

Hybrid Model of Strategic and Contextual Leadership in Pluralistic Organizations- A Qualitative Multiple Case Study

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Abstract : This study adopts strategic leadership (Upper Echelons) as the core theory and contextual leadership theory as the research lens. This research asks how the external context impacts strategic leadership effectiveness to achieve the outcomes in pluralistic organizations (PO). The study explores how the context influences the selection of CEOs, top management teams (TMT), and their leadership effectiveness. POs are characterized by the multiple objectives of their top management teams, divergent objectives, multiple strategies, and multiple governing authorities. The research question is explored by means of a qualitative multiple-case study focusing on healthcare, real estate, and financial services organizations. The data sources are semi-structured interviews, documents, and direct observations. The data analysis strategy is inductive and deploys thematic analysis and cross-case synthesis. The findings differentiate between national and international CEOs' delegation of authority and relationship with the Board of Directors. The findings identify the elements of the dynamic context that influence TMT and PO outcomes. The emergent hybrid strategic and contextual leadership framework shows how the different contextual factors influence strategic direction, PO context, selection of CEOs and TMT, and the outcomes in four pluralistic organizations. The study offers seven theoretical contributions to Upper Echelons, strategic leadership, and contextual leadership research. (1) The integration of two theories revealed how CEO's impact on the organization is complementary to the contextual impact. (2) Conducting this study in the Middle East contributes to strategic leadership and contextual leadership research. (3) The demonstration of the significant contextual effects on the selection of CEOs. (4 and 5) Two contributions revealed new links between the context, the Board role, internal versus external CEOs, and national versus international CEOs. (6 and 7) This study offered two definitions: what accounts for CEO leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes. Two methodological contributions were also identified: (1) Previous strategic leadership and Upper Echelons research are mainly quantitative, while this study adopts qualitative multiple-case research with face-to-face interviews. (2) The extrication of the CEO from the TMT advanced the data analysis in strategic leadership research. Four contributions are offered to practice: (1) The CEO's leadership effectiveness inside and outside the organization. (2) Rapid turnover of predecessor CEOs signifies the need for a strategic and contextual approach to CEOs' succession. (3) TMT composition and education impact on TMT-CEO and TMT-TMT interface. (4) Multilevel strategic contextual leadership development framework.

Keywords : strategic leadership, contextual leadership, upper echelons, pluralistic organizations, cross-cultural leadership

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