Fostering Organizational Learning through Corporate Culture, and Core Competences

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the relationship between corporate culture, core competences and organizational learning among manufacturing firms in Uganda. Using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide, this research gathered quantitative and qualitative data from 410 Ugandan manufacturing businesses in Uganda. A cross-sectional explanatory survey design was employed to study the nature of reality. To test the hypothesis, regression analysis was performed, while content analysis was used to evaluate qualitative data. According to the results, corporate culture has a positive influence on organizational learning, and core competencies also have a positive effect on organizational learning. The results supported the theoretical foundations of organizational learning and resource-based view theories. As a result of the findings, manufacturing firms may increase the influence of strategic leadership on organizational learning by promoting cultures that emphasize employees' desire to improve and learn, openness, creativity, teamwork, interaction with others, open dialogue, long-term orientation, and mutual trust. Furthermore, manufacturing firms should guarantee that capabilities are built inside their organizations. The results might help Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and policymakers develop strategies and policies to boost organisational learning among manufacturing firms. This research contributes to our knowledge of the influence of strategic leadership aspects on organizational learning in manufacturing firms, particularly in a developing country like Uganda.

Keywords: Organizational learning, Corporate culture, Core competences, Strategic leadership, Customer value, Manufacturing firms.

Highlights of this paper

- This study adds two important findings to new knowledge. First, it shows how cultures such as organizational commitment and teamwork influences organizational learning. Second, the study gives real-world examples of how core competence affects organizational learning especially among Ugandan manufacturing firms.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ever-changing corporate environment has fueled current interest in organizational learning and its capacity to boost organizational competitiveness (Dahou, Hacini, & Burgoyne, 2019; Lau, McLean, Hsu, & Lien, 2017; Mitsuhashi & Yasuda, 2017; Oh & Han, 2020). Promoting organizational learning (OL) is an essential management approach for firms seeking to preserve a competitive advantage and develop their knowledge resources. OL is critical in generating creative initiatives that support firms' competitive edge in a constantly changing global market (Li & Herd, 2017).

Putting learning at the heart of an organization's strategy allows it to stay competitive (Bloodgood, 2018). Oh and Han (2020) has defined OL as a collective attempt to quietly transmit and absorb non-deliberately and subconsciously social behaviors of organizational members. Despite its many definitions, mainstream understandings of OL emphasize its origins in the personal learning of organizational members (Shrivastava, 1983). Furthermore, over the last four decades, the concept of OL has grown and evolved in accordance with various academic perspectives, including management, education, sociology, political science, and anthropology (Popova-Nowak & Cseh, 2015). Learning in organizations has been examined and interpreted from a variety of academic viewpoints in order to better understand how organizations learn (Tempest, McKinlay, & Starkey, 2004). In the early attempts to understand how companies learn, researchers extended individual learning processes to organizations (Campbell & Armstrong, 2013; Shrivastava, 1983).

The essential premise of this viewpoint was that organizations learn in the same way as people do, by gaining information, evaluating it, and storing it Huber (1991). Meanwhile, organizations were thought to have OL capability because they possessed specific types of organizational and managerial practices that facilitated learning and thus achieved their goals (Chiva, Alegre, & Lapiedra, 2007; Jerez-Gomez, Céspedes-Lorente, & Valle-Cabrera, 2005; Tohidi, Seyedaliakbar, & Mandegari, 2012). Management was primarily interested in determining if organizations owned the finest practices or the most successful systems, such as leadership or knowledge exchange platforms, which would directly foster learning within an organization.

Organizations, on the other hand, learn from a sociological standpoint because they have a distinct value system built in the social interaction of organizational members who support it, and they learn via their own interpretation processes based on practices, myths, and beliefs (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Gherardi, 2001). Thus, the OL process may be seen as socially created, with people or groups negotiating, interpreting, or integrating their experiences to produce new structures, systems, and performance. OL entails not just acquiring explicit information but also willingly engaging in and jointly doing what is necessary in organizational life (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999; Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000).

OL has emerged as a critical management framework or set of practices in terms of firm success, with much research from a variety of multidisciplinary perspectives devoted to understanding how and why organizations learn (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). Because of its significance as a source of competitive advantage in coping with volatile settings, research has concentrated on identifying the determinants of OL (Oh & Kuchinke, 2017; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

However, few studies have been conducted to determine the effects of corporate culture (CC) on OL in terms of direct or indirect effects on, or construction of, organizational members' beliefs, values, and behavior in relation to

participation in a collective learning process involving the interpretation of new ideas or reinterpretation of existing ideas. CC is a significant environmental factor that influences whether or not members of an organization are willing to participate in OL activities. From a social constructionist standpoint, CC changes assumptions about how people think, what information is valuable and widely accepted, and how knowledge will be used (De Long & Fahey, 2000). From a resource standpoint, CC is a significant driver to nurture other management techniques as well as to increase organizational learning since it is also recognized as a key resource for sustained competitiveness owing to its particularly beneficial attributes (Barney, 1991).

For example, trust between people, open communication and sharing of knowledge, organizational culture and climate, and transformational leadership are all strong predictors of organizational learning (Flores, Zheng, Rau, & Thomas, 2012; Hsu, 2014; Sattayaraksa & Boon-itt, 2016; Swift & Hwang, 2013). Corporate culture is a key factor in organizational learning because it shows employees how to act and think (Flores et al., 2012). Even though different factors that lead to organizational learning have been looked at in the past, few studies have shown that corporate culture plays a role in organizational learning. Also, it was found that core competence has an effect on organizational learning (Abel, 2008).

Also, only a few studies were done to find out how core competences affect organizational learning, according to the empirical literature that was looked at. To further understand how corporate culture and core competencies affect learning in organizations, additional study is required. This knowledge is especially important because organizational learning can help employees become active members of the organization and, in the long run, can contribute to a firm's performance and competitive advantage (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2004).

So, the goal of this study is to look at the ways in which corporate culture, core competence, and organizational learning are connected. This study adds two important things to the research on how organizations learn. First, we looked at how corporate culture affects organizational learning in the real world. Second, we gave real-world examples of how core competence affects organizational learning among Ugandan manufacturing firms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Corporate Culture and Organisational Learning

Several studies indicate that corporate culture is crucial to organizational learning (Argote, McEvily, & Reagans, 2003). Organizational culture may be described as the shared values, beliefs, and implicit assumptions shared by all members of an organization (Cameron & Sine, 1999; Rohit, Frederick, & Webster, 1989).

These values, beliefs, and assumptions impact actions that are fundamental to organizational learning, either facilitating it or serving as a barrier to it Davenport and Prusak (2009); De Long and Fahey (2000). The significance of corporate culture in driving organizational learning has long been recognized (Alsabbagh & Khalil, 2017; Cook & Yanow, 1993).

Corporate culture promotes the efficacy of learning and behavior by assisting the ordinary process of gaining information and understanding via intellect, experience, and the senses (Kululanga, Edum-Fotwe, & McCaffer, 2001). According to Tallman (2015) organizational learning is vital in ensuring that knowledge is consistently updated to allow efficient reactions to changes.

Liao, Chang, Hu, and Yueh (2012) discovered that company culture is connected to organizational learning in a positive way. Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) observed similar results (Liao et al., 2012) investigated the effect of corporate culture on organizational learning and concluded that corporate culture does not directly affect performance; rather, it influences organizational learning behavior, which enhances business performance. According

to Chan and Scott-Ladd (2004) organizational learning failures may be caused by a lack of communication across the organization's many cultures.

Corporate culture may act as a standard of cognitions or interpretations, influencing the efficacy of organizational learning and behavior (Mahler, 1997). Organizational learning, according to Kululanga et al. (2001) functions as a catalyst for developing an organizational learning culture, and the learning culture systematically promotes organizational learning.

Corporate culture can be viewed as a knowledge repository with the ability to store and process information, whereas organizational learning is critical in ensuring that the knowledge repository is constantly replenished and updated to allow efficient responses to changes in its competitive environment (Lemon & Sahota, 2004). According to Liao et al. (2012) organizational learning is positively associated with corporate culture.

Moreover, Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) found that corporate culture positively influences organizational learning. According to De Long and Fahey (2000) organizational learning is impacted by corporate culture in four ways First, culture influences workers' beliefs regarding the value of information and which types of knowledge are worth managing. Second, culture influences the organizational learning process by facilitating the transformation of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge.

Thirdly, culture influences the procedures used to generate, validate, and disseminate new information. In conclusion, culture establishes the context for social interaction, which ultimately affects an organization's capacity to generate, share, and apply knowledge.

Consequently, diverse corporate cultures will have diverse effects on organizational learning (Chang & Lee, 2007). It's important to foster an environment that values employees' desire to learn and grow, openness, autonomy or self-direction; employee empowerment; risk assumption and tolerance for ambiguity; creativity; teamwork; interaction with others; open dialogue; long-term orientation; organizational commitment and mutual trust.

The comparison of the aforementioned learning-oriented culture characteristics with the types of cultures in Cameron and Sine (1999) model permits the derivation of certain conclusions. Initially, hierarchical cultures have the most detrimental effect on learning.

This culture places a premium on the achievement of norms, formal processes, and control, which are viewed as the most significant barriers to learning because they discourage autonomy, a focus on continuous change, communication and conversation, empowerment, and risk-taking. These characteristics define the stability and control (as opposed to flexibility) aspect of Cameron and Sine (1999) model. Taking this into account, clan and adhocracy cultures, which foster flexibility (versus stability and control), will be those which enhance organizational learning the most.

In addition to collaboration, other clan values that facilitate organizational learning include organizational commitment.

Moreover, entrepreneurialism, openness, risk-taking orientation, and change orientation, the adhocracy culture has additional attributes necessary for organizational learning. Lastly, despite the fact that market culture may assist the acquisition of external information and knowledge, its focus on goal attainment may diminish the long-term orientation associated with learning. In addition, this culture prioritizes stability and control above the flexibility essential for learning.

Therefore, a detrimental impact on organizational learning might be anticipated from this culture. Very few research have examined the relationship between corporate culture and learning (Chang & Lee, 2007; Chin-Loy & Mujtaba, 2007). Despite contradictory data (Sanz-Valle, Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Perez-Caballero, 2011) in their findings indicate that corporate culture positively affects organizational learning. Specifically, they

discovered that adhocracy and clan culture are favorably correlated with organizational learning, but hierarchical culture has a negative correlation. We hypothesize consequently that;

H_{01} *Corporate culture has no significant effect on organizational learning.*

2.2. Core Competences and Organisational Learning

In addition, the resource-based view of the firm has emphasized core competencies as a crucial element for enhancing learning within organizations. According to Chew, Yan, and Cheah (2008) a company's core capability distinguishes it from its environment.

According to Sanchez and Heene (1997) core competencies often originate from "collective learning" processes and show themselves in company activities and procedures. The core competencies are the distinctive competencies that often span many products or markets (Hafeez, Zhang, & Malak, 2002). According to Kim, Park, and Choi (2017) a company's core competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and personal characteristics, empowering the workers to act professionally and appropriately. Numerous types of "core competencies" have been described in the literature. Chang and Chang (2012) define three basic competencies: 1) Market access competencies, 2) Integrity-relevant competencies, and 3) Functionality-relevant competencies. According to Vic and Kaussar (2001) market access competencies help a firm get closer to its customers (e.g. brand management, sales and marketing, technical customer support, and logistics), integrity-related competencies help a firm deliver products/services faster and with higher quality (e.g. quality management, knowledge management, time management, just in time systems, and faster production), and functionality-related competencies help a firm deliver product/service functionality (e.g. innovation management, more and improved features, and exceptional after sales services beyond normal expectations).

Thompson and Richardson (1996) categorizes organizational strategic core competencies as learning and awareness competencies, process competencies, and strategy content competencies.

These competences, which impact organizational efficiency and productivity, are crucial for the strategic performance and success of firms. Ashton-James, Richardson, Williams, Bianchi-Berthouze, and Dekker (2014) identifies nine fundamental characteristics that have been implemented in various ways across the literature. These qualities include a focus on customer service, adaptability, dedication to corporate values, accomplishment oriented, entrepreneurship and initiative, innovative problem solving and decision making, empowerment, and talent/performance management.

In addition, Abel (2008) discovered that there are two sorts of competencies in organizations: hard competences and soft competences. According to Abel (2008) hard competencies help firms in identifying the resources required for individual and group learning. Soft skills, on the other hand, relate to personal behaviors, personal qualities, and personal motivations, which, according to Moore, Cheng, and Dainty (1982) include working with people, leadership, and other behaviours.

All of these characteristics and motives encourage organizational learning, as described by Abel (2008). Over time, a company's core competencies might become institutionalized and hence integrated into its knowledge-creating system (Lei, Hitt, & Bettis, 1996). Studies on core competencies provide a variety of reasons for the idea of core competencies and its function in fostering learning in organizations (Srivastava, 2005). Evidence demonstrates a rise in the use of competence models to drive workplace learning activities by organizations (Garavan & McGuire, 2001). The use of competence frameworks as the focal point of workplace learning provides the twin function of enabling the identification of learning needs and ensuring that learning provision is aligned with business requirements (Mabey & Thomson, 2000). Numerous studies have evaluated the link between corporate culture, core competencies, and

organizational learning in industrialized nations, but few have done so in developing nations, and none in Uganda specifically. We therefore hypothesize that.

H_o Core competences has no significant effect on organizational learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Sample

To investigate the link between corporate culture, core competencies, and organizational learning, the researchers used a cross-sectional explanatory survey methodology that blended qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

Based on Taherdoost (2017) the study targeted a population of 1,324 manufacturing firms registered with the Uganda Manufacturers' Association, from which a sample of 624 firms was taken. Manufacturing companies in Uganda served as the study's unit of analysis. A total of 410 manufacturing companies provided quantitative data, yielding a response rate of 65.7 percent. The quantitative data was supplemented with qualitative data from 10 respondents.

3.2. Measurement of Variables

3.2.1. Dependent Variable

To measure the construct of organizational learning, the tool developed by Santos-Vijande, López-Sánchez, and Trespalacios (2012) which consists of several dimensions such as information acquisition (11 items), knowledge dissemination (7 items), shared interpretation (6 items) and organizational memory (7 items) were adapted and used in this study.

3.2.2. Independent Variables

A tool developed by Ireland and Hitt (1999) and empirically tested by Serfontein (2010) and Jooste and Fourie (2009) were used to measure corporate culture and core competences among manufacturing firms in Uganda.

3.2.3. Control Variables

The study controlled for the firm age, and firm size. Firm age was measured as the number of years since the establishment of the firm (Xiao Wu, Yao, & Luan Guo, 2021). Firm size was assessed by the firm's number of employees (Becker-Blease, Kaen, Etebari, & Baumann, 2010).

The statements in the questionnaire were all anchored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "Much worse than competitors" to (7) "Much better than competitors" or (1) "Strongly disagree", to (7) "Strongly Agree" were used. The seven-point Likert scale was selected because it was considered to be most valid and reliable since most authors of the original measure used it to test the psychometric properties of the variables.

3.3. Data Entry, Editing and Reliability Analysis

Input errors, missing values, outliers, and normalcy were all checked in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) once the quantitative data from the field was inputted. Unusable data was found to be at 0.1 percent, which is within the 0.5 percent rule of thumb (Hadi, Imon, & Werner, 2009).

The data was evaluated for normality assumptions and a normal distribution pattern was identified. Furthermore, as proposed by Won, Wan, and Sharif (2017) tests for linearity were carried out using scatter plots of

the standardized residuals of the dependent variable and the independent variables, and the results showed that the dependent variable and the independent variables had linear relationships.

The data was then tested for homoscedasticity, and the result showed that the data was homoscedastic since all of the test statistic values had a level of significance more than 5% (p-value >.05). In addition, the Varience inflation factor (VIF) values were less than ten and the tolerance level was larger than 0.10, suggesting that there was no multi-collinearity. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.75 was achieved in serial correlation testing, indicating that there was no serial correlation since the result was within the 1.5 to 2.5 range recommended by the authors (Savin & White, 1977).

3.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Organizational Learning

Organizational learning was measured in terms of information acquisition, knowledge dissemination, shared interpretation and organizational memory.

Ten items from exploratory factor analysis under information acquisition as a dimension survived, while item 7 was eliminated as a result of low loading. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed and retained all the 7 items from exploratory factor analysis from knowledge dissemination.

Item 5,6 &7 were eliminated under organizational memory and a total of 4 items were retained after conducting confirmatory factor analysis. Under shared interpretation, items 4, and 7 were eliminated as a result of low loading. Results from the confirmatory factor analysis for firm competitiveness are indicated in the Table 1.

Table 1. Model fit measures of confirmatory factor analysis for organisational learning.

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	989.253	--	--
DF	287	--	--
CMIN/DF	3.447	Between 1 and 3	Acceptable
CFI	0.873	>0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.079	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.036	<0.06	Excellent
PClose	0.048	>0.05	Acceptable

Note:
CFI: Comparative factor index.
RMSEA: Root mean square of error approximation.
CMIN/DF: Mininum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom divided.
SRMR: Standard root mean squared residual.
Source: Survey data 2022.

Figure 1 illustrates the confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements.

The elements of strategic leadership were measured in terms of corporate culture and core competence. All the 3 items from exploratory factor analysis under quality as a dimension survived. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed and retained all the 6 items from exploratory factor analysis from core competence. Three items for corporate culture were retained, while item 4 was eliminated as a result of low loading after conducting confirmatory factor analysis. The measurement model yielded acceptable fit indices (Eisenburger & Tschernitschek, 1998) suggesting a good representation of strategic leadership items retained after confirmatory factor analysis. Results from the confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements are indicated in the Table 2.
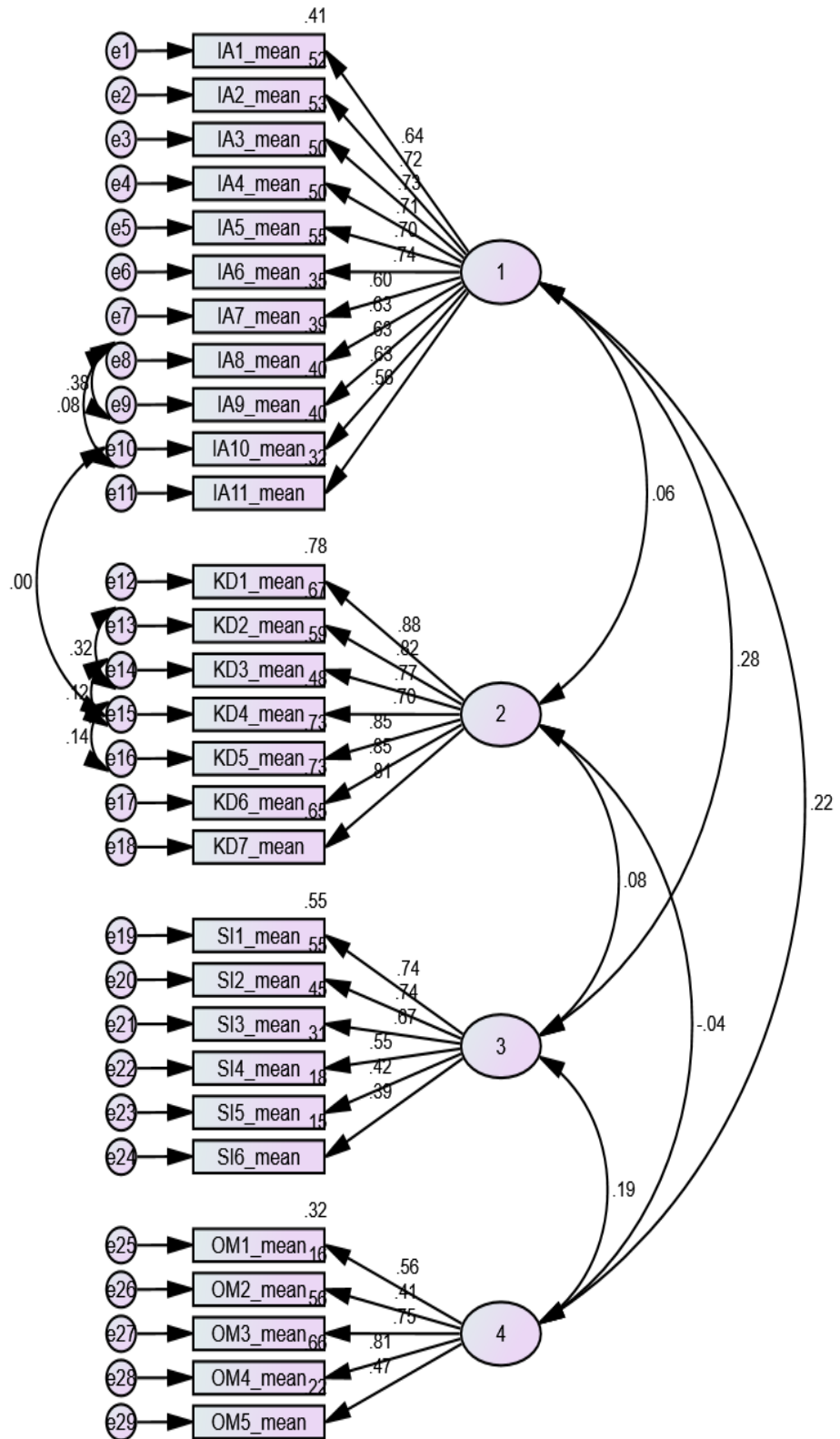
Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements.

Measures	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	95.945	--	--
DF	23	--	--
CMIN/DF	4.172	Between 1 and 3	Acceptable
CFI	0.955	>0.95	Excellent
SRMR	0.053	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.061	<0.06	Acceptable
PClose	0.000	>0.05	Terrible

Note:
CFI: Comparative factor index.
RMSEA: Root mean square of error approximation.
CMIN/DF: Mininum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom divided.
SRMR: Standard root mean squared residual.
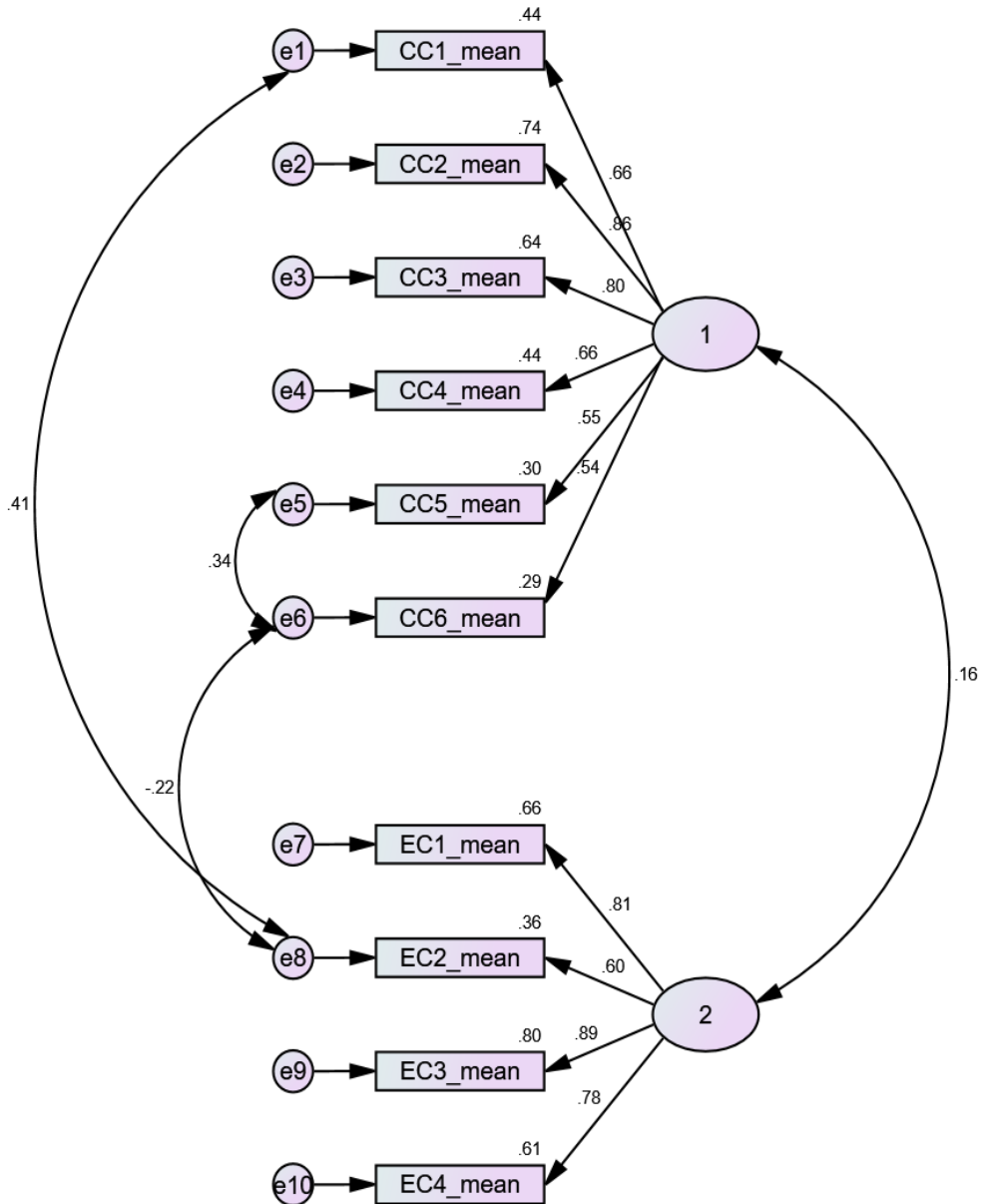**Source:** Survey data 2022.

Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements.
Source: Survey data 2022.

Figure 2 illustrates the results of confirmatory factor analysis for strategic leadership elements.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 include the mean, standard deviation and correlation between study variables. As shown in the table, all the variables positively correlated with one another and organizational learning (Corporate culture r = 0.238, p-value < 0.05, core competences r = 0.428, p-value < 0.05) with the exception of the control variables; firm size (r = 0.143, p-value < 0.05) and firm age (r = 0.023, p-value > 0.05) which reported low positive correlations. Also, the results indicate that corporate culture had the highest mean of 5.8884 with a standard deviation of 0.73136 whereas core competence had slightly lower mean of 5.3837 with a standard deviation of 0.79053.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the study variables.

No.	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	Sig.	Mean	SD
1	OL	1					0.000	5.6058	0.40264
2	EC	0.238**	1				0.000	5.8884	0.73136
3	CC	0.428**	0.164**	1			0.000	5.3837	0.79053
4	Firm size	0.143**	0.002	0.004	1		0.004	5.8171	0.49269
5	Firm age	0.023	0.064	-0.002	0.021	1	0.649	4.6683	0.74152

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
OL: Organizational learning, EC: Corporate culture and CC: Core competences.
Source: Survey data 2022.

4.2. Testing For the Effect of Control Variables on the Dependent Variable

Control variables were examined for their influence on the dependent variable in order to determine how the controls affected the dependent variable in comparison to the direct effects (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). According to the data in Table 4, firm age and firm size predict a 2.1% variance in organizational learning (R^2 = 0.021). The combined prediction is significant, as evidenced by the F value (4.323, P <0.05). Only firm size substantially predicted business competitiveness independently. The coefficients do not have a causal meaning because they are merely control variables.

Table 4. Control variables on the dependent variable.

Model	Beta unstd.	Std. error	Beta std.	t.	Sig.
(Constant)	4.879	0.263		18.568	0.000
Firm size	0.116	0.040	0.142	2.904	0.004
Firm age	0.011	0.027	0.020	0.400	0.690
Model summary statistics					
R				0.144	
R square				0.021	
Adjusted R square				0.016	
Standard error of the estimate				0.39941	
Change statistics	R square change			0.021	
	F change			4.323	
	Sig.			0.014	

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Firm size, Firm age.
Source: Survey data 2022.

4.3. Test of Hypotheses

4.3.1. Hypothesis 1: Corporate Culture has no Significant Effect on Organizational Learning

The results revealed that corporate culture has a statistically significant effect on organizational learning (β =0.095, t-value =3.884, p 0.000 which is <0.05). These results indicate that with each unit increase in corporate

culture, organizational learning increases by 0.095 units. The results confirm that corporate culture has a positive and significant effect on organizational learning. Therefore, hypothesis H_{01} was rejected.

4.3.2. Hypothesis 2: Core Competences has no Significant Effect on Organizational Learning

The results revealed that core competences have a statistically significant effect on organizational learning (β =0.203, t-value =9.039, p 0.000 which is <0.05). These results indicate that with each unit increase in core competences, organizational learning increases by 0.203 units. The results confirm that core competences have a positive and significant effect on organizational learning. Therefore, hypothesis H_{02} was rejected.

Table 5 presents the results of hierarchical regression for direct effect relationship.

Table 5. Hierarchical regression for direct effect relationship.

Model		B	Std. error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.879	0.263		18.568	0.000
	Firm size	0.116	0.040	0.142	2.904	0.004
	Firm age	0.011	0.027	0.020	0.400	0.690
2	(Constant)	3.261	0.287		11.382	0.000
	Firm size	0.115	0.036	0.141	3.234	0.001
	Firm age	0.005	0.024	0.009	0.216	0.829
	Corporate culture	0.095	0.024	0.172	3.884	0.000
	Core competences	0.203	0.022	0.399	9.039	0.000

Model summary								
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0.144ª	0.021	0.016	0.39941	0.021	4.323	2	407	0.014
2	0.482ᵇ	0.232	0.224	0.35462	0.211	55.650	2	405	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Firm age, Firm size
b. Predictors: (Constant), Firm age, Firm size, Core competences, Corporate culture
Dependent variable: Organizational learning

Source: Survey data 2022.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY RESULTS

This section presents a discussion of findings. It is based on emerging themes and critical incidents that address the stated hypotheses. The researchers combined quantitative and qualitative findings to bring out the social reality of corporate culture, core competences and organisational learning. The discussion is based on two hypotheses:

5.1. H_{01}: Corporate Culture has no Significant Effect on Organizational Learning among Manufacturing Firms in Uganda

This study demonstrates that corporate culture contributes to organizational learning. Corporate culture in this study is understood as a distinctive norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that give each firm its distinct character. According to the findings of this study, cultures that promotes learning are encouraged and such cultures guide the identification of the skills and knowledge the workers need to have, the source of information, how knowledge is disseminated and how information is stored within the firm. The relevance of corporate culture in achieving organizational learning among the manufacturing firms is supported by Vignette 1.

Vignette 1. Positive cultures promotes learning in organizations.

> The 4th informant indicated that, positive cultures in firms facilitates building a positive knowledge transfer environment in firms. He noted that cultural elements such as trust, communication, reward system, and organisational structures positively impact knowledge sharing in firms.

Vignette 1 demonstrates that when firms encourage the culture of trust, communication, the level knowledge sharing in such firms improves.

The findings of this study agree with those of Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) who claims that corporate culture positively influences organizational learning. It is argued that cultures which encourages open communication, social networks, and trust may help to increase information transmission (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Competence-based trust, for example, may combine with more conventional knowledge elements like tacit knowledge (Levin, Cross, & Levin, 2004). Furthermore, they contend that some aspects of social interactions, such as perceived trustworthiness, influence the social fabric of organizations, making it more (or less) successful in producing and transmitting knowledge.

Trust is vital in how people transmit and share information with others; organizational controls used to manage knowledge may have a substantial impact on how people behave (Turner et al., 2006). An equitable reward or incentive system encourages people to share their expertise and promotes people's awareness of a company trust culture. The research suggests that when a firm has a culture of trust and collaboration, innovation, profitability, and knowledge transfer occur more effortlessly (Conner & Prahalad, 1996).

The degree to which workers accept the corporate culture has a big impact on the climate, and if individuals do not feel a part of the company and do not share the prevailing attitudes and ideas, unpleasant feelings and conflict are probable (Mullins, 2016). This is especially important when investigating the influence organizational culture has on the learning experience in a firm. Organizational culture offers a constant viewpoint and value maintenance to assist decision-making, coordination, and control; yet, this consistency may lead to many attitudes and beliefs being permanent and unquestioned, making them exceedingly hard to change (Waterman et al., 2004). These ideas and beliefs are mostly handed down via generations (Schein, 2005).

5.2. H₀₂: Core Competences has no Significant Effect on Organizational Learning among Manufacturing Firms in Uganda

Core competency, as an element of strategic leadership, was also indicated as a way to boost learning within firms, according to the study.

The coordinated mix of diverse resources and talents that distinguishes a company in the marketplace is referred to as core competency. Core competences are important qualities that are both collective and distinctive in their features, as well as strategically adaptable, and contribute to prospective business success. According to the findings of this study, manufacturing businesses' core competence must satisfy the following criteria:

a) Customer Value: A key competency must contribute significantly to the customer's perception of value.

b) Competitor Differentiation: A manufacturing firm's level of competence cannot be characterized as core unless it is superior to all of its competitors and impossible to copy.

c) Extensibility: Within a manufacturing firm, the skill must be able to be applied to new product areas.

Vignette 2 explains core competence and its relevance in improving the level of learning among manufacturing firms.

Vignette 2. Core competences helps in improving the level of organisational learning.

> The informants indicated that, core competences such as skilled personnel, working as a team, experienced team and rewards given to the sales team makes firms to be more efficient in terms of what they do. Also, working as a team increases the speed of work and this implies that we reach our customers faster than the competitors. All these makes firms to be more competitive since the workers are more motivated and committed to their work.

Vignette 2 demonstrates that core competences such as skilled personnel, rewards given to staff and possession of experienced workers improves on the level of learning within organisations.

Following these findings, experts such as Abel (2008) discovered that there are two sorts of competencies in organizations: hard competences and soft competences. According to Abel (2008) hard competencies help firms in identifying the resources required for individual and group learning. Soft skills, on the other hand, relate to personal behaviors, personal qualities, and personal motivations, which, according to Moore et al. (1982) include working with people, leadership, and other behaviours. All of these characteristics and motives encourage organizational learning, as described by Abel (2008).

Over time, a company's core competencies might become institutionalized and hence integrated into its knowledge-creating system (Lei et al., 1996). Studies on core competencies provide a variety of reasons for the idea of core competencies and its function in fostering learning in organizations (Srivastava, 2005). Evidence demonstrates a rise in the use of competence models to drive workplace learning activities by organizations (Garavan & McGuire, 2001).

The use of competence frameworks as the focal point of workplace learning provides the twin function of enabling the identification of learning needs and ensuring that learning provision is aligned with business requirements (Mabey & Thomson, 2000). Numerous studies have evaluated the link between corporate culture, core competencies, and organizational learning in industrialized nations, but few have done so in developing nations, and none in Uganda specifically.

5.3. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study provide a significant contribution to the body of strategic management literature by establishing how much strategic leadership traits influence organisational learning within firms. The purpose of this research was to find out how corporate culture and core competences affect the degree of organisational learning among Ugandan manufacturing firms. The study looked into, among other things, the link between corporate culture and organisational learning, as well as the relationship between core competences and organisational learning among Ugandan manufacturing firms. The researchers came to the following conclusions as a result of the study's findings. To begin with, the findings show that corporate culture has a statistically significant and positive influence on organisational learning. In conclusion, the study reveals that cultures such as organizational commitment and teamwork are enablers of organizational learning since they influence workers' beliefs regarding the value of information and which types of knowledge are worth managing. Further, cultures that promotes learning were found to influence the procedures used to generate, validate, and disseminate new information. This enables a firm to advance in terms of learning, hence increasing the organization's competitiveness. Moreover, cultures establish the context for social interaction, which ultimately affects an organization's capacity to generate, share, and apply knowledge.

Further, the study's findings revealed that core competences have a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational learning. As a result, the study concludes that if managers want to improve learning in their firms, they discovery two sorts of competencies in organizations: hard competences and soft competences. Hard competencies will help firms in identifying the resources required for individual and group learning.

Soft skills, on the other hand, relate to personal behaviors, personal qualities, and personal motivations, which, according to Cashman and Woodruff (1993) include working with people, leadership, and other behaviors. All of these characteristics and motives encourage organizational learning. Firms must also institutionalize and integrate their core competencies into its knowledge-creating system. Finally, there is also a need for firms to use competence models to drive workplace learning activities since it provides a twin function of enabling the identification of learning needs and ensuring that learning provision is aligned with firm requirements.

5.4. Theoretical Implications

This study simultaneously applied existing theories, namely: the resource-based view theory and the organisational learning theories to understand organisational learning. The theoretical review of the theories provided the study's metaphors: corporate culture, core competences and organisational learning. These constructs derived from the two reviewed theories form a novel explanation for organisational learning among manufacturing firms in Uganda. The constructs explain organisational learning by 23% and other constructs that were not part of the study explain firm competitiveness by 77%. The use of a multi-theoretical approach therefore offers a better explanation of organisational learning among Uganda's manufacturing sector compared to individual theories.

This study's explanatory model demonstrates how corporate culture and core competencies interact to improve the level of learning among Ugandan manufacturing firms. The current study demonstrates that approaches established in liberal western environments may be used in other situations when integrated. Organisational learning has lacked a comprehensive theoretical framework and success direction until now, which leads to the low level learning within organisations, particularly in emerging countries (Oh & Han, 2020). As a result, this research contributes to the theoretical understanding of organisational learning and makes an effort to provide a meaningful theory to guide learning within organisations. The findings show that employing a multi-theoretical approach is beneficial in determining the level of learning among Ugandan manufacturing firms.

5.5. Methodological Implications

The study contributes to philosophy by using mixed methods which provides a better approach to the study of organisational learning of firms in Uganda. The researchers collected and used both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methods provide an opportunity to get diverse views from study participants. In addition to quantifiable data, feelings and perceptions were captured from participants which enriches the findings. The study also adopted and modified the measurement instruments that were used. This proved helpful in understanding organisational learning among manufacturing firms in the Ugandan context. This suggests that measurement tools used by previous scholars have to be tested for validity and reliability to be used effectively in understanding organisational learning. Explanatory sequential method was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data which helped to better explain the relationships between the variables. This implies that explanatory sequential method is critical in organisational learning studies since qualitative data explains the quantitative findings. The study as well used SPSS version 23 & NVIVO version 11 pro in the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data respectively. This implies that SPSS version 23 software & NVIVO version 11 pro are appropriate for analyzing data when studying organisational learning.

5.6. Policy Implications

After considering the findings of the study and the attendant arguments, the following policy suggestions have been made. First and foremost, the findings of the study proved that corporate culture has a positive impact on organisational learning among manufacturing firms. As a result, in order to increase the level of learning in firms, senior managers must ensure they promote cultures which enhances learnings in firms, because doing so will inspire employees to work hard in order to generate, share, and apply knowledge, thereby increasing the level of firm competitiveness.

Second, the findings of the study indicate that core competencies have a positive and statistically significant impact on organisational learning. Therefore, it is critical for management to identify and use key competencies such as product quality, design, marketing, and the sales ecosystem in order to attain the required degree of learning among manufacturing firms. Also, firms need to use competence models to drive workplace learning activities since it provides a twin function of enabling the identification of learning needs and ensuring that learning provision is aligned with firm requirements.

5.7. Managerial Implications

The findings of the study have substantial ramifications for managers and leaders in the real world. The findings will serve as a reference for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and other stakeholders in the manufacturing sector on how to raise the level of learning in their respective firms.

In the study, it was discovered that identifying and promoting positive cultures while at the same time strengthening core competencies resulted in an improvement in their level of learning among manufacturing firms. As a result, therefore, managers must ensure that cultures that promote learning such as team work and commitment among others are encouraged. Moreover, managers must recognize, develop, and capitalize on the core competencies that their organizations hold, as this will help them to reach better levels of learning within their firms.

5.8. Study Limitations

This study presents several limitations, suggesting possible avenues for further research. One of the limitations of this study is the use of a cross-sectional design as the data were collected at one point in time; therefore, a longitudinal study is suggested for future studies.

The study found that corporate culture and core competencies accounted for 23 percent of the variation in organisational learning across Ugandan manufacturing firms. The report suggests that more research be conducted utilizing variables not considered in this study to identify other factors that account for the remaining 77 percent of the variation in organisational learning of manufacturing firms in Uganda.

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