



CUSTOMER-CONTACT EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AND RESILIENCE OF QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANTS

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Abstract:

The QSR industry in Nigeria has witnessed the emergence and disappearance of several actors. Some stride the industry for a couple of years; others fade away as quickly as they surfaced. Yet there are QSRs that have thrived and endured in the industry. Several factors could be responsible for this phenomenon. However, the current study investigated the extent to which employee empowerment can account for resilience of QSRs. ECD, DoA and EPDM are used as indicators of employee empowerment. The study adopted an explanatory research design and used a questionnaire to collect primary data; while the Spearman's rank order correlation (ρ) was employed as the test statistic. The study relied on SPSS version 20.0 for data analyses. The study observed that employee empowerment associates strongly with resilience of QSRs as all the dimensions of employee empowerment posted strong, positive and statistically significant relationship with resilience of QSRs. The study concludes that employee empowerment informs resilience of QSRs, or that resilience of QSRs depends on DoA, EPDM, and ECD; and recommends that QSRs that desires resilience in the business-scape must continually update the competencies of their customer-contact employees, involve them in decision-making and give them adequate powers to perform tasks and discharge duties assigned to them.

Keywords: Customer-contact employee, DoA, ECD, employee empowerment, EPDM, resilience of QSRs

1. Introduction

The effect of globalization on the Nigerian society is very prominent in the quick service restaurant (QSR) industry, as western and oriental delicacies pervade the industry with an attendant professionalization, sophistication and proliferation of brands (Ateke, Ogonu, & Ishmael, 2015). The industry's limited entry and exit barriers engender a robust business-scape where firms compete for brand recognition through aggressive

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marketing programmes (Ateke et al, 2015). The intensity of competition in the industry has led to improved service delivery and responsiveness to shifts in consumer preferences. QSRs in Nigeria evolved thirty six (36) years ago, with the coffee shops of UAC's Kingsway departmental store which metamorphosed into Kingsway Rendezvous. However, it is the establishment of "Mr Biggs" in Yaba, Lagos in 1986 that mark the humble beginning of the industry in Nigeria (Akpotaire, 2013).

The industry has however developed into one of the fastest growing due to rapid industrialization and increase in the number of households that rely on QSRs for their daily food needs (Ateke et al, 2015). Economists contend that free and open competition benefits individual consumers and societies as a whole by ensuring lower prices, better products and expanded consumer choice. The benefits of competition are readily observable in Nigeria's QSR industry where competition has improved service delivery. However, players in the industry must always adjust to changing consumers' preferences in order to survive while regulators must establish appropriate policy frameworks to govern the industry.

The similitude of products offered by QSRs makes it somewhat onerous for players to differentiate their products and stand out of the competition. QSRs can however, aspire for distinction through other avenues, including customer-contact employee empowerment. Fluidity, pervasive globalization, complexity in business processes and technology, and faster information and communication flows have revolutionized the business-scape (Iskanius, Haapasalo, & Page, 2006). Firms therefore, must exploit newer sustainable sources of competitiveness. In this regard, scholars, based on anecdotal evidence and case studies, propose employee empowerment as a viable resource for organisational improvement (Payne & Webber, 2006). Through responsiveness and other attitudes that inform customer satisfaction, employees enhance firms' ability to survive the vagaries of the business-scape. The necessity of concerted efforts at empirical examination of the influence of employee empowerment on the resilience of firms has thus been established. With a view to contributing to this discourse therefore, the current study aims to determine the relationship between customer-contact employee empowerment and resilience of QSRs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Customer-contact Employee Empowerment

Customer-contact employees are those members of firms with whom customers make their first contact in their interaction with the firm. These first-point-of-contact-employees have been identified by various appellations including customer-contact employees (Bowen & Hallowell, 2002), boundary spanning employees (Czepiel, 1990), and front-line personnel (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). Customer-contact employees link the firm and its customers; and also manage and sustain relationships with customers (Payne & Webber, 2006). Bowen and Hallowell (2002) contend that customer-contact employees offer the first and often, the only impression of the firm and

therefore are the “image makers” of the firm, representing the organization to the customer.

Employee empowerment refers to the activities involved in improving the decision making capacity of employees through cooperation, training and team work (Vogt & Murrell, 1990). It encompasses the activities of assigning appropriate responsibility to employees and helping them gain abilities (Klagge, 1998). Employee empowerment improves institutional abilities and intrapreneurial skills of employees (Tutar, Altinoz, & Cakiroglu, 2011). Employee empowerment does not mean that management abdicates its responsibilities of leading the organization. Rather, management's responsibility comes to create and foster an environment in which the input of employees is desired and cultivated (Elnaga & Imran, 2014). In effect, employee empowerment involves granting employees wider authority in monitoring, taking responsibility, and using their knowledge and skills by encouraging them to make independent decisions (Al-Ghabra, 2017).

Being a pathway to employee satisfaction and improved productivity (Demirci & Erbas, 2010), employee empowerment enables the firm to better adapt its business to the demands of the ever-changing marketplace and sophisticated customership. Employee empowerment goes by other aliases like participative management, employee involvement and employee commitment. It is a management style that encourages managers to decentralize powers and responsibilities. It is achieved by involving and committing employees in the decision-making processes of the firm. The implementation of result oriented employee empowerment requires shared vision, institutional support/recognition and knowledge and learning (Demirci & Erbas, 2010) and results to devolution of power in corporate governance (Khan, Tariq, Hamayoun, & Bhutta, 2012).

Benefits associated with employee empowerment include increased employees' commitment, employee-firm bond and acceptance of decisions through a sense of “ownership” (Kuye & Sulaimon, 2011; Sashkin, 1976); enhanced positive and effective participation in achievement of organizational goals (Al-Ghabra, 2017); improved performance, enhanced productivity, increased likelihood of effective goal implementation and increased adaptive capacity (Kuye & Sulaimon, 2011; Chang & Lorenzi, 1983; Sashkin, 1976); increased interest in knowledge and skills acquisition (Al-Ghabra, 2017); enhanced employees' morale, job satisfaction, self-realization and respect for the organisation (Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, & Hamayoun, 2015; Chang & Lorenzi, 1983); organisational flexibility and improved product quality through incorporation of employees' ideas and information (Williamson, 2008; Preuss & Lautsch, 2002); greater trust and a sense of control on the part of the employees (Chang & Lorenzi, 1983); brings maximum viewpoints and diversity of perspectives in decision-making situations which leads to increased organisational performance (Kemelgor, 2002); However, these potential benefits of employee empowerment are easier obtained when employees' interests and firms' interests are aligned (Ogden, 1992; Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999). In the current study, employee empowerment is dimensionalized as employee

competence development (ECD), delegation of authority (DoA) and employees' participation in decision making (EPDM).

2.1.1 ECD

The fast-paced, high-pressure business-scape demands customer-contact employees to be up-to-date on latest opportunities and challenges (Ateke & Kalu, 2016). Organisations must therefore regularly update the knowledge and skills of employees via continual competence development programmes. ECD includes activities aimed at enlarging the competency levels of employees, which facilitate the achievement of nominated organizational objectives (Asiegbu, Awa, Apkotu, & Ogbonna, 2011). It involves the development of the knowledge and skills of employees in order to prepare them to assume newer or greater responsibilities and challenges (Asiegbu et al, 2011). Through ECD, employees broaden their horizons and acquire newer technologies to enable them become more efficient and increase their creativity in problem-solving. ECD is consummated through various means, including training, coaching and mentoring (Asiegbu et al, 2011).

Training is the process of instilling competencies, skills, knowledge and attitudes in employees that translates to improved productivity and company wellness. Through training, employees acquire specific skills to be become more proficient in doing a job. It focuses on using appropriate techniques to transfer expert knowledge and skills which are intended to positively change employees' current behaviour (Asiegbu et al, 2011). Coaching on the other hand is a wisdom-transfer process, from a wise and trusted teacher to an acolyte; and is done in real time, performed on the job as the coach uses real tasks and problems to help the learner increase performance (Asiegbu et al, 2011). Mentoring occurs when a more experienced individual (mentor) takes the responsibility for developing and guiding a less experienced individual (mentee). Pullins and Fine (2002) identify peer mentoring as a practice whereby *"a more experienced agent provides help and support to a less experienced agent"*. Mentor-mentee relationships are often informal in organisational settings and are not subscribed in the organizational hierarchy (Asiegbu et al, 2011; Higgins, 2001; Gunn, 1995).

2.1.2 DoA

The allocation of decision-making powers in the internal workings of firms has been of interest to scholars (Colombo & Demastro, 2004). This is in view of the fact that timely achievement of organisational goals requires the performance of tasks and discharge of responsibilities which managers cannot do alone. DoA is thus conceived as a potent tool for the enhancement of firms' ability to perform its tasks and discharge its responsibilities. Authority is delegated when a superordinate transfers the power to make decisions to a subordinate or when political, administrative and fiscal management powers are transferred from a higher to a lower level in an organisational setting (Mwikali & Wafula, 2015). In the view of Shekari, Naieh and Nouri (2011), DoA is a *"process of distributing tasks and authorities in an organisation"*; while Kiiza and Picho (2014) aver that DoA occurs when a leader assign part of his authority commensurate

with an assigned task, to a subordinate. To Thomas, Idowu and Olarewaju (2016) DoA is *“the granting of a part of authority or full authority and right to certain employees or individuals in an organization to perform a particular task or execute a plan towards achieving the aims and objectives of the organisation”*.

Ortiz, Gorita and Vislykh (2004) opine that DoA is an essential requirement for the successful implementation of result-based management. This suggests that employees must be empowered through clear DoA if they must be accountable for results. The primary reason for DoA is to foster efficient use of resources and facilitate the emergence of a more agile and responsive (resilient) organization. Performance improves when customer-contact employees have the responsibility and authority to address customer issues. Business organizations must therefore ensure that their internal processes provide employees with the authority they need to contribute to the actualization of the organization’s mission (Ortiz et al, 2004). DoA is a process that culminates with managers assigning responsibilities to subordinates, with commensurate power to make decisions, in order to accomplish given assignments. In order to accomplish a task using this managerial tool, a superordinate delegate some responsibility to a subordinate, along with the power to exercise control, and also holds the subordinate accountable for his decisions and actions.

DoA facilitates employee motivation and enhances the achievement of stated organisational objectives. It is beneficial to firms, managers, employees and customers (Al-Jammal, Al-Khasawneh, & Hamadat, 2015). DoA enables competitiveness, knowledge inventory, increased productivity and timely performance of tasks for firms; it reduces functional burdens, reduces burnout and builds cooperation and trust for managers; for employees, it bestows functional empowerment and prepares them for administrative leadership (Al-Jammal et al, 2015). It also builds self-confidence in employees and motivates them to greater performance; while to customers, DoA facilitates timely fulfilment of needs, increased care and attention and builds loyalty and respect for the firm and its offerings (Al-Jammal et al, 2015). In Colombo and Demastro (2004), increased agent’s initiative and participation, exploitation of agent’s competencies, avoidance of information leaks, and timely decision-making are identified as key benefits of DoA; while Marume, Ndudzo and Chikasha (2016) posit that the essence of DoA is the conferment of discretion upon subordinates, to use their judgment in meeting specific problems and challenges within the frame work of their duties.

2.1.3 EPDM

EPDM is a concept with management, psychological and sociological roots. Its definition has thus tended to be skewed towards the bearing of individual definers. Hence, a multitude of definitions of the concept obtain. Noah (2008) conceive EPDM as a *“special form of delegation in which subordinates gain greater control, greater freedom of choice with respect to bridging the communication gap between the management and the workers”*; while Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) conceive it as the degree to which subordinates are involved in the firm’s strategic planning activities. In the view of Han

et al (2010), EPDM is the degree to which employees participate in organizational decision-making through multiple approaches; while Likert (1967) define it as a “collective management system, involving the processes of leading, motivation and interaction to provide employees with opportunities to participate in organizational decision making”.

Present day economies are knowledge-based; and this has increased firms’ concern for knowledge management (Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010). Yang (2004) identify knowledge sharing as the most important knowledge management practice in organizations; contending that greater knowledge sharing within an organization informs greater organizational effectiveness. However, knowledge sharing is enhanced when employees participate in decision making, especially those decisions that affect the performance of their duties. Pierce, Kostova and Dirks (2001) aver that EPDM arouses a sense of ownership on the part of employees and lead to altruism. Such altruistic spirit unavoidably contributes to organizational effectiveness (Strauss, 2006).

Intellectual assets have become more important than physical assets because knowledge is the catalyst for differentiating a firm’s work from its competitors (Stewart, 2001). However, intellectual assets are embedded in employees. Human capital is therefore a key strategic asset of organizations (Han et al, 2010). Managers must adopt management practices that induce employees to share important knowledge that can enhance organizational resilience (Han et al, 2010). In the view of Anand, Gardner and Morris (2007), “flexible mechanisms in organizations contribute to sharing and transferring of new information that leads to new knowledge, thus contributing to innovation”.

EPDM does predict employee satisfaction and gives employees the perception that they have influence over organizational decisions (Driscoll, 1978). According to Ritchie (1974), participatory decision-making is necessary in an organisation when employees (1) have relevant skills and information (2) perceives that their involvement will affect their outcomes (3) feel their participation is legitimate (4) experience little status or expertise differential (5) benefit from the trust and support of superiors. EPDM thus satisfies important psychological needs for responsibility and autonomy at work, suggesting that increased EPDM could predict greater employee satisfaction and improved productivity (Wood, 1972).

2.2 Organizational Resilience

A resilient organization is one that is able to adapt, cope, survive and prosper in the face of abrupt and sometimes hostile variations in the business-scape (Ateke & Nadube, 2017). The BSI (2015) conceptualization of organizational resilience describes resilient organisations as those that have the ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to gradual and abrupt disruptions in the operating environment. A resilient organization adapts to changing environmental conditions in order to remain fit for purpose over the long term (Ateke & Nadube, 2017). Resilient organisations learn from their own experiences and also from the experiences of others (Zhang & Liu, 2012). They are focused more on business improvement as a futuristic strategic enabler (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005). Also, resilient firms are flexible, proactive, anticipatory and creative; they exploit new opportunities through calculated risk taking (Ateke &

Nadube, 2017). BSI (2015) further states that organizational resilience involves the adoption of best practices to deliver continual business improvement, embedding competence and capability across all units of an organization.

Businesses operate in challenging environments that present both threats and opportunities. Cultivating a resilient organizational culture therefore better positions a firm to prosper. Everly (2011) identify investment in client base, innovativeness in times of adversity, investment in leaders, and investment in all levels of the workforce as common practices of resilient organisations. Coping with change, overcoming adversity and functioning adaptively are essential to management (Zhang & Liu, 2012). Organizational resilience is thus fundamental for firms that must respond effectively to change or crisis that disrupts the established or expected trend of events without getting devastated for an extended period of time (Horne & Orr, 1998).

Being neither a chance occurrence nor a one off exercise, but one that is achieved continually, through ongoing relationships and interaction with stakeholders, organizational resilience requires commitment from the whole firm in a top-down direction and bottom-up engagement, through clear communication (Ateke & Nadube, 2017). In essence, resilience is what an organization does with what happen to it, and not what happens to the organization. It however requires product excellence, process reliability and people behaviour to be effective (BSI, 2015). To be truly resilient, an organisation must be flexible in its operations. The benefits of organizational resilience include strategic adaptability, agile leadership and robust governance.

Organisational resilience has been treated as a multidimensional construct consisting of various constituents (Ahiauzu & Jaja, 2015; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008); including resilience ethos, situation awareness, understanding and management of keystone vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity (Ahiauzu & Jaja, 2015; Lee et al, 2013). Resilience ethos is organisation-wide shared attitude, habits and beliefs that encourage resourcefulness, reflectiveness and responsiveness to environmental shifts and promote business wellness. Situation awareness describes the organizations awareness of its business-scape, what is happening around it, and its understanding of what that information means for its present and future wellbeing (Ahiauzu & Jaja, 2015). Keystone vulnerability defines operational and managerial aspects of an organization that could affect the organisation negatively in instantaneous or insidious crisis situations (Ahiauzu, & Jaja, 2015). Adaptive capacity describes context specific organizational abilities that facilitate constant and continuous evolution to keep up with the needs of the operating environment (Meyer, & Allen, 1991). In the current study however, organisational resilience is treated unidimensionally.

2.3 Customer-contact Employee empowerment and Resilience of QSRs

Employee empowerment is a fundamental managerial tool that firms need to remain competitive in today's marketplace. This is because employee empowerment is believed to induce in employees, a commitment to the firm and the work environment; which in turn helps the firm to survive, nurture its business, stand out of the competition and

face the challenges the business environment presents (Sahoo, Behera, & Tripathy, 2010). Employee empowerment collapses the gap between managers and employees by increasing the authority and responsibility of the employee and flattening the organizational structure. It is a management style that gives employees the authority to make independent decisions when required and encourage them to use their skills and knowledge to react to changing market situations (Khan et al, 2014) and customer requirements. Employee empowerment is thus a basic managerial principle that managers adopt to enhance company performance (Karim & Rehman, 2012).

Customer satisfaction is paramount to resilience of firms; and to deliver customer satisfaction, firms and their employees must work closely, with the employees having the required freedom to exercise some level of independent decision making. The most powerful tools firms can use to achieve this include having the right set of employees and empowering them (Kim, Kim, Im, & Shin, 2003). Having the right set of employees and empowering them to deliver quality service and attend to customers' issues promptly is a way to satisfying customers and holding a competitive edge in the business-scape. A skilled, creative and adequately trained workforce is the most valuable asset an organization can own; since the survival of a firm depends, to a large extent, on knowledgeable and skilled workforce (Ghorbani & Ahmadi, 2012). Empowered employees readily adapt to change in customers' preferences because they are able to make decisions and take responsibility on the firm's behalf.

The adoption of employee empowerment as a management principle enhances firms' resilience in the face of global competition and rapid environmental changes that compels firms to modify the way they engage and manage their interface with customers. Karim and Rehman (2012) states that empowered employees are inclined to share information and enhance their intellectual capacity to gain autonomy in decision making situations. This suggests that firms that focus on employee empowerment are better able to achieve and maintain long-term survival (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2015). Empowered employees are more efficient in performing their tasks because they make independent decision, easily cope with situations, events or individuals and uses their skills and knowledge (Conger & Kanunga, 1988). Managers must thus empower their employees in order to improve the capabilities and competencies of the firm (Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, & Hamayoun, 2015).

The resource-based theory of competitiveness (Pfeffer, 1994; Grant, 1991) emphasizes the roles of internal resources of the firm, including its employees as key to creating and sustaining competitive capabilities (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Studies also increasingly observe employees as the ultimate source of competitiveness as globalization and other environmental vagaries weakens traditional sources of competitiveness such as markets, financial capital, and scale economies (Asiegbu et al, 2011). Thus, firms that seek resilience in today's global business-scape must invest in human resource to acquire and build employees that possess better skills and capabilities than their competitors (Pfeffer, 1994). More so, Al-Ghabra (2017) and Han et al (2010) empirically determined that employee empowerment significantly associates with employee commitment and organisational resilience; while Kuye and Sulaimon

(2011) found empirical evidence that employee empowerment positively impacts organisational performance.

Customer-contact employees should have the right abilities, flexibility, and power to engage in customer-oriented behaviours. Employee empowerment remains one of the most effective tools firms can utilize to satisfy customers in the modern day business-scape (Khan et al, 2014). This is because it confers competitive advantage on firms by enhancing employee-firm bonds, bringing the firm closer to its customers; improve after-sales service, offers continuous innovation and increased productivity (Saifullah et al, 2015). It gives subordinates more control over job-related situations and decisions, and allows them to be more flexible and responsive to customers' needs (Kim et al, 2003). The role of customer-contact employees in service organizations is profound. They are explainers-in-chief to customers, they proffer solutions to customers' complaints; and have to do this instanter, rather than wait for managers' feedback and judgment (Khan et al, 2014). It is thus palpable that the resilience of a business organisation is closely linked to how empowered, its customer-contact employees are. The study therefore proposes that:

H₁: ECD significantly associates with resilience of QSRs.

H₂: DoA significantly associates with resilience of QSRs.

H₃: EPDM significantly associates with resilience of QSRs

3. Methodology

The aim of this study was to determine the link between customer-contact employee empowerment and resilience of QSRs. The study adopted an explanatory research design. It takes a realist ontology and positivist epistemology, subscribed to the deterministic nature of human interactions and relied on a nomothetic methodology. The study was conducted in a natural setting without any form of manipulation; and employed questionnaire as instrument of primary data collection.

The population of the study consists of QSRs in Port Harcourt. Information obtained from the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce and Industry indicates that there are twenty-one (21) QSRs operating in Port Harcourt that are duly registered with the chamber. These QSRs thus served as the population of the study. The study took a census since the population is small. Sixty-three (63) customer-contact employees, on a sample frame of three (3) employees per QSR, who are arrived at using the accidental sampling technique served as the test units (respondents). However, only data collected from fifty eight (58) respondents was used in the final analysis.

The validity of the instrument of the study was confirmed through the opinion of academic experts and practitioners with adequate knowledge of the subject of the study; while the internal consistency of the measurement items was confirmed through the Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability with a threshold of 0.70 set by Nunally (1978). Table 3.1 below presents the summary of the test of reliability. The Spearman's rank order correlation (ρ) served as the test statistic, relying on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The key for interpretation considered appropriate

for the correlation (r) of the study variables was the categorization scheme set by Evans (1996), where: 0.0-0.19 = very weak; 0.20-0.39 = weak; 0.40-0.59 = moderate; 0.60-0.79 = strong; and 0.80-1.0 = very strong. The interpretation process was subject to 0.01 (two tail) level of significance.

Table 1: Summary of Result of Reliability Analysis on Study Variables

S/N	Variable Measure	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
1.	ECD	0.716	6
2.	DoA	0.803	5
3.	EPDM	0.747	6
4.	Resilience of QSRs	0.711	9

Source: Simulation from SPSS Output on Data Analysis on Employee Empowerment and Resilience of QSRs (2017).

4. Analyses and Results

Correlations of dimensions of employee empowerment and resilience of QSR were tested using rho. The summary of the results is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Correlation Analysis on Employee Empowerment and Resilience of QSRs

			Resilience of QSRs	ECD	DoA	EPDM
Spearman's rho	Resilience of QSRs	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.688**	.715**	.708**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000	.000	.000
		N	58	58	58	58
	ECD	Correlation Coefficient	.688**	1.000	-	-
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-	.000	.000
		N	58	58	58	58
	DoA	Correlation Coefficient	.715**	-	1.000	-
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	-	.000
		N	58	58	58	58
	EPDM	Correlation Coefficient	.708**	-	-	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	-
		N	58	58	58	58

Source: Simulation from SPSS Output on Data Analysis on Employee Empowerment and Resilience of QSRs (2017).

Table 2 above displays summary of result of test of association between dimensions of employee empowerment and resilience of QSRs. The Table indicate that the rho coefficient of the nexus between ECD and resilience of QSRs is .688**, with a probability value of .000 which is less than 0.01. This indicates that a strong relationship exists between ECD and resilience of QSRs, and that the relationship is statistically significant. The result implies that increase in competence development of customer-contact employees will result to increased resilience capacity of QSRs.

On the relationship between DoA and resilience of QSRs, Table 2 indicates a rho coefficient of .715** with a probability value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01. This suggests that a strong positive link exists between DoA and resilience of QSRs, and that the link between the variables is statistically significant. Meaning that greater DoA will result to greater resilience of QSRs.

Finally, the result of test of relationship between EPDM and resilience of QSRs as shown on Table 2 indicates the existence of a significant association between the variables. The rho coefficient of the result show that the link between EPDM and resilience of QSRs is .708** with a probability value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01. The result implies that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant; and that increase in EPDM will lead to increased resilience capacity of QSRs.

5. Discussion of Findings

The focus of this study was to determine the connection between employee empowerment and resilience of QSRs. Based on the tests conducted; it was observed that all the dimensions of employee empowerment have positive and statistically significant relationship with resilience of QSRs. Particularly, it was observed that ECD, DoA and EPDM associates strongly and positively too, with resilience of QSRs; with DoA and resilience of QSRs indicating the strongest relationship.

The findings of the study largely supports the finding of Ghorbani & Ahmadi (2012) that having the right set of employees and giving them the enablement to deliver quality service and promptly attend to customers' issues is a way of standing the firm for competitiveness. The finding of the current study also supports that of Khan et al (2014) who observe that when employees are given the authority to make independent decisions when required, they use their skills and knowledge to react to changing market situations and customer preferences for the good of the firm. Also, the findings of the current study corroborates that of Al-Jammal et al (2015) which indicate that empowered employees inform resilient firms through knowledge inventory, increased productivity and timely performance of tasks.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study supports the finding of Han et al (2010) that employee empowerment through EPDM results to psychological ownership, and organizational commitment, which benefits the organizational via knowledge sharing in the workplace. Han et al (2010) conclude that EPDM encourages employees to produce positive cognitions, attitudes and behaviour, all of which directly impacts organisational resilience. Additionally, the findings of the current study supports that of Al-Ghabra (2017) that EPDM motivates employees and spur them to contribute to the success of the organization. The findings of the study also lends credence to that of Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) that employee empowerment have significant impact on firms' performance; and that firms with entrenched employee empowerment culture achieve higher performance than firms that do not have such culture.

The findings of the study also cohere with submissions of scholars including Preuss and Lautsch, (2002) who posit that employee empowerment facilitates

organisational flexibility, improved product quality and productivity through the incorporation of ideas and information from employees; Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) and Sashkin (1976) who contend that employee empowerment increases the likelihood of effective goal implementation and increased adaptive capacity of the organisation; Chang and Lorenzi (1983) who state that employee empowerment enhances productive efficiency through increased employees' morale, job satisfaction; and Kemelgor (2002) who opines that employee empowerment leads to increased firm performance via the generation of diverse ideas, viewpoints and perspectives in decision-making situations. The findings also agree with the position of Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) that employee empowerment increases employees' commitment and acceptance of decisions through a sense of "ownership", which leads to unity of purpose and improved performance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

To be resilient means to recover quickly from setbacks or challenges and to surmount difficulties. The QSR business-scape has seen the emergence and disappearance of several actors. Some operated for several years; others die as quickly as they come. While several factors could be blamed for this, it is less likely that managers have looked to employee empowerment as a potent reason for the differences in the experiences of QSRs. A skilled and efficient workforce is undeniably a strategic asset that facilitates the attainment of company goals. Managers therefore need to identify how best to empower employees in order to drive them to optimum performance, and ensure resilience of QSRs. Improved organizational performance through flexible and responsive processes is the outcome of employee empowerment.

Employee empowerment is also critical to organizational innovativeness and effectiveness. Organisational resilience can therefore be taken to follow from employee empowerment. On the strength of the empirical analysis and the discussion of findings in the preceding sections, the study concludes that a significant association exists between employee empowerment and resilience of QSRs; and that resilience of QSRs rests largely on DoA, EPDM and ECD. The study thus recommends that QSRs that desire resilience in the business-scape must continually update the competencies of their customer-contact employees, involve them in decision-making on matters that concern their jobs and delegate adequate powers to them to enable them perform their tasks efficiently.

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