy as hypothetical statements advanced are tested in line with validating the social cognitive theory and its veracity within the context of selected public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The research design is a correlation, emphasizing the distinctive nature and characteristics of the variables of interest (adaptive culture and employee change readiness). The choice of the public organizations is premised on selective criteria of the sector, State, ministry, and years in operation. Given the level of analysis (individual), 218 employees from five public organizations in Bayelsa State were identified as the population for this

research. A sample size of 140 employees was determined as substantial based on the Krejcie and Morgan table of 1970 (Sekaran, 2003) and the sampling method adopted is the simple random sampling method.

Data collection for this research was conducted physically with personal visits to the target organizations in Bayelsa State. Structured questionnaire instruments were administered and retrieved from the five public organizations in Bayelsa State. Instrumentation for the variables builds on previous research and their operational definitions as availed in literature. Measurement for adaptive culture was based on Cameron and Quinn (2006) while that of employee change readiness and its measures (employee recognition of the need for change, acceptance of change and the support for change) is based on Saragih et al (2013). The 5-point Likert scale was adopted in the ranking of responses for the variables. Reliability assessment for the instrument was carried out using the Cronbach alpha reliability with all scores observed at a > 0.70 (Sekaran, 2003).

DATA RESULTS

The result presented in this section is based on the univariate and bivariate analyses of the retrieved data. Field outcomes on the administration, retrieval, and cleaning of questionnaire copies were observed to have low issues or error cases, primarily missing values on some indicators which were treated using the mode approximation method. All cases (100%) after cleaning and treatment were coded and thereafter analysed accordingly.

Table 1: Univariate distribution for the variables

		Employee Recognition of the Need for Change	Employee Acceptance of Change	Employee Support for Change	Adaptive Culture
N	Valid	140	140	140	140
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.61	2.49	2.65	2.31
Mode		4	2	2	2
Std. Deviation		1.371	1.089	1.223	1.169

Source: Survey Data, 2022

The outcome for the univariate analysis suggests relatively low and poor levels of agreement to employee acceptance of change (x = 2.49) employee support for change (x = 2.65) and adaptive culture (x = 2.31). However, the distribution for employee recognition of the need for change (x = 3.61) appears to be higher, suggesting participants understand their organization’s need for change; however, they do not appear to accept or support this change. The univariate distribution also indicates that the distribution for adaptive culture (x = 2.31) is also low indicating a weak culture with poor levels of inclusivity, participation and employee empowerment. Interpretations for the univariate distribution build on a base mean of x = 3 in line with the adopted measurement scale for the research (Sekaran, 2003).

Table 2: Bivariate Analysis

Adaptive Culture	Employee Recognition of the Need for Change	Employee Acceptance of Change	Employee Support for Change
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Adaptive Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.457**	.538**	.403**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140
Employee Recognition of the Need for Change	Pearson Correlation	.457**	1	.524**	.471**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140
Employee Acceptance of Change	Pearson Correlation	.538**	.524**	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	140	140	140	140
Employee Support for Change	Pearson Correlation	.403**	.471**	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	140	140	140	140

Source: Survey Data, 2022

The result on the test for the hypotheses indicates that adaptive culture significantly and positively correlates with outcomes of employee recognition of the need for change ($R = 0.457$; $P_v = 0.000$) employee acceptance of change ($R = 0.583$; $P_v = 0.000$) and employee support for change ($R = 0.403$; $P_v = 0.000$). The results demonstrate the significance of adaptive culture in the outcome and manifestations of these facets of employee change readiness, in public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In line with this evidence, previous hypothetical statements are rejected. The findings show that adaptive culture has a more significant impact on employee acceptance of the change ($R = 0.538$) suggesting that through related value and emphasis on inclusion and participation, employees are clarified and informed on the imperatives of change and its occasioning of preferred organizational outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The evidence generated herein reinforces the social cognitive theory and its veracity in predicting the outcome of the relationship between adaptive culture and employee change readiness. The result from the analysis indicates that adaptive culture is a significant predictor of outcomes such as employee recognition of the need for change, employee acceptance of change, and employee support for change. This suggests that related actions of employee empowerment, inclusive leadership, and participative decision-making – all related facets and attributes of adaptive cultural systems, are imperative for effectively engaging employees in change events. The findings of this research reinforce the assertions of previous studies (Suwaryo et al, 2015; Shin et al 2012) on bridging the gaps or differences between organizations and their environment through the focus on the culture of the organization.

Related studies (Umrani et al, 2017; Lee et al, 2016; Shin et al 2012) point to the significance of culture in advancing organizational strategies and especially in the implementation of policies. This research has through the positive outcome of the tests, demonstrated the role and substantiality of culture in providing clarity and in enriching employees' views and positions on the imperatives of change. This is because, not only is adaptive culture people-oriented, but it is also innovative and futuristic – thus it builds on creating an environment where creativity thrives and where ideas are generated (Shin et al 2012). Within such a context, employees are motivated to contribute meaningfully toward change and that way, share in the way related change actions are coordinated

and channelled in the interest of the organization. The implications of the findings of this study follow the need for improved levels of inclusivity at the leadership level and employee decision autonomy. It is also important that communication is strengthened in the organization as a way of increasing correspondence and collaboration across organizational levels and units in the organization.

CONCLUSION

This investigation provides a position that establishes adaptive culture as an imperative for improved outcomes of employee recognition of change, acceptance of change, and the support for change in public organizations in Bayelsa State. This validates the social cognitive theory and its prescribed actions for enhancing the change capabilities of the organization through the effective enactment and adaptation of frameworks suited to addressing its employee change concerns. From the evidence generated, adaptive culture can be stated as a precursor to improved change perceptions in the workplace, facilitating employee positive outlook and disposition toward such. It is therefore imperative that related public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, focus on learning and interpreting the dynamic factors that shape their environment, and mimic such through adaptive culture systems that allow and support co-creativity, innovation, and growth. This is necessary for effectively engaging employees in the change process and stimulating their support for the organization as well.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this research are such that could be described as limiting in terms of its generalization of finding and also the timing or period of investigation. The study focused on public organizations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria; thus, its findings are such that only apply to similar organizations that share its peculiar features or attributes. Such delimitation in terms of scope or industry streamlines the extensivity or generalizability of the findings generated. Furthermore, the time horizon of the study was cross-sectional as the investigation focused on primary data, suggesting possible dispositions or outcomes which may be linked to particular changes that have marked or shaped the period (e.g. such as the COVID-19 pandemic) which may not have been an issue in the past and may also not be an issue in the future. The findings of this research as specific to the period of interest and as such cannot be considered as valid for subsequent changes in the context as a result of time.

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