

# Knowledge Discovery and Employee Resilience: A Theoretical Standpoint

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## Abstract

*In a knowledge-driven economy, the performance of an organization is largely anchored on the quality of its intellectual asset. The quality of an organization's intellectual asset is however measured in relation to its employees' knowledgeability. This is because having a pool of knowledgeable employee is an unmatched source of competitive advantage; this knowledge thus frantically evokes employee resilience behavior amid work strains. However, sustained access to pool of knowledgeable employee requires that organizations adopt knowledge discovery practice which is the foundation of successful knowledge management agenda. Consequently, this study theoretically examined the nexus between knowledge discovery and employee resilience at the workplace. In doing this, the study adopted adaptability and interpersonal competence as measures of employee resilience. After extant literature review on the study variables, it was found that the essentiality of knowledge resource in the current industrial economy is the premise on which leaders of organizations are aggressively seeking for the location, acquisition and retention of immutable knowledge within and outside the organization. Consequently, the paper concludes that knowledge discovery is a managerial tool through which employee resilience is activated for better performance at the workplace. Therefore, it was recommended that to remain competitively vibrant in the face of rapidly changing work processes managers of organizations should effectively incorporate knowledge discovery practice into their corporate strategy as this will help the organization to sustainably have access to rare industry-driven knowledge that will not only promote performance but also foster resilience behavior among the employees.*

**Key Words:** Knowledge Discovery, Employee Resilience, Adaptability, Interpersonal Competence

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## I. Introduction

Generally all organizations operate in an environment that is in a state of constant evolution and revolution. This is a result of forces emanating from the internal and external environment. The forces originating from within the organization are controllable in nature while those manifesting from the outside are considered uncontrollable. For instance, Caruana (2020) confirms that organizations operate in a rapidly changing world dominated by austerity-based economics, reduced budgets and sometimes uninspiring political leaders and role models. This is so because organization as a goal seeking outfit does not exist in isolation but are mutually interlaced with its operating environment. However, as a result of this mutuality, organizations are presented with array of latent opportunities and threats to grapple with. Consequently, organization while maximizing these opportunities also adopts different mechanisms to assuage the impact of environmental threats on its existence. One of such strategies is building and developing employees with resilience through effective knowledge discovery.

Having employees characterized with resilience posture is a great source of corporate vitality to overcome adversity, especially within the purview of tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State. This is connected with the fact that resilient employees are people with great commitment and perseverance tendency to face any work pressure and stress without giving-up until success is achieved. It is on this premise that having a pool of such employee is priced as a source of competitive advantage. This assertion is thus in alignment with the view of Stephenson (2010) that resilience is a fundamental behavioral expectation that employers look out for in their workers, especially as it is seen as an indicator of institutional competence and a defining ethos in the organization's daily operations. Through senior management commitment, organization can raise resilience workforce successfully by way of adaptive capacity development, even as it evolves itself to navigate uncertainty, changes and disruption, thereby preserving its functioning, competitive stance and long-term growth.

However, drawing from the importance of knowledge in the management of contemporary organization, effective knowledge management through the lens of knowledge discovery is considered critical

for employee resilience building. Accordingly, Cooper (2006) asserts that organizations use knowledge management approach to retain employees and enhance customer satisfaction. This is because knowledge is regarded as a vital source of psychological power. As a source of empowerment, possession of requisite knowledge about phenomena promotes employee determination to stay in the face of adversity. This is because through the learning process, organizations can expand their knowledge base, improve the ability to utilize information and develop effective strategies and structures to manage change in uncertain environments (Fernández-Mesa & Alegre, 2015). In every knowledge management process, knowledge discovery tends to be the foundation on which every other process is built. This is as it enables the management to locate where knowledge is situated within the organization.

Sadly, despite the observed importance of knowledge discovery in the advancement of employee resilience, not much of empirical attention has been paid to examine its relationship with employee resilience among tertiary education institutions in Rivers State. Some of the empirical studies carried out in this stance include the work of North and Kumta (2018) who examined the impact of Knowledge management on value creation through organizational learning. Zvobgoet *et al.* (2015) on the other hand investigated the relationship between knowledge management and survival strategy to enhance competitive advantage in the Zimbabwean tourism and hospitality industry. Furthermore, Omerzel (2010) examined the impact of knowledge management on SME growth and profitability. Given this paucity of research in the area of knowledge discovery, it is the focus of this work to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationship between knowledge discovery and employee resilience in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is hinged on the assumptions of the human capital theory. This theory was considered as an appropriate framework to explain the relationship between knowledge discovery and employee because of its clear emphasis on the criticality of the human dimension of organizational resources in a knowledge driven economy. The human capital theorists assume that it is the organization's human resource that gives it competitive advantage (Prime & Butler, 2001). This is because according to Izushi and Huggins (2004), human capital is associated with the skills, knowledge and abilities of an individual that create value. Leaning on these assumptions, in order to sustainably leverage on its immutable knowledge and skills amid competition, firms' leadership considers it a strategic option to seek out hidden and untapped knowledge as a competitive advantage. This observation aligns with Wobodo, Konya and Nwaeke (2019) when they contend that the increased advocacy for the protection of a firm's immutable resources knowledge by scholars and organization leaders validates the indispensability of the employees in the determination of overall organizational performance and survival. The contribution of effective knowledge discovery in relation to employee resilience is tied to the fact that it helps the organization in the enrichment of its stock of knowledge assets both tacit and explicit; which then act as a source of empowerment in the face of complexities. This observation also supports the view of Gabriel (2012) that the essence of knowledge management practice is to bring together internal and external knowledge for easy adaptation to environmental changes at the workplace.

### **Concept of Knowledge Discovery**

In today's knowledge centered economy, to remain operationally sustainable, managers and administrators must pay critical attention to organizational knowledge management more especially in knowledge generation centers like tertiary education institutions. This is because effective application of knowledge is the foundation on which organization goal execution is made pure and simple. It is on this premise that knowledge management is considered a formidable managerial weapon for employee empowerment and organizational stability. The foundation of organization's knowledge management agenda begins with effective knowledge discovery. This is because a manager cannot manage or utilize what he or she is not aware of its existence. Therefore, knowledge discovery is the process of identifying the existence and location of particular knowledge within the organization with a view to making it an organizational asset. Because knowledge discovery affords the organizational leaders the opportunity of capturing the location and carrier of certain knowledge in the organization, it is viewed as an indispensable element in knowledge management. This supports the view of Zwain, Teng and Othman (2012) that knowledge capturing provides room for organization to capitalize on the importance of a much needed knowledge.

Practically, in modern organization management, one seamless approach in which knowledge can easily be discovered within the organization is through employee appraisal. This is because during employees' appraisal, information relating to each individual worker is uncovered and from which individual workers' currently possessed knowledge is located. Therefore, validating the view of Armstrong (2009) that appraisal focuses on gathering, analyzing and recording information that explains the relative worth of the employee to the organization. Therefore, the worth of an individual worker is measured in relation to knowledge possessed

and the value of such knowledge to the organization's operations. Going by this, it is very clear that appraisal exercise promotes timely discovery of knowledge within the organization. It is upon this discovery that managers develop strategies to extract, share and store such knowledge for the greater good of the organization. Knowledge discovery initiative may have several drives, but the most common is to provide physical confirmation of what knowledge the organization wants, where the knowledge is located, how it is being used, what problems and difficulties is associated with it, and what improvements can be made on it. Aliand Hassan (2012) confirmed that the importance of Knowledge discovery in its capacity to capture the qualification and measurement of both tacit and explicit knowledge of the organization, and knowledge networks within the organization.

### **Types of Knowledge**

Basically, there are two types of knowledge in organization. Nonaka and Takeuchi, (1995) categorized them as explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is that form of information that can be classified, written down, saved and made accessible to others within an organization. It usually very easy to locate, store and accessed (Wellman, 2009). The importance of this type of knowledge is that it serves as a guideline and procedure under which things are done or not done in the organization. It is usually formal in nature (Daft, 2001), as well as an intellectual property to an organization (Gabriel, 2012). Explicit knowledge is readily imbedded in an organization's documents, policies, code of conduct, records and archive and, procedure manuals. In fact, it is locked in processed.

### **Mechanisms for Explicit Knowledge Management**

In organizations whether public or private, there are a number of mechanisms through which knowledge could be discovered, gathered and disseminated. Daft (2001) have identified the following mechanisms as a driving force for effective explicit knowledge management

- i) **Data warehousing and Mining** – This approach allows organizations to bring together all their data into formidable databases for stress-free access when they are needed. Data mining on the other hand, aids users in making maximum use of the data by examining creative ways of solving organizational complexities while taking advantage of latent opportunities (Daft, 2001). However, the combination of these two mechanisms can bring about a cohesive customer relationship management which then results in customer loyalty and retention.
- ii) **Knowledge Mapping** – Mapping mechanism is geared towards helping organizations discover where knowledge is domiciled in the organization. It guides people to knowledge assets within the organization.
- iii) **Electronic Libraries** - This provides organizations with databases for a particular type of information for specific users. By doing this, organizations store knowledge and make same accessible to all members.

On the other hand, tacit knowledge is seen as a rigid form of knowledge which focuses on knowledge domiciled in the minds of people and usually very complex to access without the owners express will. Tacit knowledge is individual based, contextual in nature and very difficult to formalize and communicate (Umoh& Amah, 2013).It is regarded as expert knowledge gained as a result of training and experience. In the organization, possessors of tacit knowledge not only constitute a wealth of intellectual asset to their organization but also represent a source of competitive edge through effective contributions in decision making process. Since tacit knowledge is personal in nature, it is imperative that organizations adopt a motivating strategy to retain their employees' requisite knowledge. Leaning on the fact that if such employees either through voluntary or involuntary means leaves the organization, the knowledge in their heads also leaves with them, leaving the organization intellectually short-changed. Umoh and Amah (2013) suggest meetings, seminars, workshops and coaching as means of discovering and retaining this knowledge. By doing this, there will be less-tendency that the expertise of the organization will disappear just at the same time with the employees' exit.

### **Mechanisms for Tacit Knowledge Management**

- i) **Learning Histories and Storytelling** – These mechanisms are designed to put especially new employees of the organization up-to-date on how critical issues and decisions were made in the past and how such decisions affected the organization. With this, knowledge of past successes and failures are passed to the present day decision makers in the organization. Thus, enhancing their procedural knowledge of the job.
- ii) **Dialogue** – the idea behind the concept of dialogue in sharing tacit knowledge revolves around the fact that through dialogue, people come together talking face-to-face or through a computer aided device like video conferencing. The implication of this is that, through this, media collective intelligence is created. Thereby making knowledge that cannot be written down easily and documented in the database to be exchanged (Umoh& Amah, 2013).

## **Employee Resilience**

According to Bello (2011), the Nigerian business operating environment is saturated with unlimited challenges occasioned by macro and micro environmental forces which affect business in varied ways. In credence to this claim, Wobodo, Asawo and Asawo (2018) state that some of these forces could manifest in the form of political imbalance, technological shifts, terrorists' attacks, natural disaster, market rigging by the government, employees' educational and cultural differences and wrong structural configurations. The manifestation of these factors in no doubt adversely affect the employees' general work-life such that resilience is now considered as the key virtue to staying focused. In fact, Hamel and Valikangas (2003) indicate that the essence of developing resilience work behavior among employees was as a result of urgent need for organizations to respond to internal and external challenges that impinge on its operational existence. Employee resilience the capability of a person to recover from and at the same time adapt to changes (Jeffery & Jeffery, 2006). To this end, we view resilience as an individual's developable internal competence to gradually adjust in the face of challenging situation. Employees who are resilient practically bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure and increased responsibility.

Resilient employees believe that tough times never last forever but resilient people do. As such, they strive to keep up in the face of any situation knowing that no situation is insurmountable. The implication of the existence of this type of rare behavioural tendency in the foundation of individual behavior is strategic in nature to the organization. This is because it provides the organization with competitive advantage, especially as resilient employees have remarkable tenacity to persevere in the face of adversity or stress. Therefore, to continuously reap from the gains that this disposition brings, human resource professionals must always develop strategies to develop and improve the growth of this type of mentality amongst employees. Viable strategic options like employee training, mentoring and coaching can be adopted guide and strengthen employee resilience mentality (Luthans, 2002). Regular application of these resilience mentality development tools is very important in the advancement of individual resilience level knowing that resilience is not a static behavior; thus developable. Resilience mentality places less emphasis on who we are and more on how we perceive ourselves and our environment. Hence, it directly influence the way we perceive challenges and threats – seeing them as either devastating, frustrating or as opportunity in disguise.

**Adaptability**– Resilience mentality is characterized by a strong sense of adaptability in the face of physical and psychological strain. This view aligns with the position of Hammel and Valikangas (2003) when they contend that successful individuals and organizations relentlessly adapt to changes in their environment. Adaptability refers the ability of an individual to transform the demands of the environment into action (Denison, 2007). What this definition implies is that being adaptive is connected with the individual's capacity to remain focus amidst adversity by aligning oneself to the current trend. In the same vein, we view adaptability as the efficacy to yield oneself to the expectations of the current situation or environment without given up. Yielding oneself to the demand of the situation being dealt with is about undermining inherent threats, while leveraging on the opportunities therein to bounce back. With this view in mind, we may say that adaptive employees are those who are usually cognizant of and sensitive to the changes and happenings in their environment. The forgoing observations thus affirm the view of Wobodo and Oparanma (2019) when they argue that organizations' and individuals' adaptive capacity is a major driver of a sustained resilient behavior and a recipe that keeps hope alive in the face of stress and disaster.

**Interpersonal Competence**– Given that the organization is an entity characterized by bloc of stakeholders with varied interests, interpersonal competence is considered as an essential skill needed to effectively relate with others. Interpersonal competence shares similar trait with Robert Katz and Kahn's human relation skill, which is a dimension of their managerial skill theory. This skill is regarded as a salient attribute of a resilient employee behavior. It is seen as an individual's ability to relate effectively well with others irrespective of their uniqueness in character and physiology. Interpersonal competence skill enables us to adequately understand our emotions and those of others. This view reinforces the assertion of Robbins, David and Mary (2011) employees with interpersonal competence demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence and work well with others both individually and in groups. This is because; they have a good understanding of self and social awareness; and the capacity to utilize this information to effectively manage themselves and their affinities with others. Considerable studies have shown that resilience results from positive social relationships, the ability to control one's own emotions, and feelings of competence (Doll, Zucker & Brehm, 2004). Schneider, Lyons and Khazon (2013) opine that emotional understanding facilitates resilience and has a positive correlation with a remarkable effect. It is argued that people with higher level of interpersonal skills are better able to adapt their own ideas to others' especially when it supports in achieving organizational goals more quickly and efficiently. Interpersonal skills are required at all three levels of management: supervisory, middle management, and senior management (Yukl, 2006). It is not a function of the individual's hierarchy but his/her flexibility in relation to behavior.

Therefore is very necessary that employees be cultured so as to demonstrate a noble interpersonal connection with one another in the organization.

### **Knowledge Discovery and Employee Resilience**

Drawing from the fact that we are in an industrial era whereby knowledge is considered as the major source of competitive advantage, the need for organizations to progressively discover immutable knowledge is considered critical. This is because discovery of new knowledge re-fuels the energy of the organization and employees to remain steadfast in the face perturbations arising from intense competition and changing work processes. Again, discovery of rare knowledge wherever it is situated within the organization and converting same to organizational wide knowledge serves as a great source of employee empowerment to remain resilient. Accordingly, Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2013) posit that effective knowledge identification is crucial for employee motivation and satisfaction on the job. Therefore, we infer that motivated and satisfied employees may have higher tendency to display resilience behavior due to access to discovered knowledge.

In tandem with the forgoing, Robbins *et al.* (2011) reveal that knowledge management promotes employees' knowledge of the organizations inside workings, especially in the face of complexities. Meaning that when employees are carriers of requisite operational knowledge of their job as discovered and shared to all in need, among other things, their motivation and commitment to do the job will increase. This perceived increase in motivation and commitment in turn impact positively on their resilience behavior such as adaptability and interpersonal competence. This finding also aligns with Sarawanwong, Tuamsuk, Vongprasert and Khiewyoo (2009) study which states that identifying knowledge need is necessary to support staff improve and also carry out their respective duties effectively. This finding also affirms Wang., Ashleigh and Meyer (2006) wherein the author maintains that effective knowledge management processes such as knowledge discovery provides organizational employees with the required knowledge at the right time to support the right action.

## **II. Conclusion and Recommendations**

In view of extant literature review, it was uncovered that the essentiality of knowledge resource in the current industrial economy is the premise on which leaders of organizations are aggressively seeking for the location, acquisition and retention of immutable knowledge within and outside the organization. An organization that incorporates knowledge discovery process of knowledge management into its corporate strategy enjoys competitive advantage. This is because through access to immutable knowledge, it makes exploit and set the pace of others to follow. The employees also view their jobs as challenging and explorative, thereby reinforcing their resilience behavior. Consequently, the paper concludes that knowledge discovery is a managerial tool through which employee resilience is activated for better performance. Therefore, the paper recommends that to remain competitively vibrant in the face of rapidly changing work processes, that managers of organizations should effectively incorporate knowledge discovery practice into their corporate strategy as this will help the organization to sustainably have access to rare industry-driven knowledge that will not only promote performance but also foster resilience behavior among the employees.

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