

## Strategic Flexibility and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour amongst Civil Servants in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Today's work places have experienced rapid changes in recent time which requires expertise in management and flexibility in strategic positioning. This brings to the forefront, the need for firms to be strategically flexible in dealing with issues related to the organization in order to achieve the required behavioral outcome. This study examines the extent to which strategic flexibility would ensure citizenship behavior amongst civil servants in Nigeria. Altruism, civic virtues and courtesy were used as the measures of citizenship behaviour. The population of this study covers four ministries in Rivers state with convenient sample of 120 civil servants. Both univariate and bivariate analyses were carried out on the data. From our test of hypotheses, we realized a significant relationship between strategic flexibility and all the measures of citizenship behaviour. The study further recommends a contingent action plan from the government towards its civil servants, a listening ear as well as trainings with modules incorporating team work to improve altruism index of civil servants.*

**Keywords:** strategy, flexibility, citizenship behavior, altruism, civic virtues, courtesy

### INTRODUCTION

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) refers to whatever actions employees deliberately choose to do, spontaneously and out of their own will, which is most times of their specified contractual agreement (Organ, 1997). This is to say that it is discretionary and employees are

not being coerced to do it. Such behaviours may not always be directly and formally recognized or rewarded by the leaders of the organizations, through salary increments or promotions, It may be reflected in favorable supervisor and co-worker ratings, or better performance appraisals. As working under changing circumstances has become an essential feature of organizations, organizations will necessarily become more dependent on individuals who are willing to contribute to successful change, regardless of formal jobs requirements. Today, such behaviors that exceed delineated role expectations but are crucial for an organization's survival are categorized as organizational citizenship behaviors (Somech&Drach-zehavy, 2004). Researches have given many names to this phenomenon such as Organizational spontaneity (George & Brief, 1992), Prosocial organizational behavior (Brief &Motowidlo, 1986) and Extra role behavior (Van Dyne & Comm, 1995).

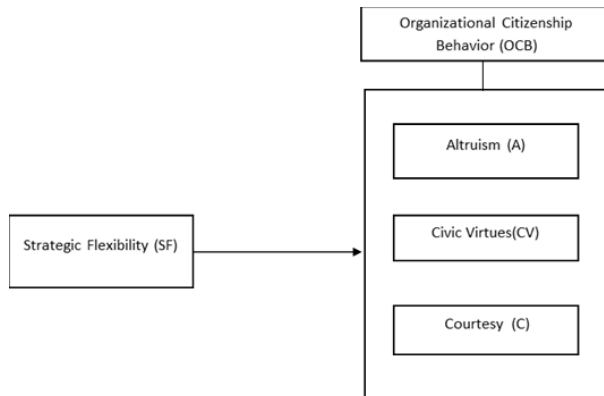
On the other hand, strategic flexibility concept refers to how firms adapt and respond to internal and external environmental factors to implement their tasks and activities. Additionally, strategic flexibility is very closely linked to uncertainty of environment (Abbott and Banerji, 2003). According to (Grewal and tansuhaj, 2001) strategic flexibility can be defined as the ability of organizations to manage Political and economic risks through rapid response to market opportunities and threats by using the method of action and reaction. Strategic flexibility canalso bedescribed as the ability of organizations to identify the changes in external environment and respond rapidly to these changes (Katsuhiko and hitt, 2004). On the other hand, some researchers identified the strategic flexibility concept as the ability of organizations to deal, respond and adapt with environmental changes especially externally and this will help the organizations to get the competitive advantages it desire (Cingoz and Akdogan, 2013). According (Shah, 2013) strategic flexibility refers to the ability of organizations to modify career upon new information which is perhaps different from past information. Researchers such as Bahrami (1992), Evans (1991) Buckley and chapman (1997), and Shah (2013) are of the opinion that organizations are strategically flexible if they are able to respond rapidly to any anticipated change in the external environment.

### Research Hypotheses

H01 strategic flexibility does not relate with altruism of civil servants in Nigeria

H02 strategic flexibility does not relate with courtesy of civil servants in Nigeria

H03 strategic flexibility does not relate with Accommodation of civil servants in Nigeria



**Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework**

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on contingency theory. Contingency theory is an approach to the study of organizational behavior in which explanations are given as to how contingent factors such as technology, culture and the external environment influence the design and function of organizations. Contingency theories were developed from the sociological functionalist theories of organizational structure such as the structural approaches to organizational studies by Reid and Smith (2000), Chenhall (2003) and Woods (2009). These studies postulated that organizational structure was contingent on contextual factors such as technology, dimensions of task environment and organizational size.

The logic of contingency theory underpins much research on Human Resource Management (HRM). The functional imperative of aligning HRM with strategic flexibility served as one of the key factors differentiating HRM from personnel management, while a current stream of research examines industry, firm size and

environmental intensity as the moderating or boundary conditions informing the HRM–performance relationship. Attention has also turned to differentiating HRM within firms so that, contingent on the value and uniqueness of employee groups in realizing strategy, certain types of HR practices are said to be more optimal than others (Lepak and Snell, 1999). The limits of contingency theory, however, is that it risks proposing a limited range of options which takes things as a given and thereby narrows the role of choice and the agency of HR managers to do things differently. Frequently absent are the dynamics of change or considerations that HR managers may proactively influence, avoid, or navigate key contingencies themselves. Contingency theory also seems to relegate implementation to something as unproblematic once a decision is made. Politics, power, resistance and, for the most part, employees are assumed out of existence. In advancing contingency research, HRM researchers have called for consideration of broader contingencies including institutional fit and also more micro-level research.

This theory characterizes the flexible component of strategic flexibility and reveals why businesses would always take proactive measures based on situational circumstances and not based on rigid rules and regulations.

### **Concept of Strategic Flexibility**

According to Sanchez (1995, 1997), flexibility is an ability to respond to varying demands coming from a company's dynamic competitive environment. Hitt, Keats & Demarie (1998) define flexibility as the company's ability to immediately respond to the changing conditions of the competition, and thus to maintain or improve its competitive advantage. Strategic flexibility is considered a vital feature, particularly for industries that have highly dynamic environmental conditions (Cannon and John, 2004; Mackinnon Grant & Cray, 2008). Sharfman and Dean (1997), and Johnson et al (2003) emphasize that a growing level of uncertainty increases the need of the company to become flexible. From the resource-based perspective, strategic flexibility means the ability to redistribute and reorganize organizational resources, processes, and strategies of the company, based on the environmental change (Sanchez, 1995, 1997).

Strategic flexibility plays a guiding role in many organizational features such as investments, enabling rapid shifts between

competitive approaches, policies, encouraging learning, and structure. Decreasing structural inelasticity and creating a horizontal and flat organizational structure are important to providing desirable flexibility (Beraha, 2014). This flexibility supports adjustment to the competitive environment by decreasing costs and reducing need for time. By means of strategic flexibility, companies find a chance to evaluate available opportunities and to minimize risks to their assets (Roca-Puig et al., 2005). The success of strategic flexibility is proportional to the rate, scope, and cost of the response to uncertainty (Gerwin, 1993). Approaches to and perspectives on flexibility differ in literature related to strategic management and organization theories. In general, these two conceptual perspectives, organizational and strategic flexibility, are interrelated and complementary. Strategic flexibility can become an organizational feature by achieving organizational flexibility at all levels. Likewise, flexibility at all levels and in functional departments of a company enriches the options of decision-making units, and thus facilitates strategic flexibility.

### **Altruism**

Altruism has been defined as a cooperative behavior by which the person who acts helpfully increases the other person's fitness with a cost of his/her own fitness (Le Galliard, Ferriere, & Dieckmann, 2003). The term fitness indicates one's survival chance from an evolutionary perspective rather than the common usage of sports or other athletics kind of fitness. Li, Kirkman, and Porter (2014) also explained altruistic behavior as a list of voluntary actions benefiting other people including self-sacrifice. This definition indicates that altruistic behavior involve acts that are not required by central authorities or formal sanctions but are done to increase other people's fitness (Hamilton, 1972) or gain higher social status and personal benefit later (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Buss (2008) explains that the problem of altruism becomes even more complicated by the findings that altruistic behaviors are neither new nor unusual in human history. Altruistic behaviors are not species specific for humans. It was noted that other organisms also act altruistically towards members of the same species or other species. When the helping behavior is towards members of the same species, it is called altruism. Altruism can also be observed in every society in any time period even though it carries costs for the actors (Van Vugt & Van Lange,

2006). Members of some societies may show less altruistic behaviors compared to others, yet members of all known societies behave altruistically in some ways. Aligned with the previously discussed literature, Kitcher (2010) described altruism as a multidimensional concept.

### **Civic Virtues**

Civic virtue is defined as subordinate participation in organization political life and supporting the administrative function of the organization (Deluga, 1998). It is referring to the responsibility of the subordinates to participate in the life of the firm such as attending meetings which are not required by the firm and keeping up with the changes in the organization (Organ, 1988). This dimension of OCB is actually derived from Graham's findings which stated that employees should have the responsibility to be a good citizen of the organization (Graham, 1991). These behaviors reflect an employees' recognition of being part of organization and accept the responsibilities which entails (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Other researchers have found that civic virtue enhances the quantity of performance and help to reduce customer complaints (Walz & Niehoff, 1996).

Civic virtue refers to the constructive involvement in the political process of the organization and contribution to this process by freely and frankly expressing opinions, attending meetings, discussing with colleagues the issues concerning the organization, and reading organizational communications such as mails for the well being of the organization. Civic virtue is behaviour on the part of an individual that indicates that employee dutifully participates in, is actively involved in, and is concerned about the life of the company (Podsakoff et al, 1990). Civic virtue represents a macro level interest in, or commitment to, to the organization. It shows willingness to participate actively in organization's events, monitor organization's environment for threats and opportunities, to work out the best alternative for the organization. These behaviours occur when employees reckon themselves with the organization and consider themselves to be part of the organization.

### **Courtesy**

Courtesy refers to behaviors, that focus on the prevention of problems and taking the necessary to reduce the effects of the problem in the future. In other words, courtesy means a member encourages other workers when they are demoralized and feel discouraged about their professional development. Early research efforts have found that employees who exhibit courtesy would reduce intergroup conflict and thereby diminishes the time spent on conflict management activities (Podsakoff et al., 2000). A courteous employee prevents managers from falling into the pattern of crisis management by making a proactive effort to avoid creating problems for co-workers (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). In simple words, courtesy means the encouragement given by a member to other members of the organization when they are demoralized and feel discouraged about their professional development. Again to reiterate, research has shown that employees who exhibit courtesy would reduce intergroup conflict and thereby abating the time spent on conflict management activities (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The main idea of courtesy is avoiding actions that unnecessarily make colleagues' work harder. It also includes giving them enough notice to get prepared when there is an addition to their existing work load.

### **Strategic Flexibility and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)**

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as a concept is based upon super role behavior given by Katz and Kahn (1966). In the last three decades, more than 700 studies have been conducted on OCB and allied subjects (Organ et al.2006). OCB, though an organizational behavior concept, has reached the range of domains like health administration, human resource management, marketing, military psychology, industrial relations, economics and leadership (Podsakoff et al.2000).OCB has developed from a voluntary behavior to an unwritten job requirement (Turnipseed and Wilson2009). Hall et al. (2009) said that “simply being a good citizen may not be enough, individual need to develop an audience to examine such behavior”.

Though, there has been an absence of previous research on the direct relation between strategic flexibility and OCB, flexibility has proved to have positive associations with various variables, which are linked to OCB. Work-place flexibility has been established as having

positive associations with commitment, job satisfaction and work-family life (Stavrou, 2005). Further, Ferris et al.(1998) stated that “HRM systems influence organization effectiveness through system flexibility, employee behaviors and organization reputation”, and also noted“ attachment are types of behaviors that also make contributions to organizations operating more effectively”.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a cross sectional research design because the elements under study are humans in their live state. The population was made up of civil servants from four ministries (ministry of health, ministry of education, and ministry of petroleum) in Rivers state. The study adopted convenient sampling technique of 120 civil servants across these ministries based on accessibility. Data analyses were done using descriptive statistics (skweness, and mean) while spearman rank order correlation was used in testing the null hypotheses. This was made possible through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

## DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

### Univariate Analyses

**Table 1. Univariate Analysis for Strategic Flexibility**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
SF_1	120	1	4	3.23	1.002	-.689	.221
SF_2	120	2	4	2.98	.601	-.009	.221
SF_3	120	1	4	2.54	.961	-.063	.221
SF_4	120	1	4	2.48	.820	-.804	.221
SF_5	120	1	4	2.97	.707	-.486	.221
Valid N (listwise)	120						

Table 1. reveals a minimum entry of ‘1’ which indicates ‘strongly disagree’ and a maximum entry of ‘4’ which represents ‘strongly agree’. The items further have mean greater than 2.5 which is quite actptable as well as negative skewness which justifies the use of a non-parametric test.



**Table 2. Univariate Analysis for Altruism**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
ALT_1	120	1	4	2.68	.534	-.444	.221
ALT_2	120	2	4	3.15	.694	-.209	.221
ALT_3	120	1	4	2.96	.627	-.178	.221
ALT_4	120	1	4	2.67	.938	-.403	.221
ALT_5	120	1	4	2.59	1.056	-.435	.221
Valid N (listwise)	120						

Table 2. also reveals a minimum entry of ‘1’ which indicates ‘strongly disagree’ and a maximum entry of ‘4’ which represents ‘strongly agree’. The items further have mean greater than 2.5 which is quite acceptable as well as negative skewness which justifies the use of a non-parametric test.

**Table 3. Univariate Analysis for Civic Virtues**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
CV_1	120	1	4	2.56	.951	-.081	.221
CV_2	120	2	4	2.55	.532	-.138	.221
CV_3	120	1	4	2.68	.769	-.521	.221
CV_4	120	1	3	2.69	.702	-.285	.221
CV_5	120	2	4	3.16	.686	-.214	.221
Valid N (listwise)	120						

Table 3. also reveals a minimum entry of ‘1’ which indicates ‘strongly disagree’ and a maximum entry of ‘4’ which represents ‘strongly agree’. The items further have mean greater than 2.5 which is quite acceptable with negative skewness which justifies the use of a non-parametric test.

**Table 4. Univariate Analysis for Courtesy**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
CRT_1	120	2	4	3.12	.434	-.627	.221
CRT_2	120	2	4	2.86	.455	-.565	.221
CRT_3	120	1	4	2.68	1.078	-.096	.221
CRT_4	120	1	4	3.12	.747	-.316	.221
CRT_5	120	1	4	2.68	.945	-.397	.221
Valid N (listwise)	120						

Just like the other constructs, for Courtesy, Table 3. also reveals a minimum entry of ‘1’ which indicates ‘strongly disagree’ and a maximum entry of ‘4’ which represents ‘strongly agree’. The items further have mean greater than 2.5 which is quite acceptable with negative skewness which justifies the use of a non-parametric test.

## Multivariate Analyses

### Test of Hypotheses

**Table 5. Correlation Matrix**

			STRATEGIC_FLEXIBILITY	ALTRUISM	CIVIC_VIRTUES	COURTESY
Spearman's rho	STRATEGIC_FLEXIBILITY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.389**	.543**	.458**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	120	120	120	120
	ALTRUISM	Correlation Coefficient	.389**	1.000	.684**	.347**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	120	120	120	120
	CIVIC_VIRTUES	Correlation Coefficient	.543**	.684**	1.000	.735**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	120	120	120	120
	COURTESY	Correlation Coefficient	.458**	.347**	.735**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	120	120	120	120

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

#### **H01 strategic flexibility does not relate with altruism of civil servants in Nigeria**

Our first test of hypothesis reveals a significant relationship between strategic flexibility and altruism of civil servants with a correlation coefficient of 0.389 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. we therefore reject the stated null hypothesis.

#### **H02 strategic flexibility does not relate with courtesy of civil servants in Nigeria**

Also, our second test of hypothesis reveals a significant relationship between strategic flexibility and civic virtues of civil servants with a correlation coefficient of 0.543 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. we also reject the stated null hypothesis.

#### **H03 strategic flexibility does not relate with Accommodation of civil servants in Nigeria**

Our third test of hypothesis reveals a significant relationship between strategic flexibility and courtesy of civil servants with a correlation coefficient of 0.389 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. this justified the rejection of the stated null hypothesis.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study findings reveals that the action of altruism, civic virtues and courtesy amongst civil servants can be associated to strategic flexibility. This simply means that rigidity is put a distance away. From the univariate analyses, our analyses reveals that all of our items have a mean above 2.5 which is quite acceptable and each item also had skewness with negative values and this also validates the use of a non-parametric statistical tool like Spearman rank order correlation. In most cases, the minimum entry for each respondent was '1' which represents 'strongly disagree' and in few cases, the minimum entry was '2' which represents 'disagree'. However, for all items, the maximum entries was '4' which represents 'strongly agree' using a four point Likert scale. The test of hypotheses further reveals that the stated null hypotheses should be rejected while the alternate is been accepted.

## **CONCLUSION**

The act of citizenship behaviour is more needed amongst civil servants now than ever. With current dilapidation of government owned institutions and infrastructures, the public have almost lost hope in the competence of civil servants and political leaders. The general public now believes that government workers do not go to office on time and do not apply professionalism and courtesy when attending to clients and citizens. It is on this note that this study in contributing to the solutions to such negative behaviours have proposed the concept of strategic flexibility by government in ensuring that such behaviours such as altruism, civic virtues and courtesy are developed by civil servants so that they would bring professionalism towards their day to day public activities. With altruistic behaviour, they would watch out for each other and cover each others nakedness while maintaining status quo in the system. Civic virtues would also help them want to act according to the rules of engagement and ensure that what is right is done all the time. Courtesy would extent to both colleagues, clients and the general public through the act of friendship and respect to established authorities. These variables had coefficients greater than 0.4 and p-values less than 0.05.

## **Recommendations**

- i. Civil servants would work effectively when they work within the right environment. Therefore, government should ensure that such environment is put in place where they can function to the best of their ability and ensure there is a listening ear for civil servants at all level who would want to provide ideas or solutions towards problems or challenges. Such responsibilities make the feel like stakeholders in the system.
- ii. Civil servants should be trained and retrained more frequently and team work should be captured in each of their training module to increase their altruism index.
- iii. While rules and regulations should be visible in work places, personal interactions between superiors and subordinates could be the best way of bringing about civic virtues amongst civil servants.
- iv. Strategic flexibility means not strategizing from only a particular point of view. Therefore, as the theoretical framework suggests, actions of government towards civil servants should be based on the contingency or situation at hand as one good action today may be a bad action tomorrow.

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