

**CONTEXTUAL FACTORS' MODERATING EFFECT ON INTERNAL
AUDIT FUNCTION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP IN
QUOTED MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *The paper focused on the moderating effect of corporate culture, size and technology on the relationship between Internal Audit function and Business Performance. Thirty-two (32) quoted manufacturing companies constituted the study sample. Data collection was done by means of questionnaire. Pearson's partial correlations, aided by the statistical package for social sciences was adopted for the analysis of data. It was found that corporate culture and organizational technology positively moderates the influence of internal audit function on business performance whereas, regarding organizational size it was found that it does not influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance. In conclusion, the more manufacturing firms' culture place increasing value on accountability, the more their internal audit function positively influence business performance. Also, the more sophisticated and audit oriented the manufacturing firms' technology tends to be the more internal audit function tends to positively impact on business performance. It was recommended that firms should encourage corporate values to guide employee behaviour on issues of accountability and transparency and manufacturing companies should procure modern technological infrastructure that enhances audit function and tracking of intended and unintended derivations' and wrong usage and misrepresentations in business operations.*

KEYWORD: Corporate culture, technology, organizational size, internal audit function, business performance.

INTRODUCTION

Every organizational activity is influenced by the enduring values, styles, beliefs, knowledge and work processes, including the magnitude of the organizational membership. Organizational values and beliefs constitute the fundamentals of organizational culture therefore, it is expected that management will establish the condition of workplace culture under which superb performance will serve both company's and individual workers best interest.

Culture is a shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, values and behaviour found among speakers of the same language in one time period and in one geographical region. In order to share a common culture, people must speak a common language and live in the same geographical area. Culture might also change over time.

Organizations, other creatures and companies also develop their own culture. The individuals who work in an organization often develop culture attitudes and habits that are unique to that organization. Even global organizations, in which employees do not share the same language or live in the same geographical area, can develop a culture of shared belief and attitudes.

Hence, there is a link between culture and organizations' performance. This is because for an organization to continue to survive and to have competitive comparative advantage over its competitors, the employees in the organization must adopt to the cultural tendencies of the organization. The employees must therefore adhere to the code of conducts of the organization.

Technology is also an aspect of organizational culture which every organization must possess for efficiency and effectiveness. Technology falls under the material aspect of culture. As culture changes over time, so does technology. In fact, in this 21st century, technology changes rapidly than any other material cultures. Technology now dictates the pace of change in our environment. Therefore, business organizations need to adapt to the change in order to be competitive in business, and for organization to improve on its performance.

From the foregoing, a mind boggling question arose in furtherance of the quest to assess the moderating effect of the organizational factors in focus, thus: To what extent do corporate culture, size and technology affect the influence of internal audit function on business performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is dedicated for the discussion of the influence of the mediating factors within the environment where such relationships occur. The internal audit practices are carried out within a context that appears to have influence over it. Most of these contextual issues that appear to influence internal audit function are corporate culture, size, and technology(Koontz 2000).For instance, Koontz argued that every organizational activity is influenced by the enduring values, styles, beliefs, knowledge and work processes, including the magnitude of the organizational membership.

Basically, culture refers to a system of shared assumptions, values and norms that define appropriate attitude and behaviour for its members. Much of a company's cultural assumptions and norms are inherited from the industry hosting the particular business organization, also from the overall economy and the wider society. The inherited assumptions and norms are practically invisible to most organizations because they are simply accepted as truth, the basic operating and design assumptions.

According to Kreitner and Kinicki(2001), organizational values and beliefs constitute the fundamentals of organizational culture. They also argued that employees' performance and general ethical behaviour are influenced by the organizations' culture, it is therefore expected of management to establish the conditions of workplace culture, under which superb performance will serve both company's and individual worker's best interest. The taproot of corporate culture is the philosophy, the attitudes, the beliefs and shared values upon which the organization operates. They manifest in people

attitudes, their feelings and the chemistry and the vibration which come from the work environment (Waterman 1982).

Ottih(1997) argued that organizational culture contains five attributes; language articles and symbols, patterns of behaviour, basic underlying assumptions and subcultures. It is expressed by behaviour in five areas; norms, corporate values, organizational climate, management style, structure and system. An eminent scholar, Tarling (2007), often referred to as the God father of internal audit, by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), in course of advancing an argument on the problem of command culture, noted that the internal auditors in the former Soviet Union, did not know how to think. According to Tarling(2007), “Thinking and asking questions” are the hallmarks of internal audit. They were the missing keys in the education required of the internal auditors of the former Soviet Union, Tarling argued.

It is widely acknowledged that every organization has its own culture, nature and identity. The organizations have their respective history of successes, which reinforces and strengthens the way they do things. The older and more successful the organization, the stronger its culture, nature and identity. Corporate culture is critically an important organizational phenomenon, when considered in the light of organizational economic performance, its impact supercedes most of the other prevalent factors. Organizational culture has to do with implementation and how success is actually achieved.

According to Schneider (2000), in good management, an idea will not work in practice if it does not fit the culture. Therefore, an organization can have the most super strategy, but if its culture is not aligned with and supportive of that strategy, the strategy will either stall or fail. Strategy is a course of action, including specialization of the resources required to achieve a specific objective, which may either be unit/ functional or corporate objective, the latter is the focus of this investigation.

The establishment of an internal audit unit is a desirable step, for the attainment of high performance standards, thus, it appears obvious that the corporate culture in place, in a particular work environment should be relatively suitable. This will be necessary, in order to attain the desired growth expected by management of organization. While no organization has one pure culture throughout, every successful organization has a core culture, which is central to the functioning of the organization. This forms the nucleus of how that organization should operate, in order to succeed. It appears absolutely very critical for the core culture to be aligned with the organization’s strategy and its core leadership practices. According to Schneider (2000), reflecting on Collins and Porras(1987), argued that the alignment of core culture and leadership coupled with strategy is central to achieving organizational effectiveness which is a measure of business performance.

In the absence of the expected synergy of such factors with culture, the organization may loose focus, energy would be dissipated and wastages will be experienced, as employees, system and processes could work at contrary purposes against one another. Therefore, it is possible to argue that, if the management idea fits the nature of the organizational culture, the probability may be that organizational goal attainment success will be high. The second organizational factor of interest is organizational size. This refers to the magnitude or extent of an organization. It is often referred to in

dimensions such as “big-small” and “large-small”. Organizational size is an important variable that influences structural design.

Structure refers to the manner in which the human resources are organized for its teleological activities. It is the way the human capital are allocated in relatively fixed relationships that largely defines patterns of interaction, coordination and task oriented behavior (Steers 1977). It is a generalized impression that internal audit department is a fall out of departmentalization, span of control and decentralization etc, which are features of large organizations. We are inclined to accept the fact that smaller organizations with negligible number of employees, will be able to check internal controls, system implementation, therefore may not possibly create an internal audit unit(Koontz 1998).

There has been several interests generated from the issue of how the size of an organization may influence various aspects of organizational success. The pattern that emerged indicated that, increase in size of the organization appears to be positively associated with increased efficiency (Lucey, 1983). There are other factors such as reduced labour cost, environmental controls and orderly managerial succession, which are attributes of internal control, that may ultimately result to organizational efficiency. It has been argued that delegation and decentralization which are features of very large organizations had often times resulted in excessive bureaucratization which may hamper organizational effectiveness (Daft 2000 and Mintzberg 1989).Though, over centralized internal control system may aid reduction of bureaucracies, thereby contributing to enhanced effectiveness in organizations.

Barrie (1974) and Greiner (1972) appear to have a corroborative view that organizational size relates to the state of its life cycle. This view appears to imply that younger firms are most likely to be smaller than older ones. Considering the business life cycle, it could be further argued that oldest firms are most likely to shrink in their size.

The evolutionary disposition of Barrie (1974) and Greiner (1972) underlie the fact that an enterprise begin as simple firms with a single product, function and a single region, it tends to be small with simple operations. However, as they successfully operate they tend to add more products and move to other regions. However, a broader perspective on determining organisation size according to Timmons (1994) is to evaluate the strength of such indicators as sales volume and employees size. Therefore, a firm could be viewed as larger in size than another with regards to its sales volumes and its number of employees considered higher, comparatively.

To some extent, there appears to be a link between the life cycle perspective of Barrie (1974) and Greiner (1992) sales and employees perspective of Timmons (1994). This evidences the fact that firms start with a single product, function and a single region but successfully adapt to multiple regions, functions and finally multiple products as the firm move from introduction state to growth stage (Galbraith and Nathanson, 1974). Because size is related to operational complexity of firms, it appears that the auditing practice in business organization is most likely to be influenced by size, to the extent that the practice or function of auditing is neglected or absent in smaller firms.

However, such functions are never absent in firms irrespective of size, but such is diffused in the responsibility of the entrepreneur or the chief executive.

Besides, size tends to have some relationship with growth. Because of the implicit importance of sales and employees in determining size, Barrie (1974) argues that sales and profits as functions of size tend to be the reliable factors to determine life cycle trend since they present tangible indices that are meaningful and also reflect the fortune of the firm. This further indicate the acceptance of sales and profit trends as indications of growth. The implication of the life cycle perspective is that growth is strongly related to time and the transition of the firm from one life stage to another.

According to Olayiwola (2004), the study carried out on fraud and allied issues. Two key facts emerged regarding the type of industry and the size of the organization: The largest median losses occurred in publicly quoted and private companies, and the smallest took place in nonprofits and governmental agencies. This is not surprising considering publicly quoted companies generally have more assets than the other two types of entities. The smallest organizations of 100 employees or less actually suffered larger median losses than did the largest organizations with 10,000 employees or more.

This means the smallest companies were over a hundred times more vulnerable to fraud than their largest counterparts. In the 1996 report, the trend was similar. The smallest organizations suffered the largest per employee median losses because of three factors. First, basic accounting controls often were lacking. It was common for a small organization to have one employee write and sign cheques, reconcile the bank statement and keep the company's books. In such situations, occupational fraud was easy to commit. The second was due to the level of trust that existed because of the entity's size, in an atmosphere where employees knew each other, they were less alert to the possibility of dishonesty. Thirdly, small companies were less likely to be audited. Unfortunately, small companies were also less likely than their large counterparts to report and prosecute these offenses because of the effect of adverse publicity. The indisputable fact is that favourable public image is important in a competitive business environment.

The focus of this study is not on technology, as a major influence. The issue is to what extent does the effects of these organizational factors of corporate culture, size and technology affect the influence of internal audit function and business performance. Technology is defined broadly to include spheres of research and development. In almost every industry, technology linkages have been a source of competitor scenarios proven to be critical for firms (Schneider 2000). For instance some small business have used internet and communication technologies along with database and related technologies to deliver superior value, in large dimensions.

According to Cohen et al (2001), technology refers to the means by which work is done; and includes the (i) machines, tools and materials used, (ii) sequence or flow of operations, (iii) way in which work arrives and is processed, (iv) pace and timing of work as determined by machine speed or customer demands, (v) deadlines and interdependencies with other parts of the organization (vi) noise level, (vii) procedures, processes, and forms used in doing work, (viii) level and kind of expertise or technical skill needed to do work, (ix) activities and interactions required to provide a service such as meetings, discussions and desk work with some few tools and (x) way in which space is used and equipment laid out.

Woodward defined technology as “the methods and processes of manufacturing” measured in three variables. These are the: (i) states in the historical development of production processes (ii) interrelationship between the items of equipment used for these processes and (iii) extent to which the operations performed in the processes were repetitive or comparable from one production cycle, or sequence, to the next.

According to Steers(1977) technology may serve to moderate the impact of size on productivity and growth which constitute embodiment of favourable profitability, effectiveness and organizational efficiency. The mediating effects of the organizational factors is the main focus.

From the brief discussion of the meanings, components, variables and types of technology, there are several possible indices to measure organizational technology. Unfortunately, there is no one single study that can utilize all of them. Even where this is possible, not all of them may be relevant to a given study. This leaves the researcher with discretion of what measures or indices of technology to select for a given study involving technology.

In view of the foregoing, this study employs central storage facility, frame work for easy information sharing and information technology that is supportive of easy data retrieval technology. This is in anticipation of their being used to illustrate the role of technology in the hypothesized relationship between internal audit function and business performance.

Though, regarding the effects of technology on organizational effectiveness, there were popular empirical studies, like the Woodward(1958), Aston studies(1973), Mahoney and Frost(1974),Meyer (1968) etc. According to Mohr(1971), the effectiveness of organization is largely a result of the extent to which an organization can successfully match its technology with an appropriate structure (size). In the local environment the use of out-dated method of baking bread, by means of mud-oven, with firewood, then manual loading and off-loading of bread casing (plates), placing such technology alongside with the automated modern electric-powered giant oven, the difference in operations is incomparable. From the foregoing, the possible hypothesization is stated thus:

H_{A1}: Corporate culture does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance.

H_{A2}: Organizational size does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance.

H_{A3}: Organizational technology does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross sectional survey method. 32 quoted firms in Nigeria were sampled. The research instrument was tested for validity and reliability with the aid of SPSS version 20. Partial correlation analysis was carried out to test the moderating effect of the organizational factors on the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. The results and findings are presented below.

RESULTS

Table 1. Partial Correlation of Internal Audit Function, Business Performance Moderated By Corporate Culture

Control Variables	Variables	Statistics	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	CORPORATE CULTURE
-none- ^a	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.473	.507
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.006	.003
		df	0	30	30
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.473	1.000	.418
		Significance (2-tailed)	.006	.	.017
		df	30	0	30
	CORPORATE CULTURE	Correlation	.507	.418	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.003	.017	.
		df	30	30	0
CORPORATE CULTURE	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.333	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.067	
		df	0	29	
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.333	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.067	.	
		df	29	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

The controlled partial correlation coefficient CPC = 0.333. The difference between ZPC and CPC (DPC = 0.473 – 0.333) = 0.14. DPC > 0.1 hence the hypothesized relationship between the criterion variable (business performance) and the predictor variable (internal audit function) is attributed to the moderating factor (corporate culture).

We therefore accept the alternate hypothesis which states that “corporate culture does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance”. The table 1 above, also shows that corporate culture has a significant relationship with internal audit function (PV = 0.003) and business performance (PV=0.017).

Table 2 Partial Correlation of Internal Audit Function, Business Performance Moderated By Organisational Size

Control Variables	Variables	Statistics	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	ORGANISA NAL SIZE
-none- ^a	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.473	.100
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.006	.587
		df	0	30	30
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.473	1.000	.045
		Significance (2-tailed)	.006	.	.808
		df	30	0	30
	ORGANISATIONAL SIZE	Correlation	.100	.045	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.587	.808	.
		df	30	30	0
ORGANISANAL SIZE	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.471	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.007	
		df	0	29	
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.471	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.007	.	
		df	29	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

The zero-order partial correlation coefficient $ZPC = 0.473$ and the controlled partial correlation coefficient $CPC = 0.471$ the difference between ZPC and CPC , $DPC = 0.473 - 0.471 = 0.002$. $DPC < 0.01$ hence the hypothesized relationship between the predictor variable (internal Audit function) and criterion variable (business performance) is not attributed to the moderating factor, organizational size. We therefore, reject the alternate hypothesis which states that organizational size does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance. The result also shows that organizational size does not have a significant relationship with internal audit function ($PV = 0.587 > 0.05$) and business performance ($PV = 0.808 > 0.05$).

Table 3. Partial Correlation of Internal Audit Function, Business Performance Moderated By Organizational Technology

Control Variables	Variables	Statistics	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	TECHNO LOGY
-none- ^a	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.473	.334
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.006	.042
		df	0	30	30
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.473	1.000	.418
		Significance (2-tailed)	.006	.	.017
		df	30	0	30
	TECHNOLOGY	Correlation	.334	.418	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.042	.017	.
		df	30	30	0
TECHNOLOGY	INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	Correlation	1.000	.289	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.031	
		df	0	29	
	BUSINESS PERFORMANCE	Correlation	.289	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.031	.	
		df	29	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

and the controlled partial correlation coefficient. $CPC = 0.289$, $DPC = (ZPC - CPC) = 0.473 - 0.289 = 0.184$

$DPC > 0.1$ therefore, the hypothesized relationship between the criterion variable (business performance) and the predictor variable (internal audit function) is attributed to the moderator variable organizational technology.

The hypothesis which states that; “organizational technology does influence the relationship between internal audit function and business performance” is therefore accepted ($DPC > 0.1$) more so organizational Technology has positive and significant relationship with internal audit function ($PV = 0.042 < 0.05$) and business performance ($PV = 0.017 < 0.05$).

The results of the analysis on the moderating influence of corporate culture, size and technology in the relationship between internal audit function and business performance, involved the use of Pearson’s partial correlation coefficient to test the influence of culture, technology and size on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance. The test shows that the moderating influence of corporate culture ($DPC = 0.14 > 0.1$) is significant; also, technology has a significant moderating influence ($DPC = 0.184 > 0.01$), while size has no significant moderating influence on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance ($DPC = 0.002 = < 0.01$). On these results, we state our finding, thus “organizational culture and technology moderate the influence of internal audit function on business performance”.

From the above results of the analysis, the following can be deduced: Corporate culture positively moderates the influence of internal audit function on business

performance; hence, corporate culture has very significant influence which has the capability of propelling effective performance and growth in manufacturing businesses; and Organisational technology positively moderates the influence of internal audit function on business performance. Therefore, technology exerts very significant but positive moderating influence on the relationship between both variables.

DISCUSSION

One of the objectives of this research investigation was to examine the influence of organizational factors such as size, culture and technology on the influence of internal audit function on business performance. Thus, from the results interpretation on the test of this moderating influence, that corporate culture and technology was found to have moderating impact on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance. Size was not found to moderate the influence of internal audit function on business performance. The issue of the influence of culture and technology is dominant in influencing organizational outcomes. The findings on the moderating influence of organizational culture and technology quite support this disposition. For instance, the internal audit practices are carried out within a context that appears to have influence over it. Concerning this argument, Koontz(2000) further argued that most of the contextual issues that influence organizational processes including internal audit function are corporate culture and technology. Concerning the impact of culture, it is the view of Koontz that organizational activity is influenced by the enduring values, styles, beliefs, and knowledge employed at work.

Also, the finding on the moderating influence on internal audit function and business performance found support in the argument of Kreitner and Kinicki(2001) that, employee performance and general ethical behaviour are influenced by the organisation's culture. Waterman (1982) also argued that the success of any activity in organization depends largely on how it is supported by the organizational culture. Therefore, the influence of internal audit function, on business performance is dependent on how the particular organizational culture supports the internal audit function processes. The strength of organizational cultural influence on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance rests on the collective values and beliefs implication of culture on corporate activities. Schneider (2000) contends that, corporate culture is critically an important organizational phenomenon, when considered in the light of organizational economic performance. From these expositions we deduce that organizational culture mediates the impact of internal audit function on business performance.

Similarly, the impact of organizational technology on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance tends to follow the cultural influence pattern. It was found in the study, that technology positively impact on the relationship between internal audit function and business performance. This finding found relevance in the works of Woodward (1958), Aston study(1973), carried out by Pugh, John Child and Physey (otherwise referred to as Pugh et al, 1973 studies in Aston University), Mahoney and Frost (1971). For instance, Mohr (1971) argued that the effectiveness of organizations is largely a result of the extent to which an organization can successfully match its technology with an appropriate size. In this sense, technology represents the

skills, techniques, and tangible infrastructure present in an organisation and put to use in the conversion of inputs to outputs. Aston studies (1973) also contented that, the pace at which work is successfully done, largely depends on the technology in use.

Therefore, in carrying out the internal audit function, there is the adopted technology which exist in form of skills, work process, and tangible infrastructure that determines not only the level of success, but also how it impact on the business performance.

CONCLUSION

The more manufacturing firms' culture place increasing value on accountability, the more their internal audit function positively influence business performance.

The more sophisticated and audit oriented the manufacturing firms' technology tends to be, the more internal audit function tends to positively impact on business performance.

Organisational culture has a strong impact on the influence of internal audit function on business performance. More importantly, this tends to be so when considered in the light of organizational economic performance. Therefore, the more accountability oriented the organizational values are, the more internal audit function will improve the achievement of growth objectives of manufacturing businesses.

The more audit driven the technology in place is, in quoted manufacturing companies the higher the enhancement of internal audit function on business performance. This implies that the state of the organizational technology is a prerequisite for the achievement of its set goals. This is argued in the works of Schneider (2000) and Steers (1977) that technology is an important determinant of operational efficiency. With the increasing development in digital technology, auditing has become sophisticated to cope with the increasing wave of internet and internet related crimes in business.

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