

Hybridity in Contemporary Commercial Organizations

Hybridity in Contemporary Commercial Organizations:

Implications for Employee Trust

By

Ijeoma Jacklyn Okpanum

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASL – Alter Securities Limited

BPL – Barak Petroleum Limited

CBN – Central Bank of Nigeria

CHO – Commercial hybrid Organizations

IL – Institutional logics

ILP – Institutional logics perspective

JOA – Joint operating agreement

JV – Joint venture

NNPC – Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

NSE – Nigerian Stock Exchange

OH – Organizational hybridity

PMS – Premium Motor Spirit

PSC – Production sharing contract

SEC – Securities and Exchange Commission

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Times of extensive institutional pressure challenge the existence of contemporary commercial organizations as entities that reproduce a single coherent market-orientated institutional template to achieve effectiveness (Greenwood et al., 2010; DiMaggio, 1988; Karré, 2011; Billis, 2010; Suddaby et al., 2010; Battilana et al., 2012). Indeed, “markets are constantly on the move as tastes change and advanced products and services raise expectations about future products and prices” (Snow, 2015:5). In tune with pressure from the changing markets, contemporary commercial organizations adopt various combinations of skills, templates and processes for new sources of competitive advantage (Day, 1998, 1999; Foreman and Whetten, 2002). This continuous combination of skills and processes for competitive advantage enabled the rise in the “hybridisation movement”, as postulated by Battilana et al. (2012:54). Janus-faced or multidimensional commercial organizations, which in some sense incorporate non-commercial principles, are commonly referred to as hybrid organizations (Karré, 2011; Billis, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2010; Battilana et al., 2012).

At a conceptual level, hybridisation embraces the notion that contemporary commercial organizations may embody multiple templates, logics or values to secure legitimacy and achieve effective organizational performance (Pache and Santos, 2013; Thornton, 2004; Suddaby et al., 2010; Alter, 2007; Foreman and Whetten, 2002; Haigh and Hoffman, 2012). A good number of scholars have supported the idea of hybridity, suggesting that it has the potential for generating effective outcomes for organizations. Such outcomes include making the organizations more enduring, sustainable and innovative (Kraatz and Block, 2008; Jay, 2013). However, other scholars have argued that the concept presents tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions for organizations; a state of affairs that could have adverse consequences for employees’ behaviour and trust in the organization (Pache and Santos, 2010; Pache and Santos, 2013; Karré, 2011; Mangen and Brivot, 2014; Reay and Hinings, 2009; Brandsen and Karré, 2011).

This book, therefore, explores the implications of organizational hybridity for employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations, with a view to making a contribution to theory by providing a fresh perspective for understanding individual-level responses to organizational hybridity. In particular, this is in terms of identifying, among other things, the major tensions faced by employees of these organizations. This study aims to address the gap in the literature between institutional logics and trust, by highlighting the role of religion in influencing employees' behaviour and trust in commercial hybrid organizations. Furthermore, this work addresses the gaps in knowledge relevant to organizational hybridity by extending on the frameworks of Battilana and Lee (2014), and Besharov and Smith (2014). This study extends Battilana and Lee's (2014) framework by highlighting governance, organizational culture, leadership, intra-organizational relationships and trust relations as core attributes of commercial hybrid organizations. In addition, it addresses a gap in Besharov and Smith's (2014) hybrid typology framework, showing how tensions are experienced within hybrid organizations. Finally, this study also makes practical recommendations on how to improve the overall effectiveness and performance of commercial hybrid organizations.

1.1.1 Organizational hybridity

In the literature that forms the background of this study, organizational hybridity has been characterised as: A concept developed from research and practice-based evidence for achieving effective organizational performance through the embodiment of multiple institutional logics in a unified strategy (Pache and Santos, 2013; Besharov and Smith, 2014; Battilana and Lee, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2010). The concept of organizational hybridity has attracted much scholarly attention across different disciplines in recent years (Besharov and Smith, 2014; Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Battilana and Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Karré, 2011; Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Mars and Lounsbury, 2008; Lee and Lounsbury, 2015). This growing attention in organizational studies cuts across a variety of fields including healthcare (Dunn and Jones, 2010), micro-finance (Battilana and Dorado, 2010), eco-entrepreneurship (Mars and Lounsbury, 2008), public administration (Skelcher, 2012), toxic waste (Lee and Lounsbury, 2015) and social enterprise (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Doherty et al., 2014). However, the study of hybridity in organizational studies appears to focus mainly on social enterprises (Battilana et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2013b; Doherty et al., 2014). Thus, this study attempts to advance the understanding of organizational

hybridity in the sense proposed by Boyd et al. (2009:243): “Hybrid organizations are for-profit organizations which create social value, but are mainly driven by profits and capitalist incentives.” Despite the documented challenges posed by organizational hybridity, research suggests that wider adoption of the growing concept may hold promise for effectively addressing modern-day economic, environmental and social challenges, which traditional organizational practices have increasingly failed to meet (Billis, 2010; Karré, 2011; Boyd et al., 2009).

1.1.2 The institutional logics perspective

Institutional logics appears to be one of the most promising perspectives for understanding organizational hybridity and, more specifically, for an understanding of the phenomenon that pays due attention to actors’ responses to hybridity (Binder, 2007). Institutional logics has been argued to connect meaning with action by linking internal mental cognitions to external institutions, rituals and practices, and in doing so, provide prescriptions that help actors to make sense of their social reality (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012; Greenwood et al., 2010; Thornton, 2004; Gawer and Phillips, 2013). Thus, this research adopts institutional logics as a meta-theory to explore the implications of organizational hybridity for employees’ trust in commercial hybrid organizations. An institutional logics perspective is defined in this study as the intellectual current in sociology and organization theory that places at centre stage: “The socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which organizations and individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999:804). The general direction of this research lies in showing how employees, who are exposed to multiple institutional logics within commercial hybrid organizations, make sense of, interpret and respond to these logics embodied within the organizations.

1.1.3 Organizational trust

Trust has many definitions. In an organizational context I have drawn on the definition of trust provided by Mayer et al. (1995:712): “The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” Trust in an organization has been argued to have a positive influence on

employees' workplace attitudes, behaviour, effectiveness and performance (Jones and George, 1998; Rousseau et al., 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). This is because when employees trust the organization, they are more willing to suspend doubts about it and carry out the tasks and objectives set by the leaders towards a common goal (Burke et al., 2007). Thus, trust appears to be a social imperative for the sustainability and effectiveness of contemporary (commercial hybrid) organizations (Fukuyama, 1995). However, so far, research linking organizational hybridity and institutional logics to trust appears to be scarce (Karré, 2011). Nevertheless, literature posits that institutional logics can influence individuals' behaviour (Thornton et al., 2012; Pache and Santos, 2013; Pache, 2010; Battilana, 2006; Farrell and Knight, 2003), as well as foster the development of trust (Bachmann and Inkpen, 2011; Fuglsang and Jagd, 2015). Further empirical research is required to understand how trust might be influenced by multiple logics that prescribe different values for individuals' behaviour. Moreover, very little attention has been paid to the consequences of non-market-orientated institutional logics on employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations. Hence, this study attempts to address these gaps.

1.1.4 The context of the study: Nigeria

Nigeria was chosen as the context for this study for two main reasons. Firstly, judging from my past experiences as a Nigerian who has worked in the country, the Nigerian institutional environment provides a rich context for learning about trust. Moreover, it is an environment that has suffered from a severe trust deficit in previous years (Omeje, 2006). Secondly, Nigeria is a complex, pluralistic and highly institutionalised environment in which competing logics are almost palpable. Its history reflects ongoing regional, community and religious tensions, which reveal the dominance of non-market institutional logics within the society. Thus, Nigeria exemplifies the contextual institutional elements implicit within the research purpose. Nigeria, the largest single geographical unit in West Africa, originated from the merger of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). The country consists of 36 states carved out from seven regions - the North Central, the North East, the North West, the South East, the South-South and the South West, plus the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Omeje, 2006). Like Western society as depicted by Friedland and Alford (1991), Nigeria is infused with various institutional logics derived from dominant institutions, such as the capitalist market, religion, family and community, that provide values and meaning to actors' social realities (Omeje, 2006; Ibrahim, 1991).

However, some of these institutions have been argued to fuel recurring conflicts in Nigerian society and the strong influence of factors such as religious affiliation on actors' behaviours make the Nigerian context an interesting subject of consideration in a study, like this one, informed by the institutional logics perspective. Despite the ethnic and political conflicts, even civil war, in the later decades of the 20th century, Nigeria has experienced strong economic growth in recent years, thanks to the dynamism of the private sector (Effoduh, 2014; Kolawole and Omobitan, 2014). The private sector comprises large commercial organizations alongside small- and medium-scale enterprises and self-employment of all kinds (Osemeke, 2011; Kolawole and Omobitan, 2014; Okonjo-Iweala and Osafo-Kwaako, 2007). The case studies for this research are both private sector commercial hybrid organizations, namely ASL and BPL, both of which are located in the FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In this thesis, I argue that organizational hybridity can offer a promising flexible vehicle for understanding the creation of socially and economically sustainable organizations in both developing and developed countries (Battilana et al., 2012; Boyd et al., 2009). However, despite this potential as a device for scholarly analysis, the literature shows that commercial hybrid organizations could face various tensions as a result of the embodiment of multiple logics, which may prescribe contradictory values for actions. These tensions may take the form of conflicting and mixed messages to employees (Pache and Santos, 2013). Such messages could have implications for employees' behaviour and trust in an organization, as well as affecting its overall performance in the long run.

Interestingly, social enterprise organizations emerged as the most favourable contexts for the study of organizational hybridity in recent years (Battilana et al., 2012; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2013b; Doherty et al., 2014). This tendency has generated questions regarding the theoretical assumptions surrounding the conceptualisation of organizational hybridity. Researchers such as Besharov and Smith (2014) have argued that the focus on social enterprise is inadequate for advancing the understanding of organizational hybridity. The focus neglects the potential research interest of a broader spectrum of hybrid organizations and their distinguishing dimensions, such as commercial hybrid organizations which are more market focused (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Smith et al., 2013b). By analysing the dynamics of organizational hybridity across a broader spectrum of hybrid organizations,

we may get a better understanding of the concept, the tensions posed by hybridity, and how employees working within these organizations make sense of, interpret and respond to the multiple logics prescribed to them. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to understand the implications of organizational hybridity for employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations, with a view to making both theoretical and practical recommendations.

1.3 Research Questions

Yin (2003) suggests that robust research questions guide the research process and methodology, helping the researcher decide upon the type of data required, how best to collect it and the particular focus that the analysis will take. However, while it is important to know what one is looking for (see Table 2), this initial focus should not divert attention from other unanticipated questions that are perhaps more attractive, relevant or manageable than the initial one(s) (Bryman, 2012). The process of developing the research questions (see Table 1) and the research propositions (see Table 3) was based on an extensive review of the literature on organizational hybridity, institutional logics and organizational trust. The research questions were formulated to address the overall research aim, identify objectives of the research and guide the empirical research. The questions were improved by discussions with specialists in the field during conferences and workshops. The questions were revised throughout all phases of the research to ensure that the aim and objectives were achieved.

Table 1: Primary and Supporting Research Questions

Primary research question:
What are the implications of organizational hybridity for employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations?
Supporting research questions:
1. To what extent does organizational hybridity influence specific attributes of commercial hybrid organizations?
2. What role does religion play in influencing employees' behaviour and shaping other organizational attributes of commercial hybrid organizations?
3. How does organizational hybridity affect the level of employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations?
4. How can employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations be sustained for improved effective organizational performance?

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives and Propositions

The overall aim of this research and the research objectives are summarised in Table 2, while the key research propositions are depicted in Table 3.

Table 2: Research Aim and Objectives

Overall research aim:
The aim of this research is to understand the implications of organizational hybridity for employees' trust in the commercial hybrid organization.
Research objectives:
1. To explore the influence of organizational hybridity on specific organizational attributes including governance, leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure and intra-organizational relationships of commercial hybrid organizations.
2. To understand the influence of non-market-orientated institutional logics on commercial hybrid organizations.
3. To shape an understanding of the implications of organizational hybridity for employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations, with particular attention to those implications having a plausible relationship to organizational effectiveness.
4. To develop research-based recommendations for sustaining employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations.

Table 3: Key Research Propositions

Propositions:
1. The more extensive the tensions associated with organizational hybridity, the greater the likelihood of negative behavioural responses by employees.
2. The greater the tensions produced by multiple logics, the less likely it becomes that employees of commercial hybrid organizations will trust their organizations.
3. The greater the employees' trust in commercial hybrid organizations, the more effective the organizational performance.
4. The stronger the employees' affiliations to religious logics, the greater the influence of such logics on employees' behaviour and trust in commercial hybrid organizations.

1.5 Research Strategy and Design

Research can be designed and conducted using various methods and approaches. According to Yin (2003), the appropriateness of a particular research strategy is dependent on the type of investigation. The early stages of this study established that the most important issue to consider was that of determining the best context in which to conduct the study. The key findings from the early literature review revealed that it was essential to carry out the study in a context that best suits the research aim and objectives. The Nigerian institutional environment was selected for this research for the reasons detailed in Section 1.1.4 and Chapter 4.

To answer the research questions shown in Table 1, I conducted an exploratory investigation using qualitative research methods. Owing to the lack of previous studies, it was clear that a qualitative case-study research design was the most appropriate strategy for this study (see Section 4.3.1 The case-study design). A multiple case-study design was chosen for this research, as it would allow the opportunity for a holistic and comparative analysis of the research context. This approach has been used in many fields of social science research and by several researchers (Grix, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Bryman and Bell, 2011). A qualitative case-study research design was appropriate since it provides an excellent opportunity to explore and understand the subjective experiences of the participants. The two case organizations selected for this study – ASL and BPL – were chosen using Besharov and Smith's (2014) framework. This framework was utilised in this study to analyse and assess the nature of hybridity in both organizations.

The initial intention was to select four hybrid organizations operating in Nigeria's private sector that were consistent with Besharov and Smith's hybrid typology. However, due to limited resources and time restrictions, only two hybrid criteria were met: the contested hybrid type and the dominant hybrid type. The detailed justifications for the case-study selection are discussed in Section 3.7 and further detailed in Section 4.3.3. Data collection was undertaken using semi-structured interviews. This research method was chosen based on my interest in the interviewees' subjective interpretations of reality, views and experiences within a naturalistic organizational setting. A total of 20 interviewees were recruited heterogeneously across different levels of the employment hierarchy, including top management executives, middle managers and employees from each of the organizations (ASL and BPL). This was achieved through purposive and snowball sampling. A total of 40 interviews were conducted

from both organizations. The estimated duration of each interview was one hour, and data was analysed and interpreted using a thematic approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Grix, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Bryman and Bell, 2011; Blaikie, 2009; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Also, online documents from the websites of both companies were analysed for additional information.

1.6 Research Process

Research, as defined by Patton (2002:32), is “a systemic process of enquiry whose goal is communicable knowledge”. As Yin (2003:21) affirms: “Unless research activity has been carefully planned, data analysis made through established protocols and an effort to disseminate knowledge [made]...it cannot be classed as research.”

Reflecting on the above definition, the research process was planned and structured into six continuous, interlinked, reflective and progressive phases, as follows:

1. The initial phase involved an extensive review of literature, analysing current knowledge on the topic and identifying any gaps therein. This phase is presented in Chapter 2.
2. The second phase focused on the formulation of the research problem, questions, propositions and identification of the research context (the Nigerian institutional environment). The conclusion of the first and second phases established the philosophical, theoretical and methodological framework for the study. The second phase is presented in Chapter 3.
3. The third phase is linked to the outcome of the second phase and entailed the development of the empirical research strategy, projecting the conduct of fieldwork, data collection and selecting appropriate techniques for analysis. This phase is presented in Chapter 4.
4. The fourth phase included the fieldwork, using qualitative methods for data collection strategies, namely semi-structured interviews and a review of company documents. This phase is also detailed in Chapter 4.
5. The fifth phase included the analysis and interpretation of the data from both organizations, which included categorising the data into themes and coding. This stage is presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

6. The final phase summarised the research findings, including making a synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, drawing conclusions, and formulating recommendations.

1.7 Scope of the Study

To answer the focal research question of “What are the implications of organizational hybridity for employees’ trust in commercial hybrid organizations?” a multiple case-study approach was employed. However, owing to geographical, technical, time, and human and financial resource limitations, the study was focused on only two case studies: ASL and BPL.

The study was constrained by a number of factors, the most important of which were as follows. Firstly, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the activities and performance of commercial hybrid organizations. More so, most of the research on organizational hybridity is based on social enterprises, and the dimensions of organizational hybridity are not well established empirically. Secondly, most of the research investigating organizational hybridity builds on the organizational level of analysis. Thus, there is limited research on individual-level responses to organizational hybridity based on the institutional logics perspective. Furthermore, there is limited literature on organizational hybridity and institutional logics in the Nigerian context. Thirdly, there were delays and difficulties in obtaining approval from case organizations and the timing of the interviews coincided with the suppression of the insurgency (Boko Haram) in the FCT of Nigeria. The restrictions involved in this emergency made movement within the city difficult. Finally, conducting the interviews within the workplace was very stressful for some of the employees, because of the nature of their jobs.

To address these theoretical limitations, a literature review was conducted drawing on a vast body from independent fields such as institutional theory, corporate governance and strategic management. Furthermore, caution was taken during fieldwork, which included scheduling multiple interviews per day and pre-informing the interviewees about the interviews to avoid unnecessary movements around the city. Also, breaks were given to the interviewees when required, to minimise stress. Details of how these limitations were addressed are further discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 8.

1.8 Rationale and Contributions of the Research

The limited understanding of the concept of organizational hybridity from an institutional logics perspective, especially with particular reference to its implications for understanding employees' trust in the organizations operating in developing countries, provides a compelling rationale for this research. The significance of this study is essentially theoretical as it provides a fresh perspective for understanding individual-level responses to organizational hybridity. In addition, it highlights, among other things, how employees of commercial hybrid organizations experience tensions. Specifically, this study attempts to revive religion as an important institution that strongly influences behaviour at the individual level of analysis; therefore, this is an element that should not be ignored in organizational trust literature. Furthermore, this study contributes to existing knowledge, embodied in the literature relevant to organizational hybridity and the tensions it presents for contemporary organizations, by extending Battilana and Lee's (2014) and Besharov and Smith's (2014) frameworks, which should be of interest to researchers in hybrid organizations. The study provides a different perspective to understand organizational hybridity by highlighting governance, leadership, organizational culture, intra-organizational relations and trust relations as core attributes of commercial hybrid organizations where tensions are likely to occur. However, it also has a practical intent and the recommendations may be of interest to practising managers.

Further reasons why the study is justified and significant are summarised below.

1. This study advances knowledge on organizational hybridity by focusing on another spectrum of it: commercial hybrid organizations. This knowledge could help yield research-based knowledge aimed at developing strategies for the effectiveness and sustainability of these organizations.
2. This study contributes to understanding the relationship between organizational hybridity and trust. Most importantly, it explores the links between institutional logics and trust. Furthermore, it contributes to the very limited knowledge on the role of non-market-orientated institutional logics, such as religious logics, in influencing employees' behaviours and trust in commercial hybrid organizations. Thus, it could help these organizations to understand how to sustain employees' trust.

3. The research contributes to existing knowledge on organizational hybridity by exploring the individual level of analysis – more specifically, individual responses to organizational hybridity. It focuses on the continent of Africa – more specifically Nigeria, which is an environment that is often ignored in management and organizational research.
4. The findings and recommendations from this study, as well as the research methodology, can be used as a reference and point of departure for studies in a similar contextual background. The data and information gathered through this research may suggest and inform future studies.

1.9 Summary of Empirical Findings

This study makes a significant contribution to knowledge, with the key empirical findings as follows.

Firstly, organizational hybridity may lead commercial hybrid organizations to use flexibility in adopting distinctive attributes in relation to governance, leadership and organizational culture, which may trigger various degrees of tension. These tensions may result in both positive and negative behavioural responses by the employees. Regarding the positive responses, the data showed that organizational hybridity may have triggered a high level of trust in the organizations and the subsequent progressive behavioural responses from the employees (see Figure 19). However, the data also unveiled a paradoxical effect. Specifically, organizational hybridity may have also triggered distrust in the organizations and the subsequent retrogressive behavioural responses from the employees (see Figure 20). These negative behavioural responses emerged in the form of employee disengagement, opportunism, insubordination and resignation, which may have affected the overall performance of the commercial hybrid organizations.

Secondly, the data also showed that non-market-orientated institutional logics, such as religious logics, played a role in influencing positive employee behaviours in terms of commitment, honesty and trust; and, conversely, it may also promote unethical behaviours such as bribery and corruption (see Section 7.4.1d The influence of religion on employees' behaviours). Finally, the overall findings pointed to the need to sustain employees' trust, which may be achieved through involving the employee in decision-making and clearly communicating organizational values and goals to them to avoid misinterpretation of multiple logics.