

THE EFFECTS OF JOB RESOURCEFULNESS AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Introduction

In today's global market environment where there are intense competitive pressures, having a pool of motivated and high-performing employees in frontline service jobs provides service firms with competitive advantage [5], [10], [31]. This is not surprising, because a synthesis of the services management and marketing literatures proposes three key features of employees in frontline service jobs. First, frontline employees represent their organization to outsiders (customers), enhance the image of the organization, and improve the organization's legitimacy through advocacy [8]. Second, frontline employees are important sources of information about customers' requests, complaints, and expectations due to their intense face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers [6], [31]. Third, frontline employees play a critical role in achieving customer satisfaction through delivery of service quality, are expected to cope with a number of customers' complaints in the service encounter and resolve them to the satisfaction of the complainants [11], [23].

Despite this recognition, frontline employees work under scarce resource conditions in the service industries. Therefore, managers need to have a pool of employees in frontline service jobs who can work productively under resource-deprived conditions. Job resourcefulness, which is a situational-level personality trait and refers to "the enduring disposition to garner scarce resources and overcome obstacles in pursuit of job-related goals" [26, p. 258], is particularly important for frontline employees who should be skilled at directly having intense

face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers [4]. In addition, as a surface-level personality trait, customer orientation refers to "an employee's tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context" [12, p. 111]. As discussed by Licata et al. [26], a job-resourceful individual would be able to have energy to find innovative ways for satisfying customers. Consequently, such individuals would display customer-oriented service behaviors in the workplace.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to develop and test a conceptual model, which examines customer orientation as a *full* mediator of the relationship between job resourcefulness and frontline employees' external representation, internal influence, and service delivery behaviors.

This study contributes to the services marketing literature in the following ways. First, a limited number of empirical studies have assessed the relationships among job resourcefulness, customer orientation, and various job outcomes [17], [26]. Personality traits, such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are also important predictors of a number of job outcomes [7], [16]. This study focuses on job resourcefulness and customer orientation, because there is a paucity of empirical research regarding their effects on various job outcomes in the services marketing literature. With this realization, this study partially fills in this void by testing customer orientation as a full mediator of the effect of job resourcefulness on frontline employees' service behaviors.

Second, the preponderance of empirical research on job resourcefulness and customer

orientation has been conducted in the developed Western countries, especially the United States. As a matter of fact, empirical research based on data obtained from the developing sub-Saharan African countries in the services marketing literature is meager [30]. Therefore, the current study uses data obtained from the hotel industry of Nigeria. Nigeria, which is situated on the Gulf of Guinea, is a developing sub-Saharan country. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Nigeria has thirty-six states, and its capital, Abuja, is the administrative and political center of the country. English is the official language throughout Nigeria and Hausa is the second prevalent language [1]. Nigeria is one of the largest crude oil exporters of the world. However, such an oil-rich country has been confronted with political instability, corruption, and high unemployment rates for years [19], [27].

Finally, in addition to filling in the above-mentioned gaps in the relevant literature, the

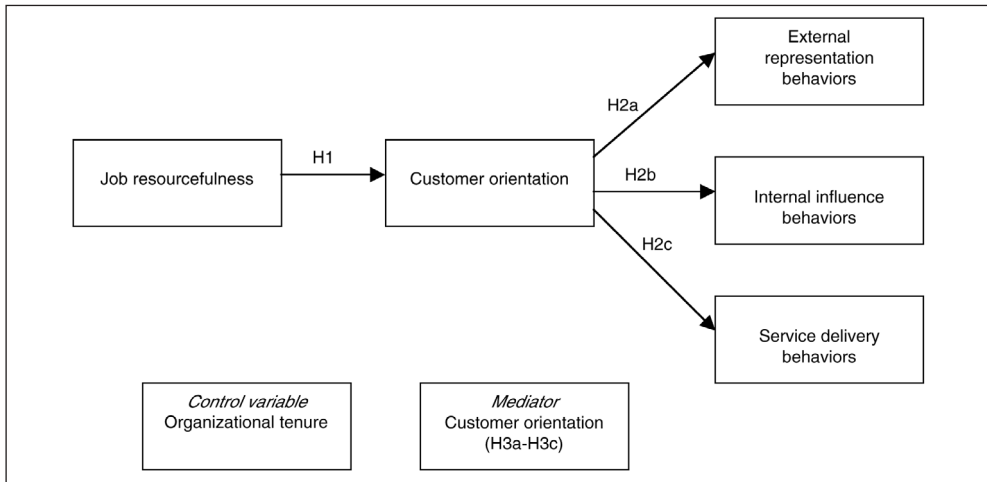
results of this study will provide useful implications for service managers.

The next section of the article includes the conceptual model and hypotheses. This is followed by discussions of the method and results of the empirical study. The article concludes with implications of the results and directions for future research.

1. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual model and the hypothesized relationships. The model proposes that job resourcefulness is positively linked to customer orientation. According to the model, customer orientation positively influences frontline employees' external representation, internal influence, and service delivery behaviors. The model also contends that customer orientation fully mediates the impact of job resourcefulness on the aforementioned service behaviors. In the model organizational tenure is treated as a control variable.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model



Source: own

As mentioned above, there is a positive association between job resourcefulness and customer orientation. Job resourcefulness is a situational-level personality trait within a hierarchical personality structure and operates within a general work setting [26]. Job-resourceful employees have the abilities to accomplish job-related goals, even if they are faced with scar-

ce resources in the workplace [17]. Job resourcefulness is a critical personality trait in frontline service jobs, because lack of training, inadequate social support, and insufficient empowerment and rewards are prevalent in most of the service industries [7], [22].

As a surface-level personality trait, customer orientation emerges from the joint effects

of elemental (e.g., conscientiousness), compound (e.g., competitiveness), and situational (e.g., job resourcefulness) traits as well as the specific work environment [26]. Babakus et al. [6] state, “Customer orientation is cushioned, nourished and supported by a set of deeper more abstract personality traits” (p. 483). In this study, it is posited that job-resourceful employees are expected to come up with innovative ways for responding to customer requests effectively and satisfying customers, though they work under resource-depleted conditions (cf. [4]). In empirical terms, Licata et al. [26] found that job resourcefulness exerted a significant positive effect on customer orientation among bank employees and nurses. Harris et al. [17] also reported a similar finding among bank employees.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Job resourcefulness is positively related to frontline employees’ customer orientation.

As shown in Figure 1, customer orientation enhances frontline employees’ external representation, internal influence, and service delivery behaviors. External representation refers to “being vocal advocates to outsiders of the organization’s image, goods, and services; internal influence refers to “taking individual initiative in communications to the firm and coworkers to improve service delivery by the organization, coworkers, and oneself; and service delivery refers to “serving customers in a conscientious, responsive, flexible, and courteous manner” [9, p. 142]. These definitions suggest that service delivery behaviors appear to be linked to frontline employees’ in-role performance, while external representation and internal influence behaviors are likely to be linked to frontline employees’ extra-role performance [8], [9]. Frontline employees high in customer orientation are likely to display higher in-role and extra-role performances.

There is empirical evidence that customer orientation is positively associated with in-role and extra-role performances. Specifically, in a study of bank and restaurant employees, Donovan et al. [14] reported that as the level of employees’ customer orientation increased, their level of organizational citizenship behavior-altruism also increased. In a study of media retailers and travel agencies in Germany, service employees’ customer orientation

positively affected customer satisfaction [18]. According to the findings of another study, salesperson customer orientation enhanced their sales performance [13]. Recently, Farrell and Oczkowski [15] found that customer orientation enhanced organizational citizenship behavior-courtesy among food servers. In a study of frontline bank employees in New Zealand, Babakus et al. [6] also demonstrated that customer orientation was positively linked to job performance.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Customer orientation is positively related to frontline employees’ (a) external representation, (b) internal influence, and (c) service delivery behaviors.

The person-job fit is one of the types of the person-environment fit and refers to the fit between the abilities of a person and the requirements of a specific job [24]. It also refers to the fit between employees’ needs, desires, or preferences and the attributes of a specific job [25]. A type of job-fit which has a healthy research tradition is the link between personality traits and job characteristics. Consistent with the person-job fit perspective, highly resourceful employees would fit well in work environments, where there are scarce job resources. Such employees would try to focus on various ways to satisfy their customers. Consequently, they would display high levels of in-role and extra-role performances.

There are limited empirical studies regarding the mediating role of customer orientation on the relationship between job resourcefulness and job outcomes. For example, Licata et al. [26] demonstrated that customer orientation partially mediated the relationship between job resourcefulness and self-rated job performance. Harris et al. [17] found that customer orientation fully mediated the effect of job resourcefulness on job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Underpinned by the person-job fit perspective and limited empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Customer orientation fully mediates the effect of job resourcefulness on frontline employees’ (a) external representation, (b) internal influence, and (c) service delivery behaviors.

2. Method

2.1 Sample and Procedure

Data were gathered from a judgmental sample of frontline employees in the four- and five-star hotels in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The selection criteria were that frontline employees had full-time jobs and frequent face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with hotel guests. Since many part-time employees think that they are outsiders [2] and they do not stay at work as long as full-time employees do [29], they have not been included in the study sample.

According to the information we received from the Director for Planning, Consultancy and Information Services in the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism in Abuja at the time of our study, there are 2 five- and 7 four-star hotels, which were licensed by the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation. Permission was received for data collection from managements of all five-star hotels and 1 four-star hotel. Promising complete confidentiality, 70 questionnaires were personally distributed to frontline employees in each of the five-star hotels, while 40 were personally distributed to those in the four-star hotel. In total, 180 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to frontline employees. By the cut-off date for data collection, 102 usable questionnaires were retrieved, yielding a response rate of 56.7 percent.

19 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18–27, 41 percent between the ages of 28–37, 31 percent between the ages of 38–47, and the rest were older than 47. The sample was balanced in gender (50 percent male and 50 percent female). With respect to education, 2 percent of the respondents had primary school education, while 9 percent had secondary and high school education. 21 percent of the respondents had two-year college degrees, while 61 percent had four-year college degrees. The rest had graduate degrees. 7 percent of the respondents had tenures below one year. 34 percent of the respondents reported having tenures between one and five years and 33 percent between six and ten years. The rest had tenures more than ten years. 41 percent of the respondents were single or divorced, while the majority of the respondents (59 percent) were married.

2.2 Measurement

Each of the constructs depicted in Figure 1 was operationalized using scales derived from the services marketing literature. Job resourcefulness was measured using four (4) items from Licata et al. [26]. Sample items are 'I am very clever and enterprising in doing my job' and 'I am a very resourceful person in finding ways to do my job'. Twelve (12) items from Brown et al. [12] were used to measure customer orientation. Sample items are 'I enjoy responding quickly to my customers' requests' and 'I get customers to talk about their service needs with me'.

External representation, internal influence, and service delivery behaviors were measured using items from Bettencourt et al. [9]. That is, external representation and internal influence each were operationalized via four (4) items, while service delivery was measured through five (5) items. Sample items for external representation are 'I tell outsiders this is a great place to work' and 'I say good things about our hotel to others'. Sample items for internal influence are 'I make constructive suggestions for service improvement' and 'I share creative solutions to customer problems with other team members'. Finally, sample items for service delivery are 'I follow customer service guidelines with extreme care' and 'I follow up in a timely manner to customer requests and problems'.

Organizational tenure was treated as a control variable to avoid statistical confounds. Responses to the items in job resourcefulness, customer orientation, external representation, internal influence, and service delivery were elicited on 5-point scales ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Organizational tenure was measured using a six-point scale. Higher scores indicated higher job resourcefulness, customer orientation, external representation, internal influence, service delivery, and longer tenure.

The pilot test of the survey instrument, with five (5) frontline employees in one of the five-star hotels in Abuja, revealed no compelling reason to make changes in the instrument.

3. Results

3.1 Measurement Results

The dimensionality, convergent and discriminant validity of the measures were assessed based on a series of confirmatory factor analyses [3],

[20]. Several items were dropped during confirmatory factor analysis due to non-significant *t*-values and low standardized loadings. Specifically, one item each from job resourcefulness and service delivery and four items from customer orientation were removed from further analysis. The final results of confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated a moderate fit of the five-factor model to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 271.55$, $df = 220$; $GFI = .81$; $CFI = .84$; $RMSEA = .048$; $SRMR = .088$). In addition, Anderson and Gerbing [3] suggest that all observable indicators should load significantly on their respective latent variables in order to provide evidence of convergent validity. According to the results of confirmatory factor analysis, all observable indicators loaded on their latent variables and the magnitudes of the loadings ranged from .37 to .83. Their *t*-values were higher than 2.00. Overall, the results provided support for convergent validity [3].

Discriminant validity was evaluated based on a series of chi-square difference tests using measures of each pair of constructs. In particular, a two-dimensional model for each pair of constructs was first fit, and then items representing each construct were forced into a single-factor solution. The chi-square difference test produced a significant result for each pair of measures. Thus, imposing a single factor solution on the two sets of items representing different constructs demonstrated a significant

deterioration of the model fit. These results provided evidence of discriminant validity [3].

In addition, common method bias was checked with a confirmatory factor analysis approach to Harman's single-factor test as a statistical remedy [28]. This test is based on the assumption that common method bias is a serious problem when a single latent factor will account for more than 50 % of the total variance of the measures [28]. The results of the single-factor model were as follows: ($\chi^2 = 501.09$ $df = 230$; $GFI = .70$; $CFI = .52$; $RMSEA = .108$; $SRMR = .11$). The single-factor model accounted for only 17.4 % of the total variance. The chi-square test also demonstrated that the five-factor model was superior to the single-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 229.54$, $\Delta df = 10$, $p < .001$). Consequently, the results were worse than that of a five-factor model and one single-factor model did not account for the majority of the variance. According to these results, common method bias was not a significant problem in this study.

Composite scores for each measure were obtained by averaging scores across items representing that measure. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. Coefficient alphas were as follows: job resourcefulness .56, customer orientation .75, external representation .76, internal influence .65, and service delivery .67. The small sample size of this study appears to be responsible for coefficient alphas below .70.

Tab. 1: Scale Reliabilities, Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables (n = 102)

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Organizational tenure	2.86	1.07	-	1.000					
2. Job resourcefulness	4.11	.42	.56	.079	1.000				
3. Customer orientation	4.15	.37	.75	.067	.413**	1.000			
4. External representation	3.90	.53	.76	-.038	.209*	.293**	1.000		
5. Internal influence	4.01	.44	.65	.013	.084	.191	.417**	1.000	
6. Service delivery	4.06	.46	.67	.056	.032	.305**	.251*	.333**	1.000

Notes: Composite scores for each measure were obtained by averaging scores across items representing that measure. The scores ranged from 1 to 5. Organizational tenure was measured using a six-point scale. Higher scores indicated longer tenure.

* Correlations are significant at the .05 level.

** Correlations are significant at the .01 level. Correlations without asterisks are not significant.

Source: own

3.2 Model Test Results

The correlation matrix in Table 1 was used as input to LISREL 8.30 to test the hypotheses via path analysis [20]. The results of path analysis demonstrated that organizational tenure was not significantly related to study variables. The results in Table 2 indicated that the model fit the

data well ($\chi^2 = 5.76$ df = 4; $p = .22$; GFI = .98; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .066; SRMR = .049). The results accounted for 1 % of the variance in job resourcefulness, 17 % in customer orientation, 9 % in external representation, 4 % in internal influence, and 10 % in service delivery.

Tab. 2: Model Test Results

Control variable and hypotheses	Standardized estimates	t-values
(I) Impact on JR Control variable Organizational tenure	.08	80
(II) Impact on COR Control variable Organizational tenure Direct effect: Hypothesis 1 JR → COR	.04 .41	.41 4.45*
(III) Impact on EXREP Control variable Organizational tenure Direct effect: Hypothesis 2a COR → EXREP	-.06 .29	-.63 3.07*
(IV) Impact on INIF Control variable Organizational tenure Direct effect: Hypothesis 2b COR → INIF	-.01 .19	-.03 1.96
(V) Impact on SERDEL Control variable Organizational tenure Direct effect: Hypothesis 2c COR → SERDEL	.04 .31	.40 3.23*
(VI) Mediating effects Hypothesis 3a JR → COR → EXREP Hypothesis 3b JR → COR → INIF Hypothesis 3c JR → COR → SERDEL	.12 .08 .13	2.53** 1.79 2.61**

R^2 for: JR = .01, COR = .17, EXREP = .09, INIF = .04, SERDEL = .10

Model fit statistics:

$\chi^2 = 5.76$, df = 4, $p = .22$

GFI = .98; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .066; SRMR = .049

Notes: Organizational tenure was measured using a six-point scale. Higher scores indicated longer tenure. JR = Job resourcefulness; COR = Customer orientation; EXREP = External representation; INIF = Internal influence; SERDEL = Service delivery. GFI = Goodness of fit index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = Standardized root mean square residual. The t-values without asterisks are not significant

* The t-values demonstrate a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level.

** Sobel test results. The t-values demonstrate a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level.

Source: own

Hypothesis 1 predicts that job resourcefulness is positively linked to customer orientation. The results in Table 2 indicate that there is empirical support for this relationship ($\beta = .41$, $t = 4.45$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. An examination of the standardized estimates in Table 2 indicates that customer orientation is significantly and positively related to external representation ($\beta = .29$, $t = 3.07$) and service delivery ($\beta = .31$, $t = 3.23$) behaviors. Therefore, hypotheses 2a and 2c are supported. However, hypothesis 2b cannot be supported, because there is no significant association between customer orientation and internal influence behaviors.

A close examination of Sobel test results in Table 2 demonstrates that customer orientation fully mediates the effect of job resourcefulness on external representation ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.53$) and service delivery ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.61$) behaviors. Therefore, hypotheses 3a and 3c are supported. However, there is no empirical support for hypothesis 3b, since customer orientation does not significantly influence internal influence behaviors.

The main results reported above remain intact with or without organizational tenure as a control variable in the model.

4. Discussion

This empirical investigation makes contributions to the services marketing literature in two ways. First, it provides insights pertaining to customer orientation as a *full* mediator of the relationship between job resourcefulness and frontline employees' service behaviors. Second, it tests the abovementioned relationships using data collected from frontline hotel employees in Nigeria, which is a developing sub-Saharan African country. There are a number of useful findings, which emerge from this empirical investigation.

The finding regarding the direct effect of job resourcefulness on customer orientation is consistent with past writings [17], [26]. This is an important finding, because frontline hotel employees try to perform their job-related tasks in an environment, where there are limited job resources. Therefore, job-resourceful employees can seek various ways of satisfying customers in order to minimize customer defection. In addition, the findings appertaining to the direct impact of customer orientation on external

representation and service delivery behaviors are in line with prior and recent empirical studies ([e.g. [13], [15]). Such findings suggest that frontline employees high in customer orientation can perform their job-related tasks better and can represent the organization to outsiders successfully.

The findings regarding customer orientation as a full mediator of the effect of job resourcefulness on external representation and service delivery behaviors are consonant with the study predictions. Also consistent with the person-job fit perspective, the results suggest that highly job-resourceful employees would fit well in the work environment and would try to find innovative ways for meeting customer needs and requests. Consequently, they would have elevated levels of external representation and service delivery behaviors. It should also be noted that the small sample size used in this study appears to be responsible for the non-significant relationship between customer orientation and internal influence behaviors.

In closing, the current empirical investigation makes useful additions to the services marketing literature by testing the aforementioned relationships via data obtained from frontline employees in the hotel industry of Nigeria.

4.1 Management Implications

There are important implications for managers for business practice. First, it is obvious that managers should use effective recruitment and selection techniques to be capable of hiring frontline employees who can work in an environment, where there are scarce resources and cutbacks. For example, using mini case studies or scenario-based tests would be helpful for understanding whether the abilities, needs, desires, and preferences of candidates as well as their personalities match the requirements of frontline service jobs. Second, as mentioned before, customer orientation is an enduring disposition. Therefore, the existing frontline employees in the organization could be trained to learn customer-oriented behaviors [6]. Having such training programs could make employees improve their acting skills over time and consistently display customer-oriented behaviors. Consequently, such implications would lead to better external representation and service delivery behaviors.

4.2 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

There are several limitations to the present study. A first limitation is the use of self-report data, which is prone to common method bias. In this study, common method bias was checked using Harman's single-factor test via confirmatory factor analysis. However, such a technique only evaluates the extent to which common method bias may pose a problem [21]. Therefore, future studies should obtain data from multiple sources (e.g., supervisors or customers) to minimize this potential problem. Second, the present study used cross-sectional data to test the study relationships. Using cross-sectional data in empirical studies does not permit a true test of causality. With this realization, in future studies longitudinal designs are needed for verifying the causal relationships among the study variables. Finally, replication studies with large sample sizes in the other service settings of Nigeria would be useful for making further generalizations. Having large sample sizes would also be a potential remedy for increasing the internal consistency reliabilities of job resourcefulness, internal influence, and service delivery.

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THE EFFECTS OF JOB RESOURCEFULNESS AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA**Osman M. Karatepe**

This study develops and tests a conceptual model that investigates customer orientation as a full mediator of the effect of job resourcefulness on performance outcomes. Data were obtained from a sample of full-time frontline employees in the four- and five-star hotels in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. These relationships were tested with path analysis in LISREL 8.30. As hypothesized, job resourcefulness is positively linked to employees' customer orientation. Consistent with the study predictions, customer orientation enhances employees' external representation and service delivery behaviors. However, the results indicate that customer orientation does not significantly affect employees' internal influence behaviors. The results further reveal that customer orientation fully mediates the impact of job resourcefulness on employees' external representation and service delivery behaviors. In other words, job resourcefulness influences such performance outcomes via customer orientation. Managements of the hotels would benefit from the use of effective recruitment and selection techniques to be able to hire employees who can work under resource-depleted conditions. In addition, managements of the hotels could arrange training programs to teach their employees customer-oriented behaviors. By doing so, employees could improve their acting skills over time and consistently demonstrate customer-oriented behaviors. In future studies using longitudinal data would be a potential remedy for minimizing problems associated with the cross-sectional data. In future studies collecting data from multiple sources would also minimize problems emerging from self-report data. In closing, this study partially fills in the void in the services marketing literature by testing the aforementioned relationships using data gathered from frontline hotel employees in a developing sub-Saharan African country.

Key Words: customer orientation, hotel employees, job resourcefulness, Nigeria, performance.

JEL Classification: M31.