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Intuitive Decision Making under Conditions of Deep Uncertainty

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of intuition in business crisis decision-making under deep uncertainty. While acknowledging potential biases, the analysis demonstrates how intuitive thinking enables rapid, experience-based decisions that avoid groupthink and complement analytical methods. The study highlights intuitive training as a way to mitigate subjective influences, ultimately arguing that intuition remains a vital tool for time-constrained, information-scarce crisis scenarios.

Keywords: Intuitive decision-making; Crisis management; Uncertainty; Groupthink; Leadership training

1. Introduction

This argumentative essay aims to analyse whether intuitions are an effective rational decision-making tool for business organizations during a business crisis. According to Sayegh et al. (2004), the process of decision making in a business organization during a crisis involves the careful navigation of key internal problems, such as information scarcity and time limits. The situation is also further complicated by the pressures from business stakeholders such as investors. Therefore it is important for business leaders, managers, and other key corporate decision makers to come up with decision making strategies that enable the organisations to make effective decisions given the time constraints and pressure. Pedersen et al. (2020) further assert that business that the importance of such as decision making strategy cannot be emphasized enough because businesses also have to contend with the fact that crisis navigation is important for business survival and also remaining competitive. While there may be other approaches to decision making that business leaders use to make these effective decisions, this essay has singled out the role that intuitions play in this process and its outcomes. This essay has therefore argued that the intuitions of a leader play a critical role in rational decision making during conditions of deep uncertainty.

2. Argument Analysis

In academic, scholars argue that a leader's intuitions enable them to make effective strategic decisions during a time of business crisis thereby allowing the organization to take action quickly in a period of time constraint and informational scarcity. For example, Adam and Dempsey (2020) support that a leader's intuitions help make decisions faster despite facing time constraints and informational scarcity. Referring to a case study in a hospital delivery room, the authors note that leaders are able to tap on their experiences and intuitions and make quick decisions which enables the business organizations to navigate through the current crisis much faster than the time it would take when using other decision making approaches. Okoli and Watt (2018) further add that when using intuitions to make decisions, business or organizational leaders tap into their experiences in decision making enabling them to draw similarities between past crisis events and the current event. These similarities then enable the leaders to come up with possible decisions while at the same time predicting their outcomes under the given conditions. Looking at these two articles, it is worth noting that leaders using their intuitions are able to take the shortest time to make informed decisions during a crisis because they are able to familiarise themselves with the crisis much faster. This rids them of the time constraints and information constraints. Therefore, a leader's intuitions play a critical role during rational decision making under conditions of deep uncertainty.

Moreover, some researchers support that leaders' intuitions or rather intuitive decision making allows business leaders to make highly individualized decisions that are easily customizable to the crisis at hand. For an instance, Li et al. (2016) suggest that, relative to other rational decision making approaches in a crisis, such as deliberative ones, intuitive decision making results in the production of highly individualized decisions. As cited by Norris et al. (2020), most of the time, during a crisis the problem of groupthink clogs the cognitive decision-making process in teams and groups. Therefore, large teams and teams of decision makers are not always effective in making correct decision for business organizations. On the other hand, if the decision making is centralized to a lone person or a select team of two or three more experienced

leaders, they have the capacity to keep down the degree of groupthink and come to the correct choices. Li et al. (2016) furthermore claim that intuitions keep rigid thinking at a minimum in modern day business and therefore give an overall better decision that suits solving the crisis in question. It is, thus, in this context, that intuitions serve to help business leaders avoid currents that lead to groupthink during the rational decision making process so that only the right decisions can be taken in any crisis scenario.

Besides a data driven decision making, the use of intuition or the intuitive decision making approach can be heavily employed in a situation of deep crisis, blending well with other formats of decision making. The use of intuitions, as stated by Okoli et al. (2015), does not restrict other approaches to decision making to business leaders but plays a role in helping them make better and more informed decisions. Referring to the firefighting case study, the authors noted that better decision outcomes are reached when leaders in the firefighting teams analyse the data at hand and then use their intuitions to make the final decisions. These arguments reinforce and emphasize the importance of intuitions during the decision making process similar to what Li et al (2016) argues on the compatibility of intuitions and other decision making approaches. Preda and Stan (2023) also suggest that intuitions during decision making give room for leaders' creative imagination and therefore eliminate the challenge of bounded rationality in decision making. Based on the arguments that have been presented by the scholars in this section, it appears that the intuitive decision making approach not only helps leaders in making creative decisions by complimenting other methods of decision making but also enables them to use their creative imagination during the decision making process. This way intuitions bring in the aspect of creativity that aids in making the right decision and problem solving. Without a leader's intuitions complementing these conventional decision-making approaches, creative decisions are impossible to make during a crisis situation.

Although some scholars argue that intuitions have been lauded as a critical component of making rational decisions during a crisis situation, other scholars also indicate that intuitions can also lead to the making of worse decisions during a crisis. For example, Kotzian (2025) argues that a leader's intuitions are as good as their emotional intelligence and tenacity to withstand pressure. The author notes that during a crisis, emotions run high and leaders are crowded by their own biases. The author further notes that business leaders using their intuitions intensely consider their decisions and therefore end up making worse decisions. The argument by Kotzian (2025) in this case counteracts the arguments made by Lie et al. (2016), Adam and Dempsey (2020), and Okoli et al. (2015). The work of Resnik (2017) shares similar resolutions as Kotzian (2025) by suggesting that intuitions are heavily influenced by subjectivity and therefore a leader with low emotional intelligence may end up making the wrong decisions during a crisis. The arguments by Resnik (2017) and Kotzian (2025) caution that intuitions may lead to poor decisions during a crisis and this is a point worth noting in that in as much as intuitions can be relied upon to make better and creative decisions, they are also capable of making poor decisions.

Moreover, some scholars have different findings about the effectiveness of intuitions as rational decision-making tool in decision making. For example, Kotzian (2025) supports that intuitions in decision making can be easily eliminated through intuitive training for leaders. According to Hess and Bacigalupo (2011), intuitive training for leaders helps in improving their self-awareness during decision making and this allows them to be aware of their emotions and biases and also prevents them from making biased or subjective corporate decisions. Intuitive training for leaders has been experimented with by Patterson et al. (2012) and exhibited high chances of success. In this study, the authors suggest that intuitive training for decision makers at the corporate level can be implemented through passive exposure of leaders to simulated crisis situations requiring quick and effective decision making. The results from this study show that skills and competence gained through this form of leadership training are successfully translated into real-world decision making processes. As a result, it is worth noting that the downside of intuitive decision making such as bias and subjectivity can be easily prevented and controlled during crisis decision making at the corporate level.

3. Conclusion

This essay has analysed whether intuitions are an effective rational decision-making tool for business organizations during a business crisis. It agrees that decision making during situations of business crisis is affected by key constraints such as lack of enough crisis data and adequate time. As a result, business leaders often find themselves handicapped by these constraints and this eventually affects their ability to make rational and effective decisions. This essay has argued that in such situations, leaders can rely on their intuitions to make the right decisions. The use of a leader's intuitions or intuitive decision making allows leaders to make effective decisions within a limited time even in situations of inadequate data. Intuitions also allow a leader to tap into their experiences and creative imagination thereby making individualized, highly customized decisions that are free of group think. Although, some scholars have argued that intuitive decision making is affected by a leader's subjectivity, emotions, and biases, this essay refuted these claims by noting that leaders can be successfully trained on how to apply their intuitions during decision making through intuitive training. Therefore, this concludes that the intuitions of a leader play a critical role in rational decision-making during conditions of deep uncertainty.

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