**Strategic Leadership as a Catalyst for Competitiveness and Sustainability: A Study of Organizations in Kogi State**

**Abstract**

*This study focused on Strategic Leadership, Competitiveness and Organizational Sustainability of manufacturing Companies. The study assessed how strategic leadership affects competitiveness and organizational sustainability of manufacturing firms in Kogi State.**The specific dimensions of strategic leadership that were studied are strategic flexibility and strategic execution.**This study employed a survey research design. Fifty manufacturing companies were selected. The research employed 150 purposive samples. The study employed regression analysis. Finding showed that strategic flexibility has a significant effect on the competitiveness of manufacturing firms, and that strategic execution has a significant positive effect on the organizational sustainability of manufacturing firms. The study concluded that strategic leadership has a major effect on important organizational outcomes in manufacturing companies. The study recommended that manufacturing firms should invest in developing agile leadership and flexible decision-making structures that allow for quick adaptation to market changes. This study is relevant and timely because it addresses the urgent need for strategic leadership to improve sustainability and competitiveness among manufacturing companies in Kogi State, a region working to fortify its industrial growth in the face of environmental and economic obstacles.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Competitiveness, Organizational Sustainability, Strategic Flexibility, Strategic Execution

**Introduction**

Strategic leadership is essential to a company's success and long-term viability in the fiercely competitive and quickly changing industrial sector of today. Situated in the centre of Nigeria, Kogi State is home to a wide variety of manufacturing companies that make significant economic contributions to the state. Top management's actions, vision, and resource allocations have a big impact on these companies' lifespan and performance. Setting specific objectives, inspiring staff, and directing companies toward operational excellence and market relevance all depend on strategic leadership. For Kogi State's manufacturing companies to maintain growth and a competitive edge, it is essential to comprehend how strategic leadership affects them. Successful companies stand out from the competition due to their effective leadership, which also allows them to proactively adjust to shifting consumer needs.

Companies of all sizes are realizing that strategic leadership is a key component of organizational strategy as the business environment becomes more dynamic (Samimi et al., 2022). Artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics are just a few examples of the technological innovations that are changing sectors and requiring companies to use adaptive leadership strategies (Dagnaw, 2020; Nafiu et al., 2022; Xuan & Ness, 2023). Companies that successfully apply strategic leadership can use these advancements to promote resilience and growth. Visionary leadership has become crucial for identifying opportunities, fostering innovation, and navigating market challenges as global competition intensifies (Kumkale, 2022; Yardı & Aksöz, 2023). In this regard, Kogi State companies are able to predict trends, develop quickly, and increase their market share due to strategic leadership.

Strategic leadership is crucial for improving organizational goals. Companies that practice strategic leadership—through alignment, flexibility, execution, and orientation—see increases in performance, competitiveness, and sustainability (Kitonga, 2017; Nwachukwu & Vu, 2020; Yas et al., 2023). For example, Luftman et al. (2017) stress the importance of alignment in employee performance, whereas Bamel & Bamel (2018) associate strategic flexibility with competitiveness. Further evidence that strong leadership enhances performance and creativity comes from Nigerian studies (Egwakhe et al., 2019; Palladan et al., 2016).

Manufacturing companies are well-positioned to achieve sustainable growth if they implement strategic leadership techniques, which include establishing clear direction, nurturing talent, fostering ethical values, and imposing strategic control (Nafiu et al., 2019). Better workforce performance, enhanced market positioning, and more organizational resilience are all results of these strategies. Therefore, business leaders' strategic choices help individual companies and advance the region's industrial development and economic prosperity (Nafiu et al., 2023). In the end, Kogi State's manufacturing sector can undergo change and achieve long-term success through the use of strategic leadership. Thus, the research objectives are to assess how strategic leadership (with respect to strategic flexibility and strategic execution) affect competitiveness and organizational sustainability of manufacturing firms in Kogi State.

**Literature Review**

The ability of a leader to foresee future events, imagine potential outcomes, maintain flexibility, and enable others to carry out essential strategic adjustments is known as strategic leadership (Gupta, 2018). This strategy places a strong emphasis on innovation, proactive long-term thinking, and the ability to lead companies through uncertainty. Strategic leaders motivate their workers to adjust in line with company objectives in addition to spotting future chances and obstacles (Gakenia et al., 2017; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). The two key components of strategic leadership that are the subject of this study are strategic execution and strategic flexibility (Alayoubi et al., 2020; Nafiu et al., 2022; Nwachukwu & Vu, 2020). To guarantee that objectives are reached, strategic execution includes converting strategic purpose into workable plans, allocating resources effectively, and monitoring progress (Hunitie, 2018; Srivastava & Sushil, 2017). It necessitates efficient communication, dedication, and strong leadership.

Conversely, an organization's capacity to react quickly to both internal and external developments is known as strategic flexibility. It stresses flexibility, ongoing education, and resilience in unpredictable situations, in contrast to strict methods (Brozovic, 2016; Herhausen et al., 2020). It is crucial for managing today's changing corporate environment since it enables executives to change course, try new things, and match innovations with their main goals, as Ramukumba (2017) points out.

**Strategic Flexibility and Competitiveness of Firms**

In strategic management, strategic flexibility has grown in significance, especially for boosting companies' competitiveness in the complicated and turbulent business climate of today. This study looks at the relationship between organizational competitiveness and strategic flexibility. Fundamentally, strategic flexibility is the capacity of an organization to react quickly to changes in the external environment while maintaining internal unity (Szemz et al., 2022). It enhances companies' capacity to manage uncertainty by enabling them to proactively take advantage of opportunities and lessen risks (Bamel & Bamel, 2018; Chan et al., 2017).

By promoting experimentation and the creation of new goods, services, and business models, flexibility promotes innovation (Anning-Dorson & Nyamekye, 2020). Companies can adapt to shifting consumer expectations thanks to this inventive capacity, which offers them a competitive edge. To beat rivals and increase their market share, strategically adaptable businesses can swiftly reallocate resources and change operations (Ogbadu et al., 2017; Orugun et al., 2017; Sule & Nafiu, 2019). Additionally, by facilitating diversification and response to shocks like technological upheavals or economic downturns, strategic flexibility improves resilience and risk management.

**Strategic Execution and Organizational Sustainability of Firms**

The organizational viability of manufacturing companies is largely dependent on strategic execution (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017). Sustainability in this context refers to preserving a long-term equilibrium between social responsibility, environmental preservation, and economic growth (George et al., 2021; Yong et al., 2019). This study investigates the effect of effective strategy on promoting sustainable habits. By making sure that production, supply chains, and business practices follow ethical and environmental rules, a successful strategy connects everyday actions with sustainability goals.

Manufacturing companies can lessen their environmental impact, increase resource efficiency, and promote social welfare by incorporating sustainability into their daily operations. Engaging suppliers, partners, and communities is also essential for successful implementation to guarantee ethical sourcing and open procedures. Such action enhances brand reputation in addition to fostering resilience and competitiveness. According to Henao et al. (2018), strategic execution promotes continuous assessment and adjustment to market and regulatory shifts, which in turn stimulates innovation. For the benefit of the economy, the environment, and society, companies can use this knowledge to innovate goods, streamline operations, and implement new technology (Nafiu et al., 2020). Furthermore, strategic execution improves a company's crisis response capabilities by empowering it to take advantage of sustainability opportunities and manage risks with flexibility and foresight (Zhan, 2021).

**Methodology**

This study employed a survey research design. The purpose of this design is to collect firsthand information. The study focused on manufacturing companies in Nigeria's Kogi State. Owners and strategic executives of these companies, including managing directors, chief executive officers, and key decision-makers, participated in the study. 50 manufacturing companies were selected for the study. The research employed 150 purposive samples. As a key component of the research technique, the study used a well-constructed questionnaire. The use of content validity ensured that the survey instrument was relevant and in line with the objectives of the study. The content validity was ensured through the expertise of manufacturing gurus and academic scholars. Regression was the preferred technique for inferential analysis; however, the study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics in its data analysis.

**Data Analyses and Results**

**Table 1 Participants’ gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Male | 81 | 54.0 | 54.0 | 54.0 |
| Female | 69 | 46.0 | 46.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | **150** | **100.0** | **100.0** |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Table 1 displays the gender distribution of the research participants. Male participants made up 81 (54.0%) of the 150 respondents, while female participants made up 69 (46.0%). This data suggests that the gender representation is fairly balanced, with men slightly outnumbering women by 8%.

**Table 2 Participants’ age distribution**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | 18-20 years | 19 | 12.7 | 12.7 | 12.7 |
| 21-23 years | 64 | 42.7 | 42.7 | 55.3 |
| 24- 27 years | 48 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 87.3 |
| 28 years and above | 19 | 12.7 | 12.7 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | **150** | **100.0** | **100.0** |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Table 2 shows the participants' age distribution. Of the 150 responders, 64 participants (42.7%) are between the ages of 21 and 23. The next largest group, 48 participants (32.0%), are between the ages of 24 and 27. 19 participants (12.7%) are in the youngest age group, which is 18–20 years old, and the oldest age group, which is 28 years and above. This distribution suggests that the sample base is young, with the majority of participants being young people in their early to mid-twenties.

**Table 3 Participants’ level of education**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | OND/NCE | 50 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| HND | 53 | 35.3 | 35.3 | 68.7 |
| B.Sc | 29 | 19.3 | 19.3 | 88.0 |
| MBA/M.Sc | 17 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 99.3 |
| Ph.D | 1 | .7 | .7 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | **150** | **100.0** | **100.0** |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Table 3 presents the educational qualifications of the 150 study participants. The highest proportion of participants, 53 individuals (35.3%), hold a Higher National Diploma (HND), followed closely by 50 participants (33.3%) with an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or NCE. Additionally, 29 participants (19.3%) possess a bachelor's degree (B.Sc.), while 17 (11.3%) have a master’s certificate (MBA/M.Sc.). Only 1 participant (0.7%) holds a Ph.D. This distribution suggests that the majority of participants have attained tertiary education, particularly at the diploma level, indicating a reasonably educated participant group.

**Table 4 Participants’ work experience**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | below 1 year | 7 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.7 |
| 1-5 years | 77 | 51.3 | 51.3 | 56.0 |
| 6-11 years | 54 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 92.0 |
| above 11 years | 12 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Table 4 shows the distribution of the 150 participants' employment experience. Most of the participants, 77 (51.3%), had between one and five years of job experience, while 54 (36.0%) had between six and eleven years. Seven participants (4.7%) have less than a year of experience, while a smaller percentage, 12 people (8.0%), have worked for more than 11 years. This distribution reveals that the majority of the sample's participants are in their early to mid-career stages, indicating a workforce that includes both emerging and somewhat seasoned professionals.

**Table 5 Model summary on strategic flexibility and competitiveness of manufacturing firms**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .907a | .823 | .822 | .58299 |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Flexibility; Dependent Variable: Competitiveness

**Table 6 ANOVA on strategic flexibility and competitiveness of manufacturing firms**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 234.691 | 1 | 234.691 | 690.511 | .000b |
| Residual | 50.302 | 148 | .340 |  |  |
| Total | 284.993 | 149 |  |  |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

**Table 7 Coefficients on strategic flexibility and competitiveness of manufacturing firms**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
| B | Std. Error | Beta |
| 1 | (Constant) | .600 | .126 |  | 4.756 | .000 |
| Strategic Flexibility | .858 | .033 | .907 | 26.278 | .000 |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

The results presented in Tables 5 through 7 offer thorough statistical support for the idea that strategic flexibility affects manufacturing companies' ability to compete. With an R-squared of 0.823, Table 5 demonstrates a very strong positive correlation (R = 0.907) between strategic flexibility and competitiveness, meaning that strategic flexibility alone accounts for almost 82.3% of the variance in competitiveness. The standard error of 0.58299 shows a respectable degree of accuracy in the model's predictions, and the adjusted R-squared of 0.822 demonstrates that this association is still strong even after correcting for potential flaws.

Table 6 displays the ANOVA results, which evaluate the regression model's overall significance. The regression model appears to be statistically significant based on the p-value (Sig.) of 0.000 being less than 0.05 and the noticeably high F-value of 690.511. This result indicates that one independent variable that greatly influences the prediction of manufacturing companies' competitiveness is strategic flexibility. Additional evidence for the model's explanatory power comes from the low residual sum of squares (50.302) in comparison to the regression sum of squares (234.691).

Lastly, the analysis in Table 7 shows that the unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.858) means that if everything else stays the same, competitiveness increases by about 0.858 units for each unit increase in strategic flexibility. The significance level (p = 0.000) and t-value of 26.278 attest to the highly significant and positive effect of strategic flexibility on competitiveness. These results essentially imply that manufacturing companies are far more likely to preserve or improve their competitive edge in dynamic market settings when they implement flexible strategic methods.

**Table 8 Model summary on strategic execution and organizational sustainability**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .788a | .621 | .619 | .78136 |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Execution; Dependent Variable: Organizational Sustainability

**Table 9 ANOVA on strategic execution and organizational sustainability**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 148.235 | 1 | 148.235 | 242.796 | .000b |
| Residual | 90.359 | 148 | .611 |  |  |
| Total | 238.593 | 149 |  |  |  |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

**Table 10 Coefficients on strategic execution and organizational sustainability**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| B | Std. Error | Beta |
| 1 | (Constant) | .290 | .193 |  | 1.501 | .135 |
| Strategic execution | .818 | .053 | .788 | 15.582 | .000 |

Source: SPSS Version 25.0

Tables 8–10 give a clear picture of how organizational sustainability and strategic execution relate to each other in manufacturing companies. Table 8 demonstrates that there is a substantial positive association between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.788. Strategic execution account for 62.1% of the variation in organizational sustainability, according to the R-squared value of 0.621. The standard error of 0.78136 falls within an acceptable range, indicating moderate variability in prediction, while the adjusted R-squared of 0.619, which accounts for the number of predictors, validates the model's robustness.

Table 9 displays the results of the ANOVA test, which evaluates the regression model's statistical significance. The model is statistically significant at the 5% level, according to the F-statistic value of 242.796 and the p-value of 0.000. This result demonstrates how important strategic execution is to the long-term viability of organizations. In support of the model's overall strength and explanatory power, the regression sum of squares (148.235) is much larger than the residual sum (90.359). These results emphasize how crucial it is to translate strategic ideas into practical measures to ensure long-term viability.

According to Table 10, the coefficient for strategic execution is 0.818, which indicates that an anticipated 0.818 units rise in organizational sustainability corresponds to every unit increase in strategic execution. A p-value of 0.000 and a matching t-value of 15.582 verify that this effect is statistically significant. The high beta coefficient (0.788) shows that strategic execution greatly helps improve sustainability results, even though the constant term is not statistically significant (p = 0.135). This implies that companies are more likely to function sustainably in terms of the environment, society, and economy if they successfully implement and track their strategies.

**Discussion**

Finding shows that strategic flexibility has a significant effect on the competitiveness of manufacturing firms. The finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of adaptability in dynamic market environments. Prior studies, such as those by Alzoraiki et al. (2024) and Dong (2024), argue that strategic flexibility enables firms to respond swiftly to environmental changes, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and mitigate risks, thereby strengthening competitive positioning (Sule & Nafiu, 2019). Similarly, Adomako et al. (2021) and Nafiu et al. (2022) posits that flexible resource allocation and rapid decision-making are critical for sustaining competitive advantage in volatile industries. This study reinforces these insights by empirically validating the positive relationship between strategic flexibility and competitiveness in the Nigerian manufacturing context. It supports the notion that firms with agile leadership and responsive planning systems outperform less adaptable counterparts.

Finding shows that strategic execution has a significant positive effect on the organizational sustainability of manufacturing firms. The finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of effectively translating strategic plans into actionable outcomes. Scholars such as Alkhodary (2023) and Shaik et al. (2024) emphasized that organizations with strong execution capabilities are better positioned to achieve long-term sustainability by aligning operations with strategic goals. Similarly, Orugun et al. (2017) argued that execution, more than formulation, is often the deciding factor in realizing strategic objectives and sustaining organizational performance over time. This result aligns with studies by Ogbadu et al. (2017) and Nafiu et al. (2022), which assert that firms integrating execution with social and environmental goals tend to enjoy improved stakeholder trust, resource efficiency, and resilience. The current study affirms these findings within the context of manufacturing firms in Kogi State, suggesting that leadership focus on implementation—through adequate resource allocation, monitoring systems, and accountability—significantly enhances sustainability outcomes.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has shown that strategic leadership has a major effect on important organizational outcomes in manufacturing companies. In particular, strategic execution promotes sustainability, and strategic flexibility boosts competitiveness. These results highlight how crucial proactive, flexible, and well-executed leadership techniques are to long-term success. Manufacturing companies can maintain competitive advantages and more successfully traverse complicated business situations by coordinating leadership practices with organizational goals.

**Recommendations**

The study recommends that:

1. Manufacturing firms should invest in developing agile leadership and flexible decision-making structures that allow for quick adaptation to market changes. This includes scenario planning, continuous environmental scanning, and empowering cross-functional teams to respond promptly to shifts in consumer demand and industry trends.
2. Leaders should prioritize the effective implementation of strategic plans by ensuring clear communication, resource availability, and performance monitoring. Firms should also integrate sustainability metrics into strategic initiatives to align daily operations with long-term environmental, social, and economic objectives.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

The authors hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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