IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN UNILEVER NIGERIA

By

Course

Instructor

Institution

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of Research

The development of any organization depends on the identification and analysis of the factors that drives the effectiveness of an organization. Most organizations focus on enhancing the levels of employees' commitment due to its central role in determining the productivity of an organization (Brooks, 2006). This achieved by introducing the employees to the objectives, values and norms of the organization which are important for the employee to comprehend the corporate culture of the organization (Magee, 2002). Organization's management is not only responsible of communicating to the staff of the corporate culture of the organization but also developing an environment that supports learning. Studies have shown that higher levels of organizational culture comprehension by the employees promote higher levels of efficiency and productivity of the employees (Brooks, 2006).

Non boundary Global economy has been brought forward by the trendy process of the international economic liberalization and globalization, as well as the vigorous competition among the organizations (Dolan et al,. 2003). As the technology advances during this process of globalization is fasten up in the remarkable way in recent years which provoke the organizations to think out of the box. They are not just required to develop their competitive advantages for surviving in the market but also to find new market to expand their business around the world and increase the market share across the territories (Lawler & McDermott, 2003). The expansion of the business has become the core strategy of many multinational organizations, and they tend to expand their business into fully explored and highly potential

African market in order to increase the business profits and gain a market share (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008). The purpose of this study is to find and evaluate the impact of corporate culture on the performance of Unilever Nigeria, and how they have created the market driven image through effective strategies of cultural adaptation across different nations of the world

Problem statement

Unilever, like other multinational corporations have the advantage of credit and trust from stakeholders, abundant capital and experience of operating in the market (Burns, 2008, p. 10). During the establishment of the company, Unilever has built a strong corporate culture which is fostered and considered as an intangible asset to the company while carrying out their operations abroad, given the fact that it cannot be easily imitated by any other organizations (Unilever, 2011). However, it is very difficult to operate a business across the national boundaries.

Recent studies have linked effective human resource management to organizational performance and achievement of its vision (Farashahi et al., 2005). Numerous studies on this issue have focussed on organizations operating in developed economies (Farashahi et al., 2005; Orbonna & Harris, 2000; Magee, 2002). The high level of dynamism between economic environment in developed countries and developing countries limits the applicability of management practices used in developed economies, in developing economies. Studies have also identified corporate culture as the main difference in performance management practices (Orbonna & Harris, 2000). This demands an investigation of organizational culture in the context of a developing economy. To be able to fill this gap, a

sub-Saharan state, Nigeria was deemed the most appropriate destination of this study. More so, to be able to provide effective comparison of the effect of cultural deference on performance, Unilever, a multinational with numerous operations in developed economies was selected.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

This research aims at establishing the impact of corporate culture on organizational performance in a developing economy. To be able to meet this aim, this research study was guided by the following objectives:

- To discover and evaluate the impact of corporate culture on the performance of Unilever Nigeria.
- To identify the corporate cultural aspects of Unilever Nigeria and its impact on the performance of the employees and managerial staff.
- To evaluate the ways in which Unilever used their strategies of corporate cultural adaptation for improvisation of their performance level.

Research Question

The research study endeavoured to provide comprehensive responses to the following question in an attempt of addressing the objectives of the study:

- *How has Unilever, in its expansion to the Nigerian market, adapted its corporate culture to the prevailing business culture of Nigeria and how has the adaptation of Unilever to the business culture of Nigeria influenced its performance?*

Scope and Significance of the Study

In this research, the researcher has focused on the multinational corporation particularly Unilever in Nigeria which is considered as a very successful British-Dutch FMCG multinational company that possess different and famous brands like Viso, Sunsilk, OMO, P/S, Knorr, Clear, etc. Since 1973, Unilever Nigeria Plc is listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange and known as a public liability company whose 49% equity is currently held by Nigerians (Unilever Corp, 2012b). An exclusive right is given by Unilever Plc London to Unilever Nigeria Plc for the know-how about marketing, manufacturing and distribution of their brands (Unilever, 2012a). The competitive advantage of the Unilever is founded in its strong relationship with its customers, which is based on the knowledge and understanding of the markets and local business culture that ensures the long-term success of the business (Unilever Corp., 2012b). The company has maintained the complete commitment to extraordinary standards of productivity and performance.

Unilever thrives to maintain its corporate behaviour at the highest levels towards its customers, operating environment, communities and employees in order to sustain its success (Unilever Corp., 2012a). Unilever is deeply committed to meeting the daily needs of their consumers everywhere in Nigeria and, therefore, its brands are mostly household favourites.

Unilever believes in the culture of performance which enables them to draw successful position in the market. Their operational strategies are not only customers focused as employees and other stakeholders are also part of the organizational culture as the ultimate

success of an organization is based on all stakeholders of the company (Unilever Corp., 2012b). The corporate culture has its negative and positive impact on the performance of the employees and organization as a whole. If the top executives are not successful in stabilizing the different cultures of the organization into one, the success of the company is at stake.

Unilever strongly believes in respecting the values of all its employees irrespective of which culture they belong. Performance culture of Unilever is based on goal setting, learning and development plans, performance ratings, 360 feedback, GPS feedback, forced distribution, differentiated pay for performance and most importantly on individuals (Unilever Corp., 2010).

Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to managerial theory and practice on corporate culture and performance. From a theoretical perspective, the study offers various contributions to corporate culture and the effect of national identity. The study indicates the existence of national differentiation in corporate culture with evidence from Nigeria's Unilever Company. Regarding corporate culture national identity, this study demonstrated that differences in corporate culture between developed and developing economies are due to the uniqueness of the economic environment.

The results of this study are also relevant to performance management practices as they show national variations in corporate culture. Consequently, performance managers will have evidence required for designing and implementing differentiated programs aimed at

improving organizational performance with relation to developing economies. Particularly, this will assist organizational management to design effective organizational culture that recognizes the differences between developed economies and developing economies business environment.

Nature of the study

This research study was focused on uncovering national differences in organizational culture with specific reference to the operations of Unilever in Nigeria. The study relies on a cross section qualitative research design to test the various concepts proposed in previous research studies. The research study gathered secondary data from previous investigations and any other available information that presented a picture of the company's corporate culture. This was followed by employing quantitative data analysis techniques to analyze the data to be able to provide an effective response to the research question. Therefore, a case study approach, incorporating primary and secondary data was viewed as sufficient for meeting the purposes of the research (Creswell, 2008).

Study assumptions

This research study was based on specific assumptions outlined below:

a. The data collection instrument was adequate in covering all the variables that were under investigation in this research.

b. The respondents provided truthful responses to the statements stated in the interview guide instrument.

c. The research methodology selected provided full-bodied evidence on the research issue.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation is that the study employed a cross section case study research design to measure the variables that make it impractical to engage in the assessment of weights in directionality between variables. Second, the study only used three participants for the interview, which raises concerns on the generalization of the results of the study. Third, the primary data for the investigation comes from self-reported opinions in response to the interview questions. This means that the study did not assess actual behaviour as it was focused on the interviewees' behavioural intents. Consequently, this limits the results of this research to participants' intents instead of real behaviour.

Outline of the study

The first chapter of the study covered the introduction about the corporate culture Unilever Nigeria and their impact on the performance of employees and overall organization. It follows with the scope and significance of the study. The second chapter of the study represents literature review on research relating to the previous studies carried out by various authors. The third chapter of the study presented the research methodology adopted in the study, which include the research methods and designs. The analysis and findings for the research study are in the fourth chapter. The final chapter concluded the study and provided useful and justified recommendations for the further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Organizational culture is composed of a range of intricate social phenomena resulting to classification of corporate culture as a multi-layered assemblage which is divisible based on accessibility and observability of these issues (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). To be able to develop a deeper understanding of the effect of organizational culture on organizational

performance, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of the concept of culture and its application in an organization.

2.1.1 An Overview of culture

Culture is the sanctity of intellect. Wealth and other things can be renounced by a man, for without holiness and culture, which are considered a gift for some people, but a man cannot renounce jealousy, revenge, envy and hatred (Pauleen, 2007). Culture has its inception in mid fifteenth century, inferred from the Latin expression, "cultura" initially implied "a cultivating agriculture", or "the tilling of land", symbolically "culture, honoring and care" (Hofstede, 1984). In the year 1805, intellectual side of civilization was referred to as culture which was understood as achievements of people and collective customs (Harper, 2012). However, culture is not just limited to the cultivation of soil in English, yet alludes to a more entangled elucidation, the preparation and refining of the psyche, behaviour, taste, and so forth or the consequence of this (Clark, 1990; Hofstede, 1984).

Culture assumes a significant part in confirming the personality of a group of human, likewise as disposition verifies the character of an individual (Hofstede, 1984, p. 21). Culture is viewed in different ways by the anthropologists, and many researches were conducted in order to acquire a sophisticated and complete understanding of culture. During his study, Pauleen (2007) had recognized more than 160 definitions of culture. According to Tylor who shared his views in (Ajmal, Kekale, Takala, 2009, p. 346) culture is known as "an intricate

entire that incorporates the habits, capabilities, law, knowledge, customs, beliefs, morals and art which is attained by a person being a part of society.

Another opinion about culture was given by Clark (1990, p. 66), who described culture as an enduring and a distinctive pattern of personality characteristics and behaviour. However, it was argued by some anthropologists that culture is considered as a system for the purpose of storing, creating, sending and dispensation of information (Doney, Cannon, Mullen, 1998, p. 607). In the year 2001, Hofstede in his book Culture's consequences gave a distinct definition of culture which articulates culture as the shared programming of the intellect which helps in distinguishing the members of one category or group of individuals from another (p. 9), where collective programming is considered as a key expression.

Although there are many different definitions of culture given by anthropologists, it was concluded that the definition given by Pauleen, (2007) was the most inclusive and acceptable definition. His perception about the culture implied that a different pattern like implicit and explicit, of and for behaviour attained and conveyed by symbols, comprising the typical achievement of groups of human, which includes their quintessence in objects; considering tradition as the essential core of culture (chronologically developed and selected) thoughts and particularly the values attached to them. On the other hand, the system of culture may be referred as products of action or may be as breaking in components of future actions (Pauleen, 2007). Concluding all the opinions suggested by different authors Culture is referred to as something which is shared by all members of a specified society. Culture is

passed on from one generation to another, which has a great impact in shaping up the behaviours of people and their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours about the world (Adler, 2008, p. 19).

2.1.2 National Culture

Beliefs, assumptions and values which are learned by individuals in their early stages of development and differentiate one group of individuals from the other group of individuals are known as national culture (Hofstede, 1996, p.754). On the other hand, Tayeb (2003), defined national culture as a thread which in incorporated, in our lives. This constant thread differentiates people from each other particularly those from the other countries (p. 13). It is imbedded profoundly in people's regular life and in this way impenetrable to change (Newman & Nollen, 1996, p. 754). In any case, when talking about multifaceted matters, it's indispensable to precisely recognize "culture" from "country" (Tayeb, 2008, p. 13). The cultural boundaries between nations, as a result of economic integration, are becoming less and less significant, and obvious differences in culture might exist even inside one nation (Pauleen, 2007).

In a study conducted by Tayeb (2003), it was evident that geographical boundaries have limited influence on cultural identity of a group of persons. Tayeb used the Kurds as a case for strengthening an argument that geographical boundaries make no difference for equating the culture. Despite the fact that Kurdish individuals have a different social personality, they do live in three country states such as Iraq, Turkey and Iran. Clearly, one society does not constrain itself to the political borders of one and only country state. None, of these is it

essential that standards and qualities are imparted by all nationals or unwavering over all sections of the population (Doney, Cannon, Mullen, 1998, p. 607). In contrast, the characteristic of a large number of people who possess the same education, experiences of life and backgrounds is called national culture (Doney, Cannon, Mullen, 1998, p. 607).

2.1.3 Corporate Culture

Human capital is the main component of an organization because it is made up by individuals. Therefore, performance of the organization and its effectiveness in achieving the strategic organizational goals is affected by the interactions among people within an organization (Jones, 2010). These interactions are epitomized in and headed by the culture of the organization (Browaeys & Price, 2008, p. 30). Specifically, organizational culture is a collective beliefs and values which are absorbed within the organization that defines the way individuals treat their superiors, subordinates, suppliers, shareholders, customers, and each other (Dolan, Garcia & Auerbach, 2003, p. 30).

 In spite of the fact that culture of the organization has ended up being such a significant conception, explaining it is always been difficult. Indeed, not many ideas in organizational theory have the same amount diverse and contending definitions as organizational culture (Barney, 1986, p. 657). Generally, organizational culture is defined as a set of collective norms and values which tends to control the members of the organization as well as their interactions with each other and with people outside the organization that are related to business in any manner (Jones, 2010).

The culture of the organization is controlled by the ways individual members makes choices and decisions, the way they decipher and supervise the environment of the organization, what is done with the information by them and how they act (Jones, 2010, p.201). The qualities that makeup corporate culture is comprised of two contributory components, in particular the outcomes, which a corporate wants to achieve and preferred kind of behaviours, which a corporate encourages its people to adapt, together they are made as particular rules and standard, specific norms and operating procedures that harmonize the members of the organization (Jones, 2010, p. 201-202). Despite the fact that individuals ordinarily discuss the culture of the organization in the peculiar, all firms have numerous cultures, which are usually not connected with geographic locations and functional groupings (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 5).

It implies that an organization ordinarily has one overwhelming culture as well as various subcultures, which are the collective understandings around parts of one geographic operation/department/group. Accordingly, when looking into the culture of a particular corporation, dominant culture is usually mentioned by us which are values that are essential and shared by a majority of the members of the organization (Sypher, 1990, p. 73). The scope of this study, accordingly, does not comprise of the subcultures that exist at easier levels of the corporate, for example, the two Dutch and English Unilever organizations or different organizational departments, groups and branches. Rather, just the prevailing corporate social qualities are considered for the analysis.

2.2 Denison's Framework of Organizational Culture

According to Yilmaz (2008) who states that, following Schien (1984) at the centre of Denison's model are the essential assumptions and beliefs that speak to the deepest levels of culture of the organization. The foundations are provided by these fundamental assumptions (Denison, 2000, p. 292):

- The surface-level cultural elements, for example observable artefacts and values including rituals, heroes, symbols, etc. are derived

- Action and behaviour spring

    In comparisons of Denison's model of corporations dependent upon moderately more "surface-level" manifest practices and values and their show practices are made. These values are considered both more consistent than the artefacts and more accessible than the assumptions (Denison, 2000). Four cultural traits are the basis of the Denison's organizational cultural model mission, adaptability, involvement and consistency that have been demonstrated in various literatures for influencing the performance of the organization (Denison & Mishra, 1995). According to Denison's framework of organizational culture, there are four traits, which include:

2.2.1 Involvement

Organizations which are efficient, engage their individuals, construct their corporations around groups, and advance human proficiency in each level of organization (Lawler, 1996). Managers, employees and executives, feel that they are part of the organization and they own a piece of it, therefore, they show more commitment towards the organization. This creates a sense of responsibility among the individuals towards

organizational decision and performance, and they have at least some input into decision made in the organization which has an impact on their work and their performance has a direct relationship to the goals of the organization (Lawler, 1996).

2.2.2 Consistency

Organizations which consist of systems that are well coordinated, highly consistent and well integrated used to have strong cultures and work effectively and efficiently. Behaviours and attitudes are the roots of the set of core values, and even the leaders and followers have a different point of views but still they are talented, skilled enough at reaching agreement (Pham, 1994). This sort of consistency is internal integration and a powerful source of stability which will result from a high degree of conformity and a common mindset.

2.2.3 Adaptability

It was found that organizations, which are considered to be well integrated, are often not easy ones to be changed. External adaptation and internal integration can often be at chances. Those organizations, which are adaptable in terms of culture are driven by their customers, they are more willing to take risks and learn from their past mistakes. They have the experience and capability for creating change in the organization (Nadler, 1998). The systems of these organizations are changed continuously for improving the collective abilities of the organization in order to provide values for their customers (Stalk, 1988).

2.2.4 Mission

The organizations that are successful possess a clear direction and sense of purpose which identifies and defines the organizational strategic goals and objectives and articulate the vision of how the organization will look in the future (Ohmae, 1982; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). When there is a change in an organization's underlying mission, the aspects of organizational culture are also changed.

2.3 Hofstede Five Dimensions of Culture

The variety of the behaviours of people is explained by the cultural differences that are possessed by different people coming from different backgrounds (Hofstede, 1984). However, in order to study the cultural differences, it has become a challenge for scholars to identify which tool is best effective for studying cross-cultural management. There has been an argument over the comparable and unique aspects of culture, throughout the history. Some researchers believed that there is no comparison of cultures between each other, using the metaphor of apples and oranges, whereas it was argued by many other authors that the comparison between both fruits can be done on the number of aspects, like prices, durability colour, nutritive value and weight.

An international employee attitude survey program was conducted by Geert Hofstede in order to find a scale on which different cultures can be positioned against each other, in a large multinational corporation. More than 116000 questionnaires from 72 countries in 20 languages were used to gather the information which was then analyzed from the answers. Four dimensions were identified by Hofstede which suggested the basis on which employees

and managers varied, such as namely masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distances. A fifth dimension was added in 1991, which was named as long term/short term orientation which was a result of a new cross-national study, Bond˙s Chinese Value survey (Hofstede, 2001).

2.3.1 Power Distance

Mauk Mulder developed the term "power distance" that was a social psychologist of Dutch. Mulder carried out various experiments in order to investigate dynamics of interpersonal power. The word "Power" can be defined as "the prospective to establish or express, the behaviour of other persons or another person, to some extent, more so than the other way round" (Mulder, 1977, p.90). Organization's structure, management process and subordinate superior relationship can be differentiated by using power distances in societies which is considered as a significant aspect.

It was observed by Hofstede (2001, p.107) that organizations, which have a culture of high-power distance usually have tall organization pyramids, having highly centralized structure of decision making, and, therefore, when we compare flat organic pyramid we find that more concentration of authority is practiced by high power distance organizations, and decentralized decision structure is practiced in the low-power distance society. The performance of the employees of the organization has a relationship with the power distance in a sense that if the structure of the organization is highly centralized and no authority is given to employees for making a decision, the employees will not be able to consider themselves as a part of the organization. As it was discussed earlier that it the employees are

given a little authority of decision making, they show more commitment towards the organization and increase their level of performances.

2.3.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

Cyert and March (1963) in his book, a behavioural theory of the firm introduced one more organizational phenomenon which is "Uncertainty Avoidance", which was used as one of the key coherent concepts in their theory. Hofstede used this term in order to describe the extent to which people in a society feel threatened or nervous by unknown or uncertain situations (Hofstede, 2001, p. 161). Hofstede (2001) found that, at the organizational level, there is a direct relationship between uncertainty avoidance and employees because their duration of employment and their loyalty towards the organization is dependent of the uncertainty of avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance affects their tolerance of indistinctness in procedures and structures, fixed or flexible working hours, and the degree to which trendsetters feel restrained by formal rules.

2.3.3 Individualism/ Collectivism

This extent depicts the relationship between a collectivism and individual in human society. A society where there is loose-knit, individualism is often observed. In such type of system individuals are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family or relatives. However, in contrast with the collectivism which suggests that collectivism is a society where individuals from the beginning are integrated into a strong, which all through people's lifetime press on to ensure them in return for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 225).

In complex organizations, the individuals can perform better in teams. They share different perspectives and opinions which can be shared with other individuals in order to generate maximum outcome for the organization.

2.3.4 Masculinity/ Femininity

In the year 2001, Hofstede characterized Masculinity and Femininity as the two shafts of national culture dimensions. The social gender roles are clearly distinct in a masculine society. Men should be focused, assertive and tough on material success, while women are expected to be tender, concerned with the quality of life and modest. However, in contrast with that, the society in which femininity stands, social gender roles are overlapping. Therefore, it is important for both men and women to be tender, concerned with the quality of life and modest (p. 297). The creation of different management hero types is highly influenced by the masculinity and femininity. In society, which possesses masculine cultures, decisive, aggressive, assertive, and competitive attitude is expected from the director. Whereas in societies where there are feminine cultures, the manager is considered as an employee like any other and tends to be cooperative, accustomed to seeking consensus and intuitive (p. 318).

2.4 Corporate Culture as a Source of Competitive Advantage

The obviously clear relationship between culture of a corporation, performance and effectiveness has indeed not been apparently showed in numerous research studies up to this

point (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 9). This was because of the challenges in matching a very immaterial thought like organizational culture, which cannot be portrayed by numbers and figures with a clear component like performance of the organization which can effectively be seen through quantitative assessments and financial statement (Sorensen, 2002, p. 70). This, then again, does not imply that long-term economic performance is not affected by culture of an organization has no authentic grounds.

In fact, since the 1980s, after the distribution of a Business Week article on organizational cultures, which excited significant investment on that theme (Allaire & Fisirotu, 1984, p. 194), organizations have progressively recognized and offered personality to the acquaintanceship between financial performance and corporate culture, and through aligning its culture, there is an improvement in the organizational performance and success thus it turned into a famous centre of work (Hanaberg, 2009, p. 1).

According to Jones 2010 in his book on organizational theory, affirmed, in order to promote stakeholders interests and achieve competitive advantage organizational structure is used, similarly in order to increase the organizational performance and effectiveness organizational culture is helpful (Jones, 2010, p. 201). Competitive position of an organization and performance is influenced by culture. Susan et al. (1997, p. 7) claimed that, despite considering culture as a problem, which needs to be solved, it can be evident that culture, on the other hand, is also providing the source of competitive advantage. The theme of

effectiveness and culture is presently of higher criticalness in the studies of organizations for these reasons.

2.4.1 Strong and Strategically Appropriate Corporate Culture

Likewise inside Kotter & Heskett's extent of contentions, the degree to which a particular culture hysterics the current scenarios of a firm might as well additionally be carried into attention. This second view emphasizes that the cultural content, as far as which behaviours and values are regular, is as essential, if not to say more paramount, than its strength (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 28). Despite the fact that up to this point, the strength of American theory has more or less strengthened and created a belief "one size fits all", and that prominent managing style effective management practices of Nigeria will be prominent and effective anywhere (Newman & Nollen, 1996, p. 753), it is still a wide and profound conviction that there is no such thing as a "win" or "good" culture that might be decently connected all over to each corporation in each social and financial condition.

According to Kotter & Heskett a culture is said to be "good" if it is according to the context, which is the culture of the society or nation where it is working, the segment or an industry specified by the strategies of the firm or strategies of a business itself (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 28). A culture that is strong but not reasonable, it will be failed to bring about excellent performance for the organization. From this second viewpoint, it is inferred that such an effective and excellent performance or organization must be interlinked with the strategically and contextually appropriate culture. The better the fit, if the operations of the

organization are effectively implemented, higher will be the performance (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 28).

2.5 Performance Management

suggested by Armstrong and Baron (1998), the integrated and strategic approach for delivering continuous success to corporations is performance management by enhancing and improving the performance of the employees who are part of the organization and by developing the individual contributors and team. It underpins the justification that individuals and not capital give corporations with an intense advantage (Reynolds & Ablett, 1998). Performance management aims to transform the rare perspective of human resource into performance by eradicating transitional hurdles as well as rejuvenating and motivating the human resource (Kandula, 2006). The essence of performance management is to effectively manage and build strong people through whom competitive capacity of the organization can be increased (Pham, 1994).

2.5.1 Relationship between Organizational Culture and Performance Management

Good performance and strong organizational culture is directly proportional to each other. As suggested by Kandula (2006), good performance is the key to a strong culture. According to him, it was suggested that as the cultures of the organizations differs from each other, similar strategies ca not benefit and yield similar outcomes for two different corporations within the same industry and in the same location. A strong and positive culture can results in an average employee performing and achieving brilliantly. While weak and negative culture, might discourage employees who previously performed

outstanding to underperform and results in zero achievement. Hence, corporate culture has a direct and an active role in the performance management. According to Murphy and Cleveland (1995) who believed that understanding of performance management can be developed by researching on various aspects of corporate culture. In contrast, Magee (2002) argued that without in view of the impact of corporate culture, organizational practices, for example, performance management could be counterproductive as these two variables are interdependent and if a change is brought to any one will impact the other, as well.

2.6 Various Approaches of Relationship of Culture-Performance

Different ideas contribute towards the extent of using the organization culture as a management tool. This subsection will discuss the performance of the management and the impact of culture on their performance. In short it represents the comparative significance of culture versus management.

2.6.1 Cultural Engineering: Corporate Culture as Managerial Design

Culture is often referred to as a subsystem, a building block or well-distinguished from other divisions of the corporation in the most influentially oriented of these formulations such as behavioural styles, values, norms and beliefs of employees. It is in standard no different from other divisions of the business in terms of control and management, even though it may be not easy to master. The spirit of this position is captured by the term 'cultural engineering' which is sometimes referred as 'corporate-culture school' (Alvesson and Berg, 1992). According to Kilmann (1985: 354) who

recognized the substantial divergence about what culture is this is concluded as it might be considered still significant to reflect on what makes a culture dysfunctional or adaptive and good or bad. The culture is described as a physical force by Kilmann. It was also suggested that the direction, meaning and mobilization is also provided by culture. The corporations are moved by the social energy into allocation.

This means that the power that streams from mutual obligations among the members of the group (p. 352) and the strength, which controls the behaviour of employees at each level of the organization (p. 358). It was believed that all organizations possess the different culture which is changed and developed quickly and needs to be managed and controlled efficiently. If the culture is left alone, it might become a dysfunctional (p. 354). As proposed by Kilmann, the essential element of culture is considered as norms. This is because it is believed that the culture can be easily controlled. Attitudes and behaviours of the employees in the organizations are guided by the norms. These attitudes and behaviours are of great significance and interest as they can impact strongly on the requirements of its efficiency, quality, success, customer service, hard work, product reliability, innovation, loyalty, etc. This is the core thing of corporate culture of UK. However, this model has many complexities. Other than culture, there are many other dimensions which affect behaviours and norms.

There are various norms within a culture, which are related to the massive range of diverse behaviours. Culture usually indicates the dimension of meaning. A problem, which comes

with the behaviour-near view on culture is the propensity to perceive culture less or more

vigorously affecting behaviour. It was argued by Sathe (1985: 236), that the intensity of

behaviour is influenced by the strength of a culture and "how many significant collective

assumptions there are" is determined by the strength of the culture. It is also determined that

how evidently they are ranked and how extensively they are shared. The characterization of a

strong culture is determined by evidently controlled assumptions, simplicity, and

homogeneity. Assumptions are difficult to rank and identify in a complex culture and it was

argued that the phenomenon is distorted by such a measurement which needs to be studied.

According to Fitzgerald (1988, 9-10), values cannot be referred to as independent,

incremental and isolated entities. Purposes and hopes, principles and values, assumptions and

beliefs, and inclinations and tastes are neither considered as packages which are available in

modular packages stored on the shelves of warehouses, not waiting for inventory. No

separate existence is found for values, but there is inner dynamic which is associated with

values of an organization. These inner dynamics is composed of order, patriotism, progress,

dignity, security, equality and each of them entails other values and their opposites.

The tendency to view values and norms is another problem in this approach which keeps the

management abstracted from other things in the organization. It was proposed if other things

remain same corporate culture is referred to as the values and norms of the company which

are affected by the external forces and become cause of performance and behaviour. This

should be considered as important because norms of work are almost definitely tied closely to

a range of conditions in the workplace rather than being organization-wide among other

things. Therefore, it seems to be problematic. In order to determine these norms of a workplace, certain factors, which are kept under consideration are the reward structure, the employee's age, gender, the reward structure, kind of job and organization, interests and qualifications. According to Hofstede *et al*. (1990), it was suggested that work values are predicted by hierarchical position, educational level, and age. It is not easy to segregate values and norms all over the organization as a separate casual factor in work performance. However, norms possess a great value in the organization. To a certain extent, norms are relatively connected with diverse groups to different degrees and have diverse content.

The keystone of the contemporary corporation is the division of labour and norms which despite of reflecting, oppose would not help in making it efficient. It is sometimes argued that culture of a corporation counteracts the breakdown encouraged by the horizontal and vertical delineation of contemporary organizations. If this is the case, then to some extent through organization-wide norms less could be achieved which have a direct impact on the behaviour in an identical way rather than through shared feelings of community and identification. Distinguishing between culture as something that directly affects behaviour through norms and common culture as a source of shared understanding is very important. It can be concluded that there of limited direct impact in the effectiveness of an organization in terms of willingness to work and work behaviour where the corporate culture is comprised of norms and values.

2.6.2 Shared Understandings as Managerial Accomplishment (Management as Symbolic Action)

The reality-defining powers of management action are emphasized by the second approach of linking performance with the organizational culture. It is understood that more or less far-reaching influence is exercised by the leaders of the organization on the way in which employees understand and perceive their everyday jobs and on the place of work by maintaining and creating myths and metaphors. From the point of view of a management, this influence will result in organizational work and reality is defined by the entire corporation or a part of it (Berg, 1986; Pfeffer, 1981a; Smircich and Morgan, 1982). Pfeffer (1981a) differentiated between environmental control (like conditions of the market and other forms of external resource dependencies), internal and external management control, and between substantive outcomes (activities and actions which lead to measurable, tangible results and have physical referents, like salary allocations, sales, budgets, and profits) and symbolic outcomes (perceptions, values, sentiments, and attitudes). It was suggested by him that the substantive outcomes are determined by limitation beyond managerial control, attitudes of employees to social reality is influenced by management.

A common set of understandings about affairs of an organization among organizational members is possibly developed by the symbolic outcomes of managerial action. Managerial culture and action involve the increase of consent around the definition of workplace activity (p. 21). It was pointed out by Pfeffer that this consent is about technology and means rather

than about goals, values, and interests. However, his idea was different from other writers on culture of an organization which put the prominence on norms and values rather than on meanings (Kilmann, 1985). Understanding and perceptions are considered less a cause than an outcomes and behaviours. External constraints are the in determining the patterns of behaviour. The dimension of culture is considered more as a stabilizing force. For rationalizing, the patterns of behaviour shared understandings are likely to emerge which develops and the planned sample of behaviour are likely to be less persistent and stable and the absence of such meaning creation and rationalization (p. 14). There are some consequences which contribute in the symbolic action, for example, implementation of change, motivation/mobilization, satisfaction of demands, and among them the most important is feelings and attitudes of satisfaction. Pfeffer further explained about corporate culture and assumed carefully about the relations between corporate performance and culture rather than emphasizing on the problems which have adverse impacts on the performance of the organization for instance widespread frustration, absenteeism, resistance, conflict, and high turnover.

2.6.3 Awareness of Culture as a Navigation Aid: (Organizational Culture as a Constraint of Management Rationality)

The third approach of culture-performance relationship is that the culture of an organization and performance of the organization is used for avoiding the traps and making wise decisions. Basic assumptions and deep values of the organization are stressed. This approach does not advices on the ways to control the culture of an

organization. However, it provides the relevant information to the managers about the difficulties in accomplishing the ideas for constructive actions under cultural conditions. The main focus is given to the consequences of cultures of organizations rather than the effects of managerial action. According to Schein (1985, pp. 9) culture can be defined as the pattern of basic assumptions which is discovered, developed or invented by the group of people which enable the employees and managers to learn the ways of coping with the issues of internal integration and external adaptation. It helps them to learn the correct ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving with the problems. The audible and visible patterns of culture are considered to as Artefacts, which exists on the top level, and at intermediary level, there are values. It is understood by the community of the organization that what needs to be done. It was suggested by Schein that effectiveness of the organization and satisfaction of individuals are greatly influenced by the cultural phenomenon. The effects on culture can be pointed out through examples like acquisitions, mergers, strategies, level of productivity, diversifications, socialization, the incorporation of new technologies, intergroup conflicts within the organization, and the efficiency of communication. An example could be discussed here of a company which can efficiently market their products to the sophisticated customers.

2.7 The Culture-Performance Relationship

The discussion which was primarily done in the initial part of this chapter helps in identifying various concepts of culture which relates to the performance of the individuals and organization as a whole. There have been many critiques which have been raised against the promises of using culture as a means for goals of the company. Nevertheless, much of the

focus is given to the effects of performance of strong or right enough for the culture of the company. There is much of the discussion about the culture–performance relationships in previous studies.

2.7.1 The Effects of Organizational Culture on Performance

There are various perceptions which contribute to the understanding of the relationship of culture with performance. According to Denison (1984) who proposed that the commitment of the employees of the organization and managers must be assumed at similar conception because it helps in driving positive results for the company. Beliefs, values and a similar set of norms will help in achieving goals of the organization. Hence, there is a direct correlation between the strength of the corporate culture and level of profits. The employee's involvement can better result in high performance because they are allowed to participate in the decision making process and thus it helps them to see themselves as a part of the organization (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982; Ouchi, 1981). It has been argued by many researchers that performance can be increased through diverse organizational cultures through facilitating goal alignment. It is easier to achieve goals if the managers and subordinates are agreed on a similar set of objectives. Motivation is also directly linked with the culture-performance relationship. It has positive effects on the motivation level of the employees. According to Brown (1995), in order to identify with the organization and feel the belongings, shared culture play a significant role to encourage people and be responsible for it.

On the other hand, there are some researchers who have suggested an inverse relationship between the performance and culture. Strong corporate culture is created by high performance which refers to the cultural homogeneity. A common set of beliefs, values and orientations can bring success to the organization.

2.8 Conclusion

From the above review of the literature it is evident that an organizational culture is not immune from national culture as national culture shapes the behaviours of the organization's human capital and economic conditions of the nation which in turn influences the culture of the organization. Thus, organizational culture presented based on studies conducted in developed economies is inapplicable in developing economies. Thus to be able to fully comprehend the Unilever case in Nigeria, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study. The next section will present the research methodology used in collecting and analysis of data on this research phenomena.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research philosophy, methods and approaches for this research study. It details the concepts being the selection of qualitative case study methodology was the most appropriate. The sampling procedures are also presented. Furthermore, it delineates the data analysis methods, research reliability and validity, and ethical issues. The chosen research methodology is anticipated to provide adequate responses to the following research question:

- *How has Unilever, in its expansion to the Nigerian market, adapted its corporate culture to the prevailing business culture of Nigeria and how has the adaptation of Unilever to the business culture of Nigeria influenced its performance?*

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research studies are conducted based on four research philosophies namely positivism, social constructivism, participatory, and pragmatism (Yin, 2003). This study was conducted based on social constructivism as a research philosophy. This philosophy is most appropriate for qualitative studies. This mainly due to the fact that it allows the investigator to develop an understanding of the research phenomenon using open-ended questions where the participants construct the social meaning of the research issue (Hartas, 2010). Therefore, this research philosophy is inductive in nature as meaning is constructed using qualitative data as

influenced by the investigator. As a result, this paradigm was considered the most appropriate for this study as it provided ways of providing explanations for the qualitative findings.

3.3 Research approach

Most research studies employ either inductive or deductive as research approaches. Deductive research approach is common for theory testing where research questions are formulated to provide a framework for testing the theory (Wilson, 2010). Inductive approach, on the other hand, involves a systematic observation of the research issue through seeking the linkages between the variables in the process of developing generalized findings. Consequently, inductive process provides an analysis of the "why" of a research issue while deductive approach provides a detailed description of the research issue.

This study was founded on case study research idea in finding and evaluating the impact of corporate culture on the performance of Unilever Nigeria. The use of a case study promotes the use of multiple data sources which is known to enhance the reliability and credibility of the data. Thus, a case study research approach that was based on the collection of qualitative data was selected for analysing the research issue coupled with various sources of secondary data including archival records and documentation. The fact that qualitative data was used in this investigation, inductive approach was deemed the most appropriate approach.

3.4 Research design

This case study was based on exploratory research design with the use of the qualitative approach in collection of primary data (Forecasting, 2006). Qualitative approach was used in

discovering how cultural aspects affected the performance of the employees. The research was conducted as an exploratory case study. The main reason for employing an exploratory case study was because it allowed the researcher to interact with research participants in an actual organization. Furthermore, this study opted to employ exploratory research design in the sense that it allowed the investigation to develop an empirical understanding of performance of the employees of Unilever Nigeria and how they are affected by the cultural diversity within the organization. In order to get a deeper understanding about the different cultures which influence the strategies of business in multinational companies, qualitative approach was necessary. In this case qualitative approach was deemed most necessary in conducting the case study as this investigation was seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the supposed causal links in real-life situations that seem complex for survey strategies (Yin, 2003). Therefore, the uses of a qualitative case study as a research methodology was essential in promoting researcher's flexibility in the research as well as allowing the investigator to get a comprehensive view about the cultural differences among the employees of the organization (Jacobsen, 2002). Thus from this description, the methodological approach of this study was essential in finding and evaluating the impact of corporate culture on the performance of Unilever Nigeria

3.5 Data Collection Technique

This research study collected two sets of data, namely, primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using semi structured interviews while secondary data was collected through comprehensive literature review of various sources of information on Unilever.

Specifically the data collection technique involved a complex mixture of interviews, participants' observation and review of archival records and documentation.

3.5.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data involves gathering available information that relates to the understanding of the subject and the core concept of the study. This was implemented based on the information presented in the literature review section. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the analysis, the secondary data was collected from multiple sources. Most of the information that comprised of the secondary data was sourced from the university library which has several databases that were accessed in order to get the most updated and relevant information. Other than the university library more information for developing secondary data was sourced from online databases and company website and publications.

3.5.2 Primary Data

This was very important data in conducting the case study as it allowed the investigation to collect and integrate qualitative data which is known to enhance the holistic understanding of the research issue (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, the information gathered is ultimately created by the author of the study. In this study, the instrument used for collecting primary data was semi structured interviews. Additionally, the researcher adopted the most critical and careful execution in order to ensure the most accurate, relevant, reliable, unbiased and recent data was gathered in this process. In

accordance with the research by Creswell (2008), primary research is often categorized as the fieldwork. This is because the researchers approach the field to collect the data.

Primary data was deemed essential in this investigation due to its benefits in an investigation including the presentation of multiple advantages and benefits such as presentation of current information which is in relation to the subject of the study. Furthermore, the primary research is often attributed for being a clear and transparent method in comparison to the secondary research done by the researcher in the same area of study (Ketchen, Boyd & Bergh, 2008, p. 644). The primary research is also responsible for the provision of control over the findings as it is the prospective work.

3.6 Research Population and Sampling

This was an important attribute of the qualitative part of the case study. A study conducted by Kumar, (2007) emphasized that selection of the sample is significant along with the strict criteria which make sure that the right participants are selected for the research (pp. 33). Adequate sampling technique enables the accuracy of the collected data and information along with aiding in time saving and cost effectiveness. This is not only important in finding the right participants for this research, but also improving the unbiasedness in selecting study participants.

The sample population for this study was randomly selected among the managers of Unilever Nigeria. The use of a random sample was necessary as the population under study was huge as compared to the sample used in the investigation. However, the fact that the primary data was collected based on qualitative research methods; the sample size was insignificant in

developing the findings of the study (Mays & Pope, 2000). The interview guide was sent via email to the employees and management professionals of the Unilever Nigeria. The sample size was of 10 participants of whom three were sourced from management positions, 3 were sourced from the human resource management department and the rest were selected from an ordinary employee pool in the organization. To minimise on the biases of the primary data, the selection procedure of the participants ensured that there was no particular supervisory relationship of the participants involved in terms of personal or professional criteria. There are some basic judgmental and instructing phenomena involved through which design the basic methods to draw attention of the participants. There is a consistent need of guidelines and parameters because participants are less likely to answer about their experiences in an open manner. To get better answers and thorough concepts, this step is significant.

3.6.1 Selection Criteria

The target population is the employees and management professionals of Unilever Nigeria. The main focus of the participation selection criteria was that the participants should be an employee of the Unilever Corporation in Nigeria during the time the study was taking place.

3.7 Data collection procedures

3.7.1 Instrument

This study had two forms of data, primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected and analysed qualitatively. In particular, the instrument used for collecting the primary data was semi structured interviews.

3.7.2 Data Collection Process

The primary data in this study was collected through the use of semi structured interviews. The construction was done by the researcher of the interview guide from the review of the literature. The qualitative approach of this study investigated the relationship between corporate culture and performance of the employees. The interview guide was based on the review of the literature attained through secondary sources. The interview guide was assembled in such a way that it guarantees the precision of the questions by the elimination of any technical words, unfamiliar words and jargons (Burns & Grove, 2007; Creswell, 2008; Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl, 2007). In addition to this, ambiguous and imprecise concepts or words were avoided for the reduction of errors in responses to the questions of the interview (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Kumar, 2007). In the end, in order to formulate an interview guide questions that is extremely reliable and valid, the guide must not use questions that can create biases and are leading to the pre- formulated results (Ketchen, Boyd & Bergh, 2008, pp. 649). The interview was taken from 10 participants who were employed in the Unilever Nigeria.

Secondary data, on the other hand, was collected based on the approach described in the data collection technique with major sources including government publications, company publications, company website, online data bases, and market research reports.

3.8 Data analysis

The collection of data was done from the interviews which were recorded in the voice recorder. The data was then converted into transcripts to make an in-depth analysis. Content analysis was done to analyze the data obtained from the employees of the Unilever Nigeria through interviews. Descriptive study was done through past studies discussed in the literature reviews and the information gathered from the interviews through discussions. Thematic analysis was deemed the most relevant data analysis approach for this investigation as the sample population was predetermined, the research questions are specific, and the constructs had been clearly identified (Silverman, 2011). Moreover, this study was concerned with the description and interpretation of the relation between corporate culture and performance in a particular context, which was Nigerian Unilever Company.

3.9 Validity of the research methodology

Validity in a case study can be measures via analysing conformability, dependability, and transferability (Mays & Pope, 2000). The most common steps used in enhancing the validity of a case study include, clear presentation of the research question, provision of the research propositions, and full substantiation of the research question (Yin, 2003). This was achieved through basing the argument of this paper on literature gap in developing a research question.

Another important aspect of research validity is the appropriateness of the design of the case study in providing an effective response to the research question. The use of both primary data and secondary data was essential in promoting the appropriateness of the case study. In addition, validity is realised through systematic collection, management, and analysis of data.

The use of triangulation of the secondary data using primary data ensured that the findings of this investigation were as accurate as possible (Yin, 2003).

3.10 Ethical procedures

In conducting a research study that involves human participants, consideration of the participants' ethical rights is a very important ingredient of the research process. The most common ethical rights of the participants include consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Interview contents were sent to the targeted population via email to request permission and to seek consent to use the response of the participants in using his/her responses in the study. The participants were required to fill the consent forms beforehand and send it back to the researchers. Upon receiving the contact details of the respondents, information was entered into the database. A copy of the consent form was also sent to the participants.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Each participant was assured that the confidentiality of the information provided by him or her will not be disclosed in any case. In order to maintain anonymity, the results from the interview were later on converted to coded documents. Additionally, the instructions were provided by the researcher to the participants in order to complete the interview by facilitating confidentiality while minimizing the risk of participants being detected through the responses provided.

3.10.3 Data Storage

The data collected during the study in the form of interview responses was stored securely through voice recorders and then transferred to the researcher's computer systems. The interviews were then transcribed and converted into to written transcripts. The files were secured with a password and the access was given only to the researcher. Secure encryption of the password was done in the U. S. B. device to ensure properly protection. All these measures contributed to the participant's confidentiality and anonymity

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided an account of the research methodology that was used in this research study. From the account, it was clear that qualitative case study was the most appropriate approach for the collection and analysis of data for this study. Thus, the data collected based on this methodology was discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the approach adopted in data collection and analysis in this investigation. Specifically, a case study design with the use of qualitative data was used in the collection and analysis of the data for this investigation to be able to meet its objectives. This section presents the findings developed from the analysis of the data collected in this investigation. The presentations of the findings are limited to the objectives

of this investigation. The investigation employed both primary and secondary data in developing a response to the research question.

4.1.1 Respondents Profile

The research question of this investigation as highlighted in the introductory chapter was:

> *"How did Unilever, in its expansion to the Nigerian market, adapt its culture to the prevailing culture of the nation and how has the adaptation of Unilever to the culture of Nigeria influenced its performance?"*

In order to fully address this question primary data was collected from 10 respondents to analyse the secondary data findings. All these respondents participated in a semi-structured interview. The informants were coded P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10.

Among the ten interview participants, 5 were females, 3 were held senior management positions in the organization, 3 held other management positions in the human resource department, and the rest were ordinary employees from the organization.

4.2 Findings

The mission of Unilever is to add vitality to life (Our mission, 2012).Unilever defines the concept of vitality as their standard and some of its unique features which differentiate it from other multinational companies are its values and the contribution it makes to society (Unilever Corp., 2011a). Values of Unilever are considered as threads which connect their

brands and the core exclusive way it works around the world (Our mission, 2012). Vitality is also embodied in the culture of Unilever as one of the interviewees suggested, "*…They are more focused on helping people look good, feel good, and get more out of life from their brands of hygiene, personal care, and nutrition for meeting the everyday needs of the customers….*" (Participant P2).

The corporate culture of Unilever Nigeria is founded in the principles of organizational success, ability of the employees to learn ubiquitously and implement the learning outcomes daily, staff having the courage to dream and dare to do, accurately-acting on well-planned targets, collaborating and contending together (Unilever at a glance, 2012). There are various principles, which were defined by Unilever Nigeria for the people who work in the company. These rules are related to the cultural performance of the organization. One of the most important principles of Unilever Nigeria is that they provide fair and equal opportunities to their employees despite their age, nationality, gender, status of marriage and religion (Unilever Corp., 2011b). Just to illustrate, interviewee P4 believes that "*… The decisions of promotion and recruitment are based on the appropriateness to the related position, personal skills, and ability to perform….*"

More so, another important principle that defines Unilever Nigeria corporate culture is the right of all employees to participate in the procedure of evaluation of performance because it aids its employees to develop and enhance their knowledge, experiences and skills (Unilever Corp., 2012a). Plan of performance evaluation is not considered as a one-year project or plan. However, it is known as a perpetual process of appraising the performance of employees from one year to another year (Unilever Corp., 2012b). Good opportunities and conditions are

created for managers and employees for the assessment of the overall design, suitable long-term strategies and performance (Participants P1, P4, & P8). The other aspect, which contributes to the corporate culture of Unilever Nigeria, is related to the training programs. Unilever Nigeria tries to accomplish the particular needs of the company. The employees of the company are encouraged to control their career developments and learning processes by themselves (Unilever Corp., 2011b). Training department and Human Resource Department are responsible for ensuring quality training to the employees of the company for all related aspects. Similar findings were sourced from the interviewees as most of them suggested that employees are encouraged to learn from their own experiences by working on various projects, self-learning through the internet and numerous libraries, learning from the superiors, working process by receiving instructions and guidelines, learning outside the company through observing markets, learning from different seminars, conferences and occasional courses (Participants P1, P2, P5, P7, & P10).

Moreover, at Unilever Nigeria, employees are encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions with the management of the organization or share their ideas through mailing to the human resource department (Unilever Corp., 2012a). They highly appreciate the ideas of their employees because it shows the commitment and care towards the organization's interest and demands of consumers which looks out for improving the manufacturing methods of the company (Unilever Corp., 2012a).

The company strongly emphasizes on employee satisfaction and happiness as well a healthy and safety working environment (Unilever Corp., 2012b). They believe that the success of the company is highly dependent on the commitment of standards of productivity and work

ability which is based on the health and good attitudes of all employees. Thus is clearly demonstrated by interviewee P1, who suggested "*…instructions for health, safety, and environment are provided to their employees very clearly…*" Those employees who do not follow the rules of the company are entitled to different disciplinary measures. This is evident as it is mandatory for all employees to go through periodical medical check-ups. Moreover, basic health service is provided to all employees of the company through the clinic in the office. The company places more emphasis on energy saving. The employees are strictly advised to turn off electronic devices, lights, and air conditioners when they are not using them. The employees of the organization have always been a priority for Unilever and are proved to be the most importance resource. They play an indispensable role in the overall success of the company. When Unilever Nigeria was facing challenges in the past few years due to the economic crisis in Nigeria, the reason for the spectacular growth after recovering the economic crisis was the hard work and intelligence of its employees who were preserved and had the aim to passionately serve the customers of Unilever Nigeria (Participants P3 & P10).

This organization believes that the main objective for its human capital is to make the life of the consumers better each day. The employee enthusiasm and loyalty levels realised the organization is as a result of the effectiveness of corporate culture, which makes them devoted towards their performance in the organization. Unilever Nigeria made efforts to understand the culture and environment of the Nigerian business with the help of creating strategic alliances with the agencies of government such as Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health (Our principles, 2012). This made it easy for Unilever Nigeria to

understand the people of Nigeria, the environment and Nigerian market in such a way that it can be incorporated into the business strategies of the company. At the same time, they are also focused on the implementation of social corporate responsibility as evident in the Award of the Prime Minister on environmental protection, (2011).Unilever has always been concerned about caring for the environment and people the most. As interviewee P2 puts it, *"...Unilever has become one of the leading company in terms of its performance among employees as well as their financial statements ...this is evident in the increase in turnovers of the products of the company in home and personal care products..."* The financial statistics also prove that Unilever has increased the productivity with the increase in overall performance of the company (Unilever Corp., 2012b). This has been possible due to the performance of employees which have increased each day to contribute in the overall success of the company.

From Unilever's perspective, highest standards of behaviour are needed for adding vitality to the life of all its employees, the environment which are affected by them and the communities which are directly linked with their products (Our mission, 2012). The code of conduct of Unilever includes openness, integrity, and honesty in terms of the human interests and rights of their employees. The legitimate interests are also respected by them for those who are connected with them (Our principles, 2012). Unilever is considered as the top most diverse corporation in terms of culture among all the multinationals around the world. Currently, Unilever is operating in 22 countries around the globe (Introduction to Unilever, 2011). The strong relationships are created with the local people with the help of the deep roots of the company. Local people involve labour forces, suppliers and local consumers. These local

people bring global expertise and mission to the local circumstances in turn (Our vision, 2012).

4.2.1 Power Distance

According to Unilever's official website (2011), a firm statement was published "We have local roots with global scale" and the core strategy of the company states "corporate reputation with local stakeholders." Harmonization is always given priority at Unilever as it is a large corporation operating with diverse culture. It is the culture of the organization that employees within the organization must avoid the problems and conflicts between interests of the company and their personal activities. Misuse of positions is strictly prohibited by the management of the company, and employees are expected not to seek to benefit themselves by misusing their positions (Our principles, 2012).

Unilever Nigeria is a multinational company consisting of a large number of employees and varied divisions and departments. It is also composed of tall organizational pyramid of hierarchy. The top managers of the company are rarely involved in the direct activities of the company, however; they are more responsible for designing the strategies of how to achieve the effectiveness in the performance of the employees and organization as a whole. A large number of different departments and centralized structure of decision making may need different stages in working procedures, order giving and reporting of the outcomes (Interviewee P1). However, five levels of hierarchy exist in the company that is named accordingly 1-5 sublevels are marked at each level of the hierarchy. The employees who have

newly entered the company will start from level one-A. According to Participant P3 "*…With the increase in the performance of a new comer, employees have been given a chance to proceed to the higher level of hierarchy. However, it takes time and an acceptable performance to increase the perceived level of hierarchy, but the employees are motivated to perform better each day to get on those levels. The highest level of the organization is level 5 which is possessed by the chairman. There are nine Vice Presidents under the supervision of the chairman who belongs to level four and takes responsibility of the performance of various departments. The smaller parts of each department are controlled by the number of managers at lower levels…"*

At Unilever Nigeria, some of the Vice Presidents and Chairman are from foreign cultures. The remaining employees are Nigerian nationals. From their responses, it was obvious that Unilever Nigeria has many layers of hierarchy and complex organizational culture, the researcher observed a large number of supervisory personnel (Participants P5 & P9). Moreover, in general, superiors expect obedience from their juniors (irrespective of if it depends on different managers in different situations). According to one of the responses from the research participants, "*…even though the work becomes faster and efficient, but there is no encouragement given to bypassing any superior…each step of the organizational activities will be under the supervision in order to avoid the loopholes…*" (Participant P4) This may support the increasing performance of the company as well as employees of the organization individually. As it was discussed earlier, it is the culture of Unilever Global as well as Unilever Nigeria, that suggestions and ideas of the employees are highly welcomed

by the management professionals so as to give a sense of belonging to employees within the structure of the organization.

Additionally, it was also stated by one of the research participants that, for the process of decision making, the highest priority is given to the formal rules of the company among all managers (Participant P9). Participant P5, on the other hand, suggested that *"... After all the rules of the organization have been followed, subordinates and personal experiences come second..."* There is always a remarkable and clear distinction in the levels of salary at Unilever Nigeria, as well as in the privileges of managers and employees at different levels of the hierarchy. More insurance options, more prerogatives given to their family and more expenses for the business is granted to the managers at high levels. On the other hand, there is no polarization found in the relationships of subordinates and superiors. Although, comfortable atmosphere is created by the subordinates in the company, but still sensible respect is very necessary towards superiors when working under their control (Participant P1).

One of our research participants added that, at Unilever, there is an environment for subordinates for working with the reasonably easy-going yet experienced and skilful managers, but still the consultative leadership is not encouraged throughout the company (Participant P7). In distinction, it was experienced by the managers of Unilever Nigeria that authoritative leadership proved to be better for guidance in the work of subordinates and straight-forward orientation which will contribute in the crease of productivity and performance of the employees. Power abuse is considered as unfavourable and strictly not allowed throughout the company, and if, in case, it is experienced in any part of the

organization; it can be reported to the department of Human Resource. According to Participant P2, there is specific Human Resource Unit who is made responsible for receiving the complaints and ideas like these from the employees and try to come up with the appropriate solutions at all levels of the company. At Unilever, tasks and roles are clearly defined by the superiors, and there is no role ambiguity found in the organization. The managers are responsible to guide the employees about the routine tasks and make them clear about the ways of achieving it. This increases the productivity of the company and performance of employees and helps them work in a better way. The other thing, which was stated by the research participants, is that there has been frequent work overload in the company (Participants P1 &P5). Even though Unilever has various departments at each level, but there can still some improvements about the workstations. To be specific, Participant P1 added "…*It makes me feel more closely and obviously the serious and professional yet comfortable working environment here thus gives me a strong motive power to best finish my job…*"

4.2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

The average duration of employment at Unilever is comparatively short, and employees tend to have weak loyalty towards the company. Therefore, there are frequent recruitment processes of employees almost all year round. According to Participant P3 "*…there are managers and employees who tend to quit their jobs within one or two years at Unilever… Despite the fact, the culture of Unilever is globally dispersed, but Unilever is failed to gain the loyalty of their employees…*" The participant added that "*…the same cases happened with the Former Activation Manager at Unilever Nigeria… He preferred*

working with another company just after a year of working with Unilever..." This can also be because Unilever has a big name in the market and people often try to get experiences and learning from them and implement the learning in other organizations for various reasons. This can affect the performance of the organization. Because each employee when he/she is recruited, they need time to adjust with the culture of the organization. And each time when one employee departs from the organization it creates a gap which required time to be filled. This is obvious that the performance of the organization is adversely affected. But somehow the management professionals of the organization effectively manage with this problem. This may be the reason that the average age of the employees of the company is very low (22-30) according to the (Participant P4).

It was said that Unilever seems to be more attractive to young graduates who are after graduating from their universities seek for reasonable salaries in the professional, dynamic, and modern working environment where they are able to gain experiences and practice their knowledge (Participant P10). Due to effectively managed culture of the organization, new comers are more attracted towards working with Unilever but still if they find any other job which offers them better learning opportunities and salaries, they will switch their jobs, provided that they get same working conditions. This is the reason that at Unilever people are more observed as entering and leaving the organization in the time span of 1 to 3 years. If the work duration increases from 5 to more years, the trend of leaving the job becomes lessen because then they are pleased with the work they do at Unilever. They feel comfortable with what they receive from the company and what they devote to them. Opportunities are

preferred much more than protection in such a dynamic and young environment (Participant P6). There is one more reason that the company found it difficult to retain its employees. The formal procedures of work become time consuming and complicated because the company seems to be large having many different layers and departments. Furthermore, totally different processes and systems are introduced in the company which is difficult for the new employees to get used to them. It usually takes more than three months to get adjust with the systems and processes of Unilever as compared to the other multinational corporations in Nigeria (Participant P5).

Another major problem that Unilever is facing is poor approach to recruitment training as evident in suggestions by Participant P1 who suggested that *"...Unilever lacks in paying attention to the initial large scale training to the new employees who let the new employees adapt and find out new procedures and rules by themselves with limited instructions provided to them by their supervisors..."* This is still a big trouble even with adaptive and young people. This might be the reason that the company's employees easily switched his job despite the attractive salary. However, things seem to be easier for people that have been familiar with the processes and rules in the organization. Regular training is provided to the employees for both soft and hard skills. In addition, the company also holds courses that are online and persuade all its employees to practice and join themselves, despite the provision of occasional training (Participant P6). It was admitted by Participant P3 that such types of course are very useful, and he attended the online course and found it helpful for the nature of his job. At Unilever, in order to give and consult professional advices, there is a hot line for all queries that might appear.

Quality of training is also an aspect which helps place Unilever at the top most multinational organizations of the world. Globally, Unilever has been operating with the 7600 online modules of training. Unilever Learning Academy's courses were attended by128, 000 employees in the year 2011 (Unilever Corp., 2011b). The performance of the employees is tracked by the Human Resource department as the performance is evaluated twice a year. If the HR department finds any gap between the desired and actual performance of the employees, they try to find out the reasons which have become the cause of unsatisfactory results. After then, HR department is held responsible for providing on time and proper training to the employees. Employee turnover is minimized because recruiting a good employee and making them aware of the systems and procedures take a lot to efforts and time (Interviewee P5). In addition, major strategies frequently drop down from the headquarter because Unilever Nigeria is just considered as a small part of the Unilever Global. They do not encourage big innovations at the additional level. They appreciate the creative ideas from their employees particularly in highly young and competitive business environment. The performance of the employees is measured as per the final results, therefore; there are no fixed working hours for employees working in Unilever Nigeria (Participant P8).

4.1.3 Individualism/Collectivism

Unilever ensures that its employees are taking the responsibility of contributing towards the success of teams (Unilever Corp., 2011b). Unilever does not appreciate individual styles of risk-taking entrepreneurship, however, it is assumed that it is necessary to take large risks and this is implemented at Unilever but to some extent centralization is more focused in the organization to avoid risks associated with the

decision making. It was also said that there was no place for the entrepreneurs at Unilever; therefore, it is generally considered as risk-averse and conservative organization (Jones, 2005, p. 252).

In Unilever Nigeria, management is referred to as management of groups and work is generally assigned and organized in groups. This is because the size of the company is large and training could be provided in groups to save time and efforts. Rewards are also distributed in groups according to the contributions made by the people working in groups (Participant P1 & P5). Acquaintances and relatives are avoided for the hiring process. Though, at Unilever a large number of applications are received from the candidates, it helps more or less in speeding up the procedure of recruitment. As Participant P6 illustrates "…*Managers try to avoid conflicts and maintain harmony in order to maintain comfortable and pleasant environment at work in Unilever. In order to increase the effectiveness of work and strengthen the solidarity, extra outdoor activities are held more than a few times a year in each department in particular and in the company as a whole…*"

4.1.4 Masculinity/Femininity

Unilever has invested heavily in promoting gender equality within the company. This is the reason which encourages balancing the gender mix within the company with its management systems and staffs. The company, therefore, always tries to balance the gender mix in its staffs and management system. Women are estimated at about more than 50% of the employees. The task of the company is found to ensure that more and more women can reach the top levels of the organization. This shows that there is no

male dominance found within the organization which is considered as a good sign for the company (Unilever Corp., 2011b). Lots of formal rules and regulations are required as Unilever is a very large Multinational Corporation; therefore it needs to be a more bureaucratic organization in order to cover every prospect so as to run the business smoothly and orderly (Jones, 2005, p. 251). The decision making structure of the organization must be balanced among centralization and decentralization, and Unilever has made good efforts for this purpose (Jones, 2005). Unilever is famous for the prospect that they turn their ambitious plans into reality with the help of the people who are like-minded (people who think in the same way, share common attitude, objectives, passion, and outlook). High importance to team work is given at the culture of Unilever as it is operating globally as a large business.

The most important key advantage for the increase in the performance of the employees is that there is no gender discrimination found in the company. There are no wage gaps among different genders of the employees. The decisions for the wage distribution among the employees are exclusively decided on the performance, position and working time for the company (Participant P7). Another interviewee suggested that "…*In terms of promotion, there is no gender discrimination observed within the organization as well as in the process of recruitment. This creates a feeling of justifiable working environment among employees and motivates them to improve their performance gradually. However, at present more female employees can be seen at Unilever Nigeria rather than male employees…*" (Participant P4). Unilever requires its managers to effectively deal with the problems that are encountered to them related to work and then try to find solutions for them through

competitiveness, decisiveness, personal skills, and assertiveness. These skills are considered as very important for the promotion for any manager. Characteristics like consensus and sympathy for employees and subordinates are essential to generate a motivating and comfortable working environment, but not the primary factors that define a good manager at Unilever (Participants P3 & P9).

4.3 Other Aspects of Unilever's Corporate Culture

Unilever pays high attention to the environment and people being consistent with vitality focus as its mission. Since the first day of the operation of Unilever, being socially responsible has been considered as the core aspect of the culture of Unilever (Our history, 2012). In order to grow the company, Unilever has designed ambitious plans for creating incomes and jobs for the people who are linked with the success of the company. These stakeholders include customers, suppliers, investors, employees, and a large number of farmers around the globe. Unilever expects to be a sustainable business in every sense of the word. Therefore, the development of the "Unilever Sustainable Living Plan" has taken place which enables thousands of people to improve the quality of their lives devoid of escalating their ecological impact (Unilever Corp., 2011b).

Unilever ensures its employees for the healthy and safe working conditions more specifically and shows more commitments towards enhancing and developing capabilities and skills of each individual employee. With the help of consultation procedures and company based information, Unilever can successfully maintain good communications with the employees. Unilever shows great commitment towards the protection of the environment and makes

continuous improvements for its environmental impacts in the management and their long-term objectives for the development of sustainable business (Our principles, 2012). The main strategies of living in a sustainable environment are reducing consumption of energy in offices and contribute to Unilever's sustainability living plan. According to the progress report of Unilever (2011), recycled sources and certified sustainable forests contribute in their paper-based materials (90%).

The health and life of the employees are considered very important at Unilever. It was revealed by all the interviewees that they were satisfied and happy with the policies and procedures of the company which places emphasis on caring for employees (Participants P1, P3, P7 & P9). There are a lot of facilities provided to the employees of the company which enhances their living condition and motivates them to work better to receive more benefits from the company such as (hair salon, gym with instructors, spa and many other facilities for the employees which can be availed by them at Unilever). In order to test and examine the employees medically, Unilever provides health insurance to the employees at all hospitals in the city (Participants P2 & P10). All expenses for treatment are given by the company if any of the employees is suffering from cancer. Great importance is given to the protection of the environment. The consciousness of employees is fostered by the company in order to save energy like reminding employees to switch off their lights, computers, fans and other electronic devices when leaving the rooms, sticking propaganda posters on the wall, close the lifts twice a week, etc (Participant P7). In the end, the current employees who were also the research participants stated in the interview that despite the problems which are faced due to the short duration of the employment, they are quite happy and satisfied with the work

environment when working in such harmonized, professional, modern, and comfortable environment.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This research study has concluded that the culture of the organization has directly influenced the performance of the employees in organizations like Unilever. The corporate culture of Unilever is based on the western culture and, therefore, the corporate culture of Unilever is completely influenced by the western norms and values. On the Other hand, bringing the same culture to Unilever Nigeria was a complicated decision but due to strategic planning and flexibility of Unilever, they are successful in Nigeria.

Despite the fact that Unilever has formal rules and regulations and firm culture within the organization, it has invested heavily in ensuring its corporate culture is flexible enough to meet the employee requirements of a specific country. Contrastingly, it was also evident that doing business with culturally diverse population is not easy for any organization in general. Doing business in Nigeria for a western organization is complex as evident in Unilever's case as the company has encountered various number of problems and issues which are primarily caused by the diverse cultural differences among employees of the organization. However, there are a few similarities between cultures of different nations that have benefitted Unilever Company and employees in various ways especially with respect to the core values of the Nigerian culture. This has been significant in the company's efforts of creating good working conditions for their employees and the process of establishing a good corporate culture throughout the company. By comparing the company's corporate culture to the business culture of Nigeria, it was evident that Unilever observed most of the conditions that were favourable rather ones that would create obstacles for them in different challenging ways with respect to the business culture of Nigeria. The Nigerian business culture was easy to understand by the organization's management and thus it was not very difficult to transmit it to their employees because Unilever has already set the culture which can be easily adapted by culturally diverse population.

Moreover, it was evident that Unilever has developed a good understanding about the business culture of Nigeria despite the fact that they have faced various challenges while establishing their global corporate culture in Nigeria. For instance, Unilever did not show reluctance for accommodating and amending the differences of employees, and despite

focusing on the differences, it took benefits from the similarities of the employee's culture in Nigeria and its global core values.

Consequently, Unilever found it successful in collaborating with people and their actions and directed them to focus on one direction despite the difficulties it faced during the cultural adaptation. This strategy of adapting Nigerian culture and adjusting it to the core values of the organization, the performance of the employees is highly affected and improved which contributed in the success of the company, as well. Cultural values of the company are shared by the employees of the organization, and they tend to be absorbed into everyday activities of employees. It directs and strengthens the relationships among the workers of the company and transmits it to the new employees coming into the organization. The proclaimed global vision of Unilever is generally more focused while performing business activities, and it has proven to follow their vision. The vision states that "We have local roots with global scale." Strong relationship among the people of the organization including customers, employees, investors, suppliers is developed by the deep roots of the company into the local cultures of different nations which results in bringing the expertise and global mission into local circumstances (Our vision, 2012). This vision proves Unilever to be a truly multi-local multinational.

Indeed, Adapting the local culture of Nigeria does not only enable the company to survive but it also increases the performance of the employees by creating an appropriate and strong culture within the organization which was appreciated and well recognized by the local people of Nigeria and ultimately proved to be a competitive advantage which differentiates it from other multinational corporations in Nigeria. The corporate culture of Unilever as a firm

is also a major reason for its impressive success in the Nigerian market. Although, some major problems can be observed within the organization as observed through interviews regarding the diverse cultures of employees of the company but these problems must be addressed in effective, efficient ways and focused immensely in order to improve the company's performance in future as well as in the Nigerian environment. Some of the problems which Unilever is facing in Nigeria include; Short duration of employment and weak loyalty; Bureaucracy; Frequent work overload for the employees; and Misunderstanding among native employees and foreign managers

5.2 Recommendations

As much as Unilever Nigeria has successfully managed to operate competitively in Nigeria, various strategic changes are necessary to enhance its integration into Nigeria's business environment and culture. To begin with, the best possible ways of treating employees of Unilever Nigeria must be adopted to make them comfortable with what they are earning and learning in all ways. Furthermore, Unilever should increase its corporate social responsibilities in regard to its role in protecting the environment as this will allow the organization to integrate its global corporate culture into the Nigerian environment through building a local contribution towards such sustainable plans which benefit the environment of Nigeria. More so, Unilever has an understanding to considering business as a second family of employees which create positive vibes among the employees of the organization and perform better each day. Incorporating this aspect in its operations, in Nigeria with a focus on observing Nigerian culture would enhance the levels of satisfaction of its staff. In addition,

the working environment of the company must be synchronized to ensure smooth running of the operations.

As a way of increasing the performance of the company and employees while operating in Nigerian business culture, Unilever should try to decrease the complexities of the working procedures and raise the level of compensation for employees in order to increase the employment duration. In this way, employees can be retained and attracted towards working for a longer time and motivate them to perform better each day in the company. Similarly, Unilever should allocate project funds step by step and make clarifications of all the policies which are related to the commissions, envelopes, kickbacks and gifts in order to prevent embezzlement and corruption. The performance of employees can also be improved and increased by controlling the level of work overload on them. Work overload can create frustration regarding work and which will decrease the productivity of the employees in all departments. If the level of the workload is controlled by the management professionals, then there will be a reduction in the employee burnout. For avoiding the problems of misunderstanding among the foreign managers and native employees, can be avoided through encouraging top managers to communicate and listen to the voice of employees which will decrease the potential obstacles created due to the differences in culture.

If these problems which are limited in number related to the culture and performance of the employees can be eradicated or handled in a good manner, strong and famous corporate culture can be developed with the increasing productivity and performance of the employees and will lead to the most brilliant success of the Unilever in Nigeria.

5.3 Further Research

This study was based on a case study that was limited to collection of qualitative data as the main approach to reviewing the case. The lack of a quantitative approach denied the author an opportunity to explore the research issue from an objective point of view. Thus, future studies on this issue should develop a methodology that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure a deeper scrutiny of the research issue is realised.

Furthermore, in this research study, the researcher has more focused on the Hofstede's work as it was found to be the most transparent model of cross-cultural performance. However, there are other models as well which can enhance the reliability of the findings of this research. Many cultural framework can demonstrate that how culture can affect the performance of the employees in the organization including multinational corporations. For example, GLOBE project's study can also be used for the purpose of demonstrating the relationship between culture and performance. But due to the time limitations, the author did not use that GLOBE project in this research study. However it would be more interesting if other models can be used for the further research and help in evaluating the performance with respect to the cultural dimensions.

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Appendix I: Interview Procedure Guide

Title of research: Impact of Cultural Differences on Organizational Performance in Unilever

Nigeria

Research question

How did Unilever, in its expansion to the Nigerian market, adapted its culture to the

prevailing culture of the nation and how has the adaptation of Unilever to the culture of

Nigeria influenced its performance?

Thank you for assenting to take part in this study. This investigation will provide response to the above question with specific reference to the information you will provide during the interview. Just to remind you, confidentiality and anonymity principle will apply to all the information collected from you during this interview.

Part A: Introduction and Background

1. What is your position in your Organization?

2. How long have you been working in that position?

3. What are your roles and duties in this organization?

Part B: Characteristics of Unilever corporate culture

1. How do relate with Unilever's mission of adding vitality to life?

2. Tell us something about the code of conduct at work in your organization?

3. Does your work environment encourage individual responsibility and teamwork?

4. Do you believe that fairness and equality is promoted at work? Why?

Part C: Cultural Dimensions at Unilever Nigeria

1. What type of management structure exists in your company and how does it relate to the culture of your organization?

2. Do you believe that your organization support employee promotion based on performance?

3. Do you believe power of an individual increases as he/she rises the ranks in this organization?

4. Can you make important decisions in your organization without consulting your superiors?

5. Who is prioritised during decision making in this organization?

6. Dou you trust your company's complaints management system? Why?

7. Does your organization suffer from role ambiguities? Why?

8. How do you rate the amount of work you do at the organization vis-à-vis the pay?

9. What are the average working years for employees in this organization? Please illustrate?

10. How do you rate the average employee loyalty to this organization?

11. How do you rate this organizational effectiveness in recruits training programs and how has this affected the ability of the organization to retain its employees?

12. How does your organization measure employee performance?

13. Does this organization offer group training or individual training programs?

14. How does this organization distribute its rewards to employees?

15. What is the employee hiring approach adopted by this organization based on its culture?

16. How related are the different departments of this organization?

17. What are the current levels of gender representativeness in this organization both generally and in management positions?

18. Are males and females given equal remuneration in this organization?

19. What is your opinion with regard to gender equality in this organization?

Part D: Other Aspects of Unilever's Corporate Culture

1. Please inform us of any other feature that you like or dislike about Unilever Nigeria?

Part E: Additional comments:

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this research study