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Decision-Making Speed and Organizational Effectiveness among West African Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review

[1]Chilala Osman, [2]Faustina Oduro Twum, [2]Peter Agyekum Boateng, [2]Jeanette Owusu

[1]Bolgatanga Technical University

[2]School of Business

Valley View University

Ghana

ABSTRACT

Decision-making speed plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational effectiveness, particularly in dynamic environments where timely responses influence performance outcomes. This systematic literature review examines the relationship between decision-making speed and organizational effectiveness among West African institutions, emphasizing the trade-offs between agility and decision quality. The study explores how decision-making speed affects financial, operational, and strategic performance, while identifying key moderating factors such as environmental turbulence, bureaucratic structures, and leadership styles. Drawing on Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Organizational Agility Theory, the research highlights that institutions capable of sensing opportunities, seizing resources efficiently, and reconfiguring processes tend to outperform counterparts with slower decision cycles. The review follows a rigorous systematic approach, synthesizing empirical findings from recent peer-reviewed studies on decision speed in sectors such as healthcare and higher education. Results indicate that while rapid decision-making enhances responsiveness and innovation, excessive speed can lead to inadequate analysis, resistance from stakeholders, and compromised decision quality. The study underscores the importance of balancing speed and accuracy in decision-making, offering strategic insights for leaders navigating complex institutional environments in West Africa.

Keywords: African Institutions, Decision-Making Speed, Dynamic Capabilities, Organizational Effectiveness, Strategic Agility, West Bureaucratic Constraints.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid and effective decision-making is increasingly recognized as essential for organizational success in a rapidly changing environment (Thaci et al., 2024). Organizations that adapt quickly to market shifts are often better positioned to seize emerging opportunities and maintain operational efficiency. Research highlights that companies excelling in both decision speed and quality tend to outperform competitors in financial and operational performance (Asikhia et al., 2021). Timely decisions can facilitate quicker resource deployment, faster innovation cycles, and greater adaptability, all of which enhance organizational effectiveness (Santana et al., 2024).

This is particularly relevant for institutions in developing regions such as West Africa, where resource constraints and external uncertainties amplify the need for agile decision-making. In sectors like healthcare and higher education, delays in decision-making—such as slow procurement or policy approvals—can directly affect service delivery and stakeholder outcomes (Nadaf et al., 2024). Case studies of West African public institutions indicate that rigid bureaucratic structures often create bottlenecks that hinder efficiency (Ijeoma, 2020). Similarly, research on healthcare systems suggests that administrative rigidity significantly slows down decision-making, affecting service quality (Serra et al., 2024). These contexts illustrate why examining decision-making speed is not merely an academic pursuit but a practical necessity for organizational improvement.

While fast decision-making is often linked to enhanced organizational outcomes, concerns persist regarding its potential drawbacks. Executives worry that accelerated decisions may lead to errors, inadequate analysis, or resistance from stakeholders (Calseyde et al., 2020). Some studies argue that rapid strategic decisions improve overall performance (Asikhia & Mba, 2021), while others caution that decision speed without sufficient context may be counterproductive (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020). This trade-off between decision speed and quality remains underexplored, particularly in mission-driven institutions like hospitals and universities, where both efficiency and accuracy are paramount.

In West African institutions, the challenge is further complicated by resource limitations and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which can either slow decision-making to a halt or lead to hasty choices that bypass due process (Evanthi, 2021). The core issue addressed in this review is the relationship between decision-making speed and organizational effectiveness within such contexts, including the trade-offs and conditions that influence this dynamic. Striking the right balance is critical: decisions made too slowly risk missing opportunities, while excessively rapid decisions may compromise quality.

The research aimed to assess the relationship between decision speed and organizational effectiveness by consolidating empirical findings on financial, operational, and strategic outcomes. It also sought to identify key moderating factors—such as environmental turbulence, organizational structure, and leadership style—that influence the effectiveness of fast decision-making. By systematically reviewing literature on decision speed, the study explored how organizations in various sectors optimize agility while maintaining decision quality. The findings contribute to understanding the balance between rapid decision-making and effectiveness, particularly in dynamic contexts like West African institutions where bureaucratic constraints often hinder responsiveness.

A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to ensure a rigorous and unbiased synthesis of findings on decision-making speed and organizational effectiveness. This approach follows a replicable and transparent process, minimizing selection bias and enabling aggregation of results across studies (Thaci et al., 2024). The review protocol was established in advance, defining clear steps for identifying, screening, and analyzing literature to enhance objectivity and reliability (Santana et al., 2024). The search strategy involved retrieving peer-reviewed studies published from 2020 onward from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Keywords included “decision speed,” “rapid decision-making,” “organizational effectiveness,” and sector-specific terms like “healthcare” and “academic institutions” to refine the scope. Boolean operators and wildcard variations were applied to capture synonymous terms (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020). Additional sources were identified through citation tracking of foundational works.

Inclusion criteria required studies to explicitly examine decision speed and organizational performance, be empirical or theoretically robust, and focus on relevant institutional contexts. Studies lacking clear links to decision speed or those outside scholarly sources were excluded (Neiroukh et al., 2024). For data extraction and analysis, each study was systematically coded for research design, sample characteristics, theoretical frameworks, and findings. A structured synthesis categorized results into themes such as the benefits and trade-offs of rapid decision-making, with particular attention to the healthcare and education sectors (Nadaf et al., 2024). Cross-referencing ensured consistency and identified patterns and contradictions in the literature.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how organizations achieve adaptability and agility in decision-making. It emphasizes a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure competencies to respond to changing environments (Acevedo-Gelves & Albornoz-Arias, 2020). This theory comprises three main components: sensing (scanning the environment for opportunities or threats), seizing (allocating resources to act on insights), and reconfiguring (adjusting structures and assets to maintain agility) (Kapoor & Aggarwal, 2020). Organizations proficient in these capabilities tend to make faster and more effective decisions.

A dynamic-capabilities perspective suggests that firms that effectively sense and reconfigure resources can navigate uncertainty and improve performance (Tuschke & Buellet, 2020). For instance, a hospital with strong dynamic capabilities can reallocate staff and resources quickly during a crisis, ensuring faster decision cycles and better

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outcomes. This theory is particularly relevant in West African contexts, where infrastructure limitations and unpredictable markets necessitate organizational flexibility (Gonzalez-Samaniego et al., 2023). Overall, decision speed is a core aspect of dynamic capabilities, as it determines an organization's ability to pivot in fast-changing environments (Dias et al., 2020). The literature supports the view that firms with well-developed dynamic capabilities tend to outperform competitors by making quicker, more strategically aligned decisions (Alshaar & Alkshali, 2024).

Organizational Agility Theory focuses on an organization's capacity to rapidly respond to changes in its market, technology, or internal operations. It is considered an essential outcome of dynamic capabilities and a key driver of competitive advantage (Ristyawan et al., 2023). Agility is typically characterized by two elements: speed (quick decision-making and execution) and flexibility (the ability to shift directions efficiently) (Liboni et al., 2022). In strategic management, agility ensures that an organization can pivot quickly without suffering major operational setbacks (Kurian et al., 2024).

For example, a West African university that rapidly shifts to online learning during a crisis or a healthcare agency that swiftly reallocates funding to manage a disease outbreak exemplifies agility in action (Girardi, 2023). The relationship between agility and dynamic capabilities is deeply intertwined—organizations use dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring) to achieve agility (Bratnicka-Myśliwiec et al., 2020).

Research shows that agile firms experience higher resilience in volatile markets, minimizing disruptions and capitalizing on change more effectively than competitors (Markovich et al., 2022). This study uses agility as a framework to interpret decision speed findings—when an organization makes fast, effective decisions, it exhibits agility as a competitive advantage (Ogrenci & Alpkan, 2023).

3. DECISION-MAKING SPEED: CONCEPTS AND DETERMINANTS

Decision-making speed refers to the pace at which an organization or its leaders execute all phases of the decision-making process, from problem identification to implementation. It is often measured as the time elapsed between recognizing the need for a decision and reaching an outcome (Nadaf et al., 2024). Different studies have used various methods to measure this construct, including subjective perceptual scales where managers rate decision speed relative to competitors and objective timestamps tracking decision cycles (Santana et al., 2024).

Decision speed varies based on context; strategic decisions such as entering a new market may take months, whereas operational decisions, like daily hospital resource allocations, might be completed in hours or days (Zapata et al., 2022). Importantly, decision-making speed is distinct from implementation speed (the time taken to carry out a decision) and response speed (how quickly an organization observes performance impacts from decisions) (Hemadi, 2023). While these concepts are interrelated, this study primarily focuses on the decision phase itself.

3.1 Influencing Factors

Environmental Velocity and Complexity: External environmental conditions significantly impact decision speed. Organizations operating in high-velocity industries, such as technology and healthcare, often need to make rapid strategic choices to maintain a competitive edge (Asikhia & Mba, 2021). Research suggests that in dynamic environments, faster decision-making correlates with improved performance, as it enables firms to keep pace with market shifts (Thaci et al., 2024). Environmental complexity also plays a crucial role. Organizations operating under strict regulations, such as government agencies and healthcare institutions, often experience delays due to the necessity of compliance and stakeholder considerations. However, in some cases, high complexity drives the development of efficient decision protocols to manage uncertainty (Serra et al., 2024). In West Africa, factors such as political instability, infrastructure gaps, and public health crises have required institutions to develop rapid decision-making mechanisms to manage crises like the Ebola and COVID-19 outbreaks (Smirnov et al., 2021).

3.2 Organizational Structure and Culture

The structure of an organization greatly influences decision speed. Highly centralized organizations, where authority is concentrated at the top, often experience slow decision-making due to multiple approval layers. In contrast,

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decentralized organizations allow for quicker decision-making by granting local managers decision authority (Jia, 2020). Formalization, or the extent to which an organization relies on standardized procedures, also affects decision speed. While excessive bureaucracy can create bottlenecks and delay decisions, structured decision-making processes can streamline choices by clarifying roles and responsibilities (Hemadi, 2023).

Organizational culture further impacts decision-making speed. Cultures that encourage empowerment and calculated risk-taking enable employees to make quicker decisions without excessive fear of failure (Calseyde et al., 2020). In contrast, risk-averse cultures tend to slow decisions, as employees seek higher-level approvals. Public institutions in West Africa have often struggled with bureaucratic inertia, where hierarchical processes delay decisions on critical resource allocations (Serra et al., 2024).

3.3 Leadership Styles and Competencies:

Leadership characteristics significantly influence decision speed. Decisive leaders who are comfortable with ambiguity tend to facilitate faster resolutions (Asikhia et al., 2021). Research highlights that leaders who strike a balance between autocratic (fast but potentially uninformed) and participative (slower but inclusive) decision styles tend to achieve optimal decision-making outcomes (Zapata et al., 2022). Top Management Team (TMT) characteristics also matter. While diverse leadership teams may take longer to analyze problems, they can mitigate slowdowns through clear task delegation (Nadaf et al., 2024). Additionally, research suggests that affective conflicts among leadership teams (personal disputes) slow decision-making, while cognitive conflicts (task-related debates) can actually improve speed when managed effectively (Hallo et al., 2020).

3.4 Information Availability and Technological Infrastructure

Access to timely and relevant information is crucial for fast decision-making. Organizations that invest in data analytics, decision-support systems, and collaboration technologies can significantly improve decision speed (Smirnov et al., 2021). For example, hospitals utilizing real-time patient tracking dashboards can make immediate decisions about resource allocation, enhancing efficiency (Thaci et al., 2024). However, information overload presents challenges. Decision-makers overwhelmed with excessive or conflicting data may experience "analysis paralysis," delaying decisions (Sansone & Balconi, 2023). Effective organizations mitigate this by employing filtering mechanisms or AI-based decision-support tools to synthesize information efficiently (Jia, 2020).

4. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: DIMENSIONS AND METRICS

Organizational effectiveness is a broad concept that encompasses an organization's ability to achieve its goals efficiently. Rather than being measured by a single indicator, effectiveness is typically assessed across multiple dimensions that capture both financial and non-financial performance. This is crucial in understanding how decision-making speed impacts different facets of effectiveness. While some dimensions benefit directly from rapid decision-making, others require a balance between speed and deliberation to ensure long-term success.

***Financial Performance*:** One of the most common ways to assess organizational effectiveness is through financial performance. This dimension includes key metrics such as profitability, revenue growth, return on investment (ROI), and cost management. Organizations track indicators like profit margins, net income, and economic value added to gauge financial health (Asikhia & Mba, 2021). Many studies prioritize financial performance as the primary measure of effectiveness because of the availability of quantitative data. Fast decision-making can directly influence financial outcomes. For example, a company that rapidly launches a new service in response to market demand may experience revenue growth, while a firm that quickly implements cost-cutting measures may see improved short-term profitability. However, poorly executed fast decisions can lead to long-term financial risks if they are not supported by adequate analysis (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020). For non-profit and public institutions such as hospitals and universities, financial performance is often evaluated in terms of budget adherence, cost efficiency, and fundraising success rather than profitability.

***Operational Efficiency*:** Beyond financial measures, effectiveness is also determined by how efficiently an organization executes its processes. Operational efficiency focuses on minimizing waste while maximizing output, ensuring that products or services are delivered smoothly. Key metrics include productivity rates, turnaround times,

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throughput, and resource utilization (Smirnov et al., 2021). Decision-making speed plays a major role in improving operational efficiency. A hospital, for instance, can reduce patient wait times and optimize bed utilization by quickly reallocating staff in response to demand fluctuations (Nadaf et al., 2024). Conversely, delayed decisions on process improvements or technology adoption can sustain inefficiencies and lead to bottlenecks. Organizations that integrate real-time data analytics and automated decision-support systems often see enhanced efficiency by enabling rapid, informed decision-making (Serra et al., 2024).

***Employee Satisfaction and Engagement*:** An effective organization not only meets financial and operational goals but also fosters a productive and motivated workforce. Employee satisfaction and engagement are critical indicators of organizational effectiveness, with metrics such as employee survey scores, turnover rates, and absenteeism rates used for evaluation (Ceneza & Tagadiad, 2022). Decision-making speed can impact employees both positively and negatively. When decision-making is inclusive and timely, employees feel heard and valued, which enhances engagement. Conversely, rushed decisions that bypass employee input may cause dissatisfaction and lower morale (Sadykova et al., 2024). Organizations that delegate decision-making authority to lower levels often see higher engagement, as employees feel empowered to contribute meaningfully. However, excessive pressure to make quick decisions without adequate resources can lead to burnout, which ultimately reduces effectiveness (Hashim et al., 2024).

***Customer and Stakeholder Satisfaction*:** For businesses, customer satisfaction is a direct measure of effectiveness, often assessed through Net Promoter Scores, repeat business rates, and customer feedback surveys. In public and non-profit institutions, stakeholder satisfaction is equally important, encompassing student satisfaction for universities, patient satisfaction for hospitals, or citizen approval for government agencies (Sansone & Balconi, 2023). Fast decision-making is often critical to customer experience. Rapid response to complaints or feedback can enhance loyalty, while slow decision-making—such as delayed adoption of a customer-requested feature—can damage trust. This is particularly evident in service industries, where agility in responding to customer needs is a competitive advantage (Dahal, 2021).

***Innovation and Adaptability*:** A long-term indicator of organizational effectiveness is its capacity for innovation and adaptability. This dimension is measured through metrics such as the number of new products launched, the proportion of revenue derived from recent innovations, patent filings, and expert evaluations of an organization's responsiveness to change (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020). Decision-making speed is crucial for maintaining an innovative and adaptive organization. Slow decision-making can hinder innovation by causing delays in product development or strategic pivots, while organizations that encourage fast, iterative decision cycles tend to be more resilient in dynamic environments (Smirnov et al., 2021). Dynamic Capabilities Theory suggests that organizations that institutionalize rapid decision-making and learning processes are better positioned to navigate uncertainty and sustain long-term effectiveness (Serra et al., 2024).

5. DECISION-MAKING SPEED AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: INTERRELATIONSHIP

Positive Impacts

Research consistently shows that increasing decision-making speed positively affects various aspects of organizational effectiveness. Quick decision-making enables organizations to respond to opportunities and threats in a timely manner, ensuring they maintain or improve performance. Empirical studies reinforce this connection. For example, Asikhia and Mba (2021) found that strategic decision speed plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational performance, particularly in fast-changing environments where agility is critical (Asikhia & Mba, 2021).

One of the most significant benefits of decision-making speed is improved market responsiveness. Organizations that can quickly introduce new products or services gain a competitive advantage, allowing them to adapt to market demands before their competitors. Additionally, rapid decision-making enables businesses to adjust pricing strategies, optimize marketing campaigns, and address customer concerns efficiently. As a result, firms with agile decision-making processes tend to achieve better financial and customer satisfaction outcomes. A study by Santana et al. (2024)

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highlights that fast decision cycles allow firms to remain competitive in dynamic industries by capitalizing on opportunities more effectively (Santana et al., 2024).

Beyond financial benefits, decision-making speed significantly impacts operational efficiency. For instance, healthcare organizations that quickly adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic—such as reallocating medical resources or integrating telehealth services—were able to maintain operational effectiveness while meeting urgent patient needs. Research by Nadaf et al. (2024) demonstrates that efficient decision-making allows institutions to manage operational challenges more effectively and improve overall service delivery (Nadaf et al., 2024).

Decision-making speed also fosters organizational learning and innovation. Companies that operate in high-velocity environments often benefit from rapid feedback loops, allowing them to continuously refine their strategies. Research suggests that rapid decision-makers do not necessarily compromise analytical depth; instead, they optimize their decision-making processes to gather relevant information efficiently. Eisenhardt's work on decision-making in fast-paced industries supports this view, demonstrating that speed enhances an organization's ability to innovate and adapt (Santana et al., 2024).

Additionally, organizations that make swift decisions can prevent minor problems from escalating into major crises. A proactive approach to decision-making allows firms to maintain stability and ensure smoother operations. Smirnov et al. (2021) highlight that structured and rapid decision-making processes enhance organizational resilience and reduce disruptions in operations (Smirnov et al., 2021). Overall, research indicates that when speed is balanced with strategic insight, organizations can enhance competitiveness, increase operational efficiency, and foster innovation. These factors collectively contribute to higher organizational effectiveness.

Potential Negative Consequences

Despite the advantages, scholars caution that speed is not always beneficial and can sometimes compromise decision quality. When organizations prioritize rapid decision-making over thorough analysis, they risk making poor choices that undermine long-term effectiveness. Hemadi (2023) argues that organizations that rush through the decision-making process without sufficient evaluation may encounter adverse consequences, such as strategic missteps and decreased stakeholder confidence (Hemadi, 2023).

One major risk of excessive decision speed is the increased likelihood of making flawed choices under high uncertainty. A study on public-sector decision-making in the European Union found that prioritizing decision speed as an efficiency metric often leads to neglecting crucial contextual factors. Serra et al. (2024) observed that organizations that overemphasized speed frequently made ineffective decisions due to insufficient data analysis and stakeholder engagement (Serra et al., 2024).

Rapid decision-making can also lead to negative organizational outcomes such as reduced decision quality, lower employee morale, and frequent policy reversals. When organizations make hasty decisions without consulting key stakeholders, they risk alienating employees and undermining engagement. Sadykova et al. (2024) highlight that decision-making processes that exclude employee input often result in resistance to implementation, which can reduce overall effectiveness (Sadykova et al., 2024).

Another potential drawback is that rapid decision-making can result in increased organizational stress and employee burnout. Employees who are constantly expected to make quick decisions may experience fatigue, which can lead to declining productivity and job satisfaction. Sansone and Balconi (2023) found that excessive time pressure negatively affects employees' cognitive abilities and decision accuracy, leading to higher error rates (Sansone & Balconi, 2023). While decision speed can be beneficial, organizations must be cautious about overemphasizing it at the expense of thorough evaluation and stakeholder engagement. Finding a balance between responsiveness and careful analysis is key to optimizing organizational effectiveness.

Moderating Variables

The relationship between decision-making speed and effectiveness is influenced by various moderating factors. Environmental uncertainty and dynamism play a crucial role in determining whether decision speed leads to better outcomes. In fast-changing industries, speed is often necessary to remain competitive, whereas in stable environments,

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slower and more deliberate decision-making may yield better results (Asikhia & Mba, 2021). The complexity of the decision is another key moderator. Routine operational decisions benefit from speed, while high-stakes strategic decisions require careful deliberation. Research suggests that complex decisions involving multiple stakeholders and long-term consequences should not be rushed, as excessive speed can lead to flawed outcomes (Serra et al., 2024).

Organizational structure also affects the impact of decision-making speed. Centralized organizations often struggle with rapid decision implementation, whereas decentralized firms can make and execute decisions more efficiently. Nadaf et al. (2024) found that decentralized decision-making frameworks enhance responsiveness and organizational agility (Nadaf et al., 2024). Resource availability further moderates the effectiveness of decision speed. Organizations with sufficient resources can quickly act on decisions, whereas resource constraints can hinder execution. Smirnov et al. (2021) suggest that organizations with flexible resource allocation systems are better positioned to capitalize on fast decision-making (Smirnov et al., 2021).

6. RESOURCE ALLOCATION DELAYS AND PRODUCTIVITY BOTTLENECKS

Causes of Delays

Delays in resource allocation create significant bottlenecks that hinder organizational productivity, especially in healthcare and academic institutions in West Africa. Bureaucratic inefficiency is a primary cause, as multi-layered approval processes slow down decision-making. Public universities in Nigeria, for example, experience significant delays in faculty recruitment and procurement due to bureaucratic hurdles (Uneke et al., 2021). Similarly, healthcare institutions often require multiple levels of authorization before funding or staffing decisions can be finalized, further delaying critical resource allocation. Financial uncertainty and risk aversion also contribute to slow decision-making. Administrators frequently hesitate to allocate funds until budget availability is confirmed, delaying purchases of medical equipment or faculty recruitment (Udimal et al., 2022). These delays are particularly harmful in healthcare, where timely resource deployment is essential for patient care. Additionally, budget constraints force organizations to engage in prolonged deliberations to determine the most effective use of limited resources. In West African hospitals, funding shortages often result in delayed procurement of essential medicines and supplies, disrupting service delivery (Arezki, 2021).

Interdepartmental coordination challenges further slow down resource allocation. When multiple stakeholders must approve financial decisions, misalignment and conflicts between decision-makers lead to prolonged deliberation. In some hospitals, both the Ministry of Health and hospital administrators must authorize budgetary decisions, causing inefficiencies that prevent funds from being disbursed on time. Furthermore, poor data availability exacerbates delays, as decision-makers may postpone resource allocation due to lack of real-time financial and operational data (Karakara & Osabuohien, 2021).

Impact on Productivity

Delayed resource allocation has direct consequences for organizational productivity and efficiency. In hospitals, delays in approving budgets for medical equipment repairs result in non-functional diagnostic machines, increasing patient wait times and reducing service throughput. Research indicates that healthcare institutions with streamlined resource allocation processes deliver better patient outcomes and operate more efficiently (Uneke et al., 2021). Similarly, in universities, delayed faculty recruitment leads to overburdened instructors, larger class sizes, and diminished academic performance (Nadaf et al., 2024). Beyond operational inefficiencies, prolonged decision-making results in higher costs. Organizations often resort to temporary solutions, such as paying overtime wages to existing staff while waiting for approvals to hire additional personnel (Serra et al., 2024). These reactive strategies increase labor costs and strain institutional budgets. Employee morale is also affected; persistent delays in accessing essential resources discourage faculty members, leading to lower research output and stalled innovation (Sadykova et al., 2024).

Case Examples

The consequences of slow resource allocation are evident across multiple West African institutions. A study on Nigerian public universities found that faculty hiring delays lasted up to a year due to administrative bottlenecks, resulting in course shortages and lower student engagement (Nadaf et al., 2024). Similarly, research on hospital

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administration in Nigeria found that bureaucratic approval processes led to prolonged shortages of critical medical supplies, forcing doctors to ration treatments and compromising patient care (Arezki, 2021). During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, international funding disbursement delays significantly hindered containment efforts. Bureaucratic inefficiencies prevented emergency response teams from acquiring medical supplies and hiring healthcare personnel on time, worsening the crisis. By the time funding was fully mobilized, the outbreak had escalated, demonstrating how delayed decision-making in resource allocation can have severe consequences (Serra et al., 2024).

These examples highlight the urgent need to streamline resource allocation. By reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, improving interdepartmental coordination, and leveraging real-time data systems, organizations can deploy resources more effectively, ultimately enhancing institutional productivity and service delivery.

7. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

A thorough review of the literature reveals consistent patterns regarding the relationship between decision-making speed and organizational effectiveness. Recent studies indicate that in the face of increasing global uncertainty, including technological shifts and crisis events like the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are prioritizing agility in decision-making to maintain competitiveness and operational efficiency (Thaci, Tambunan, & Aritonang, 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that across different industries—ranging from healthcare to higher education—organizations that exhibit greater decision speed tend to outperform their counterparts, particularly in areas related to responsiveness, innovation, and operational efficiency (Santana, Arroyo, Nicola, & Moran, 2024).

Several key trends emerge from the literature. First, decision speed and firm performance are positively correlated, with meta-analytical studies confirming that firms capable of rapid decision-making report better financial and operational outcomes (Asikhia & Mba, 2021). Studies indicate that organizations that can swiftly introduce new products, respond to customer feedback, or adjust strategic priorities tend to achieve superior market positioning. Furthermore, research highlights that dynamic capabilities—specifically sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources—are key enablers of fast decision-making, which, in turn, supports agility and sustained effectiveness (Neiroukh, Emeagwali, & Aljuhmani, 2024).

Another observed pattern is the increasing integration of theoretical frameworks such as Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Organizational Agility Theory into discussions on decision speed. Scholars frequently examine decision-making speed within these frameworks, emphasizing that firms with well-developed dynamic capabilities can not only make rapid strategic decisions but also execute them effectively in response to external shocks (Kapoor & Aggarwal, 2020). Notably, agility—defined as the ability to adapt to environmental changes with minimal lag—has become a widely accepted measure of an organization's ability to sustain decision speed without compromising effectiveness (Bratnicka-Myśliwiec, Dyduch, & Bratnicki, 2020).

Sectoral variations also emerge, with public institutions, particularly in healthcare and education, struggling more with slow decision-making processes due to bureaucratic constraints. Research indicates that West African public institutions face significant administrative inertia, which delays critical resource allocation and policy decisions, negatively impacting organizational efficiency (Ijeoma, 2020; Nadaf et al., 2024). Studies on government-run hospitals in Nigeria, for instance, reveal that excessive formalization and multi-layered approval processes create decision bottlenecks that hinder timely service delivery (Serra et al., 2024). Similarly, in higher education, universities that delayed adopting remote learning strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic faced greater disruptions and student dissatisfaction than those that acted swiftly (Sadykova, Kochkonov, & Zheentaeva, 2024).

From a methodological perspective, recent studies employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze decision speed. While earlier research primarily relied on financial and operational metrics, newer studies incorporate case studies, interviews, and longitudinal analyses to understand the processes enabling fast yet effective decision-making (Neiroukh et al., 2024). A common finding across these studies is that organizations that balance speed with structured decision frameworks tend to achieve superior results. This reflects earlier research by Eisenhardt (1989), which emphasized that fast decision-makers do not necessarily skip analysis but rather optimize information processing to make well-informed yet rapid choices.

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Another key trend is the role of digital transformation in enhancing decision speed. Many firms leverage real-time data analytics, AI-driven decision support systems, and collaborative digital platforms to streamline decision processes. For example, hospitals utilizing predictive analytics to manage patient inflows and allocate resources saw improved operational efficiency and service delivery (Nadaf et al., 2024). Similarly, businesses that employed AI-powered tools for market trend analysis reported faster and more precise strategic shifts (Neiroukh et al., 2024).

***Gaps in Literature*:** One of the most critical gaps is the underrepresentation of research on developing countries, particularly in Africa. While studies on corporate decision-making in Western economies are abundant, fewer empirical works explore how institutional challenges, political instability, and resource constraints affect decision speed in low-income settings (Nadaf et al., 2024). Given that bureaucracy and administrative inefficiencies are key barriers to fast decision-making in these regions, further research is needed to develop context-specific frameworks for improving decision speed in public sector organizations (Serra et al., 2024).

Additionally, while the trade-off between speed and quality is frequently mentioned, there is limited quantitative evidence on optimal decision speed thresholds. Most studies acknowledge that too much speed can reduce thoroughness, but few provide empirical models to determine when decision acceleration becomes detrimental (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020). Developing predictive models that identify inflection points where speed shifts from beneficial to harmful would provide valuable guidance for decision-makers.

Another theoretical gap involves the integration of cognitive psychology into organizational decision-making research. While some works explore how leaders process information under time pressure, more studies are needed to understand how cognitive biases (e.g., overconfidence, anchoring, or groupthink) influence fast decision-making in organizational contexts (Calseyde, Evans, & Demerouti, 2020). Understanding these mechanisms could help firms design better decision protocols that mitigate cognitive distortions when making rapid choices.

Moreover, while Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Organizational Agility Theory are widely used to explain decision speed, there remains a lack of prescriptive frameworks detailing specific decision techniques, structures, or leadership practices that enhance speed without compromising effectiveness (Bratnicka-Myśliwiec et al., 2020). Future studies should aim to translate theory into actionable strategies, providing clear guidelines on how firms can institutionalize decision speed through organizational design, leadership training, and technology adoption.

Another area requiring further research is team-level decision-making speed. While most literature focuses on executive decision-making, there is limited empirical work on how frontline teams and operational managers balance speed and accuracy. Given that execution speed at the micro-level can significantly influence overall organizational responsiveness, expanding research on decision processes at different hierarchical levels would provide a more comprehensive view of decision-making speed (Jankelová & Joniaková, 2022).

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

***Implications for Theory*:** The findings of this review contribute significantly to strategic management theory by refining the understanding of how decision-making speed interacts with existing theoretical frameworks, particularly Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Organizational Agility Theory. Firstly, the evidence presented supports the argument that decision speed is a fundamental component of dynamic capabilities, reinforcing the view that timely responses to market and operational changes are a source of competitive advantage. As suggested by Teece et al. (2016), strong dynamic capabilities enable firms to sense opportunities, seize them efficiently, and reconfigure resources to maintain agility. Our synthesis shows that rapid decision-making is a manifestation of these processes, indicating that future theoretical models should explicitly incorporate decision speed as a measurable outcome of dynamic capabilities.

Moreover, our findings nuance Organizational Agility Theory by demonstrating that agility is not solely about speed but rather about balancing speed with deliberation. While agility is often framed as the ability to shift strategies quickly, our review suggests that judicious speed—knowing when to move fast and when to pause for deeper analysis—is a critical, yet underdeveloped, aspect of agility theory. This refinement aligns with recent scholarship on strategic agility, which emphasizes that highly adaptive firms deliberately govern the pace of decision-making to optimize performance across various scenarios.

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Additionally, our review highlights the importance of contextual adaptation of strategic management theories, particularly in the case of organizations operating in developing regions like West Africa. Existing theories—often developed based on Western corporate environments—may require modifications to account for factors such as institutional voids, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and cultural expectations around decision-making. For instance, dynamic capabilities in public sector organizations may be constrained by regulatory rigidity, necessitating a hybrid theoretical model that incorporates elements of institutional theory to explain variances in decision speed outcomes.

Furthermore, our findings reinforce the enduring relevance of Contingency Theory in strategic management. Rather than viewing decision speed as a universally beneficial trait, our synthesis underscores the need for context-dependent frameworks that consider moderating factors such as industry dynamism, decision complexity, and organizational structure. Future theoretical work should seek to formalize these contingencies by defining the optimal conditions under which decision speed contributes most to effectiveness.

Finally, behavioral decision-making theories could benefit from incorporating a time dimension, recognizing that organizations operate along a spectrum from hyper-comprehensive (slow but thorough) to hyper-heuristic (fast but intuitive) decision modes. By integrating cognitive psychology insights into strategic management, future research could explore how time constraints influence managerial cognition, risk assessment, and bias in decision-making.

Implications for Practice

From a practical standpoint, particularly for leaders and managers in healthcare and academic institutions in West Africa, this review highlights several actionable strategies to enhance decision-making speed while maintaining effectiveness.

Strategies for Enhancing Decision-Making Speed: Organizations can improve decision speed by adopting a structured yet flexible approach to decision-making. One effective method is streamlining approval hierarchies by delegating decision authority to lower levels where appropriate. By empowering mid-level managers or department heads to make routine decisions without excessive escalation, institutions can reduce bureaucratic delays and improve responsiveness. Another critical strategy is the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and decision frameworks for recurring decisions. For example, a hospital can establish an emergency procurement procedure that bypasses normal bureaucratic hurdles under predefined conditions, ensuring that urgent medical supplies can be acquired swiftly.

Organizations should also consider cross-functional decision teams that meet regularly to facilitate real-time decision-making. Cross-departmental collaboration can eliminate the inefficiencies caused by decisions bouncing between siloed departments. For urgent matters, setting up a "rapid response team" or crisis management unit with predefined authority to act quickly can significantly enhance agility. The use of technology is another powerful enabler of decision speed. Decision support systems, dashboards, and collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Slack can accelerate communication, ensuring that decision-makers have real-time access to critical data. Some organizations have adopted AI-driven decision-making tools to synthesize large volumes of information, enabling faster and more accurate decision-making.

Balancing Speed and Quality: While increasing decision speed is beneficial, organizations must safeguard decision quality to avoid hasty, ill-informed choices. One approach is the "Prepare Fast, Decide Slow" principle, where the initial stages of data collection and stakeholder input are expedited, but sufficient deliberation is ensured before finalizing critical decisions. A checkpoint system can be established to pause for quality verification at key stages of the decision-making process. For instance, before a university decides on a major policy change, an intermediate review can ensure that essential factors—such as financial feasibility and stakeholder buy-in—have been adequately considered.

Training leadership teams in decision-making under uncertainty can also improve decision quality. Techniques such as scenario planning can help managers anticipate multiple possible outcomes, ensuring they are prepared to act quickly without sacrificing analytical depth. Another best practice is conducting post-decision reviews, where teams assess the outcomes and effectiveness of past decisions. A structured review process allows organizations to learn from both successes and failures, refining their decision-making models over time.

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Addressing Resource Allocation Delays*:* Given that resource allocation bottlenecks are a significant impediment to decision speed in many West African institutions, targeted solutions are necessary. Organizations should revise procurement and budgeting processes to introduce more flexibility. For instance, hospitals could establish emergency procurement funds that department heads can access for urgent needs without requiring multiple levels of approval. Similarly, universities might allocate discretionary budgets to faculty heads, allowing them to address minor but urgent expenses without central administrative delays.

Process mapping can also help by identifying redundant or unnecessary steps in resource allocation workflows. By removing outdated procedures, institutions can cut decision time while maintaining accountability. The adoption of digital workflow systems can further accelerate decision cycles. An e-procurement system, for example, can automatically notify multiple decision-makers simultaneously, allowing for parallel approvals rather than linear, time-consuming review processes.

Another effective strategy is to establish service-level agreements (SLAs) within internal departments. If a university finance office commits to processing budget reallocation requests within a fixed timeframe (e.g., three business days), internal decision-making inefficiencies can be minimized. To maintain responsiveness, some organizations have introduced "decision clearance meetings", where leadership teams periodically review and expedite any stalled or delayed decisions. This prevents important requests from being buried in bureaucracy and ensures critical decisions are addressed in a timely manner. Finally, fostering a customer-service mindset within internal administrative functions can improve responsiveness. If finance, HR, and procurement teams treat faculty, medical staff, or project leads as internal customers, they are more likely to prioritize efficiency and minimize bureaucratic inertia.

9. CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings**:** This systematic review investigated the relationship between decision-making speed and organizational effectiveness, framed within the theoretical lenses of Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Organizational Agility Theory. The findings overwhelmingly suggest that increased decision-making speed positively influences multiple dimensions of organizational performance, including financial success, operational efficiency, innovation capacity, and stakeholder satisfaction. Organizations that cultivate rapid decision-making processes are often better equipped to capitalize on market opportunities, respond effectively to crises, and prevent the stagnation caused by excessive deliberation.

Empirical studies reviewed in this work affirm that firms with faster strategic decision-making processes tend to achieve superior growth and profitability, reinforcing the notion that speed confers a competitive advantage. The healthcare and education sectors, particularly in West African contexts, illustrate the profound effects of decision speed. Hospitals that swiftly reallocate resources, adopt new technologies, or modify patient care protocols often maintain higher service quality and efficiency. Similarly, universities that eliminate bureaucratic delays in faculty recruitment or research funding allocation tend to experience better academic and institutional outcomes.

Nevertheless, this review also highlights the importance of balance in decision-making speed. While speed enhances organizational agility, it must be tempered with analytical depth, inclusivity, and adaptability. Rushed decisions made without adequate information or stakeholder engagement can erode decision quality, cause strategic missteps, and undermine long-term effectiveness. Moreover, the benefits of decision speed are contingent upon environmental factors, with high-velocity industries benefiting more from rapid decision-making than stable ones.

A key insight from the review is that organizations can optimize decision speed by fostering a culture of agility. This involves implementing decentralized decision-making structures, leveraging technology for faster data processing, and empowering leadership teams to make timely yet well-informed choices. In the case of West African healthcare and academic institutions, the findings suggest that eliminating bureaucratic bottlenecks and streamlining administrative processes are crucial to unlocking the benefits of faster decision-making.

Recommendations for Future Research**:** Future research should focus on sector-specific studies in developing regions, particularly in West Africa, to understand how institutional voids, regulatory constraints, and political influences impact decision speed. Comparative studies between African and developed economies could reveal unique cultural and structural factors shaping decision effectiveness. Additionally, the role of AI-driven decision support

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systems and automation in optimizing speed warrants further investigation. Research should determine whether AI eliminates the trade-off between speed and accuracy or introduces new biases and risks. Another crucial area is the cognitive and behavioral aspects of rapid decision-making. Investigating how time pressure affects heuristics and whether training programs can mitigate biases would provide practical insights for decision-makers. Similarly, as remote work becomes more prevalent, studies should explore decision speed in virtual teams and whether digital communication tools enhance or impede decision efficiency. Addressing these gaps will enhance understanding of how organizations balance speed with decision quality, ensuring long-term performance and agility in evolving business environments.

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