

Contextual Intelligence and Employee Engagement

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement in selected hotels in Rivers State. Primary data were obtained from 59 employees, and the data retrieved were subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In analysing the data, an inferential statistic tool (i.e. Spearman correlation) was deployed to examine the association between the study variables and a linear regression analysis was also engaged to predict the relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement using the IBM SPSS version 21. The findings revealed a positive strong association ($r = 0.882$) and a significant positive relationship (.954) between contextual intelligence and employee engagement. The study advances postulation on the theoretical and practical implications of its findings to the academia and industry.

Keywords: contextual intelligence, employee engagement, dynamic capability theory, management by interest theory

1. Introduction

The intricates of organizational growth are continuously becoming more unpredictable and uncertain as organizations' environment advances its labyrinthian nature; nonetheless, a key stakeholder (i.e. employees) whose competence, skills and engagement are critical in effectively navigating the organizational landscape is more affected by the organizational activities of the past, present, and future exploits; hence, employee's consciously or unconsciously seek to comprehend the context of their operations, workplace environment, and develop adequate intelligence to engage them. Organizational members are constantly striving to fill relevant knowledge that accrues from gaps in the organization's affairs with regards to their past, present and future; this is possibly reinforced by the management style, workplace culture, the deployment of technology which have limited explicit comprehension of organizational evolutionary reality, and the paucity of empirical credence to establish the influence of contextual intelligence on employee engagement; hence, the relevance of this research in filling such gap.

The dynamics of the changing context (i.e. environmental variables) in which organizational members function necessitate employee's progressive change and adaptation; hence, the need

for understanding of context and accurate perception of organizational reality (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002), possessing and practising contextual intelligence is critical in how such progressive change and adaptation is executed and managed (Kutz, 2008). The attainment of organizational survival, development, and sustainability demands strategic information; hence, intelligence is the effective coordination of relevant information to instil adequate and strategic decisions and engagement. The information required to optimise organization survival, development, and sustainability is arrayed in diverse contexts (i.e. variables in the organization's environment); hence, intelligence must properly articulate context in navigating strategic decisions to optimize goals and performance. The deployment of contextual intelligence by organizational members enables an effective understanding of these organizational variables and may prompt a proactive or effective engagement.

Employee engagement is not attained in a vacuum; employees need information on organizational context (past, present, and future) in order to strategically deduce hindsight, explore insight, project foresight and possibly calibrate their engagement level for advancing organizational interest. Kahn's (1990) propositions of physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement, should arguably be a consequence of individual employees' perception and comprehension of the unique context of their host organization, and this, the present study seeks to give empirical credence to.

The study objective is anchored on investigating the association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement in selected hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. The remaining section of this study will be segmented under the following headings; literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Contextual Intelligence

Every environment embodies context irrespective of when an actor (i.e. employee) is introduced. An employee's ability to comprehend the vicissitudes inherent in their context, and apply effective understanding in navigating such environment to optimize goal attainment is termed contextual intelligence. The intricacies contained in context span diverse variables that operate in an organizational environment (i.e. internal and external), as well as interpersonal bias; hence, an organization's variation of context, is a continuum as long as the environmental variables are dynamic (Kutz, 2008). Kutz's (2008) depiction of contextual intelligence denotes one who is cognizant of past events, possesses a significant understanding of the present, forecasts the future and is capable of strategically reacting or responding to environmental changes. The recurrent evolution dynamics of context demand heightened deployments of skills and competence (i.e. contextual intelligence behaviour) which organizational members should sufficiently possess in order to keep pace with the changes in organizational context dynamics, and better position the organizational interest for strategic relevance and advantages. The viability of contextual intelligence has been analyzed in different fields; athletic training, medicine, entrepreneurship, educational psychology, and international business (Kutz, 2022; Ayari & Kamoun, 2021; Sternberg, 2018; Khanna, 2014, 2015), and has been associated with strategic flexibility, identifying influences (i.e. external and internal) that are not directly obvious, aided in correlating non-linear connections, offer comprehensive perspective to resolving or managing tensions, and creating innovative outputs (Logman, 2008; Kutz, Ball & Carroll, 2001). Kutz (2011) posits that organizational members' effectiveness in diagnosing

context is capable of being challenged by the following factors; the pace of change, the interwoven and complex nature of the variables, learned behavioural bias, and inappropriate time orientation. While the above could be categorized as external and personal factors in limiting accurate diagnosis of context, some key organizational factors capable of limiting accurate diagnosis of context are the culture and level of informal power dynamics at play in the organization.

2.2. Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) set a foundational structure for articulating employee engagement, he classified employee engagement to denoted three basic arms; physical, emotional, and cognitive. Employee engagement encompasses an array of interest, dedication, meaningfulness, vitality, safety, availability and absorption necessary to exact discretionary effort for the advancement of role performance and organizational interest (Kahn, 1990; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Rich, Lepine & Crawford 2010; Sundaray, 2011; Kwon & Kim 2020; Hameduddin & Lee, 2021). Organizations are constantly aiming to advance their interest, and management who are conscious of this development is proactive in encouraging a heightened level of employee engagement. Hence, organizations seek to adapt to changes by positioning their employees to effectively manage and control changes and dynamics in the workplace (Hill & Birkinshaw, 2012; Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann & Piller, 2014; Musgrove, Ellinger & Ellinger, 2014); this is reinforced by the report that disengaged employees negatively affected the performance of organizations (Purcell, 2014). Osborne and Hammoud, (2017) posit that attaining employee engagement remains a pivotal challenge in contemporary workplaces; this is enabled by the requirements of contract agreement, resource scarcity, and the organization's stringent and complex regulations (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). Nonetheless, an organization's ability to culture and sustain employee engagement has earned them the virtue of survival, vitality, profitability, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen & Espevik, 2013; Vandenberghe, 2014; Albercht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015; Farndale & Murrer, 2015).

2.3. Theoretical Discourse

In discussing the theoretical framework for the study variables, two theories will be analyzed; the dynamic capability theory and the management by interest theory.

2.3.1. Dynamic Capability Theory

The dynamic capability theory denotes firms incorporate, build, and restructure internal and external competencies/resources to address, manage, and control fast changing firm's environment (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997, 1990). (Teece, 2007, 2010) posits that dynamic capability connotes the degree and speed at which a firm's distinctive competencies/resources can calibrate and recalibrate to align with the opportunities and demands of its environment. A firm's ability to obtain dynamic capability is anchored on the refining of information (i.e. deployment of intelligence) accrued from environmental activities of the past, present and future (i.e. context), and enabling of firms' culture to foster heightened engagement of employees, which results in employee's creation and sustenance of value offerings that accredits the firms with sustainable competitive benefits. Dynamic capability in essence is built not bought (Teece, 2010); hence requires contextual intelligence in integrating the firm's past, present, and future in obtaining strategic hindsight, insight, and foresight (i.e.

competence/resources) necessary to calibrate and recalibrate in aligning and optimizing opportunities and managing the demands of threats in its environment. In conclusion, a firm's navigation into the market landscape involves deploying dynamic capabilities (i.e. contextual intelligence) necessary to understand market evolutions and trends, which enables the firm to strategically position its employees for optimal engagement that eventually attains market relevance and dominance.

2.3.2. Management by Interest Theory

The management by interest theory offers hindsight, insight, and foresight to the essential influencing feature of decision-making and perception of a firm's purpose; as interest dynamics realigns the distribution of orientation, priority, motivation, resource and authority (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2022). Arguably, organizational interest is relatively evolving and majorly spans economic benefits and market dominance; these cannot be achieved without a guided comprehension of the trajectory of the organization's and industry's past, present, and future antecedents and projections; hence requires an understanding of the organizations and industry context and deploying of intelligence to further the organization's dominant interest. The dominant interest is the functioning interest that majorly impacts, controls, interprets, enables, and manages organizational policy, resources, priority, orientation, motivation, and action (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2022). An organizations' dominant interest must gain significant top managerial cadre support (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2022); given that significant support denotes effective communication of the organization's activity trajectory (past, present, and future) and harnessing the tool of contextual intelligence to gain such support, and further organizational members engagement in advancing such dominant interest. The optimal drive of organizational interest is the creation and sustenance of benefits that possess strategic relevance and further the organization's posterity and positioning in the market landscape; hence, the organization's management seeks to own contextual narrative via flexible contextual intelligence profiling to proactively respond to organizations evolving realities and subtly influence organizational members engagement; the contextual intelligence profiling is projected to mainly enable intrinsic motivators that trigger heightened employee engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study engaged the descriptive research approach; which aids the clarification and understanding of the nature of the association between contextual intelligence and employee engagement. The study specifically deployed the cross-sectional descriptive and explanatory research design which enables the comprehensive explanation of the relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement.

3.2. Research Approach

This study utilizes both the qualitative and quantitative research approach, the application of both approaches is essential as the qualitative approach facilitates the descriptive aspect of the study, while the quantitative approach enables the testing of the association between the study theme, and is critical in establishing quantifiable association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement (Ghauri & Grønnaug, 2005).

3.3. Population and Sampling Technique

The study population includes staff members who have worked for a minimum of three years in selected hotels (i.e. that have operated for at least six years) in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study deployed the convenience sampling technique and successfully allocated and retrieved questionnaire (primary data source) from 59 employees.

3.4. Measures

Constructs measurement was calibrated at a 5-point Likert scale that is rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Contextual intelligence. This study deployed the 12-item contextual intelligence scale, which was adopted from the study of Kutz (2008).

Employee engagement. This study deployed the 18-item employee engagement scale, which was adopted from the study of Rich, Lepine & Crawford, (2010).

3.5. Analysis

The questionnaires were validated via the deployment of content validity, and the study also utilized Cronbach's alpha coefficient to establish the reliability of the instrument ("contextual intelligence" $\alpha = 0.820$, "employee engagement" $\alpha = 0.899$). Also, the study utilized the Spearman correlation (i.e. inferential statistics tool) in analyzing the association, strength, and direction of the variables. Furthermore, a linear regression analysis was executed to predict the relationship among the study variables. The utilization of these statistical tools was anchored on the data set alignment to the statistical tool's assumption. Tables were used to demonstrate the result of the data analyses, and the decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$); do not reject the null hypothesis if otherwise.

4. Results

The Spearman correlation between contextual intelligence and employee engagement is demonstrated in Table 1; the result shows empirical evidence that contextual intelligence and employee engagement have a positive strong association ($r = 0.882$). Hence, the authors postulate that contextual intelligence and employee engagement possess a significant positive association [$p(0.000) < 0.05$].

The study further deployed a simple linear regression analysis to forecast the relationship and degree of variance in employee engagement that may be influenced by contextual intelligence (See Table 2). Table 2 shows that 90.9% of the unpredictability in employee engagement could be clarified by the actions of contextual intelligence; this is evidenced by the result that $p(0.000) < 0.05$, $r = .954$. Hence, there is a significant positive relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement.

Table 1. Spearman's Correlation Results for Contextual Intelligence and Employee Engagement

		Contextual Intelligence	Employee Engagement
Spearman's rho	Contextual Intelligence	1.000	.882**
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	59	59
	Employee Engagement	.882**	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	59	59

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

Table 2. Linear Regression Analysis Results, Where Contextual Intelligence Is the Independent Variable, And Employee Engagement Is the Dependent Variable

Variable	Contextual Intelligence					
Employee Engagement	R	R ²	F	β	T	P
	.954	.909	575.020	.954	23.917	.000

R, R-value; R², R-squared value; F, F-value; β , beta-value; P, significance.

5. Discussion

The study set out to investigate empirically the association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement and found a positive strong association ($r = 0.882$), as well as a significant positive relationship (.954) between contextual intelligence and employee engagement. This reveals that employee's effective comprehension of their work context (i.e. past, present, and future dynamics) is critically strategic to their effective and heightened deployment of physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Organizations should lead an active narrative of organizational context dynamics to enable strategic vision alignment of organizational objectives with employees' expectations and engagement. This result further strengthens the need for organizations to be strategic in culturing their environment to possess a perpetual continuum of attributes that motivates employees with the security of belonging and a sense of furthering a worthy and progressive cause in the organization's name. Organizations especially in the service industry must be conscious of their past, present and future context, as perception by stakeholders is critical to their functioning, operations, and market navigation. The result of the study also aligns with the postulations of various related studies (Kutz, Ball & Carroll, 2001; Logman, 2008; Kutz, 2022; Ayari & Kamoun, 2021; Sternberg, 2018; Khanna, 2014, 2015). While the study understudied hotels, other segments of the service industry may also be investigated in different geographies to enhance knowledge of the study variables. Finally, this study is critical, as it provides empirical credence to the relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement, and the authors believe that this will strengthen further discourse and debate on the research theme.

5.1. Theoretical Implication

Theoretically, the study possesses the following implications; first, the study investigated the association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement and provided an empirical output on the nature of such association and relationship. Also, the study further strengthens the discourse on contextual intelligence by directly revealing its influence on employee engagement, which has not been studied or sufficiently studied in literature. Finally, the study examined the relationship between the variables within the framework of the dynamic capability theory, and the management by interest theory.

5.2. Practical Implication

Practically, the study possesses the following implications; first, an organization's management should play an active role in creating and sustaining an organization's culture and practice whose transcending narratives of past, present, and future events possess strategic advantages and value alignment with employees. Finally, the organization's management should periodically evaluate their contextual intelligence behaviour and take corrective measures where necessary.

6. Conclusion

The study empirically investigated the association and relationship between contextual intelligence and employee engagement. The study via its result concludes that there is a positive strong association ($r = 0.882$) and a significant positive relationship (.954) between contextual intelligence and employee engagement. This study has given strategic insight into the association and relationship of the study variables; hence, the academia and industry may deploy it to advance strategic knowledge, and gain sustainable advantages in the industrial landscape.

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