



Adaptive Capacity and Corporate Reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary source of data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of one hundred and fifty (150) employees was drawn from the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Port Harcourt. A sample size of one hundred and nine (109) respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. Data generated were analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The study findings revealed that adaptive capacity positively and significantly influences corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria. The result of the findings further revealed that adaptive capacity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company gave rise to positive corporate image and corporate identity. The study recommends that management of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company and other related companies should adjust their policy on adaptation to ensure that priority is given to the various corporate reputation practices.

Keywords: Adaptive Capacity, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Image, Corporate Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, Corporate Reputation Management has become the world's most acceptable PR practice organizations - banking, telecom, manufacturing, government agencies, colleges, professions, security services and the actual distribution of power - Sector used to build and maintain organizational reputation (Fombrun and Van- Riel, 1997; Regester and Larkin, 2002; Nwosu and Uffoh, 2005). It combines integrity with consistency (Kottasz, 2000; Joep, 2004 and Dalton, 2005). However, many practitioners of corporate reputation do not have a clear idea of the concept and its application (Barnett et al, 2006). Knowledge of different strategies, models, tools and techniques required to achieve results is really necessary both at academic level and internship.

Electricity distribution is part of the three value chain chains that ensure that end-users receive power to their homes and industries. Despite the private investment in the energy sector, the electricity supply situation in Nigeria remained unresolved, as collection, transmission, gas supply, inter alia, has limited the impact of the private sector and has created a negative general view of electricity distribution companies in Nigeria, no matter what name they are. The company's reputation in the electricity sector in Nigeria is expected to address the myriads of problems, problems or challenges facing industry. The biggest problems have been identified below by some Nigerian authors (Haastrup, 1997; Nwosu and Uffoh, 2005; Obeta, 2007; Orukari, 2010): Hostile societies and agitations, vandalization of installations (tampering) payment of electricity bills, connects consumers so that they can access electricity supply, installation, maintenance, measurement of meters and revenue collection and many more.

From the mid 90's, it has been a conscious effort in blue chip organizations to build, maintain, protect, project and maintain a solidly positive corporate reputation, now recognized as the invaluable company's access by many researchers (Mahon, 2002; Alsop, 2004, Fombrun, 1996 and Orukari, 2010). In addition, such organizations can now evaluate or measure their reputation quotas (RQ) in a reputation area (RS) - (Fombrun & Foss, 2001). Corporate reputation should reduce social welfare, achieve better stakeholder rating, reduce vandalization and create positive publicity for electricity distribution companies in Nigeria. It is intended to create a positive perception of the companies from its critical audience, namely employees, customers, distributors, suppliers, entrepreneurs, bankers, regulators, media, society, top managers, opinion leaders etc. That's why the company's reputation is regarded as an important invaluable intellectual property access (Mahon, 2002, Alsop, 2004 and Fombrun, 1996). However, the electricity distribution companies selected for this survey suffer so much awareness error from constant negative media publicity. Various issues, including hostile societies, environmental pollution, pollution, gas flaking, unwanted occupational accidents, alleged poor welfare packages, youth support, worker abduction, vandalization, regulatory issues etc. have continued to generate negative headlines in national newspapers and airwaves (Haastrup, 1997; Nwosu & Uffoh, 2005, Ogedengbe, 2007, Azaiki, 2008, Obeta 2008). In fact, Nwosu and Uffoh (2005) believe that electricity companies have not been able to deal with most of the issues identified above over the years. This presupposes the need for organizational resistance as a way to mitigate against low public opinion.

Deevy (1995) suggests that the ultimate test for any organization today can be summarized in one single question: is it sufficiently resilient to cope with an increasingly turbulent and unpredictable environment? The basic ingredient of a robust organization is "a committed workforce who is free to give maximum effort (Deevy, 1995). However, this commitment can be demonstrated through employee behavior far beyond his mission. Resilience is characterized as the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences and through flexible adaptation to the changing demands of stressful experiences (Bonanno, 2005; Maddi and Khoshaba, 2005).

Literature reveals that organizations that have capacity to quickly and efficiently adapt always jump back from stressful experiences as well (Hoopes and Kelly 2004). In his view, Mallack (1998) perceived that the situational conscious organizations design and implement effective measures to promote, which increases the likelihood of self-survival. Similarly, an organization that adapts easily according to Brand and Jax (2007) is said to have the ability to maintain competitive advantage over time through the ability to do two things simultaneously; deliver outstanding performance to current goals and efficiently innovate and adapt to fast, turbulent changes in markets and technology.

Because of this diversity and challenge organizations face to adapt, most research approaches to the design have focused on conceptualization, measurement and impact rather than the possible organizational behavioral reasons and we have barely encountered any evidence of such studies, especially in Africa and especially Nigeria. However, it is conceivable that Deevy (1995) claims that the unstable environments under which modern organizations seem to require a deep understanding of the internal dynamics of the organizations. The old perception that organizations are simply mechanical devices that can be solved when broken are no longer sufficient. "The challenge for organizations today is to develop a new organizational form, one with the ability to continuously respond to change (Deevy, 1995). In the more developed economies, firms are realizing that in order to survive they must re-focus upstream on the value chain (Bititci, Mendibil, & Maguire 2010). This is to enable them to compete not on cost, but on value innovation, process excellence and sustainability (Bititci, et al, 2010). This study therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution company. This study was also be guided by the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company?
- What is the relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Resource Based View (RBV) introduced by Wernerfelt (1984) and refined by (Barney, 1991) that borrows heavily from earlier research by Penrose (1959). Central to the proposition of RBV is that a firm represents a collection of unique resources and capabilities that provide basis for sustained competitive advantage so long as they are valuable, rare, non-substitutable and difficult to imitate (Barney, 1991). The theory presumes that firms are a bundle of heterogeneous and capabilities that are imperfectly immobile across firms. According to this view, firm performance can be attributed to unique resources rather than industry structure, a proposition supported by strategy literature (Guthrie, Datta and Wright, 2004). Hall (1992) and Grant (1996) classified resources into tangible assets, intangible assets and human resources, with human being characterized as the most productive asset. Hall (1992) survey of intangible assets revealed that corporate reputation, corporate culture and employee's know how were characterized as more influential than tangible assets as they are likely to meet Barney's (1991) four conditions outlined.

Consistent with strategy and SHRM literature, competitive advantage can be attributed to unique resources particularly intangible ones when they are combined or integrated (Barney 1991). Teece, Pisano and Shuer (1997) also note that competitors would have difficulty in duplicating a competitive advantage based on combination of firm specific resources, because the combination arise from organization process that is casually ambiguous, path dependent and socially complex. Building on the work of Barney (1991) and Hall (1992), the current study proposed that the combined effect of intellectual capital components has a greater influence on corporate performance than individual influence of human capital, social capital and organization capital; the joint effect of intellectual capital, corporate reputation and corporate culture on corporate performance is greater than individual influence of predictor variables, thus supporting the proposition of RBV. In support of this proposition Becker and Gerhart (1996) and Wright et al. (2001) noted that a synergetic effect rather than a set of independent practices leads to competitive advantage. This argument discredits the assumption that reliance on a single element like human capital which has been overly emphasized in literature as a source of competitive advantage. RBV is governed by general belief that resource interaction should be more valuable than the sum of its part.

2.2. Adaptive Capacity

Dalziell and McManus (2004) define adaptive capacity as the ability of the system to respond to changes in its external environment, and to recover from damage to internal structures within the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose. Starr et al. (2003) discuss the importance of adaptation and note that the aim is to create advantages over less adaptive competitors. This suggests that adaptive capacity is also linked to competitiveness. Adaptive capacity was also later defined as the measure of the culture of the organization that allows it to make decisions in a timely and appropriate manner both in day to day business and also in crises periods (McManus, 2007). Adaptive capacity considers aspects of an organization such as the leadership and decision making structures, the flow of information and knowledge and the degree of creativity and flexibility that the organization promotes or tolerates. Therefore, the rapidity and swiftness with which organizations operate can be attributed as a function of its adaptability.

Adaptability is an aspect of resilience that reflects, learning, flexibility to experiment and adopt novel solutions, and the development of generalized responses to broad classes of challenges (Walter, et al., (2006). According to Bowden (1946) researching the past world war, adaptive capability is the ability or inclination of individuals or group to maintain an experimental attitude towards new situations as they occur and to act in terms of changing circumstances. Adaptability is addressed in this context through two approaches; socio environmental and organizational (Mc Manus, et al; 2008).

An organization's ability to adapt is at the heart of their ability to display resilient characteristics. Starr, et al; (2003) discusses the importance of adaptation and notes that the aim is to create advantages over less adaptive competitors. This suggests that adaptability is also linked to competitiveness. Dalziell and Mc Manus (2004) define adaptability as the engagement and involvement of organizational staff so that they are responsible, accountable and occupied with developing the organization's resilience through their work because they understand the links between the

organization's resilience and its long term success. It is the ability of the system to respond to the changes in its external environment and to recover from damage of internal structures with the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose.

2.3. Corporate Reputation

Reputation is a core (intangible) asset of the firm and creates barriers to competitive threats. Established reputations impede competitive mobility and produce returns to firms because they are difficult to imitate (Caves and Porter, 2007). A strong corporate reputation suggests that the products and services being offered by the firm are of higher quality (Carmeli and Tishler, 2005) and that the firm is responsible and will treat its customers well. Organizational reputation is intuitive and simple in its common usage. However, it is surprisingly complex when employed and investigated in management research, as evidenced by the multiple definitions, conceptualizations, and operationalizations that have emerged across studies.

For Cayanus and Booth-Butterfield (2004) corporate reputation is a component of an overall image of a company. It is a soft concept which defines the overall estimation in which an organization is held by its internal and external stakeholders based on its past action and probability of its future behaviour. It is an amalgamation of all expectations, perceptions and opinions of an organization developed overtime by customers, employees, suppliers, investors and the public at large in relation to the organization's qualities, characteristics and behaviour, based on personal experience, hearsay or organization's observed past actions. (Bennett and Kottasz, 2000). Corporate reputation is also defined as the knowledge gained of an organization by its public based on corporate behaviour and organization -public relationship (Gruning and Hung, 2002). Gotsi and Wilson (2001) view it as a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time.

3. MEASURES OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

3.1. Corporate Image

Organizational image refers to people's global impressions of an organization and is defined as knowledge and beliefs about an organization. Organizational image represents the reactions and associations of customers, investors, employees, and applicants to an organization's name, Harvey, Harris, & Martinko, (2008). Accordingly, it serves as a template to categorize, store, and recall organization-related information. These multiple images result from various groups (also known as stakeholders or corporate audiences) holding different images of the same organization. At least, one might distinguish among the following organizational images. First, investors and executives hold an image of an organization as an economic performer ("company financial image"). These investors typically rely on factual economic figures as a basis of their beliefs about the organization. Second, there is the image of an organization as a social performer in the general society (also known as "corporate social performance"), which can be further broken down into an organization's involvement in the community and its pro-environmental practices. Third, customers or clients hold an image of an organization as a provider of goods and services ("product image or service image"). Fourth, each organization has an image as an employer among current employees and (potential) applicants (also known as company employment image or employer image) Belschak, & Hartog, (2009).

Organizational images typically develop over longer periods of time. They result from, among other things, media coverage, individual or group sensemaking, and communication on the part of the organization (as reflected in an organization's advertising, sponsorships, and publicity). However, it should be clear that organizational images are not static. Specifically, organizations often audit their images, Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Tee, & Tse, (2009). Organizational image (OI) can be defined as public impressions of an organization created to appeal to an external audience while simultaneously interpreted by the organization's members. Construed external images, projected images, and desired future images can be developed and transmitted by mass media, public relations consultants, and savvy marketers. Typically, these image consultants attempt to manipulate the public's perceptions of a given corporation to help its top management achieve the firm's strategic goals. One key goal, attracting and retaining high-quality talent, is requisite for continued organizational effectiveness and survival. Related perceptual concepts include corporate reputation, organizational identity, and brand image.

The importance of organizational image in career-related research has typically focused on investigating the relationship of organizational image within recruitment efforts. The logic that potential recruits will be attracted to an organization based on positive perceptions of its image is consistent with much of the staffing literature. Before potential recruits consider job-specific factors (e.g., starting salary, promotional opportunities) in job search efforts, they are believed to be attracted to certain employers based on their organizational images. Most of this research has studied novice job seekers or soon-to-graduate college students, while less is known about OI's impact on seasoned job seekers, blue-collar workers, and current employees.

Organizational image has been identified as one of the key factors that can affect the likelihood of potential applicants choosing one employer over another. Companies that are considered good employers often seek a strong, positive image in the marketplace. Successful employers consciously manage outsider perceptions and employee experiences to impact the firm's image. Top management seeks those coveted "Employer of Choice" awards and "Best Company to Work For" rankings because they can contribute to a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talented employees, loyal customers, and satisfied shareholders. Research indicates that a positive OI can significantly increase organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions.

3.2. Corporate Identity

Organizational identity is the manner in which the organization consciously projects itself visually, in support of the image it seeks to promote. Identity is the planned, visual expression of an organization's personality. It is a category of images that identify the organization and either associate it with or distinguish it from others. Identity involves the choices an organization makes about presentation through its messages and its actions. Organizational Identity serve as the basis for all aspects of the business. Any change to either the Purpose or the Philosophy will have a significant impact on the organization and its employees. When you alter either the Purpose or the Philosophy, the organization will feel like a different organization; employees will need to reevaluate their connections to it, and many Practices will need to be altered Chisholm, Russell, & Humphreys, (2011).

3.3. Adaptive Capacity and Corporate Reputation

Most establishments put the significance of a corporate reputation at the fore front while they attend to more hard-edge, day to day urgencies. On the other hand, many organizations consider their greatest assets to be their good name or reputation. This is especially true in information based establishments. They work actively to build their good reputation, to build the "bank of good will" towards them. Although reputation is intangible, research universally shows that a good reputation demonstrably increase Adaptive Capacity thereby provides sustained competitive advantage (Obiefule, 2012).

A business can achieve its objectives more easily if it has a good reputation among its stakeholders, especially key stakeholders such as its largest customers, opinion leaders in the business community, suppliers and current and potential employees. With good reputation, customer will have a good preference in doing business with you when other companies product and services are available at a similar cost and quality. Also suppliers will be more inclined to trust the firms ability to pay and to provide fair trading terms. If any problem occurs in their trading relationship with the company, suppliers will be more inclined to give the benefit of doubt when the company has a reputation for fair dealings. Likewise, government regulators will trust more, as and they will be less inclined to punish if the organization trip along the way. And clearly, a potential employee will be more likely to sign up with the company with good reputation for the treatment of its staff compared with an employer who may have an equivocal reputation (Obiefule, 2012).

From the foregoing therefore, the study hypothesized thus:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Distribution Company.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Distribution Company.

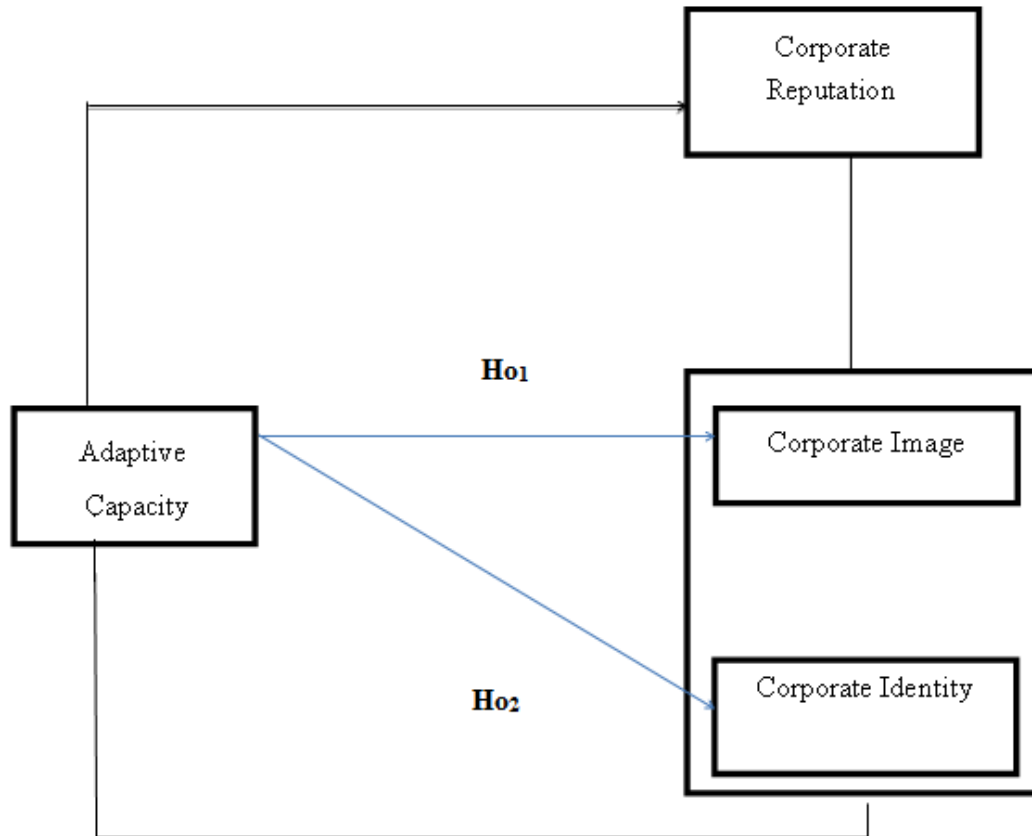


Fig1. Operational framework for the hypothesized relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation

Source: Author's Desk Research, 2018

4. METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional design. The directors, managers, operations managers, heads of departments, unit heads and duty managers or supervisors constituted the elements of our study population. The sampling frame for the study was 150 workers obtained from the Human Resources Department of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, from which a sample size 109 was calculated using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used in hypothesis testing with the aid of the SPSS version 23 package.

Table1. Reliability statistics for the instruments

S/ No	Dimensions/Measures of the study variable	Number of items	Number of cases	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Adaptive Capacity	4	94	0.781
2	Cooperate Image	4	94	0.885
3.	Cooperate Identity	4	94	0.865

Source: Research data, 2018

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Bivariate Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover a Ho1 hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We have based on the statistic of Spearman Rank (ρ) to carry out the analysis. The level of significance 0.05 is adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ($p < 0.05$).

We will begin by presenting first a test of existing relationships.

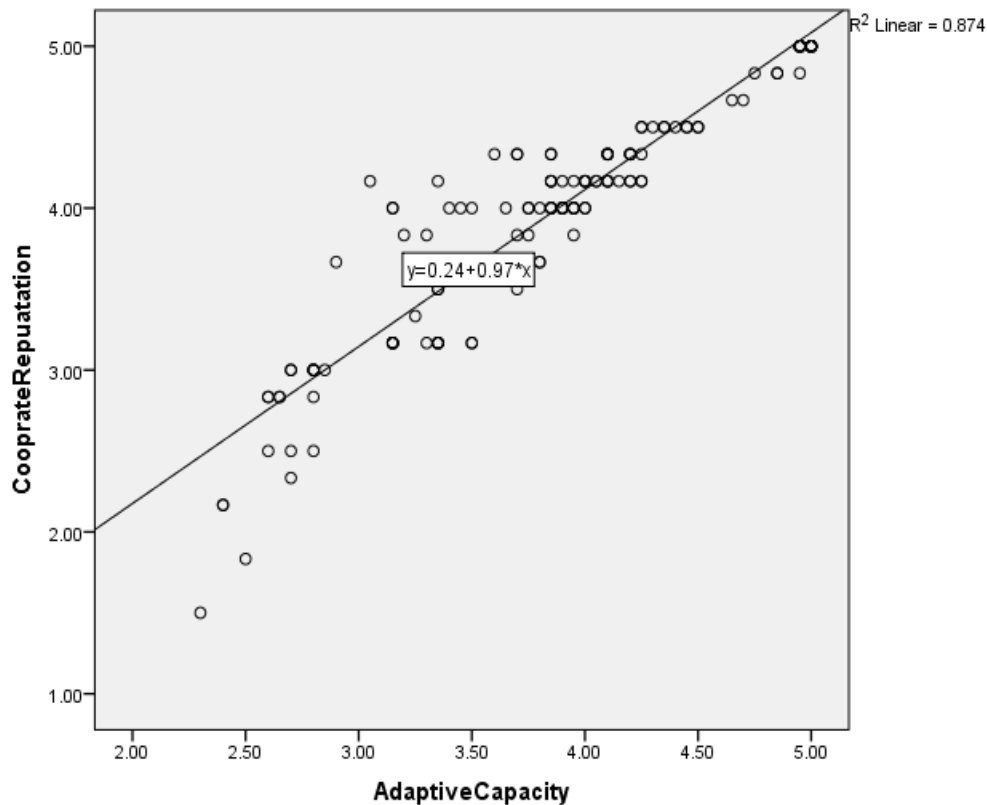


Fig2. scatter plot relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation

The scatter plot graph shows at R^2 linear value of (0.874) depicting a strong relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in adaptive capacity simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of cooperate reputation. The scatter diagram has provided vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship among the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

Table2. Correlations relationship between adaptive capacity and the measure of corporate reputation

			Adaptive Capacity	Corporate Image	Corporate Identity
Spearman's Rho	Adaptive Capacity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.561**	.849**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	94	94	94
	Corporate Image	Correlation Coefficient	.561**	1.000	.752**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	94	94	94
	Corporate Identity	Correlation Coefficient	.849**	.752**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	94	94	94

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

Source: Research Data, 2018, (SPSS output version 21.0)

The table above illustrates the test for the previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements.

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a positive relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate image. The value 0.561 indicates a strong positive relationship at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a moderate correlation among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a positive relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate identity. The value 0.849 indicates a very strong positive relationship at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation indicating also a strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria.

5.2. Discussion of Findings

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between adaptive capacity and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria, using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that adaptive capacity have a positive effect on corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria.

The findings of this current study reinforces the study of McManus, Seville, Vargo and Brunson (2008), which is seen as a measure of the culture and dynamics of an organization that allow it to make decisions in a timely and appropriate manner, both in day to-day business and also in crises, it promotes the organizational reputation due to the response that seeks to tackle the issue on ground. They also viewed Adaptive capacity to consider aspects of an organization that may include the leadership and decision making structures, the acquisition, dissemination and retention of information and knowledge, as well as the degree of creativity and flexibility that the organization promotes or tolerates.

An organization's ability to adapt is at the heart of their ability to display resilient characteristics. Starr, Newfrock, & Delurey (2003) discusses the importance of adaptation and notes that the aim is to create advantages over less adaptive competitors. This suggests that adaptability is also linked to competitiveness. Dalziell and Mc Manus (2004) define adaptability as the engagement and involvement of organizational staff so that they are responsible, accountable and occupied with developing the organization's resilience through their work because they understand the links between the organization's resilience and its long term success. It is the ability of the system to respond to the changes in its external environment and to recover from damage of internal structures with the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Running adaptive capacity in a firm (like the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company) is always a multifaceted task and can go south with enormously consequences for both organizational performance and productivity especially when the Corporate Reputation is affected. Adaptive capacity is hereby seen to have a towering effect on Corporate Reputation such that the more efficiently an organization manages adaptive, the better the organization will perform. The study concludes that a significant positive relationship exists between adaptive capacity and Corporate Reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria. The study recommends that management of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company and other related companies should adjust their policy on adaptation to ensure that priority is given to the various corporate reputation practices.

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