

## **SITUATION AWARENESS AND CORPORATE REPUTATION IN THE PORT HARCOURT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY, PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the relationship between situation awareness and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary source of data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. A sample of one hundred and nine (109) respondents was drawn from a population of one hundred and fifty (150) employees of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. Data generated were analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. Empirical findings revealed that situation awareness positively and significantly influences corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria. The result of the findings further revealed that in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria gave rise to corporate image, corporate identity and corporate image. The study recommends that management of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company should seek to understand its operational environment better, by been aware of the situation in order to attract desirable changes and boost its corporate reputation.

**Keywords:** Situation Awareness, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Image, Corporate Identity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reputation is a vital component of a company's value and a key measure of performance, functioning as a mechanism which decreases uncertainty for customers and increases marketing effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and customer base (Kotha . Rajgopal & Rindova, 2001). Corporate reputation emerges as an intangible asset which differentiates a firm from others and attracts customers to repurchase and willingly pay higher price for products (Eberl & Schwaiger, 2005; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). High reputation serves as a cost saver for firms. Employees desire to work for firms with excellent reputations and the firms are able to recruit and retain a competent work force with less contracting and monitoring costs (Roberts and Dowling, 2002). Furthermore, a high reputation often lifts a firm to a virtuous cycle, known as halo effect. Reputable firms have an advantage to pursuing an even better reputation via production, branding, and environmental actions.

Nowadays, reputation is considered more and more a precious and decisive factor for the competitive advantage of organizations (Cramer & Ruefli, 1994). Corporate reputation has

become a “hot” topic in the past few years given the evidence linking a favorable corporate reputation and various intangible and tangible benefits . The high profile corporate scandals that have come to dominate the media and the generally low opinion the general public has of corporations and business, makes corporate reputation a necessity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Reputational challenges often create opportunities for reputation building. If a challenge is handled poorly, reputation can be damaged and if a challenge is handled well, reputation can be enhanced (Goldstein, 2010); in other word, corporate reputation may also be a critical factor in responding to a crisis (Schnietz & Epstein, 2005).

For ages, the view that corporate reputation positively impacts on firm performance has been documented; even accounting literature backs the notion that corporate reputation causes an enormous amount of wealth encapsulated in what is called goodwill, while some conventional wisdom assert that the reputation which organizations orchestrate for themselves do cause sustainable profits. These views have attracted quite a lot of scholars to structure research in so many areas of corporate reputation, and the body of knowledge on this subject is indeed not only increasing but deepening also. Reputation is an intangible asset and intangible assets are now increasingly seen as drivers of sustainable competitive business and corporate advantages. Thus, intangible assets like reputation are increasingly researched as sources of sustainable advantages, hence, the need to examine situation awareness as a correlate of corporate reputation (Aniuga & Okolo,2015).

Situation Awareness is the ability to identify products, processes, and administrative capabilities and follow serious features of evidence around the happenings to the organization with regards to its vision and mission. Understanding what is happening within the organization is very important and it is seen as a strong leadership quality. When organization loses its situational awareness it increases the potential for human error and mishaps (Seville, 2013). According to Naylor (1999), effective organization situation awareness depends on the composition of its members developing accurate expectations for organizational performance by drawing on a common knowledge base. This process involves anticipate the needs of organization members; predict the needs of organizational members; and adaptation to efficient demand of organizational task. To ensure effective situation awareness, organizational members must share their knowledge relative to organization task and goals (vision and mission); their individual tasks; and organizational members’ roles and responsibilities. To provide a solid base for building team situation awareness, organizational members need to have information that will help them develop relevant expectations about the entire organizational task. When organizations lose focus, it puts them in a gray area where no one may be able to predict outcomes with any certainty thereby making process, product and administrative capability most difficult. During organization evolution, they set certain goals or targets to meet, such as speed of advance, waypoints, and soundings. When they are not met, organizations must question why and systematically begin to evaluate its present situation to determine what went wrong (Smit & Wandel, 2006).

For organizations to maintain situation awareness for effective process, product and administrative actions, it must occur through effective communications and a combination of the following actions, vis-à-vis, recognize and make others aware when the organization deviates from standard procedures; monitor the performance of organizational members; provide information in advance; identify potential or existing problems; demonstrate awareness of task performance; communicate a course of action to follow as needed; demonstrate ongoing awareness of mission status; continually assess and reassess the situation in relation to the mission goal(s); and clarifying expectations of all organizational

members eliminates doubt situation awareness is dynamic, solid to retain, and very cool to lose. Knowing what is going on all the time is very difficult for any organization, especially during complex high stress operations. Therefore it is important that organizations know what behaviour is effective in keeping employees situational aware of its product, process and administrative capacity and capabilities. It is important that organizations retain and maintain effective regain situation awareness (Becker, 2003; Smit et al., 2000).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between situation awareness and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company. This study was also be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between situation awareness and corporate image of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company?
- ii. What is the relationship between situation awareness and corporate identity of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical framework

The theory underlying this study will be based on the theory of Dynamic capacity. Teece Pisano, & Shuen (1997) defines dynamic capacity as the ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to cope with a rapidly changing environment. The concept of dynamic capacity arises from the main drawbacks of views based on business resources. RBV is criticized ignoring the factors surrounding the resources, assuming that it simply "exists." It is not known in the literature how resources are developed and how they are integrated into the company and how they are published. Dynamic capabilities address attempts to close these gaps by adopting a process approach by acting as a buffer between the company's resources and the changing business environment. Dynamic resources help companies coordinate the coordination of resources, thus maintaining the sustainability of the company's competitive advantage, or else, they erode quickly. RBV emphasizes the selection of resources and the selection of appropriate resources, but the dynamic functions focus on developing and updating resources. According to Wade and Hulland (2004), resources are likely to occupy many of the attributes of dynamic capacity, which is especially useful when operating companies in a rapidly changing environment. However, when reviewing important articles in this academic field (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006; Salvato (2003), reveal that the definition and discrepancy overlap to distinguish the dynamic ability of other skills. Zahara and George (2002) consider dynamic capabilities not as the capabilities of a company or as a process, but as the ability to meet customer requirements and competitive strategies. The general strategy of the company and the central concern of the administration are to maintain a dynamic adaptation between what the company must provide and what the environment specifies (Miles and Snow, 1978). To achieve this, once again, the company needs to be able to change the process. Therefore, in addition to increasing the chances of the company surviving, the company must have the dynamic capacity to provide a potential for organizational growth (Helfat & Winter, 2011). The root of dynamic capabilities is based on evolutionary economics (Nelson & Winter, 1982), the key to the dynamic capacity approach is that competitive success arises from the continued development, coordination and reconfiguration of the company's specific assets (Teece et al., 1997, Augier and Teece, 2006).

### Situation Awareness

The term situation awareness was first used in connection with the military where pilots are required to understand, assimilate and act on large volumes of information in order to perform their roles (Endsley, 1995). Endsley et al., (2003) define situation awareness as being

aware of what is happening around you and understanding what that information means to you now and in the future. They go on to note that the term is usually applied to operational situations. One example of this is Masys (2005) application to airline operation and safety which argues that situation awareness is distributed across teams, groups and organizations, as well as human and machine *agents*. Stout and Salas (1998) argues that situation awareness (SA) should be regarded as an essential requirement for competent performance in dynamic environments, with inaccurate and incomplete SA often leading to dangerous and life-threatening consequences (Masys, 2005).

Crichton, Lauche & Flin (2005) echo this when they discuss incident command skills in the oil industry. They argue that situation awareness is a vital command skill in a crisis because the first step in decision making is to evaluate the situation. Roth, Multer & Raslear (2006) discuss the importance of shared situation awareness as an informal cooperative strategy between railroad workers which facilitates work, and contributes to the overall efficiency, safety, and resilience of railroad operations (Roth, et al., 2006). This informal cooperative strategy, which occurs within the organization's culture, is the mechanism through which the organization shares or communicates their situation awareness.

McManus (2007) described this as the measure of an organization's understanding and perception of its entire operating environment. The ability of an organization to look forward for opportunities, identify crises and their consequences accurately and also understand the trigger factors for crises. Situation awareness also includes organizational awareness of the resources it has available, its minimum operating requirements and the expectations, obligations and limitations in relation to its community of stakeholders, both internally (Staff) and externally (Customers, suppliers, consultants etc.).

### **Corporate Reputation**

Reputation is a core (intangible) asset of the firm and creates barriers to competitive threats. Established reputations impede competitive mobility and produce returns to firms because they are difficult to imitate (Caves & Porter, 2007). A strong corporate reputation suggests that the products and services being offered by the firm are of higher quality (Carmeli & Tishler, 2005) and that the firm is responsible and will treat its customers well. Organizational reputation is intuitive and simple in its common usage. However, it is surprisingly complex when employed and investigated in management research, as evidenced by the multiple definitions, conceptualizations, and operationalizations that have emerged across studies.

For Cayanus and Booth-Butterfield (2004) corporate reputation is a component of an overall image of a company. It is a soft concept which defines the overall estimation in which an organization is held by its internal and external stakeholders based on its past action and probability of its future behaviour. It is an amalgamation of all expectations, perceptions and opinions of an organization developed overtime by customers, employees, suppliers, investors and the public at large in relation to the organization's qualities, characteristics and behaviour, based on personal experience, hearsay or organization's observed past actions. (Bennett and Kottasz, 2000). Corporate reputation is also defined as the knowledge gained of an organization by its public based on corporate behaviour and organization -public relationship (Gruning and Hung, 2002). Gotsi and Wilson (2001) view it as a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time.

## Measures of Corporate Reputation

### Corporate Image

Organizational image refers to people's global impressions of an organization and is defined as knowledge and beliefs about an organization. Organizational image represents the reactions and associations of customers, investors, employees, and applicants to an organization's name, Harvey, Harris, & Martinko, (2008). Accordingly, it serves as a template to categorize, store, and recall organization-related information. These multiple images result from various groups (also known as stakeholders or corporate audiences) holding different images of the same organization. At least, one might distinguish among the following organizational images. First, investors and executives hold an image of an organization as an economic performer ("company financial image"). These investors typically rely on factual economic figures as a basis of their beliefs about the organization. Second, there is the image of an organization as a social performer in the general society (also known as "corporate social performance"), which can be further broken down into an organization's involvement in the community and its pro-environmental practices. Third, customers or clients hold an image of an organization as a provider of goods and services ("product image or service image"). Fourth, each organization has an image as an employer among current employees and (potential) applicants (also known as company employment image or employer image) Belschak, & Hartog, (2009).

Organizational images typically develop over longer periods of time. They result from, among other things, media coverage, individual or group sense making, and communication on the part of the organization (as reflected in an organization's advertising, sponsorships, and publicity). However, it should be clear that organizational images are not static. Specifically, organizations often audit their images, Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Tee, & Tse, (2009). Organizational image (OI) can be defined as public impressions of an organization created to appeal to an external audience while simultaneously interpreted by the organization's members. Construed external images, projected images, and desired future images can be developed and transmitted by mass media, public relations consultants, and savvy marketers. Typically, these image consultants attempt to manipulate the public's perceptions of a given corporation to help its top management achieve the firm's strategic goals. One key goal, attracting and retaining high-quality talent, is requisite for continued organizational effectiveness and survival. Related perceptual concepts include corporate reputation, organizational identity, and brand image.

The importance of organizational image in career-related research has typically focused on investigating the relationship of organizational image within recruitment efforts. The logic that potential recruits will be attracted to an organization based on positive perceptions of its image is consistent with much of the staffing literature. Before potential recruits consider job-specific factors (e.g., starting salary, promotional opportunities) in job search efforts, they are believed to be attracted to certain employers based on their organizational images. Most of this research has studied novice job seekers or soon-to-graduate college students, while less is known about OI's impact on seasoned job seekers, blue-collar workers, and current employees.

Organizational image has been identified as one of the key factors that can affect the likelihood of potential applicants choosing one employer over another. Companies that are considered good employers often seek a strong, positive image in the marketplace. Successful employers consciously manage outsider perceptions and employee experiences to impact the firm's image. Top management seeks those coveted "Employer of Choice" awards and "Best

Company to Work For” rankings because they can contribute to a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talented employees, loyal customers, and satisfied shareholders. Research indicates that a positive OI can significantly increase organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions.

### **Corporate Identity**

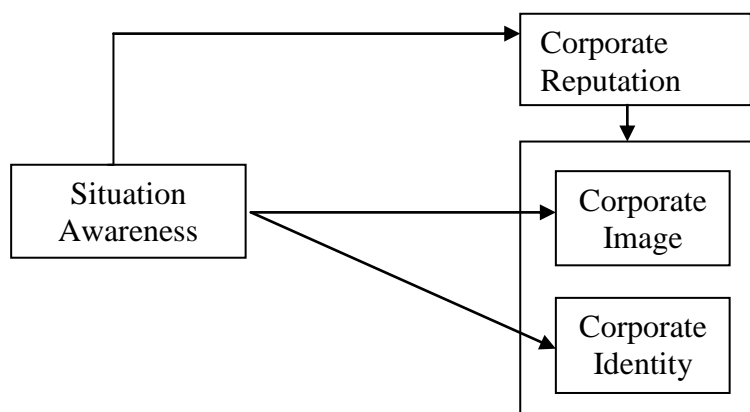
Organizational identity is the manner in which the organization consciously projects itself visually, in support of the image it seeks to promote. Identity is the planned, visual expression of an organization's personality. It is a category of images that identify the organization and either associate it with or distinguish it from others. Identity involves the choices an organization makes about presentation through its messages and its actions. Organizational Identity serve as the basis for all aspects of the business. Any change to either the Purpose or the Philosophy will have a significant impact on the organization and its employees. When you alter either the Purpose or the Philosophy, the organization will feel like a different organization; employees will need to reevaluate their connections to it, and many Practices will need to be altered Chisholm, Russell, & Humphreys, (2011).

### **Situation Awareness and Corporate Reputation**

Reputation is a vital component of a company's value and a key measure of performance, functioning as a mechanism which decreases uncertainty for customers and increases marketing effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and customer base (Kotha et al., 2001). Corporate reputation emerges as an intangible asset which differentiates a firm from others and attracts customers to repurchase and willingly pay higher price for products (Eberl and Schwaiger, 2005; Roberts and Dowling, 2002). High reputation serves as a cost saver for firms. Employees desire to work for firms with excellent reputations and the firms are able to recruit and retain a competent work force with less contracting and monitoring costs (Boyd et al., 2010; Bergh et al., 2010; Roberts and Dowling, 2002). Furthermore, a high reputation often lifts a firm to a virtuous cycle, known as halo effect. Reputable firms have an advantage to pursuing an even better reputation via production, branding, and environmental actions. While traditional measures of success remain important, non-financial factors such as distinction of quality in product and service, images and branding, social responsibility, leadership, and corporate citizenship have emerged as critical parts of benchmarking (Laiet al., 2010). These non-financial factors account for a significant percentage of a company's value and pave the way for enduring salience in the turbulent business environment. Reputation also plays an integral role in developing and assessing the organization's favorability.

From the foregoing arguments, the following hypotheses emerge:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between situation awareness and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Distribution Company.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between situation awareness and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Distribution Company.



**Fig.1 Operational Framework for the hypothesized relationship between situation awareness and cooperate reputation.**

*Source: Author's Desk Research, 2018*

### Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional design. The directors, managers, operations managers, heads of departments, unit heads and duty managers or supervisors constituted the elements of our study population. The sampling frame for the study was 150 workers obtained from the Human Resources Department of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, of which a sample size of The sample size for the study therefore was 109. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for the hypothesis testing with the aid of the SPSS version 23.0 package.

**Table 1. Reliability statistics for the instruments**

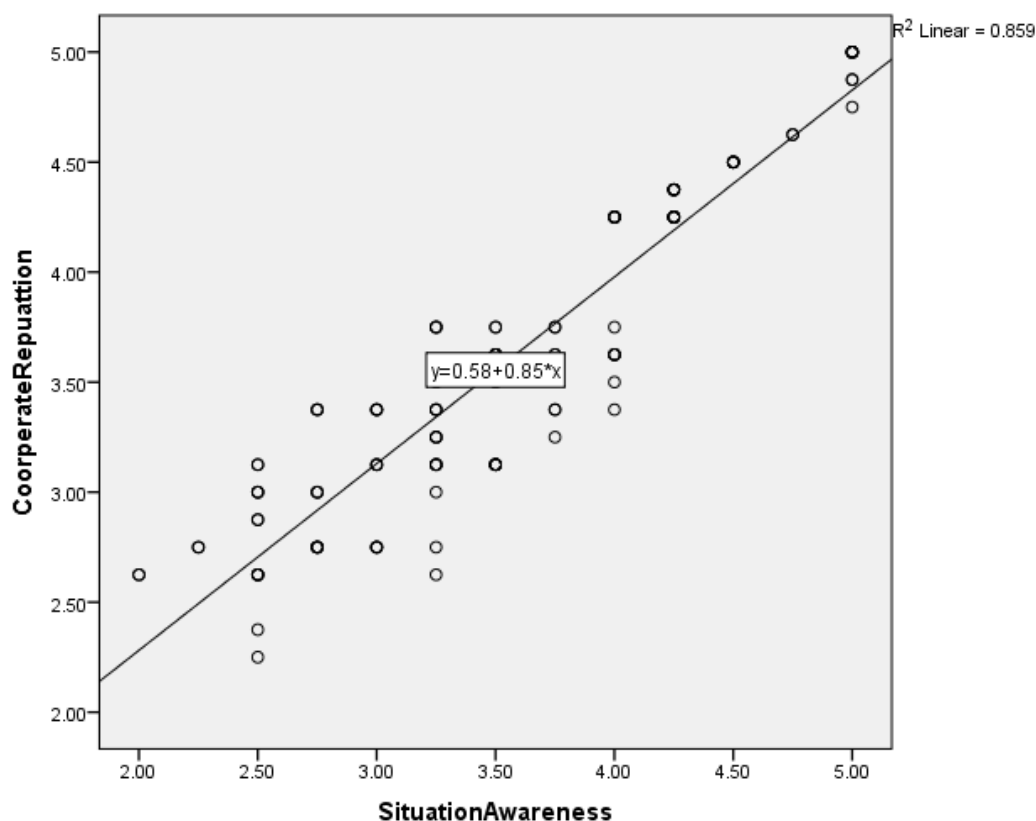
| S/No | Dimensions/Measures of the study variable | Number of items | Number of cases | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1    | Situation Awareness                       | 4               | 94              | 0.887            |
| 2    | Cooperate Image                           | 4               | 94              | 0.775            |
| 3.   | Cooperate Identity                        | 4               | 94              | 0.891            |

*Source: Research data, 2018*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Bivariate Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover a Ho1 hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We have based on the statistic of Spearman Rank ( $\rho$ ) to carry out the analysis. The level of significance 0.05 is adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ( $p > 0.05$ ) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ( $p < 0.05$ ). We will begin by presenting first a test of existing relationships.



**Figure 2** scatter plot relationship between Situation Awareness and cooperate reputation

The scatter plot graph shows at  $R^2$  linear value of (0.859) depicting a strong relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in situation awareness simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of cooperate reputation. The scatter diagram has provided vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship among the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

**Table 2** Correlations relationship between situation awareness and measures of corporate reputation

|                    |                         |                         | Situation awareness | Corporate Image | Corporate Identify |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Spearman's rho     | Situation Awareness     | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000               | .726**          | .823**             |
|                    |                         | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .                   | .000            | .000               |
|                    |                         | N                       | 94                  | 94              | 94                 |
|                    | Corporate Image         | Correlation Coefficient | .726**              | 1.000           | .752**             |
|                    |                         | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000                | .               | .000               |
|                    |                         | N                       | 94                  | 94              | 94                 |
| Corporate Identity | Correlation Coefficient | .823**                  | .752**              | 1.000           |                    |
|                    | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000                    | .000                | .               |                    |
|                    | N                       | 94                      | 94                  | 94              |                    |

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

Source: Research Data 2018, (SPSS output version 23.0)



The table above illustrates the test for the previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements.

***Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Situation awareness and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company***

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a positive relationship between Situation awareness and corporate image. The value 0.726 indicates a strong positive relationship at  $p < 0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation indicating also a strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between Situation awareness and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company.

***Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Situation awareness and corporate identity in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company.***

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a positive relationship between Situation awareness and corporate identity. The value 0.823 indicates a strong positive relationship at  $p < 0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation indicating also a very strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between Situation awareness and corporate image in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between situation awareness and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between situation awareness and corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria, using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that situation awareness have a positive effect on corporate reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria.

This reinforces previous studies like Pearson and Mitroff (1993), who argued that improving an organization's situation awareness about crises which involves learning about the types of emergency situations that may occur, of which many organizations have engaged in some sort of risk identification process, but few take this process one step further and combine risks of similar nature or expected response. In an emergency, often the same types of issues will be faced and actions will be common across crisis types. This keeps the corporate reputation of the organization on high esteem as they respond to the risk situations.

According to the study by McManus, Seville, Vargo and Brunsdon (2008), as a promoter of organizational reputation, situation awareness also incorporates an enhanced awareness of expectations, obligations, and limitations in relation to the community of stakeholders, both internally staff and externally customers, suppliers, consultants, etc.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Managing situation awareness in an organization (like the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company) can be a difficult task and can easily go wrong with extremely serious consequences for both organizational performance and productivity especially when the Corporate Reputation is affected. Situation awareness is hereby seen to have a high effect on Corporate Reputation such that the more an organization has better situational awareness, the better the organization will perform. The study concludes that a significant positive relationship exists between situation awareness and Corporate Reputation in the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Nigeria.

The study recommends that management of Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company should seek to understand its operational environment better, by been aware of the situation in order to attract desirable changes and boost its corporate reputation.

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