
COMPETENCE PLANNING AND CORPORATE SURVIVAL OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of competence planning in enhancing the corporate survival of telecommunications companies in Rivers State. Specifically, the research examines the relationships between competence mapping, personal development plans (PDPs), customer satisfaction, and organizational growth. A cross-sectional research design was employed, with data collected from 124 respondents using purposive sampling. The study utilized both primary data from questionnaires and secondary data from management literature. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between competence mapping and customer satisfaction, competence mapping and growth, PDPs and customer satisfaction, and PDPs and growth. These findings underscore the critical importance of competence planning in fostering employee development, enhancing customer satisfaction, and driving organizational growth. The study concludes that competence mapping and PDPs are vital for aligning employee skills with organizational objectives. Recommendations include regular competence mapping, comprehensive PDP implementation, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and prioritizing innovation and technological advancement to sustain growth.

Keywords: Competence planning, competence mapping, personal development plan (PDP), customer satisfaction, organizational growth, corporate survival.

Introduction

Corporate survival is the main objective of many firms, which is fueled by the dynamic and fiercely competitive commercial climate. Organizations must now aim for excellence in order to survive and prosper due to factors including globalization, technological improvements, and changing customer tastes (Gunday et al., 2011). An organization's success is determined by its performance (Stuggart, 2005). Businesses now understand that success involves more than simply financial performance; it also involves adding value for all parties involved, including consumers, staff, investors, and the community (Gallouj, 2007). A deeper understanding of the function of companies in society and the significance of sustainable practices is reflected in this change in emphasis.

Companies must teach their staff to foresee future trends and adjust to shifting market circumstances in order to survive in the modern workplace (Dems & Silver, 2015). In order to boost employee performance and the company's overall success, organizations must also foster continuous learning and growth. As a result, pursuing business survival is a challenging and multidimensional task that calls for an all-encompassing strategy. Organizations may boost their competitiveness, spur development, and improve society by coordinating their objectives, strategies, and values with those of their stakeholders. These elements interact in intricate ways and may change depending on the environment, size, and industry of the business.

While scholars have examined a variety of elements that impact corporate survival, competency planning appears to have gotten little attention in the literature despite being a potent instrument for improving organizational effectiveness. Competency planning is the process by which employee competence management determines the types and levels of skills required for both individual and organizational performance. The terms used to describe this process and the particular tasks it involves vary throughout scholars and organizations. The term competence profiling, cataloging, identifying, analyzing, and modeling are some of the titles used in the research (Kikeoma, 2000; Munene et al, 2000; Berio & Harzallah, 2005; Marrelli et al., 2005; North and Reinhardt, 200).

The chosen idea of competency planning is identified in this study using the management function approach. This is because planning is a well-known management function, and the researcher wants to assess planning competence from the perspective of a controlling function. Among the tasks or activities that made use of the concept were competency mapping, skill, knowledge, and attitude gap analysis, as well as a personal development plan (Zeb-Obipi, 2015). Competency planning, in whatever form it takes, is essential to an organization's operation and might enhance performance if management would just give it careful consideration and use it effectively as a tactic to achieve organizational objectives. The competence planning exercise enables people to identify ways to translate their skills into efficient and successful job performance behavior. It guarantees their alignment in addition to recognizing and classifying people's skills in their various job functions and throughout a business. Their more effective use is made possible by the competence mapping method. The potential of a company to raise production level and customer satisfaction (product quality) with the same resources is shown by this kind of mapping competence usage (Zeb-Obipi, 2015). Therefore, it is impossible to overstate how crucial competence-building is to a company's ability to survive. Therefore, this research looked at how competence planning might be utilized to increase business survival in light of the gap that was found and the significance of competence planning.

Statement of the Problem

A company's ability to survive may be seriously hampered by inadequate competence planning in a number of ways. First of all, it may result in a lack of skills among employees, which would reduce output, diminish the caliber of work, and prevent chances for innovation (McLean & Company, 2023). Furthermore, poor competence planning often results in high turnover rates since underused or unsupported personnel may look for better possibilities elsewhere (Patterson et al., 2021). Employee turnover has been shown to be decreased by using competency-based frameworks; for example, research found that turnover rates decreased from 23% to 16% after such adoption (Smith & Bradley, 2020). Additionally, low staff morale and disengagement may come from inadequate competence planning, which lowers productivity and work satisfaction (Jones et al., 2019). Competitive performance levels have been shown to rise by 25% as a result of structured competence exams (Richards, 2021). Furthermore, poor resource allocation results in resource waste and lost possibilities for advancement, as shown by misallocated project assignments and training funds (Thompson, 2022). According to a case study, creating a competency model from the ground up enhanced employee retention, fostered leadership development, and offered clear career pathways (Brown & Taylor, 2023).

Additionally, companies find it difficult to innovate and adjust to changes in the market when their personnel lack the necessary skills and expertise, which results in a loss of market share and competitive advantage (Carter, 2021). Companies that actively use competence frameworks have a 56% higher chance of being competitive, according to research (Johnson et al., 2023). Due to a lack of experience in customer-facing positions, poor competence planning also has a detrimental effect on customer satisfaction, which lowers customer satisfaction and loyalty (Harrison & Green, 2022). It has been shown that competency mapping enhances worker performance, which has a direct impact on customer satisfaction (Evans, 2020). There hasn't been any research on whether or not companies use competence planning in their management (Miller, 2019). Nonetheless, it has been shown that competency-based development programs improve organizational performance and services (Davis & White, 2021). The implementation of competency-based development plans emphasizes the skills workers must possess to advance in their positions and advance within the organization, which enhances performance (Taylor, 2022).

Concerns have been expressed that not all organizations trying to create competence plans are happy with the process, despite assertions that implementing competency planning enhances companies. The inability of certain executives to align their goals with the required resources hinders the organization's expansion (Stoner, 2020). Employees have also expressed worry that the planning process is often tight and inflexible, which makes it difficult to adjust to a changing environment and may have a detrimental impact on firms (Brennan, 2021). They believe that the competence planning process is unattainable, and their actions may make it more difficult for the company to survive. In order to address these concerns, this research looks at how competence planning may help businesses survive, and it offers suggestions for how businesses might utilize competence planning as a tool to do so.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to examine how competence planning enhances corporate survival of telecommunications companies in Rivers State.

However, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the relationship between competence mapping and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
2. Determine the relationship between competence mapping and growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
3. Examine the relationship between personal development plan and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
4. Investigate the relationship between personal development and growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the relationship between competence mapping and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State?
2. How does competence mapping relate with growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between personal development plan and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State?
4. How does personal development relate with growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between competence mapping and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between competence mapping and growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between personal development plan and customer satisfaction of telecommunications companies in Rivers State
- H₀₄:** There is no significant relationship between personal development and growth of telecommunications companies in Rivers State

Significance of the Study

This study on the impact of competence planning on the corporate survival of telecommunications companies in Rivers State holds significant value for various stakeholders, including firms, scholars, and society. Below is a detailed explanation of its importance: The study provides telecommunications companies with insights into how competence planning can be integrated into their strategic frameworks to improve operational efficiency and ensure long-term sustainability. This study enriches the existing body of literature on competence planning and its relationship to corporate survival, particularly within the telecommunications industry in Rivers State. Scholars can use the findings as a basis for further exploration of competence planning in other industries or regions, encouraging comparative analyses and interdisciplinary studies. The study provides researchers with real-world insights and data, bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in workforce management and corporate strategy.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

The conceptual review of this study focused on competence planning with two dimensions: competence mapping and personal development plans, among others. While corporate survival has two measures, such as customer satisfaction and growth.

Conceptual Framework

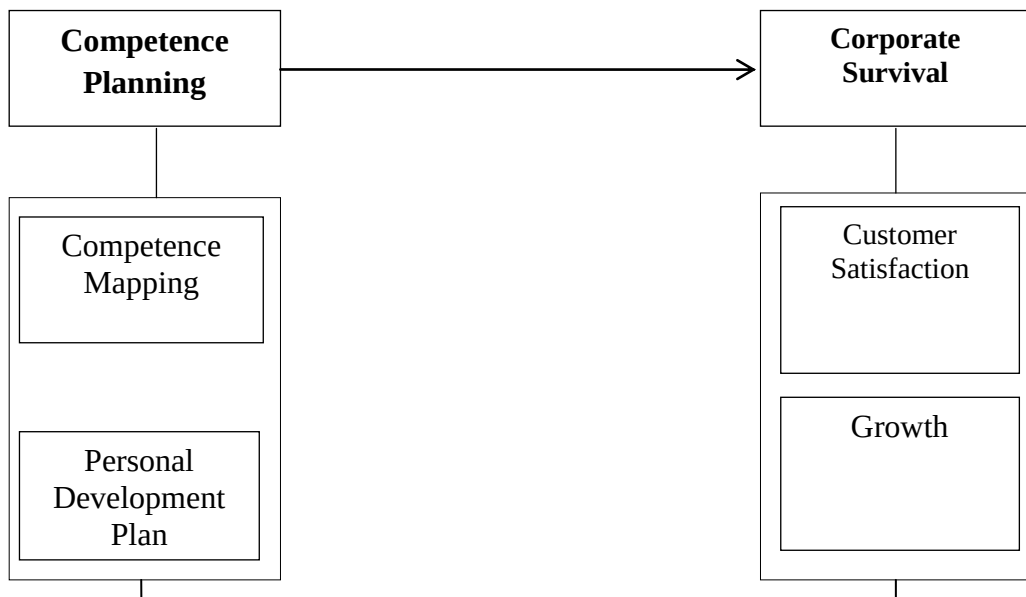


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of competence planning and corporate survival.

Source: Dimensions of Competence Planning adapted from Zeb-Obipi (2015). Measures of corporate survival

Concept of Competence Planning

An organization's human resources play a crucial role in generating value, adaptability, and performance, as well as in determining the organization's competence and adaptability. Employees perform their duties as professional human resources in accordance with their workplace culture, the nature of their job, senior management needs, their abilities, and their own beliefs. Competency is necessary for an employee to perform this function. A key factor in human resources' ability to successfully accomplish organizational objectives is competence (Ojo et al., 2020). Therefore, proper competence planning by management is necessary for workers to carry out their jobs in an efficient manner. The activities of competence mapping and personal development planning are included in competency planning. According to Adebayo and Yusuf (2018), the term "competent," which implies "ability," is the root of the word competency. Meanwhile, the terms "competence" (plural: competences) and "competence" (plural: competencies)" have distinct meanings, according to Oladele et al. (2017). Competence describes labor that focuses on the activities and outcomes required to do a job, while competence describes individuals who concentrate on identifying traits in the sense of competency. However, in the context of managing human resources in a company, these two words are connected. Armstrong & Taylor (2014) define competence as the fundamental traits that a person has in order to work effectively or better. No matter how competency is defined or interpreted, the development of human talents is at the heart of it

all. Consequently, competence planning, which entails determining the competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors) necessary for success in various roles within the organization, evaluating the present competencies of employees, and creating plans to fill any gaps, could be viewed as the strategic process that organizations use to make sure that they have the right people with the right skills in the right positions to achieve their goals.

Competence Mapping

Competency mapping is the practice of identifying critical skills for an organization. A new HR strategy called competency mapping aligns employee skills with what is needed to succeed in any career (Ganesh, 2004). Competency mapping is the process of assessing an individual's degree of possession of the many skills related to a profession. The degree to which each competency is required for a given job can be used to compare a person's level of adaptability, resourcefulness, ability to work well under pressure, ability to anticipate threats, ability to find solutions, and ability to contribute to innovations in order to assess their suitability for the position. Every well-run business should have jobs that are well-defined and accompanied by a list of competencies required to do them. It helps determine the assets and liabilities of an individual. He may choose a career more easily if he is aware of his benefits and weaknesses. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to regularly evaluate and improve worker competency in order to compete worldwide in a knowledge-based economy (Gary, 2002). Every industry is trying to achieve high levels of efficacy and efficiency in the present climate in order to survive the intense competition. The manufacturing and service industries are the two primary industrial categories. They work hard to improve the efficiency of their system.

Competence and skill are two fundamental components that are referenced in every plan and approach for improving the efficiency and performance of their operations. As a result, businesses focus on skills and knowledge to boost performance. All firms place a high value on competence, but producing sectors place a higher value on it (Fasola and Adedeji, 2019). It is now necessary for each manufacturing company that wants to improve performance to map out the ability levels of each employee. Skills mapping is a technique for investigating and assessing the abilities that the people in question possess. It is a methodical approach to assessing each individual's level of skill. In addition to revealing a person's skill level, skill mapping identifies areas that might be improved via training or other means. Competency mapping necessitates many crucial stages. First, the department for which competency mapping is required is identified, as stated by Bassi and Van Buren (1998). Following the creation of a work description, a Position Information Questionnaire (PIQ) completed by workers is used to conduct a job analysis (Finegold & Mohrman, 2001). The collected PIQ data is used to generate a competency-based job description (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). These talents are then evaluated as assessment criteria in performance assessments based on proven behaviors, leading to more objective evaluations (Boyatzis, 1982). The results of the assessment may also be used to identify areas in which each individual needs training or growth to satisfy the company's goals (McBer, 1997). Under competence mapping, competences are evaluated based on job demands and include knowledge, character, motivations, attitude, and talents (Ajayi et al., 2020). The job criteria are followed while evaluating the abilities.

Personal Development Plan

A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is a structured and strategic framework designed to foster the growth and enhancement of an individual's innate traits and abilities. This systematic approach aims to improve personal effectiveness, adaptability, and resilience, particularly when navigating challenging responsibilities such as managing one's own business or undertaking leadership roles. According to Man and Lau (2000), a well-executed PDP is instrumental in helping individuals reach their full potential by offering a clear roadmap for self-improvement.

A robust PDP encompasses a variety of critical attributes that contribute to personal and professional success. Among these are self-motivation and self-management, which are foundational for setting and achieving goals, maintaining focus, and optimizing time and energy effectively (Martin & Staines, 1994). These traits are essential for maintaining discipline and driving progress, especially when external circumstances demand consistency and resilience. In addition to these qualities, emotional intelligence and self-awareness play a pivotal role in personal development. Emotional intelligence, as discussed by Goleman (1998), involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while navigating interpersonal relationships with empathy and tact. Self-awareness complements this by fostering an understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and triggers, enabling better decision-making and more effective communication. Together, these qualities contribute significantly to interpersonal skills, leadership capabilities, and the ability to adapt in dynamic environments. Moreover, a well-rounded PDP emphasizes the importance of determination and self-belief as critical drivers of success. Thompson and Stout (1997) highlight that determination fuels persistence in the face of adversity, while self-belief instills the confidence needed to embrace challenges and seize opportunities. These traits form the backbone of a growth-oriented mindset, empowering individuals to overcome obstacles and remain focused on their objectives.

Finally, the attributes of self-control and stress tolerance, as outlined by Markman and Baron (2003), are vital for managing the pressures and uncertainties inherent in demanding roles. Self-control enables individuals to regulate their reactions, stay composed, and approach problems logically, while stress tolerance builds the capacity to remain resilient under pressure, ensuring sustained performance and well-being. In essence, a personal development plan (PDP) is a structured and strategic framework designed to foster the growth and enhancement of an individual's innate traits and abilities. This systematic approach aims to improve personal effectiveness, adaptability, and resilience, particularly when navigating challenging responsibilities such as managing one's own business or undertaking leadership roles. According to Man and Lau (2000), a well-executed PDP is instrumental in helping individuals reach their full potential by offering a clear roadmap for self-improvement.

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Concept of Corporate Survival

Corporate survival is a multifaceted concept that has been defined and interpreted in numerous ways, with no universally accepted definition currently in place (Albino et al., 2015; Cameron & Whetten, 1983). It encompasses the ability of an organization to sustain itself over time while adapting to internal and external challenges that could threaten its existence. Achieving corporate survival often necessitates a combination of clearly defined goals, strategic planning, and the continuous acquisition of knowledge and capabilities (Oladele & Sanni, 2021; Porter, 1985). As a critical objective for organizations, survival implies

maintaining competitive advantage, financial stability, and operational resilience in an ever-changing business environment (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

The complexity of corporate survival lies in its dynamic nature, as it can be influenced by factors such as market competition, technological advancements, regulatory changes, and economic fluctuations (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Barney, 1991). Therefore, establishing clear corporate goals and formulating adaptable strategies are paramount for ensuring that an organization remains relevant and viable over time (Bryson, 2018). According to D'Aveni (1994), firms that fail to anticipate or respond effectively to external pressures are more likely to face decline, highlighting the importance of strategic foresight and agility. Additionally, the integration of innovation and learning within organizational processes plays a crucial role in enabling firms to overcome disruptions and seize new opportunities (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Christensen, 1997).

Although no universal definition exists, the concept of corporate survival often intersects with broader themes such as sustainability, growth, and resilience (Ghobadian et al., 2004; Freeman, 1984). In this regard, organizations must continuously align their resources, capabilities, and objectives to meet the demands of stakeholders while navigating an uncertain business landscape. This alignment not only aids in ensuring survival but also promotes long-term success and value creation (Grant, 1996). Overall, corporate survival is a dynamic and evolving construct that requires organizations to remain vigilant, proactive, and adaptable in a highly competitive and uncertain environment.

Growth

Growth is a fundamental indicator of corporate survival, signifying the organization's ability to expand its market presence, resources, and capabilities over time. According to Penrose (1959), growth reflects the dynamic capabilities of a firm to utilize its internal resources effectively, ensuring its continued relevance and sustainability in a competitive environment. Barney (1991) emphasized that growth is not merely about scaling operations but also involves developing strategic assets that provide a competitive advantage. Similarly, Bryson (2018) argued that an organization's growth trajectory often mirrors its capacity to adapt to changing market conditions and innovate continuously. In the Nigerian context, Adekunle and Yusuf (2020) highlighted that firms demonstrating consistent revenue and market share growth are better positioned to withstand economic fluctuations. Furthermore, Drucker (2002) posited that growth serves as a measure of how well a company meets the needs of its customers, employees, and stakeholders, thereby enhancing corporate survival.

Organizations that prioritize growth in both financial and non-financial aspects—such as employee skill development and technological advancement—are more likely to thrive, as noted by Oladele and Sanni (2021). Growth also fosters resilience by enabling firms to build reserves that can be deployed during economic downturns, according to Wernerfelt (1984). Ojo et al. (2020) highlighted that in developing economies, growth through diversification often ensures corporate survival by reducing dependence on a single revenue stream. On the other hand, stagnation or negative growth can signal underlying structural or strategic issues,

jeopardizing survival (Kotter, 2012). Additionally, growth is essential for attracting investments, as investors are more inclined to support firms with upward performance trends (Yukl, 2012). Therefore, growth is not merely a byproduct of survival but a deliberate and strategic effort to ensure long-term corporate viability.

Competence Mapping and Customer Satisfaction

Competency mapping ensures that staff possess the essential skills and knowledge to successfully satisfy client requests. For instance, Tammubua and Surapto (2020) studied the influence of service quality and personnel competency on customer satisfaction and loyalty in border tourism in eastern Indonesia. Their study adopted a quantitative research approach, utilizing a questionnaire to obtain data from 192 visitors to the PLBN Skouw region, examined using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique using SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results demonstrated a favorable and considerable influence of staff competency on both customer satisfaction and service quality. Similarly, recent research by Anwar et al. (2021) and Nguyen and Hoang (2022) have verified the significance of staff competences in boosting customer satisfaction and service delivery standards.

Front-line staff, being at the heart of service delivery, strongly affect customer views of service quality and satisfaction (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Olorunfemi & Adesanya, 2023). Research demonstrates that competences such as intercultural skills (Ihtiyar et al., 2014) and emotional intelligence (Delcourt et al., 2013; Yilmaz & Ersoy, 2022) directly lead to improved customer experiences. For example, emotional competence helps staff to empathize with clients, handle relationships efficiently, and solve concerns with professionalism, hence enhancing satisfaction levels (Goleman, 2017). Moreover, professionals with well-developed interpersonal and communication skills are more competent at creating long-term connections with customers, encouraging loyalty, and trust (Vargo & Lust, 2014; Adewuyi & Musa, 2022). By continuously updating and aligning employee competencies with evolving customer expectations, organizations can ensure better service outcomes. This alignment not only improves customer satisfaction but also bolsters organizational reputation and competitive advantage (Olaniyan et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of structured competency mapping frameworks in driving customer satisfaction and organizational success.

Competence Mapping and Growth

Competence mapping is a critical tool for driving organizational growth as it ensures the alignment of employee skills with the strategic objectives of the organization. By identifying and addressing skill gaps, organizations can build a workforce capable of meeting evolving market demands and fostering innovation (Ganesh, 2004; Adeoye & Elegbede, 2021). Studies have shown that firms that systematically map and develop employee competencies achieve better adaptability and resilience in competitive environments (Bassi & Van Buren, 1998; Ijeoma & Chukwuemeka, 2022). Competence mapping also facilitates effective resource allocation, enabling organizations to focus their training and development efforts on areas with the highest potential for impact (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Olamide & Adebayo, 2023).

Moreover, growth is achieved as organizations leverage mapped competencies to enhance employee performance and productivity, contributing to increased revenue and market share (Wernerfelt, 1984; Onuoha & Okeke, 2022). Employees with well-defined competencies are better equipped to innovate, collaborate, and respond to challenges, which supports the

organization's ability to scale and expand (Boyatzis, 1982; Markman & Baron, 2003). Competence mapping also enhances employee engagement and retention by aligning roles with individual strengths and career aspirations, thus reducing turnover and promoting a culture of continuous improvement (Finegold & Mohrman, 2001; Afolabi & Idowu, 2023). This strategic alignment between workforce capabilities and organizational goals positions competence mapping as a vital enabler of sustainable growth in dynamic business landscapes.

Personal Development Plan and Customer Satisfaction

Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and customer satisfaction are intimately related, especially in service-oriented businesses where interactions between employees and customers are vital. According to Beausaert et al. (2011), a well executed personal development plan may greatly improve staff competences, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, motivation, and consistency in service delivery—all of which are factors that lead to higher customer satisfaction. PDPs enhance workers' capacity to satisfy customer requirements by assisting them in gaining skills that are directly related to providing outstanding customer service, which in turn leads to increased levels of satisfaction (Beausaert et al., 2013). Employees may improve their current abilities and learn new ones via personal development programs, which ensures they are prepared to meet complicated consumer expectations (Petrie, 2014).

Additionally, the process of developing skills via PDPs may result in increased knowledge, which can help people improve their careers or become more competitive in the job market (Petrie, 2014). This kind of growth, known as horizontal development, entails expanding one's knowledge and skill set, which enhances one's overall ability to succeed in a company (Beausaert et al., 2013). Leaders are particularly under pressure to learn and use new skills in order to adapt successfully in the volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment of today, as businesses deal with continuous change (Jari & Lauraéus, 2019). Employees' capacity to enhance customer happiness, adjust to changing customer expectations, and support organizational performance increases when their capabilities are enhanced by well-designed PDPs.

Personal Development Plan and Growth

Personal Development Plans (PDPs) play a vital role in fostering growth and enhancing organizational performance by improving skills, competencies, and motivation. A well-structured PDP helps employees evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, setting clear goals that align with both their personal aspirations and organizational objectives (Oluwatayo et al., 2020). Through continuous learning, employees can acquire new knowledge and refine existing skills, leading to improved performance and higher productivity (Beausaert et al., 2013). This process, often referred to as horizontal development, empowers employees to adapt to changing job roles and responsibilities (Petrie, 2014). Additionally, PDPs are crucial for fostering leadership capabilities, as they encourage employees to develop key competencies such as emotional intelligence and problem-solving abilities (Goleman, 1998). Research by Petrie (2014) underscores the significance of PDPs in preparing employees for leadership roles through the development of these competencies. Furthermore, in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, continuous personal development is vital for organizational survival and growth (Jari & Lauraéus, 2019). By enhancing employees' skill sets, PDPs also improve employee satisfaction and retention, contributing to both individual and organizational success (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2014).

Competency Planning and Corporate Survival

Competency planning is a critical element for ensuring that an organization remains competitive, efficient, and adaptable in a fast-paced business environment. Competency planning involves identifying and mapping the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to perform specific roles and achieve organizational objectives (Akinyele, 2018). Research by Armstrong & Taylor (2014) highlights the importance of aligning employee competencies with organizational goals to ensure that the workforce can meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing business environment. Effective competency planning enhances employee performance, facilitates the development of new skills, and helps in closing skills gaps that could hinder the organization's growth (Bassi & Van Buren, 1998). By providing targeted training and development opportunities, organizations can increase their employees' capabilities, improving both individual and organizational performance (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Moreover, competency planning reduces turnover by ensuring that employees are continually supported in their professional development, increasing job satisfaction and commitment (Ogunyemi & Adegoke, 2018). In today's competitive business landscape, where technological advancements and market shifts require constant adaptation, competency planning is essential for corporate survival and long-term success (Wernerfelt, 1984). This strategic approach enables organizations to allocate resources effectively, drive innovation, and remain resilient in the face of adversity (Barney, 1991). Ultimately, competency planning serves as a key driver of organizational sustainability by aligning employee development with strategic goals (Akinyele, 2018; Fitz-Enz, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Resource-Based View Theory by Barney (1991)

The Resource Based View Theory asserts that variations in an organization's success within a specific sector may be linked to its unique resources, which are hard for rivals to duplicate. Assessing an organization's level of performance in respect to its rivals is the cornerstone of the notion of competitive advantage. Resource-based theory is a strategic management concept that contends that a firm's abilities and resources are its key sources of superior performance and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). According to this idea, in order for a corporation to have a sustained competitive advantage, it must make sure that its assets and abilities are valuable, rare, unique, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Resources could comprise actual assets like industrial facilities, technology, and financial resources in addition to intangible assets like company culture, expertise, and brand recognition. Capabilities are the company's capacity to utilize its resources, such as people, processes, and procedures, to fulfill its strategic goals.

The company's resource-based vision (RBV) asserts that enterprises should concentrate on developing and leveraging their distinctive resources and abilities in order to acquire a competitive edge. This contrasts with conventional techniques, which assign greater weight to external variables like market circumstances and industry structure. RBV highlights the necessity of internal analysis as well as the constant enhancement and preservation of a business's resource base. Businesses may develop an enduring competitive edge that is tough for rivals to imitate by doing this. Resource-based theory may assist businesses achieve organizational success by establishing a framework for recognizing, developing, and leveraging their distinctive resources and abilities to acquire a competitive advantage. According to this concept, firms that possess and manage valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-

substitutable (VRIN) resources and abilities have a better probability of achieving a durable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

To begin with, resource-based theory helps firms identify their most valuable assets and talents. By undertaking a comprehensive internal investigation, firms may discover which resources and competencies are vital, distinctive, and difficult for rivals to imitate or replace. With this understanding, organizations may concentrate their resources and efforts on strengthening and employing these key resources and talents (Peteraf, 1993). Second, resource-based theory enables organizations gradually grow their resources and capabilities. Businesses could invest in generating new resources and talents or strengthening current ones via initiatives like organizational learning, training, and research and development (Barney, 1991). By continually developing their resources and abilities, organizations may increase their competitive position and adapt to changing market circumstances.

Thirdly, resource-based theory helps organizations achieve a competitive edge by exploiting their resources and skills. Businesses may leverage their distinctive resources and talents to distinguish their goods and services, save money, or enter new markets (Barney, 1991). By successfully leveraging their resources and talents, firms may preserve a competitive edge over time and give value to their consumers. Therefore, by offering a framework for recognizing, analyzing, and increasing their particular resources and skills, resource-based theory may help organizations achieve organizational success. By concentrating on five critical areas, firms may strengthen their competitiveness, adapt to changing market circumstances, and achieve long-term organizational success. Resource-based theory offers a beneficial theoretical framework for appreciating how firms may leverage their unique human competency via competence planning, mapping, and personal development plans to achieve organizational success.

Empirical Review

Zeb-Obipi (2015) evaluated the link between worker competence planning and corporate productivity performance in Nigerian firms, adopting a quantitative, co-relational, interrogative, cross-sectional, and field survey approach. The unit of analysis was the company, and a sample of 75 firms from a total of 1,516 organizations listed in the “Profile of Business Opportunities in Nigeria” business directory was chosen using a stratified systematic random sampling approach. These firms encompassed three sectors: oil, manufacturing, and service. Primary data were acquired via questionnaires, using nominal and ordinal scales and Likert-type items. The reliability of the questionnaire questions for Competence Planning, Product Offering, and Resource Utilization was validated with a Cronbach's alpha of around 0.9, while factor loadings beyond 0.3 showed validity. The data from 70 returned questionnaires were analyzed using rank correlation statistics, including Spearman's rho, Kendall's tau, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) using SPSS. The research demonstrated a substantial positive association between worker competency planning and company productivity performance across the three industries. Organizations with organized competency planning were shown to perform better in terms of resource usage and product offers, which contributed to total productivity. Based on these data, the research indicates that competency planning is vital for enhancing corporate efficiency in Nigerian firms. It recommends that businesses invest in structured competence development for their workforce, implement targeted training programs, periodically evaluate and adjust competence plans, and foster cross-sector collaboration to exchange best practices. Future research is encouraged to explore sector-specific competence planning needs and the impact of sector-specific strategies on productivity performance.

Wijayanti and Sari (2023) utilized a literature review strategy to explore the influence of competence on worker performance. They undertook a research of the literature on employee performance, competence, and the link between the three. To grasp their link, they apply the literature review procedure. In addition to summarizing the material from the literature review, they also offered adequate background and rationale. They found that employee competence influences employee performance, as predicted by the results of a number of prior theories and research. This shows that in order for organizations to effectively traverse the obstacles and upheavals in their environment, they want individuals who are competent. Competent personnel will find it easier to fulfill their responsibilities and grow because, for the most part, they already possess the requisite competencies to carry out jobs effectively, efficiently, and competitively.

Junus's (2009) research on competence had a harmful influence on leadership but was not statistically significant. The ability of a leader to inspire and empower their team members will have an influence on how well they perform. Employee performance, attitude, and behavior are substantially affected by the activities of their leaders. The features of followers that are connected to the communication process that takes place between leaders and subordinates determine a leader's effectiveness. A leader is unsuccessful if they cannot inspire, motivate, and satisfy the requirements of their team members in a given job or circumstance. Encouraging subordinates to be competent and improve in anticipation of hurdles and employment chances is the task of a leader. These empirical research clearly indicate the value of competence mapping, competency planning, and personal development plans in boosting customer pleasure, raising output quality, and finally advancing organizational success.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review underscores the critical role of competence planning, which encompasses competence mapping and personal development plans (PDPs), in driving organizational success. Competence mapping aligns employee skills with strategic objectives, fostering growth, adaptability, and innovation. PDPs enhance employees' skills, motivation, and leadership capabilities, thereby improving customer satisfaction and organizational performance. Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, the review highlights that leveraging unique, valuable, and non-substitutable resources such as employee competencies yields sustainable competitive advantages. Empirical studies affirm the positive impact of competencies on employee performance, leadership effectiveness, and organizational resilience. Together, these insights underscore the necessity of structured competency frameworks for ensuring corporate survival and growth in dynamic business environments.

Knowledge Gap

While existing literature extensively highlights the significance of competence planning, including competence mapping and personal development plans (PDPs), in enhancing organizational performance, several gaps remain. Most studies focus on the general relationship between competencies and performance but lack in-depth analysis of how these frameworks adapt to specific industries, cultural contexts, and rapidly evolving business environments. These gaps present opportunities for further research to refine and expand the understanding of competence planning's strategic value in diverse and dynamic organizational settings. The present study addresses these gaps by providing a detailed

analysis of how competence planning frameworks, including competence mapping and personal development plans (PDPs), are adapted and implemented in specific industry contexts. By focusing on a particular organizational setting, the study explores how these frameworks align with unique industry requirements and cultural nuances, thus offering a more contextualized understanding of competence planning.

Methodology

The main data were received directly from the respondents, while the secondary data were taken from management literature and resources from relevant areas of study. Specifically, the sources included journals, textbooks, and the internet. It was highly thought that acquiring data from various sources aided in establishing reasonable results and developing appropriate conclusions on the topic matter. All factors were scored on a Likert 4-point scale, where a score of 1 was given to "strongly disagree," 2 to "disagree," 3 to "agree," and 4 to "strongly agree." A typical item statement included: "Members of my organization have been honored for developing new abilities and for being innovative. This study employed cross-sectional research design since it is a quasi-experimental survey investigation. The target demographic of the research includes of managers and supervisors for decision making in telecommunications enterprises in Rivers State.

However, the accessible population contains just telecommunications businesses that operate inside Rivers State since most of the companies have their main office in Rivers State particularly in Port Harcourt. However, based on the enormous population and scattered geographical position of telecommunications enterprises in Rivers State, the research analyzed one hundred and eighty (180) respondents composed of managers and supervisors who are qualified for decision making. This number of population of respondents was obtained from the human resource department of each organization utilizing purposive or convenient sampling approach. The sampling frame comprises the collection of criteria that a researcher may use to pick a sample of the target population. Since the accessible population of the research is huge, consequently, Taro Yamene's sampling approach was employed to calculate sample size. The formula is presented as.

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

N = Population size
e = Level of significance (0.05)
2 = Power of level of significance

Computing the sample size for the study by applying the formula becomes;

$$n = \frac{180}{1 + 180(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 124$$

Hence, the sample size becomes 124.

The main data were received directly from the respondents, while the secondary data were taken from management literature and resources from relevant areas of study. Specifically, the sources included journals, textbooks, and the internet. It was highly thought that acquiring data from various sources aided in establishing reasonable results and developing appropriate

conclusions on the topic matter. All factors were scored on a Likert 4-point scale, where a score of 1 was given to "strongly disagree," 2 to "disagree," 3 to "agree," and 4 to "strongly agree." The instrument was submitted to evaluation by research specialists, and it was concluded that the item statements adequately reflected the variables examined (face validity). Multiple questions encompassing all facets of the variables were utilized to verify content validity (Spector, 2008). This revealed that all variables' domains were covered by items necessary for the evaluation. Scientifically, the research employed the Cronbach Alpha reliability test to assess the reliability of the instruments and attained reliability scores of 0.7 or higher, which was the criterion for dependability acceptance (Cronbach, 1951). The reliability test calculation was done using SPSS version 23.0. The questions were administered directly to respondents. Instructions directing the completion of the questionnaire were supplied, and the surveys were recovered within a short period. The data were examined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistic, a non-parametric test statistic. The data were evaluated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistic, a parametric test statistic that assesses the strength and direction of the linear connection between two continuous variables. This statistical approach examines how closely the variables move together, yielding a value between -1 and +1. A score of +1 implies a perfect positive correlation, -1 shows a perfect negative correlation, and 0 indicates no linear connection. The Pearson correlation is commonly utilized when the data are normally distributed and the connection between the variables is linear.

Data Analysis and Result

Out of the 124 questionnaires distributed, a total of 121 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. This reflects a 97.58% response rate, which is quite high and indicates strong engagement from the target respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Option	Count (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Position	Manager	47	38.84%
	Supervisor	74	61.16%
	Total	121	100%
Age Range	20 – 30 years	38	31.40%
	31 – 40 years	43	35.54%
	41 – 50 years	30	24.79%
	Above 50 years	10	8.26%
	Total	121	100%
Highest Educational Qualification	O'LEVEL	12	9.92%
	OND/NCE	21	17.36%
	Degree/HND	52	42.98%
	M.Sc/MBA	31	25.62%
	Ph.D/DBA	5	4.13%
	Total	121	100%
Years of Experience	0-5 years	33	27.27%
	5-10 years	46	38.02%
	10-15 years	26	21.49%

	Above 15 years	16	13.22%
	Total	121	100%

Source: Desk Research (2024)

Position: The majority of respondents (61.16%) hold supervisory positions, while 38.84% are managers. This distribution suggests that the workforce represented in the study is predominantly composed of individuals in supervisory roles, which may indicate a larger number of mid-level employees compared to senior management. This could be reflective of the structure in the organization, where there are more supervisory roles that directly oversee operations and employees, while managerial positions are fewer and more strategic.

Age Range of Respondents: The largest age group is between 31 and 40 years (35.54%), followed closely by the 20 to 30 years range (31.40%). The representation of younger employees (20-40 years) indicates a relatively youthful workforce, which could be beneficial for innovation and adaptability. There is a smaller proportion of respondents over the age of 50, suggesting that older employees may be fewer in the organization, potentially due to retirement or career transitions.

Highest Educational Qualification: A significant proportion of respondents (42.98%) hold a Degree or HND, followed by those with M.Sc or MBA qualifications (25.62%). The relatively high percentage of degree holders indicates that the workforce is well-educated. The lower percentage of respondents with Ph.Ds (4.13%) suggests that advanced academic qualifications are less common in this group, which may reflect the nature of the industry or the focus on practical skills over academic credentials.

Years of Experience: The majority of respondents (38.02%) have 5-10 years of experience, with a significant proportion (27.27%) having 0-5 years of experience. This suggests a workforce that is relatively young in terms of industry experience, with more employees in the earlier stages of their careers. There is a smaller representation of those with more than 10 years of experience, indicating that the organization might have a higher turnover rate or that experienced workers are in smaller numbers.

Bivariate Analysis (Test of Hypotheses)

		Competence mapping	Personal development plan	customer satisfaction	Growth
Competence mapping	Pearson Correlation	1	.832**	.756**	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	121	121	121	121
customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.832**	1	.840**	.811**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	121	121	121	121
Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.756**	.840**	1	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	121	121	121	121

Growth	Pearson Correlation	.752**	.811**	.762**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	121	121	121	121

The results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis provide valuable insights into the relationships between the variables in question. Here's a discussion of the correlation between each of the pairs:

Competence Mapping and Customer Satisfaction: The Pearson correlation between competence mapping and customer satisfaction is **0.832**, which indicates a strong positive relationship. This suggests that as competence mapping improves, customer satisfaction also increases. A higher level of competence mapping, which involves aligning employees' skills with organizational needs, leads to better service delivery, improving customer experiences and satisfaction.

Competence Mapping and Growth: The Pearson correlation between competence mapping and growth is **0.752**, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. This shows that effective competence mapping is strongly associated with organizational growth. When organizations map and develop the competencies of their employees, they are better positioned to adapt to market demands, innovate, and ultimately experience growth.

Personal Development Plan and Customer Satisfaction: The Pearson correlation between personal development plans (PDPs) and customer satisfaction is **0.840**, indicating a very strong positive relationship. This implies that as employees' personal development plans are well-executed, their ability to meet customer needs improves. PDPs enhance employees' skills, which, in turn, leads to more effective communication, problem-solving, and overall customer service, thereby boosting customer satisfaction.

Personal Development Plan and Growth: The Pearson correlation between personal development plans and growth is **0.811**, indicating a strong positive relationship. This correlation suggests that when employees engage in well-structured personal development plans, their growth contributes to the organization's overall success. As employees develop their skills and competencies, they are better equipped to drive organizational growth through improved performance, innovation, and adaptability. In summary, the strong positive correlations between competence mapping, personal development plans, customer satisfaction, and growth highlight the strategic importance of competency planning and employee development in achieving both organizational success and improved customer outcomes.

Discussion of Finding

Based on the first finding, competence mapping positively relate with customer satisfaction. Competence mapping plays a crucial role in ensuring that employees have the skills and abilities needed to meet customer needs effectively. Studies such as those by Spencer and Spencer (1993) and Heskett et al. (1994) suggest that when employees are equipped with the right competencies, they are better positioned to enhance customer satisfaction. The present findings support this, showing that competence mapping directly contributes to customer satisfaction by aligning employee abilities with customer expectations. Past research largely aligns with this notion, arguing that the development of employee competencies not only enhances organizational performance but also improves customer interactions. However,

more recent studies emphasize that the focus should not only be on mapping competencies but also on fostering an adaptive mindset among employees to respond to evolving customer demands. Thus, while past studies support the current findings, they also suggest a more dynamic view of competence mapping, which includes continuous adaptation to customer needs.

The second finding revealed that competence mapping is integral to organizational growth by ensuring that employees possess the necessary skills to drive innovation and adaptability. According to scholars like Boyatzis (1982) and Hamel & Prahalad (1994), competence mapping allows organizations to identify talent gaps and invest in skill development, thus enhancing their ability to grow and stay competitive. Present findings align with these earlier theories, reinforcing the idea that well-defined competencies lead to improved performance and organizational growth. However, past studies primarily focused on growth in a static context, whereas newer research suggests that competence mapping should be continuously updated to account for the rapid pace of change in today's markets. This shift in perspective reflects a broader understanding of growth, where continuous competence development is viewed as a necessity rather than a one-time assessment. While earlier studies are in support of present findings, they emphasize the need for a more dynamic approach to competence mapping.

The third finding shows that there is a positive correlation between personal development plan and customer satisfaction. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) have long been recognized as tools for enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction, which, in turn, influences customer satisfaction. Research by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) and other scholars suggests that when employees feel supported in their professional growth, they are more likely to deliver better service, resulting in higher customer satisfaction. Current findings similarly confirm this relationship, showing that employees with clear personal development paths tend to be more motivated and engaged in their work, thus improving customer interactions. This aligns with earlier research, as both emphasize that employee satisfaction and growth lead to better customer service outcomes. However, newer studies place a stronger emphasis on the importance of continuous personal development to maintain high standards of customer satisfaction in an increasingly competitive environment. The support from past studies is strong, though the present findings highlight a more proactive, ongoing approach to personal development that has gained greater attention in recent years.

The fourth finding shows that personal development plan positively relate with growth. A Personal Development Plan is a key element in both individual and organizational growth. Previous studies by scholars like Senge (1990) and London (2003) have linked personal development to organizational success, asserting that when individuals grow, the organization grows with them. The current findings align with this view, reinforcing that a focus on personal development fosters a culture of growth and adaptability within organizations, ultimately contributing to greater overall success. However, past research primarily emphasized the individual-level benefits of PDPs, such as improved job satisfaction and career progression, whereas recent studies broaden the scope to include the collective organizational benefits, such as innovation and enhanced competitiveness. This shift suggests that personal development is now seen not only as a tool for individual advancement but also as a critical component of organizational strategy. The present findings are consistent with past research, but they reflect an evolution in understanding that integrates personal development with organizational growth in a more holistic manner.

Conclusion

The relationships between competence mapping, personal development plans, and key business outcomes (customer satisfaction and growth) in the telecommunications companies of Rivers State are interdependent and crucial for organizational success. Competence mapping and PDPs serve as critical tools for enhancing employee skills, which directly translate into improved customer satisfaction and business growth. The findings from examining these relationships in the context of Rivers State align with existing research, which emphasizes the importance of aligning employee competencies and development with organizational goals. Telecommunications companies in Rivers State that invest in these practices are likely to see positive outcomes in both customer satisfaction and growth.

Recommendations

Telecommunications companies in Rivers State should invest in regular competence mapping exercises to ensure that their workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to meet evolving customer demands and adapt to technological changes. This can be achieved through regular training programs, performance evaluations, and alignment of employee skills with the strategic goals of the company.

Companies should develop and implement comprehensive PDPs for their employees, focusing on continuous skill development and career progression. Monitoring the progress of these plans will help ensure that employees remain motivated, engaged, and capable of providing high-quality customer service, which will, in turn, enhance customer satisfaction.

Encouraging a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within telecommunications companies in Rivers State will help employees stay adaptable in a rapidly changing industry. By prioritizing personal and professional development, companies can enhance their competitive edge and improve overall business performance.

To support growth, telecommunications companies should focus on innovation and technological advancement. Ensuring that employees are trained on the latest technologies and market trends will enhance both their personal development and the company's ability to grow and scale effectively.

Contribution to Scholarship

This study contributes to the scholarship by providing an empirical examination of the relationship between competence mapping, personal development plans, and their outcomes in the context of telecommunications companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. While existing research has explored the individual concepts of competence mapping and personal development plans, this study combines both variables to assess their direct influence on two critical organizational outcomes—customer satisfaction and growth. By focusing on telecommunications companies in Rivers State, this study also offers a contextualized understanding of how these factors play out in a specific regional setting, adding depth to the global understanding of organizational development in the telecommunications sector. Moreover, the study supports the growing body of literature that suggests a strong link between employee development and company performance, thus affirming the importance of investing in human capital for achieving organizational success. This research serves as a

bridge between theoretical frameworks on competence mapping and personal development plans and their practical applications in the real-world business environment.

Suggestions for Future Research

With rapid advancements in telecommunications technology, it would be valuable for future research to explore how competence mapping and personal development plans should adapt to new technological trends. Understanding how these elements influence the effectiveness of employees in a technology-driven environment could provide further insights into the growth of telecommunications companies.

Future studies could delve deeper into the customer perspective by exploring how customers perceive the influence of employee competence and development on their satisfaction. Investigating customer opinions about the relationship between employee performance and service quality could offer a more holistic view of how internal employee development directly impacts external customer experiences.

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