

EMPLOYEE ALTRUISM AND CORPORATE COMPETITIVENESS IN THREE STAR HOTELS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between employee altruism and competitiveness, measured in terms of operational efficiency, innovativeness and customer satisfaction, in 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational design. With a population of 11 registered 3-star hotels, a sample of 33 managers were drawn for the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that altruism significantly influences operational efficiency, innovation, and customer satisfaction among 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt. Employees who demonstrate altruistic behaviors such as selfless support for colleagues contribute to enhanced teamwork, reduced workplace conflict, and smoother service delivery. These behaviors also foster innovative practices and a positive customer experience. The study concludes that altruism is a critical driver of organizational performance in the hospitality industry. It recommends that hotel managers incorporate altruism-focused values in staff recruitment and training programs. Additionally, creating a supportive work environment can further encourage altruistic behaviors and sustain service excellence.

Keywords: Employee Altruism, Competitiveness, Operational Efficiency, Innovativeness, Customer Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

As global markets become increasingly interconnected and competition intensifies, sustaining competitiveness has become a top priority for organizations worldwide. Competitive advantage, as conceptualized by Porter (1985), can be achieved through cost leadership, differentiation, or focus strategies. Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (2019) further argue that dynamic capabilities—the

capacity to adapt and innovate—are essential for long-term competitiveness, especially in fast-changing industries. Innovation, as emphasized by Grant (2020), plays a crucial role in enabling firms to introduce new products, services, or processes that meet evolving customer needs, thereby securing long-term relevance in the market. Without such strategic positioning and innovation, organizations risk stagnation in an increasingly volatile business environment.

The consequences of a lack of competitiveness are far-reaching. Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (2021) emphasize that firms that fail to adapt or innovate are likely to lose market share, suffer declining revenue, and face customer attrition. Kotler and Keller (2020) warn that complacency in dynamic markets leads to a deterioration of profitability and brand reputation, which are difficult to rebuild. Moreover, Olusanya, Abiodun, and Fatima (2023) note that financial distress forces companies into cost-cutting measures that further hinder innovation and service delivery. At a macroeconomic level, this erosion of firm-level competitiveness can impede national economic performance, reduce innovation capacity, and weaken a country's global economic standing (Aigbokhan, Obadan, & Eboh, 2023). Despite the push for customer-centric strategies and regulatory compliance, many Nigerian hospitality firms continue to struggle with poor service delivery and complaint resolution (Eze & Chukwu, 2020), revealing deeper organizational challenges that hinder competitiveness.

In this context, employee altruism emerges as a potentially transformative factor for boosting corporate competitiveness. Altruism is a form of prosocial behavior where employees selflessly help colleagues or customers without expecting direct rewards (Grant & Berg, 2021; Bolino et al., 2020). Factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and intrinsic motivation play key roles in cultivating such behavior (Wang, Li & Sun, 2023). While existing research links prosocial behavior to outcomes like customer satisfaction and reduced turnover, few studies—particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria—have explored its strategic implications for competitiveness in the hospitality sector (Adeoye & Elegbeleye, 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between employee Altruism and corporate competitiveness in three-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, addressing a critical gap in both local and international literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between employee altruism and competitiveness of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the relationship between employee altruism and operational efficiency of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- ii. To determine the relationship between employee altruism and innovativeness of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- iii. To understudy the relationship between employee altruism and customer satisfaction of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework showing the predictor variable (employee altruism) and the measures of the criterion variable (competitiveness).

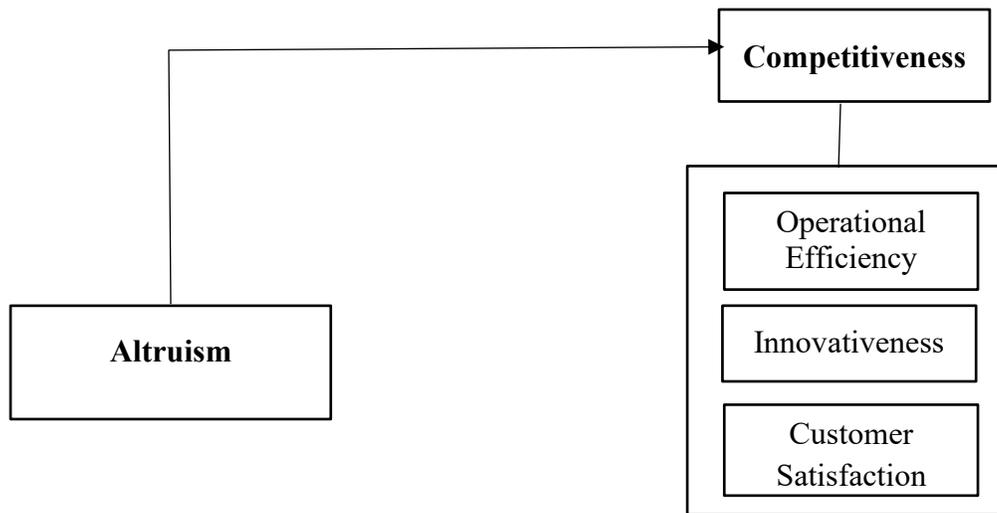


Figure 1: Indicates the Relationship between employee altruism and corporate competitiveness.

Source: Researcher’s Desk (2025). The measures of corporate competitiveness were adapted from Porter and Kramer (2019) and Amankwah-Amoah and Syllias (2020).

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between employee altruism and operational efficiency of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between employee altruism and innovativeness of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
- iii. What is the relationship between employee altruism and customer satisfaction of three (3) star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by George Homans (1961) and Peter Blau (1964), provides a foundational framework for understanding social behavior within organizational contexts, positing that individuals engage in interactions based on cost-benefit calculations and expectations of reciprocity. The theory suggests that when organizations invest in their employees—through High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), leadership support, or resource provision—employees tend to reciprocate with beneficial behaviors such as knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and innovative performance. Recent studies (Bhayana et al., 2024; Siddiqui et al., 2024; Cook & Rice, 2023) affirm this reciprocal dynamic,

demonstrating that perceived organizational support enhances job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement. Furthermore, Saks (2006) linked employee engagement to the provision of economic and socioemotional resources, showing that disengagement often stems from perceived imbalances in these exchanges.

SET's applicability extends across various domains, including knowledge management, leadership, and digital communication. For instance, Van Houten (2022) emphasized that knowledge sharing among professionals is influenced by perceptions of interpersonal safety and reciprocity, while Posey et al. (2010) applied SET to online self-disclosure, finding that trust and perceived mutual benefit drive information sharing. Leadership dynamics also align with SET principles, as fair and supportive leader-member exchanges (LMX) have been shown to foster OCB and performance (Tinti et al., 2017). Experimental studies such as the gift-exchange game (Yamamori & Iwata, 2023) further validate SET by illustrating how equitable compensation leads to increased employee effort. Additionally, SET's relevance to peer behavior and cultural dynamics is evident in research by Boucher et al. (2024) and Olivetti et al. (2020), who highlight how social connectedness and cultural norms shape individual actions. While SET offers valuable insights into workplace behavior, it tends to emphasize rationality, potentially overlooking emotional, altruistic, and culturally contingent aspects of human exchange.

Altruism

Altruism in the workplace refers to voluntary actions aimed at benefiting others without seeking external rewards, reflecting a selfless and intrinsically motivated disposition. Eisenberg (2020) emphasizes the voluntary and reward-independent nature of altruistic behavior, while Kaplan (2020) highlights its association with personal sacrifice and genuine concern for others. Within the organizational context, Podsakoff et al. (2020) link altruism to helping behavior, a key component of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), where employees proactively assist colleagues with work-related challenges. Empirical studies support the value of altruism in enhancing organizational outcomes: Georgewill and Ekpa (2021) found that altruism fosters employee commitment among local government staff in Rivers State; Jaja and Gabriel (2020) argue that altruism promotes adaptability and resilience within organizations; and Li et al. (2024) revealed that altruism helps mitigate occupational stress and reduces turnover intentions among Chinese community rehabilitation workers. Furthermore, Du Plooy and Roodt (2020) reported a positive correlation between altruistic behavior and work engagement, suggesting that altruistic employees are more committed and contribute to a cooperative organizational culture.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is a dynamic and multifaceted concept that reflects a company's ability to sustain or improve its market position through innovation, efficiency, and customer satisfaction (Ketels, 2020). It requires continuous adaptation to evolving market conditions and consumer needs. Dávila, Villar, and González-Benito (2020) further describe corporate competitiveness as encompassing financial performance, market share, product differentiation, and operational

efficiency, emphasizing the importance of leveraging intangible assets such as brand value, intellectual capital, and organizational culture. In the Nigerian context, Akinyele (2021) views competitiveness as a firm's ability to outperform rivals by maintaining strategic advantages in pricing, quality, and customer service—especially important given the country's volatile business climate. Adebayo and Sulaimon (2020) add that Nigerian firms can sustain competitive advantage by capitalizing on local knowledge and tailoring offerings to consumer preferences, noting that success is more likely when businesses adopt competitive pricing and deeply understand their target markets.

Measures of Competitiveness

Operational Efficiency: Operational efficiency is broadly defined as an organization's ability to convert inputs into valuable outputs using minimal resources, encompassing both financial and non-financial performance dimensions such as employee productivity, technological innovation, and customer satisfaction (Chen et al., 2022). Expanding on this, Lee and Park (2023) assert that operational efficiency is not solely about cost reduction but involves optimizing processes to align with market demands, thereby enhancing value creation and responsiveness. This dynamic view positions operational efficiency as a strategic necessity in a competitive environment. Kim and Yoon (2021) further emphasize the role of technology and automation, defining operational efficiency as the effective deployment of innovations and process improvements to overcome bottlenecks and elevate performance. Liang and Lee (2020) stress the importance of time efficiency, especially in fast-paced industries, where timely delivery and lean production methods significantly enhance competitiveness and customer satisfaction.

Innovativeness: Organizational innovativeness is broadly defined as the capacity of an organization to leverage its resources, culture, and knowledge to develop novel products, services, or processes that yield competitive advantages (Çallı et al., 2024). This process is deeply rooted in a supportive culture and leadership that encourages creativity and experimentation. Shoham et al. (2022) link innovativeness to market orientation, suggesting that organizations attuned to customer needs are more inclined to pursue innovation as a means of adapting to market dynamics. In the Nigerian context, Fagbemi (2022) noted that innovation-driven policies have significantly contributed to economic performance, while Egberi and Omogbiya (2022) found that emotional intelligence positively influences individual innovativeness, indicating a link between personal attributes and innovation potential. Furthermore, Samuel and Amah (2021) demonstrated that innovativeness enhances organizational resilience in the food and beverage sector in South-South Nigeria, showing that innovation is not only about novelty but also about adaptability and sustained performance in changing environments.

Customer Satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is commonly defined as the post-consumption evaluation by customers comparing their expectations with the actual performance of a product or service, as noted by Oliver (2020). Yi and La (2022) further conceptualize it as a psychological

state shaped by emotional responses such as happiness or fulfillment following cumulative interactions with a company. Kumar and Shah (2021), however, emphasize a transactional perspective, where satisfaction results from the customer's evaluation of perceived benefits versus costs, highlighting the rational dimension of satisfaction. Zainuddin et al. (2023) argue that satisfaction not only reflects current service experiences but also predicts future behaviors such as repeat purchases, brand loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations. According to Liu and Wang (2021), satisfaction arises when post-purchase perceptions meet or exceed pre-purchase expectations, while unmet expectations result in dissatisfaction.

Empirical Review

A study by Georgewill and Ekpa (2021) explored the relationship between altruism and employee commitment within local government areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research found a positive and significant correlation between altruistic behaviors and various dimensions of employee commitment, including affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This suggests that fostering altruistic behaviors can enhance employees' dedication to their organizations which results in competitiveness. In the context of highly competitive businesses, Fajri et al. (2024) investigated how workplace compassion, social support, and altruism influence employee retention. Their findings indicate that these factors significantly predict employee retention, emphasizing the importance of altruistic practices in maintaining a stable workforce. Research by Gicobi (2023) examined the influence of altruistic strategies on organizational commitment in five-star hotels in Kenya. The study highlighted that implementing altruistic strategies, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, positively affects employees' commitment levels, which is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

Ahiauza and Asawo (2014) investigated the association between 'altruistic love'—an element of workplace spirituality—and workers' commitment in the Nigerian manufacturing industry. Based on a sample of 235 middle and senior-level organizational members, the study found that a culture of altruistic love leads to high workers' affective and normative commitment, as well as low workers' continuance commitment. The authors recommend that Nigerian manufacturing organizations should strive to show devotion to organizational members through acts of benevolence, care, and concern to ensure a high level of commitment to work. A study by Archie and Ezi (2019) examined the relationship between OCB and organizational performance in selected banks in Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a sample of 172 employees, the study employed Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for data analysis. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between altruism and coordination ($r = 0.962$, $P\text{-value} < 0.05$), suggesting that altruistic behaviors among employees enhance coordination and, consequently, organizational performance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between employee altruism and operational efficiency of 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between employee altruism and innovativeness of 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between employee altruism and customer satisfaction of 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the correlational research design. This study targets all 3-star hotels in Rivers State but focuses specifically on the 70 located in Port Harcourt due to operational similarities. Using criteria such as NTDC registration, facility standards, security, and a minimum of 15 years in operation, only 11 qualified 3-star hotels in Port Harcourt form the study population. These hotels meet both national hospitality ratings and regulatory compliance benchmarks. As an organizational level study, the study was conducted as a census. Three managers were selected from each of the 3-star hotels making a total of thirty-three (33) managers which serves as the population elements. Structured questionnaire was the only source of data collection. Pearson Product Moment Test Statistics was used to analyze the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science. The total number of questionnaire administered to the management staff were thirty-three (33), and all were retrieved. Therefore, our response rate from the administered copies of questionnaire is one hundred percent (100%) as all the administered questionnaire were retrieved.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Bivariate Data Analysis

The secondary data analysis employed the use of bivariate inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation tool which was used at a 95% confidence level. Specifically, the tests covered hypotheses H₀₁ to H₀₃ which were bivariate at all, stated in the null manner. The probability criterion of 0.05 significance level was adopted for accepting the null hypotheses at ($P > 0.05$) or rejecting the hypotheses at ($P < 0.05$).

Altruism and the Measures of Competitiveness

Table 2 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for **altruism and the measures of competitiveness**. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 1: Correlation matrix between altruism and the measures of competitiveness

		Altruism	Operation	Innovate	Satisfy
Altruism	Pearson	1	.719**	.514**	.652**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.002	.000
	N	33	33	33	33
Operation	Pearson	.719**	1	.716**	.517**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.002
	N	33	33	33	33
Innovate	Pearson	.514**	.716**	1	.436*
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000		.011
	N	33	33	33	33
Satisfy	Pearson	.652**	.517**	.436*	1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.011	
	N	33	33	33	33

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Based on the SPSS output on Table 1, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis reveals statistically significant positive relationships between employee altruism and three organizational outcomes. The interpretation of each correlation is as follows:

H₀₁: Employee Altruism and Operational Efficiency. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.719, indicating a strong positive relationship between employee altruism and operational efficiency. This suggests that as employees demonstrate more altruistic behaviors, operational efficiency tends to improve. The p -value is 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, confirming that the observed relationship is unlikely due to chance.

H₀₂: Employee Altruism and Innovativeness. The correlation coefficient is 0.514, showing a moderate positive relationship between employee altruism and innovativeness. This means that higher levels of altruism among employees are associated with increased innovativeness within the organization. The p -value is 0.002, which is also statistically significant, supporting the reliability of this association.

H₀₃: Employee Altruism and Customer Satisfaction. The correlation coefficient of 0.652 suggests a moderately strong positive relationship between employee altruism and customer satisfaction. This implies that organizations with more altruistic employees tend to have higher customer satisfaction levels. The p -value of 0.000 confirms that this relationship is highly significant statistically.

All three correlations are positive and statistically significant, indicating that employee altruism plays a meaningful role in enhancing operational efficiency, innovativeness, and customer satisfaction. Therefore, hypotheses 1-3 were all rejected, and their alternatives accepted. The strongest relationship observed is with operational efficiency, followed by customer satisfaction and innovativeness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Employee Altruism and Competitiveness of Three (3) Star Hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of employee altruism in enhancing organizational competitiveness, particularly in the domains of operational efficiency, innovativeness, and customer satisfaction. Altruistic behaviors, characterized by voluntary and discretionary acts aimed at benefiting others within the organization, have been shown to positively influence various organizational outcomes. Employee altruism contributes to operational efficiency by fostering a collaborative work environment where individuals willingly assist colleagues, share knowledge, and support organizational goals. This collaborative culture leads to streamlined processes, reduced redundancies, and improved overall performance. For instance, studies have demonstrated that organizational citizenship behaviors, including altruism, are positively correlated with increased productivity and efficiency in various organizational settings (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006).

Altruistic employees are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote innovation, such as sharing creative ideas, supporting experimental initiatives, and collaborating across departments. This openness to sharing and collaboration creates an environment conducive to innovation. Research indicates that employee engagement, often driven by altruistic motives, is positively associated with organizational innovation, particularly in times of crisis, where adaptive and innovative responses are crucial (Joe, Lee & Lee, 2020). The altruistic behavior of employees extends to customer interactions, where employees go beyond basic service expectations to meet customer needs, leading to enhanced customer satisfaction. Studies have found that organizational citizenship behaviors, including altruism, are positively related to customer satisfaction, as employees' extra-role behaviors contribute to improved service quality and customer experiences (Podsakoff, Blume, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2009).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the study establishes that altruism significantly enhances both operational efficiency, innovation and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Altruistic employees, through their willingness to support colleagues selflessly, promote teamwork, minimize workplace conflict, and ensure smoother service delivery all of which contribute to more efficient operations and a more satisfying experience for customers.

Based on the conclusion that altruism enhances operational efficiency, innovation and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry, the following three recommendations are proposed:

1. Hotel management should integrate assessments of altruistic traits during recruitment and design training programs that foster empathy, cooperation, and voluntary support among employees.
2. Managers should establish a workplace culture that rewards teamwork, mutual assistance, and proactive support behaviors, which can be reinforced through peer recognition programs and team-based incentives.
3. Organizations should implement initiatives such as mentorship programs, employee support systems, and open communication channels that nurture altruistic behaviors and strengthen interpersonal relationships among staff

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