

Knowledge Management and Competitive Advantage in Selected Manufacturing Firms in Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT: *This paper was designed to examine the relationship between Knowledge management and Organizational competitiveness. The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. In line with the research objective was the research questions and hypothesis. Survey research design was adopted for the study and a sample size of 105 respondents were drawn from the population using census sampling technique. The major instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire administered to the respondent using stratified sampling techniques. The major instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire administered to the respondent using stratified sampling techniques. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results showed a significant positive relationship between each of the two dimensions of knowledge management (organizational learning, = $R_{x_1} = 0.799$ and Knowledge retention = $R_{x_2} = 0.825^{**}$), and organizational competitiveness at the selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended that, firm managers and knowledge management implementation members should incorporate organizational learning, knowledge retention, as part of Knowledge Management infrastructure capabilities in addition to culture, structure, and information technology in order to make their Knowledge Management infrastructure capabilities more robust.*

KEYWORD: Knowledge management, Organizational competitiveness, Knowledge retention, organizational learning.

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of organizational is to assure the effective and efficient use of its different resources such as labor, money, materials, energy, and information in order to attain competitiveness and boost production. Organizations in Nigeria are no exception, as they attempt to sustain high productivity through managerial innovations and policy distribution. Knowledge management is concerned with the entire process of discovering and creating knowledge, as well as its dissemination and usage. To have a significant competitive advantage, knowledge is essential. According to Uwa (2022), good knowledge management increases the performance of companies, whether public or private. Ahmed and Mohamed (2017), further underlined that employee retention and effective training not only increase their abilities but also develop their confidence. Knowledge generation is critical to the life of any institution. Knowledge is an activity that occurs during regular job activities and is necessary for survival in a competitive market. These might be achieved through formal training, discussions with others who share similar interests, or through technology mechanisms such as data mining operations. Knowledge production is largely a human activity in which technology may help but cannot replace humans and therefore their ongoing evolution and progress. Therefore, it is natural to assume that the capacity to develop knowledge and establish a competitive advantage is critical for any firm that intends to remain relevant and attain a larger, sustainable market share, since this will provide fantastic results (Ekanem, Iko, Ekanem, and Ajibade, 2023). To achieve meaningful results, performance entails a complicated set of behaviors that integrate abilities and knowledge. Designing, marketing, producing, participating in sports, and other problem-solving activities are examples. Each level determines the performance's efficiency, quality, and effectiveness (Akram and Hilman, 2018). Without a doubt, knowledge, along with labour, land, and money, has become an essential asset for production (Sher and Lee 2014). While certain types of intellectual capital may be transferred, internal or personal knowledge is difficult to explain, collect, keep, spread, and utilize. As a result, information anchored in employees' minds may be lost if they leave the business (Lazarus, (2014).

According to Valmohammadi and Ahmadi (2015), knowledge sharing and collaboration refers to the frequency and scope of activities like internal training sessions, communities of practice, workshops, or online forums for exchanging ideas and skills. This proxy demonstrates the organization's dedication to promoting a collaborative culture and supporting information sharing among staff members. Knowledge accessibility is the simplicity with which pertinent information and knowledge may be found inside the company. This can be assessed by variables like the speed at which knowledge requests are answered, the accessibility of knowledge repositories or databases, or the use of search and retrieval tools. This proxy shows the organization's efforts to ensure that employees have easy access to knowledge when they need it. Employee engagement in knowledge activities such as contributing to knowledge repositories,

actively participating in knowledge-sharing platforms, or taking part in communities of practice. This proxy indicates the level of employee buy-in and enthusiasm for knowledge management practices. According to Onyango, (2018) knowledge utilization is the extent to which knowledge is applied and utilized in decision-making, problem-solving, or innovation processes within the organization. This can be measured by tracking the number of knowledge-based solutions or ideas implemented, the impact of knowledge on project outcomes, or the percentage of employees who report using knowledge resources in their work. Organizational learning is the ability to learn from past experiences, adapt to change, and continuously improve. This can be measured by the implementation of feedback mechanisms, the effectiveness of knowledge transfer during employee onboarding or transitions, or the organization's ability to apply lessons learned from previous projects or initiatives (Uwa, 2022). Performance improvement such as increased productivity, reduced errors or rework, improved customer satisfaction, or enhanced innovation capabilities (Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015). This proxy assesses the value and effectiveness of knowledge management in driving organizational outcomes. It's important to note that the selection of proxies may vary depending on the organization's specific goals, industry, and knowledge management strategies.

Additionally, qualitative factors, such as cultural norms, leadership support, and employee perceptions, should be considered alongside these proxies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organization's knowledge management efforts and their impact on organizational effectiveness. According to Darroch (2017) knowledge management relates to the location, creation or discovery of knowledge. There are many sources of knowledge both internal and external for an organization to tap from (Werr, 2016). Employees' individual capabilities, skills and experiences need to be discovered and exploited. Analyzing and understanding of various internal data and information are vital sources of knowledge that can be exploited. Knowledge can also be acquired from other members in the external environment like competitors and the public (Petruzzelli, 2019). This information is required if an organization has to develop a sustainable competitiveness leading to superior market performance. Hence, this study will examine the relationship between knowledge management and organizational competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problems

Knowledge management is an information system that stores and retrieves knowledge to improve understanding, collaboration, and process alignment within an organization. Many companies are currently putting together methods that convert inferred and implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge, in forms that can be coded, stored and transmitted, in a way that can be used by others in similar scenarios (Japhet, Olaoluwa and Olapeju 2021). Although, the usefulness of knowledge management as a tool for organizational competitiveness are glaring, organizations face challenges in the process of adopting knowledge management. Some of the challenges include Knowledge creation, Knowledge acquisition, Knowledge utilization and

organizational learning. Organizational culture plays a significant role in facilitating information sharing. In an open culture, the flow of information is more fluid. Implicit knowledge can easily be shared among colleagues and other member of staff. However, in practice, it is observed that some organizational cultures do not encourage this free flow of information, adopting more formal structures of communication that do not support knowledge management. To this end, this study will seek to examine the relationship between knowledge management and organizational competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. Some specific objective includes;

- i. To examine the relationship between Knowledge retention and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State
- ii. To examine the relationship between Organizational Learning and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions

- 1 What is the relationship between knowledge retention and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State?
- 2 What is the relationship between organizational learning and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State?

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge retention and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State

H₀₂: Organizational learning has no significant relationship with Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

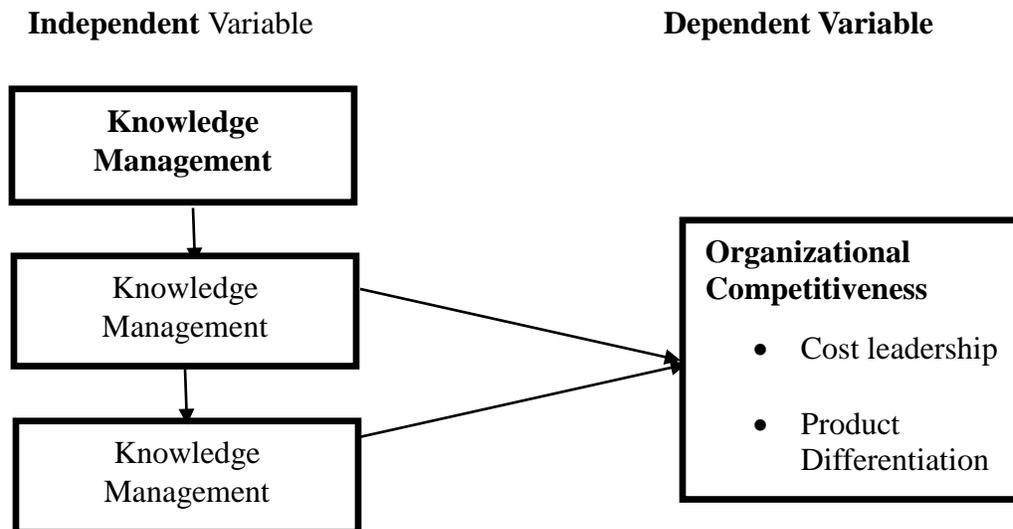


Figure 1. Model of Knowledge Management system and organizational Competitiveness by the researcher, 2023.

Concept of Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is concerned with the entire process of discovering and creating knowledge, as well as its dissemination and usage. Organizations must know what they know, according to knowledge management concepts. To have a significant competitive advantage, knowledge is essential. The definition of knowledge management mostly consisting of the descriptive form that is why Arora (2011) defines knowledge management as the process through which an enterprise uses its collective intelligence to accomplish its strategic objectives. knowledge management is not just about technology. It is about processes, people, behaviour, workflow and other factors. knowledge management is about understanding how people work, sharing concepts and ideas, identifying groups of people who work on similar things and seeing how they can learn from one another. knowledge management is about organizations learning from their experiences and about leadership in organization.

Xu Liang (2016) defines knowledge management as the process of transforming information and intellectual assets into enduring value. Jashapara (2014) defines knowledge management as the

effective learning processes associated with exploration, exploitation, and sharing of human knowledge (tacit and explicit) that use appropriate technology and cultural environments to enhance an organization's intellectual capital and performance. Given the recognized multidisciplinary nature of knowledge management (González-Valiente, 2019), posits that knowledge management has emerged as an important field for practice and research in information systems. This field is building on theoretical foundations from information economics, strategic management, organizational culture, organizational behaviour, organizational structure, artificial intelligence, quality management, and organizational performance measurement. Xiaoping and Kaushik (2003) defined knowledge management as a set of systematic approaches to find, understand and use knowledge to achieve organizational objectives. In the same light, Kanmal Chen, and Zhu (2019) defined knowledge as a corporate asset, but in practice it is grounded in different organizational functions and is stored in repositories and in individuals' memories. We can assume to mean that knowledge management is everyone's problem (Edwards, Shaw, and Collier, 2003). Genet and Mesfin (2015), depict that the concept of Knowledge Management as a newly emerging, interdisciplinary business model that has knowledge within the framework of an organization as its focus. Despite varying emphasis, all these actors feature the existence of key components in any knowledge management discourse; which are: people, processes, and system. These components in turn form the knowledge sharing architecture.

Knowledge Retention

Kianto et al. (2016) simply defines knowledge retention as an activities related to overseeing employee turnover and the related loss of expert knowledge which refer a key organization asset. Expert knowledge can be lost when employees leave the organization for some reason. As baby boomers retire, attracting and maintaining the best employees will turn into a significantly all the more squeezing challenge concerning knowledge retention. As indicated by Kirsch (2008), Knowledge Retention canter around the information that is a danger of loss, and their effect upon in general authoritative execution, and afterward creating useful plans to hold that information. The main reason for KR is to drain the minds of people who are leaving an organization, retiring, or switching to the new one.

Knowledge Retention is an integral part of the information management process (Quang et al. 2016). Liebowitz (2009) states the knowledge retention techniques coordinates in everyday work, which based on the execution period: responsive (brief period), control (medium period) and preventive (long period). One way to access the lost knowledge is to interview the employees before they leave. This technique is or maybe a responsive one, and it demonstrates not be an effective and efficient method since it will not result to extract genuine value in preserving information. As Liebowitz, 2009 states: One strategy is to have a possible plan. Possibility plan means a strategy to exchange the information of the retirees of 1-3 years in development sometime recently their retirement period. This can be considered to be a medium

period information retention technique. Another may be the obstructive strategy, which will start after retirement and will proceed until take off. Gaghman, (2019) states that numerous leaders and supervisors are mindful of the information loss, although, they thought retaining information and keeping the specialists inside the association a basic and tricky situation. In truth, holding information inside the association requires an appropriate understanding of the person's behavioral variables that affect implied information retention within the association. Besides, centering on information retention as the portion of the KM technique improves firms' efficiency, effectiveness and progresses its competitive advantage.

Organizational Learning

Organizational learning is a core organizational capability that creates competitive advantages (Molodchik and Jardon, 2015). It plays an important role in the acquisition, dissemination, and use of knowledge to adjust to an evolving external environment (Park and Eun-Jee, 2018). Cryert and March, who initially proposed the concept of organizational learning in the 1960s, stressed the importance of learning by experience and the ways in which an organization may adapt to environmental changes. The concept of organizational learning was expanded upon by Argyris and Schon (1978) through the introduction of single and double loop learning as the core element of organizational flexibility. Organizational learning appears in knowledge management processes at all levels of an organization. Odor (2019) viewed organizational learning as a means of gathering information to create knowledge and using that knowledge to improve the organization. An organization's knowledge base is constantly changing when the organization acquires new experience. This perspective stresses the role that experience has on the process where knowledge is accrued in the organization as its employees either perform or try to perform tasks (Echajari and Thomas, 2015).

Senge (2014) describes organizational learning as the continual testing of experience and translation of that experience into knowledge that is accessible to the whole company and relevant to their purpose. Senge (2014), it consists of four processes: information intake, dissemination, interpretation, and organizational memory. Argyris and Schön (2006) are even less restricting in their definition, declaring that organizational learning emerges when organizations acquire information (knowledge, understandings, know-how, techniques and procedures) of any kind by any means. Learning is organizationall to the extent that the above three criteria are met. Often in organizations these criteria are incompletely met. For example, it is possible for an individual to learn to serve a customer better, without ever sharing what she has learned. Similarly, when changes occur in machine designs, routines, cultural norms, or policies, organization learning also occurs, even if these changes are not understood by individual members (Ekanem, Akpan, Ekanem, and Edem, 2023). The many theories and models described in the organizational knowledge management literature all conclude that organizational learning includes the acquisition of organizational knowledge, as well as the distribution of information and its application to accomplish the organization's goals (Senge, 2014)

Concept of Organizational Competitiveness

Competitiveness has been described as multidimensional and relative concept (Nachiappan, Gunasekaran and Yu Ning, 2014), that changes with context and time. It embraces different approaches, from classical theories of mercantilism, which introduced the notion of trade rivalry between nations, to absolute advantages of notions, the theories of competitive and comparative advantages and up to neoclassical critiques of international competitiveness of countries. It constitutes a major economic objective in the current context of globalization, rapid technical change and frequently invoked by policy makers worldwide (Salvador, Rodríguez and Luque, 2015). The competitiveness defines economic strength of an entity with respect to its competitor and it has the country, industrial and enterprise perspectives (Sadegh, Senin and Tourani, 2015). There is no agreed definition of national competitiveness. However, the WEF, 2013 refers to national competitiveness as a set of institutions, policies and factors that determines the level of productivity of country (Schwab, 2013).

Uwa, (2021) defined organizational competitiveness as a measure of relative ability of a firm to create and maintain an environment in which enterprises can competent so that the level of prosperity can be improved. On the other hand, enterprise competitiveness refers to its ability to design (Yosuke and Shibata, 2013), produce and/or market products superior to those of offered by competitors, considering the price and non-price product qualities (Sadegh, Senin and Tourani, 2015). From the customer's point of view, competitive advantage is a company's attractiveness to its customers in compares to their rivals. It is also viewed as diversity of features or any company's dimensions that enables it to perform better services to customers in compares with rivals.

Measures of Organizational Competitiveness

The measures of competitive advantage in this study include: cost leadership and product differentiation as elucidated below:

1. Cost leadership

Cost leadership is one of the generic competitive strategies pioneered by Michael Porter in 1980 (Grant, 2018). The schema of the competitive strategies is a matrix built on two variables namely: competitive advantage and competitive scope as shown below:

		COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	
		Lower Cost	Differentiation
COMPETITIVE SCOPE	Broad Target	1. Cost Leadership	2. Differentiation
	Narrow Target	3 A. Cost Focus	3B. Differentiation Focus

Fig. 2. Three Generic Strategies

Source: Adapted from Porter, M. E. (1985).

The competitive advantage can result owing to two factors: lower cost and differentiation, while competitive scope has to do with the breadth or size of the target market of which a business organization decides to adopt in the choice industry (Kazmi, 2002). Hence, Singh (2014) posits that the relative position of a business organization is determined by its competitive advantage which can be pursued on the basis of cost leadership, product differentiation, focused low and focused differentiation. It is one thing for a business organization to craft corporate strategy in answer to the question of where to invest and another thing to have what it takes to compete in the choice industry. This raises the issue of business models or the generic competitive business-level strategies needed to grapple with the five forces of industry attractiveness mentioned earlier on (Porter, 1985, 1998).

Product Differentiation

The concept of product differentiation has been discussed widely in the literature. Kazmi (2002) defines product differentiation as the “competence of the firm to provide unique and superior value to the buyer in terms of product quality, special features or after-sale services.” Schermerhorn (2010) states that differentiation strategy has to do with the offer of products that are unique and different from the competition. Differentiation can also be attained when a firm chooses to create uniqueness in its choice industry along certain dimensions that are valued by its target markets (Porter, 1985). Noe (2022) corroborates that differentiation approach entails offering superior services to customers but at the same price offered by competitors. These dimensions vary from design or brand image, technology, distinctive features, customer service to dealer network as well as being the first mover (Porter, 1998).

Knowledge Retention and Organizational Competitiveness

Knowledge loss has become a significant issue that could make organizations vulnerable in difficult economic times as well as during economic growth periods when the competition is widespread (Noe, 2022). Since organizations cannot afford to lose knowledge, they need to retain knowledge from their employees before the employees leave. Knowledge retention is a process that organizations can use to reduce the risk of knowledge loss through processes like mentoring and coaching. Noe, (2022) suggested that to retain knowledge in an organization, there are three steps in the process:

- i. Identifying critical knowledge,
- ii. Transfer critical and undocumented knowledge, and
- iii. Integrate the retained knowledge for reuse in business processes.

In a multicas study of four organizations, (Uwa, Ubong, and Etimfon, 2018) concluded that strategies that focus on the retention of knowledge and its integration into the organization's processes and routines would be useful to mitigate knowledge loss. Various strategies such as training, social networks, communities of practice, succession planning, and leveraging retired knowledge workers can be used to retain knowledge in organizations (Noe, 2022). Knowledge retention can have both positive and negative effects on an organization. Smith (2017) identified talent management (recruiting and mentoring), job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as barriers to knowledge retention.

Smith. (2017) argued that retained knowledge hides inefficiency and rigidity and can prevent adjustment to new situations thus enhance organizational competitiveness. On the positive side, knowledge retention helps to control transactional costs. A challenge facing organizations is the lack of a defined knowledge retention process and understanding of its importance. Noe (2022) contended that knowledge retention needs to be well integrated into an organization's business operations and should start before key employees are about to leave or retire. Makhubela and Ngoepe (2018) recommended that organizations enforce knowledge retention policies in order to achieve their objectives

Organizational learning and Organizational Competitiveness

Organizational learning is the capacity of an organization to acquire the knowledge necessary to survive, sustain, and compete in its environment (Sathishkumar and Karthikeyan, 2017). Brandi and Iannone (2015) identified three perspectives on organizational learning. The first is learning by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behavior, the second is a process of detecting and correcting errors, and the third is a constant evolution through social and cultural interactions. The three perspectives show a shift from formal learning to informal learning and are applicable in various organizational structures from bureaucratic (formal learning) to cultural structures (informal learning).

Organizational learning and knowledge management are two distinct concepts that in specific ways complement each other. Some of the significant components of organizational learning are knowledge creation, acquisition, sharing, and application. These components correspond to most definitions of knowledge management processes (Uforo, Malachi, and Don, 2022). Hammoud (2020) summarized that organizational learning focuses mainly on the processes by which knowledge is created, acquired, stored, shared, and applied. One of the most prominent organizational learning features is the organization's ability to recognize the need to change and adjust. Knowledge management aims to create the organization's values through knowledge management processes (the creation, capture, storage, transfer, and implementation of knowledge). These values emphasize the need for individual knowledge to be available for everyone in the organization (Julian 2017).

Julian (2017) also asserted that organizational learning is complementary to knowledge management. Organizational learning is crucial in entrenching the knowledge gained into the fabric of a particular organization. However, it is entirely dependent on individual learning within a particular organization, while knowledge management is more of sharing within the institution. Qi and Chau (2018) explained that knowledge management is closely related to organizational learning because it is a critical capability that provides organizations with a source of competitive advantage. Noe (2022) contended that organizational learning is accelerated through knowledge management by creating a common knowledge repository, identifying and codifying competencies and routines, and manipulating information within and external to the organization. Udo, Baridam, and Akpan, (2023) conducted a review of organizational learning and knowledge management research to determine if organizational learning was conceptually absorbed by knowledge management. They summarized that knowledge creation, acquisition, and transfer are characteristic processes of organizational learning. Another key element of organizational learning and a firm's competitive advantage is absorptive capacity.

Theoretical Framework

The Resource Based View (RBV) by Penrose (1959).

This study is anchored on the Resource-Based View of the firm (RBV) by Penrose (1959). The view has been further developed as Knowledge-Based View of the firm (KBV) by Robert Grant (1996). The theory states that the source of competitive advantage in a changing business environment is not the knowledge that is repository to the organization since such knowledge erodes faster as a result of obsolescence and imitation, rather sustained competitive advantage is determined by non-documented knowledge in the form of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be a form of competitive advantage because it is immobile and unique. The theory emphasizes that knowledge creation is an individual activity and that the primary role of the organization is the application of the knowledge created into the production of goods and services, this can be done through multiple individuals integrating and sharing their specialized knowledge.

The approach suggests that firms gain and sustain competitive advantage by deploying valuable resources (Grant, 1996a). These resources and capabilities that are valuable, uncommon, poorly imitable and non-substitutable constitute firm's unique or core competencies. Evolving developments in the RBV suggests that capabilities are crucial contributors to organizational performance (Teece, et al., 1997). In RBV, knowledge is seen as a strategic asset or capability with the potential to be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) for an organization (Teece, 1998). As Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu and Kochhar (2001), puts it, intangible firm-specific resources like knowledge permit firms to add up value to incoming factors of production, thereby generating competitive advantage. It therefore promotes a knowledge based perspective, which postulates that competitive advantage (CA) is built upon those privately developed resources, tacit and explicit, inside the firm that are less likely to be imitated easily. These unique resources and capabilities are discussed under different names like distinctive competences, core competences, invisible assets, core capabilities, internal capabilities, embedded knowledge, corporate culture, and unique combinations of business experience.

Empirical Review

Iqbal et al. (2019) carried out a study on the impact of knowledge management practices on organizational performance in higher education institutions. They examined the mediating role of intellectual capital and innovation in the relationship between knowledge management processes and performance of universities in Pakistan. Data were collected by distributing surveys to about 217 academic and administrative personnel. They used the partial least squares structural equation model. They discovered that the existence of knowledge management processes had positive and significant influence on the organizational performance of the sample universities.

Forghani and Tavasoli (2017) undertook a study to test the relationship between knowledge management dimensions and organizational performance in lean manufacturing companies in Iran. The study findings indicated that a significant relationship exists between knowledge creation, knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and knowledge registration and organizational competitiveness in lean manufacturing companies in Iran. Bihamta, Nowzari, Eghtebasi, Subramaniam, Salimi and Salehi (2012) carried out a descriptive study of the impact of knowledge creation mechanism on organizational performance, focusing on Malaysian automotive industry. The study found positive relationship between knowledge management and organizational performance. The study concluded that the process of continuous improvement is one of the significant and predominant programs in most of the manufacturers all over the world.

Xue (2017) conducted a study on knowledge management and its significance to organizations. The outcome of the research showed that knowledge management constitutes a major driver for any organization to remain competitive in this contemporary time. The justification for this discovering lies in the fact that competitive advantage involves some level of uniqueness. For a strategy to be competitive, it ought to involve performing different activities or similar activities

in a different way from competitors (Zerfass et al., 2018). Knowledge management helps to create ideas and brings about innovations that make organizations unique compare to others.

Shpakova et al. (2017), in their study, suggested gamification as a medium for enhancing knowledge sharing and interaction among workers in contemporary business environment. From review of existing literature on knowledge management and gamification, they discovered that the advantages of gamification goes beyond increased motivation and engagement but can also support flexibility, facilitate transparency (thus improving trust), visualization of skills and competences, and promote a collaborative environment among knowledge workers.

Kianto et al. (2016) did a study on the impact of knowledge management on job satisfaction. They argue that the existence of knowledge management systems may be significantly linked with job satisfaction in an individual's working environment. They used structural equation modelling to test the relationship of the five aspects of knowledge management (acquisition, sharing, creation, codification and retention of knowledge) with job satisfaction. Survey data was collected from about 824 respondent belonging to a Finnish municipal organization. They discovered knowledge sharing (especially within the organization) to be a critical knowledge management process that is significantly linked with job satisfaction.

Chen and Fong (2015) conducted a study to illustrate the movement and transformation from a mechanistic to an organic perception of knowledge management strategy and performance evaluation. The system dynamic simulation was applied to predict the development of knowledge management strategy configurations and the evolution of knowledge management performance over-time. Survey study was also collected on a sample of 143 construction companies, and a confirmatory factor analysis was used to develop a knowledge management performance index for measuring the key elements that make up a firm's knowledge management strategy. The results showed that, compared to the mechanistic knowledge management strategy and performance evaluation method, the organic knowledge management strategy and performance evaluation method had a significantly higher capacity to improve the configuration and alignment of knowledge management strategies within a progressively dynamic business environment and had higher capacity for improvement.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. The study utilizes the survey research design approach. survey research design was adopted for the study and a sample size of 105 respondents were drawn from the population using census sampling technique. A total number of 105 questionnaire were administered to the staff of the selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State on different days at these locations. The instrument of data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was made of 12 questions which helped clarify responses gathered from the staff on the subject under

study. The research instrument had both face and content validity. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in analyzing the data.

RESULT

Test of Hypothesis

Tables 5.1.1 Pearson Product Moment Correlations Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses will be rejected

		Organizational learning	Knowledge Retention	Organizational competitiveness
Organizational learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.869**	.799**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	180	180	180
Knowledge Retention	Pearson Correlation	.869**	1	.825**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	180	180	180
Organizational competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	.799**	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	180	180	180

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

Source: Field Survey Data, (2023).

Test of Hypothesis One (H₀₁)

There is no significant relationship between Organizational learning and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, the correlation coefficient (R) for the first hypothesis (H₀₁) was $R_{x_1} = 0.799$, suggesting a strong positive correlation between Organizational learning and Organizational Competitiveness. The result was statistically significant ($R_{x_1} = 0.799$; $n = 180$; $p = 0.000$). Based on this, it is safe to assume that Organizational learning will influence Organizational Competitiveness. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between Organizational

learning and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State.

Test of Hypothesis Two (H₀₂):

Knowledge retention has no significant relationship on Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, the correlation coefficient (R) for the third hypothesis (H₀₃) was $R_{x_2} = 0.825^{**}$, suggesting a strong positive correlation between Knowledge creation and Organizational Competitiveness. The result was statistically significant ($R_{x_3} = 0.829^{**}$; $n = 180$; $p = 0.000$). Based on this, it is safe to assume that Knowledge retention in organization will influence Organizational Competitiveness. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, Knowledge retention has a significant relationship on Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study showed a significant positive relationship between each of the two dimensions of knowledge management (organizational learning, and Knowledge retention,) and organizational competitiveness at the selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State.

Based on the objective of the study which was to examine the relationship between Organizational Learning and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. The result of first hypothesis testing shows that there is a significant positive relationship between organizational learning and organizational competitiveness with a correlation coefficient of $R_{x_1} = 0.799$. This finding is in agreement with the work of Cruz (2011) carried out a research on the relationship between organizational learning and competitiveness of professional service firm in California. The qualitative research method was used. Three focus groups were used with interview including, managers, knowledge workers and a combination of the two. Based on the findings, five categories of behavior were identified as a result of organizational learning. They are; spiritual essence of business, openness and believability, whole brain learning, ethical responsibility and connectivity. Advancement of knowledge management through encouragement and organizational learning in organization has a positive impact on organization and the success of the organization creates a value to the well being of its shareholders.

To examine the relationship between Knowledge retention and Organizational Competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State. The result of the second hypothesis demonstrates that Knowledge retention significantly influences organizational competitiveness with a correlation coefficient of $R_{x_2} = 0.825$. The result is in agreement with previous studies done by Ode and Ayavoo (2020) did a study on the impact of knowledge management practices on firm innovation. The authors tried to examine the role of knowledge application (Knowledge

retention, Knowledge creation) in this relationship. A survey data collected for about 293 service companies in Nigeria. The data was analyzed using structural equation model. The results showed that knowledge generation, storage and application had significant and positive effect on firm innovation. The results also show that Knowledge retention, and Knowledge capturing played a significant mediating role in the relationship between the different knowledge management processes and firm innovation. Thus, they support the opinions of Venkitachalam and Willmott (2017) and Raudeliūnienė et al. (2018) that knowledge generation, diffusion, storage and sharing will only bring about substantial innovation if such stored knowledge is truly applied.

CONCLUSION

Base on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn;

From the study conducted, it is concluded that Knowledge retention, and organizational learning, are relational dimensions that can influence organizational performance among manufacturing firms in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Knowledge and information have become the medium in which business problems occur. As a result, managing knowledge represents the primary opportunity for achieving substantial savings, significant improvements in human performance and competitive advantage. This paper therefore concludes that quality, efficiency and effectiveness in performance cannot happen if employees are not developed. Organizations compete today on the basis of knowledge since products and services are increasingly complex.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends that firm managers and knowledge management implementation members should incorporate Knowledge retention and organizational learning as part of Knowledge Management infrastructure capabilities in addition to culture, structure, and information technology in order to make their Knowledge Management infrastructure capabilities more robust; and great attention should be paid to organizational learning because of their direct and strong influence on organizational competitiveness. Also, appropriate investment in knowledge retention initiatives can enhance competitive advantage. However, firms cannot afford to neglect the indirect contributors as they work in combination with and support other capabilities which contribute directly to organizational competitive advantage.

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