Effects of Organisational Culture on the Performance of Quantity Surveying Firms in Nigeria

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Abstract

The challenge to the management of quantity surveying firms is not only to focus on devising strategies for driving performance but to ensure sustainability by giving consideration to influences on implemented performance strives. Organisational culture as a social phenomenon has therefore been affirmed as enhancing and sustaining performance. This research therefore attempts to verify whether organisational culture has any impact on the performance of quantity surveying firms. The study adopts survey research design where 126 well structured questionnaires were sent to principal partners, senior and junior quantity surveyors in 42 quantity surveying firms in Lagos out of which 90 questionnaires from 40 quantity surveying firms were analysed using mean score. Stepwise regression analysis was carried out in order to find the most parsimonious set of predictors that are most effective in predicting the performance of quantity surveying firms. The study reveals that organisational culture wields influence on the performance of quantity surveying firms in the areas of reward, stability, competitiveness and performance orientation. The paper concludes that quantity surveying firms can be more efficient and achieve sustainable performance if they focus their attention on those organisational elements that enhance their performance.

Keywords: Organisational culture, Performance, Quantity surveying firms, Service, Nigeria

Introduction

Quantity surveying firms (QSFs) are service oriented organisations providing cost and value management expertise on infrastructure procurement. The importance of infrastructure coupled with the dwindling global economic resources requires QSFs to be apt in performance in the course of service rendition. Previous researches have pointed out some of the performance strives of the QSFs in time past. In Australia QSFs have ventured into services beyond the traditional boundaries (Abdullah and Haron 2005). In Hong Kong, Sonia (2005) points out that knowledge management processes interaction in QSFs has become a powerful tool for sustaining firms' competitiveness and robust innovation practices are found in the QSFs in the United Kingdom (Page, Pearson and Pryke 2004).

In Nigeria, the management of QSFs have been involved in mergers, service diversification and forming consortium with both allied and non-allied professions with the aim of sustaining competitiveness and improving performance. Despite these performance strives, there are persistent calls by experts and researchers (Aliyu, 2011; Babalola, Ojo, Bello, Adafin and Musa 2011; Kawu, 2011 and Oyediran, 2011) for improved performance of the QSFs signalling that their performance is unsatisfactory. Since these performances strives seem incapable of delivering the desired outcome; it is therefore necessary to approach the performance issues from a different perspective by looking at the QSFs as organisations where there are characteristics that are causal of organisational effectiveness and performance. One of such characteristics is organisational culture (OC).

In the past 20 years, research focus has been shifting to the OC paradigm with a strong belief that the performance of organisations is attributable, at least in part, to it (Liu, Shuibo and Meiyung 2006).

In corroboration, Baker (2002) states that once organisational goals are defined, it is necessary to address the type of OC that is necessary to advance these goals and objectives. Hence, for QSFs, there is need to digress from the previous approaches to performance improvement and embrace OC that is more grounded as a predictive and explanatory construct in organisation science. This paper aims to use OC to explain the performance of QSFs by establishing relationships between the two variables with a view to proffering improvement and sustenance measures.

Literature Review

Organisational Culture

Organisational Culture is the pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein 2004). These assumptions are said to be maintained in the continuous process of human interaction (attitudes and behaviour) as the right way in which things are done. Zhang (2010) also describes OC as a mode, composed by some basic assumptions; and the assumptions are found and created gradually by a certain group in the process of exploring the method of adapting to external environment and solving internal interconnected system. Internal integration is the socialisation of new members in the organisations, creating the new boundaries of the organisation and the feeling of identity among personnel and commitment to the organisation (Martins and Terblanche, 2003). External adaptation was also said to be creation of competitive edge, making sense of environment in terms of acceptable behaviour and social system stability.

The definitions by Schein (2004) and Zhang (2010) offer both deeper basic assumption and faith that is shared by organisational members in explaining the purpose; and the environment of organisation itself. Also, the assertions focus on internal integration and external adaptation of organisations which are the OC attributes that define the performance of organisations. It is thus admittable that OC is paramount to organisational success (Twati and Gammack, 2006).

Influence of Organisational Culture on Performance

Organisational culture is gaining support as a predictive and explanatory construct in organisation science (Liu *et al*. 2006), where; if managed and controlled is useful as a management tool for organisational effectiveness and performance. Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2003) argue that several researches have been conducted to identify the nature and type of OC in organisations with a view to eliciting the key values, beliefs, and norms in an organisation that have given much impetus to the success and superior performance of the organisation. To elicit some of these researches and their successes in establishing relationship between OC and performance require that the concept of OC be understood first.

Culture involves beliefs, values and behaviour which exist at various levels and manifest in a wide range of characteristics of organisational life (Krumbholz and Maiden 2000). Included in the wide range of organisational life where culture manifests itself is performance. Therefore, OC is important to organisational success (Twati and Gammack, 2006). Success can be regarded as a performance construct with differing areas as components. Martins and Terblanche (2003) assert that OC seems to be a critical factor in the success of any organisation with particular emphasis on creativity and innovation. This indicates that organisational culture affects the way creative and innovative solutions are encouraged. In their study of the influence of OC on the quality of services provided in higher education in Greece, Trivellas and Dargenidou (2009) find that different dimensions of higher education service quality are linked to specific culture models. Knowledge is considered the one and only distinct resource crucial to sustenance of organisational competitive advantage. Suppiah and Sandhu (2012) find that organisational culture types influence tacit knowledge sharing behaviour positively or negatively depending on the culture type. The negative influence is an indication that the contribution of culture to organisations could not only be positive. For example a strong OC is a potential stumbling block to organisational change. Job satisfaction and commitment are recognised as variables that can majorly determine organisation performance (Riketta 2002, Lok and Crawford 2003). However, both variables (job satisfaction and commitment) are influenced by OC (Lok and Crawford 2003).

Reported in Web book (2012) are leading organisations in the world where different types of culture has been seen to drive and sustain their competitive advantage.

These organisations cut across manufacturing, IT, food chain, automobile, construction and hotel and tourism. Specifically, Microsoft Corporation has been observed to exhibit aggressive and competitive culture which has worked well as seen in their global stand. This information corroborates the assertion of Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2003) based on a study of Malaysian companies that corporate culture contributes to superior performance. In Nigeria, there is a dearth of empirical studies on OC. However, Aluko (2003) finds evidence on the effect of OC on the performance of textile firms.

Measuring Organisational Culture

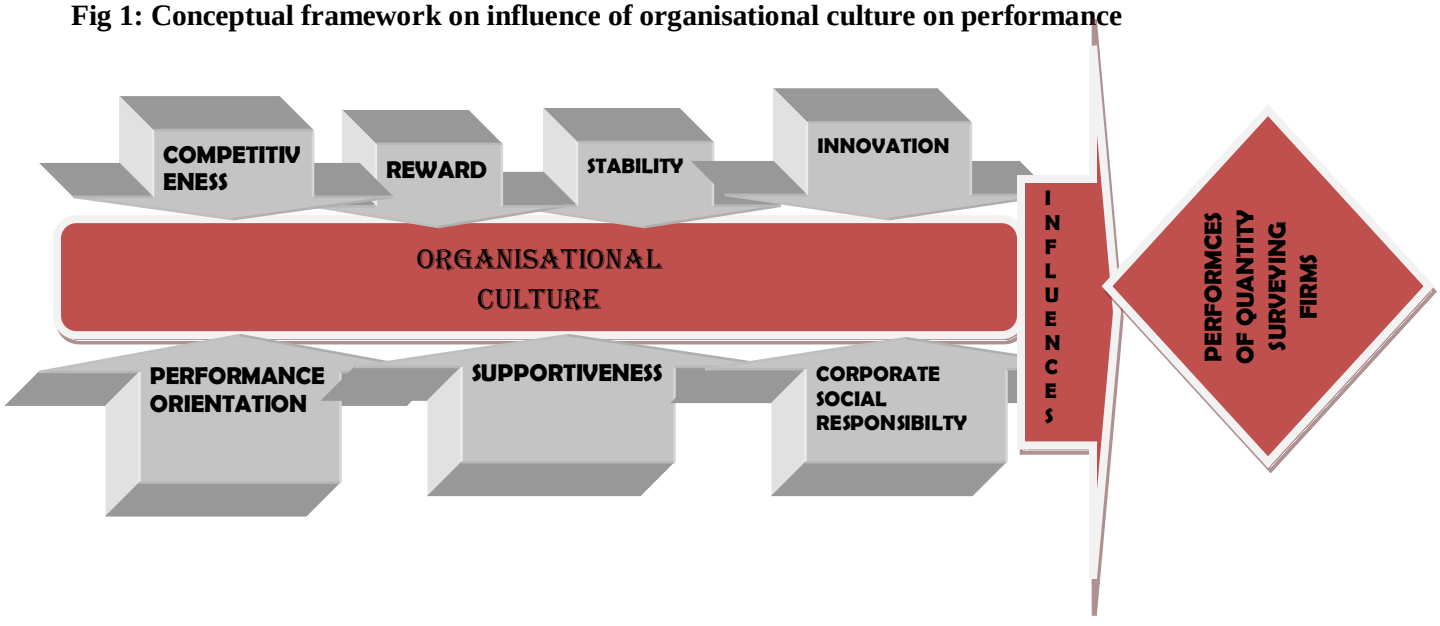
In measuring organisational culture, Organisation Culture Profile (OCP) was adopted because it has three dimensions of goal accomplishment, people orientation and environment related which reflect the performance of service organisations and it represents one of the major measures of organisation culture (Agle and Caldwell 1999, Howard 1998, Cable and Judge 1997). The OCP appears to be most suitable for measuring organisational culture (Sarros, Gray, Densten and Cooper 2005). It consist of 28 items with seven factor structure loadings which are supportiveness, innovation, competitiveness, performance orientation, stability, emphasis on rewards, and social responsibility. Sarros *et al.* (2005) re-categorised the factors into three dimensions namely: people oriented dimension, goal accomplishment dimension and external environment dimension which are important to service organisations like the QSFs

Performance Measures

Various performance measures are used by researchers to assess different types of organisation. Ambastha and Momaya (2004) consider profitability/financial measures, value creation, customer satisfaction and competitiveness as measures of performance of organisations. Innovation as a measure of performance is crucial to attaining a competitive advantage and performance (Naranjo-Valencia, Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle, 2011; Zingheim and Schuster, 2007) and is said to enhance construction services in the UK (Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform 2008). Business process re-engineering is also believed to be a measure of performance in organisations (Muthu, Whitman and Cheraghi 1999; Weerakkody and Currie, 2003). Market orientation and service flexibility are considered as measures of competitiveness and performance in service firms (Akimova 2009, Aranda 2003). Customer satisfaction and service quality are also regarded as measures of performance (Zingheim and Schuster, 2007; Razalli, 2008). Additionally, job-satisfied employees can strongly contribute to an organization's success by having a customer-centric approach in their work and in their work-related interactions (Bulgarella, 2005).

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework in a visual form so as to ensure a better understanding of the data collected and its presentation and analysis in accordance with Goddard (1999).

Fig 1: Conceptual framework on influence of organisational culture on performance



The Nature of Quantity Surveying Firms in Nigeria

Quantity Surveying Firms are service based which provide consultancy, financial and allied management services to their clients (Abidin, Yusof, Hassan and Adros, 2011). Oyediran (2011) views QSFs as knowledge based firm because quantity surveyors sell knowledge and not physical product when in operation. It is noteworthy that this knowledge is transformed into service that gets delivered to clients eventually. The performance of QSFs in Nigeria has been less impressive as few of them were involved in all the project developments of the Federal and State governments (Kawu, 2011). The all encompassing involvement of QSFs in project development in Nigeria has diminished over time. Presently QSFs are seen as only good for providing cost management on building projects procurement. Professionals in the field of engineering are of the opinion that Quantity Surveyors are incapable of providing cost management on engineering infrastructures. Jagun (2006) notes that many projects are being conceived and executed in different sectors of the Nigerian economy without the involvement of a Quantity Surveyor but that of other professionals. This is probably due to their poor performance and inability to satisfy their clients. Therefore the QSFs have not been able to occupy their rightful position in the Nigerian construction industry.

Reports have it that many regular clients are critical of traditional services of the QSFs (Page, Pearson and Pryke, 2004). Presently the consultancy commission fortunes of the QSFs are tied to the goodwill of friendly architecture and engineering firms (Oyediran, 2011). It is to be noted that a commanding performance of the QSFs would have mitigated their reliance on allied firms. In the area of ICT which contributes to performance enhancement, the QSFs appear to be making sluggish progress (Usman, Said and Yahaya, 2012). Virtually all the Nigerian QSFs are structured as either sole proprietorship or partnership which no longer satisfies the present day business environment (Annunike, 2011). Most of the QSFs have the principal and a few qualified professionals with weak or no corporate structure and best business practice (Aliyu, 2011). The Nigerian QSFs are confronted with many shortcomings like offering services on *ex-gratia* basis which exposes them to survival risks. They are small in size with low capacity, little training capability, poor staff motivation and inability to retain specialists.

Research Method

This study employed survey design approach for being a good measure of aspects of employee workplace as well as for focusing on just the issues of interest and offering complete control on the questions being asked. Furthermore, surveys are quantifiable and therefore are not only indicators in themselves, but also allow the application of more sophisticated analysis techniques appropriate to organisations (Xenos and Christodoulakis, 1997). Using this approach, 126 questionnaires were sent to 42 QSFs in Lagos state. The respondents were Principal partner, Senior and Junior Quantity Surveyors. The inclusion of the three hierarchies was to allow for robust and all inclusive response since perception of organisational culture can vary among hierarchies in organisations. Ninety (90) or 71.42% questionnaires from forty (40) or 95.23% firms were returned. The rate of response is considered adequate for this study judging from the response rate of about 30% in the construction industry.

Instrument

In assessing organisational culture, the OCP instrument was used. The instrument has 28 questions organised into seven constructs with four contents in each construct. The seven constructs represent the factors that constitute organisational culture. For the performance aspect, ten constructs were used to represent the performance areas typical of service firms. Each of the ten constructs was operationalised into four variables. The content of each of the constructs of both organisational culture and performance were made to reflect the peculiarities of QSFs in Nigeria. The questionnaire employed was a multiple-choice type using 5-point Likert type scale. Respondents were asked to rate the extent of agreement or disagreement with statements cast for both organisational culture and performance of QSFs using 5 as 'strongly agree' and 1 as 'strongly disagree'.

Analysis

The SPSS was used for finding the mean item score of the respondents. From the mean score values, a stepwise regression analysis was conducted in order to find the most parsimonious set of predictors that are most effective in predicting the performance areas. Abiola-Falemu (2012) states that stepwise regression analysis is appropriate not only because it provides the means of assessing the predictive ability of individual variables but also show the factors that influence an outcome.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Results of regression analysis of dependent variables on independent variables

	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES									
	FNPF	BPRE	MKTO	COMP	SFLE	EMSAT	CMSAT	VALCR	SQUAL	INNO
Adjusted R^2	0.059	0.125	0.029	0.2	0.05	0.075	0.051	0.214	0.091	0.082
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
F-statistic	8.589	18.078	6.321	18.948	19.777	15.543	7.495	33.627	19.032	11.749
DEPENDENT VARIABLES										
Stability		**0.165**		**0.15**		**0.187**	**0.135**	**0.387**		**0.141**
Innovation				**0.175**						
Corporate social responsibility				**0.447**						
Reward	**0.197**	**0.117**				**0.338**	**0.208**			**0.149**
Competitiveness		**0.25**	**0.213**	**0.246**				**0.482**		
Performance orientation					**0.267**				**0.253**	**0.385**

ρ-value is significant at 0.05 The values in bold print are the variable coefficients β

FNPF – Financial performance, BPRE – Business process re-engineering, MKTO – Market orientation, COMP – Competitiveness, SFLE – Service flexibility, EMSAT – Employee satisfaction, CMSAT – Customer satisfaction, VALCR – Value creation, SQUAL – Service quality, INNO - Innovation

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analysis carried out. The adjusted R^2 values on Table 1 express in percentage the proportion of dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The variable coefficients β reveals the proportion of the adjusted R^2 value that is attributed to the independent variable in each of the dependent variables on Table 1. The ρ-values in the Table 1 which are all less than the level of significance set out in the analysis (ρ-values < 0.05) indicate that the change caused by the independent variable on the dependent variable is significant. The generic finding from the analysis shows that all the types of organisational culture except the supportiveness culture have significant effect on one or more performance measures. Supportiveness culture has no influence on any of the performance areas of quantity surveying firms. Supportiveness culture emphasises team and people orientation, sharing information freely and general collaboration within an organisation (Sarros *et al.,* 2005). Since most employee Quantity Surveyors at all levels in QSFs are hardly regular in their offices due to varying site visits, collaborative and supportive ventures are therefore hampered. This could prevent Supportiveness culture from providing significant influence on the performance of quantity surveying firms. However, other types of organisational culture that influence performance in quantity surveying firms are discussed as follows:

Financial performance (FNPF)

Financial performance which is also interpreted as firms' profit is a measure of organisational performance (DeVaro, 2006). Due to the structure of QSFs in Nigeria, their financial performance is predicated to a great extent on annual values of new consultancies, number of new clients in a year and annual profit level. From Table 1, the financial performance of the QSFs is attributable to organisational culture factor of reward. This is in agreement with Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2003) that culture influences the financial performance of organisations. Reward emphasises fairness, opportunities for professional growth, high pay and praise for good performance (Sarros *et al.,* 2005; Medcof and Rumpel 2005). By implication, the reward culture impacts on the financial performance of QSFs.

Furthermore, the predictability of the financial performance of QSFs could best be explained by the expectancy theory. Medcof and Rumpel (2005) state that the expectation theory proposes that workers will be motivated to exert a high level of effort in their work if they perceive that their efforts will lead to good performance (expectancy) which is instrumental to obtaining the rewards offered by the organization and that those rewards have significant positive value to the worker. Explicitly, reward culture in quantity surveying firms is structured to be employee-driven in that motivations are attached to the performance of employees. And since motivations are a product of the finance level, employees thus concentrate on exerting high level effort on works that improves the finances of the quantity surveying firms.

Business process re-engineering (BPRE)

A business process is a series of steps designed to produce a product or a service and it includes all the activities that deliver particular results for a given client (Muthu, Whitman and Cheraghi, 1999). An organization is also said to be as effective as its processes. Therefore, an organisation with flawed process is ineffective. BPR advocates process improvements in organisations. Ojo (2010) reflecting Saffold (1988) notes that culture can influence organisational processes. From Table 1, stability, reward and competitiveness cultures influence the business process re-engineering in quantity surveying firms. Stability culture emphasises business stability, calmness, security of employment and minimal conflict.

Achievement orientation, emphasis on quality, distinctiveness and competitiveness are the elements of competitiveness culture (Sarros *et al.,* 2005). Stability, reward and competitiveness cultures in quantity surveying firms address its environment, people and goals respectively. The environment, people and goals in organisations are similar to what Muthu, Whitman and Cheraghi (1999) refer to as jobs, people and tasks that BPR addresses. Therefore, this convergence thus explains why these types of culture influence business process re-engineering in QSFs.

Market orientation (MKTO)

Competitiveness culture influences the market orientation of QSFs. The comprehensive understanding of the clients' value chain with the aim of delivering superior client value by organisations is termed marketing orientation (Slater and Narver 1994). Competitiveness culture emphasises achievement orientation, emphasis on quality, distinctiveness and competitiveness (Sarros *et al.,* 2005). Competitiveness culture is also referred to as aggressive culture which places emphases on outperforming competitors (Web book, 2012). Thus, the entrenchment of competitiveness culture in QSFs leads to sourcing for information on clients in order to understand their needs and deliver results that outclass other competitors. Clearly, the activity of sourcing and understanding of information on clients' need is market orientation.

Firms' competitiveness (COMP)

The competitiveness of QSFs is explained by stability, innovation, social responsibility and competitiveness cultures. At the firm level, competitiveness is generally understood to refer to the ability of the firm to retain and, better still, expand its global market share, increase its profits and expand (Kumar and Chadee 2002). In Sarros *et al.,* (2005), stability and social responsibility cultures are referred to as environment related while innovation and competitiveness are business related. The environment related cultures bothers on concerns beyond and external to the organisation. This includes the business standing of the organisation, image and reputation. The business related cultures bother on issues that leads to achieving the business goal of an organisation. Clearly, the business and environment related cultures in QSFs could only influence its strives to become better because the cultures focus on issues bothering on improving the firms. Abidin *et al.,* (2011) stress the need for QSFs to be competitive; and organisational culture is a means to attain the competitiveness.

Service flexibility (SFLE) and Service quality (SQUAL)

Performance orientation culture influences the service flexibility and quality of QSFs. Quantity surveying firms are service based that provide consultancy and manage financial related issues for their clients (Abidin *et al.*, 2011). Flexibility and quality in service bothers on improving the performance of QSFs. Alvarez Gil (1994) describes flexibility as a useful tool to improve competitive position of firms and Frei, Kalakota and Marx (1997) posit that service quality is an essential part of organisational success. Performance orientation culture emphasises high performance expectation, job enthusiasm, results orientation and high organisation (Sarros *et al.,* 2005).

Organisations entrenching performance orientation culture are conscious of performance and goal accomplishment (Bashayreh, 2009). Thus, performance orientation culture addresses the service performance of QSFs because they are service organisations. By extension, flexibility and quality of service of QSFs are influenced by performance orientation culture.

Employee satisfaction (EMSAT) and customer satisfaction (CMSAT)

Stability culture emphasises general organisation stability, calmness, minimal conflict level and security of employment (Sarros *et al.,* 2005). The stability culture of QSFs ensures comfortable firms' standing in terms of broader client network, favourable financial and business position. This translates to security of employment and minimal organisational conflict. Suffice to say that this is a form of reward to employees. Medcof and Rumpel (2005) emphasise the value of reward as it helps to attract and retain employees. Aside from stability culture, this also explains why employee satisfaction in QSFs is influenced by reward culture.

Delivering service to construction industry clients to time, cost and quality may not ensure their total satisfaction. Modern day clients want to identify with their service providers and key into their vision. Therefore, stability culture which places emphasis on the positioning of organisations provides an avenue for such organisations to provide their clients with an opportunity to identify with them. Clients are known to be boastful of their service providers because they see this as a way to sustain and improve on their social status. This explains why the customer satisfaction of QSFs is influenced by the stability culture. The interaction of the employees with the customer offers an explanation as to why employees' satisfaction affects customers' satisfaction.
The interaction puts the employees in good position to develop awareness of and respond to customer goals and needs which can only be achieved when the employees are satisfied and motivated (Bulgarella, 2005). The satisfaction and motivation of employees are a function of the reward culture of organisations. In addition to stability culture in quantity surveying firms, the response that clients get therein is also attributable to the level of motivation and satisfaction (reward) of the employees responding to them.

Value creation (VALCR)

Abidin *et al.*, (2011) and Frei (2010) are of the view that QSFs should be synonymous with value creation.. Value is the amount buyers are willing to pay for what a firm provides them and is measured by total revenue (Porter, 1985). A firm is then said to be profitable if the value it commands exceeds the costs involved in creating the product. Table 1 reveals the influence of stability and competitiveness cultures on the value creation of quantity surveying firms. In Sarros *et al.* (2005), competitiveness culture emphasises achievement orientation, emphasis on quality, distinctiveness and competitiveness.

In QSFs, competitiveness culture emphasise the uniqueness in the service provided and its delivery. This uniqueness is what Abidin *et al.* (2011) refers to as differentiation. This therefore explains the predictability of value creation by competitiveness culture since value is created by differentiation along every step of the value chain (Porter, 1985). One of the scenarios created by stability culture is making the clients identify with QSFs. Modern day clients are more satisfied with service providers that key into their strategic vision in the course of service rendition. By this, the service providers have added value to the clients. Clients thus identify with the category of QSFs that add value to them. This further explains the influence of stability culture on the value creation since value created and stability culture are both means which allows client to identify with the QSFs.

Innovation (INNO)

McLean (2005) describes innovation as bringing an idea from concept to market, recognising the idea for its potential, funded in an environment of scarce or at least competing resources and overcome potential obstacles such as technology challenges, competitive pressures, and a variety of others. Innovation is achieved in organisations when creative risk taking and promptness in taking advantage of opportunities is encouraged by allowing individual responsibilities and initiatives. This is what Sarros *et al.* (2005) referred to as innovation culture. Table 1 show that innovation is influenced by stability, reward and performance cultures. This is in agreement with Martins and Terblanche (2003) and Naranjo-Valencia *et al*. (2011) that states that organisational culture influences innovation in organisations and suggests that different organisational cultures will be required depending on the innovation strategic orientation of the firm.

The innovation strategic orientation in QSFs in Nigeria seem to be any or all of service, product, process, market, organisational and resource innovations (Page *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, as the core value of stability culture is general organisational stability. It influences innovation because of the organisational strategic orientation of QSFs. Suffice to say that QSFs in Nigeria have been strategising for improved organisational structuring after Annunike (2011) has continually reiterated its unpleasant state. Creative acquisition, organisation and management of new human resources are a typology of innovation in organisations. Thus, the influence of reward culture on innovation of QSFs is attributable to the fact that the management of the firms are looking at innovative ways of attracting and retaining skilled employees like the corporate organisations.

Innovative ways of handling human resources in QSFs is necessary going by the assertion of Aliyu (2011) that employees in the QSFs are poorly motivated. Innovation in QSFs is also influenced by performance orientation culture. It emphasises high performance expectation, job enthusiasm, results orientation and high organisation (Sarros *et al*, 2005); similar to outcome oriented culture in Web book (2012) that instils performance consciousness in employees of organisations. Thus, as employees in the performance oriented QSFs strive to perform, they tend to think and act innovatively. Thus, the aggregate of innovative thoughts and acts results to innovation and explains the influence of performance oriented culture on the innovation of QSFs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this research, organisational culture has been affirmed to influence the performance of QSFs. Explicitly; the financial performance of QSFs is solely influenced by reward culture. Both stability and reward cultures influence business process re-engineering, employee and customer satisfaction and value creation in QSFs. The competitiveness of QSFs is influenced by stability, innovation, social responsibility and competitiveness cultures. Competitiveness and stability culture influence the value creation of the QSFs. Service rendered in the QSFs in terms of service quality and flexibility as well as the innovativeness is influenced by performance orientation culture. Therefore, the main research question of this study has not only been answered; the types of organisational culture that influence each of the performance areas in QSFs have been made explicit. While it is reasonable to conclude that the QSFs should give emphasis to these cultures in enhancing their performance drives, it is suggested that priority should be accorded to both reward and stability cultures due to their broad based influence on the performance of QSFs. This findings of this study also implicate that against the backdrop of QSFs playing the latter/rear game in organisational effectiveness and performance in the construction industry, a new course has been channelled not only to see improved QSFs but also a performance sustaining one. With the immense contribution of culture to organisations, the management of QSFs is not expected to give sole consideration to organisational culture in driving performance but embrace an all encompassing organisational strategies so as to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

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