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### STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN A VOLATILE, UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX AND AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT: THEORETICAL EVIDENCE FROM NESTLE NIGERIA PLC

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#### ABSTRACT

*In Nestle Nigeria, the strategic leadership of the firm has a special way of aligning and streamlining their employees' personal goals and aspirations with that of the organization's overall goals and objectives. The study focused on strategic leadership and organizational performance in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment: theoretical evidence from Nestle Nigeria Plc. The study concluded that to fully realize the promise of the era's new technologies, increase agility and inventiveness, and address the challenges of an increasingly demanding, vocal marketplace, organizations will need the human judgment, empathy, passion, and creativity of all of their employees. The study recommended that recommended that for firms to keep further improving performance at all times, they should use essential administration that can set up their HR to endure any change that might happen occasionally in their business climate.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous Environment Organizational Performance

#### INTRODUCTION

In recent times, strategic leadership has been seen as an avenue through which organizations can improve their performance in the face of uncertainties and complex environments. Leadership research on corporate ethical conduct and practices have expanded significantly, offering considerable information on organizational and industry-specific ethical leadership difficulties. Complex socio-ecological systems, on the other hand, are putting a strain on corporate culture and historical patterns of leadership behaviour (Al Halbus; Williams & Mansoor, 2019). Firms with a strong strategic leadership style rely on

this asset to stay afloat in an ever-changing, dynamic, and confusing competitive marketing environment. Strategic leadership is a method in which executives use various management styles to create a vision for their firm that allows it to adapt to or remain competitive in a changing economic and technical environment. Strategic leaders may utilize this vision to encourage personnel and departments, generating a feeling of togetherness among them and direction to implement change within their organization (Sales & Holak, 2023).

In recent times, organizations have battled to survive under a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment. And these challenges are posed by constantly changing environmental factors and sophisticated changing customer tastes, most of which are uncontrollable and outside the organization to put up with these factors under the fiercely competitive marketing environment where they, they to show strategic leadership that will be capable of pushing and pulling the employees towards achieving the predetermined organizational goals. In the year 2020, the global business environment was hit by the Covid-19 virus, a pandemic that nearly reduced the world population if not for the timely intervention of the renowned pharmaceutical organizations in the world that can up with vaccines that could be used to contain the spread of this deadly virus. Businesses were badly affected, as some businesses did not survive the impact of this pandemic while some leveraged their strategic leadership and human resources to thrive and recorded very high sales during this period. Hence firms must have strategic leadership that can weather any uncertainty that may come their way.

Nestlé Nigeria PLC is one of Africa's major food and beverage corporations. Nestlé has been delighting Nigerian consumers with high-quality nutritional food items for over 57 years. The firm produces and promotes numerous renowned brands, including Maggi, Milo, Golden Morn, Nescafé, and Nestlé Pure Life, and has approximately 2,300 direct workers, 3 manufacturing locations, 8 branch offices, and a main office in Lagos. Nestlé's mission is to improve people's lives and contribute to a healthier future. The corporation gives back to society while also securing its long-term profitability. Every day, our company touches millions of people's lives, from the farmer who grows the grains to the family that enjoys nutritious meals in their home.

### **Role of Strategic Leadership in Nestle Nigeria Plc. Organizational Performance**

In Nestle Nigeria, the strategic leadership of the firm has a special way of aligning and streamlining their employees' personal goals and aspirations with that of the organization's overall goals and objectives. And this help is reducing clash of interest in their operations since once the employees work hard in meeting up with the laid down goals of the company, their personal goals will be passively actualized as well, thereby creating a friendly work environment that allows the workforce to bring out their best in any task that they are assigned to do. This alone accounts for the tremendous successes that the company has recorded over the years and also births a series of transformations that places the firm above its rivalry in the manufacturing sector. Top executives of Nestle use their creative problem-solving skills and strategic vision to help team members and their organization stay relevant in the competitive marketing environment by constantly delivering value to their numerous customers and stakeholders.

In Nestle Nigeria Plc., The primary goals of strategic leadership are to streamline manufacturing and marketing processes, increase organizational strategic productivity, promote regular innovation, and cultivate an environment that encourages employees to be

productive and independent and put forward their ideas that can help the organization. Strategic leaders may utilize reward or incentive programs to motivate personnel and assist them in meeting their objectives.

To be strategic, leaders must first comprehend their organization's mission. This entails completely comprehending why the organization exists, who its consumers are, and how it can deliver value to them. Then, strategic leaders must construct a vision of what that mission will look like in the future. As a result, leaders must devise a plan to put that vision into action. The strategy should outline the actions that a firm must take or the modifications that must be made to go from its present condition to its intended state.

### **Nestlé's Organizational Behaviour, Impact on Society and Role of Ethical Leadership**

Nestlé's top-level management is stocked with Ethical leaders that value authenticity and act with integrity. By fostering a workplace culture where honesty, respect, fairness, transparency, and accountability are valued, they help build trust between colleagues and create a strong sense of community within their organization.

Technology has altered business in its effort to develop things and generate profits from the Industrial Age to the present. Although organizational work is a collaborative process, and, as Jean-Paul Sartre pointed out, the business has a moral contract to constantly make decisions about "what we ought to do" concerning others, there appears to be a growing disconnect in modernity between maximizing profit and ethical business practices (Ciulla, 2014; Escobar, 2011). We are witnessing immoral commercial activities in the era of "Trumpism," to the point that they have become normal behaviours (Trevio, Den Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014). Furthermore, we are familiar with the ethical scandals that have surfaced in the business world. These events represent the tip of the iceberg of unethical business practices that have sparked growing concerns from researchers, governments, practitioners, and civil society (Brown & Treviño, 2014; Manz, Anand, Joshi, & Manz, 2008; Mehta, 2003; Treviño et al., 2014).

Organizations have witnessed people's unethical behaviour, especially those who seek to satisfy their personal and self-interest goals. Often, such ego-centric behaviours are at the expense and pain of the greater good, that is, causing grave impairment to the organization's internal and external stakeholders (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Schaubroeck, Walumbwa, Ganster, & Kepes, 2007). As a result, in an era of unprecedented change in which human and technological systems have become increasingly interconnected and transformed at an unprecedented rate, and where human vulnerabilities to ecological and planetary dynamics are becoming more apparent, the concept of successful organizational change must be reassessed to include the need for significant and simultaneous change in multiple institutions and organizations in the direction of greater sustainability. (2015) (Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, & Dentoni). According to Schein (2010), ethics is the critical examination of the assumptions that emerge and are taught to members of an organization.

Leadership roles can also be tied to ethics. Leaders must position themselves as ethical role models to create a successful work environment over time (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004; Trevio et al., 2014). To offer a moral framework, they must model the highest moral behaviour via their actions. Most study on ethical conduct emphasizes the importance of ethics for leaders (Harris, 1990; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). As a result, ethical leaders play an essential role in influencing and affecting

workers' ethical behaviour at work by actively engaging in ethical standards (Brown & Trevio, 2006; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Mitchell, Reynolds, & Trevio, 2017; Wiernik & Ones, 2018; Ko et al., 2018).

Leadership theories try to describe the skills and behaviours that allow leaders to succeed (IET, 2023). They research well-known leaders, such as presidents and company entrepreneurs, to better understand why certain professionals make better leaders than others. Leadership theories are important because they explain the tactics and mental processes that must be learned to become a better leader. This is crucial to the health and well-being of an organization. As a leader, you must assume responsibility for your actions and decisions since they may benefit or hurt your organization. As a consequence, leadership theories can help you make better choices. Your efforts can have a big impact on the productivity and motivation of your employees.

Organizations in expanding, highly competitive business contexts must embrace change. Change theories describe the efficacy with which organizations may alter their strategy, procedures, and structures. Kurt Lewin's three-stage model of organizational change often outlines how leaders may strategically enhance the performance of their organizations. The three stages of change are as follows:

**Step 1: Defrost.** Human behaviour, in terms of change, is identified by Lewin as a quasi-stationary equilibrium condition.

**Step 2: Make a Change.** After you've "unfrozen" the status quo, you may start implementing your change. The third step, refreezing, is intended to maintain the alteration you've made. The objective is for all concerned to accept this new state as the new status quo, so they will no longer oppose forces attempting to implement the predetermined change.

**Step 3: Refreeze.** This simply means solidifying the desired change you intend to bring to the organization.

In line with Kurt Lewin's Power Field theory, controlling variables influence the way of behaving of people, eventually decide the destiny of change. Employees are spurred and directed toward the future state by the driving elements. The limiting elements accentuate conceivable resistance to change and act as essential hindrances to change exercises.

According to Lewin, it is basic to adjust these elements through compelling change correspondence and staff interest through ability gap training. Change specialists should utilize pressure the executives draw near, keep up with consistency, and give convincing change thinking.

### **Role of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Culture**

Ethics are normative standards in the form of moral values, norms, and things that are considered good. Ethics functions as a guide/guidance in behaving and behaving towards a better life. The true meaning of ethics is the determination of guidelines to do what is right and not to do anything that is not right. Thus carrying out an ethical life is believed to bring life to a better condition, which does not harm the life around it (Pasricha et al., 2022). Ethics is the science and standards of what is right and what is wrong; something that can be done; and something not to do. Right behaviour is ethical behaviour and wrong behaviour is unethical behaviour. Ethical leadership has gained considerable attention from

scholars in the past decade or so (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, and De Hoogh, 2013a). Ethical leadership refers to the manifestation of normatively suitable behaviour through individual actions and social relationships and the promotion of such behaviour to followers via decision-making, communication, and reinforcement (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison, 2005). Recent research (e.g. Wang and Sung, 2016; Yang, Ding, and Lo, 2016) has shown that this leadership style is positively related to organizational behaviours (OBs), which are extra-role activities that extend beyond the core task requirements and result in beneficial outcomes for the organization (Bolino, Turnley, and Bloodgood, 2002). Ethics is a determining factor for the success of leadership. In an organization, leadership is considered good if the leadership functions are carried out based on ethical principles according to the values adopted by the organization. Ethical leadership will create a more comfortable working atmosphere in the organization, higher productivity, and resolve conflicts that exist within the organization (Pasricha et al., 2022).

It is with great sadness that most business announces the death of integrity after a long and progressively debilitating illness. Integrity, born in the early days of civilized mankind, has often been known by such names as Honesty, Trust, and Decency. Integrity's passing went largely unnoticed as her absence became commonplace and her followers gave up hope. No monument will be erected to Integrity due to a lack of popular support. The statement above is a manifestation of Baun's concern as quoted by Pasricha, Singh & Verma, (2022), regarding the emergence of disasters in the field of business and companies that occurred in the United States in the early 2000s (Pasricha, Singh, & Verma, 2022). Companies such as Arthur Andersen, WorldCom, Rite Aid, and others, have tarnished or damaged their reputation due to the corruption committed by their leaders (Jansen, 2021). Likewise, companies and organizations in the UK and European countries are widely discussed regarding issues of bribery and corruption (Robbie & Praharjo, 2020). The same concern is felt very strongly among the people. In the United States, these scandals involve business people. In Nigeria, the parties involved are various elements, ranging from business people to state administrators, both the executive, legislative, and judiciary.

The 2021 Corruption Perception Index released by Transparency International, states that Nigeria scored 29 out of 100 points, and is ranked 168 out of a total of 180 countries (Pinintasih & Salendu, 2022). The Corruption Perception Index is a survey regarding perceptions of corruption that occurs in a country according to public opinion. These results indicate that opinion regarding the occurrence of corruption, especially in Nigeria, is still relatively high when compared to other countries. This then raises many questions, why can this happen? Are not they the people who are elected and trusted to carry out their positions, who of course have been equipped with a set of value systems or procedures for how to carry out their duties? This question can be further explored, what are the procedures and systems of ethical values for these organizational leaders? How do these ethics explain the leader's relationship with his team members, other parties (stakeholders), or the general public? Among academics and practitioners recently there has been concern about how organizations choose ways to run their business while still achieving organizational goals, but in a more appropriate way.

Nestle Managers teach organizational culture through their social interactions with their employees. Through their actions, Nestle leaders show employees what behaviour is accepted and encouraged. Here are seven ways that leadership affects organizational culture.

1. Defines and teaches core values
2. Fosters a desire to learn
3. Promotes a culture of recognition
4. Encourages a shared vision
5. Changes the culture
6. Improves job satisfaction
7. Ensures accountability

### **ROLE AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS AND DIVERSITY PRACTICES IN AN ORGANIZATION**

Organizations that desire to succeed are defined by one factor: leadership. The leadership aspect is required to participate in teamwork to attain the organization's stated success. These elements can help to build a solid team and an ethical leader. Leadership is defined as a leader's style of leading, encouraging, and controlling the elements of a group or organization to reach a desired organizational objective (Arista Putri et al., 2020). Leadership is primarily the capacity to encourage, lead, direct, and move others so that they can work together to attain the goals that have been established. To achieve these objectives, leaders must engage in a variety of tasks, including guiding the individuals working in the company he leads. In other words, the success or failure of an organization's aims is determined by its leadership. A good leader can influence the people he leads so that people in the organization work together to achieve goals. Leaders can also influence the people they lead so that the leaders concerned can work with the team who are led to achieve organizational goals. A leader should be able to plan, offer direction and the proper commands to subordinates, and make critical organizational choices (Hidayat, 2019).

Leadership is a central activity in an organization, with a top leader as a central figure who has authority and responsibility in making the organization effective in achieving its goals. The leader as a central figure has a strategic role, namely uniting individuals to move in the same direction with all available means. Such authority and responsibility show that the existence of a leader cannot be separated from the organization, both formal and informal, while the organization cannot be separated from its members who consist of individuals (Zaini, M.F. & Siregar, 2021).

Strategic leadership practice (SLP) is the way by which the leaders create and re-create reasons for the continuous existence within the organization (Abdulla et al. 2019; Alsaadi, Khalifa, et al. 2019; Goldman 2012). Thus, strategic leaders must have the capability to keep an eye on how the organization is currently adding value and change, both inside and outside the organization (Alharthi et al. 2020; Hopkins et al. 2008; Simsek et al. 2015). It influences others to voluntarily make a continuous decision to enhance the long-term viability of the organization (Bandar Abdulla F. H. Alharthi, Khalifa, and Bhaumick 2019). Leithwood et al. (2004) further considered the responsibility of the strategic practice to formulate a challenging view of the future, providing a clear idea of where threats could come from different sides by thinking and doing combined. Similarly, (Amos 2007) considered the ability to realize the entire organization and the surroundings to operate and use this realization through other people's both short and long-term stability.



**Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) in the workplace**

Political suppositions, variety, culture, sexual direction, religion, class, or potential orientation personality qualifications are instances of diversity. Diversity in the work environment alludes to employees who contribute new perspectives and foundations to the table (Wong, 2020). Inclusion suggests that everybody in your diverse group feels included, appreciated, regarded, genuinely treated, and imbued in your way of life. A piece of fostering a comprehensive association is enabling all employees and perceiving their special capacities. A different and comprehensive work environment is one in which everybody feels similarly included and upheld in all pieces of the work environment, paying little mind to what their identity is or how they help the organization.

Inclusion without diversity may result in a toxic culture, whereas diversity without inclusion can result in a stagnant and uncreative organization. Organizations are beginning to focus on variety, but many are overlooking the problem's consideration element. Your workers will feel alone and unsupported if you do not make a concerted effort to promote diversity and inclusion.

Employees foster a sense of belonging in a diverse and welcoming environment. Employees that are more engaged at work perform harder and smarter, producing higher-quality results. Organizations that use D&I approaches report considerable gains in corporate outcomes, progress, and direction as a result (Wong, 2020).

**Personal Reflection on Leadership Development Experience, Leading with Emotional Intelligence in a VUCA World**

The year 2020 has undoubtedly seen us living and working in a VUCA world where leadership skills have been tested. The world was hit by a pandemic that reduce the world population and restricted human contact to a reasonable extent. This affected how we did business and lived our normal lives, Firms lost many of their human resources and most people were forced to work from home.

My experience during this period that helped develop my leadership skill the more is that the VUCA era helped me to start thinking outside the box, since the only firms that survived that pandemic without going into debt had strategic leaders who went to extra mile to make their organization withstand the prevalent global situation.

Improving leadership abilities is a continual and deliberate process that involves self-reflection, continuous learning, and practice. To begin, establishing self-awareness is critical. Understanding your talents, limitations, and values enables you to lead truly and effectively. Seeking input from others and carefully listening to other points of view may help you obtain new insights and improve your leadership style. Reading books, attending seminars, participating in leadership programs, or seeking mentorship can broaden your knowledge and expose you to different leadership styles and strategies. Additionally, honing effective communication skills, including active listening, empathy, and clear articulation, enhances your ability to connect with and inspire others. Building strong relationships, empowering your team, and fostering a positive and inclusive work environment are also key aspects of effective leadership. By proactively working on these areas, you can continuously improve your leadership skills and positively impact those around you.

In a VUCA environment (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous), success may be attained by adopting a mind-set and skill set that allows you to manage the continuously

shifting landscape. Here are a few crucial pointers for thriving in a VUCA world: Accept change; be a lifelong learner; cultivate resilience; nurture connections; develop emotional intelligence; and promote creativity and agility. Individuals may survive in a VUCA environment by following these guidelines, and organizations can create cultures that are adaptive, inventive, and successful by following these guidelines.

To lead in a VUCA world, leaders must be adaptable, resilient, and innovative. They should foster a culture of continuous learning, promote collaboration, and encourage risk-taking. Emotional intelligence is critical, as is the ability to inspire and motivate teams through change and uncertainty. Successful leaders in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world possess agility, resilience, and adaptability.

## CONCLUSION

To saddle leadership skills for more great effect on performance, it must centre around self-improvement, fabricating solid connections, and developing a growth mentality. To better understand themselves and the impact they have on others, leaders should work on developing their emotional intelligence and self-awareness. To broaden their support network, they should cultivate relationships with colleagues, mentors, and other professionals. A growth mind-set is also necessary to encourage on-going learning, take on challenges, and persevere in the face of setbacks. Moreover, employees ought to zero in on areas of strength for creating abilities, designating really, and engaging their group to accomplish their maximum capacity. By levelling up these abilities, employees can augment their effect and make positive changes in their associations and networks. Organizational leadership plays a significant part in imparting a future picture for the association to add to the acknowledgment of the association's vision as per the well-defined course of action and it is the fundamental driver of the firm's accomplishment for successful organizational performance where the key employees assume a significant part in advancing the association's upper hand in the long haul.

Enhanced Organizational performance does not just happen; rather it is a function of dedication and hard work from the top management and executives which transcend to the employees who get the work done. These employees always look up to the top management to assign responsibility and tasks to them and when the leadership exhibits ethical morals in their dealings, you will find out that the employees will also uphold their operations ethically. And this will also help in the growth of emotional intelligence within the operations of the company thereby increasing their productivity and doing it effectively and efficiently. Ethical leadership helps businesses succeed and grow. Ethical leaders create a culture of honesty, integrity, trust, and fairness. Employees are engaged and happier working for leaders with firm ethical principles. Quality leadership builds a harmonious, collaborative, and trustworthy work environment. By being ethical, leaders uphold the standards for a positive organizational culture.

Today's workplaces are more diverse and connected to the world than ever before. With the intricacies of the present workplace, pioneers should take advantage of aggregate insight to boost the capability of each individual. Every industry's landscape is continually being altered by technological and social shifts. To fully realize the promise of the era's new technologies, increase agility and inventiveness, and address the challenges of an increasingly demanding, vocal marketplace, organizations will need the human judgment, empathy, passion, and creativity of all of their employees.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, it is recommended that for firms to keep further improving performance at all times, they should use essential administration that can set up their HR to endure any change that might happen occasionally in their business climate.

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