

CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL RITUALS IN NIGERIAN MANUFACTURING FIRMS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper was on ascertaining the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness; including an assessment of the mediating role of organizational rituals on the relationship between the variables as expressed or manifested within the context of Nigerian manufacturing firms. The design of the study was correlational and primary data was generated using the questionnaire from 69 management staff from 18 manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria. Results from the test revealed that contextual intelligence significantly contributes towards the adaptability ($R = 0.529$) and flexibility ($R = 0.635$) of the manufacturing firms. Also, organizational rituals were affirmed to significantly mediate the relationship between the variables. Hence, all related null hypotheses were rejected. It was concluded that that existing organizational rituals within the Nigerian manufacturing sector are delimiting and in this way constrain its efforts towards effectively applying knowledge and responding in line with the increasing dynamics characterizing its environment.

Keywords: *Organizational rituals, contextual intelligence, organizational responsiveness, adaptability, flexibility*

INTRODUCTION

Business contexts are multi-layered and contrast on various levels. Thus, bridging organizational actions with contextual features is considered a priority, especially when the survival of the organization depends on such (Khanna, 2014). The Nigerian manufacturing sector is one which over the years has increasingly garnered interest with regard to its expansion and growth (Onuba, 2017). This is interest as Onuba (2017) pointed out, is premised on addressing the poor economic diversification and lagging of sub-sectors. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2021) reported that by the year 2020 only 6 sub-sectors had expanded, comprising – (a) plastics and rubber products (b) transportation equipment (c) apparel (d) footwear and leather (e) non-metallic mineral products, and (f) pharmaceutical products and textile. Onuba (2017) posited that times are changing and there is the need for improved responsiveness from local or indigenous manufacturing organizations in aligning with the practices, technologies and functions that currently define global manufacturing.

Ojo and Ololade (2014) identified existing policy frameworks as stringent and not supportive of change or development within the context of manufacturing. Most organizations according to the authors yet operate using traditional and highly inefficient modules despite the changes in industry and markets. In another vein, Akinyomi (2014) argued that the poor development noted in the manufacturing sector stems from the low and inconsistent attention offered in terms of investment, funding and infrastructure. Nonetheless, Onuba (2017) posited that the unsteady growth and poor performance outcomes which characterize most manufacturing firms is rooted in the disparities that exist between their practices and the features of their context. Not only has information technology evolved, but business practices, relationships, and even the market has evolved in line with the dynamics of societies. This position reiterates that of Ojo and Ololade

(2014), affirming to existing issues of responsiveness in the functional and administrative features of most manufacturing firms.

Related studies (Teece, 2009; Fioretti, 2012; Baker & Welter, 2018) suggest that the capacity for change and the effective adaptation of business forms to their environment is hinged on learning and knowledge about the context or environment – contributing towards informed decisions and choices of the organization. Temleton (2019) posited that the level of intelligence demonstrated by the organization in terms of its context, shapes its relationships, guides its choices and also determines its design and operational features. Contextual intelligence describes a form of cognitive capability premised on learning and knowledge development. It is also dynamic in nature, consistent in knowledge acquisition and in tune with the evolving attributes of the context (Loman, 2008; Khanna, 2015). However, extant research has not delved substantially in addressing the responsiveness of manufacturing firms from the perspective of contextual intelligence. While blames have been directed at the government, the level of corruption and the lack of investors (Onuba, 2017), little has been done to address the link between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. This investigation addressed the noted gap in research as it investigated the relationship between contextual intelligence and the outcomes of organizational responsiveness (adaptability and flexibility) of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The significance of this paper is also justified on the basis that the related rituals of the organization expressed through existing rule-bound traditions and practices of the organization are also examined as possibly mediating the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness of the manufacturing firms. This action is premised on the need to assess the extent to which existing standardized frameworks and norms either support or delimit the organizations learning and change initiatives or goals; thus, advancing research specificity in terms of organizational experiences and behaviour particular to the context of the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

Aim of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Nigeria; including the mediating influence of organizational rituals on the relationship between the variables.

Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of this paper are stated as follows:

- i. To determine the nature of the relationship between contextual intelligence and adaptability of food and beverage manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria
- ii. To examine the nature of the relationship between contextual intelligence and flexibility of food and beverage manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria
- iii. To ascertain the mediating role of organizational rituals on the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness of food and beverage manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Learning Theory

Learning is a social action (Khan & Cangemi, 2001; Lou, 2013). According to Edinyang et al (2015), it occurs within social settings and draw on the experiences, relationships and observations of the individual or organization. The social learning theory identifies learning as both a process and an outcome. Learning as a process details the organizations deliberate and conscious effort in generating knowledge through its relationships and observations. As an outcome, learning is evidenced in the organizations transformation and application of knowledge in ways that boost its performance and the effectiveness of its functions (McLeod, 2011). Thus it is possible for

organizations to acquire knowledge but fail to apply them effectively – suggesting poor learning outcomes. Lou (2013) argued that learning occasions change and contribute towards the emergence of suitable structures and designs for improved organizational outcomes. These most often are based on imitations of more successful organizations or the adaption of related practices or features to match the gaps and concerns of one's own environment or context (McLeod, 2011).

Contextual Intelligence

Kutz and Bamford-Wade (2013) described contextual intelligence as the practicalization of knowledge within the context of real business situations or contexts. Kutz, Ball and Carroll (2018) identified the concept as relating to the ability to discern and apply knowledge in a more suitable and effective format, appropriate and matching the peculiarities of the context. Similarly, Scheepers and Maher (2019) emphasized on contextual intelligence as the action of adapting organizational strategies and actions to its context. These definitions indicate that contextual intelligence, first involves the understanding or knowledge advanced by the organization with regard to its environment, second, the modification or adaption of such knowledge in ways that facilitate or enable its successful practicalization within the context of interest to the organization (Khanna, 2015; Barlett & Beasmish, 2018; Bushe, 2019). It is a demonstration of the organizations cognitive capacity and ability to relate and apply its knowledge in ways that are beneficial and sharpen its competitive edge.

Organizational responsiveness

Responsiveness at the organizational level, details the organizations capacity to modify and adjust its form and behaviour in line with the attributes that characterize the environment of the organization (Hatum & Pettigrew, 2006; Reeves & Deimler, 2011; Kaplan, 2008). Responsiveness suggests the existence of qualities, capabilities and alternatives that support and enable the required adjustments by the organization. Ngoa and Loib (2008) argued that organizational responsiveness stems from a position that involves flexibility and adaptability – implying availing choices or alternatives in the course of action, and evidence of systems or structural fluidity. Responsiveness is therefore manifested through the quality of relationships between the organization and its stakeholders, in the decentralization of decision-making, extent of participation or leadership inclusivity and also in the extent of interfunctional coordination (Vasconcelos & Ramirez, 2011; Kotter, 2012; Alkhafaji, 2003). It is in this nature a permeating feature of the organization that requires the integration of all units and levels in the organization. In this vein, two measures of organizational responsiveness are highlighted in this paper – adaptability and flexibility (Fioretti, 2012).

Adaptability: Adaptability describes a capacity for change or modification due to emerging needs or conditions. It is fundamentally hinged on the existence of supportive infrastructure, skills, collaboration, competent as well as visionary leadership (Reeves & Deimler, 2011). Sarta, Vergne and Durand (2017) posited that for organizations to be able to adjust effectively, their internal features are systems must be aligned and coherent with their goal or change objectives. According to the author, the action of adapting involves a reconfiguring of processes and functions such that may require new operational or behavioural forms. This places strong emphasis on the readiness and capacity for such adjustments or change. It involves the training and development of staff, collaboration across units, increased participation for the pooling of ideas, enriched decision-making, and the upgrading and strengthening of information technology systems and other related function-supportive infrastructure (Reeves & Deimler, 2011).

Flexibility: At the organizational level, flexibility describes conditions of availing alternatives and varied options, advanced through the organizations relationships, partnerships or even through

the skill flexibility of its human resources and practices. Ioretti (2012) described flexibility as the extent to which the organization can advance towards a specific through a variety of avenues or strategic options. Hence, while the goal or objective of the organization remains consistent, it is able to rotate functions and roles, alternate between suppliers or vendors, apply a variety of technological applications and processes, engage various frameworks and modules operate from different locations or facilities etc. Flexibility is linked to robustness since it is argued to ensure operational consistency and minimize disruptions to the activities and processes of the organization (Fioretti, 2012). It is in this vein considered a substantial reflection and manifestation of the responsive capacity of the organization.

Contextual Intelligence and Organizational Responsiveness

The social learning theory, offers a substantial position on the imperatives of knowledge in driving the effective adjustments and transformation of organizations for improved functionality within their various contexts (Khan & Cangemi, 2001). The development and practicalization of knowledge is such that sustains the organizations relevance within its context – enriching its value and competitiveness. Contextual intelligence is linked to improved service and product localization (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; Kotter, 2012). Such behaviour is demonstrated by multinational organizations such as coca-cola and MTN in their adaptation of products and service features to reflect particular cultural factors such as the language and names of indigenous peoples and tribes within the context of Nigeria. Cultural intelligence therefore provides the yardsticks through which organizations connect with their context and are able to address their particular expectations (Collings, Mellahi & Cscio, 2018; Logman, 2008). In this vein, one could therefore argue that knowledge with regard to the imperatives of system fluidity, relationships and intercoordination enables actions and policies that serve in and enhancing the adaptability and flexibility of organizations (Fioretti, 2012). However little has been done in regard to empirically establishing the role of contextual intelligence in outcomes of organizational responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Nigeria; thus, the following hypotheses are stated:

HO₁: Contextual intelligence does not significantly correlate with the adaptability of manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria

HO₂: Contextual intelligence does not significantly correlate with the flexibility of manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria

Organizational Rituals

Organizations are characterized by various traditional and rule-bound practices or behaviour, considered as defining and distinctive to the organization. Much like culture, the rituals of the organization comprise the various transitional as well as repetitive actions that are emphasized and considered as sacred to the organization (Awadh & Saad, 2013; Nadia & Shazia, 2015; Feldman, 2007). Pieper (2010) argued that the rituals of the organization stem from its values, beliefs and assumptions, hence rituals could also be considered a component of the culture of the organization. Aberg (2015) posited that rituals are important to the health and wellbeing of the workplace as they provide stability and consistency in the behaviour of the organization. This way, workers are able to predict certain actions or inclinations of the organization, thus enabling them plan or structure their own affairs in that same line. One finds that through rituals, organizations are able to remember and actively sustain historical ideologies and creeds upon which the organizations vision and goals were based. Existing narratives (Nugent & Collar, 2014; Brorstrom & Siverbo, 2004) indicate that rituals enhance organizational members' feelings of identification and oneness with the organization; however, rituals can also be restraining especially when related rules and practices are subjugating of creativity or innovative behaviour within the organization. Aberg (2015) affirmed that rituals should be accommodating of change, while at the same time protective of the organizations core values. This suggests that organizational rituals

may in several ways impact on its responsive capacity and ability to adjust effectively to the changes or evolving nature of its environment. Feldman (2007) argued that rituals hold the organization together – advancing symbols and a crystallization of the values and core beliefs of the organization. While related studies may appear to agree and validate this perspective, scarce research has empirically tested or assessed the veracity of this position (Nadia & Shazia, 2015; Pieper, 2010). Thus the following hypothesis is stated:

HO₃: Organizational rituals do not significantly mediate the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation anchored on a quantitative methodology, while the correlational design was adopted as the research design for the investigation. The correlational design is process specific – detailing the features that enable data generation and the assessment of distinctively defined and operationalized constructs (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The study population comprised on 18 manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria, sourced from the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN, 2021) Website, covering 6 states, namely – Akwa-Ibom, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Rivers and Bayles State. Units of observation for the study comprised of 72 management staff selected on the basis of their leadership positions and direct involvement in the decision-making and policy development actions of the organization. The instrument for contextual intelligence was developed based on operational definitions advanced by previous studies (Logman, 2008; Khanna, 2014; 2015) the instrument for organizational responsiveness was developed based on operational definitions offered by Fioretti (2012), while the instrument for organizational rituals was also developed based on operational definitions offered by Aberg (2015). Instruments were scaled on a Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. Constructs were assessed using 4-item instruments each, with all related indicators stated in the positive. The results for the Cronbach reliability test for the instruments are stated on table 1

Table 1: Reliability result for the instruments

Variables	No. of items	Alpha Coefficients
Organizational Adaptability	4	0.893
Organizational Flexibility	4	0.882
Contextual Intelligence	4	0.911
Organizational rituals	4	0.878

Source: Survey Data, 2021

Data Analysis and Results

All 72 questionnaire copies distributed were duly retrieved from contact channels established within the target manufacturing firms; however, error assessment during collation and coding revealed 3 copies with blank sections and thereby discarded. Thus 69 copies were considered as suitable for the analysis.

Bivariate data analysis

Table 2: Relationship between Contextual Intelligence and Organizational Responsiveness

		Contextual Intelligence	Adaptability	Flexibility
Contextual Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.529**	.635**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	69	69	69
Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.529**	1	.776**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	69	69	69
	Pearson Correlation	.635**	.776**	1
Flexibility	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	69	69	69

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

Source: Survey Data, 2021

The result on the relationship between contextual intelligence and the measures of responsiveness revealed to be significant. Results indicate that at an $R = 0.529$ and $P = 0.000$, contextual intelligence significantly correlates and in that way is linked to the organizations capacity to adapt. The relationship between the variables is also noted to be positive indicating that efforts channelled towards knowledge practicalization would contribute towards improved adjustments and modifications in the behaviour and processes of the organization. On this basis the related null hypothesis is rejected. The result for the relationship between contextual intelligence and flexibility is also observed to be significant at an $R = 0.635$ and $P = 0.000$. The results suggest that contextual intelligence is a significant and positive antecedent of flexibility; determining and impacting positively on the nature and development of its operational options, alternatives and choices. Thus, related actions concerned with learning and the specificity of knowledge application within contexts can be considered as substantially impacting on the organizations flexibility. On this basis, the related null hypothesis is rejected.

Multivariate data analysis

Table 3: Variables Listed in the Models

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Contextual Intelligence		. Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter $\leq .050$, Probability-of-F-to-remove $\geq .100$).
2	Organizational Rituals		. Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter $\leq .050$, Probability-of-F-to-remove $\geq .100$).

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Responsiveness

Source: Survey Data, 2021

The table 3 offers a listing of the predictor variables (contextual intelligence and organizational rituals) and the number of models developed in examining their effects on organizational responsiveness (the criterion variable).

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.614 ^a	.377	.368	.64249
2	.994 ^b	.989	.989	.08660

a. Predictors: (Constant), Contextual Intelligence

b. Predictors: (Constant), Contextual Intelligence, Organizational Rituals

c. Dependent Variable: Organizational Responsiveness

Source: Survey Data, 2021

Table 4 illustrates the influence (R , adjusted R and R^2) of each model (1 and 2) on the criterion (dependent) variable – organizational responsiveness. While both models are revealed to have substantial effects (where model 1, $R^2 = 0.377$ and model 2, $R^2 = 0.989$), nonetheless, the model 2 effects are noted to be higher and more substantial. The evidence supports the third model (organizational rituals) as having a 99% power of impact and influence over outcomes of organizational responsiveness. This demonstrates the significance of organizational rituals in the capacity of the manufacturing firms in Nigeria to adapt and be flexible in line with the emerging dynamics or changes in their environment.

Table 5: Regression analysis on the variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.769	.272		6.513	.000
	Contextual Intelligence	.546	.086	.614	6.372	.000
	(Constant)	.159	.045		3.514	.001
2	Contextual Intelligence	-.394	.019	-.443	-20.265	.000
	Organizational Rituals	1.302	.022	1.315	60.180	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Responsiveness

The result for the regression analysis demonstrates the significant (t statistic = 6.372; $p = 0.000$) effect of contextual intelligence on organizational resilience (model 1); suggesting the substantiality of a direct relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness. However, evidence suggests that the indirect relationship, as evidenced in model 2 offers a much stronger and positive influence on organizational responsiveness (t statistic = 60.180; $P = 0.000$). Evidence indicates a weaker and role and influence from contextual intelligence (t statistic = -20.265; $P = 0.000$). It is therefore evident that organizational rituals are a critical factor in the relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness; hence, the null hypothesis of no mediating effects is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness (adaptability and flexibility) is observed to be significant. The evidence agrees with the observations of previous studies as it establishes contextual intelligence as a substantial and positive predictor of the outcomes of adaptability and flexibility of the manufacturing firms in the South-south of Nigeria. This way it reiterates the noted imperatives of knowledge and its practicalization within contexts – indicating that through contextual intelligence, organizations stand a better chance at driving their change initiatives and in the same manner, coping with the expectations and evolving nature of their markets and environment (Masipa, 2018; Bushe, 2019). Similarly, Khanna (2015) study identified the adaptation of knowledge and related practices as key in the effective configuring of the organization and in the application of actions within particular environment.

The results from the investigation further reveal that despite the noted correlation between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness, this relationship is significantly accounted for and explained by the rituals of the organization. Nadia and Shazia (2015) posited that organizational rituals is a permeating factor that reflects the core values and principles of the organization. According to Aberg (2015) rituals are used to protect the traditions and beliefs of the organization; thus, it determines and shapes the actions and behaviour of the organization. This view is also corroborated by Aberg (2015) who identified existing practices and the emphatics on traditional frameworks as the bane of the Nigerian manufacturing industry. According to Teece

(2009), the imperatives of change and responsiveness are such that should be shared and echoed across the various units, levels and functions of the organization.

It is therefore apparent that the major set-back of manufacturing firms in Nigeria, stems from the rigidity of their rituals and the non-responsive frameworks and traditions that structure and shape their practices, policies and operations. While the imperatives of responsiveness are evident and well admitted across the sector, the lack of impetus for such is nonetheless hinged on existing rule-bound practices and standards that have over-time delimited and continue to militate against the change efforts and initiatives of the related manufacturing firms. Akinyomi (2014) argued that the organizations traditions and operational frameworks condition its behaviour and relationship or partnership with other organizations, stakeholders and also determines its level of pro-activeness or innovativeness. Hence, it is evident that while contextual intelligence contributes and could have a meaningful impact on the responsiveness of the manufacturing firms, the interaction between both variables is hinged on the nature and features of the organizations rituals.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness is one which anchors on learning and the practicalization of knowledge in forms suitable and well adapted to the needs and specific challenges of contexts. However, the rituals of the organization are such that substantially condition and determine the extent of interaction between these variables (contextual intelligence and organizational responsiveness). It is the position of this paper that existing organizational rituals within the Nigerian manufacturing sector are delimiting and in this way constrain its efforts towards effectively applying knowledge and responding in line with the increasing dynamics characterizing its environment.

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