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## Personal Service and Competitiveness of Oil and Gas Exploration and Producing Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria

Nwakanma, Spencer Ugochukwu

(Dr.) Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ph: +2348052238407 or +2348039388838

Corresponding Email: [snwakanma@gmail.com](mailto:snwakanma@gmail.com)

### Abstract:

This study examined the relationship between personal service and the competitiveness of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population of this study comprises all the oil and gas companies that operate in the South-South region of Nigeria. There are 131 companies involved in oil and gas exploration and production in the South-South region of Nigeria. Because the population of the study is small, the researcher handled the entire population for the study. Regarding the respondents, two senior managers in the operations and finance of each company were considered for this study. Therefore, the total number of respondents became 262 from the 131 companies involved in oil and gas exploration and production in the South-South region of Nigeria. Primary data was collected using a 5-point Likert scaled questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between personal service and the competitiveness of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommends that management of oil and gas exploration and producing companies should strategically integrate gig workers into their operations, especially in roles that require specialized skills, temporary expertise, or project-based contributions.

### Keywords:

Personal Service, Firm Competitiveness, Reliability, Flexibility, Product Quality.

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## INTRODUCTION

Competition in business is increasing by the day entrepreneurs are looking for innovative means of reaching potential customers differently to attract patronage in order to remain in business. One way many successful businesses have done that is to render quality service to customers trying to serve them to suit their personal needs. Mahamad and Ramayah (2010) posited that services are increasingly becoming a significant part of many businesses regionally, nationally, and globally and it is also considered as a means of generating revenue for the business. Thomas (2012) defined service as the support of an organization's infrastructural capabilities and the automatic policy enforcement in a service-oriented industry.

This involves the hiring of a third-party firm or a very skillful individual who has the required skills and expertise to handle an aspect or the different aspects of services in the business. Services can be deployed in all industries, government, security outfits, retail outlets, supply chain and logistics, manufacturing, health, etc. Lord, Bates, Friday, McLeod, Cherrett, Martinez-Sykora, and Oakey (2023) revealed that the services rendered by delivery firms online by some gig giants like Deliveroo have changed drastically the way people buy and consume foods presently. This drastic change they argued has expanded the on-demand delivery service business and many businesses have sprung up and are doing well.

Lopez-Vega, Tell, and Vanhaverbeke (2016) argued that the increasingly open innovation environment that exists in this contemporary business environment has a lot of external solutions and collaborations are now very common in finding the right innovation solution or partner where people can easily locate what they want. The adoption of technology and its online involvement has so many benefits for businesses as it has in the past increased profitability and other sustainable factors (AlZayani, Mohammed & Shoaib, 2023); it has transformed the facets of interaction between businesses and customers and also resulted in improved services and customer satisfaction (Shahid Iqbal, Ul Hassan, & Habibah, 2018).

The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between personal services and the competitiveness of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

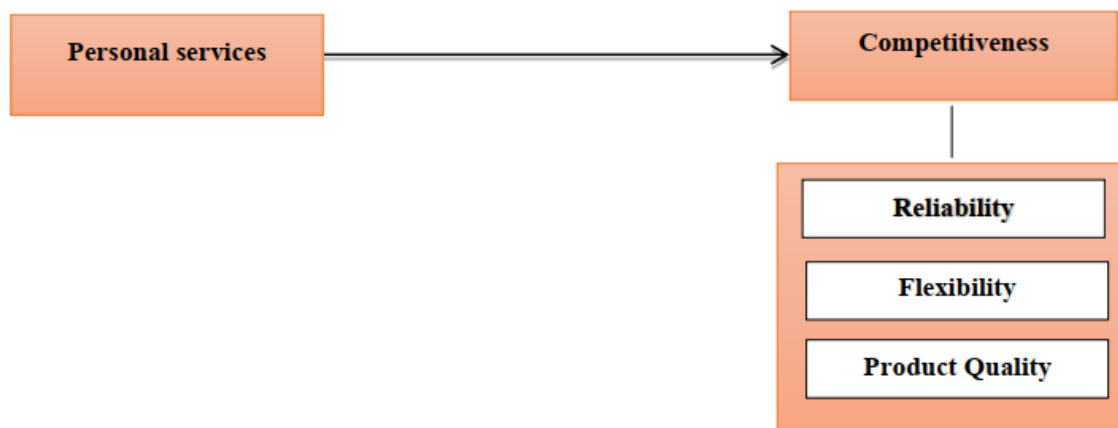


Figure 1: *Conceptual model for the relationship between personal services and competitiveness*

Source: Desk Research (2024)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

#### Resource-based view theory

The resource-based view (RBV) of the firm was first introduced by Edith Penrose in her seminal work "The Theory of the Growth of the Firm," which was published in 1959. Resource-based theory (RBT) is a strategic management framework that holds the view that the internal resources and capabilities of a firm are the primary drivers of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Developed in the late 20th century, Penrose's RBT suggests that a firm's unique bunch of resources—such as tangible assets, human capital, organizational capabilities, and intangible assets like brand reputation or technological know-how—are the key determinants of its ability to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace.

According to RBT, not all resources are equally valuable or rare, and firms need to possess resources that are not easily replicated by competitors to achieve a lasting competitive edge. The theory emphasizes the importance of these resources in creating value for customers, and stakeholders, and majorly leading to superior performance and market positioning (Khanra, Kaur, Joseph, Malik & Dhir, 2022). One important aspect of the Resource-based theory is the concept of resource heterogeneity and immobility (Gerhart & Feng, 2021). Resource heterogeneity highlights the idea that firms differ in the types and amounts of resources they possess, which makes them unique.

On the other hand, resource immobility suggests that these resources cannot be easily transferred or replicated by competitors. RBT encourage firms to identify and acquire resources that are valuable and difficult for competitors to acquire or imitate. By so doing, businesses can build a sustainable competitive advantage that go beyond short-term strategies, fostering long-term success in dynamic and competitive business environments. RBT has become an important theory in the field of management, offering a guide to

businesses in understanding the importance of their internal and external resources in shaping their competitive positions. A good knowledge of this enhances the ability of managers in harnessing these resources to the benefit of their organizations.

### **Personal services**

Competition in business is increasing by the day entrepreneurs are looking for innovative means of reaching potential customers differently to attract patronage in order to remain in business. One way many successful businesses have done that is to render quality service to customers trying to serve them to suit their personal needs. Mahamad and Ramayah (2010) posited that services are increasingly becoming a significant part of many businesses regionally, nationally, and globally and it is also considered as a means of generating revenue for the business. Thomas (2012) defined service as the support of an organization's infrastructural capabilities and the automatic policy enforcement in a service-oriented industry.

This involves the hiring of a third-party firm or a very skillful individual who has the required skills and expertise to handle an aspect or the different aspects of services in the business. Services can be deployed in all industries, government, security outfits, retail outlets, supply chain and logistics, manufacturing, health, etc. Lord, Bates, Friday, McLeod, Cherrett, Martinez-Sykora, and Oakey (2023) revealed that the services rendered by delivery firms online by some gig giants like Deliveroo have changed drastically the way people buy and consume foods presently. This drastic change they argued has expanded the on-demand delivery service business and many businesses have sprung up and are doing well.

More especially with the aid of online platforms, the way services are now rendered in this sector is entirely different from the traditional methods of delivery in the past thirty years. The World Bank (2023) revealed that there has been a huge demand for workers online by developed countries from developing nations due to the rise in demand for the services of these firms especially in Europe and the United States of America and that the gig economy alone accounts for twelve percent of the entire global labor market and that this is much higher than what was initially estimated. They further posited that it holds more promise for the female gender.

Personal services therefore can be defined as the employment of freelancers or contractors third-party employees or specialized firms to handle either in part or full the service activities of a company in order to engender innovation and creativity to meet customer satisfaction through outsourcing. These services may include, human resources, manufacturing, supply chain and logistics, sales, retailing, accounting, consultancies, etc. This has also been fuelled by the use of digital technologies and online platforms and these firms also have the expertise in one or more areas involving them can help the client company be relieved of some burdens and allows it to concentrate on other trivial issues to be efficient especially when they are a multinational firm.

The service mediation concept has been in existence for a very long time where people employ those that have special skills in their activities and pay them off after their services but this concept has been popularized only recently due to the success of the gig economy in recent times. Some of these service companies do not have the facilities, but they link with the facility owners and also search for customers, cater to the company's overhead, and make profits for the owners of the factor of production that they have gathered. Some of these gig service companies are Deliveroo, Uber, Bolt, Amazon Flex, Airbnb, Google, Yahoo, Le Meridian, Lyft, and so on.

All these companies mentioned here render one service or the other. Amazon flex, Lyft, Uber, etc. employ drivers who come with their vehicles, their training, and their licenses. What they do is to be the link between those who need luxury rides and those who can offer rides and take their commission. The services in business are very significant and have proven to be a very efficient means of lowering operational costs as the third-party firm or individual pays lower wages to their workers, increased efficiency in business as professionals will be handling, it also increases focus on strategy and core competencies, it creates access to skills and resources as one will have to see first-hand how the experts do it, it increases flexibility to meet changing business and commercial needs (Overby, 2022).

### **Firms' Competitiveness**

Chikán, Czakó, Kiss-Dobronyi, and Losonci (2022) posited that the concept of firm-level competitiveness is widely used in the field of management. However, it is scarcely related to the analysis of the effectiveness of functional operations. The concept of competitiveness can be viewed in many ways by scholars of management depending upon their convenience, however, firm competitiveness is defined as the ability of a firm to produce superior goods and services better than that of other competitors either in the local market or at the international scene (Basu, 2011). The Government of the United Kingdom's Department of Trade and Investment defined firm competitiveness as a firm's ability to produce the right goods and services, at the right quality, at the right price, and at the right time (Budd & Hirmis, 2012)

Firm-level competitiveness can be defined as a firm's ability to design, produce, and or market products superior to those offered by other competitors concerning price, and non-price qualities. Competitiveness determines the ability of a firm to conquer new markets, outplay others in the market, attract investment, and grow. It is therefore important for entrepreneurs and policymakers, who need to understand how competitive their organization or country is relative to others, and how their competitive position changes over time (Fagerberg & Srholec, 2017). Huggins and Thompson (2017) identified five main determinants of firm competitiveness which include; access to market, access to raw materials, transportation cost, availability and cost of energy, and cost of labor.

This they argued when put right by any organization can place them ahead of other competitors by reducing their price, making available quality raw materials, and other associated costs that can raise the price of their products. Sahoo, Le, and Rath (2022) also identified determinants of firm competitiveness which include: talent, cost

competitiveness, innovation policy, energy policy, legal and regulatory system, and physical infrastructure. Jambor and Babu (2016) identified economies of scale, market concentration, product differentiation, and entry barriers are important determinants of a firm's competitiveness. Dvouletý and Blažková (2021) in their research on the competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized businesses in the Czech Republic.

They identified the age and size of the firm, the geographical location of the firm, and the strategic management of the firm. Suroso, Fahmi, Tandra, and Haryono (2023) in their research on the agro-food export in Indonesia identified determinants of firm competitiveness which include; strategic management, technological adoption, collaboration and partnership, risk management techniques, financial management techniques, and human capital. Firm competitiveness has now become a buzzword and also multi-disciplinary as it has combined the aspects of economics, management, politics, history, and culture (Owuso, 2023). Firms need to be active and innovative in order to remain in business or be booted out by others.

Firm competitiveness can be achieved in many different ways depending on the industry the geographical location or other factors surrounding the business. In the fast-paced and ever-evolving landscape of business, firm competitiveness stands as a critical determinant of success. Competitiveness goes beyond merely having a superior product; it encompasses a holistic approach that involves strategic planning, operational efficiency, innovation, and adaptability. A competitive firm is one that not only meets but exceeds customer expectations while maintaining financial viability (Falciola, Jansen & Rollo, 2020). The journey to firm competitiveness is a multifaceted expedition that involves various dimensions.

### **Measures of Firm Competitiveness Reliability**

The concept of reliability cuts across many fields of life whether in science, business, mathematics, research, engineering, statistics, economics, humanities, etc. The American Society for Quality (2023) defined reliability as the probability that a product and or service, system will perform its intended function adequately for a specified time, or will operate in a defined environment without failure. The Cambridge Dictionary defines reliability as the quality of being able to be trusted or believed because of working well or behaving well in the past. Reliability in business is very necessary for patronage as customers will have confidence in them that the product or service of an organization will satisfy the purpose for which it will be procured.

Reliability can be defined in various contexts, but it generally refers to the consistency, dependability, and accuracy of a system, process, measurement, or person. Successful business organizations are well known for the reliability of their product or service. The reliability of a firm stands as a critical dimension in understanding its overall performance and sustainability. Evaluating the reliability of a firm becomes imperative, as it provides insights into the organization's ability to consistently deliver products, and services, and meet stakeholder expectations. This comprehensive examination delves into

various facets of reliability, exploring financial stability, operational resilience, strategic adaptability, and ethical considerations.

One of the key indicators of a firm's reliability is its financial stability. A stable financial foundation ensures that the firm can weather economic uncertainties, sustain operations, and invest in future growth (Rashid, 2023). Understanding the firm's financial history, liquidity, and debt management strategies becomes crucial in evaluating its long-term reliability. The strength of a firm lies in its ability to utilize its financial resources in achieving its goals and objectives as well as gaining a competitive advantage in the industry in which it competes. With the financial reliability of a firm, they can pursue long-term goals and this can put them in front in the industry in which they compete.

### **Flexibility**

Business flexibility refers to the ability of an organization to adapt and respond effectively to changes in its internal and external environment. This adaptability allows businesses to navigate uncertainties, seize opportunities, and overcome challenges. Flexibility is a concept that extends beyond the physical realm of bending and stretching; it embodies the ability to adapt and navigate the twists and turns of life with grace and resilience. Whether applied to the human body, the mind, or societal structures, flexibility is a fundamental attribute that enables growth, innovation, and overall well-being. In the face of life's uncertainties, individuals with a flexible mindset are better equipped to handle challenges and adapt to changing circumstances.

This mental adaptability fosters creativity, problem-solving skills, and a capacity to learn from experiences. Embracing change becomes a source of personal growth rather than a source of stress (Crespo del Granado, Rajasekharan, Pandiyan, Tomasgard, Kara, Farahmand & Jaehnert, 2023). Flexibility also plays a pivotal role in interpersonal relationships. Individuals who are open-minded and adaptable in their interactions with others are more likely to build strong connections and collaborate effectively. Understanding and appreciating diverse perspectives contributes to a harmonious and inclusive social environment.

In the professional realm, adaptability is a prized quality. In rapidly evolving industries like the Information Technology (IT), employees and organizations that demonstrate flexibility are better positioned to thrive. The ability to learn new skills, embrace new technologies, and pivot when necessary is a key factor in long-term success. Societal structures also benefit from flexibility. Legal systems, educational frameworks, and governance models that can adapt to the changing needs of their populations are more likely to foster stability and progress. Flexibility in policies allows for accommodating diverse needs and evolving social values. Cultivating flexibility involves a willingness to step out of one's comfort zone.

It requires a mindset that values learning and growth over the security of routine. Embracing uncertainty and ambiguity becomes a way to explore new possibilities and discover hidden potential. The journey towards flexibility involves overcoming resistance

to change. This resistance often stems from fear – fear of the unknown, fear of failure, or fear of losing control (Bashir, 2023). Acknowledging these fears and developing strategies to navigate them is an integral part of building flexibility. A flexible approach to life does not mean abandoning structure altogether. Rather, it involves striking a balance between stability and adaptability. Establishing a strong foundation provides a secure base from which to explore new opportunities and navigate challenges.

In times of crisis, flexibility becomes a lifeline. The ability to pivot, innovate, and find alternative solutions can mean the difference between stagnation and progress. Resilience, a close companion of flexibility, allows individuals and communities to bounce back from setbacks stronger than before. Organizational cultures that embrace flexibility tend to be more dynamic and adaptive. They celebrate diversity, encourage creativity, and foster an environment where individuals feel empowered to voice their ideas and perspectives. This cultural flexibility contributes to the vibrancy and sustainability of communities (Leso, Cortimiglia & Ghezzi, 2023). In education, a flexible curriculum prepares students for a rapidly changing world.

### **Product Quality**

Product quality refers to the characteristics and features of a product that meet or exceed customer expectations and requirements. It is a measure of how well a product conforms to its specifications, standards, and the level of excellence it delivers in terms of performance, durability, reliability, safety, and other relevant attributes. The American Society for Quality defines quality as the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied customer needs. Consistently delivering high-quality products is key to satisfying customer expectations and fostering long-term success in the marketplace (De Giovanni & Zaccour, 2023). Product quality is a paramount aspect that significantly influences consumer satisfaction and brand reputation.

It encompasses a multitude of factors, from the materials used in manufacturing to the design, durability, and overall performance of a product. Companies that prioritize and maintain high standards of product quality often establish themselves as leaders in their respective industries. A product's quality is a composition of various elements. The choice of raw materials, manufacturing processes, design precision, and adherence to industry standards all contribute to the overall quality. Quality control measures, testing protocols, and continuous improvement efforts further refine and ensure the excellence of a product. Perceived quality plays a pivotal role in consumer decision-making (Xiao & Zhang, 2023).

When customers have confidence in a product's quality, they are more likely to make a purchase and become repeat customers. Positive experiences with high-quality products foster brand loyalty, leading to long-term customer relationships. The quality of a product is inextricably linked to the brand's image. Consistently delivering products of superior quality enhances brand credibility and trustworthiness (Badalov, 2023). On the contrary, subpar quality can irreversibly damage a brand's reputation, resulting in loss of market share and consumer trust. In a competitive marketplace, product quality serves as a



crucial differentiator. Companies that invest in maintaining or elevating the quality of their offerings stand out among their competitors.

Superior quality not only attracts more customers but also allows for premium pricing, reinforcing a brand's market position. Ensuring product quality is an ongoing process that involves continuous improvement and innovation. Companies must adapt to changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and industry standards to stay ahead. By embracing a culture of innovation and quality enhancement, businesses can sustain their relevance and thrive in dynamic markets.

### **Personal Services and Competitiveness**

Chung, Ko, Joung & Kim (2020) investigated to analyze whether luxury fashion retail brands can adhere to their essence of providing personalized care through e-services rather than through traditional face-to-face interactions, particularly through Chatbot, an emerging digital tool offering convenient, personal, and unique customer assistance. The researchers used customer data using a Chatbot for customer perceptions of interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization, and problem-solving. The result of the findings revealed that Chatbot e-service provides interactive and engaging brand and customer service encounters and also, Marketers and managers in the luxury context can adopt the instrument to measure whether e-service agents provide desired outcomes and to determine whether they should adopt Chatbot virtual assistance. Scherer, Wunderlich, and Von Wangenheim (2015) investigated the extent to which the advancement of information technology has changed the way customers experience a service encounter. The researchers drew from the service-dominant logic and its central concept of value-in-context, they discussed customers' value creation in self-service and personal service channels and also examined the long-term impact these channels have on customer retention. They adopted the longitudinal customer data, they investigated how the ratio of self-service versus personal service use influences customer defection over time. It was observed that the ratio of self-service to personal service used affects customer defection in a U-shaped manner, with intermediate levels of both self-service and personal service use being associated with the lowest likelihood of defection.

Asrilisyak, Putri, Sayuti, Septyandi, and Rafdinal (2021) investigated the factors that influence an individual in making a purchase decision in online stores. It also investigated the factors of technology acceptance (theory of acceptance model), personal (lifestyle and trust), product quality, and price in an online store. Using the data of 180 customers who have bought products in the online stores. The data analysis technique used is the Structural Equation Model based on Partial Least Square. The results showed that the technology acceptance explained by TAM indicated that only perceived usefulness was significantly influential toward attitude. This means that attitude, product quality, price, lifestyle, and trust can influence purchase decisions in online store applications by explaining the relation among technology acceptance models, personal factors (lifestyle and trust), product quality, and price.

From the foregoing discourse, the study hypothesized thus:

**Ho1:** Personal services has no significant relationship with the reliability of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

**Ho2:** Personal services has no significant relationship with the flexibility of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

**Ho3:** Personal services has no significant relationship with the product quality of oil exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population of this study comprises all the oil and gas companies that operate in the South-South region of Nigeria. From the Corporate Affairs (CAC) Office in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, there are 131 companies involved in oil and gas exploration and production in the South-South region of Nigeria. Because the population of the study is small, the researcher handled the entire population was for the study. The census method was then used thus used. With respect to the respondents, two senior managers in the operations and finance of each of the companies were considered for this study. Therefore, the total number of respondents became 262 respondents from the 131 companies involved in oil and gas exploration and production in the South-South region of Nigeria. Primary data was collected using a 5-point Likert scaled questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for personal service and measures of firm competitiveness. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which enables us to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

**Table 1: Correlations for Personal Service and Measures of Firm Competitiveness**

		Personal Service	Reliability	Flexibility	Product Quality
Personal Service	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.519**	.566**	.814**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Reliability	Correlation Coefficient	.519**	1.000	.740**	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	.566**	.740**	1.000	.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Product Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.814**	.590**	.733**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	240	240	240	240

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

Source: SPSS Output version 23.0

**Ho1:** Personal services have no significant relationship with the reliability of oil exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.519 on the relationship between personal service and reliability. This value implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in reliability was as a result of the adoption of personal service. Therefore, there is a moderate positive correlation between personal service and reliability of oil and gas companies in Nigeria. Similarly displayed is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between personal service and reliability of oil and gas companies in Nigeria.

**Ho2:** Personal services have no significant relationship with the flexibility of oil exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Similarly, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.566 on the relationship between personal service and flexibility. This value implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in flexibility was as a result of the adoption of personal service. Therefore, there is a moderate positive correlation between personal service and flexibility of oil and gas companies in Nigeria. Also displayed is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, based on this finding

the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between personal service and flexibility of oil and gas companies in Nigeria.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Personal services have no significant relationship with the product quality of oil exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.814 on the relationship between personal service and product quality. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in product quality was as a result of the adoption of personal service. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between personal service and product quality of oil and gas companies in Nigeria. Also displayed is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between personal service and product quality of pharmaceutical companies in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between personal service and firms' competitiveness of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. This finding corroborates with Chung, Ko, Joung & Kim (2020) who investigated to analyze whether luxury fashion retail brands can adhere to their essence of providing personalized care through e-services rather than through traditional face- to-face interactions, particularly through Chatbot, an emerging digital tool offering convenient, personal, and unique customer assistance. The result of the findings revealed that Chatbot e- service provides interactive and engaging brand and customer service encounters and also, Marketers and managers in the luxury context can adopt the instrument to measure whether e- service agents provide desired outcomes and to determine whether they should adopt Chatbot virtual assistance.

Also, the finding confirms the earlier work of Balinado, Prasetyo, Young, Persada, Miraja, and Redi (2021) who investigated the factors affecting customer satisfaction in an automotive after- sales service at Toyota Dasmarinas-Cavite Philippines. They found that among the five SERVQUAL dimensions, reliability and empathy were observed to have significant relationships to the satisfaction of customers at Toyota Dasmarinas-Cavite Philippines. Also, tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance were observed to have no significant relationship to satisfaction. It requires the service provider to deliver a high-quality service in meeting customer expectations and achieving high customer satisfaction, which subsequently builds customer trust in the company.

Similarly, Scherer, Wunderlich, and Von Wangenheim (2015) investigated the extent to which the advancement of information technology has changed the way

customers experience a service encounter. They observed that the ratio of self-service to personal service used affects customer defection in a U-shaped manner, with intermediate levels of both self-service and personal service use being associated with the lowest likelihood of defection. Lehrer, Wieneke, Vom Brocke, Jung and Seidel (2018) examined how big data analytics enables service innovation, materiality, affordance, and the individualization of service. Their analysis revealed that the flexible and reprogrammable nature of BDA technologies provides features of sourcing, storage, event recognition and prediction, behavior recognition and prediction, rule-based actions, and visualization that afford service automation and BDA-enabled human- material service practices.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study concludes that personal services positively enhance firms' competitiveness of oil and gas exploration and producing companies in the South-South region. The positive impact of personal services implies that companies in the oil and gas sector are benefiting from personalized and specialized expertise. This tailored approach can be instrumental in addressing specific challenges, optimizing operations, and enhancing overall project outcomes.

Based on the foregoing, the study thus recommends that management of oil and gas exploration and producing companies should strategically integrate gig workers into their operations, especially in roles that require specialized skills, temporary expertise, or project-based contributions. This can be done by establishing clear frameworks for engaging and collaborating with gig workers.

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