

Firm Size: The Role of Learning Organization

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Abstract

Learning organization is vital to the development of any Nation, because of its capacity to enhance skill development, decision making capabilities, and knowledge. Hence learning organization's is a slogan for achievement and sustainability in an organization. A lucrative organization is an organization that devote with utmost intentionality in continuous learning and job enrichment (Budhiraja, 2022). The wide deficiency broadly spread in Nigerian SMEs in employing and utilizing the dimensions of learning organization which has birthed below the benchmark achievement of their business hence the gap in the study. SMEs in Nigeria have been tagged has having a barrier to success, and bankruptcy due to various dangerous issues, including firm size. Cross-sectional survey method was utilized based on the ability to capture a singular mark in time, acquiring info from a group at a single point and matching participants, and a simple random sampling technique was employed due to its suitability for homogeneous demography gives members of the sample the liberty to be selected. Also, the validity of all scales was established using confirmatory analysis, which demonstrated satisfactory reliability. The study utilized SmartPLS version 4.0 in the execution of the algorithm and bootstrapping using a two-tailed technique. The findings from the analysis using structural equation modelling indicate that the dimensions of a learning organisation have a symbolic influence on the size of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The implication of the findings is that the findings will assist management in diagnosing and systemizing strategies to address the persistent challenge that has hindered the industry's progress over time. It will also help them in achieving the organisational goals, gaining a competitive edge, and preparing for the uncertainties and dynamic nature of the business landscape.

Keywords: Firm size, Learning Organization, Nigeria, Business.

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1. Introduction and Background to Study

Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) performs a compelling role in the global context, serving as a fundamental foundation for the growth, development, and enhancement of economies. They are pivotal in shaping a nation's economic structure and act as catalysts for socio-economic transformation, including the process of industrialization (Ionescu et al., 2011; Matthews et al., 2017). In the context of diverse economies, small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) enacts a compelling role in facilitating technological advancements and fostering entrepreneurial skills within critical sectors of society. Additionally, SMEs serve as the primary catalyst for the extensive development of new products and processes (Small & Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria and National Bureau of Statistic, 2017).

Bearing in mind the ample and beneficial input injected by the SMEs into various economies, it is still pegged internationally that the attainment of SMEs are not yet at par with expectation, owing to various unanticipated and unexpected circumstances and predominated dilemmas that have plagued the SMEs which has caused numerous SMEs a toll of hardship in surviving the brutal business environment coupled with weighty contention with the various dilemmas that has plagued the sector, dampening firm size (PwC, 2020; Matthews et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, SMEs enterprises are yet to rise to become the vital determinant of a nation's comprehensive economic texture, as their performances are still below the benchmark (Ionescu et al., 2011). Notwithstanding, the dilemmas plaguing SMEs have been noticed to vary from nation to nation and geographical context to geographical context, owing probably to variations in concepts and geographical factors (PwC, 2020). The shelf life on an average for SMEs in the US is pegged at five years, because of the numerous setbacks plaguing SMEs (Okafor & Daferighe, 2019). Unequivocally, a total of 25% survives for more than a space of 10 years, which translates to a sum of 50% collapse within 5 years of inception, all due to the brutal business environment, absence of strategic leadership, coercion, unpredictability and the international economic down plunge (Quansah et al., 2022).

The stature of SMEs in Nigeria is not too farfetched from that of other nations, as the case of SMEs in Nigeria can be categorically construed as in a state of respiratory distress, where vitality remains uncertain, rendering them indeterminate in terms of their state of existence or mortality (Pulka et al., 2021). The causes of the current state of SMEs in Nigeria are lack of skilled labour, high death rate, poor human capacity, lack of

training, economic down plunge and growth barriers (Audu, 2022; Ekren et al., 2022; Iloh & Nosiri, 2022; Johnny & Simeon, 2012; Olujide, 2022; Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2020; PwC, 2020). Firms are conceptualized as small, medium or extensive, with respect to total assets according to (Rashid et al., 2021). However, any change in size that is seen as a change in an upward direction in the size of such firm will propel into a positive response from investors, and eventually yield an increment in organization value. Hence the reason to visualize firm size as a performance measurement (Hirdinis, 2019). In lieu of this nonetheless, firm size in itself has some parameters with which it can be construed and measured, such as; number of employees, market value, total capital and sales (Farooq et al., 2021; Ha et al., 2020; Karlsson, 2020). Firm sizes differ from geographical context to geographical context, and can be ascertained through revenue, sales, number of employees and total assets (Zhou et al., 2021).

Learning organization (LO) surfaced in the 90s, in the literatures of Senge; 'the fifth discipline' (Durrah et al., 2018). The construct of (LO) has exasperated the inquisitiveness both that of the academic and practitioners, due to the regular study endeavours within recent years, in order to claim competitive advantage, and heighten firm achievement (Kiani & Gillani, 2014). The notion of a learning organisation is primarily grounded in the pasture of management, namely within the realms of Human Resource Development, Management, and Organisational Behaviour. The concept of a (LO) is characterised by the acquisition, generation, and promulgation of knowledge in order to facilitate progress (Kiani & Gillani, 2014; Y. Kim & Han, 2015; Malik & Garg, 2017a). Learning organization has attained the scale of a watchword for firm success and durable viability, because learning organization is pegged at utmost relevance in developing nations, due to its aid in skill improvement and decision-making capacity (Bhaskar & Mishra, 2017; Malik & Garg, 2017a). Learning organization is widely used across businesses, with specification on businesses trying to make headway in an aggressive space (Hussein et al., 2016).

According to the idea of human capital theory, it is argued that the stocks of human capital should be given same consideration as other types of output. The literature indicates that expenditure in employee learning capacity, within the confluence of training and education to enhance their skills, have the potential to generate productive outcomes in the long term for economies, organisations, and individuals (Dobbins et al., 2014; Fix, 2018; Gillies, 2017; Marginson, 2019; Tan, 2014). Weatherly (2003) states, as referenced by Pasban and Nojedeh (2016), the perception of human capital encompasses a range of attributes that individuals allocate towards their professional development, such as life skills, knowledge, creativity, innovation, and energy. The concept of human capital theory encompasses the notion that training and acquiring skills inside an organisation may be seen as an investment that enhances productivity, the wages of workers, and future job opportunities (Dobbins et al., 2014; Gillies, 2017; Tan, 2014).

This work provides significant additions to the existing scope of knowledge. This investigation use human capital theory to explore the impact of investments in workers on the performance of companies, specifically focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria. The study examines the learning organisation of company size in Nigerian SMEs. Furthermore, our work contributes to the current body of information about the relationship between firm size and learning organisations, as well as their respective dimensions. Our research provides empirical data about the correlation between firm size and the concept of a learning organisation. This research has significant implications for decision makers in organisations about the management of workers' continual knowledge acquisition. Additionally, it aids in developing a more comprehensive conceptualization of the contextual effects of learning organisations and the size of firms.

2. Hypothesis Development

2.1 Firm Size

According to Atmaja (2008), as referenced by Zuhroh (2019), the concept of company size is defined as a measure that classifies the magnitude of a business using several indicators, including total assets, logarithmic size, stock market value, and total sales. However, in contrast, Zuhroh (2019) pegged firm size in respect of descriptions of the number of assets a firm hold, with assets comprising of sales, profit level funds available for operational cost. In line with Zuhroh (2019), Horne & Wachowicz (2009), cited in Hirdinis (2019), ascertained that firm size mirrors the size or amount of assets owned by the firm. Leal-Rodri'guez et al. (2015), quoted in Farooq et al. (2021), sees firm size as an institution's resources, turnover or workforce size. Firm size influences the export capability, in ways such as, the larger the firm, the larger the volume of export, and otherwise, when the size is small (Ha et al., 2020). Firm size is a vital element that makes significant effect on an organisation's economic, investment, and financial decisions (Rashid et al., 2021). Larger firms, in comparison to smaller firms, holds a better attitude towards risk, possess the ability to expand to the global market, enjoy the scope and scale of economies, minimize the cost of production, and seamless management of shock (Farooq et al., 2021; Ha et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2021). To guide this study, firm size is an organisation's resources, turnover, or workforce size.

2.2 Learning Organization (LO)

The notion of (LO) has garnered considerable attention within the realm of management. Nevertheless, the topic is mostly examined within the domains of Human Resource Development, Management, and Organisational Behaviour. The field under consideration is distinguished by its emphasis on the procurement, generation, and circulation of information with the aim of advancing knowledge and understanding (Yoonjeong Kim & Han, 2015; Malik & Garg, 2017a). The emergence of the notion of the learning organisation may be traced back to the early 1990s, as shown by Senge's exploration of this theory and its practical implementation in his book titled "The Fifth Discipline" (Durrah et al., 2018). The concept described above has attracted considerable attention from both academic researchers and professionals in the field. This is evident from the continuous research endeavours in recent years that aim to leverage this concept as a strategy for attaining competitive advantage and exceptional organisational performance (Kiani & Gillani, 2014; Malik & Garg, 2017a).

The concept of (LO) is widely used in the business sector, especially by companies striving to maintain their competitiveness in a challenging market (Hussein et al., 2016). The concept of a (LO) has been shown to contribute to the enhancement of workers' technical knowledge, increased dedication to organisational goals, and enhanced firm output (Dekoulou & Trivellas, 2015). Consequently, the adoption of a (LO) approach is expected to result in overall organisational improvement. The conceptualization of the (LO) by Wakins and Marsick encompasses seven dimensions, namely continuous learning, team learning and collaboration, embedded system, strategic leadership, inquiry and dialogue, empowerment, and system connection (Bhaskar & Mishra, 2017; Boccia & Cseh, 2021; Chawla & Lenka, 2015; Ellinger et al., 2002; Hussein et al., 2016; Yoonjeong Kim & Han, 2015; Kyoung Park, Hoon Song, Won Yoon, & Kim, 2014; Malik & Garg, 2017b; Milic et al., 2017; Pokharel & Ok Choi, 2015; Salehzadeh et al., 2014; Song et al., 2018; Subiyakto, Widyanti, and Basuki, 2020; Xie, 2020; Yin Yin Lau et al., 2022). Therefore, it has been deemed acceptable for inclusion in this research. According to Marsick and Watkins, the concept of a (LO) is seen as the fundamental essence of every company that aspires to achieve progress.

2.3 Continuous learning

The concept of continuous learning (CL) is not a recent paradox, but rather an increasingly significant aspect in the promotion of lifelong learning and the integration of both formal and informal educational possibilities (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019; Näykki et al., 2021). The pursuit of continuous learning has become an essential aspect of human existence, as it is necessary for ensuring a stable future and adapting to the ever-growing commerce (Chukowry et al., 2021). The company, thence, endeavours to foster a culture of ongoing learning in order to provide learning chances for all personnel (Hussein et al., 2016). Procedural memory, which serves as the basis for the implementation of a (CL) strategy, is acquired through the establishment of formations and systems within firms. This involves the development of standardised established ways and mechanisms for managing interactions with customers, suppliers, partners, and long-term workers within a specific sector (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2020).

The adoption of (CL) as a cultural norm inside an organisation yields significant advantages for the organization's learning endeavours. However, the capacity to engage in continuous learning seems to be contingent upon the presence of support systems that inform individuals about motivation, opportunity, and resources for learning (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019). Organisations that strategically allocate resources to enhance employee knowledge and implement interventions to foster continuous learning and empower employees, thereby improving task performance, are more likely to achieve sustained success in their operations (Budhiraja, 2022; Chukowry et al., 2021). While this kind of learning may include some formal training that offers credits and sometimes certifications, it is often seen as a mindset and an informal learning method. Continuous learning, in contrast, perceives workers or people as intrinsically driven, self-directed, and proactive persons who see self-improvement as an essential element of their own growth. According to the study conducted by Näykki et al. (2021).

Continuous learning denotes a circumstance where individuals can update their skills and knowledge frameworks to respond to new ideas, allowing them to function effectively and adjust to changes (Sánchez-Polo et al., 2019). Malik & Garg (2017a, 2017b) posited that continuous learning represents an organisation's effort to offer continuing education and growth opportunities. Furthermore, continuous learning is an environment where employees can grow, change, adapt, and take charge of their decisions (Laeque & Babar, 2015). The quantification of continuous learning poses challenges due to its ongoing nature and broad scope, including a wide range of subjects and activities (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019). The ability to take calculated risks for the survival of the company will undoubtedly improve human capital quality and capability, effectiveness, creativity, discovering and sustaining competitive advantage, along with product innovation performance, skill enhancement, and positive response to change, as a result of engaging employees in continuous learning. (Arsalan, 2014; Hannachi, 2016; Kiani & Gillani, 2014; Malik & Garg, 2017a, 2020).

H1: Continuous learning has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.4 Team learning and Collaboration

In order to remain competitive in the current business environment characterised by a wealth of information, organisations depend on the skills of team learning. Consequently, significant efforts have been undertaken in the last twenty years to get a comprehensive understanding of team learning (Wiese & Burke, 2019). Therefore, the productivity and innovation achievements of an organisation are contingent upon its ability to transition from individual work units to teamwork, therefore necessitating cooperation and collaboration (Hannachi, 2016). The concept of teamwork is pervasive within organisational settings. It is well recognised that the learning experiences of individual team members may be influenced by the emotional reactions of their fellow teammates. In order for teams to function optimally, it is essential that team members actively participate in the process of collective learning (Watzek et al., 2019). Accordingly, in the face of a high degree of complexity in their tasks, team members have a greater capacity for efficient learning compared to individual learners (Duan et al., 2022). According to Watzek et al. (2019), a team consists of a minimum of two persons that engage in interactions, possess shared objectives, and collaborate on activities that need interdependence for successful completion. Teams may be seen as social entities that exist inside larger organisational systems. They are characterised by many aspects of social interaction, such as the sharing of shared goals and a reliance on one another to achieve the overall objectives of the company (Watzek & Mulder, 2019).

The idea that a teaching process like team learning is readily observable leads to the difficulty in explaining it; nonetheless, team learning is cyclical because it is a psychological orientation. (Stewart, Dalsky & Tajino, 2019). Team learning sometimes arises as a consequence of collaborative efforts focused on a specific task (Stewart et al., 2019).

Collaboration within teams is not a random occurrence, but rather a result of intentional endeavours to communicate ideas and coordinate actions. Through socialisation and discourse among teammates, mutual understanding is fostered, leading to the development of shared cognition. Researchers have highlighted the intricate characteristics of the learning process as a direct outcome of the phenomenon of globalisation. This worldwide trend has led to the establishment of collaborative relationships between enterprises across national borders, therefore exerting an influence on their internal structures (Yeo, 2020).

Senge proposes that team learning and collaboration are key aspects within an organisation, whereby people work together towards a shared goal with the intention of acquiring knowledge and skills (Hansen et al., 2020). The act of enhancing various aspects via the exchange of skills, insight, experience, and knowledge is not a fixed procedure (Hutasuhut et al., 2021). This is attributed to the presence of a collective vision (Chawla & Lenka, 2015; Meshari et al., 2021). The phenomenon in which team members improve their expertise by obtaining new skills and information via experiential learning is referred to as team learning (Duan et al., 2022). According to Yang and Chen (2005), as referenced in the study conducted by Hutasuhut et al. (2021), team learning can be described as a dynamic procedure wherein team members collaborate, exchange feedback, adapt, enhance, and modify their behaviours with the aim of improving their competencies and acquiring innovative knowledge.

The facilitation of team learning and collaboration serves to enhance group work activities via the utilisation of diverse cognitive approaches, hence fostering optimal levels of cooperation (Kiani & Gillani, 2014). In support of this interpretation, Malik and Garg (2020) expressed the view that the implementation of team learning and collaboration within an organisation reflects its commitment to fostering a collective environment and facilitating team members' exposure to various cognitive perspectives. Nevertheless, although TLC places its emphasis on the communal learning process of workers, it also underscores the contemplative dimension of learning (Yin Yin Lau et al., 2020). In the realm of education, team learning is a charismatic and multifaceted practice that encompasses a range of activities, including the exchange of knowledge, collective introspection, and the organisation and retrieval of information. These activities are characterised by their number, quality, and the common understanding that emerges among team members (Watzek & Mulder, 2019). Hence, this research emphasises the importance of team learning and cooperation, which is a dynamic process whereby team members engage in cooperative efforts, provide and collect responses, adapt, improve their skills, and modify their style to better their capacities and acquire new information.

H2: Team learning and collaboration has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.5 Embedded Systems

The embedded system refers to the mechanism through which organisations acquire, retain, and disseminate information, skills, and practises across various levels of management (Hannachi, 2016; Hussein et al., 2016; Wang, 2020). Embedded systems play a vital role in aiding the procurement and promulgation of knowledge, enabling people to efficiently access and get the necessary information at any given time (Oh & Koo, 2021). The possession of employee knowledge is of utmost importance for businesses as it enables them to sustain a competitive advantage vis-à-vis their competitors (Zammit et al., 2017).

In the contemporary global marketplace, institutions that possess the ability to produce products with

superior quality, staying power, and performance, while simultaneously reducing costs and expediting time-to-market, are more likely to gain a competitive advantage. This advantage can be facilitated through the effective utilisation, reutilization, and management of information acquired from suppliers, as well as through the maintenance of comprehensive records of past accomplishments and the adoption of innovative technologies (Hicks et al., 2002). However, the process of collecting and extracting information is not a straightforward task (Mourtzis & Doukas, 2014). The acquisition of information is often challenging due to its reliance on experiential learning, sometimes referred to as tacit knowledge, which poses difficulties in its effective transmission to others (Serkan et al., 2008; Zammit et al., 2017).

When an organisation seeks to enhance its performance, it is essential to establish mechanisms for the collection and preservation of data. Additionally, the organisation should develop a system that facilitates the dissemination of accumulated knowledge among its employees (Meshari et al., 2021). This practise of capturing and sharing knowledge is crucial for promoting continuous improvement and preventing the recurrence of past errors (Tan et al., 2006). Inability to take proactive measures in completing necessary tasks may lead to the loss of valuable knowledge and information. This loss may occur due to delays in collecting knowledge, turnover of staff members, and individuals' reluctance to share their experience (Tan et al., 2006). However, the utilisation of embedded systems facilitates the acquisition, dissemination, and reutilization of information (Fazekas, 2021; Kools et al., 2019; Malik & Garg, 2017a).

The acquisition of knowledge should occur in a collaborative setting, in which real-time data is gathered throughout the execution and presentation of a project, experiment, or method. To facilitate its future utilisation, a template should be used that enhances the reusability of the obtained knowledge. This need is the reason for the implementation of embedded systems, as highlighted by Tan et al. (2006). The establishment of a systematic approach to collecting insights is of utmost importance in the development of a sustainable and widely accessible knowledge base. It is essential that this documentation goes beyond a mere set of rules and instead include a framework for strategic planning that can be effectively managed and customised (Park, 2003). Nevertheless, it is essential to include low-tech technologies into an embedded system in order to optimise its efficiency for examination purposes, namely via focused group discussions (Meshari et al., 2021).

In contexts where embedded systems are implemented, the employee's sense of value becomes a prominent factor, leading to the activation of organisational citizenship behaviour. This, in turn, has a positive impact on job engagement, the quality of innovations generated, and the pace at which innovations are brought to market (Hannachi, 2016; Milić et al., 2017). Furthermore, it has been suggested by Hicks et al. (2002) that it also contributes to the process of decision-making and enhances the overall performance of a business. In the context of this project, an embedded system is being used to develop frameworks, protocols, and mechanisms for the purpose of acquiring and disseminating knowledge and information.

H3: Embedded Systems and collaboration has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.6 Strategic Leadership

Nyong'a and Maina (2019) argue that ineffective leadership is a substantial obstacle that hinders an organization's progress and achievement of its goals. In support of this notion, Chanpoom and Intrawong (2019) assert that the capacity to effectively use motivation as a means of influencing people and organisations to collaborate towards the attainment of shared objectives is a vital facet of leadership that enhances work efficacy and efficiency. The demand for effective leadership styles that can adeptly address the challenges posed by the dynamic nature of processes, navigate uncertainty, and develop successful strategies in an ever-changing world is heightened by the fluctuating conditions prevalent in the realm of business, there exists a distinctive set of characteristics that define its environment, including vaporization, ambivalence, intricacy, and anagram. Strategic leadership is one such leadership style that has been identified as being capable of fulfilling these requirements (Hidiroğlu, 2020).

Strategic leadership has emerged as a dominant force within governmental, commercial, and economic entities, both on a global and local scale. Consequently, it has become a subject of utmost importance for individuals and organisations, as highlighted by Abu Mostafa et al. (2021). This prominence stems from its emphasis on individuals who bear primary responsibility for the functioning and success of the organisation, as noted by Samimi et al. (2022). Strategic leadership entails the ability to adapt to change, and as the magnitude of changes increases, the need for effective leadership becomes even more crucial (Nyong'a & Maina, 2019). Strategic leadership is considered to be a key factor within the framework of a learning organisation, as highlighted by Birdthistle and Fleming (2005). The consolidation of many components and elements inside a learning organisation is a significant factor (Prause & Venesaar, 2011). This particular leadership style is characterised by its ability to effectively navigate ambiguity and anticipate the future trajectory of businesses (Hidiroğlu, 2020). According to Nyong'a and Maina (2019), strategic leadership encompasses the ability to inspire, engage, motivate, and mobilise a team in order to effectively achieve desired strategic and organisational

goals.

Strategic leadership pertains to the use of acquired knowledge by executives in order to instigate transformation and guide the firm towards novel trajectories or burgeoning enterprises (Birdthistle & Fleming, 2005). The concept promotes comprehensive and continuous learning procedures that are strategically focused on enhancing corporate performance and outcomes (Dirani, 2006; Hannachi, 2016; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Song et al., 2009). According to Birdthistle and Fleming (2005), the statement suggests that managers strategically use learning in order to achieve business goals, while leaders serve as role models, advocates, and promoters of learning inside the organisation. Similarly, strategic leadership encompasses the practise of delegating tasks to subordinates and encompasses the leader's ability to anticipate, conceptualise, and adapt to facilitate the initiation of strategic transformations as required (Nyong'a & Maina, 2019). Similarly, strategic leadership refers to the managerial capacity to effectively communicate a strategic vision for the organisation or a particular department within the company, while also inspiring and exerting influence on others to embrace and implement this vision (Chanpoom & Intrawong, 2019). From an alternative perspective, strategic leadership may be defined as a leadership approach that places emphasis on the ability to envisage future outcomes, cultivate adaptability, and collaborate with others to facilitate necessary strategic transformations (Abu Mostafa et al., 2021). Furthermore, this study aims to enhance the coherence and congruence of the conceptualization of strategic leadership within the context of a learning organisation, as included by the scope of this research. Hence, the term "organisational leadership" encompasses the deliberate actions undertaken by a leader to facilitate continuous learning, see the potential of learning to instigate transformation, steer the organisation towards novel ventures, and ultimately improve overall organisational effectiveness.

Strategic leadership emerges as a response to the need for efficient accomplishment and delivery of tasks, which are often constrained by time limitations and inherent difficulties (Hidiroğlu, 2020). Nevertheless, the many managerial responsibilities necessary for the execution of the strategy are integral components of the process of strategic leadership. These jobs include the establishment of strategic controls aimed at monitoring progress and ultimately achieving the organisational goals (Nyong'a & Maina, 2019). Hence, it can be said that strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in determining the achievement of an organisation (Chanpoom & Intrawong, 2019). Moreover, it is important for strategic leaders to oversee the organization's capacity to enhance value and respond to internal and external changes (Alkheyi et al., 2020).

The objective of strategic leadership is to construct an optimal and appropriate vision that aligns with strategic intents within a relevant organisational culture, while also fostering the development of personnel. This approach is marked by the promotion of values, ethics, innovation, and adaptability (Abu Mostafa et al., 2021). By effectively incorporating the strategic leadership style into firm procedures, strategic leaders has the ability to exert influence over all individuals within the firm, hence enhancing employee performance via the cultivation of a strong sense of dedication towards the company's objectives (Hidiroğlu, 2020). According to Chanpoom and Intrawong (2019), it is imperative for strategic leaders to possess a range of essential qualities and skills. These include a heightened level of cognoscible activity, proficiency in conceptual thinking, the capacity to contemplate future scenarios, transformative thinking abilities, proficiency in product or service design, expertise in market research, the ability to determine industry boundaries, and the skill to create a compelling vision. In order to provide direction for this research, strategic leadership may be defined as a systematic approach used by the leader of an organisation to facilitate continuous learning, assess the potential impact of learning on driving change, steer the business towards new ventures or growing markets, and ultimately improve overall organisational performance.

H4: Strategic Leadership has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.7 Inquiry and Dialogue (ID)

In accordance with the assertions of multiple authors and their widespread adoption, inquiry and dialogue (ID) are deliberate strategies employed by organisations to foster a culture of inquiry, expression of opinions, receipt of feedback, and experimentation (Kiani & Gillani, 2014; Lim et al., 2019; Murphy et al., 2017; Narzary & Palo, 2020; Tunyi, 2019; Yin Yin Lau et al., 2020). Moreover, the process of inquiry encompasses several cognitive activities such as curiosity, speculation, questioning, experimentation, challenging, investigation, analysis, conjecture, and imagination (Bound, 2010). In a similar vein, there is a prevailing argument that inquiry and dialogue constitute an integral aspect of institutional culture, fostering a climate of questioning, feedback, and experimentation. This approach serves to cultivate the cognitive abilities of learners or employees, enabling them to develop effective reasoning skills for articulating their own perspectives. Additionally, it nurtures their capacity to actively engage with the ideas put forth by others, as well as to pose inquiries regarding their contributions (Song et al., 2009).

Therefore, it is anticipated that the act of listening entails providing sincere feedback, ascertaining the perspectives of others, and investing time in building trust (Kiani & Gillani, 2014; Lim et al., 2019; Murphy et al., 2017; Narzary & Palo, 2020; Song et al., 2009; Tunyi, 2019; Yin Yin Lau et al., 2020). Academic scholars

have provided clarification on the concept of identification (ID), asserting that it encompasses a reciprocal and interactive relationship between employees and organisational management. In authentic discourse, it is essential to possess a receptive mindset, foster curiosity, and engage in effective communication. The process of inquiry involves questioning that serves the purpose of challenging assumptions, presumptions, and judgements, while refraining from launching personal attacks or engaging in ad hominem arguments (Mbassana, 2014; Song, 2008). Inquiry and discussion are inherently interconnected since they form a coherent process, thereby rendering inquiry impossible without the presence of discourse (Bound, 2010). In the context of active learning, inquiry and conversation are often used as instructional strategies. Active learning is a pedagogical approach that prioritises the student or learner as the focal point, emphasising experiential learning and encouraging critical reflection on the significance of their experiences (McPherson, 2020).

According to Chawla and Lenka (2015), inquiry and conversation include the act of challenging the insights, therefore fostering a culture that encourages the pursuit of knowledge and provides workers with feedback on their queries (Malik & Garg, 2020). According to scholarly perspectives, fostering a culture of inquiry and discussion inside an organisation allows for the critical examination and questioning of prevailing viewpoints, in contrast to an environment where the perspectives and decisions put forward by organisational management are seen as unassailable. Supervisors or leaders are subject to scrutiny and demonstrate attentiveness towards their workers, therefore promoting a conducive environment for learning, trust-building, creativity, and enabling open discussions. This is facilitated by the feedback received from employees (Hannachi, 2016; Yin Lau et al., 2020). Furthermore, it has been argued that inquiry and discussion play a crucial role in promoting mutual understanding, facilitating the construction of personal meaning, and ensuring active engagement (Bound, 2010). Boccia and Cseh (2021) elaborate on the concept of inquiry and conversation, highlighting its significance in providing workers with a platform to voice their perspectives and engage in constructive questioning of work practises. This perspective is not divergent from the basic ideas. Moreover, Hussein et al. (2016) argue that inquiry and discussion serve as a means for organisations to provide a platform that facilitates the exchange of ideas, responses, and experiments among its members.

In addition, individuals within the organisation are encouraged to enhance their ability to intuitively and analytically comprehend their learning within the group setting by engaging in interactive inquiry and dialogue. Moreover, collaborative team-based activities facilitate the sharing, adjustment, and integration of learning outcomes among groups in a mutually interactive environment (Hoon Song et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the act of beginning inquiry and fostering discussion inside any given forum or organisation requires a manager to possess a profound comprehension of the essential elements that create a productive dialogue. Furthermore, it is imperative for the manager to establish an inclusive community that actively encourages the expression and consideration of other opinions. According to Pace (2013), there is a widespread sense of responsibility and empowerment among individuals to actively participate in the process of learning. Similarly, Bound (2010) argued that the process of inquiry should be seen as a systematic approach that promotes the exploration of legitimate issues as they emerge, while considering all temporary solutions.

Incorporating (ID) as a component of a (LO) within a business establishment facilitates the development of creative thinking abilities, encourages individuals to express their perspectives, fosters the capacity for active listening and further exploration of others' viewpoints, and cultivates an environment that promotes the exploration of alternative responses and experimentation (Mbassana, 2014). Similarly, an organisation that embraces a principle of (ID) will experience innovativeness, opportunities for employees to contribute to problem recognition, effective communication, and the reduction of employee resistance and ambiguity, all of which contribute to a highly competitive advantage (Subiyakto et al., 2020). Furthermore, instructional design facilitates a reciprocal learning process by promoting an inferential comprehension that guides learners from experiential encounters to the building of knowledge. It places significant focus on the potential benefits of collaborative group work and peer support (McPherson, 2020). The term "inquiry and dialogue" refers to a firm's ability to provide a platform that facilitates debates, responses, and investigations among its members.

H5: Inquiry and dialogue has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.8 Empowerment

The implementation of employee empowerment practises has been more prevalent in both the public and commercial sectors over the last thirty years (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). However, there exists a perceived bias within the workplace, where several individuals in positions of authority fail to acknowledge the significance of employee empowerment and its impact on the overall performance of the organisation (Zaraket et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the prevalence of worldwide rivalry and the significant need for ongoing quality enhancement have compelled some institutions, notably those in the United States, to adopt employee empowerment initiatives, even though they may have been initially reluctant to do so (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

The achievement of strategic and decisive leadership within an organisation necessitates the establishment

of an integrated system that involves the empowerment of workers (Jyoti & Rani, 2017; Pokharel & Ok Choi, 2015). Empowerment has been identified as one of the seven aspects of a learning organisation, as posited by Wakins and Marsick (Xie, 2020). Psychological or structural employee empowerment is a crucial managerial choice implemented as a component of a strategy plan aimed at attaining organisational objectives. Internal motivation is a crucial aspect that plays a significant role in driving individuals towards achieving their goals (Li et al., 2018; Marin-Garcia & Bonavia, 2021).

The concept of empowerment entails that individuals within an organisation are actively engaged in the establishment, ownership, and execution of the organization's shared vision. Additionally, individuals are also involved in decision-making processes and are held responsible for their respective choices (Khamis Ali, 2012). Employee empowerment is a conceptual framework that characterises the manner in which individuals in positions of authority distribute power, knowledge, resources, and incentives to others who do not possess them (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). According to the researchers, power inside the organisation is characterised by decentralisation, wherein it is not concentrated in the hands of a certain group of persons, but rather spread among several stakeholders. Similarly, the organization's operational procedure facilitates the dissemination and adoption of a collectively agreed-upon vision, while also soliciting feedback from its members to enhance the execution of the novel concept (Hussein et al., 2016). In support of the perspective presented by Hussein et al., Boccia and Cseh (2021) provide a definition of empowerment that emphasises the process of enabling individuals to work towards a shared goal, whereby both workers and leaders share responsibility for accomplishing this vision.

Empowerment encompasses the active participation of people in the development and execution of a shared vision, as well as assuming responsibility for its realisation (Milić et al., 2017). These perspectives are interconnected as they demonstrate that when the aim or concept is shared with workers, it becomes a shared objective that they collectively assume responsibility and accountability for. By working together to achieve it, a feeling of belonging and ownership is fostered. In their analysis, Bhaskar and Mishra (2017) assert that the primary factor contributing to the development of initiative, a feeling of ownership, and result-oriented workers is the empowerment of people inside the company.

In summary, the concept of empowerment extends beyond the mere act of power sharing and encompasses the redistribution of knowledge, information, and rewards. It is important to recognise that only concentrating on power without considering these other factors may render the process ineffective or unsuccessful (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). Hence, the operational approach of the general manager serves as the first point of departure, subsequently permeating throughout the organisational hierarchy, whereby it may manifest as either flexible or highly structured (Brymer, 1991). In this research, empowerment is conceptualised as the organisational process that involves the development and dissemination of a shared vision, as well as the solicitation of feedback from members on the disparity between the present circumstances and a novel concept.

H6: Empowerment has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

2.9 System Connection

System connection is identified as one of the seven aspects of a learning organisation, as described by Watkins and Marsick (2003), Prause and Venesaar (2011), and Yang et al. (2004a, 2004b). Nevertheless, this particular dimension encompasses an organization's affiliations with both its internal and external surroundings, so demonstrating a global mindset (Birdthistle & Fleming, 2005; Yang et al., 2004a). According to Yang et al. (2004a), workers engage in the process of observing their environment and using the acquired knowledge to modify their work practises. Additionally, the business maintains a connection with the community, facilitating employees in comprehending the impact of their individual job roles on the overall functioning of the company. The concept of system connection refers to an organization's capacity to establish and maintain relationships with its communities. This connection serves to enhance individuals' comprehension of the broader environment and empowers them to adapt their work practises accordingly. By understanding the impact of their actions on the organisation, individuals are able to modify their behaviours effectively (Song et al., 2009).

The concept of system connection pertains to the comprehensive evaluation undertaken by a business with regards to its many stakeholders, including suppliers, consumers, distributors, investors, and other relevant parties. This process enables the organisation to get a thorough understanding of the requirements and desires of its stakeholders (Hannachi, 2016). Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be inferred that researchers and writers exhibit a consensus about the interpretation and delineation of system linkage, since their perspectives align with the seminal work of Marsick and Watkins. This study aims to integrate many concepts within the topic, resulting in the following definition of system connection. System connection refers to the linkage established between a business organisation and its surrounding environment, encompassing both internal and external factors. This connection is facilitated through the process of information scanning, which assists in comprehending the requirements and expectations of stakeholders. Consequently, it leads to the adaptation of work practises and performance, while also taking into account the interests of various partners such as suppliers,

customers, distributors, investors, and other relevant entities. Moreover, this approach emphasises the importance of global thinking and reflection.

By establishing a link between the workplace and the environment, employees are able to see the impact of their actions on the business (Dirani, 2006; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Similarly, in order to enhance adaptability, receptiveness, and the dissemination of information, the significance of establishing both internal and external collaborations cannot be overstated (Prause & Venesaar, 2011). The internal link refers to the interrelationships across units and departments inside a firm, while external partnerships include collaborative efforts with other enterprises, suppliers, trade organisations, as well as community and social groups (Prause & Venesaar, 2011). System linkages, on the other hand, play a crucial role in enabling the consideration of important stakeholders and the public's viewpoints throughout the decision-making process (Prause & Venesaar, 2011).

Various perspectives on the interconnection of systems have shown the influence of the external environment on companies and organisations. Consequently, it is important for enterprises to acknowledge and establish strong connections with their surroundings (Dirani, 2006; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Voolaid & Venesaar, 2011; Yang et al., 2004a, 2004b). Furthermore, it is important to note that commercial enterprises do not exist in isolation. Consequently, the choices and achievements of businesses are influenced by a multitude of environmental factors. Consequently, businesses play a significant role in both the ecological and social systems (Cherunilam, 2021; Otache & Mahmood, 2015). Hence, it can be argued that a commercial entity operates as an open system, engaging in reciprocal interactions with its surrounding surroundings, resulting in mutually beneficial transactions for both the company and its environment (Otache & Mahmood, 2015). In addition, it is important to note that the business environment may be divided into two distinct components: the internal environment and the external environment. While managing the internal environment is often considered more manageable, the external environment presents a different set of challenges (Otache & Mahmood, 2015).

Meanwhile, the external environment, which is typically beyond the control of business owners but holds significant importance, pertains to the external forces that can influence business performance. These forces are assessed through factors such as dynamism, hostility, munificence, and complexity. Although the business entity cannot control these forces, they provide opportunities for exploration and exploitation (Otache & Mahmood, 2015). Various external forces may impact an organisation, including economic, political, social, technical, natural, and legal factors. These forces have the potential to provide both opportunities and challenges for the organisation. Conversely, internal forces manifest as the organization's capabilities, resources, and goodwill, among other factors (Cherunilam, 2021). Moreover, the global business landscape has consistently exhibited significant instability, thereby presenting firms with novel trials and challenges, including mounting pressure and diverse risks that hinder business growth and survival. Consequently, only organisations capable of establishing connections can endure and successfully accomplish their predetermined objectives (Khan & Khalique, 2014). Hence, the capacity of a corporate entity to develop a systematic and effective connection with its external environment via the generation and comprehension of pertinent information is likely to result in enhanced operational efficiency and efficacy of its objectives (Khan & Khalique, 2014). As previously established, research indicates that system connection refers to the relationship between a business organisation and its environment, encompassing both internal and external factors. This connection is facilitated through the process of information scanning, which assists in comprehending the needs and demands of stakeholders. Consequently, it leads to the adaptation of work habits and performance, while also taking into account the interests of various partners such as suppliers, customers, distributors, investors, and other relevant entities. Furthermore, this approach emphasises a global perspective, encouraging thoughtful consideration and reflection.

H7: System connection has no effect on the firm size of small and medium scale enterprises of Nigeria.

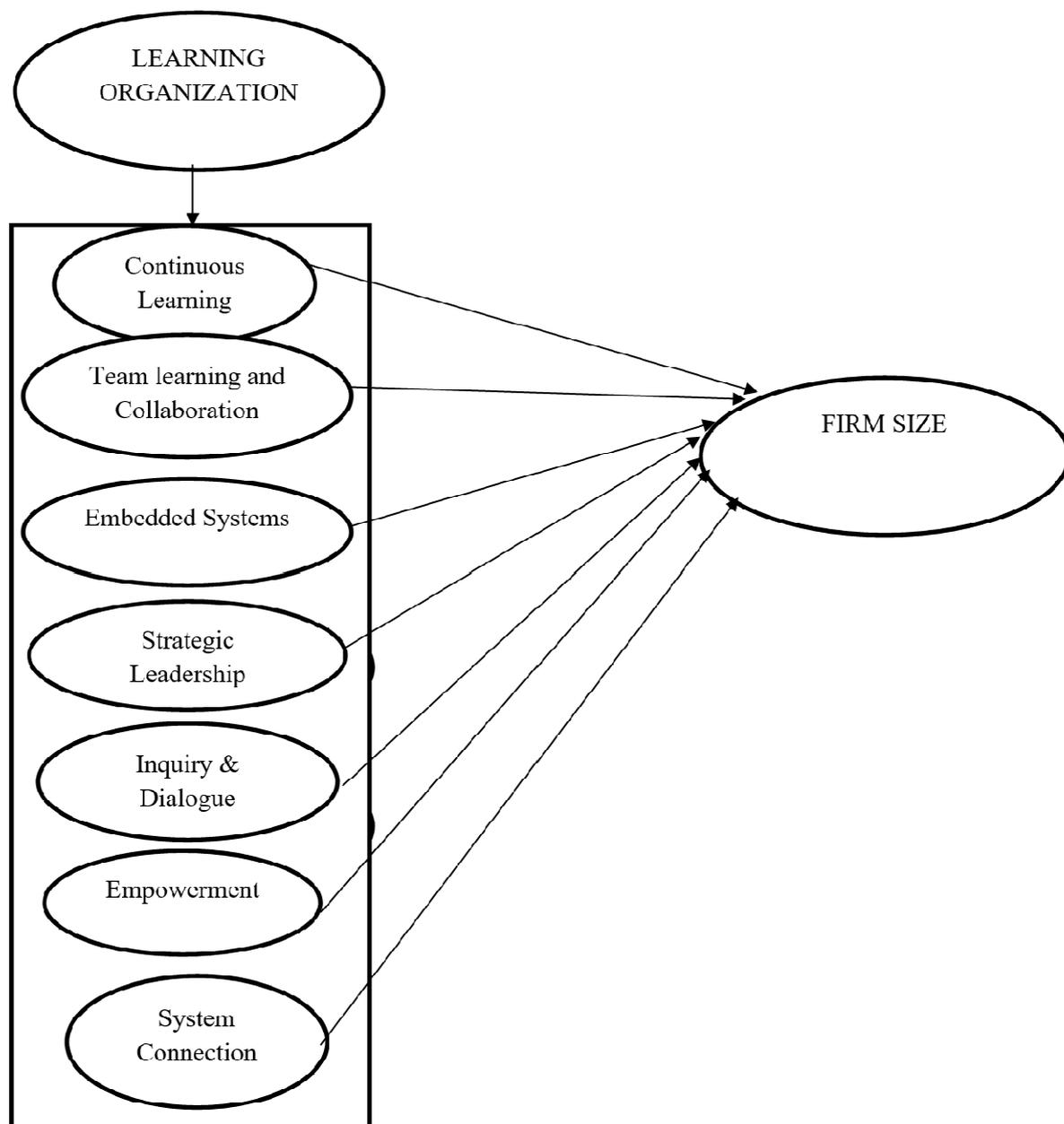


Fig 1 Conceptual Model

3. Research Method

Cross-sectional survey methodology was employed due to its capacity to capture data from a specific moment in time, gathering information from a group of participants at a single point and facilitating comparisons. Consequently, this approach offers a rapid, straightforward, and cost-effective means of obtaining the necessary information, particularly during the analysis phase (Setia, 2016). During the period of October to December 2022, a survey was designed and implemented using both online platforms, namely Google Forms, and physical copies, with the primary objective of collecting data. The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity was explicitly provided in written form. Consequently, a random sample methodology was used, whereby the survey was sent to company owners and/or managers across a diverse range of SMEs located in Lagos, Nigeria. The simple random sampling strategy is often used for homogenous demographics as it allows for the selection of sample members with freedom (Bhardwaj, 2019). The selection of managers was predicated upon their extensive understanding of the company, as well as their influence in creating the attributes of the organisation via the establishment of anticipated and endorsed behavioural patterns (Wolff et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2019). The final dataset included 376 observations, representing 78.6% of the viable responses out of the anticipated total of 478, so yielding a cumulative count of 1005. The sample size was determined by considering the population of 8,395

SMEs located in Lagos, Nigeria. The Raosoft online sample size calculator was used, with an attrition rate of 10%. The response rate, which refers to the percentage of participants who took part in the survey, was considered very good according to the evaluation by Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), as cited in the study done by Kiawa et al. (2019). The research's response rate is deemed enough for performing analysis and deriving results and recommendations within the predetermined boundaries. In addition, it has been shown by Hair Jr et al. (2020) that the existing resources are enough for conducting a research using partial-least-squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The analysis conducted in this paper used SmartPLS version 4.0 to implement the method and employed bootstrapping using a two-tailed approach.

3.1 Measurement Scales and Validity

The researchers used validated measures to assess both the independent and dependent variables. The validity of all scales was established using confirmatory analysis, which demonstrated satisfactory reliability. The researchers used a 6-point Likert scale. This is the case because the use of a 6-point Likert scale allows for a more precise expression of the range of ideas held by respondents, eliminating any potential for ambiguity. The utilisation of Likert's 6-point scale has been found to minimise deviation and enhance discrimination and reliability measures. Consequently, when prioritising discrimination and reliability, researchers have taken into account its suitability for studies involving multiple variables (Chomeya, 2010).

The assessment of the sub-variables of the learning organisation, including continuous learning, team learning and collaboration, embedded systems, and strategic leadership, was conducted using a scale ranging from 6 (indicating a high level of agreement) to 1 (indicating a low level of agreement). The alternatives for measuring Firm size ranged from 6-very high to 1-very low. The measurement of continuous learning involved seven items, while team learning and collaboration, embedded systems, strategic leadership, inquiry and dialogue, empowerment, and system connections were each measured using scales consisting of six items (Hannachi, 2016; Pokharel & Ok Choi, 2015). In contrast, firm size was measured using a scale consisting of four items.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Measurement Models

The study used validated measures to assess both the independent and dependent variables. The validity of all scales was established using confirmatory analysis, which demonstrated satisfactory reliability. The researchers used a 6-point Likert scale. This is the case because the use of a 6-point Likert scale allows for a more precise expression of the range of ideas held by respondents, eliminating any potential for ambiguity. The utilisation of Likert's 6-point scale has been found to minimise deviation and enhance discrimination and reliability measures. Consequently, when prioritising discrimination and reliability, researchers have taken into account its suitability for studies involving multiple variables (Chomeya, 2010).

The sub-variables pertaining to the learning organisation, including continuous learning, team learning and partnerships, embedded systems, and strategic leadership, were evaluated using a rating scale that ranged from 6 (representing a substantial degree of concurrence) to 1 (representing a minimal level of concurrence). The available options for Firm size included a spectrum ranging from 6-very high to 1-very low, with intermediate levels of 5-moderately high, 4-high, 3-low, and 2-moderately low. The measurement of continuous learning was conducted using a scale consisting of seven items. Similarly, team learning and collaboration, embedded systems, strategic leadership, inquiry and dialogue, empowerment, and system connections were all measured using scales consisting of six items each (Hannachi, 2016; Pokharel & Ok Choi, 2015). On the other hand, firm size was measured using a scale consisting of four items.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Continuous Learning	Embedded System	Empowerment	Firm Size	Inquiry & Dialogue	Syst. Connection	Team Learning & Collaboration	strategic Leadership
Continuous Learning	0.763							
Embedded System	0.740	0.779						
Empowerment	0.749	0.779	0.773					
Firm Size	0.629	0.683	0.714	0.812				
Inquiry & Dialogue	0.828	0.747	0.762	0.666	0.725			
Syst. Connection	-0.138	-0.043	-0.085	-0.102	-0.139	0.738		
Team Learning & Collaboration	0.776	0.782	0.785	0.677	0.795	-0.129	0.776	
strategic Leadership	0.272	0.230	0.240	0.231	0.262	-0.514	0.241	0.711

Table 3: Construct reliability and validity table

	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho a)</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho c)</i>	<i>Average variance extracted (AVE)</i>
<i>Continuous Learning</i>	0.880	0.883	0.907	0.583
<i>Embedded System</i>	0.871	0.871	0.903	0.608
<i>Empowerment</i>	0.865	0.869	0.899	0.598
<i>Firm Size</i>	0.828	0.829	0.886	0.660
<i>Inquiry & Dialogue</i>	0.810	0.831	0.865	0.525
<i>Syst. Connection</i>	0.823	0.852	0.855	0.545
<i>Team Learning & Collaboration</i>	0.866	0.878	0.900	0.602
<i>strategic Leadership</i>	0.829	1.043	0.858	0.505

4.2 Structural Model Results

The structural route coefficients, T-statistics, P-Values, and relevant conclusions are shown in Table 4. The presented table illustrates the association between the attributes of a learning organisation and the scale of the firm. The coefficient of the direct route, denoted as -0.015, has a negative association and does not possess statistical significance, as shown by a p-value over 0.05. Hence, the original hypothesis is supported, suggesting that there is no observable influence of continuous learning on the expansion of SMEs in Nigeria. Furthermore, the coefficient for the direct route (0.135) indicates a positive association, but not one that attains statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the results of this research provide empirical support for the second hypothesis, suggesting that there is a lack of substantial influence from team learning and collaboration on the development of SMEs in Nigeria.

Table 4: Path Coefficient Table

	Path Coefficients (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ($(O/STDEV)$)	P values	Effect size (f^2)		Result
Continuous learning -> Firm Size	-0.015	-0.009	0.082	0.183	0.854	0.000	No effect	Supported
Embedded System -> Firm Size	0.209	0.207	0.096	2.184	0.029	0.030	Small effect	Rejected
Empowerment -> Firm Size	0.331	0.333	0.076	4.332	0.000	0.073	Small effect	Rejected
Inquiry & dialogue -> Firm Size	0.153	0.139	0.075	2.037	0.042	0.013	No effect	Rejected
Strategic leadership -> Firm Size	0.028	0.032	0.037	0.760	0.447	0.001	No effect	Supported
System Connection -> Firm Size	-0.014	-0.026	0.048	0.289	0.773	0.000	No effect	Supported
Team Learning & Collaboration -> Firm Size	0.135	0.141	0.073	1.848	0.065	0.011	No effect	Supported

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The coefficient for the direct route, which is 0.209, demonstrates a positive association and has been determined to be statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Consequently, the third hypothesis is invalidated, suggesting that the existence of embedded systems does not have a substantial influence on the dimensions of SMEs in Nigeria. Based on the results obtained from the tables, it can be concluded that the fourth hypothesis is not supported. The path coefficient, with a value of 0.028, was found to be positive; nevertheless, it did not demonstrate statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). In contrast, the fifth hypothesis, which suggests that there is no correlation between Inquiry and discussion and the growth of SMEs firms in Nigeria, was found to be unsupported by the data and hence discarded. In a similar vein, the sixth hypothesis, positing that Empowerment does not have any influence on the magnitude of SMEs in Nigeria, was also refuted. On the other hand, the seventh hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between System connectivity and the number of small and medium-scale firms in Nigeria, is corroborated. Hence, it can be inferred that there exists no statistically significant correlation between the variables of continuous learning, team learning and collaboration, strategic leadership, and system linkage, and the quantity of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in Nigeria.

Table 4.27: Overview of R-squared, adjusted R-squared, F-squared and Q-squared

	R-square	R-square adjusted	F-square	Q-square
Firm Size	0.571	0.563	0.018	0.545

Source: Researcher's Survey Results, (2023)

The adjusted R^2 as shown in table 4.27, indicates that (LO) dimensions explained 56.3% of the variances in the firm size of SMEs in Lagos South- West Nigeria. It indicated that putting all the constructs together tends to influence a 56.3% change in the firm size of SMEs in Nigeria. Furthermore, embedded systems and empowerment have effect sizes (F-Square) of 0.030 and 0.073 on the R-Square if removed from the model, while the rest of the exogenous variables show less than 0.02 i.e continuous learning (0.000), inquiry and dialogue (0.013), system connection (0.000), Team learning and Collaboration (0.011) and strategic leadership (0.001). The effect size of these variables (embedded system and empowerment) could have a small effect. The average effect size (f^2) of all the dimensions of learning organisation on firm size therefore stands at 0.018. In the interim, the removal of an exogenous variable from the model results in F-Square (f^2) representing the alteration in R-Square (R^2). The Cohen's f^2 statistic was used to quantify the magnitude of the changing influence of R^2 . The effect sizes of f^2 , as reported by Hair et al. (2013) and Hair et al. (2019), are indicative of small, medium, and large impacts when equal to 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively. Consequently, the factors indicated above are associated with a minor level of influence.

According to the criteria proposed by Stone-Gleisser Q-Squared (Q^2), it may be concluded that the independent variable, namely; learning organization, exhibits a statistically significant predictive relationship (0.545) with the dependent variable, which is firm size.

The multiple regression model is, as a result of this, expressed thus:

$$FS = \beta_0 + 0.153ID + 0.209ES + 0.331EP \text{ ----- eq. (1)}$$

Where:

FS= Firm Size
 ID = Inquiry & Dialogue
 EP = Empowerment
 ES = Embedded System

The regression model above reveals that the unit of change in inquiry and dialogue resulted in 0.153 improvements in the firm size of small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos, Nigeria. Furthermore, an increase in empowerment embedded systems would bring about 0.331 and 0.209 improvements in the firm size of Nigerian SMEs, respectively. Thus, unlike empowerment, inquiry, and dialogue, an embedded system contributes more to firm increase. Meanwhile, the structural path analysis results revealed that learning organization dimensions significantly affect the firm size of small and medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria. The t-values for the variables in this study were found to be statistically significant, surpassing the standard value of 1.96 at a 5% significance level. This suggests that the dimensions of learning organization have a significant impact on the size of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria, as indicated by their p-values ($p < 0.05$).

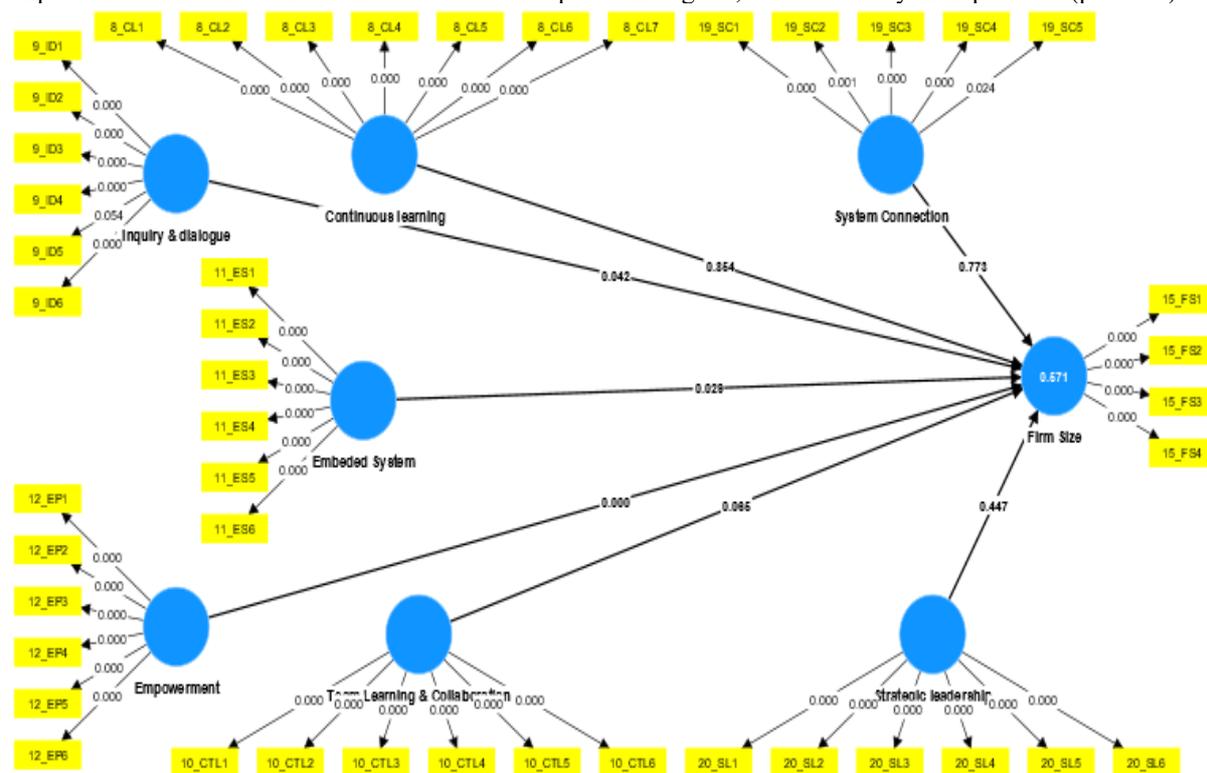


Figure 2: The path diagram of learning organization dimensions on firm size

5. Discussion

The results obtained from the research using structural equation modelling demonstrate that the various aspects associated with a learning organisation have a substantial influence on the magnitude of small and medium-scale firms (SMEs) within the context of Nigeria. The statistical findings indicate that the corrected R-squared coefficient is 0.563, suggesting that the dimensions of a learning organisation account for 56.3% of the variability seen in company size. The obtained value for the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) is 0.059, indicating a favourable level of agreement between the proposed model and the collected data. The difference between the unconstrained least squares (d_ ULS) estimate and the generalised least squares (d_ G) estimate is 3.738, suggesting a statistically significant distinction between the two estimation approaches. The obtained chi-square value of 2411.023 suggests a statistically significant disparity between the actual and anticipated covariance matrices. The normed fit index (NFI) of 0.768 indicates a satisfactory level of fit between the model and the data. The results of this research indicate that the implementation of the learning organisation framework inside small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria has promise for fostering corporate growth. Moreover, several scholars have presented data indicating a positive association between company size and the prevalence of learning organisations (Kim & Lu, 2019; Kontoghiorghes et al., 2005; Weldy, 2009).

The outcome conceptually corroborates with several literatures. For instance, Hirdinis (2019) opined that paying attention to firm size by doing all possible, including implementation of the learning organisation, will yield upward change in the size of any organisation that will propel a positive response from investors and at the end improves the organisational value. Likewise, it has been argued that the higher a business's overall assets

and revenues, the larger it is, and the larger the organization's size or scale, the simpler it will be for the company to obtain finance, both internal and external all these made possible through deliberate investment in learning (Hirdinis, 2019). Extending the thought of Hirdinis, firm size is a critical element in influencing an organisation's economic, investment, and other financial decisions (Rashid et al., 2021). Larger firms, compared to their counterparts, have a better attitude towards risk, possess the ability to expand to the global market, enjoy the scope and scale of economies, increase competitiveness, minimize the cost of production, diversify cash flow alongside the production of more goods, and in all, management of shock is seamless hence; the need for learning organisation to attain this fit (Farooq et al., 2021; Ha et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2021). Likewise, organisations that invest more in technological innovation and orientation, which cumulate learning, have every tendency to increase in size (Zhou et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the study's findings support several empirical investigations on learning organisations and organisational performance (firm size) (Bhaskar & Mishra, 2017; Camille & Nicole, 2011; Habtoor et al., 2019; Ju et al., 2021; Kurtessis et al., 2015). Specifically, Weldy (2009), in the study titled "Learning organisation and transfer: Strategies for improving performance", found out that the adoption and implementation of learning organisation contribute to a better outcome for the organisation, enlarging its size. Also, it was empirically established that learning organisation impact positively and significantly the dimensions of organisational performance (firm size) using multiple regression to examine the relationship (Kontoghiorghes et al., 2005). In another examination of both dimensions of learning organisation and organisational performance, the result shows that measurements of the learning organisation influenced the firm size as one of the organisational performance variables (Ju et al., 2021). Researchers advised managers and company owners of various organisations to consider supporting and embracing the learning organisation (K. Kim & Lu, 2019; Kontoghiorghes et al., 2005; Weldy, 2009).

The assumptions of the human capital theory are therefore established in this study using the relationship between learning organization and business size. A stronger organizational foundation will result from investments in employee learning and development. The current study's findings thus provide conceptual, empirical, and theoretical support for the notion that learning organisation features significantly impact the firm size of small and medium-sized firms in Lagos, Nigeria.

6. Implication

The findings of this study showed that learning organisation has a positive and significant effect on the firm sizes of small and medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria hence, the implication for both current and prospective investors because the adoption of learning organisation will aid a better and improved return on investment. In addition, more detailed attention and cognisance should be allotted to embedded system, inquiry and dialogue, and empowerment as these dimensions of learning organization specifically influence firm size in the small and medium-sized businesses in Nigeria.

Moreover, this research will assist management in identifying and implementing strategies to address the persistent challenge that has hindered the industry's progress over time. It will also help them in achieving the organisational goals, gaining a competitive edge, and preparing for the uncertainties and dynamic nature of the business landscape. Assist in the formulation of appropriate and relevant policies that support the development of a learning organisation. Furthermore, this advantage enhances the ability to compete on both local and global scales, while also facilitating the acquisition of high-quality investors and promoting consumer loyalty. This research aims to support small and medium-sized businesses in Nigeria by encouraging them to strategically invest in the development of their workers' skills. By doing so, these businesses may enhance their ability to navigate through turbulent times and adapt to the rapidly changing business landscape. This research elucidates the potential benefits for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria via the adoption of learning organisation aspects. Specifically, it explores how such implementation might contribute to enhancing customer satisfaction, meeting consumer demands, and ultimately improving the quality of products and services offered by these enterprises. Furthermore, the revitalization of small and medium scale enterprise in Nigeria would instil a renewed sense of optimism throughout the populace.

This study has categorically revealed with tangible proof the effect of learning organization dimensions on the firm size of small and medium-scale businesses in Nigeria. Therefore, it is advisable that the Nigerian management of SMEs should embrace the practice of shared goals, information gathering and sharing, as well as make sure that there is a platform that encourages conversations, opinions, and testing among its members to increase the size of the organization. Furthermore, the Small and Medium firms Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) is responsible for the promotion, facilitation, and monitoring of policies that support the application of learning organisation aspects inside small and medium-scale enterprises in contemporary Nigeria. This is done with the aim of enhancing performance outcomes.

The study showcased the position of the human capital theory, which was the basis of this study for linking learning organisation with firm size. Hence, the study's agreement with the assumptions of Human Capital

Theory that clarifies the link between learning organisation and firm size. The fundamental assumption of the human capital theory posits that human capital stocks are considered on par with other forms of productive resources. Investments in enhancing employees' capacity for learning, such as through training and education, are believed to enhance their skills and ultimately result in increased productivity for economies, organisations, and individuals.

7. Limitation to the Study and Suggestion for Further Studies

In a cross-sectional research, the assessment of exposure and result is often conducted without establishing a temporal link between the two variables. Consequently, the task of formulating predicted inferences proved to be arduous, although the use of prescriptive analysis mitigated this difficulty. In a similar vein, it should be noted that this particular design choice does not establish a causal relationship. Considering the limited timeframe allotted for the inquiry, it might be argued that this alternative represents the most optimal choice.

In addition, the survey design employed in this study incorporates open-ended questions alongside limited opportunities for subject interaction. As a result, the design exhibits a preference for closed-ended questions over open-ended ones, utilising a questionnaire to gather primary data. Consequently, this approach restricts respondents from fully articulating their perspectives. Considering the factors of cost and time, it may be argued that the option is suitable. Certain individuals included in the research had difficulties in comprehending and grasping the inquiry, maybe stemming from their cognitive abilities and the absence of a comprehensive explanation. Also, there were individual incomplete entries. In addition, the sample unit for the study were the business owners or their managers per firm, which made it more strenuous to acquire the required data within the time frame. Also, even though there was guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity, some participants still felt sceptical about responding to the questionnaire, while various others refused out rightly based on reasons best known to them.

Further study on learning organisation and organisational performance should also be conducted in specific industries such as the financial industry, health sector, educational sector and the like to ascertain the interaction of the variables. Researchers can also conduct more studies on the theoretical implications of the models from this study as these can be a baseline for new frontier academic development in learning organisation and organisational performance.

8. Conclusion

Based on the results of this research, it is important to provide due consideration and focus to the development of learning organisation dimensions in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. This can be likened to the careful monitoring of a kid receiving oxygen, where it is crucial to ensure that the oxygen cylinder does not run out of gas. Therefore, it is essential for company owners and managers to purposefully use learning organisation techniques in order to attain enhanced performance and gain a competitive edge.

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