

# EFFECT OF ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

Caroline Aturu-Aghedo<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*The study examines the effect of organisational learning on the performance of employees of federal universities in North-Central Nigeria. The motivation for this study is borne on the need for empirical documentation of the subject as fair contribution to knowledge in management literature. The tradition of many organisations is to cope up with or reacting to unexpected rather than anticipating changes in the operating environment. This reactive posture could not help managers and employees much in overcoming the challenges of modern realities. This study, thus, contends that organisational learning is a reality in the life of every organisation that worth empirical investigation. It adopts cross-sectional research design and measure the effects of the organisation learning on the performance of the universities as learning organisations in Nigeria. It elicited primary data using multistage sampling comprising convenient and random sampling techniques to survey the employees' understanding of organisational learning practices within the study population. It uses descriptive and inferential statistics, which includes Chi-Square, Eta Symmetric Measures and Bar Chart to analyse and test the study hypotheses. The study found significant week relationship between organisational learning practices and employees' performance with (Pearson's  $R = 0.162$  &  $P\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) indicating that 16.2% variation in employees' performance in the universities resulted from organisational learning practices. The result also shows that there is a significant effect with Pearson Chi-Square value = 15.105, Eta effect value = 0.239 &  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  indicating positive effect of organisational learning practices on employees' performance in the universities. The study concluded that the practices of organisational learning considered as baseline requirement for employees performance has not receive good attention in the universities. It thus, recommends that Nigerian universities should accord priority to the practices of organisational learning to boost performance by looking at both the internal and external variables, which indicates the Organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. More so, the management and employees of the universities should be committed to and support the drive for improve organisational learning practices as a going concern for increase productivity.*

**Keywords:** Employees performance, Learning organisations, Organisational learning in Nigeria, Universities.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Lagos, Nigeria. [karosibina@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:karosibina@yahoo.co.uk); [Caturu-aghedo@noun.edu.ng](mailto:Caturu-aghedo@noun.edu.ng).

## **Introduction**

Today many organisations are paying increasing attention to learning behaviour in order to cope with the challenges posed by globalisation and rapidly changing technological and competitive environments. This goals achievement drive requires restructuring and reengineering of management processes, training and re-training, and communication of feedback to meet performance needs, which are the essence of organisational learning practices. Indeed, the switching attention to organisational learning behaviour calls for psychological safety, integration of diverse opinions, experimenting innovative ideas, feedback communications and information sharing amongst stakeholders. Of course, where organisational learning behaviour thrives, employees exhibited high-level performance and determination.

The necessities of universities' evolvement as learning organisation requires continuous effort and empirical justification to support the drive. The imports from the modernisations drives of the last few decades, spurring inventions and innovations drastically changed the operating modes of doing work across the globe. Many scholars have turned their search light towards exploring new ways to overcome challenges of globalisation. Thus, studies indicted organisation-learning system for the individuals and group learning to enhance performance. Today, policymakers in modern organisations and particularly the universities trailed by circumstances to embraced learning system to enable them cope with the challenge of technological and competitive environments. Indeed, the quest for greater performance necessitates deployment of skilled personnel; training and knowledge integration as the very essence of the learning organisation practices worthy of note. Indeed, organisational learning system is a continuous approach whereby managers and employees strive towards optimal utilisation of scarce resources in proffering solution to emerging scenarios that help organisations achieve goals.

In 'learning organisation', every individuals and group must be ready and committed to supporting the new changes. Suffice to say, organisational learning system availed employees with good system thinking, creativity and capability depending on what they have learnt in the operating environments. Universities as learning organisations continually deploy employees' capacity to achieve higher performances with innovative patterns of thinking and collective understanding of underlying objectives. In Nigerian universities, employees are opening up to a new horizon about the organisational learning system practices. Coupled with the knowledge of on the job experiences, we understand that most public universities suffers poor performance because management and employees seems not ready to adopt the new idea of things due to poor commitments to organisations' learning concepts. However, as plausible as this assertion, there is dearth of empirical justification for the support of the knowledge-based evidences of the practices of organisational learning system among the Nigerian universities. In conceptualising this study, a wide literature search for empirical justification

on this substance only end up with a strong confirmation of a wide research gap in the available management literature.

Provoked to fill this research gap, therefore, this study explore the consequence of organisational learning system on the performance of employees in the North-central Nigerian universities. To achieve this broad-based objective, the study specifically examines the:

- i. relationship between the employees' performance and the organisational learning system universities; and,
- ii. effect of organisational learning system on the performance of employees in the universities.

To provide strapping foundation for universities to analyse the outcome of their organisational learning practices, the study posed the following hypotheses:

Ho1: organisational learning system has no significant relationship with the employees' performance in the universities.

Ho2: There is no significant effect of organisational learning system on the performance of employees in the universities.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Conceptual Meaning***

There is need for consensual definitions of organisational learning (OL) practices to understand the meaning and usage. According to Berryman (2007), organisational learning system supports learning culture that makes sure individuals and group get the required shared vision to build ideal work environment in the organisation. Prieto (2009) argues that OL practice replicates variations in the approaches deployed by the executives to handle uncertain outcomes that hitherto thrives, due to lack of understanding of the learning organisation. Cheng (2009) add that among the significant benefits of OL is the facts that the practices enhances improve and continuous performance in workplace. OL practice involves continuous learning of internal and external environments and the trends imposing by a learning organisation (Joo & Park, 2010). OL practice comprises growing up globally for market competition, customer-centric approach and strategies regarding cost minimisation of the product (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). That means OL practices help organisations to have proper monitoring of increasing environmental complexity and to build the capabilities of transforming information feedback from one individual to another. Bolden (2008) notes that it is the desired organisational requirement to identify the position of their OL practice to situate, whether they are learning or not. Even at that, it is rather difficult to develop a learning culture in Nigerian university environments. Add to this truism, Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy and Baert (2011) argue that leaders often think that the provision of training incentives to employees and engaged them in excessive strategies of meeting up clients' needs is sufficient for learning organisation.

### ***Organisational Learning Practices***

The learning of organisations depend on the learning of the individuals and/or group. Whether they are staff or line managers, learning is paramount and it requires continuous efforts towards stimulating changes in behavioural tendencies, cognitive perceptions, values orientations and operating standards. Govaerts et al. (2011) state that in organisational learning system, it is the psychology of the individuals to learn from others as well as learning from their own experiences. Berson, Nemanich, Waldman, Galvin & Keller (2006) opine that learning is the essence of the organisation and where managers think without learning, survival becomes difficult. According to Edmondson and Gino (2008) and Rebelo and Gomes (2008), organisational learning is the act of existing current practice by learning from their experiences to help individual or group continuously striving for the best approaches. Cheng (2009) opines that the learning of the individuals or group depend on the interest of the learners on the learning atmosphere. These opinions shed more light on the constituent of the OL system, which comprises of learning organisation and the organisational learning. Indeed, organisational learning system emphasis on continuous effort with series of functionally distributed activities such as frequent experimentation, performance analysis and information sharing to enhance productivity (Govaerts et al., 2011). Therefore, learning organisation encourage the learners to develop functional learning atmosphere like study groups, learning communities and reinforcements.

More often than not, university leadership only produce emerging leaders with leadership skills. That means, the behaviour of the leaders directly influence the learning culture in the university system. Indeed, good leadership can reinforce supportive learning culture, which effectively transform organisational learning practices to improve performance. According to Hannah and Lester (2009), leaders give direction and integrate shared understanding among individuals and team towards facilitating good learning environment in organisations. Of course, organisational leaders directly influence the creative ideas to implement purposeful actions through ideal organisational learning culture (Kurland, Peretz & Lazarowitz, 2010). Indeed, no change is possible without good leadership; therefore, leadership is the reinforcement key to create learning organisation for increase performance and higher productivity.

### ***Empirical Studies***

Barrette, Lemyre, Corneil, and Beaugard (2007) studied ‘organisational learning among senior public-service executives in Canada to identify those organisational parameters most conducive to learning organisation’. It collected pattern data from the national survey from a sample of 1,822 respondents and found that organisational learning played an important role in the individual and collective learning of the senior executives. Pimapunsri (2008) used Analysis of moment structures (AMOS), t-test and ANOVA statistics to study the factors affecting organisational learning practices of 360 hotel managers in Thailand and

found that demographic variables played significant roles in learning organisation and subordinates' perception of the leadership style of the managers.

Sampe (2012) studied the influence of organisational learning on performance of 501 managers and employees of SMEs in Indonesia found 'organisational culture' and 'empowerment' as viable predictors of organisational learning system. Nordin and Kasbon (2013) examined organisational learning relative to the leadership behaviour of 120 academics in higher learning institutions in Malaysia using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) to established moderate correlation, indicating average transformational leadership support for organisational learning process in the country. This finding is consistent with Snell (2001) who earlier identified transformational leadership ability as one of the factors of learning organisations for competitive advantages drive.

More so, AL-Faouri (2015) in the study of 'organisational learning capability and organisational intelligence of the 124 telecommunication companies in Jordan' using Ordinary Least Squares method to found organisational intelligence having significant effect on organisational learning capability. Soi (2013) studied the 'Determinants of organisational learning of government institutions: A study of 121 national social security fund (NSSF) in Kenya and found the significant of 'leadership', 'organisational culture', and 'politics' to influence organisational learning.

In Nigeria, Idowu (2013) studied 'organisational learning, innovativeness and financial performance of small and medium enterprises (SMES) in Osun State' and found a correlation between organisational learning and performances. The results are consistent with findings of Kitapch, Aydin and Celiki, (2012) who in their studies found 'system orientation', 'knowledge acquisition' and 'information sharing' amongst others as viable predictors of organisations performance.

## **Methodology**

The study explores the influence organisational learning practices on employees' performance in Nigerian universities. A cross-sectional research design was adopted with a population comprising of all the employees of the federal universities in North-central Nigeria. A tool kit of organisation learning practice was design using 5-points Likert scale to record responses. On this note, 150 questionnaire were distributed out of which 120 were screened for this analysis. The response rate of the distributed questionnaires stands at 80% retrieved valid instruments for generating responses on the building blocks of the organisational learning practices in the universities. That is, the study elicited primary data using multistage sampling techniques, which comprises of convenient sampling and random sampling techniques.

With these methodological equipment, the study surveyed employees' understanding of organisational learning practices in the study population. More

so, robust statistical examination of the resultant responses with the use of descriptive tools such cross-tabulation, Mean, Standard Deviation, and range; and, inferential statistics, which includes Chi-Square, Eta Symmetric Measures and Bar Chart to analyse and test the study hypotheses.

### **Results and Discussion**

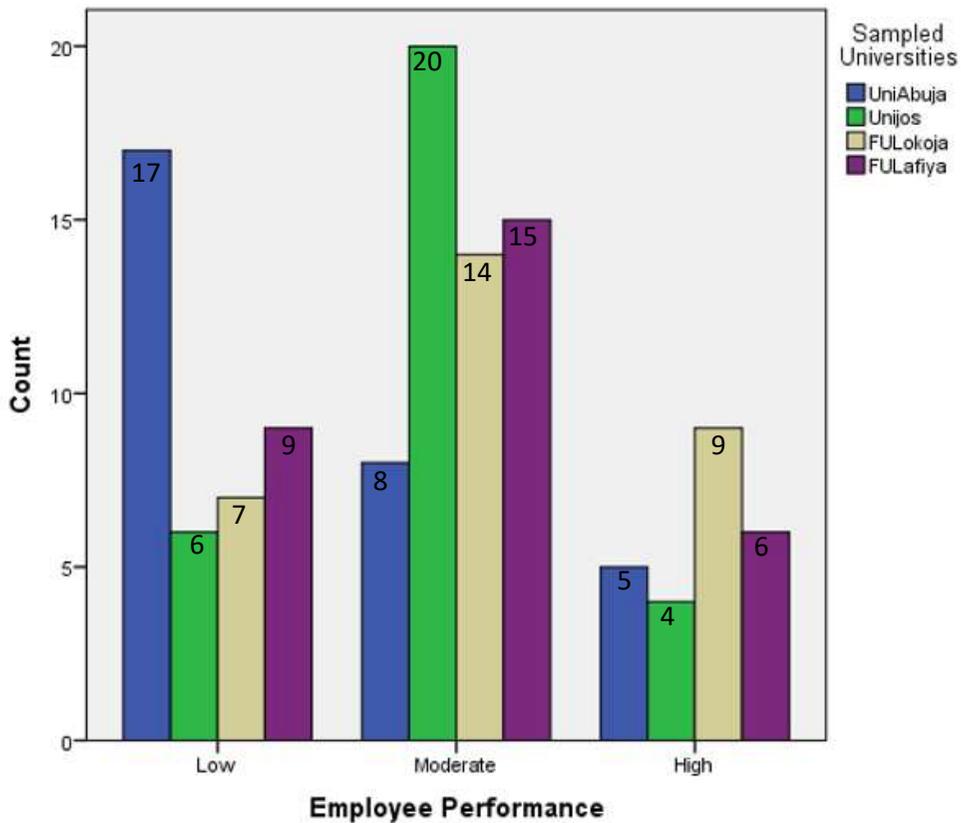
This section presents data for analysis and discussion. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation of employee performance from the sampled universities of the study population.

**Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Employee Performance \* Sampled Universities**

	Sampled Universities				Total
	UniAbuja	Unijos	FULokoja	FULafiya	
Employee Performance Low	17	6	7	9	39
Employee Performance Moderate	8	20	14	15	57
Employee Performance High	5	4	9	6	24
Total	30	30	30	30	120

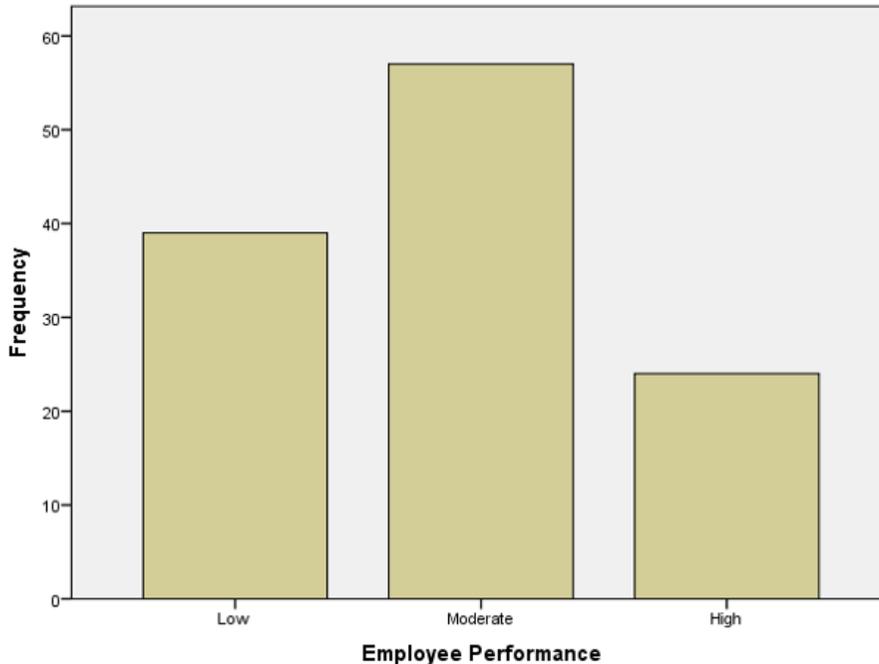
*Source: Field Data 2019*

The facts in Table 1 reveals thirty nine (39) representing about 33% of the surveyed respondents see the influence of Organisation Learning practices in the universities as low; whilst fifty seven representing about 48% reported moderate effect; leaving only twenty four (24) representing 20% reported high effect. The pictorial representation of these facts is presented in Figure 1 for visual expression of the effect of Organisation Learning System on Employees' Performance in the North-central universities in Nigeria. Perhaps this result might not be far from fact of other universities in other part of the country if replicated.



**Figure 1: A Cluster Bar Chart showing Influence of OL Practices on Employee Performance**

The measures of the influence of the OLP on the Employee Performances of each of the sample universities is display in Figure 1. For the University of Abuja, seventeen (17) of the respondents tagged the Employees’ Performance as low; whilst, eight (8) opines moderate performance, whilst five (5) reported high performance. The situation at University of Jos follows different trends with six (6) of the respondents reporting low performance; and, twenty (20) of the respondents tagged moderate performance whilst, only four (4) reporting high performance. The situation at the Federal Universities Lokoja and Lafiya report on average ‘moderate performances’ with Fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) respondents respectively. On the high performance index, Lokoja recorded nine (9) respondents, whilst, Lafiya reported six (6) of the sampled respondents in the institutions. In the interim, this result is an indication that the state of the organisational management practices across the universities had not significantly stimulate organisational performance. Summarising these facts in simple bar chart (see Figure 2) gives a clearer picture of the situation report on the behaviour of the dependent variable.



**Figure 21: A Simple Bar Chart showing Influence of OL Practices on Employee Performance**

The facts in Figure 2 provide distinctive status of impact of organisational learning practices on the employees’ performance in the sampled universities. The facts provide further revelation pointing to the fact that there is low to moderate impact of the substance in the study population. Furthermore, this revelation is supported by the results of the descriptive statistics given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics OLP**

N	Valid	120
	Missing	0
	Mean	35.1750
	Std. Deviation	8.11645
	Range	33.00

**Source: Field Data 2019**

As shown in Table 2, the population mean of performance index is 35.175 with the standard deviation of 8.116, whilst the range reads 33.00. This prove that organisational learning practices in the sample universities had not significantly influence the employees’ performance in eye of the statistical examinations. However, further statistical experiments are require to measure the study hypothesis to enable us draw valid conclusion. Table 3 presents the result of the screening test statistics for sensitivity analysis.

**Table 3a: Model Fitting Information**

Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Intercept Only	177.763			
Final	14.644	163.120	56	.000

**Table 3b: Goodness-of-Fit**

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	.000	6	1.000
Deviance	.000	6	1.000

**Table 3: Pseudo R-Square**

Cox and Snell	.743
Nagelkerke	.849
McFadden	.653

*Source: Field Data 2019*

Table 3 provides the Model Fitting Information, Goodness-of-Fit and Pseudo R-Square statistics. The resultant results shows the Likelihood Ratio Tests (Chi-Square) value of 163.120 with Cox and Snell = .743, Nagelkerke = .849 and McFadden = .653 at  $P < 0.05$ . This result had indicated a good fit for the data screened for Symmetric-Directional-Measures statistical experiment. Table 4 presents the Chi-Square Tests result.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.105 <sup>a</sup>	6	.019
Likelihood Ratio	14.593	6	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.118	1	.077
N of Valid Cases	120		

*a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.00.*

*Source: Field Data 2019*

Table 4 presents the Chi-Square Tests result with Pearson Chi-Square value = 15.105; and,  $P = 0.02$ . Since the P-value is less than Alpha ( $P < 0.05$ ), we have the statistical backing to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This reveals the existence of week degree of association between organisational learning practices and employees' performance in the universities.

**Table 5: Symmetric Measures**

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal Kendall's tau-c	.152	.086	1.762	.078
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	.162	.093	1.782	.077 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases	120			

*a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.*

*c. Based on normal approximation.*

*Source: Field Data 2019*

The result of the Symmetric Measures displayed in Table 5 shows Kendall's tau-c = 0.152 and Pearson's R = 0.162. This is confirmatory test experiment of the facts of the Chi-Square statistics as earlier presented in Table 4. A significant week relationship between organisational learning practices and employees' performance is ascertained with Kendall's tau-c = 0.152 and Pearson's R = 0.162. This indicates that 16.2% of the variation in employees' performance are resulted from organisational learning practices in the universities. This result is consistent with the findings of Idowu (2013). However, Idowu's report did not provide the degree of variations in the predictive strength of the independent variable as viable predictor of performance measure. The post-hoc test result for the sensitivity of the Eta's Effect value is presented in Table 6 for further analysis and interpretation.

**Table 6: Directional Measures**

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>b</sup>	Approx. T	Approx. Sig. <sup>a</sup>
Nominal by Nominal	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.050	.026	1.925	.024
		Employee Performance Dependent	.058	.030	1.925	.024
Nominal by Interval	Eta	Organisational Learning Independent	.044	.023	1.925	.024
		Employee Performance Dependent	.239			
		Organisational Learning Independent	.183			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Source: Field Data 2019

Table 6 display Eta Directional Measures statistical result with Eta effect value on Employee Performance = 0.239. With this result providing further evidence on the Chi-Square results in Table 4, we rejected the second hypothesis (Ho2) purely on statistical ground. This means, organisational learning practices has significant effect on Employees' performance. The Values for Eta squared range from 0 to 1 indicating the strength of the relationship where the Eta value = 0.01 (small effect); 0.06 is moderate effect; and 0.14 is large effect (Pallant, 2007 cited in Momoh, 2019). This result is consistent with the findings of Kitapch et al. (2012) who earlier reported that organisational learning is viable predictors of performance in organisations.

## Conclusion

In management theory, learning organisations of which universities are proxies paying cogent attention to organisational learning system. However, the results of the statistical tests found significant week relationship between organisational learning practices and employees' performance where ( $R^2 = 0.162$  &  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) indicating that 16.2% of the variation in employees' performance in the universities are resulted from organisational learning practices. It also shows significant result with Pearson Chi-Square value of 15.105, Eta effect value = 0.239 &  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  indicating significant effect of organisational learning on employees' performance in the universities. The study concluded that the practices of organisational learning considered as baseline

requirement for employees performance has not receive good attention in the universities. The results of this study prove that there is need of transforming Nigerian universities into learning organisation where management and employees are ready to accept new changes. The institutional leaders must learn to appreciate creative or innovative ideas from their subordinates thus, avoid functioning suboptimal.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above results and conclusion, the study recommends that Nigerian universities management should accord prioritise the practices of organisational learning to boost performance by looking at both the internal and external variables, which indicates the Organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. More so, the management and employees of the universities should be committed to and support the drive for improve organisational learning practices as a going concern of learning organisations to increase productivity.

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