



**SUPPORT-ORIENTED CULTURE AND WORKPLACE SAFETY OF OIL SERVICING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT,  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the relationship between support-oriented culture and workplace safety of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study was 1102 employees of 7 oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. A sample of two hundred and ninety two (292) respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0. The study finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between support-oriented culture and workplace safety in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. The study recommended that management of oil servicing firms should take specific steps to make safety a priority by moving every element of the organization towards an overall organizational culture that embodies safety as a core value.*

**Keywords:** Support-Culture, Organizational culture, Management, Workplace safety, Employees

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is basically the specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in organization that control the way they interact with each other and stakeholders outside the organization (Charles, Hill & Gareth, 2001). In the words of Ravasi and Schultz (2006), stated that organizational culture is a set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organizations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations. This implies that, organizational culture is the sharing of beliefs, perceptions and thoughts, and can be manifested through artifacts such as visible organizational structures and processes and by expressed values. There are three basic cultures adopted by organizations in order to enhance the realization of set objectives, among which is support oriented culture. Support-oriented culture dimension is associated with the enjoyment of the activity as well as respect for the need and values of other persons involved. Harrison et al (1992) cited in Baridam (2008) view that support culture as being based on mutual trust between the individual and the organization. Its mode of operating is characterized as low in formalization and centralization. The relationship exists to serve the needs of member, and it is served also to replace management control with consensus decision making. Subsequently, decisions making occurs through informal communication network.

On the other hands, Brown (1998) cited in Nwibere (2007), states that a support-oriented organization exists solely for the individuals who compromise it, and may be represented diagrammatically as a cluster in which no individual dominates. A good manager is the leader who is concerned and responsible to the personal need and values of others, and he uses his position to provide satisfying and grow stimulating work opportunities for subordinates (Pheysey, 2003). At all levels in the organization among and between executives, managers' supervisors and employees,

communication is often verbal or informal, and usually flows in all directions. Some disadvantages of this culture is that people focus on relationship and neglect the work and when consensus cannot be reached, the group may become indecisive, and decisions may take a long time as they would require everyone's approval (Harrison, 1993). Management of organizations adopts support oriented culture in order to enhance workplace safety. Workplace safety refers to the policies and procedures put in place to ensure the safety and health of employees in order to prevent accidents that may likely occur as an unplanned event such as hazards within a workplace. A good working environment without safety policies and procedure will definitely hamper the production of the company. No matter the size of the business, workplace safety procedures are a necessity for all staff. The essence of workplace safety is to prevent workplace hazard such as safety hazard, biological hazard, ergonomic hazard, physical hazard, chemical hazard and work organizational hazard etc., which are still occurring in most oil servicing firms. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between support -oriented and workplace safety in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

Furthermore, this study aimed at providing answers to the following research question.

- What is the relationship between support - oriented culture and safety training in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between support - oriented culture and safety policy in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between support - oriented culture and safety management in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Support-Oriented Culture

Support-oriented culture dimension is associated with the enjoyment of the activity as well as respect

for the need and values of other persons involved. Harrison *et al* (1992) cited in Baridam (2008) view support culture as being based on mutual trust between the individual and the organization. Its mode of operating is characterized as low in formalization and centralization. The relationship exists to serve the needs of member, and it is served also to replace management control with consensus decision making. Subsequently, decisions making in support oriented culture occurs through informal communication network (Nwibere, 2007). On the other hands, Brown (1998) cited in Nwibere (2007), states that a support-oriented organization exists solely for the individuals who compromise it, and may be represented diagrammatically as a cluster in which no individual dominates. A good manager is the leader who is concerned and responsible to the personal need and values of others, and he uses his position to provide satisfying and grow stimulating work opportunities for subordinates (Pheysey, 2003). At all levels in the organization among and between executives, managers' supervisors and employees, communication is often verbal or informal, and usually flows in all directions. Some disadvantages of this culture is that people focus on relationship and neglect the work and when consensus cannot be reached, the group may become indecisive, and decisions may take a long time as they would require everyone's approval (Harrison, 1993).

### **Workplace Safety**

The concept of workplace safety has gained more widespread attention in high-hazard industries as more and more safety practitioners see the influence that workers' attitudes and behaviours have on both the causes as well as the effects of workplace incidents. Safety, when viewed within the context of the workplace, brings up the subject of management responsibility to secure the owner's assets, and provide a safe and secure environment for its employees and its customers (Fay, 2005). Umoh (2013) stated that workplace safety is concerned with

behaviour of employees with regards to the rules, regulations, policies and conducts that shape or govern their actions and inactions or activities in the workplace in order to reduce or even eliminate accidental losses and injuries and maximize the nominated objective of the organization. In the same vein, workplace safety is that assembly of characteristic and attitudes in organization and individuals which establishes that, as an overriding priority, safety issues should receive the attention warranted by their significance (Internal Safety Advisory Group 1991). In the words of Maslow (1943), cited in Baridam, (2009) identified "safety" as one of the basics hierarchy of needs. Needs adopted in this study as the contemporary issues in today's firms organizations, contributes a significant aspects of human needs for employees' safety at workplace which enable individuals to live free from physical danger and fear of loss of a job.

Companies that put safety first turn out higher quality products. In some cases, a safe workplace tends to be a more efficient one, free of debris and tangles of cords. In other cases, it's a matter of focus. By working in a clean, efficient environment, workers are able to avoid disastrous occurrences and truly focus on the quality of what they do.

### **Safety Training**

Safety training is an organization activities carried out on employees by management in order to enhance their physical, mental, and behavioural consciousness, thereby helping to protect employees against any form organizational hazards. Christian, Bradley, Wallace, and Burke (2009), opined that selecting and training workers can increase dispositional factors related to workplace safety for instance, safety knowledge and safety motivation. This, in turn, can aid in decreasing the number of accidents and injuries within the workforce. Safety specific training also demonstrates that the company places a priority on safe work practices (Christian,

Bradley, Wallace & Burke, 2009). The essence of this training is to make sure that employees are well equipped with knowledge and tools necessary to carry out their function and make sound decisions and as well to prevent accidents and risk in the workplace.

### **Safety Policy**

Safety policy can be defined as an organizational safety law, rules and regulations formulated by organization management to serve as a guide towards protecting employees from all forms of organizational danger. For any successful organization to achieve its goals, they should have a safety policy put in place, created either by management or in a joint effort between management and staff. In other words, safety policies are guidelines and procedures that direct all employees to carrying out the safety policies; work safely and prevent injury from occurring to them and others. Every employee has a role in carrying out the safety policies. The safety policy statement should identify those responsible for safety matters and the steps employees should take if they have questions and/or concerns on any environmental or safety matter (Hagan, Montgomery, and O'Reilly, 2001). It is essential for managers to provide and maintain safe working conditions and to follow operating practices that safeguard all employees in the workplace. A safety handbook should be created identifying safety issues and spelling out consequences of not following the appropriate safety procedures.

### **Safety Management**

Safety management refers to the management of safety at work. It can also be defined as the implementation of policies, rules and regulations geared towards the protection of employees from all forms of job accidents that may occur in the workplace. Safety management systems may vary considerably in their practical implementation. Safety management comprises both preventive and corrective actions that aim to improve the working

environment. Kines and Beeck (2013) perceived that 'zero accident vision' is the only ethnically sustainable long-term goal for safety management. It emphasizes the management's role as a body that controls and takes charge of safety. The management is responsible for setting goals, providing resources and supervising implementation. Reason, (2003), transformed safety control from an expressly prescriptive activity to a goal-oriented one. This has also influenced the management procedures in companies, safety management systems have become obligatory in many industrial sectors.

### **Support- Oriented Culture and Workplace Safety**

The relation between support culture and workplace safety is of high interest and many, both managers and researchers agree on an existing relation. Alvesson (2002) however argues that it is difficult to establish a clear and causal link between culture and something else. Trying to do so easily implicates a rather simplistic view on culture that seriously underestimates its theoretical potential and value. Stressing the relationship between organizational culture and workplace safety, opined that it is common sense that something that we can call corporate culture will have an impact on many forms of actions in organizations and consequently also on corporate financial results. Any such influence may, however, be lost among all the factors and interaction patterns that have something to do with these results. On the other hand, workplace safety is one of the essential corporate goals of a successful manager who ensure to protect their employees from health and safety related issues in their working environments. Protecting workers from injuries is important on a social level (Montero, Araque & Rey, 2009), but there is also a positive economic impact in reducing safety hazards. In order to increase awareness of safety, managers should look for a way to monitor the good, the bad, and the ugly of their safety culture. Invariably, managers need a tool that systematically illustrate what supports safety within



their safety culture and what should be improved by allowing employees to work without following safety protocol will create a negative organizational safety culture. If negative organization safety culture is sustained for an extended period, disasters are almost inevitable (Agnew & Daniels, 2010). On the other hand, a positive safety culture can help prevent work-related injuries, including major disasters injuries and the associated costs decrease overtime when an organization views safety as an investment rather than an expense (Myers, 2010).

In the same vein, Olive, O'Connor, Mannan (2006) identified that before improving the workplace safety of an organization, there needs to be programs in place to ensure that safety precautions and procedures can actually be carried out, including programs to minimize or eliminate hazards from the environment, designs focused on minimizing hazards in the design of systems and processes, maintenance programs for systems and equipment, and effective training programs for normal and off-normal events. Hence, the efforts to maintain workplace safety and to control injuries at work are an important aspect of today's workplace. The control over safety hazards at work can only allow better use of human and material resources to ensure that these physical conditions enhance their performances, but also relate to the industrially known fact that accidents represent high costs for companies. In another vein, since the offshore gas and oil industry is located in physically challenging and harsh environment, therefore safety is necessary (Cox & Cheyne, 2000).

Most oil servicing firms' in the production industries, observed that there is dangers and threats in every occupation, and it is imperative that managers and workers alike become acutely aware of the hazards associated with their jobs, as well as the preventive measures necessary for minimizing them. Prevention of occupational injuries should be focused concerns with safety and responsibility (Haggins, 2002). The threat of work stoppages or grievances should

increase management awareness about safety concerns and increase likelihood that existing policies are followed (Sinclair & Sears, 2010). Much workplace fatality investigations point out areas of concern regarding workers safety. Cooper (2001) has stated that the idea of 'safety is a value' is based on fundamental philosophy that all injuries are preventable and that the goal of zero injuries can be achieved.

In the same vein, Jain and Rao (2009), perceived that effective accident prevention strategies target zero occurrences or a substantial near zero case; that is, zero tolerance, as much as reasonably practicable. Nevertheless, accident can occur as an unplanned event, which interrupts the completion of any activity, is invariably preceded by a combination of unsafe acts, untracked near misses, and unsafe conditions. The loss due to accidents is massive in the form of pain, loss of life and earning capacity. Pain and suffering of the injured as well as the emotional loss to the victims of the fatalities and accidents causing disfigurement or disabilities are impossible to be summed up. Accident prevention must be taken seriously in industry as the necessity for accident prevention is generally accounted for by both humanitarian aspects and economic considerations. The occurrence of an accident always results in a number of effects that constitute various and varying degrees of inconveniences to the victim, a number of people or organization, including pain to victim(s) due to injury sustained, mental agony to family members, loss of productive worker suffered by the organization, loss of time of other workers who undertake to help the injured, management's bearing of financial losses emanating from payment of compensation and medical expenses, and society's contending with the social burden of usually supporting the injured workers family, referred to as, second degree invalids. This social burden is, itself, a compact basket that translates into different subheads including financial, physical, mental and

psychological manifestations and traumas, among others. The intent of an incident investigation, state Jain and Rao (2009), is to learn from past experiences and thus avoid repeating past mistakes. Consequently, incident investigation and analysis constitute the process of identifying the underlying causes of incidents and implementing steps to prevent similar events from occurring in future.

According to Rasmussen, Carstensen and Nielsen, (2004) suggest reporting minor injuries and near-misses are associated with decreased long-term injuries. Computer-based or traditional paper-based reporting procedures can be used to track these reports. Rasmussen et al advocate that employees should not only report minor or near incidents, but they should also have an opportunity to offer suggestions for future preventive measures. Organization may encounter problems when employee's fails to adjust to a new work culture and as well nonchalant attitude of the employees toward safety reluctant to perform their duties will hamper the flow of operation in the workplace. Dollard and Bakker (2010) found evidence that positive safety culture values can permeate an organization if top management leads safety efforts by communicating and exhibiting the importance of safety. Management should encourage safe behavior along with their operation goals, not in lieu of safety performance.

To survive and make profit, organizations need to adapt continuously to the different levels of environmental uncertainty. Environmental uncertainty represents an important contingency for organization structure and internal behaviours (Daft, 2003). Organizations need to have the right fit between internal structure and the external environment. Denison (2007) identified three aspects of adaptability that impact an organization's effectiveness. These include first, ability to perceive and respond to the external environment. Successful organizations are very focused on their customers

and their competitors. Second is the ability to respond to internal customers, regardless of their department or function. Third is the capacity to restructure and re-institutionalize a set of behaviours and processes that allow the organization adapt. Without the ability to implement support response, an organization cannot be effective (Denison, 2007). An organization must learn so that it can adapt to changing environment (Lee, 1999).

Given the ever-accelerating rate of global scale change, the more critical learning and adaptation becomes to the organization's relevance, success and ultimate survival. Managers must encourage their employees to share and develop their knowledge bases with each other to improve performance. Personal relationships are very important for the meaningful internal transfer of information that will enable the organization.

From the foregoing discussion, the study hypothesized thus:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between support- oriented culture and safety training of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between support -oriented culture and safety policy of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between support-oriented culture and safety management of oil servicing Firms in Port Harcourt.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework for the relationship between support-oriented culture and workplace safety  
**Source:** Conceptualized by the Researcher 2019. Extract from Harrison, (1993) and (Schein, 2004)

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study was 1102 employees of 7 oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. A sample of two hundred and ninety two (292) respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane’s formula for sample size determination. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

**Bivariate Analysis**

Data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover a  $H_{01}$  to  $H_{03}$  hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We have based on the statistic of Spearman Rank ( $\rho$ ) 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 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Correlation coefficient for Support-oriented culture and safety training**

			Support-oriented culture	Safety Training
Spearman's rho	Support-oriented culture	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.679**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	324	324
	Safety Training	Correlation Coefficient	.679**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	242	242

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

Source: SPSS Ver. 22 Output Window, 2019

**$H_{01}$ :** *There is no significant relationship between support-oriented culture and safety training of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt*

The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) shows that there is a significant relationship between support-oriented culture and safety training. The value 0.679 indicates a strong positive relationship at  $p < 0.000 < 0.05$ . The



correlation coefficient represents a strong 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 support-oriented culture and safety training of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

**Table 2: Correlation coefficient of Support-oriented culture and Safety Policy**

			Support-oriented culture	Safety Policy
Spearman's rho	Support-oriented culture	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.785**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	242	242
	Safety Policy	Correlation Coefficient	.785**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	242	242

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

Source: SPSS Ver. 22 Output Window, 2019

***H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Support-oriented culture and Safety Policy of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt;***

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant relationship between support-oriented culture and safety policy. The value 0.785 indicates a strong positive relationship at  $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$ . The

correlation coefficient represents a strong 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 support-oriented culture and safety policy of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

**Table 3: Correlation coefficient of Support-oriented culture and Safety Management**

			Support-oriented culture	Safety Management
Spearman's rho	Support-oriented culture	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.826**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	242	242
	Safety Management	Correlation Coefficient	.826**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	242	242

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

Source: SPSS Ver. 22 Output Window, 2019

***H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between support-oriented culture and safety management of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.***

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant relationship between support-oriented

culture and safety management. The value 0.826 indicates a strong positive relationship at  $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong 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

support-oriented culture and safety management of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This study examined the relationship between support-oriented culture and workplace safety of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between support-oriented culture and workplace safety of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. This finding reinforces views by Guastello and Guastello (1998), that employee who perceive their workplace as safe report lower levels of job-related anxiety and stress as well as lower levels of exposure to fewer environmental hazards. They also argued that a strong safety climate is associated with performance. In the work of Diaz (1997) it was concluded that workplaces with active, visible safety leadership have fewer injuries and are often rated as better places to work, and have more satisfied, more productive employees who are less likely to change job.

Furthermore, Mamori and Gankar (2011) argue that a comprehensive health program not only ensures good health of employees but also leads to a lowering rate of absenteeism and health insurance costs resulting in higher productivity and improved morale. For instance, a wellness program boosts employee morale and increases job satisfaction since it promotes employee health by providing education on health issues and healthy lifestyles. Safety training programs are developed with an aim of enabling workers acquire attitudes, knowledge and skills which helps them reduce the perceived risk of their jobs. Most workplace hazards are caused by incomplete or absent training and if an employee is not trained to their job properly in order to avoid falling victim to hazards, they are likely to become frustrated. When

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trained correctly on health and safety measures, an employee is likely to feel much less stress and more satisfied with their job.

In his study, Gyekye (2005) found a positive association between job satisfaction and safety climate. Workers who expressed more satisfaction at their posts had positive perceptions of safety climate and displayed greater emotional attachment, involvement and expressed stronger feelings of allegiance and loyalty to their organization. In his study, Cole, (2007) posited that manager has the duty of monitoring health and safety performance and taking corrective action where necessary. Managers can greatly influence health and safety because they are in authority and it's up to them to constantly check on unsafe conditions and take action as they are also responsible for ensuring employees are aware of health and safety hazards and they do not take risks.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organizations have both legal and moral obligations to provide healthy and safe working environments as well as ensuring the total well-being of their employees. The provision of any health and safety program varies from according to the locations and size of the organization, the nature of work being performed and type of employees. This study concludes that support-oriented culture and workplace safety of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

The study thus recommended that management of oil servicing firms should take specific steps to make safety a priority by moving every element of the organization towards an overall organizational culture that embodies safety as a core value.

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