JOB VIGOUR AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIVENESS IN 3-STAR HOTELS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between job vigour and employee responsiveness in 3-star hotels in Rivers State. Utilizing a correlational research design, the study analyzed data from 189 staff members across ten hotels selected based on criteria including adequate signage, internet access, and a minimum of ten years in operation. The research objectives were to determine the relationship between job vigour and employee flexibility, speed, and innovativeness. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between job vigour and both employee flexibility ($r = 0.640$) and employee speed ($r = 0.720$), indicating that increased vigour enhances these aspects of employee responsiveness. However, the relationship between job vigour and employee innovativeness was weaker ($r = 0.274$). These results suggest that while vigour significantly contributes to employee flexibility and speed, its impact on innovativeness is less pronounced. The study's results support the importance of job vigour in enhancing operational efficiency and responsiveness in the hospitality sector. Based on these findings, it is recommended that 3-star hotels in Rivers State invest in employee engagement programs, flexible work practices, and training to improve vigour and, consequently, responsiveness. Further research should explore additional factors influencing the relationship between vigour and employee innovativeness.

Keywords: Job vigour, employee responsiveness, flexibility, speed, innovativeness

INTRODUCTION

Job vigour, a key construct in the study of employee engagement, encompasses high energy, resilience, and a willingness to invest effort in one's job, as well as the ability to persist in the face of challenges (Obeidat, 2016). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2010), vigour involves maintaining high levels of energy and mental resilience, along with persistence and effort, which are crucial for effective job performance. This concept is supported by Shirom (2010), who emphasizes that vigour contributes to one's capacity to overcome obstacles and sustain high performance levels.

The significance of vigour in enhancing organizational outcomes is well-documented. Studies have shown that high levels of vigour are associated with increased individual performance and, consequently, improved organizational performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Obeidat (2016) found a positive relationship between vigour and organizational performance, noting that engaged employees are more productive and innovative, which reduces costs associated with staff turnover. Additionally, Koech and Cheboi (2018) and Chege, Muathe, and Maina (2017) confirmed that vigour is positively related to employee performance, including aspects such as organizational flexibility and speed.

Employee responsiveness, on the other hand, refers to the ability of employees to adjust their behavior and processes in response to changes and demands in their work environment (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Davis, 1982). It is characterized by promptness in addressing customer inquiries and complaints, as well as the overall capacity to modify operations to meet evolving needs (Stromer-Galley, 2000; Butler & Rivera, 2020). Responsiveness is crucial for maintaining competitive advantage, especially in dynamic and competitive environments (Danese, Romano, & Formentini, 2013).

Research has shown that responsiveness includes elements such as flexibility and speed. Employee flexibility involves the availability of alternatives and the ability to adjust operations to accommodate environmental changes (Homburg et al., 2007). Speed, as a feature of responsiveness, denotes the pace at which employees can modify their operations in response to changes, reflecting organizational agility (Butler & Rivera, 2020). Innovation is another aspect closely linked to employee responsiveness. It involves the generation and implementation of new ideas, products, and processes to improve competitive advantage and meet customer needs (Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001; Utterback, 1994). Innovation is a dynamic process that requires employee vigour to continually adapt and develop new solutions (Zhuang, 1995; Nohria & Gulati, 1996).

The interplay between job vigour and employee responsiveness is particularly relevant for 3-star hotels in Rivers State, where maintaining high service standards and adapting to customer expectations are vital for success. This study aimed to explore the relationship between job vigour and various dimensions of employee responsiveness, including flexibility, speed, and innovativeness, in this specific context. The following objectives were drawn for the study:

1. To determine the relationship between job vigour and employee flexibility in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.
2. To probe the relationship between job vigour and employee work speed in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.
3. To examine the relationship between job vigour and employee innovativeness in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.

The conceptual framework showing the relationship between job vigour and employee responsiveness is displayed in Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Job Vigour and Employee Responsiveness.
Source: Desk Research, 2024

Based on the above objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between job vigour and employee flexibility in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between job vigour and employee work speed in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between job vigour and employee innovativeness in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that relationships are formed and maintained based on a reciprocal exchange of resources between individuals or parties. This theory suggests that social behavior is the result of an exchange process aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs (Blau, 1964). In the workplace context, SET emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the employer-employee relationship, where positive treatment of employees encourages reciprocal behavior, such as increased job vigor and responsiveness (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

From a social exchange perspective, job vigor can be viewed as a return from the employee to the organization in response to the resources and support provided by the employer. When employees perceive that they are treated fairly, respected, and valued, they are more likely to reciprocate with heightened levels of energy and enthusiasm in their work (Saks, 2006). Employers that invest in the well-being of their employees—through fair compensation, professional development opportunities, and supportive leadership—encourage employees to exhibit greater job vigor. This reciprocal exchange builds a sense of mutual commitment and trust, fostering a productive and engaged workforce.

According to SET, responsiveness is influenced by the quality of the social exchange between the employee and employer (Emerson, 1976). When employees perceive that the organization is supportive and provides resources, they are likely to respond in ways that reflect positive engagement and commitment. For instance, employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to display promptness, adaptability, and responsibility in their roles (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This exchange fosters a culture where employees feel obligated to reciprocate the positive treatment, they receive by enhancing their responsiveness to the organization's goals and expectations.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Job Vigour

Vigour refers to an individual's high levels of energy, resilience, and willingness to invest effort in their work. It also includes the ability to resist fatigue and persist in the face of challenges or obstacles (Obeidat, 2016). Vigour typically involves mental resilience, sustained energy, and a strong commitment to overcoming difficulties. These qualities are essential for employees to demonstrate vigour while performing their job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Shirom, 2010). As a core component of job engagement, vigour is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is characterized by high levels of energy, mental resilience, and the willingness to invest effort in one's work, as well as persistence in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This affective construct captures the subjective experience of energy and vitality (Shirom, 2004), which are critical for fostering creative and proactive behaviors that benefit the organization (Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008). Moreover, vigour is seen as the opposite of emotional exhaustion. While low energy levels are indicative of high exhaustion, high energy levels signify a strong presence of vigour (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006).

Vigour is also described as an employee's energetic approach to work, characterized by dedication and sustained effort, even in challenging situations (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). This trait aligns with Atkinson's motivational theory, which highlights the strength and resistance required to continue working under pressure. Motivation, which is often linked to the drive to perform work or the resistance to giving up, is consistent with the concept of vigour in work engagement (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Vigour is commonly assessed using six items that reflect high energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, resistance to fatigue, and persistence in the face of challenges. These items include statements such as: "At my work, I feel bursting with energy," "At my job, I feel strong and vigorous," and "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work." Individuals who score high in vigour exhibit energy, zest, and stamina, while those with low scores tend to experience less vitality and endurance in their work.

The Concept of Employee Responsiveness

Employee responsiveness is defined as the capacity to adapt systems and processes to effectively address gaps or needs within an organization (Butler & Riveria, 2020). In the context of customer service, responsiveness involves the willingness and preparedness of employees to offer timely services, taking into account the importance of meeting or surpassing customer expectations (Butler & Riveria, 2020; Kumar & Charles, 2010). Responsiveness in this regard refers to the readiness to provide services promptly, using market information to tailor responses that align with customer needs.

Employee responsiveness is further facilitated by understanding customers' safety needs, social status, psychological dispositions, and providing individualized attention (Jaja, 2000; Gabriel & Nwaeke, 2015). These factors are crucial in meeting customer expectations and play a pivotal role in creating positive impressions, which can prolong customer relationships with the organization. In today's highly competitive and dynamic business environment, employee responsiveness is a critical factor for organizations seeking to gain a competitive edge (Danese, Romano, & Formentini, 2013). Responsiveness is also seen as an organization's ability to utilize market information effectively to enhance its operations and overall success (Kumar & Charles, 2010). This concept can be broken down into both strategic and operational processes, such as organizational sensing and modular organizing. Sensing refers to an organization's capability to understand its complex relationship with the external environment, while the modular process involves perceiving, interpreting, and acting (Cadogan et al., 2016).

Employee responsiveness, therefore, relies on the collective sensing efforts of all members within an organization. It also requires organizations to develop the flexibility to respond efficiently to both strategic and operational demands. Unfortunately, the role of responsiveness in strategic management has often been under-explored, though it is gaining attention in recent research. Pehrsson (2014) advocated that organizations should aim to develop appropriate responsive actions, such as product customization and relationship-building, to better meet customer needs. Achieving effective responsiveness requires a firm to rely on a broad understanding of its customers and competitors, supported by a well-designed system for generating and disseminating market information.

Measures of Employee Responsiveness

Employee Flexibility

Employee flexibility refers to the availability of alternative approaches within an organization's operations and procedures. Flexibility is a key indicator of responsiveness, as it enables employees to modify and adapt their actions in response to changes in the environment (Homburg et al., 2007). When an organization has multiple operational routes and alternatives, employees are better equipped to adjust their behavior, processes, or operations to meet new demands or conditions (Homburg et al., 2007). This adaptability is crucial for maintaining effective responsiveness, as it highlights the importance of systems, partnerships, and stakeholders in expanding the organization's options and ensuring its resilience in the face of changes in supply chains, routes, and other operational factors.

Employee work speed

Speed, as a characteristic of employees, refers to the pace at which operations and processes are carried out. It is an essential element of employee responsiveness, as it reflects the ability to adapt or accelerate the pace of operations in response to changes or developments within the organizational context. Employee speed is crucial to maintaining operations and meeting service demands, even as those demands fluctuate (Homburg et al., 2007). The speed at which an organization operates demonstrates its agility and readiness for change, making it a key aspect of organizational responsiveness. This aligns with Butler and Rivera's (2020) observation that change occurs at varying speeds—some gradual, others rapid. For organizations to survive and thrive, they must align their agility and response speed with the pace of external changes. Butler and Rivera (2020) further argued that organizations are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance, competitiveness, and effectiveness when their operational speed or agility matches the rate of changes in their environment.

Employee innovativeness

Innovation has been widely defined as the creation of new ideas and behaviors within an organization (Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001). According to Utterback (1994), innovation is considered a crucial strategic thrust that plays a significant role in a firm's survival and prosperity, regardless of its size or industry. As the business environment becomes increasingly uncertain and competitive, the importance of innovation continues to grow. While various definitions of innovation exist in the literature, most of them share common themes, linking creative ideas to new products, processes, and services that improve competitive advantage and meet customers' evolving needs (Nystrom, 1990). Innovation can be understood as something new or improved that is done by an enterprise to create significant added value either for the organization itself or directly for its customers (Carnegie & Butlin, 1993). Rose (2005) defined innovation as the intentional introduction and application of ideas, products, or procedures within a job, team, or organization that are new to that entity and designed to benefit it. This view aligns with Santos-Rodrigues, Figueroa Dorrego, and Fernandez-Jardon (2011), who distinguished between product-process innovation and management innovation.

Empirical Review

Vigour is a key construct of engagement, characterized by high energy levels, resilience, and a strong willingness to invest effort into one's job. It includes the ability to resist fatigue and persist in the face of challenges or obstacles (Obeidat, 2016). Shraga and Shirom (2009) emphasized that a certain level of vigour is essential for motivational processes within work organizations to achieve set goals. This concept can be explained through the Broaden-and-Build Theory, proposed by Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003), which posits that positive emotions enhance activity levels. This enhancement broadens cognitive scope and fosters flexibility and creative thinking, which are crucial for solving work-related problems (Shirom, 2011).

Obeidat (2016) found a positive and significant relationship between vigour as a type of engagement and organizational performance. His study demonstrated that highly engaged employees contribute to increased innovation and productivity while also reducing costs associated with hiring new staff by retaining skilled employees. Similarly, research by Koech and Cheboi (2018) and Chege, Muathe, and Maina (2017) revealed that employee engagement is significantly and positively correlated with employee performance. Their findings indicated that vigour is notably related to organizational flexibility and employee speed. However, these studies have not empirically examined the relationship between vigour and measures of employee responsiveness. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H01: There is no significant correlation between vigour and employee flexibility in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.

H02: There is no significant association between vigour and employee speed in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.

H03: There is no significant correlation between vigour and employee innovativeness in 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, correlational research design was adopted. The choice of correlational research design was premised on the non-contrived nature of the study which assesses the relationship between the variables in their natural setting through the application of a pre-determined structure and statistical format in the evaluation of the nature of the manifestations of the variables in the target organizations as well as the extent to which the variables correlate. The population for this study comprised 360 staff members of ten registered 3-star hotels in Rivers State. These hotels were chosen based on three criteria: they must have adequate signage, offer internet access (either through their own website or a third-party platform), and have been operational for at least ten years. This selection criterion aligns with the information provided by the Port Harcourt, Rivers State Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (2020). A sample size of 189 staff members was determined using Taro Yamen's formula. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to respondents in order to get primary data from them. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, being a parametric analytical tool was applied to test the postulated hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation Result of Vigour and Employee Flexibility

		Vigour	Employee Flexibility
Vigour	Pearson Correlation	1	.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	171	171
Employee Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.640**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	171	171

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

Table 1 present correlation results ascertaining the relationship between vigour and employee flexibility using 171 respondents. The results indicated a strong relationship between vigour and employee flexibility. The correlation statistic ($r = .0.640$, $p < 0.001$) shows that vigour can explain. 64.0% of variations in employee flexibility. This is an indication of a positive relationship between the variables. In term of strength of the relationship, the result show that vigour with ($r = 0.\ 640$) is strongly related to employee flexibility. Based on the empirical findings, the null hypothesis H01 as stated earlier that, there is no momentous relationship between vigour and employee flexibility of 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State, is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Thus, there is a strong relationship between vigour and employee flexibility.

Table 2: Correlation Result of Vigour and Employee Speed

		Vigour	**Employee Speed**
Vigour	Pearson Correlation	1	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	171	171
Employee Speed	Pearson Correlation	.720**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	171	171

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

Table 2 present correlation results ascertaining the relationship between vigour and employee speed using 171 respondents. The results indicated a strong relationship between vigour and employee speed. The correlation statistic ($r = .0.720$, $p < 0.001$) shows that vigour can explain. 72.0% of variations in employee speed. This is an indication of a positive relationship between the variables. In term of strength of the relationship, the result show that vigour with ($r = 0.\ 720$) is strongly related to employee speed. Based on the empirical findings, the null hypothesis H02 as stated earlier that, there is no relationship between vigour and employee speed of 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State, is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Thus, there is a strong relationship between vigour and employee speed.

Table 3: Correlation Result of Vigour and Employee Innovativeness

		Vigour	Employee Innovativeness
Vigour	Pearson Correlation	1	.274**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	171	171
Employee Innovativeness	Pearson Correlation	.274**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	171	171

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

Table 3 present correlation results ascertaining the relationship between vigour and employee innovativeness using 171 respondents. The results indicated a weak relationship between vigour and employee innovativeness. The correlation statistic ($r = .0.274$, $p < 0.001$) shows that vigour can weakly explain. 27.4% of variations in employee innovativeness. This is an indication of a positive relationship between the variables. In term of strength of the relationship, the result show that vigour with ($r = 0.\ 274$) is weakly related to employee innovativeness. Based on the empirical findings, the null hypothesis H03 as stated earlier that, there is no momentous nexus between vigour and employee innovativeness of 3 Star Hotels in Rivers State, is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Thus, there is a strong relationship between vigour and employee innovativeness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the test of hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 established that, there is a significant relationship between vigour, emotional engagement, employee speed and employee innovation. The correlation statistic ($r = .0.640$ for employee flexibility, $r = .0.720$ for employee speed, $r = .0.274$ for employee innovativeness, $p < 0.001$) shows that vigour can explain. 64.0% of variations in employee flexibility, 72.0% of variations in employee speed, 27.4% of variations in employee innovativeness. This is an indication of a positive relationship between the variables. In term of strength of the relationship, the result show that vigour with (r = 0. 640) is strongly related to employee flexibility, with (r = 0. 720) is strongly related to employee speed and with (r = 0. 270) is weakly related to employee innovativeness.

This is very instructive to management 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State or any other industry that, a unit increase in vigour has potential to augment employee flexibility without the consideration of the effects of other exogenous variables. A unit increase in vigour has potential to augment employee speed without the consideration of the effects of other exogenous variables. A unit increase in vigour also have the potential to augment employee innovativeness, however, with the consideration of the effects of other exogenous variables. These findings support those of Shraga and Shirom (2009) stipulated that a certain level of vigor is necessary for motivational processes in work organizations in order to achieve set goals. This may be explained through the Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003) that stipulated that positive affects tend to enhance activity levels, which gives the opportunity to broaden the scope of cognition and enables flexibility and creative thinking to come up with solutions for work-related problems (Shirom, 2011).

A study by Obeidat (2016) established that there is a positive and significant relationship between vigour type of engagement and organizational performance. They found that highly engaged employees lead to increased innovation and productivity while at the same time helps in reducing costs for hiring new staff by retaining the old and talented ones. Koech and Cheboi (2018) and Chege, Muathe and Maina (2017) revealed that employee engagement significantly and positively correlates with employee performance. Their studies showed that vigor engagement is significantly related to organizational flexibility and employee speed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between job vigour and employee responsiveness in 3-star hotels in Rivers State, with a focus on employee flexibility, speed, and innovativeness. The findings reveal that job vigour is a significant predictor of various dimensions of employee responsiveness, supporting the notion that engaged and energetic employees contribute positively to organizational performance. The analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between job vigour and employee flexibility indicating that employees with high vigour are better equipped to adapt their behaviors and processes in response to changing demands. Similarly, vigour was strongly related to employee speed, suggesting that energetic employees are more likely to enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness to customer needs. However, the relationship between vigour and employee innovativeness was weaker which implies that while vigour contributes to creativity and innovation, other factors may also play a crucial role. The results underscore the importance of fostering job vigour to improve employee responsiveness.

Since job vigour significantly correlates with employee flexibility and speed, the study recommends that hotel management should invest in comprehensive employee engagement programs. These programs should focus on increasing job satisfaction and energy levels among staff. Engaging activities and recognition programs can help foster a positive work environment, boosting employees' vigour and, consequently, their responsiveness.

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