

## **Sustaining Competitive Advantage in Medium-sized Enterprises (MEs) through Employee Social Interaction and Helping Behaviours**

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### **Abstract**

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The ability to compete in today's turbulent, complex, fluid and highly dynamic business environment depends, to a large extent, on the innovative, creative and knowledge sharing capacity of employees in firms; especially for medium-sized enterprises with its peculiar characteristics. Creative/innovative and knowledge sharing capacity of firms has been attributed to the level of Employees' Social Interactions (ESI) and Helping Behaviours (HB) at work. However, discourse in existing literatures on ways through which Medium-sized Enterprises (MEs) can acquire requisite creative and innovative and employee knowledge-sharing needed to build competitive advantage, most especially through their human resource practices, are minimal. This paper examines the perception of Human Resource (HR) practitioners in Nigerian MEs to building/sustaining competitive advantage for their firms through ESI and HB. The study carried out exploratory survey of 453 HR practitioners from seven sub-sectors of Nigerian MEs sectors; data collected was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis to justify the study's specific objectives. HR practitioners' attitude to ESI and HB was measured with the administration of questionnaires using Likert Scale based on identified indicators of organisational ESI and HB to sustaining competitive advantage. The study infers that Nigerian HR practitioners in education and health and social work sector are more likely to ensure ESI at work as a means of building competitive advantage. It was also found that HR practitioners in all the subsectors examined exhibit positive inclination towards encouraging HB amongst employees as a means of building sustainable competitive advantage.

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**Keywords:** Employee Social Interaction, Helping Behaviour, Human Resource Practitioner, Competitive Advantage, Social Capital, Medium-sized Enterprises.

### **1. Introduction**

One of the many ways of sustaining competitive advantage for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is when employees, not only effectively interact with one another, but do so for the purpose of helping one another accomplish set tasks and responsibilities.

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Such interactions and help not only ensure that employees freely and willingly share information and knowledge; it does facilitate innovative behaviours of employees, and can lead to competitive advantage for small and medium-sized enterprise (Xerri and Brunetto, 2011).

Building competitive advantage for SMEs has been linked to knowledge management process of an enterprise; encompassing the recognition of a problem, devising ways of solving the problem and institutionalising the problem solving process into the practice(s) of the organisation (Onyango, 2015). Employee's social interaction and helping behaviours encourages knowledge sharing and initiate the process of bringing new problem solving ideas into use.

Van Buren (2008) and George et al (2010) inferred that Employee Social Interaction (ESI) is a kind of capital to organisations ( in their definition of organisational social capital) when they opined that organisations create values by and for themselves through their internal relations among and with employees, as well as building external alliances and reputation. They referred to ESI at work as the relational wealth of firms associated with a common sense of purpose and strong norms of cooperation. Viewed from the perspective lenses of social capital, ESI has a causal relationship with increased growth and better performance of firms (Ofori and Sackey, 2010; and Kianto and Waajakoski, 2010). Effective and affective social interactions among employees also breeds organisations' innovative capacity and employees' innovative behaviours (Oludeyi, 2014), which can lead to competitive advantage of firms.

Webb (2008), Manning (2010) and Eniola (2015) advocate that in order to encourage organisational knowledge transfer and knowledge management in 21st century organisations, attentions should be shifted to building organisational social capital through encouragement of unhindered helping behaviours among employees. Actions or inactions of an individual employee that support and facilitate the execution and completion of both routine and non-routine work constitute helping behaviours in organisation (Mossholder, Richardson, and Settoon, 2011). Helping behaviour in organisations are the interpersonal, formal and informal actions, inactions, attitude, nuges that are affiliative, cooperative and positively and intentionally directed towards supporting other individuals at work (Flynn and Lake, 2008; Scott et al., 2015).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Employee Social Interaction (ESI) as Source of Competitive Advantage**

ESI as a source of competitive advantage is deeply rooted in the relational dimension of social capital and the human relations movement view of organisational theory. The latter connotes that improving the relationship between management and employees is very important for the effective functioning of an organisation and canvases paying attention to the needs of the employees as a means to improve productivity.

It is premised on six management concepts and themes injecting a humanistic element into the scientific and analytical approach to human relations, namely; dynamism, empowerment, participation, leadership, conflict, and experience (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). The former relates to the personal relationship people have developed over and through a history of interaction (Liao and Welsch, 2005; Liao et al, 2015). It is about the frequency and nature of human interaction in a work place, often beyond the formal work structures and procedures. Relational dimension of social capital focuses on the particular relationships people have, such as respect, trust, trustworthiness, and friendliness. The higher the degree of interaction and the more communication channels are available for use, the more easily employees are able to develop trust and trustworthiness, and more easily information, resources, and other forms of transactions can take place within the organisation network.

Mačerinskienė and Aleknavičiūtė (2011) define relational social capital as the behavioural assets rooted in a relationship such as trust and trustworthiness. 'Trust is a very rich concept covering a wide range of relationships' (Jalali and Khorasani, 2012:526) and conjoining a variety of objects; trust is the pillar around which human relations revolve (Colesca, 2009). That is why trust is usually analysed as the fundamental element to social capital's existence and growth because trust and friendship are vital in development of social network ties. Given this tight connection between trust and social capital, there is confusion about whether social capital is the result of trust or they are virtually interchangeable, but evidence abound on the significance of positive employees' interaction among one another in building and sustaining competitive advantage among firms that prioritise same (Liao et al, 2015).

Relational dimension of social capital properly supports social network; it is based on social norms and sanctions. Norms are the informal rules that the members of the network must follow (Berggrer and Silver, 2009). If they are broken, sanctions should be imposed to keep the balance of obligations and expectations in those networks. This conception helps to maintain and support trust as it is obvious that norms applied in an organization should primarily focus on generating trust but not competition between parties (Totterman and Sten, 2005).

For HR practitioners working in medium-sized enterprises with the need to develop distinctive source of competitive advantage, the requirement to understand how to build and develop relational social capital as well as applying same in the organisation cannot be over emphasised (Adeniji, 2015). For Medium-sized enterprises operating in this 21st century, especially those operating in a volatile socio-cultural environment like Nigeria, with its dizzying development of information and communication technologies, the human factor becomes the single element which competition could not copy (Abiodun et al., 2014).

With the generally accepted notion that employees have a crucial role in any MEs' aspiring to be distinct from competitors, relational social capital building, that is, ESI (trust, trustworthiness, norms, and sanctions) brought about through human resources management has more important role in the planning and realisation of ME's success compared to the past period (Ceranovic and Popovic, 2009).

### **Sustaining Competitive Advantage through Helping Behaviour**

Helping Behaviour (HB) among employees in an organisation as a source of competitive advantage is rooted in cognitive dimension of social capital theory. According to Ali-Hassan, et al., (2010), cognitive dimension of social capital encompasses shared codes, values, beliefs, and common knowledge. Cognitive social capital may thus be associated and related to and with the tacit dimension of knowledge (Polanyi, 1996). Considering that tacit knowledge is what is 'hidden in the head of individuals' (Mladkova, 2012:109), the cognitive dimension of social capital entailing shared beliefs and common knowledge is likely to be negatively affected when close interpersonal encounters in the form of active relationship are reduced. Whilst focusing on the shared aspect of the cognitive dimension, Ali-Hassan, et al., (2010) argue that adopting an organisational cultural perspective can be useful for understanding the proposed negative impact of social mobility on the cognitive dimension of social capital.

They further argue in particular that norms, beliefs and assumptions, which are essential components of an organization's culture, are learned by informal socialisation processes such as attending organisation-sponsored social and recreational events, spending time with colleagues, managers, and subordinates, and building relationships with mentors outside of work setting.

Furthermore, the cognitive dimension of social capital derives from mental processes, ideas, culture, values and attitudes that contribute and predispose people to mutually beneficial collective action. Shared values, norms and expectations are part of all social structural arrangements (Nichola Grey, 2006). Ali-Hassan, et al., (2010) citing Napapiet and Ghoshal, (1998), contend that through frequent and close relationships individuals are able to share information and create common points of view and such individuals are able to learn organisational values and understand and adopt the organisational languages, codes, and practices which constitute essential catalyst for sustaining competitive advantage.

We can therefore deduce that a critical aspect of social capital investment is the act of, or directed effort, at increasing or establishing a standard value system based on mutual respect, partnership, sound work ethic and trust, whilst creating and maintaining an enabling environment supportive of these value systems, which hitherto, required a conscious effort and deep understanding from those responsible for managing human elements of organisations, otherwise known as HR practitioners. It is the creation of a culture of behaviour which facilitates human, social and economic development (Turyakira and Cathy, 2015).

Organisations can not only gain competitive advantage through employee HB, they can become more adaptive to the challenges bedevilling their operating environment because with help and assistance from one another, individual employee in the organisation can modify his/her knowledge, skills and abilities 'to deal with workplace contingencies and change' (Mossholder, Richardson, & Settoon, 2011:45). In a nutshell, HB of employees in an organisation represents a unique, dynamic and inimitable resource and capability of firms, in that, it contributes to organisational flexibility in the face of rapidly changing business environment.

### **Analytical Procedures**

Data collected was subjected to two main types of analysis. In order to gain perspectives into the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, frequency distribution of responses was calculated while descriptive statistics was employed in determining the perception of practitioners on employees' social interaction with one another at work and also their perception to encouraging the culture of helping in organisations through recognition of employees who exhibit helping behaviours at work.

### **Results**

Of the 453 questionnaires distributed to HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs across seven different sectors, a total of 451 were completed and usable, representing a response rate of 99.5 percent.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Table 1 depicts the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs surveyed were in the middle management position, 228, representing 50.6%.

There are more HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs working in the manufacturing sector - 114 (25.3%) than any other sector of the Nigerian economy, closely followed by the financial intermediation sector - 82 (18.2%), contrary to SMEDAN report of 2012 which concluded that wholesale and retail trade activities constitute a dominant sector in business activities engaged by majority of Nigerians; whereas it has just 3.10% firms in medium-sized category, and has second to the least number of HR practitioners (10.2% of HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs) in the sector according to this study. Just after transport, storage and communication sector with 10.4% of practitioners, compared to manufacturing sector that has 713 formal medium-sized enterprises and 25.3% of HR practitioners. Majority (68.8%) of HR practitioners in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises control between 10 – 20 and 20 – 30 employees at any one time, as just few percentage (15.1) control less than ten (10) employees at a time.

There are almost twice as many male HR practitioners than female HR practitioners in Nigeria ME in apparent conformity with the findings of SMEDAN (2012), which stated that there are 86.43% male owners of SMEs in Nigeria compared to merely 13.57% female SME owners. Furthermore, this study found that there are more Christian HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs than other religions. Even then, the proportion of HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs is fairly spread across the three main religious orientations in Nigeria – Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR), justifying the position of Faleye (2013) that there are three dominant religions in Nigeria.

Table 1: *Demographic characteristics of the respondents* (N=451)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Position in Organisation</b>		
Junior Manager	116	25.7
Middle Manager	228	50.6
Senior Manager	107	23.7
Total	451	100
<b>Numbers of Employees Control</b>		
Less than 10	68	15.1
10 -20	151	33.5
21 - 30	159	35.3
30+	72	16.0
Missing	1	.2
Total	451	100
<b>Organisation/Industry Specialisation</b>		
Education	38	8.4
Financial Intermediation	82	18.2
Health and Social work	59	13.1
Hotels and Restaurants	65	14.4
Manufacturing	114	25.3
Transport, Storage and Communication	46	10.2
Wholesale and Retail trade	47	10.4
Total	451	100
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	189	41.9
Male	260	57.6
Missing	2	.4
Total	451	100
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	250	55.4
Muslim	136	30.2
Traditionalist	39	8.6
Others	24	5.3
Missing	2	.4

Total	451	100
Marital Status		
Divorced	46	10.2
Married	261	57.9
Separated	55	12.2
Single	81	18.0
Widowed	8	1.8
Total	451	100
Age Group		
20 – 25	36	8.0
26-30	59	13.1
31-35	90	20.0
36-40	111	24.6
41-45	102	26.6
46-50	45	10.0
50+	8	1.8
Total	451	100
Number of Years of Practice as HR Manager		
1 - 5yrs	108	23.9
5 - 10yrs	198	43.9
10 - 15yrs	110	24.4
20+	32	7.1
Missing	3	.87
Total	451	100
Educational Background		
Doctoral Degree	28	6.2
First Degree	165	36.6
Masters Level Degree	179	39.7
Professional Qualification	77	17.1
Other	2	.4
Total	451	100

Source: Authors' field research findings

### **HR Practitioners' Responses to Effective and Affective Social Interaction at Work as Source of Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

In terms of ensuring employees socially interact with one another at work, respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statement that *'it is my responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another'*. Table 2 below depicts the responses of the participants.

62.2% of the HR practitioners surveyed indicated in varying degrees that they did not believe it was their responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another at work. 6.4% strongly disagreed it was their responsibility, 23.3% disagreed, whilst a significant number of HR practitioners (31.5%) were indifferent to the idea that it is their responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another at work. Very few (9.5%) HR practitioners surveyed in this study had firm conviction that it was their responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another at work, while 28.2% did consent and agree that it was their responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another at work.

**Table 2: HR Practitioners' Responses to Effective and Affective Social Interaction at Work as Indication of ESI**

It is my responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with one another at work					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Responses	Strongly Disagree	29	6.4	6.5	6.5
	Disagree	105	23.3	23.5	30.0
	Indifference	142	31.5	31.8	61.9
	Strongly Agree	43	9.5	9.6	71.5
	Agree	127	28.2	28.5	100.0
	Total	446	98.9	100.0	
Total		451	100.0		

Source: Authors' results from SPSS data.

From the result above, this study found that the majority of Nigerian Medium-sized HR practitioners did not believe it is their responsibility to encourage effective and affective social interactions at work. Therefore, since it is suggested by Akio (2005:144) that the 'main source of competitive advantage of a firm does not fall into the heterogeneity of resources and capabilities per se, but the heterogeneous perceptions of practitioners, the perception of HR practitioners in Nigerian MEs firms to ESI indicates that it would be difficult, if not practically impossible, to harness the values in human social interaction, such as knowledge-sharing, cooperation, understanding, love, trust, information and goodwill for the purpose of having competitive advantage in the industry. Thus, contradicting scholarly opinion that commitment to an organisation derived through organisational identity, and best understood as contested and negotiated through interactions between employees are crucial for a firm (Arregle, et al., 2007).



Also, Leana and Van Buren (1999) suggested that through participation in efforts to meet group objectives, the individual can achieve his or her goals through identification with the group and work towards the group objective and, residually, towards their goals.

This finding also buttresses the suggestion of Gbadamosi (2003) that African managers, and indeed Nigeria HR practitioners, should be more interested among others in the career advancement and employees' work environment. They need to give their decisions human faces through evident care on non-work activities capable of impacting on employees' performance.

### **HR Practitioners' Responses to Recognising Helping Behaviour at Work as Indication of ESI for Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

The perception of HR practitioners regarding the need to recognise employees who exhibit helping behaviours at work, as against those who are more concerned with personal ambitions, was gauged in this study. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that '*HR should recognise employees who are more concerned with personal ambitions than employees who are more concerned with helping other colleagues.*

Table 3: ***HR Practitioners' Responses to Helping Behaviour at Work as Indication of ESI***

HR should recognise employees who are more concerned with personal ambitions than employees who are more concerned with helping other colleagues.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Responses	Strongly Disagree	36	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	131	29.0	29.0	37.0
	Indifference	136	30.2	30.2	67.2
	Agree	33	7.3	7.3	74.5
	Strongly Agree	115	25.5	25.5	100.0
	Total	451	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' results from SPSS data.

According to table 3 above, a slight majority of HR practitioners in the Nigerian MEs surveyed in this study, that is, 167 HR practitioners, representing 37% (comprising 8% strongly disagree and 29% disagree) of the total surveyed disagreed that HR should recognise employees who are more concerned with personal ambitions than employees who are more concerned with helping others.

On the other hand, 148 HR practitioners representing 32.8% of total respondents agreed that HR should recognise employees who are more concerned with personal ambitions as different from employees who are more concerned with helping other colleagues. 136 HR practitioners, representing 30.2% of the practitioners surveyed are indifferent to the notion. It thus means that HR practitioners in Nigeria MEs, according to this survey, just somewhat believed in the concept of helping behaviour at work as a subcomponent and index of ESI, given the significant proportion (32.8%) answering the statement in affirmative and a sizeable minority (30.2%) were indifferent to the notion.

The current study implies that as much as majority of HR practitioners in the Nigerian MEs accepted that cooperative and knowledge sharing employees are necessary in ensuring sustainable competitive advantage. A significant majority did not see the need for helping behaviour at work. These two findings are contradictory in the sense that cooperative and knowledge sharing behaviour not only discourages organisational 'silos'; it is indeed, embedded in ethical behaviour at work, which in a way includes helping colleagues.

Table 4: *HR Practitioners' Responses to Indicators of ESI*

Industry/Specialization	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indifference (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
It is my responsibility to ensure employees socially interact with each other at work					
Education	13.8	12.4	30.3	27.9	32.3
Financial Intermediation	10.3	23.8	7.0	14.0	2.4
Health and Social Work	10.3	8.6	10.6	20.9	22.0
Hotels and Restaurants	13.8	12.54	7.0	16.3	8.7
Manufacturing	20.7	28.6	16.9	4.7	15.0
Transport, Storage & Communication	27.6	12.4	8.5	2.3	3.1
Wholesales & Retail Trading	3.4	1.9	19.7	14.0	16.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100
It is HR's responsibility to ensure personal trust exists amongst employees					
Education	10.7	18.5	29.3	24.4	29.7
Financial Intermediation	21.4	17.6	9.6	4.4	4.5
Health and Social Work	3.6	9.3	15.9	22.2	16.2
Hotels and Restaurants	10.7	12.0	7.0	13.3	11.7
Manufacturing	17.9	27.8	15.9	13.3	14.4
Transport, Storage & Communication	32.1	12.0	3.8	2.2	8.1
Wholesales & Retail Trading	3.6	2.8	18.5	20.0	15.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100
HR must be concerned with friendship relationships between employees					

Education	8.0	24.0	35.9	21.7	19.3
Financial Intermediation	20.0	26.0	5.6	4.3	5.0
Health and Social Work	0.0	7.3	11.3	19.6	22.9
Hotels and Restaurants	20.0	10.4	8.5	19.6	7.1
Manufacturing	16.0	22.9	27.5	6.5	10.
Transport, Storage & Communication	36.0	7.3	4.9	4.3	9.3
Wholesales & Retail Trading	0.0	2.1	6.3	23.9	26.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
It is important for HR managers to identify individuals that are committed to the organization					
Education	0.0	18.6	24.8	31.1	28.4
Financial Intermediation	21.7	33.9	9.5	13.1	2.0
Health and Social Work	0.0	0.0	10.5	13.1	22.4
Hotels and Restaurants	21.7	18.6	8.6	11.5	7.0
Manufacturing	17.4	18.6	33.3	9.8	12.9
Transport, Storage & Communication	39.1	10.2	5.7	4.9	7.0
Wholesales & Retail Trading	0.0	0.0	7.6	16.4	20.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
It is important for HR managers to identify employees that understand the purpose and mission of the organisation					
Education	0.0	12.2	26.3	27.3	29.9
Financial Intermediation	51.9	24.4	6.1	9.1	4.6
Health and Social Work	0.0	4.9	11.1	18.2	18.0
Hotels and Restaurants	7.4	24.4	14.1	6.8	7.2
Manufacturing	11.1	19.5	30.3	13.6	14.9
Transport, Storage & Communication	29.6	14.6	6.1	10.2	4.6
Wholesales & Retail Trading	0.0	0.0	6.1	14.8	20.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100
HR should recognise employees who are more concerned with personal ambitions than employees who are more concerned with helping other colleagues.					
Education	33.3	26.7	25.9	21.2	21.1
Financial Intermediation	19.4	13.7	6.7	9.1	8.8
Health and Social Work	0.0	5.3	9.6	27.3	30.7
Hotels and Restaurants	19.4	6.1	11.1	18.2	8.8
Manufacturing	5.6	12.2	34.8	0.0	14.9
Transport, Storage & Communication	22.2	14.5	5.9	3.0	1.8
Wholesales & Retail Trading	0.0	21.4	5.9	21.2	14.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Ambitious, independent employees deserve more praise than cooperative and knowledge sharing employees.					
Education	39.3	19.9	23.9	25.8	25.6
Financial Intermediation	12.5	14.0	11.9	3.2	6.0
Health and Social Work	3.6	2.9	9.2	25.8	34.2
Hotels and Restaurants	16.1	5.9	14.7	19.4	6.0
Manufacturing	10.7	19.1	31.2	6.5	12.0
Transport, Storage & Communication	14.3	18.4	4.6	0.0	0.0

Wholesales & Retail Trading	3.6	19.9	4.6	19.4	16.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors' field research findings

## Discussion

It is evident that encouraging closure, that is, the extents to which social relationships are allowed to deepen and thicken within and among people in an organisation is essential for ESI to take its course. Closure among individuals leads to strong ties and is likely to increase the transfer of information and knowledge they exchange.

Hence, organisations through their HR practices are required to structure opportunities for people to meet and build relationships, aside from encouraging team meetings (Okpu and Obiora, 2015); HR practices in an organisation must enable people to create strong ties through various forums, such as communities of practice (Ingham, 2009).

Organisations must promote interdependence - units, teams, sections, departments or any other nomenclature encapsulated in the organisational structures and charts; must be on fluid, reliable and comprises interdependent units, teams, sections, departments as essential basis for everyday operations. In order to promote productivity, quality improvements, client focus, flat management structure, efficient and effective communication, and increase employee morale that are capable of leading to sustainable competitive advantage, the different structural classification in an organisation must be positively interdependent (Shehnaz and Ramayah, 2015). This, according to Tarricone and Luca (2002) requires social interdependence which connotes how individuals in various groups, teams, sections, or departments of a firm interact and react in cooperative learning or working situations. It is a situation when individuals share common goals where individual's outcomes are affected by the actions of the others.

Organisations must encourage interaction - the depth and strength of human social interaction at work is one of the key drivers of organisational social capital. Human interaction in general and workplace social interaction in particular is a function of effective communication between and among employees. Chidi et al., (2012) whilst exploring the role of HR professionals in promoting ethical issues in human resources management asserted that no group or organisation can exist without communication. They opine that effective communication invokes interaction and thus imparts a common idea and understanding among organisational members. They reckon that in the world of business or work, communication refers to interacting and transmitting information to one another for the effective performance of their duties and to further the fundamental purpose of the organisation.

In other words, communication breeds interactions which in turns strengthens social ties and subsequently enhance competitive advantage. According to Camps and Marques, (2011), interaction is the frequency with which members of the network communicate with one another and reflect the quantity, quality and strength of the relationships among them. Hence, promoting healthy and productive interaction through active and positive communication channels and systems induced by conducive working environment as propelled by use of structural conditions and practices by HR practitioners is essential for organisations in today's dynamic operating environment.

## **Conclusion**

It is imperative for HR practitioners to operate a template that influences the development of social capital, shaping its creation and evolution in order for firms' resources and capability to create sustainable competitive advantage. These firms' resources and capability includes all assets (human assets characterised by all forms of formal and social interactions among employees) and firm attributes, information, and knowledge (exemplified by culture of helping). In the quest for building organisational competitive advantage, firms and indeed HR practitioners should focus on identifying inimitable resources and capabilities for the firms by promoting effective and affective ESI and HB.

Stability should be ensured as HR must endeavour to stimulate a working environment devoid of incessant changes. They must ensure adequate length of time that members of a group need to develop their relationships (Camps and Marques, 2011) as stability does not only promote the creation of networks and relationships among people, it also allows people to share experiences thus resulting in people sharing same vision and languages that facilitate the creation of trust, norms and obligations that can enhance sustainable competitive advantage.

Ekwoaba et al. (2015) stress the importance of organisations' HR units, and by extension HR practitioners, reflecting on the strategic role of inimitable resources and capabilities to the performance of firms. It is supposed that the ability of HR practitioners to recognise the need to ensure employees socially interact with one another as well as cultivate the habit of helping one another is of particular importance when a firm is contemplating recruiting people with the right capabilities to work for the firm.

The perception of HR practitioners to ESI and HB is not only crucial to the possibilities of firms building competitive advantage; it is a super-ordinate concept to capability building for firms. Hence, the presence of mind, that is perception of the HR practitioners to ESI and HB enables competitive advantage to be built along the organisation's vision or strategy; a positive perception to these resources (ESI and HB) enables firms to begin to coordinate the inherent values in them and the potential for creation of additional values arises.

On the other hand, a negative perception of the importance of ESI and HB by HR practitioners in a firm could lead to the possibility and inability to adequately harness the benefits and values inherent in them.

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