

# Employee Involvement and Organizational Survival of Selected Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State

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**Abstract:** This research examines the effect of employee involvement on organizational survival measures such as organizational learning and innovation. The study is descriptive and uses quantitative methods; it empirically examines the relationship between employee involvement and organizational survival. A total of two hypotheses are postulated and tested using Pearson's product moment correlation technique. The results revealed a significant relationship between employee involvement and the measures of organizational survival, namely: organizational learning and innovation; it was concluded that employee involvement was imperative for outcomes related to learning and innovation and thus the survival of the organization. Based on the conclusion it was recommended that organization should strive to improve the nature, quality of their learning process as well as innovation level which should be relevant as relates to the industry.

**Keywords:** employee involvement, organizational learning, innovation, change.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century business environment has brought with it opportunities and threats. Organizations today exist in a far more complex world. The universality of markets, quick and fast advancements in technology, higher levels of competition, increasing attention giving to costs and cost control, the uncertainty and changing nature of our world, where forecasting of future are not always accurate, the gradual removal of industry walls through technological advancement and the creating of a level ground to entry to innovation (Chakravanrty, 1997; Bitar,2003), are all contributing to the complexity of the society and need for survival of our organizations.

Organizational survival is critical to economic development. Many a times the very survival of local companies in growing markets is at stake. (Dawer& Frost, 1999). As FegghiFarehmand (2013), puts it focusing on organizational strengthening as structure, tendency and systems has not been all that productive since many of the industries where these elements have been addressed, still went back to experience dwindling performance after sometimes.

A firm or organization who does know how to coordinate itself as a group cannot be able to survive, since both external survival and internal integration problems are both important to a firm (Schein, 1984).

Recently, it has become very difficult to predict the outcome of the markets giving its turbulent nature, as it has continued to evolve into an unpredictable entities (Bettis & Hitt, 1995).

The constant change in business environment today has seen many organizations out of business. Many big names in manufacturing and service industries have suddenly dissolved and disappeared from the corporate world, the coming days might witness mass closure of business organizations. Management today are beginning to consider a new and effective method of carrying out their business activities as a result of the recent advancement made in the information system, danger posed by emergence of new innovations and increased competition in the business world today, these have made it necessary for managers to revisit their approach to business operations.

As Belohlav puts it “In business World each decade seems to bring a new way of thinking about the business environment and new way of acting” (Belohlav, 1996). In this era of business turbulence, corporate survival is very crucial. There is urgent call for our organizations to rise to the challenges of the new era by restrategizing as failure to do so will see the organizations go into extinction. Since there is the possibility that new organizations might rise to overcome the challenges posed by its business environment” (Luthans, 1975). According to Gross (1968), the issue of survival appears to be of paramount important to every organization. Organizations today have survival and growth as important goals which requires more energy and resources for it to be achieved (Jones & Bartlet, 2008). Organizations that do not have programme and objective on how it will survive at the long-run should as a matter of urgency start replanning herself.

Employee involvement in the other hand can be described as a way of making employees take part in the organizational decision making and other activities of the organization. Luthans (2006), believes that the organizations today have a major problem of employee management. It is imperative to note that employee involvement contribute greatly to organizational survival. However the literature that handles how employee involvement impacts on organizational survival appears to be very scarce, as not much have been done to address the direct link between the two.

This study therefore attempts to apply employee involvement in solving the problems of organizational survival. In particular, it seeks to investigate how organizational learning and innovation affects the survival of the organization in this era of business turbulence and in a complex environment.

**1.1 Research Questions:**

This study covers issues relating to the following pertinent questions that come from the domain of study problems. The research questions are itemized below as:

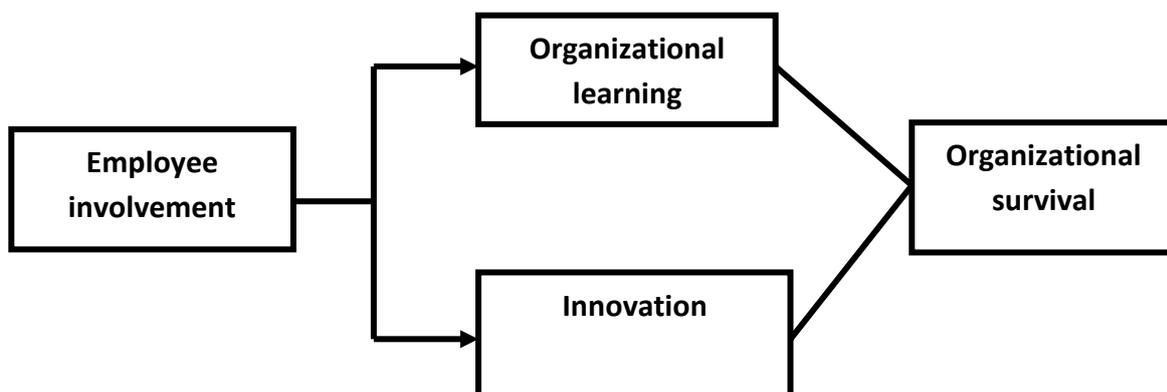
1. What is the relationship between employee involvement and organizational learning?
2. What is the relationship between employee involvement and innovation?

**1.2 Hypotheses:**

In other to achieve our study objectives and to also offer useful answers to the research questions, our hypotheses were stated in the null form

**H0:1** There is no significant relationship between employee involvement and organizational learning.

**H0:2** There is no significant relationship between employee involvement and innovation.



## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Employee Involvement:

Involvement is important to an organization. Employee involvement can be seen as that action of the organization or management that is aimed at making its members to partake in managerial decision making and other activities of the organization within their level (Apostolou, 2000).

He opined that involving employees in a project from the beginning is a good way of getting them to genuinely commit themselves to it.

According to Heathfield (2015), employee involvement can also be viewed as a way of creating the atmosphere that will enable employees impact on such decisions and actions that concern their job in an organization. She further added that involvement of employees has to do with philosophy of the management that is geared toward making members of the organization contribute to programmes that improves and lead to success of their work. Involvement is the act of participating in decision making of organization by its members. Employee involvement is the degree employees in an organization exchange information, knowledge, rewards and power (Amah, 2014).

Denison et al (2004) stressed that effective organizations empower and build their firms around teams, and also encourage human capital development of all types. Members of the organization are allowed to have feeling of being part of management by involving them in decision making that affects their work and development of the organization. Apostolou added that involvement goes beyond sharing of information in an organization. It is the step by step assigning of task to people that are part of the process. Examples of involvement are self-managed teams, autonomous work group, cell-based manufacture, high performance work systems etc.

### 2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL:

Organizational survival has become a major concern to both managers and business organizations. O'Brien & O'Neill believe that there are number of ways of regarding survival, since a significant technology change implies an organization reinvention They also pointed out that a life cycle for any organization, if an accepted concept, should therefore include organization's long term planning for a graceful exit, not a lingering and expensive farewell.

Organizational survival refers to the progressive and continuous way of carrying on organizational activities that ensure that it remains afloat in both a competitive environment and in a harsh economic situation . Organizational survival in the context of this study deals with the continual existence of firm or organization despite the harsh economic condition and in the midst of intense competition within the industry.

According to Sheppard survival has many connotations, survival in an organization is manifested in their continuing existence. He argued that survival is also tested by organization's ability to obtain input from those that assigned to supply them and makes the necessary output available to the general public and it fails when it cannot pay back a group of resources providers for their past supplies to the organization and so cannot motivate them to provide more (Sheppard, 1989). The survival of an organization is dependent on the happenings around its environment (Christensen, 1981; Schalensee, 1985), when they are favorable organization is most likely to survive and when they are not, the reverse will be the case. Sheppard opined that the fact that an organization exists in an industry that is growing and very profitable does not guarantee its chances of survival. He further analyzed other factors which must be considered: firm market share, firm size, firm general financial condition, and other considerations.

**Firm market share:** according to researchers, survival of a firm has got much to do with its profitability, as it will contribute greatly to the long run survival and the ability of a firms to obtain a reasonable market share increases profit margin and enhances its chances of survival (Buzzell et al, 1974; Amah, 2014; Hambuck et al, 1982; Sheppard) some researchers argued that the size of the firm is important factor that determines the extent to which a firm will succeed or fail, this is because size of the firm gives it credit and advantage over other small firms when securing resources as most suppliers will prefer to grant credit facilities to larger and established firms (D'aveni, 1987; Sheppard, 1989; Sheppard, ). Firm assets and total sales for the year are all part of firm size (Burt, 1983).

**Firm general financial condition:** several authors argued that firm financial solvency serves to assure capital suppliers to advance fund to the firm (Chen & Shimerda, 1981, Sheppard, 1989; Sheppard; Amah, 2014). This is because for creditors or investors to commit their resources into a cooperation, they first ascertain how much profit that will be accrued to them before expanding fund.

**Other considerations:** Organization chance of survival may be affected by radical change of regulations, consideration would also be given to the age of the firm as pointed out by several scholars (Amah, 2013, Moulton, 1988; Sheppard).

### **2.2.1 Measures Of Organizational Survival:**

Organizational survival is a concept that deals with continual existence of firm or organization. Survival of an organization is dependent on their ability to react positively (Weston & Mansighka, 1971) and promptly to the changes that pump up in their environment. As part of this concept determining the measures organization can employ to survival in a changing world like ours is very important. As researchers stated the most effective check whether an organization is surviving or not is to monitor the ability to continue in business (Delacroix and Carroll, 1983; Sheppard,)

*Organizational Learning:* In an environment where change is prevalent, learning is seen as important skill that will help an organization to survive (Brown and Duguid, 1991). It is simply trial and error action leading to organizational adjustments based in market feedback (Jaja, 2003). Schulz (2001), views organizational learning as effort to comprehend the course of transformation in organizational knowledge, and also the impact learning and knowledge have on the behavior of the organizational workers, including its effects on the performance of the corporation. He further added that what influences the way organization does things are learning processes they adopt, including the lesson learnt from both the past and present happenings around the organization. Organizations gathers experiences of what happen to them, allow it to impact on them and increase their stock of knowledge, including helping them to set their formal and informal rules (Schulz, 2001). The type of learning an organization adopts goes a long way to impact on their knowledge and also to dictate the kind of transformation that takes place within it. Organizations are shaped by what happen around them, which sometimes impact on their total performance. It equally adjust their aspirations to past experiences and experiences of others.

Organizational learning and learning organization are two broad concepts which deal mainly with changes that takes place in the organization (Wang & Ahmed, 2002). The term learning organization is build around the learning process of individual members of the organizations, which does not always culminate into organizational learning (Ikehara, 1999). Learning organization should therefore integrate individual learning into organizational learning. Organizations need to put in place a process of learning or structure that motivates workers to learn or acquire new knowledge, as continuously changing environment requires changing knowledge, skills and attitudes (Amah, 2014).

*Innovation:* In other to make sure that organizations survive in changing and turbulence environment, organizations needs to continuously innovate. Innovation has been defined as adding value and novelty to business, it customers, suppliers by creating new products and services (McFadzean et al, 2005). Innovation encompasses method of getting customers to get to know about the product. According to Burgelman (1991), turbulence business settings requires ceaseless innovation and development of new products and services. Bitar (2003) added that organizations should create additional variation by constantly innovating, as that will help then deal with turbulence and change (in the environments). Schein (1984), also believes that in innovation is of utmost important if solution to challenges brought about the market changes are to be found, in addition to positive-learning environment.

(Amah (2014) opined that innovation has to do with organization workers employing their creative ability to meet market demands promptly.

Dess and Lumpkin (2005) viewed innovativeness as efforts focused on the discovery of new opportunities and solutions. Innovation are equally viewed in terms of individual's creative ability who strongly believe in what they do and promote it through organization stages to attract help that could help in securing resources that will be channeled into developing a new idea or product from stakeholders (Howell & Boic, 2004, Howell, et al., 2005; Markham, 1998; Olughor & Oke, 2014).

Innovation is of immense importance to any organization as it triggers the designing and introduction of new products to the markets which in turn helps the organization to strengthen competitive positioning.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design:

The cross-sectional survey which is an aspect of quasi experimental design will be adopted for the study. Firstly, this was because the entire population cannot be studied, so a survey was more appropriate. Secondly, the survey was employed because the variables were outside the control of the researcher. This research work is descriptive in nature.

#### 3.2 Population of the Study:

The total population of registered manufacturing firms in Rivers State was targeted. The total number of manufacturing firms that are registered with Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN), Port Harcourt chapter, Rivers State are thirty one (31), with twelve (12) subsectors. Five manufacturing firms will be chosen as a subsector of manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN), Rivers state chapter, and they were easily accessible. In all the five manufacturing firms that were chosen, respondents from each will be selected at random as with their attendants to include the numbers of all the managers (i.e upper level managers, middle-level managers and lower-level managers).

These manufacturing firms were randomly selected and categorized into five groups. The selected firms were targeted for the generation of the relevant information for the study. To ensure the gathering of adequate and accurate information from these firms, Questionnaire was administered to the managers, in addition to conducting of personal interviews to them.

#### 3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination:

Stratified and purposive sampling was adopted in the choice of the respondents for this study. Thus, the stratified was used to determine the manufacturing firms, whereas, purposive sampling techniques was used to actualize the stakeholders selected for the study.

The target population in this study consists of seventy (70) managers working in the five registered manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt metropolis. These managers range from upper-level, middle-level and lower-level managers, thus the researcher applied the Taro Yamen's formula to determine the sample size based on the total number of managers in the five selected manufacturing companies.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where

n = sample size (Number of managers to be issued questionnaire)

N = population size (Total number of managers in the five manufacturing firms)

I = constant

E = level of significance at 0.05

Thus for an estimated total number of seventy (70) managers in the five firms, the sample size is calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{70}{1 + 70 (0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{70}{1 + 70 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{70}{1 + 0.175}$$

$$n = \frac{210}{1.175}$$

$$n = 59.57$$

$$n = 59.175 = 60, N = 70$$

Therefore the sample size for the study shall consist of 60 managers to be issued questionnaires in five (5) manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods:

Quantitative method of data collection was used by the researcher. Thus, the researcher used questionnaire as the principal instrument for primary data collection. Questionnaire was used to enable the researcher find out the attitude, belief, knowledge and feelings of respondents on questions asked (to enable the researcher achieve the objectives of the study).

### 3.5 Test of Reliability:

It is the extent to which the instrument is consistent. To ensure the internal reliability, the survey instrument was assessed by means of Cronbach alpha coefficient, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Hence, only the items that returned alpha values of 0.7 and above were considered.

**Table 1 Reliability for the instruments**

Variables	Dimensions & Measures	No. of Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients
Employee involvement (Predictor)		4	.905
Organizational Survival (Criterion)	Learning	4	.888
	Innovation	4	.791

Source: Research data, 2015

### 3.6 Operational Measures of Variables:

This study is concerned with two variables; these are the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable of the study is employee involvement while the dependent variable is organizational survival. According to Baridam (2001), no single operationalization of research production will satisfy everyone: inevitability matters of judgement and preference often intrude so as to compound the problem of measurement.

*Independent Variable:* The independent variable in this study is employee involvement. This variable were measured using 4-item instruments on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 5-strongly agree, 4=agree, 3 = undecided, 2 =disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

*Dependent variable:* On the other hand, the dependent variable organizational survival, were operationalized with organizational learning and innovation, which were measured using 4-item instruments on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 =undecided, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

## 4. DATA RESULTS

### 4.1 Field Survey:

The field survey here comprised of the distribution and retrieval of questionnaire copies from the target organizations. The study is carried out at the organizational level, and the unit of measurement are the management personnel. As a result of certain limitations such as time, respondents busy schedule and the research window for the study, not all the respondents were able to answer and return their questionnaire accounting for a 7% loss of data during the retrieval process. Also during the data cleaning process which entailed the cross-examination of the instruments for missing values, double ticks on same indicator or item as well as the blank questionnaires, all of the retrieved questionnaires were considered useful and valid, therefore the study made use of 56 questionnaires which accounts for 93% of the initial sample size.

Analysis is also expressed in four major sections namely the demographic: which examines the distribution of the sample based on demographic characteristics; the univariate: which examines the distribution of the responses based on central tendencies and measures of dispersion; the bivariate : which examines the relationship between the predictor and the measures of the criterion

Table 2: illustrating the questionnaire distribution and retrieval frequency

Questionnaire Frequency (Percentage)	Number Distributed	Number Returned	Number Used in Analysis
	60 (100%)	56 (93%)	56 (93%)

Source: Research survey, 2016

**4.2 Demographic Data Analysis:**

For the demographic data, analysis is carried out on five major characteristics of the sample which includes gender; employees are grouped into male and female categories which are mutually exclusive, marital status; employees are grouped based on their marital status bothering on single and married; age; experience; in which employees are categorized into classifications reflecting work experiences, and qualification; in which employees are classified based on their educational qualifications and level in the organization.

*Gender distribution of the participants:* The gender characteristic of the male respondents exceed the female respondents at a 54 % (30) to 46% (26) difference. This goes to imply that most of the respondents who participated in the study are male. It also implies a male dominated industry with most managers and top ranking personnel belonging to the male gender category.

*Age distribution of the participants:* Age distribution of the respondents revealed that the 31 – 40 years category has more respondents at a 52% (29) percentage rate, followed by the frequency percentage for respondents belonging to the 20 – 30 years category at a frequency percentage of 27% (15) while the 41 years and above is the least with a frequency percentage of 21% (12).

*Marital status of the participants:* For the marital status characteristic of the sample distribution, it shows that most of the respondents fall into the married category at a 88% (49) compared to their single counterparts who comprise the remaining 13% (7).

*Level of management distribution of the participants:* It shows that most of the respondents fall under the lower level management characteristic of the sample at a frequency percentage of 61% (34) followed by the participants who fall in the middle management level 36% (20) and finally those that comprise the top management level at 4% (2).

*Years of experience distribution of the participants:* It shows that most of the respondents under the years of experience characteristic of the participants years of experience spanning from 10 years and above 64% (36) followed by those who have working experiences spanning between 6 – 9 years at a 18% (32) and finally those with working experience spanning between 2 – 5 years at a 4% (2).

*Qualification distribution of the participants:* It shows that most of the respondents under the qualification characteristics of the sample have obtained master degrees at a percentage of 77% (43) followed by those who have obtained bachelor degrees with a frequency percentage of at a 18% (10) and then followed by those in the PhD category with a frequency percentage of 5% (3).

**4.3 Univariate Data Analyses:**

In this section, descriptive statistics here is carried out on individual variables and their measures. It includes the use of frequency tables, mean scores, and standard deviation values coefficients which are used to assess the nature of data distributions.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for employee involvement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Involvement	56	1.00	5.00	3.5139	1.18670
Valid N (listwise)	56				

Source: Research survey, 2016

Table 3 is used to illustrate the descriptive statistics on the predictor variable which is employee involvement. The central tendency which is expressed through the mean scores indicate a high tendency for agreement based on a middle benchmark of 2.5 for a substantial response level as a result of our previously stated adoption of a 5-point Likert scale; implying that most of the respondents agree to their experiences of being involved in the activities of the organization.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics on Organizational survival**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
<b>Learning</b>	56	1.00	5.00	3.4039	1.08761
<b>Innovation</b>	56	1.00	5.00	4.2778	.85945
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	56				

Source: Research survey, 2016

Table 4 is used to illustrate the descriptive statistics on the measures of the criterion variable which is organizational survival namely – organizational learning and innovation. The mean scores indicate a high tendency for agreement based on a middle benchmark of 2.5 for a substantial response level as a result of our previously stated adoption of a 5-point Likert scale. implying that most of the participants for the study highly affirm to organizational practices which reflect learning and innovation.

**Table 5: showing descriptive summary study variables**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
<b>Involvement</b>	56	1.00	5.00	3.7014	1.08040
<b>Survival</b>	56	1.00	5.00	3.8408	1.17352
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	56				

Source: Research survey, 2016

Table 5 is used to illustrate the descriptive statistical summary for the study variables; Employee involvement (predictor variable) and organizational survival (criterion variable). The central tendencies for the variables as indicated by their mean scores indicate a high tendency for agreement based on a middle benchmark of 2.5 for a moderate response level.

#### 4.4 Secondary Analysis:

This section is concerned with the tests for the bivariate hypotheses. As a two-tailed and non-directional study, evaluation of the result is based on correlations and not the direction of such correlations. The study adopts a 95% confidence interval therefore a significance level of 0.05 relative to the p-value is used in the acceptance or rejection of previously stated hypotheses. The Pearson product moment correlational tool is adopted in the test for correlations and strength of relations.

**The decision rule** for the acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses is premised on the  $P < 0.05$  level of significance and  $P > 0.05$  level of significance; wherein at a  $P < 0.05$  level of significance, the relationship can be considered as significant and hence a rejection of the null hypotheses and at a  $P > 0.05$  the relationship can be considered as insignificant and thus an acceptance of the null hypotheses.

Hypotheses are tested in this section as a result of their bivariate characteristic and address the relationship between the predictor variable: employee involvement and and the measures of the criterion (organizational learning and innovation).

**Table 6: Hypotheses testing for hypotheses 1 and 2**

		Involvement	Learning	Innovation
Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.943**	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	56	56	56
Learning	Pearson Correlation	.943**	1	.775**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	56	56	56
Innovation	Pearson Correlation	.720**	.775**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	56	56	56

Source: Research survey, 2016

*Hypotheses (HO<sub>1</sub>): There is no significant relationship between employee involvement and organizational learning:* the result ( $r = 0.943$ ,  $p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$ ) shows that there is significant relationship between involvement and organizational learning. We therefore reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between involvement and organizational learning.

*HO<sub>2</sub>. There is no significant relationship between employee involvement and innovation.* The hypothesis sought to examine the influence and effect of employee involvement on the organizational survival outcome which is innovation. Using the Pearson's product moment correlation statistical technique to test the hypothesis, the result ( $r = 0.720$ ,  $p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$ ) shows that there is significant relationship between involvement and innovation. We therefore reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between involvement and innovation.

#### 4.6 Discussion and conclusion of Results:

The findings from our empirical study on the investigation between employee involvement and organizational survival show an overall significant relationship between both variables. This corroborates the findings of Kartz (2006) who further argued that the concept of survival is an unwritten yet imperative law and guiding principle of every organization. This suggests that every organization should see survival as an absolute prerequisite for its serving any interest whatsoever. The empirical referents of employee involvement is revealed to significantly associate with organizational

survival through its measures which are organizational learning and innovation. Based on the results of the analysis on the relationship between the study variables, the following outcomes are herein discussed relative to previous but similar empirical and theoretical research.

we find that employee involvement significantly correlates with organizational survival through its measures which are organizational learning and innovation, this finding follows the argument of Lei, et al. (1996) in which they opine that involvement and learning are vital for achieving organizational competitive advantage and for improved performance outcomes with regards to survival measures such as organizational learning and innovation. Also it follows the stance of McFadzean et al, (2005) in describing involvement as imperatives through which employees are incorporated into objectives of the organization.

### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

From the findings and conclusion of the study, we recommend the following.

- i. Organizations should endeavour to effectively implement organizational features which would allow for effective employee involvement and participation in the affairs and activities of the organization.
- ii. More should be done in organizations as regards equality and gender distribution.

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- iii. More should be done to encourage the flow of communication within the organization so as to foster cooperative and collaborative efforts.
- iv. Flexibility of protocols should be encouraged within the organization.
- v. Organizations should strive to adopt more efficient methods in carrying out operations through the application of innovative technological methods.
- vi. The organization should strive to improve the nature, quality of their learning process as well as innovation level which should be relevant as relates to the industry.

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