



## Effect of Business Practices on the Performance of Rice Processing Firms in North Central Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study examines the effect of Business Practices on the Performance of Rice Processing Firms in North Central Nigeria, focusing on strategic orientation and reward philosophy. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected from selected rice processing firms and analysed to assess the relationship between Business practices and firm performance. The results indicate that strategic orientation has a significant negative effect on performance ( $\beta = -0.139$ ,  $t = -2.619$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ), while reward philosophy shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect on performance ( $\beta = 0.075$ ,  $t = 1.416$ ,  $p = 0.157$ ). These findings suggest that, while rice processing firm's strategic orientation may not increase performance in the context of this study, reward philosophy alone are insufficient to drive significant improvements. The study therefore, recommend the need for a balanced approach to innovation business practices in enhancing the performance of rice processing firms in the region.*

**Keywords:** Business Practices, Strategic Orientation, Reward Philosophy, Processing Firm, Firm Performance

### 1.1 Introduction

Rice Processing Firms in North Central Nigeria hold a pivotal position in the nation's agricultural value chain, contributing significantly to food security, rural development, and the overall economy (Danbaba, 2023; ET, 2024). This region, known as the country's "food basket," is notable for its immense agricultural resources, particularly rice production (ET, 2024). Despite the region's potential, rice processing enterprises continue to struggle for long-term growth and competitiveness (Abdul-Rahaman, 2023; Abubakar et al., 2023). This position has piqued the interest of regulators, scholars, and industry stakeholders who

want to know what drives these enterprises' success. One of the most important aspects of understanding corporate success is the influence of innovation in business practices, which include a wide range of activities, strategies, and managerial styles. Among these, strategic orientation and incentive philosophy have emerged as critical factors with a considerable impact on organisational success.

Strategic orientation is the deliberate and rigorous process of matching a company's resources and competencies to its external environment in order to achieve long-term goals (Beliaeva et al., 2020). It comprises employing competitive advantage-enhancing strategies such as market orientation, innovation, customer focus, and adaptive learning. Strategic orientation may impact how rice processing companies position themselves in the market, adapt to changing consumer expectations, and implement technological advancements. An unambiguous and well-stated strategic direction can lead to better decision-making, more efficient resource allocation, and, ultimately, improved corporate performance (Zhang et al., 2020). In contrast, reward philosophy is concerned with the concepts and practices that regulate employee compensation, motivation, and retention (Lawal and Ojokuku, 2022). It includes both monetary benefits (salaries and bonuses) and non-monetary rewards (recognition, professional development opportunities, and work-life balance). In the rice processing industry, where skilled labour and employee dedication are critical, a successful remuneration philosophy can result in increased production, lower turnover, and a more engaged workforce. Aligning pay systems with organisational goals ensures that employees are motivated to contribute to the firm's success, which drives overall performance (Adeoti et al., 2018).

However, despite the theoretical significance of strategic orientation and reward philosophy, there is little understanding of how these elements affect the performance of rice processing enterprises in North Central Nigeria. Existing research on agricultural business practices (Lathabhavan, 2022; Mang'ana et al., 2023) frequently focusses on broader issues such as access to finance, infrastructure, and market conditions, with less emphasis on internal management practices that can make or break a company's success. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the effects of strategic orientation and incentive philosophy on the performance of rice processing enterprises in North Central Nigeria. The study's goal is to provide insights that may be used to improve managerial practices, policy actions, and industry support systems. Understanding the relationship between strategic orientation, incentive philosophy, and business performance is critical not just for increasing individual firm competitiveness, but also for improving the overall productivity and sustainability of the region's rice processing sector. The main objective in this work is to examine the effect of innovation in business Practices on the Performance of Rice Processing Firms in North Central, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the effect of strategic orientation on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the effect of reward philosophy on the performance of rice processing firms in in North Central, Nigeria.

In line with the two objectives, the following hypotheses were tested:

H<sub>1</sub>: Strategic orientation have no significant effect on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central, Nigeria.

H<sub>2</sub>: Reward philosophy has no significant effect on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central, Nigeria.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 Concept of Innovation in Business Practices**

Innovation in Business Practice (IBP) is a subtype of organisational innovation that denotes novel techniques employed by a firm to restructure work routines by modifying or creating management processes and procedures (Dukeov, 2022). It aims to introduce new elements to a firm's behaviour (Bibi *et al.*, 2020). IBP entails changing how work routines are organized in a firm by putting new management processes, procedures, and operations in place as well as making other novel management routine adjustments (Volberda *et al.*, 2021). A new organisational method in the firm's business practices would lead to higher efficiency and lower costs.

Innovation in business practice plays a strong role in enhancing the dissemination of knowledge in organisations. When a firm applies new techniques for structuring work routines and procedures, we are talking about innovation in business practices. For instance, novel techniques in rice processing value chain involves: '*Paddy cleaning*', where straw, weed seeds, soil and other inert materials are extracted from paddy; '*De-husking*', where the husk layer is separated from paddy by friction, also known as '*De-hulling*'; '*Polishing*', the process where white rice is produced in two forms: full length and broken, after removing the bran layer and the germ, and finally it goes through the process of '*Packaging*', after which it is stored for distribution'. (Obianefo *et al.*, 2023) Studies have noted that internal firm practices and other related and complementary elements, such as capital investment adoptions, R&D practices, marketing approaches, and human resource management practices, affect firms' growth (Anzola-Román *et al.*, 2020). According to Corsi *et al.* (2019) the deployment of innovative business practices is frequently associated with a beneficial influence on firm growth (Fernando *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, it has been noted that the ultimate result of a firm's business operations is growth (Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal, 2019). Thus, innovative performance, particularly in the form of business practice, is a composite concept built on many performance indices (Hameed and Naveed, 2019). Hence, while the introduction of IBP is sufficient to generate organisational innovation and positively influence firm growth, its implementation in an organisation significantly increases the expected effect on firm outcomes (Guerreiro, 2022).

#### **2.1.2 Strategic Orientation**

Strategic Orientation (SO) refers to the extensive approach that a corporation takes in order to match its activities and decisions with its long-term aims and objectives (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2020). Aloulou (2019) opined that strategic orientation involves coming up with plans, putting those strategies into action, and adjusting those strategies so that they can attain a competitive edge and satisfy the requirements of the market. The way in which a firm responds to changes in its external environment and how it promotes

itself in the market are both influenced by the strategic orientation of the company (Jalili *et al.*, 2024). A firm's actions, from the establishment of long-term goals to the reaction to changes in the external environment, are guided by the concept of strategic orientation, which is both comprehensive and dynamic (Goyal *et al.*, 2024). It is a process that is continual and requires thorough analysis, adaptation, and a clear awareness of the position that the organisation holds in the market. The successful implementation of strategic orientation not only assists businesses in surviving in the short term, but it also places them in a position to achieve long-term success that is sustainable (Maclean *et al.*, 2023). According to Aloulou (2019), a strategic orientation offers a distinct strategic narrative to direct organisational behaviours and managerial decisions in order to accomplish firm objectives. Every strategic orientation (market, brand, product, technological, entrepreneurial orientation) typically has a distinct strategic scope that contributes to the improvement of the relevant dimension(s) of organisational performance. However, this study focuses mainly on entrepreneurial orientation which describes the procedures, methods, and modes of decision-making of entrepreneurial firms (Reyes-Gomez *et al.*, 2024).

The entrepreneurial process is guided by the notion of 'creative destruction,' which seeks market openings and connects them with new products and manufacturing processes (Schumpeter and Swedberg, 2021). The entrepreneurial orientation uses a tactical approach to impact organisational-wide procedures and management style in order to transform the organisation into an entrepreneur (Zhao *et al.*, 2021). This is accomplished by cultivating a culture and behaviour of autonomy, innovation, risk-taking, pro-activeness, and competitive aggression. It aspires to be a market-driving method that offers better or more innovative solutions by questioning current market trends (Chen *et al.*, 2020). Thus, by establishing a distinct market position, entrepreneurial enterprises can become market leaders while avoiding market challenges and rivalry. Entrepreneurial orientation enables businesses to compete in their field by taking risks, embracing innovation, and implementing changes to gain a competitive advantage. Organisations that employ mind-set in a dynamic competitive environment are more likely to change their business practices than those that do not (D'angelo and Presutti, 2019).

### **2.1.3 Reward Philosophy**

Reward Philosophy (RP) helps turn entrepreneurial resources into corporate performance (Adeoti *et al.*, 2018). Reward philosophy allows employee compensation to emphasise innovation, and organisations would gain remarkable profits when reward systems depend on the circumstances and there is no one best way to make them effective. There is a suitable reward system (Lawal and Ojokuku, 2022). For incentive systems to work, they must be used in the right context, according to Adeoti *et al.* (2018). Rewards concept is key to boosting employee performance, value-oriented behaviour, productivity, and motivation for company success (Kapur, 2022). We believe that a reward philosophy that improves business performance must match employees' work ethic and expectations and highlight the importance of the relationship between fair remuneration and relative performance. All parts of reward must be understood by employees. Okello (2018) says top organisations explain their compensation philosophy. This is because explaining the entire compensation plan, including non-monetary bonuses, to employees adds value.

Thus, companies must apply a solid incentive philosophy Statement to increase employee awareness of the company's genuine value and relevance.

A rewards philosophy Statement contains all monetary and nonmonetary benefits the company can utilise to recruit, motivate, and retain employees (Chukwuma *et al.*, 2022). It explains what an organisation gives employees for their time, talents, and efforts and the results. Programmes, policies, and other variables may make up the organization's plan to show how important people are to its success. According to Lawal and Ojokuku (2022), firms with a greater incentive mindset set pay to encourage innovation. Adeoti *et al.* (2018) found that a good reward philosophy Statement and fair remuneration systems make employees more engaged and productive, improving corporate entrepreneurial performance, organisational outcomes, and value. Rewards are vital to business innovation, but few studies have examined how incentive philosophy affects corporate entrepreneurship success, particularly in Africa (Bossey, 2022). A firm's reward philosophy is crucial to its competitive edge. This concept promotes creativity. Innovative employees are rewarded more, which guides the firm's strategy (Okwuise and Ndudi, 2023). This links incentive philosophy to entrepreneurial company goals. However, rising compensation may constrain organisations' compensation budgets. Improved effort-reward balance raises questions about how well organisations and employees match. Fun, learning, and a drive to use and sell innovation motivate employees (Lawal and Ojokuku, 2022).

#### **2.1.4 Concept of Firm Performance**

Performance is defined as an organisation's capacity to make effective use of its financial resources in order to meet its objectives (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). The essential features and results for each area of responsibility must be measured in order to measure an organisation's degree of performance (Taouab and Issor, 2019). Alosani *et al.* (2020) opined that performance is the evaluation of how well different organisational levels are doing in terms of accomplishing predefined goal. Taouab and Issor (2019) described performance as an organisation's ability to reach its potential or targets over time. Similarly, Oboreh and Arukaroha (2021) opined that performance is the organisation's ability to meet the desired result as determined by the firm's key shareholders. On the other hand, it is to ascertain whether the real output of a firm is as what has been targeted (Mikalef and Gupta, 2021).

Performance is the capacity of an organisation to achieve its mission through good management, solid governance, and a continuous commitment to achieving particular objectives over a predetermined period of time (Oboreh, 2020; Mikalef and Gupta, 2021). In today's fast-paced corporate contexts, a greater knowledge of the elements' influencing FP is becoming increasingly vital. Managers must identify effective ways to accomplish and exceed business performance goals in the face of increased competition, technological breakthroughs, and fast shifting demands from customers (Kostopoulos *et al.*, 2020).

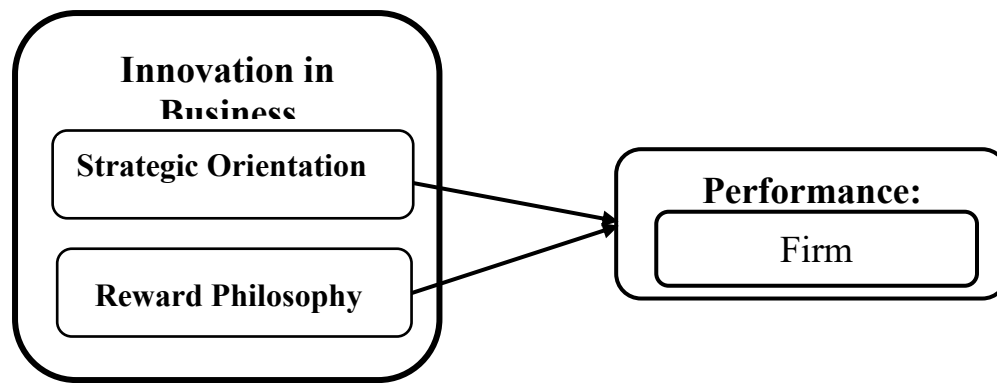


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Dynamic Capability Theory

The Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT), developed by David Teece and Gary Pisano in 1997, focuses on the ability of firms to adapt to rapidly changing environments. It suggests that integrating and building new business practices and reconfiguring internal and external competencies can improve business performance. DCT encourages businesses to gather and analyse performance data, establish short- and long-term goals, reward high performers, and retrain/fire low performers. It consists of three components: sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring. Sensing involves finding opportunities in a competitive environment, while seizing involves capitalizing on new business practices and market prospects. DCT also suggests that firms must improve network capabilities to access new information and resources and innovate. However, the theory has faced criticism for its term, conclusions, understanding, and lack of clear models.

### 2.3 Empirical Review

Chukwuma et al. (2022)'s study found that reward systems positively impact employee performance in Oyi Local Government Area, Anambra State. The study involved 1,470 staff members and found that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards positively correlated with employee performance. This supports previous research by Ngwa et al. (2019) and Bossey (2022), which also found a link between reward philosophy and employee performance.

Employers can use incentives as a motivating factor to improve employee behavior for efficiency and effectiveness.

Strategic orientation is crucial for businesses to survive in the short term and achieve sustainable long-term success. A study by Nugroho et al. (2022) and Santoso et al. (2024) examined the impact of Strategic Orientation Dimensions on the performance of micro enterprises in Kota Surabaya. The research found that technological orientation does not influence microenterprise performance, but four other elements directly enhance success. Innovation capability directly impacts corporate success and mediates the effects of learning, market, and entrepreneurial orientations, but does not alleviate the impacts of network and technology orientation.

The study by Chukwuma et al. (2022) examined the impact of reward philosophy on employee performance in Oyi Local Government Area, Anambra State. The research, which involved 1,470 staff members, found that reward philosophy is crucial for organizations to achieve their objectives. The study found that employee involvement is essential for enhancing productivity, profitability, market share, and customer demand. This finding supports previous research by Ngwa et al. (2019) and Bossey (2022), which found a link between reward philosophy and employee performance. Employers can use incentives to improve employee behavior for efficiency and effectiveness.

### 3.1 Methodology

The research design for this study is a cross-sectional survey design that utilises a quantitative technique. This approach enabled the researcher to collect information from a significant number of rice processing firms in North-Central Nigeria using a closed-ended questionnaire. This study utilises a multi-stage sampling technique to select a sample size of 384 employees from a population of 9,035. The sampling method was based on a simplified version of Slovin's formula; The sample size for this study, was obtained with a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent error of precision (Purnamawati et al., 2022). The data was collected by an online survey that utilised a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. During the process of operationalisation, the dependent and independent variables were expressed in mathematical terms. The independent variable in this context is Business practices (IBP), while the dependent variable is performance (P).

The study employs multiple linear regression analysis to analyse the collected data as well as test for the null hypotheses using SPSS. The model used by Hondoyo *et al.* (2023) in their study on the determinant of a firm's strategic orientation on firm performance is adapted in this study. The adoption of Hondoyo *et al.* (2023) models is due to the common features this study shares with theirs. Functionally, the relationship among the variables is expressed as shown in Equation below:

$$P_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SO_{it} + \beta_2 RP_{it} + \mu_{it}$$

Where:

P = Performance; SO = Strategic orientation; RP = Reward Philosophy;  $\beta_0$  = Intercept;  $\beta_{1-2}$  = Regression Coefficients and  $\mu$  = The error term.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The Demographics showing the gender, Age, educational qualification, and position in organisation are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Compositions of Rice Processing Firm Respondents**

Items	Frequency	(%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	365	74.30

Female	126	25.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18 – 24	130	26.50
25 – 31	180	36.70
32 – 38	74	15.10
39 – 45	72	14.70
46 and above	35	7.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Postgraduate	47	9.60
Degree	129	26.3
Diploma	198	40.30
Primary/Secondary	117	23.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position in company</b>		
Management team	46	9.40
Supervisor	43	8.80
Junior Staff	382	77.80
Other rank	20	4.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100.00</b>

#### 4.2 Correlation amongst the Variables

Table 2 summarizes the findings from the variable correlation analyses. This practice achieves two critical aims. The first step is to determine whether there is a bivariate relationship between each pair of dependent and independent variables. The second stage is to ensure that the correlations between the explanatory variables are not so strong as to produce multicollinearity issues.

**Table 2: Correlation coefficient**

		SO	RP	P
SO	Pearson Correlation	1	.530**	-.099*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.028
	N		491	491
RP	Pearson Correlation		1	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.974
	N			491
P	Pearson Correlation			1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N			

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



According to Table 4, the correlation coefficients between the respective variables all of which have values that are less than 0.9 and greater than 0.1. This indicates that the variables correlate fairly enough to be used for the study and there is no chance of harmful multicollinearity.

#### 4.3 Variance Inflation Factor

In addition to correlation coefficients, this study also used Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to test for multicollinearity. Kothari and Garg, (2014) stated that a VIF figure greater or equals 10 shows serious multicollinearity. However, in this study, there was no problem of multicollinearity as all VIF values in Table 3.

**Table 3: Variance Inflation Factor**

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
SO	.719	1.391
RP	.719	1.391

a. Dependent Variable: P

#### 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

Table 6 presents the ANOVA for the impact of Innovation in Business practices (IBP) on the performance of rice processing firms. The Durbin Watson coefficient stood at 1.91 as shown in Table 6 which falls within the benchmark (Norusis, 1995). This indicates the absence of harmful serial correlation, thus fulfilling one of the critical assumptions of linear regression.

**Table 4: Hypotheses Testing**

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	3.789	.177		21.409	.000
SO	-.138	.053	-.139	-2.619	.009
RP	.059	.042	.075	1.416	.157
R					.118
R Squared					.014
Adjusted R Square					.010
F-Statistics					3.429
Probability (F-Stat)					.033
Durbin-Watson					1.910

*Author's computation (2024)*

The F-statistics stood at 3.429. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at a 95% confidence level. Also, the value of R as depicted in the model indicates a positive and low (0.118) indicating a strong relationship between the combined variables of innovation in business practices and the performance of rice processing firms. The value of the R square (0.014) implies that the independent variables account for about 1.4% variation in the performance of rice processing firms. The value of the adjusted R square (0.010) implies that the independent variables will still account for about 1% variation in the performance of rice processing firms if exogenous variables are added. The study's findings concur with previous findings by Lee *et al.* (2019) Phan (2019), and Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal, (2019) which reported that there is a strong relationship between IBP and the performance of rice processing firms.

The coefficient of Strategic Orientation (SO) stood at -0.139 which is negative implies that the more flexible SO is, the less the performance by 1.6%. However, the significance of this can be judged from the *t* statistics and its significance which stood at -2.619 having a p-value of 0.783. The p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is insignificant at a 95% confidence level. This implies that the study has no statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis which states that- Strategic orientation has no significant effect on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central Nigeria. The result is however unexpected because it is believed that the more innovative strategic decisions of an organisation is, the better the performance. The findings disagree with the previous studies of Nugroho *et al.*, (2022) and Markin *et al.*, (2022). Rizan *et al.* (2019) stated that SO has positive and significant effects on a firm's performance while Han and Niu (2023) reported that organisation's decision-making style, method, and technique of operation are all reflected in its SO. Based on how it responds to and reshapes the actual environment, the enterprise chooses a SO to attain high performance.

Furthermore, the study also reveals that the coefficient of Reward Philosophy (RP) stood at .06507 which is high and positive and implies that an increase in RP would lead to an increase in the performance of rice processing firms by 69.9%. However, the significance of this can be judged from the *t* statistics and significance. The *t* statistics of Reward philosophy stood at 1.416 with a p-value of 0.157. The p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at a 95% confidence level. This implies that the study has enough statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis which states that reward philosophy has significant impact on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central, Nigeria, hence, reward philosophy has a significant impact on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central Nigeria. This result is in sync with Kapur, (2022), who assert that rewards philosophy is a fundamental technique of creating desired performance in employees, value-oriented behaviour, productivity, and motivations to levels required for a company's success. This result also matched with the findings of Adeoti *et al.* (2018)), and Lawal and Ojokuku, (2022) who were of the opinion that Organisations must implement a reward philosophy that will not only draw in the greatest talent but also continue to inspire and support staff

members as they work toward achieving organisational objectives and overcoming obstacles in a talent market that is becoming more and more unstable.

### 5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the effect of innovation in Business practice on the performance of rice processing firms in North Central Nigeria, focusing on strategic orientation and rewards philosophy. The findings revealed a significant and strong relationship between innovation in business practices and the performance of rice processing firms in North Central Nigeria, as indicated by the R value (0.118<sup>a</sup>) and the R square value (0.014). However, strategic orientation was found to have an insignificant and negative effect on rice processing firms, suggesting that increased strategic orientation does not necessarily enhance performance. Conversely, rewards philosophy demonstrated a significant positive effect, with a high coefficient (0.059), indicating that effective rewards philosophy can substantially boost rice processing firms' success. These findings highlight the critical role of rewards philosophy in driving performance, while also challenging assumptions regarding the benefits of strategic orientation. The results suggest that while AI has the potential to revolutionize rice processing, the way it is managed is crucial to realizing its benefits. The study thus recommends as follows:

- i. Given the unexpected negative impact, it is recommended that rice processing firms in North Central Nigeria prioritize a balanced approach to strategic orientation. This includes ensuring compatibility with existing systems without overemphasizing flexibility, which may lead to inefficiencies.
- ii. To enhance the performance of rice processing firms, The management should communicate in clear terms to employees, the basic reward philosophies and recognized their performances, since in this study employee recognition ranked higher than other variables of reward philosophy. In order for rice processing companies to achieve peak performance, worker welfare needs to be adequately considered. The reward system for rice processing firms should be structured to effectively inspire employees' innovation, thereby improving productivity, and ensuring their commitment to fulfilling given tasks.

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