

# Contextual Intelligence and Strategic Leadership of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The expansion of the operational scope of a business informs the need to exercise diligence and sensitivity to the nature and demands of the operational contexts both local and international. Hence, the investigation into the influence of contextual intelligence on strategic leadership of telecommunication companies in the south-south region of Nigeria with foci on Rivers and Akwa Ibom States. Quantitative and correlational design was adopted. Four (4) telecommunication companies viz: MTN, Airtel, Globacom and 9Mobile selected based on their subscribers' base and market share standing out of nine (9) major ones listed in the methodology constituted the population. Sixty nine (69) copies of the questionnaire accounting for 93% response rate were fully completed and used in the study out of seventy four (74) copies administered to senior staff and above obtained using Taro Yamene's sample size determination technique from a population of ninety (90) respondents. Primary data were obtained from questionnaire. The findings showed that the four (4) hypotheses formulated around the dimensions of contextual intelligence comprising tacit-based knowledge, synchronicity and time orientations have significant influences on measures of strategic leadership made up of strategic direction and balanced organisational controls. The conclusion showed that contextual intelligence significantly influences strategic leadership of telecommunication companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States of the South-South region of Nigeria. The managements of telecommunication companies in these two States of South-South region of Nigeria were recommended to leverage contextual intelligence to better and enhance strategic leadership in their respective operational contexts.

**Keywords:** Tacit-based knowledge, Synchronicity, Time orientations, Strategic leadership, Balanced organisational controls, Contextual intelligence.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The need for leadership cuts across different spectra of human activities especially in relation to the running of the affairs of business organisations whether they are business-to-customer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B). In order to cope with the increasing waves of change which creates hyper-competitive landscape, strategic leadership becomes imperative. Strategic leadership as the prerogative of top-management crafts the vision, defines corporate culture, sets ethical and moral tones as well as maintain balanced organisational controls of the business organisations in pursuance of survival, growth and profitable performance of the business organisations (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Hitt *et al.*, 2013). Other nominated advantages of strategic leadership comprises

fostering commitment to a choice strategic direction to support corporate business model designed to generate revenue, minimise cost and maximise profit; pursuit of competitive advantage, a mix of actions to delight customers and ensuring superior performance all round (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). Strategic leadership can be defined as "the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility and empower others to create strategic change as necessary" (Hitt *et al.*, 2013, p.362). Rowe (2001) cited in (Harappa Blogs, 2021) describes strategic leadership as "the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that enhance the long-term viability of organisation while maintaining its short-term financial stability." Strategic leadership leverages and thrives on systems mind-set and thinking which help to integrate cross-functional decisions and

actions into a consistent and cohesive whole to ensure that implementation of strategies remain on course amid environmental vagaries (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Prior to this time, the provision of telecommunication services in Nigeria was the monopoly of Nigerian Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) which performed abysmally poor before its privatisation in 2014 by National Council on Privatisation (NCP) in the sum of N45.9 billion (\$252 million) to NATCOM Consortium, (Efagne, 2014). The privatisation exercise was, in itself, a strategic move to salvage the ailing telecommunication outfit which aside from its overall poor performance, was equally bugged down by under-funding, inefficiencies and sharp practices in many ramifications of its operations (Okwumbu-Imafidon, n.d.). The development resulted in the coming on board of satellite mobile companies such as MTN, Econet which name has witnessed frequent changes to V-Mobile, Vodafone, Celtel, Zain and now Airtel, Etisalat now 9-Mobile, Globacom, MainOne, Swift Network Limited, Smile Nigeria and Spectranet. It may bear to note that the performances of these telecommunication companies have improved comparatively as their contributions to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) stood at \$70 billion as at the fourth quarter of 2022, Danbatta (2022) reported in (Egboboh, 2022) or 16.22% according to Adepetun (2023) citing National Bureau of Statistics source. However, the telecommunication companies still face other existential problems as vandalism of base-stations, theft of their network facilities and armoured cables, increased operational cost, difficulty in accessing foreign exchange cum volatility of parallel market even as general insecurity persists (Adepetun, 2023) including what this author perceives as the challenge of strategic leadership.

Strategic leadership has gained recognition and occupied pivotal position in strategic discourse over time since 1950s when strategic management began to gain traction as a number of researches have accumulated in the area (Selznick, 1957; Mjaku, 2020). Yet, the outcomes of these researches which were mostly based on foreign contexts have been mixed and as such, the puzzle of strategic leadership remains unresolved especially as the contexts desirous of strategic leadership continue to alter from place to place. Khanna (2014) posits that until and unless contextual intelligence is acquired and applied appropriately, the failure rate of businesses within and across national borders will remain on the increase. The development therefore lends credence to the fact that more researches still need to be carried out to resolve existing lacuna and thus, fill the gap in knowledge with respect to strategic leadership. Prior to the discussion of the point of departure of this study from the stand point of contextual intelligence, it may be important to examine the measures of strategic leadership.

Strategic leadership can be viewed from the prism of organisational activities, attributes of strategic leaders or a combination of these (Davies & Davies, 2004). Recourse to previous studies has shown that strategic leadership has been treated, depending on the purpose it was tailored to achieve, in terms of leadership communication, monitoring, leadership competence, staff involvement, and evaluation (Ogola, 2019), effective management, fostering effective culture, exploiting core competences, establishing ethical practices (Kaguru *et al.*, 2020). Strategic leadership could also be assessed using measures such as shaping strategic direction, forging balanced organisational controls, effective management of corporate resource portfolio, maintaining strong corporate culture and fostering ethical practices (Hitt *et al.*, 2013; Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). Yet Gupta *et al.*, (2009) link strategic leadership with dimensions such as strategic planning, performing models, sequence programming, consequential profiting and sustainable development. However, strategic leadership would be measured using proxies of strategic direction or orientation and balanced organisational controls even though the review of literature may straddle all these measures.

Contextual intelligence, admittedly, is context-oriented which in some cases can be very complex to navigate. It is a resource needed to grapple with the ever-changing environment in the sense that it helps to proffer practical solutions to problems. Sterberg (2005) cited in Moronwane, (2019) describes contextual intelligence as the ability to shape, adapt and select the environment. Kutz (2008) views contextual intelligence as the "ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions so as to maximise one's strength over the environment." Contextual intelligence can also be viewed as the capacity to appreciate the limits of our knowledge especially in adapting the said knowledge to a different environment independent of where it was originally developed (Khanna, 2014). The terms adaptation, shaping and selection cut across the foregoing definitions which simply implies that due diligence, people-wisdom, procedural wisdom and contextual wisdom should be exercised in the use of contextual intelligence (Kutz, 2008; Moronwane, 2019).

The notion of adaptation practically requires that behaviour be changed to suit the environmental demands for the good of the business organisation. On the contrary, shaping means that the environment can be changed to suit the operational orientation of the business organisation. Yet, selection signposts the fact that contexts do not only matter but also vary and as such, there is always need to make a choice of one context over another as far as the application of contextual intelligence is concerned. Extant literature indicates that leadership generally and strategic leadership in particular, is a contextual issue as well. Therefore, a nexus exists between contextual intelligence and strategic leadership of which the empirical probing of the

same remains the pivot and focal point of this study. The dimensions of contextual intelligence though vary in the literature, would include: tacit knowledge, synchronicity and time orientations (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). In sum therefore, this work was poised to probe the nexus between contextual intelligence and strategic leadership of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria as its main aim. The attendant specific objectives included to:

1. Investigate the relationship between tacit knowledge and strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.
2. Examine the relationship between synchronicity and strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.
3. Appraise the relationship between tacit knowledge and balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.
4. Probe the relationship between time orientation and strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

The research questions that arose were as follows:

1. What is the relationship between tacit knowledge and strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria?
2. How does synchronicity relate to strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship of tacit knowledge to balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship of time orientation to strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria?

Tentatively, it can be hypothesised thus:

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant influence of tacit knowledge on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant influence of synchronicity on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant influence of tacit knowledge on balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

**H0<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between time orientation and strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria.

The significance of this study would show in a number of important ways thus: The target business

organisations herein referred to as telecommunication companies would gain as the knowledge resulting from this study could help them to be equipped and better be prepared to adjust their corporate, business, functional cum operational strategies as the operating contexts shift. The outcome would add value and enrich the existing literature for the benefits of the present and future academia. Generally, business practitioners and vested interests local and international can derive one benefit or another from this study especially those in critical leadership positions.

## 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks including empirical review constituted the foci of literature review in this work:

### Theoretical Framework

Amid many theories in management as a discipline, the author opts to use upper echelons and contingency as baseline theories to anchor this work as respectively discussed below:

### Upper Echelons Theory

Hambrick and Mason in 1984 propounded upper echelons theory and it centrally accentuates the role of top-management in business organisations such as telecommunication companies of Nigeria (David *et al.*, 2012; Quttainah, 2015). The theory specifically postulates that the strategic intent of business organisation which reflects its mission, vision, business definition, objectives and goals is a direct function of the background, exposure, values, belief systems, global perspectives and world-views of the top and strategic leaders in the organisations. It bears to note that since members of the top-management team are themselves products of communities, their overall behaviours are to some extent influenced by cultures characteristic of their respective communities (Quttainah, 2015). Therefore, a business organisation is as good or bad depending on the quality and calibre of its top and strategic managers who define and chart the strategic direction for the organisation. It logically follows that the discourse on contextual intelligence and strategic leadership sits fittingly well and strikes a delicate cord with this theory.

### Contingency Theory

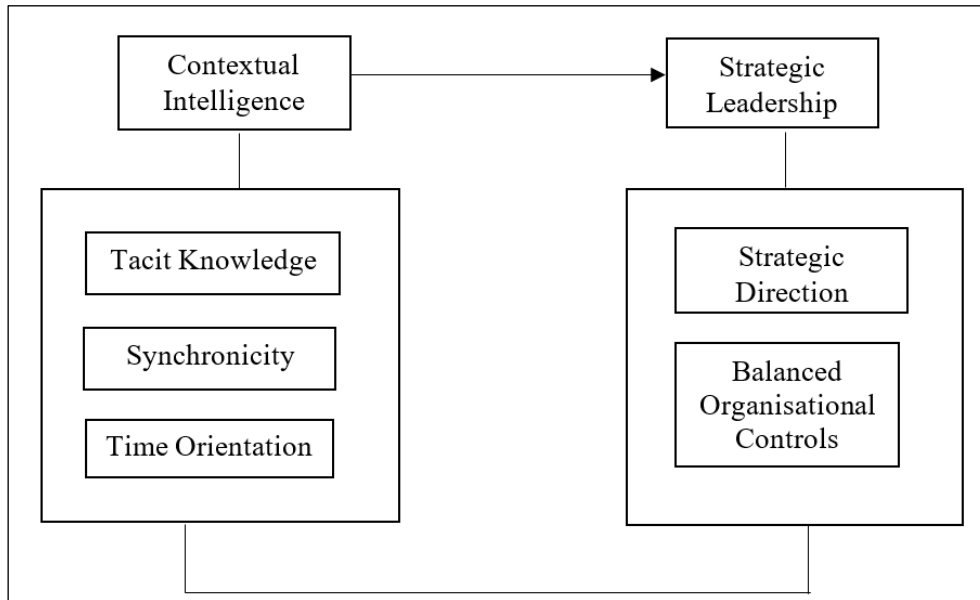
Austrian psychologist, Fred Edward Fiedler in 1964 propounded the contingency theory (Griffen, 2005). The theory states that the personality trait and character of leadership demonstrated at any one time vary in relation to the situation or context. The debate on the way and manner to manage and lead organisations, puts the classical and contingency theorists at loggerheads. While the classical theorists maintain the stance that there is one-best way to manage and lead organisations, the contingency theorists argue, on the contrary, that managing and leading organisations vary from context to context and also depend on the personalities of individual leaders involved (Griffen, 2005). When organisation experiences adversity which

causes the context to shift, the knowledge drawn from contextual intelligence informs that the strategic leadership must necessarily change to suit the environmental dynamics accordingly. Hence, the need to adapt, shape and select the right environmental context becomes inevitable (Morowane, 2019). Therefore, contingency theory thus lubricates the interaction

between contextual intelligence and strategic leadership as these constructs are explored in this empirical work.

**Conceptual Framework**

The discourse would revolve around contextual intelligence and strategic leadership as well as their components as the following schema depicts:



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of Contextual Intelligence and Balance Organisational Controls**

**Source:** Researcher’s Conceptualisation (2023). Based on dimensions and measures adapted from (Kutz & Bamford-Wade (2023) and Hitt *et al.*, (2013) respectively.

**Contextual Intelligence**

Business organisations exist within given environmental contexts. The resource inputs such as human, capital, managerial, technology, including materials, machines, money and stakeholders (Weihrich *et al.*, 2015) all of which business organisations need to transform into either semi-finished or finished products and/or services are also obtained from select environmental contexts which may be local and/or foreign. Owing to the flux in the business environment globally, leveraging contextual intelligence becomes imperative as was canvassed by Anthony Mayo and Nitin Nohria of Harvard Business School since the mid-1980s and for obvious reasons (Khanna, 2014). One of such reasons, among others, is decision-making which, as the prerogative of strategic leaders, depends on accurate, reliable, relevant and real-time information. Second, is the technology-in-use which is typically amenable to changes within and across identified economies. Third, conditions generally vary hugely from place to place and thus, as Khanna (2014) puts it, context matters. Business organisations need such information to make viable decision shaped by the three dimensional (3D) thinking on which strategic actions should be based to enhance survival, growth and profitability of the business organisations over time (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2015; Kutz, n. d.). What then is contextual intelligence per se?

Different scholars have defined contextual intelligence according to their individual perspectives and scholastic persuasions thus: To Sterberg (2005) cited in (Moronwane, 2019), contextual intelligence reflects “ability to adapt to, shape and select the environment”. Kutz (2008) defines contextual intelligence as the “ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions so as to maximise one’s strength over the environment.” Contextual intelligence can also be viewed as “the ability to understand the limits of our knowledge and to adapt that knowledge to an environment different from the one in which it was developed” (Khanna, 2014). The terms adaptation, shaping and selection form commonalities of the foregoing definitions which should be exercised with due diligence. The importance and relevance of contextual intelligence span the whole gamut of operational activities of business organisations. Consider the supply chain management, sourcing of raw materials, human resource recruitment, sourcing of finance and funding, acquisition of state-of-the-art technology, quest for strategic alliances and collaborations, for example, each operation requires contextual intelligence reflected in tacit knowledge, synchronicity and time orientation to be carried out efficiently and effectively (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013; Moronwane, 2019). Another expression that can be used for contextual intelligence according to Sternberg *et al.*, (1995) is practical

intelligence as it is reputed to be a skill that differentiates leaders from non-leaders.

### Tacit Knowledge

Knowledge to which the term “tacit” prefixes has its root word as “yada” which literally means “to know” (Kutz, 2008). Tacit knowledge is otherwise known as “unarticulated” knowledge (Hackley, 1999). However, recourse to knowledge management and social construction theory indicates that knowledge is of two types notably: tacit or embedded knowledge and explicit or migratory knowledge (Mohajan, 2017). While explicit knowledge is easily codified and transferable for use in organisation, tacit knowledge is less so as it is highly personal and embedded in individual, difficult to formalise and express in organisational databases (Polanyi, 1966; Badaracco, 1991; Huie *et al.*, 2019). Smith (2001) corroborates that 90% of the organisational knowledge is embedded and synthesised in peoples’ heads. The difficulties associated with expression of tacit knowledge include: perception and language, value, time and distance and its barriers are in terms of individual, organisational and technological (Mohajan, 2017). Hence, tacit knowledge finds its expression in intuition and wisdom governing action and decision making resulting from technical expertise and cognitive sagacity or mental maps (Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013).

Unlike explicit knowledge which is more or less context-specific and based on where it was learned, tacit knowledge has the potential of being utilised across contexts and regardless of time differences suggesting a universal appeal of contextual intelligence of which tacit knowledge is a dimension (Khanna, 2014). Tacit knowledge thrives on experience which is trial-and-error driven and vicarious in nature coupled with analogical reasoning which elicits a trend involving careful comparison of similar activities or events to the present developments to guide and inform strategic action in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environmental contexts (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). The abode of tacit knowledge situates farther than the easily accessible consciousness. It helps organisations to accomplish their long-term goals when it shifts to a more conscious level technically referred to as “ba” moment where it becomes aware internally (Chen & Mohamed, 2010; Kucharska & Erickson, 2023). At this point, organisation’s ability to leverage tacit knowledge is hugely enhanced as skills, new ideas and intuitive knowledge become handy from experience and thus, can be shared or demonstrated contextually with organisational members (Kucharska & Erickson, 2023).

Knowledge generally can both be created and learned. The creation of knowledge has to do with how new knowledge can be produced, embeds in organisational repository by way of retention and made available for use in-situ and across units within the organisation in terms of knowledge transfer (Gupta *et al.*,

2009). The learning aspect combines the correction of theory-in-use or routine practice commonly referred to as single-loop learning with having to revisit the espoused theory often reflected in beliefs and values to ensure more dominant and effective approach to organisational learning. The exercise of strategic leadership, nonetheless, demands knowledge particularly tacit knowledge which, naturally, is inimitable and valuable and to that extent, can confer long-term competitive advantage on an organisation (Jackson, 2012; Mohajan, 2017).

### Synchronicity

The term synchronicity was inaugurated into the discourse of contextual intelligence about late 1920s or early 1930s by Carl Gustav Jung and his associate, Nobel Laureate, Wolfgang E. Pauli in a work they produced in 1952 entitled: *The interpretation of Nature and Psyche* (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013; Jankowski, 2020; Russo-Netzer & Ickson, 2023). Synchronicity is parapsychological concept describing the simultaneous occurrence of two or more distinct and acausal events which lack cause-and-effect relationship and yet, coincidentally establish a meaningful connection (Jankowski, 2020). Jung (1969) defines synchronicity as unpredictable occurrences of meaningful coincidence. Imperatively, synchronicity ignites the idea that the coincidence of events in both space and time has profound meaning which transcends mere chance (Russo-Netzer & Ickson, 2023). These events bear relationship to one another irrespective of contexts and time because of analogical connection that exists between or among them which are not quite easy to notice. The hallmarks of synchronicity have to do with innovation and creative ideas which essential ingredients include: thinking outside the box where the box refers to context, incongruity as the capacity to see things as they really are, changes in perceptions, mood and meaning in relation to the perspectives of other people around (Drucker, 1985). This implies that leaders need people or human relations skills to recruit talents into organisation as contexts (boxes) vary from location to location regardless of what they are accustomed (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013; Khanna, 2014). Synchronicity provokes holistic experience in the sense that the external experience makes significant meaning only when it is linked to individual’s inner worlds. This prescription of synchronicity is even more apt as it resonates intimately with strategic leadership, in which case, both the strategic values and world views of the strategic leaders at the top echelons of the organisations shape and determine the strategic direction or orientation of the organisations amid exercise of a balanced organisational controls.

The success and survival of organisation especially in a new context (box) demands application of equally new knowledge because neither the practice of old wine in a new wineskin nor one-size-fit-all can produce the desired result. Therefore, leadership

performance becomes a function of leveraging unique skills, new ideas, talented people, vicarious experience and analogical recalls (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013; Russo-Netzer & Ickson, 2023). It thus behoves on corporate managers and leaders not only to understand the importance of context but also to develop capacity and cognate processes to make sense of the context in its complexity and wholeness which, comparatively, is much more important as it underscores the essence of contextual intelligence (Aarnoudse *et al.*, 2011). It further entails the incorporation of contextual ethos which comprises political structure and hierarchy, historical and philosophical evolution of the organisation context, idiosyncratic norms and conventions into decision-making process (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013).

### Time Orientation

The chain of activities carried out as directed by leaders of organisations take place with due recognition of time however way it is viewed and framed (Campos & Valenzuela, 2013). Corporate managers and leaders make series of decisions that trigger corporate actions leveraging on the past, present and future time orientations as they affect their respective organisations. The decisions make use of the recall and awareness of the past, sound understanding of the future imperatives and vivid sense of the present realities which inform alignment of hindsight, foresight and insight respectively (Kutz, 2011). What this means in practical decision-making context is that the knowledge of the past (hindsight) together with above-average understanding of the future dynamics (foresight) helps to better the quality of decisions made on which actions are taken in the present (insight) leading to the contextual intelligence equation given below:

$$H + F = I$$

Where:

H = Hindsight

F = Foresight

I = Insight

The need to take viable decisions calls for insight lubricated by hindsight and foresight which technically defines the 3-D thinking considered as a key success factor in the complex, volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment in which businesses generally operate in the contemporary times. Kaguru *et al.*, (2020) buttresses that corporate leaders need both adaptability and acute sense of timing to successfully steer the ships of their organisations to navigate the VUCA environment compounded by information overload with which organisations worldwide are facing. Learning and applying temporal skills which comprise time warping and time chunking are crucial to profitable use of contextual intelligence (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). The time warping simply refers to making the desired future-state of an organisation to appear nearer so that organisational members can appreciate, yearn for and take viable decisions to facilitate and actualise it

ultimately. While time chunking involves putting higher priority on the time frame set to achieve stated targets which can be in terms of years, months, weeks, days and hours or short, medium and long ranges as the case may be (Bowersox *et al.*, 2010; Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). The time orientations entail application of contextual ethos mentioned earlier on and ability to pose the right questions bordering on: resources available, metrics to access success, identification of possible obstacles and how to overcome them as well as benchmarking across a number of contexts. Like tacit-based knowledge and synchronicity, time orientations are material assets to successful strategic leadership in varying operational contexts.

### Strategic Leadership

Leadership is a key and demanding function on which role other managerial functions depend. Strategic leadership which assumes the responsibility of harnessing and aligning the organisation's internal endowments to seize opportunities in the external milieu becomes much more demanding given the ever-changing environmental contexts in which organisations operate especially in relation to emerging markets. Gupta *et al.*, (2009) buttress that strategic leadership entails "strategically correlating the initiatives of shaping, managing, and actualising appropriate environmental scenarios, cast of people, and portfolio of resources." Right from the creation of strategic intent through influencing strategic actions to strategy formulation, strategy implementation and exercise of strategy evaluation and control to attain strategic competitiveness and superior performance constitutes the key responsibilities of top strategic leaders in respective organisations (Hitt *et al.*, 2013; Nkuda, 2019). The capacity of organisation to envision, empower and motivate its workforce to discharge their duties to achieve the vision of strategic leadership predicts organisation's the life-span in question which may be long or short (Hitt *et al.*, 2013). Miles *et al.*, (2011) assert and corroborate much more that efficiently smart organisations build mechanisms that support their market strategy to avert entropy while inefficient organisations find it difficult to effect changes to structures and processes as and when needed to emplace the right mechanisms.

The operating contexts of organisations are rapidly shifting and survival necessitates that strategic leadership should be sensitive, flexible and adaptable to draw from its hindsight and foresight to make insightful decisions to remain competitive and steer the organisational leadership aright to achieve above-average returns on capital invested (Hitt *et al.*, 2013; Mjaku, 2020). It may be important to assert that strategic leadership cannot be exercised in a vacuum or out of context but within context. Strategic leadership therefore takes into cognisance the trio challenges of emerging markets notably: nature of the environment, people and resources (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). The mobile

telecommunication companies operating in Nigeria are doing pretty well because their respective strategic leaders and managers seem to have understood the dynamics of Nigerian business contexts guided by experience and intuition. Therefore, the consciousness of understanding of operating business context tends to create more or less a strong correlation between strategic leadership and contextual intelligence.

### Strategic Direction

Strategic direction also known as strategic orientation signifies the long-term goals and/or objectives which an organisation seeks to pursue (Ogbari *et al.*, 2018). Hitt *et al.*, (2013, p. 272) buttress that strategic direction “involves specifying the vision and the strategy to achieve this vision over time.” It is framed based on the perspectives of stakeholders’ which bear on realities of internal and external environmental contexts and often expressed or embedded in the mission which spells the purpose and distinguishes an organisation from its peers (Harrison & St. John, 2000). The strategic direction provides guidance for employees and managers responsible for pursuing the mission which serves as the stepping stone to attain organisational vision in the long-run (Harrison & St. John, 2000; Nkuda, 2019). The guidance provided by strategic direction comes by way of core ideology based on organisational culture and heritage as well as envisioned future which requires employees to stretch beyond mere accomplishment of their respective expectations to include orchestrating significant change and progress to actualise it (Hitt *et al.*, 2013).

It has to do with charting the course or path for an organisation to conduct its affairs and operations to enable it stay ahead of competitions which hurt seriously most times and gain, possibly, competitive advantage in its choice industry. Sun Tzu in the Art of War states that “strategy is the great work of organisation. In situations of life or death, it is Tao of survival or extinction. Its study cannot be neglected” (Grant, 2008, p.3). To define strategic direction is, indeed, not only at the heart of the strategy formulation which integrates insights from the internal and external environments of the organisation to determine corporate and business-level strategies but also include strategy implementation right to strategy evaluation and control where the effectiveness or otherwise of strategic leadership and management is determined (Hitt *et al.*, 2013). The determination of strategic direction is not a cheap exercise which does not depend on the choice of what may be described as the best strategy as strategic leaders are either risk-averse or ambivalent and erratic with attendant consequence of chief executive officers’ turnover. Other elements associated with strategic direction or orientation are commitment to learning, inter-departmental connectedness, innovativeness and speed (Levin, 2008).

To overcome challenges associated with strategic direction, it is important to extend incentives to

talented employees to motivate them to select right strategies and pursue the same, support the strategic direction mid-wife by charismatic leaders, be extraordinarily mindful of the organisational strengths and weaknesses to avoid strategic pitfalls and the need to be ambi-cultural to lead organisation strategically across contexts to attain profitable performance in the short-term and sustain potential for organisational survival in the long-run.

### Balanced Organisational Controls

Organisations are exposed to many events both internal and external which hold enormous potential to derail or set organisations off their track and thus, cause them to underperform or miss their set targets most of the times. Therefore, the need to checkmate such developments informs the rationale to maintain eternal surveillance by way of ensuring a balanced organisational controls in financial and strategic terms as a necessity (Kazmi, 2002; Hitt *et al.*, 2013; Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Kaplan, 2010). Harrison and St. John (2000, p. 120) define strategic organisational system as “a system to support managers in assessing the relevance of the organisation’s strategy to its progress in the accomplishment of its goals, and discrepancies exist, to support areas needing attention.” Hitt *et al.*, (2013, p.278) define controls as the “formal, information-based... procedures used by managers to maintain or alter pattern in organisational activities.”

Typically, organisations are characterised by goals, people and structure (Robbins *et al.*, 2011) and each of these elements needs to be controlled to ensure improved performance for organisations from both financial and strategic standpoints. The lack of balanced organisational controls exposes strategic leaders to difficulties in checking unethical practices, misuse of corporate resources and failure to adjust in time corporate structures to align or fit properly with new business context (Miles *et al.*, 1978). Balanced organisational controls can assume market, clan, bureaucratic approach or a combination of these (Amah & Nkuda, 2014) and can also cut across strategic, structural, operational and financial controls by way of typologies (Kazmi, 2002). It requires periodic checks in terms of recalling the objectives set in the planning stage, standards of performance stipulated, comparing actual performance with the set standards, determining possible variances and taking corrective actions as may be necessary (Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). Hence, balanced organisational controls capture the financial state, customer orientations, internal business process and learning cum growth.

### Contextual Intelligence and Strategic Leadership Relationship

Extant literature attests that context matters (Khanna, 2014). Similarly, knowledge of the unique characteristics of each context or box of leadership as a

cross-cultural phenomenon and global issue (Biermeier-Hanson *et al.*, 2014) equally matters as it permits strategic thinking outside of the box to address emerging and trendy issues which sign-post what strategic leadership is all about. It further entails leveraging and aligning the dimensions of contextual intelligence comprising tacit-based knowledge, synchronicity and time orientations with strategic direction and balanced organisational controls as measures of strategic leadership. However, in doing so, issues of effective management of corporate resources, installation of strong corporate culture and maintenance of ethical practices should not be ignored (Hitt *et al.*, 2013). The ability of strategic leaders to apply tacit-knowledge supported by analogical reasoning and hindsight coupled with foresight would make for informed decision making in novel contexts in terms of adapting the organisations to emerging issues, building flexible processes and adopting lean or agile operations which altogether conduces to organisational effectiveness and success (Sherehiy *et al.*, 2007; Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013).

### Empirical Review

Extant literatures reviewed in relation to this work were as follows:

Wang and Yang (2015) investigated “an empirical study of employees’ tacit knowledge sharing behaviour” in China. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 400 copies structured questionnaire issued to knowledge workers on complex product development project out of which 258 copies (64.5%) were retrieved and used in the study. Both convergent and discriminant validities were carried out as well as the reliability test of the instrument using Cronbach’s Alpha value ( $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ). Structural equation modelling (SEM) was adopted to analyse the data with the aid of AMOS software. The results showed that trust, knowledge tacitness, self-efficacy and IT support have significant influence on the externalisation and internalisation of behaviours.

Muthuveloo *et al.*, (2017) studied “the impact of tacit knowledge management on organisational performance: Evidence from Malaysia.” Quantitative and cross-sectional survey design was adopted. A total of 108 copies of questionnaire obtained from respondents comprising senior managers, managers and directors of manufacturing companies both local and foreign in Malaysia were used for analysis in the study. Convergent validity, discriminant validity, factor loading and cross-loading as well as composite reliability were carried out. Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS\_SEM) was used to analyse the data. The results evidenced that tacit knowledge management has significant influence on organisational performance of manufacturing companies in Malaysia.

Wang and Li (2019) examined “an empirical investigation of the continuance intention using the bullet curtain: Synchronicity Vs information overload” in

China. The aim was to find out the enablers and inhibitors of continuance intention using Chinese bullet curtain online video websites. A total of 350 copies of questionnaire were obtained for analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) and SmartPLS 3.2 software. The results, on one hand, showed that satisfaction and continuance intention positively correlated and thus, attests to the fact synchronicity between comments and video contents leads to improved satisfaction. On the other hand, information overload creates negative association between social network fatigue and continuance intention as social network becomes intensified.

Lin *et al.*, (2019) investigated “In the eye of the beholder: Top managers’ long-term orientation, industry context and decision making processes” in semiconductor and pharmaceutical industries in China. The aim was to ascertain the importance of time perception however temporal to decision making process. The findings showed that time orientation plays crucial role in decision making process and context.

Al-Muchim (2020) investigated “the effect of tacit knowledge and organisational learning on financial performance in service industry” in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was to ascertain how tacit knowledge and organisational learning foster financial performance in Saudi Arabia. A sample of 168 copies of questionnaire was used to obtain data from Saudi’s service sector. The research instrument was validated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and its reliability also established. Data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the aid of AMOS (version 26). The results indicated that tacit knowledge and organisational learning as critical elements of knowledge management influence financial performance as they facilitate the creation of new systems to cope with continual change.

Achoki *et al.*, (2022) carried out a study on “an empirical study of factors influencing workplace tacit knowledge sharing among insurance employees in Kenya.” The aim of the study was to find ways by which employees could share their tacit knowledge to minimise colossal loss that often accompanied employees’ turnover. A cross-sectional survey design was utilised to obtain empirical data from 55 registered insurance companies. A total of 274 (71.17%) constituted the respondents for the study. Construct validity was achieved via consultation with experts in the field and Cronbach’s Alpha’s value ( $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ) was recorded. Multiple regressions with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data taking cognisance of 5% (0.05) level of significance. The outcome showed that factors such as altruism, trust, expected reciprocity and self-efficacy significantly and positively influenced workplace employees’ tacit knowledge sharing among insurance companies in the study.



Hu *et al.*, (2023) did a study on “research on the effect of ESG performance on stock price synchronicity: Empirical evidence from China’s capital markets.” The aim was to examine the effects of corporate ESG performance on stock price synchronicity of selected listed Chinese companies from 2010 – 2021 in relation to Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets. Longitudinal research design was adopted. The data analysis involved mean and median as descriptive statistics, ESG primary rating score and regression test. The results showed that ESG performance significantly improved stock price synchronicity via reduction in information asymmetry or noise reduction with the aid of corporate ESG noticeable especially in State-owned companies with high investor’s trust as opposed to privately listed companies of which synchronicity is adjudged to relatively weak.

Odero (2023) examined “Strategic direction and firm performance: Evidence from the SACCO sector” in Kenya. Quantitative and cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population consisted of 42 SACCOs engaged in deposit taking in Nairobi County. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from 126 senior managers 12 CEOs were also interviewed. A pilot survey of 4 deposit taking SACCOs in Kakamega County was carried out. Data analysis techniques included descriptive and inferential statistics using simple linear regression and content analysis in themes was used to analyse interviews. The results indicated that strategic direction setting has significant influence on SACCO performance reflected in increase in members, growth in deposit base, increase in customer satisfaction and asset growth.

**3.1 METHODOLOGY**

The influence contextual intelligence on strategic leadership of telecommunication companies in Nigeria was examined in this study. The research design was quantitative and correlational using cross-sectional surveys. The population of telecommunication companies in Nigeria was 185 comprising nine (9) major ones namely: MTN, Airtel, Globacom, 9Mobile, MainOne, Smile Nigeria, Swift Network Limited, Ntel and Spectranet out which four (4) telecommunication companies were selected based on their subscribers’ base and market share standing. Again, two (2) States out of six (6) States in the south-south region of Nigeria comprising Rivers and Akwa Ibom States remained the focus of the study. A simple random technique using ballot was adopted to select the four (4) companies. A

total of ninety (90) respondents from the rank of senior staff and above were drawn from the websites and human resource management departments of these companies and websites and Taro Yamene’s sample size determination technique was used to obtain seventy four (74) sampling units selected using purposeful and non-probabilistic sampling procedure out of which 69 copies (93% response rate) duly completed questionnaire were used in the analysis. Content and face validities were applied to research instrument graduated on Likert’s five-point scale used to obtain primary data. Empirical indicators of tacit-based knowledge were adapted from Achoki *et al.*, (2022), time orientation from (Lin *et al.*, 2019), synchronicity from (Russo-Netzer & Icekson, 2023), strategic direction from Odero (2023), and balanced organisational controls from (Zhou & Wit, 2009) all of which with some modifications. Reliability test was carried out using Cronbach’s Alpha to achieve  $\alpha \geq 0.70$ . Simple linear regression was adopted as the data analysis technique. The model specification is empirically stated as:

SD = f (TK).....Equation.....1

SD = f (S).....Equation.....2

BGC = f (TK).....Equation.....3

SD = f (TO).....Equation.....4

Where:

SD- Strategic direction

BGC- Balanced Organisational Controls

TK-Tacit Knowledge

S- Synchronicity

To- Time orientation

**4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1.1 Results**

The results showed that 74 copies of questionnaire were distributed to staff of four (4) telecommunication companies in two states of Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South- South Region of Nigeria. But 69 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and returned which formed the basis of the following analyses.

**4.1.2 Test of Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis 1**

**Table 4.1: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Tacit Knowledge on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.954 <sup>a</sup>	.911	.909	.43334	.668

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	126.136	1	126.136	671.702	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	12.394	66	.188		
	Total	138.529	67			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.249	.131		-1.903	.061
	Strategic Direction	1.034	.040	.954	25.917	.000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2023)

Table 4.1 demonstrated the strong impact of tacit knowledge—as indicated by an R<sup>2</sup>-value of .911, an F-value of 671.702, beta coefficients of .954, and a matching P-value of .000—on strategic direction in telecommunication businesses operating in South-South Nigeria. It follows that tacit knowledge accounts for 91.1% of the strategic direction changes made by telecommunications’ operators in the South-South region of Nigeria, namely in the States of Rivers and Akwa Ibom. The South-South region of Nigeria's Rivers and Akwa Ibom States are home to telecommunications enterprises. Their strategic orientation increases by 95.4% for every unit increase in tacit knowledge, as demonstrated by the beta coefficients of .954%. But because the F-value of 671.702 is less than the social

sciences' alpha value of 0.05, it is also statistically significant at .000. Since it assesses the model's suitability for managerial decision-making in connection to strategic directions and is below the social sciences' alpha threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis—which posited that tacit knowledge had no discernible impact on the strategic orientation of telecommunications companies in Nigeria's South-South—was rejected. This indicates that, in the affected States of the South-South area of Nigeria, telecommunication companies' strategic decisions are highly influenced by tacit knowledge (P<0.05).

**Hypothesis 2**

**Table 4.2: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Synchronicity on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.949 <sup>a</sup>	.900	.898	.42293	.573

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	106.195	1	106.195	593.712	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	11.805	66	.179		
	Total	118.000	67			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.337	.146		-2.305	.024
	Synchronicity	1.118	.046	.949	24.366	.000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2023)

Table 4.2 showed that synchronicity has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South region of Nigeria, as reflected in the R<sup>2</sup> -value of .900, Beta coefficients of .949, F-value of 593.712 and the corresponding P- value of .000. This means that 90.0% variation in strategic direction of telecommunication companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South region of Nigeria can be attributed to synchronicity. The beta coefficients of .949% supports this result in the sense that 1 unit increase

of synchronicity will lead to 94.9% increase in strategic direction of telecommunication companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South region of Nigeria. However, the computed F-statistics of 593.712 confirms that the model is fit for strategic directions. As a result of the statistical significance of F-value of 593.712 at .000 which falls below the alpha value of 0.05 in social sciences, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis which states that synchronicity has no significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria is rejected.

This means that synchronicity has significant influence on strategic decision of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Hypothesis 3**

**Table 4.3: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Tacit Knowledge on Balanced Organisational Controls of Telecommunication Companies in the South- South Region of Nigeria**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.958 <sup>a</sup>	.917	.916	.44644	.467

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	145.316	1	145.316	729.115	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13.154	66	.199		
	Total	158.471	67			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.334	.121		-2.758	.008
	Tacit Knowledge	1.024	.038	.958	27.002	.000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2023)

The statistical result in table 4.3 reflecting R<sup>2</sup>– value of .917, Beta coefficients of .958, F-value of 729.115 and the corresponding P- value of .000 indicated that tacit knowledge has significant influence on balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria. This indicates 91.7% variance in balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria can be attributed to the influence of tacit knowledge. The beta coefficients of .958 supports this outcome as it means that 1 unit increase of tacit knowledge will bring about 95.8% increase in balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. However, the F-statistics with the coefficients of 729.115 as computed

indicates that the model is fit for managerial decision making pertaining to balanced organisational controls. Since the F-value of 729.115 is statistically significant at .000 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 in social sciences, the null hypothesis which states that tacit knowledge has no significant influence on balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria is rejected. This means in effect that tacit knowledge has significant influence on balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Hypothesis 4**

**Table 4.4: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Time Orientation on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.912 <sup>a</sup>	.831	.829	.54918	.364

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	98.095	1	98.095	325.253	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	19.905	66	.302		
	Total	118.000	67			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.115	.173		.663	.510
	TimeOrientation	.900	.050	.912	18.035	.000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2023)

The result in table 4.4 showed that time orientation has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria, with  $R^2$ -value of .831, Beta coefficients of .912, F-value of 325.253 and the corresponding P- value of .000. This implies that 83.1% variation in strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria is accounted for by time orientation. The beta coefficients of .912% attests to this result in the sense that 91.2% increase in strategic direction of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria comes from 1 unit increase in time orientation. However, the coefficients of 325.253 deduced from the computation of the F-statistics evidences that the model id fit for both managerial and strategic decision making. Consequently, the null hypothesis which states that time orientation has no significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria was rejected because the F-value of 325.253 is statistically significant at .000 which lies below the alpha value of 0.05 in social sciences. This implies that time orientation has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria ( $P < 0.05$ ).

#### 4.2 Discussion of findings

##### **Tacit Knowledge has Significant Influence on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

The finding of hypothesis one showed that tacit knowledge has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. This means tacit knowledge has the predictive power to explain strategic direction of telecommunication companies in South-South region of Nigeria. This finding is supported by the work of Al-Muchim (2020) who discovered that tacit knowledge and organisational learning as critical elements of knowledge management influence financial performance as they facilitate the creation of new systems to cope with continual change. The finding is in agreement with the work of Kutz (2008) who opined that knowledge to which the term “tacit” prefixes has its root word as “yada” which literally means “to know” The finding further revealed that tacit knowledge is otherwise known as “unarticulated” knowledge. While explicit knowledge is easily codified and transferable for use in organisation, tacit knowledge is less so as it is highly personal and embedded in individual, difficult to formalise and express in organisational databases.

##### **Synchronicity has Significant Influence on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

The finding of hypothesis two showed that synchronicity has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. This indicated that interaction between synchronicity and strategic direction is

positively and significantly correlated. The finding is in agreement with the work of Jankowski, (2020) who stated that synchronicity is para-psychological concept describing the simultaneous occurrence of two or more distinct and acausal events which lack cause-and-effect relationship and yet, coincidentally establish a meaningful connection. This is supported by Jung (1969) who opined and described synchronicity as unpredictable occurrences of meaningful coincidence. Imperatively, synchronicity ignites the idea that the coincidence of events in both space and time has profound meaning which transcends mere chance. These events bear relationship to one another irrespective of contexts and time because of analogical connection that exists between or among them which is not quite easy to notice. The hallmarks of synchronicity have to do with innovation and creative ideas which essential ingredients include: thinking outside the box where the box refers to context, incongruity as the capacity to see things as they really are, changes in perceptions, mood and meaning in relation to the perspectives of other people around.

##### **Tacit Knowledge has Significant Influence on Balanced Organisational Controls of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

The finding of hypothesis three showed that tacit knowledge has significant influence on balanced organisational controls of telecommunication companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. This finding is in agreement the work of Robbins *et al.*, (2011) who posited that organisations are characterised by goals, people and structure and each of these elements needs to be controlled to ensure improved performance for organisations from both financial and strategic standpoints. The lack of balanced organisational controls exposes strategic leaders to difficulties in checking unethical practices, misuse of corporate resources and failure to adjust in time, corporate structures to align or fit properly with new business context. The author stated that balanced organisational controls can assume market, clan, bureaucratic approach or a combination of these and can also cut across strategic, structural, operational and financial controls by way of typology. Operationally, balanced organisational controls entail periodic checks in terms of recalling the objectives set in the planning stage, standards of performance stipulated, comparing actual performance with the set standards, determining possible variances and taking corrective actions as may be necessary. This prescription is also supported by Wheelen and Hunger (2010) who explicated that balanced organisational controls capture the financial state, customer orientations, internal business process and learning cum growth.

##### **Time Orientation has Significant Influence on Strategic Direction of Telecommunication Companies in the South-South Region of Nigeria**

The finding of hypothesis five shows time orientation has significant influence on strategic direction of telecommunication companies in the South-

South region of Nigeria. This clearly revealed that time orientation has a predictive ability to explain the relationship between the two variables. This result is in line with the finding of Kutz (2011) who state that chain of activities carried out as directed by leaders of organisations take place with due recognition of time however way it is viewed and framed. Corporate managers and leaders make series of decisions that trigger corporate actions leveraging on the past, present and future time orientations as they affect their respective organisations. The decisions make use of the recall and awareness of the past, sound understanding of the future imperatives and vivid sense of the present realities which inform alignment of hindsight, foresight and insight respectively.

## 5.1 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary of findings in this study indicates that the dimensions of contextual intelligence reflected in tacit-based knowledge, synchronicity and time orientations have significant influences on the measures of strategic leadership defined in terms of strategic direction and balanced organisational controls. This leads to the conclusion that contextual intelligence significantly influences strategic leadership of telecommunication companies in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States of the south-south region of Nigeria. Hence, the recommendations that the management of telecommunication companies in these two states of south-south region of Nigeria should leverage contextual intelligence to better and enhance their strategic leadership in their respective operational contexts.

### 6.1 Limitations of the Study

This study focused on contextual intelligence, strategic leadership and telecommunication companies to the exclusion of other forms of intelligences, leaderships and companies as well as the use of sample as opposed to the entire population. These foci constituted limitations in a way. The emphasis on two states for reasons of convenience as against six states' configuration of the south-south region of Nigeria was also another limitation.

### 7.1 Competing Interest

The researcher declares that there is no competing interest.

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