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# Unveiling the Influence of Strategic Management Processes on Organizational Performance: The Mediating Role of Organizational Leadership

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## **Abstract**

*This empirical study examines Strategic Management (SM) processes and their impact on Organizational Performance (OP) and the mediating role of Organizational Leadership (OL) between SM processes and OP. A quantitative methodology was used through an online survey targeting managers at different managerial levels in Jordanian universities. A total of 148 questionnaires were analyzed using the Smart PLS software. The outcomes reveal that OL mediates the relationship between Environmental Scanning (ES), Strategy Evaluation (SE), and OP. However, the mediating role of OL between Strategy Formulation (SF), Strategy Implementation (SI), and OP has not been proven. These results also revealed that OL had a direct effect on OP. The importance of OL in OP is highlighted in this study, along with the fact that OL's role should not be restricted to formulating a strategy by establishing a vision, mission, and strategic goals. Instead, it ought to be broadened to incorporate attentive and knowledgeable engagement in interpreting the environment and inspiring, guiding, and obligatory engagement. This emphasizes the importance of considering the role of OL in the execution and assessment of strategic activities, as well as their initial conceptualization.*

**Keywords:** *organizational leadership, strategic management, organizational performance.*

## **1. Introduction**

The relationship between strategic management (SM) and organizational performance (OP) has been extensively studied in various contexts. Previous studies have emphasized the significant influence of strategy on OP (Kornelius et al. 2021). Additionally, Muogbo (2013) emphasized the interplay between SM and OP, noting that the effective implementation of SM has a substantial impact on factors such as effectiveness, productivity, employees, and the work environment. To enhance OP, improve efficiency, and establish a coherent framework for company activities, modern businesses should consider SM a standard managerial technique, as suggested by George et al. (2019). To achieve the advantages of implementing SM, several factors need to be considered, including the level of commitment from management, the clarity

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of strategic plans, and the corresponding action plans.

Furthermore, effective organizational leadership plays a crucial role in the implementation of strategic management (SM) by promoting collaboration, inspiring and guiding groups to embrace and execute strategic actions and overseeing the continuous strategic efforts encompassing Environmental Scanning (ES), Strategy Formulation (SF), Strategy Implementation (SI), and Strategy Evaluation (SE). Al-Dhaafri and Alosani (2021) and Alhawamdeh and Alsmairat (2019) emphasized the significance of organizational leadership in ensuring the success of SM. It is imperative to bridge the gap between thinking, planning, and action in order to attain desired business objectives, and business leaders bear the responsibility of facilitating this process (Fairholm, 2009).

However, diverse organizations have actively undertaken efforts to devise future plans. Strategic management (SM) has witnessed extensive scholarly contributions through research papers, conference papers, and books, with the aim of assisting companies in adopting systematic and scientific approaches to their SM practices. Nevertheless, it can be contended that many Arab organizations have not fully harnessed the potential of their significant and resource-intensive strategic endeavors, despite recognizing and acknowledging the added value of SM processes in numerous scenarios. This finding suggests the existence of unidentified barriers that hinder these firms from realizing the expected benefits of their strategic initiatives, necessitating further research and exploration.

The missing-point theory of SM is suggested in this investigation. Based on rational and experience-based hypotheses, an empirical attempt is made to determine the influence of SL as a mediating enabler that can strengthen the significant interaction between well-established SM processes, including ES, SF, SI, SE, and OP, which serve as the primary engines for all organizational strategic endeavors. This study argues that the mediating impact of effective leadership on the relationship between SM processes and OP requires further research, particularly in the context of Arab organizations. Kafetzopoulos et al. (2022) determined that leadership is instrumental in organizational performance by enabling adaptation to competitive environments, thereby creating a foundation for enhanced performance. Several authors, including (Mai et al. 2022; Dahleez and Abdelmuniem. 2022; AlAnazi et al., 2022; Paudel, 2019) endorse the notion that leadership can positively impact OP. Nonetheless, there are few empirical studies on the role of leadership in enhancing business performance, and this has been noted as an area that requires future research (Kafetzopoulos et al. 2022; Son et al., 2020).

This gap is extremely significant because the direction of an organization is determined by its effective leadership. (George et al., 2019), extensively affects strategic actions (Katsaros et al., 2020), and plays an essential role in enforcing the commitment to adopting organizational strategies (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). Many researchers have also pointed out the need for a deeper investigation of the effect of specific variables that mediate SM and OP, creating further bridges in organizational and leadership theory (Bolatan, 2022; Soewarno and Tjahjadi, 2020). One crucial mediating factor may be OL, which is crucial for a variety of businesses, is growing in importance, and has become a crucial component of OP in a number of different industries. Nevertheless, research on the impact of OL as a mediator between SM and OP remains underexplored.

This study aims to address the aforementioned research gaps by offering a novel perspective that helps better understand the interactions among the SM process, OL, and OP. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The theoretical background and the research hypotheses are

outlined in the following sections. The methods are discussed in Section 3. The findings, discussion, implications, and suggestions for future research are presented in Section 4.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Strategy refers to the decision to do one thing over another or to develop one skill over another. A sound strategy focuses on several objectives. One of the toughest, yet most significant, challenges for any firm is determining its top priorities in a specific competitive environment (Hughes et al., 2011). One feature makes it difficult to pinpoint the numerous variables that appear to be important to the OP. Simply put, strategy is the path from one place to another, and from the present to a more advantageous future position. According to Wheelen et al. (2017), the process of achieving alignment between the elements of internal and external organizational environments. Practically, SM is the process of achieving desired goals using a long-term planning tool to foster organizational resilience and gain a competitive edge (Kulkarni et al., 2020). SM is a continuous process that analyzes and controls the markets and industries in which an organization operates and involves strategic thinking to compete in the marketplace (Vitolla et al. 2017). Pollard and Hotho (2006) pointed out that SM is becoming an essential component of business operations because of growing competition. The SM process includes planning, formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Kazmi 2008). According to Stevenson (2012), developing a strategy entail creating a long-term plan that encompasses the company's mission, goals, and policies.

The methods of implementing a strategy are referred to as implementation. It starts with projects in accordance with strategic organizational strategies (Wheelen et al. 2017). For an organization to accomplish the desired results, it is essential to establish and investigate the precise requirements that must be met (Salkic, 2014). Many people believe that putting the strategy into practice after it has existed only on paper and, in theory, is the most unpredictable worry because this is where the true change will begin. Strategic leaders that can support and mentor all organizational members are needed to navigate this change. Lack of focus, direction, and support are significant issues raised in relation to strategy implementation, which raises questions regarding the efficacy of organizational leadership at all levels of management, including senior management, functional levels, supervisory levels, and operational levels. To bolster this claim, leadership is defined as a process through which leaders engage with their followers, shape their actions, and inspire them to attain the best possible results (Northouse 2010). According to a study by George et al. (2019), OL is a vital component of successful organizations and improves performance.

Accordingly, strategic evaluation must be a continuous process for the successful execution of a strategy and to spot changes in the internal and external environments (Wheelen et al. 2017). The goal of the strategic evaluation process is to gauge the obligation and absorbcency of environmental change. Therefore, any business that intends to distinguish its performance should formulate, implement, and evaluate its strategic plans and directions effectively and efficiently. Without the assistance and guidance of capable leaders, the success of strategic decisions appears shaky. Myers et al. (2012) have shown that SM aids and enables top management to stand out from rivals, meet consumer wants, win a large market share, and efficiently utilize organizational resources. An organization can gain several advantages from systematic strategic initiatives, including the development of its mission and vision, adaptation to the environment, and achievement of goals in a comprehensive, manageable, and controlled

manner (Barbosa et al., 2020).

This study argues that strategic planning alone does not have real value, unless it is supported by effective leadership, particularly in cases involving radical changes. OL is essential in all SM phases to ensure the involvement of all organizational members in environmental scanning, create a conducive environment for collective and participative efforts, and provide direction and motivation during uncertain times. Consequently, effective and simultaneous management of SM processes is necessary.

Numerous studies have been conducted on effective leadership, but no consensus has been reached. OL appears to involve a delicate balance of traits, skills, behaviors, and situational aspects (Northouse, 2016). There is no clear-cut formula for becoming an effective leader. Muriithi (2015) defined leadership effectiveness as a leader's ability to exert personal influence and skills to achieve set objectives. Prior research has emphasized the supportive and directive roles of leaders. For the purposes of this study, OL is viewed as leadership that provides both support and direction to employees throughout the SM processes. Scholars explored the association between SM and various organizational perspectives. These perspectives include SM and firm profitability (Doktoralina and Apollo, 2019; Abdelmoneim and Jones, 2014); organizational change (Maiga, 2015; Alsharari, 2023); employee engagement (Kulkarni et al. 2020; Taneja et al. 2015); and decision-making (Plenkina et al. 2018; Sinnaiah et al. 2023).

Agwu (2018) examines how SM affects SMEs' operating profits in Nigeria. He highlights the value of SM in raising the OP of SMEs. He emphasized that for an SME to succeed in its industry, it must not only clearly identify its vision and goal but also carefully implement SM principles to enhance its overall operating performance and gain an advantage over rival companies. Similarly, Omsa et al. (2018) examined how SM processes affect the OP of SMEs in Indonesia. Their research showed that SM activities, such as SF, SI, and SE, have a favorable and major impact on sales volume and profitability. Khan and Huda (2016) conducted research to determine how SM affects the performance of Pakistani health care institutions. Similarly, SM has been recognized as essential and required to gain an edge over rivals, become more aggressive in the market, boost overall performance, and ultimately improve organizational development. Monday et al. (2015) examined the influence of SM on OP and found that SM had significant effects on the profitability and OP of the chosen manufacturing firms. This study was conducted to provide additional data on the effects of SM on the manufacturing industry's performance. In addition, there was a correlation between SM and competitiveness. The impact of alignment strategy on the performance of Jordanian banks was also studied by Tawaha (2015). He once again stressed on the link between OP and strategic alignment. In their investigation of the interaction between SM and OP, Mogadishu et al. (2015) figure out the same conclusions.

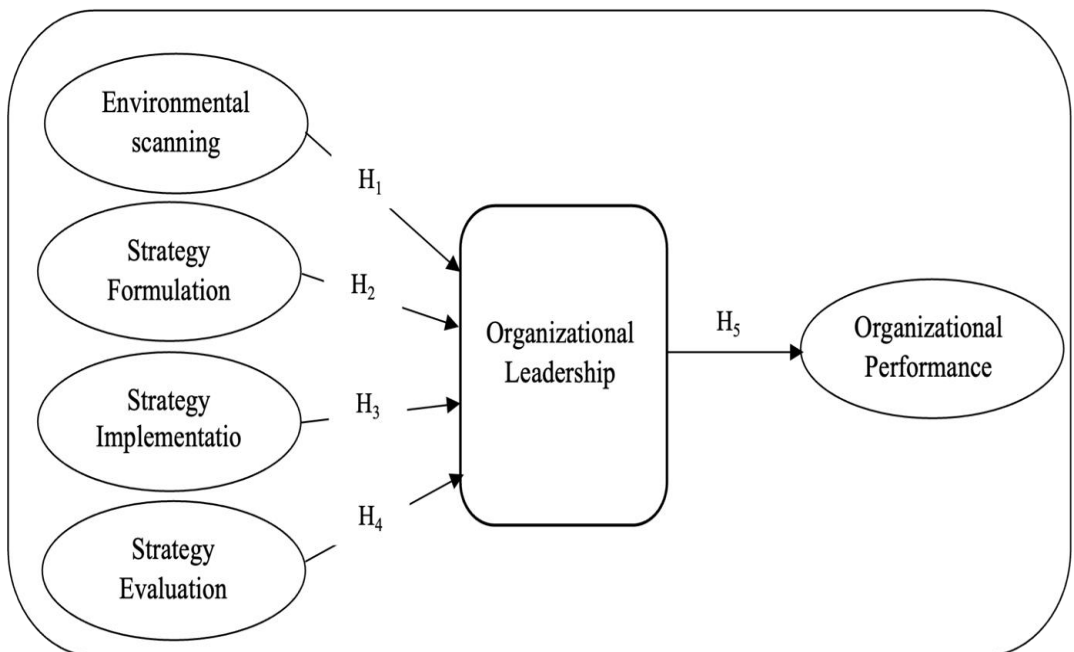
Regarding the mediating role of OL, Alagaraja et al. (2015) conducted a study examining the influence of leadership as a mediator between OP and human resource managers. Their findings suggest that OP is influenced by both leadership and people management techniques as they play a substantial role in forecasting the relationship between strategic value and OP. Regarding the link between strategic human resource management and business performance, Loshali and Krishnan (2013) investigated the mediating effect of transformational leadership. According to their results, transformational leadership and strategic human resources can raise employees' ambitions and expectations in line with corporate goals, increase organizational commitment, and encourage employees to give them all. These factors work together to increase overall OP. An examination of the existing literature indicates that the majority of

these investigations have focused on analyzing the impact of SM on OP. However, the significance of organizational learning (OL) as a mediating element can further establish and explain the relationship between various organizational aspects and OP has only recently been examined. This study seeks to bridge this gap by using OL as a bridge between SM and OP. According to this study, good leadership, which can make quick strategic decisions and offer motivation and inspiration, can improve OP by boosting OL.

Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that:

- **H1:** *OL mediates the relationship between ES and OP.*
- **H2:** *OL mediates the relationship between SF and OP.*
- **H3:** *OL mediates the relationship between SI and OP.*
- **H4:** *OL mediates the relationship between SE and OP.*
- **H5:** *OL has a significant statistical impact on OP.*

The following study model was proposed to test these hypotheses.



**Figure (1)** Research Model.

### 3. Research Methodology

Literature related to the SM process, OL, and OP was reviewed to identify the measurement scale. A structured modified survey was conducted. Data were collected using a conventional sampling technique. The target population comprised Jordanian public universities (11). The main reason for selecting public universities in Jordan is that public universities are considered a critical component of the country's education system and play a vital role in the development of the country. Therefore, understanding the strategic management processes and leadership of these institutions is crucial to the overall development of the country. The target sample of

this study comprised the strategic, operational, and departmental managers of these universities. An online survey based on a five-point Likert scale was developed, and 380 managers were contacted via email; 148 responded with a response rate of 38.9%.

The participants were distributed in terms of sex, age, and level of education. A total of 72.3% of the participants were men and 27.7% were women. This suggests that the sample had a substantial gender imbalance; the majority of participants (59.9%) were over the age of 41, according to the age distribution. Participants under 30 years of age comprised only 10.2% of the sample, while those between 31 and 40 years of age accounted for 29.9%. Most participants (86.9%) had postgraduate degrees in education, including master's degrees and PhDs. Among the participants, only a small percentage (8.0%) had a bachelor's degree, and an even smaller percentage (5.1%) had only high school diplomas or less.

- **Data Analysis**

Statistical analyses were performed using SEM-PLS. PLS-SEM is a well-known, trustworthy, and effective tool for the analysis and evaluation of the data acquired for this investigation. According to Hair et al. (2017), this method is frequently employed to measure the strength and relevance of the complicated interactions among variables. SEM uses latent constructs and many indicators to quantify each construct, providing a more accurate depiction of the underlying relationships between the variables (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, the use of Smart PLS 3 enabled the analysis of both the direct and indirect impacts of SM processes and OL on OP as well as the mediating function of OL in the interaction between SM processes and OP. Specifically, the measurement and structural models were measured.

- **Validity and Reliability**

The scale's internal consistency was investigated using the widely used Cronbach's alpha to examine its intrinsic internal reliability. (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Sekaran (2016) suggests that the alpha threshold should be equal to 0.60. The results revealed that the alpha coefficients had strong internal reliability within an acceptable range (0.870–0.930). This study followed the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2017) to establish convergent and discriminant validities. Factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess the convergent validity. Hair et al. (2006) stated that an internal reliability greater than 0.7 is regarded as good. The CR values in this study ranged from 0.912–0.952. The AVE value, which represents the variance explained in the indicators by their associated variables, while allowing for measurement error, was also utilized as a convergent validity test. Hair et al. (2010) stated that an acceptable AVE value should be greater than 0.5, which is valid for all the AVE values in our investigation.

Factor loading was also used to assess convergent validity. All item loadings in this study were greater than 0.6, exceeding the minimum level of 0.5 that is recommended (Hair et al., 2010), indicating acceptable factor loading. Convergent validity is a crucial aspect of construct validity that assesses the degree to which the measurements of a construct are related. Convergent validity can be tested by examining the factor loading of each item on the construct. Hair et al. (2010) recommended a minimum factor loading of 0.5 for acceptable convergent validity. Convergent validity was assessed by computing factor loadings for each item. The findings showed that all the item loadings were higher than the

suggested value of 0.6 and above, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity ( Table 1 and Figure 2). These findings suggest that the measures used in this study are reliable and valid indicators of underlying constructs.

**Table (1):** Measurement Model Indicators

Mean	Factor loading	Items	Constructs
3.379	0.852	ES1	ES (Alpha=0.893; CR=0.899; AVE=0.700)
3.283	0.796	ES2	
3.441	0.802	ES3	
3.276	0.905	ES4	
3.441	0.824	ES5	
3.538	0.872	SF1	SF (Alpha=0.906; CR=0.927; AVE=0.680)
3.572	0.761	SF2	
3.503	0.840	SF3	
3.166	0.817	SF4	
3.283	0.791	SF5	
3.455	0.862	SF6	
3.572	0.858	SI1	SI (Alpha=0.869; CR=0.911; AVE=0.720)
3.269	0.854	SI2	
3.166	0.896	SI3	
3.552	0.782	SI4	
3.31	0.903	SE1	SE (Alpha=0.879; CR=0.917; AVE=0.735)
3.621	0.789	SE2	
3.4	0.832	SE3	
3.303	0.900	SE4	
3.076	0.840	OL1	OL (Alpha=0.904; CR=0.905; AVE=0.733)
3.317	0.841	OL2	
3.048	0.796	OL3	
3.186	0.894	OL4	
3.117	0.877	OL5	
3.112	0.882	OP1	OP (Alpha=0.925; CR=0.929; AVE=0.769)
3.223	0.891	OP2	
3.248	0.850	OP3	
3.401	0.895	OP4	
3.467	0.866	OP5	

Reliability and validity tests for the proposed model constructs showed significant internal consistency and convergence. These results provide the researcher with the confidence to proceed with further analysis of the proposed model. The goodness-of-fit indices suggested by Hair et al. (2017) were used to evaluate the model's fit. These indices included the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ , if  $p < 0.05$ ), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (0.08), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) (0.80). The goodness-of-

fit index scores were SRMR= 0.078 and NFI= 0.927, indicating that the suggested model and data fit each other well. These results indicate that the proposed model provides an adequate representation of the underlying data and can be used for further analysis.

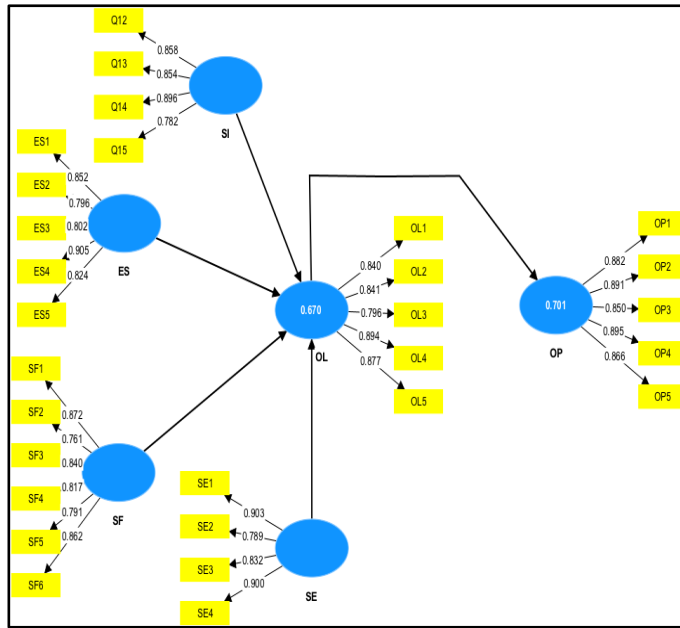


Figure (2): Measurement model with R<sup>2</sup> and Factor Loadings.

• Hypotheses Testing

Statistical analysis was used to evaluate the hypotheses and determine how OL mediates the relationships between ES, SF, SI, SE, and OP. Hypothesis 1 predicted that OL would mediate the relationship between ES and OP, which was confirmed by analysis with a significant outcome (t = 1.966, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Conversely, Hypotheses 2 and 3 predicted that OL mediates the relationships between SF and OP, SI, and OP. However, the analysis results failed to conform to these predictions, with t values of 1.807 and 1.309, respectively, and  $\rho > 0.05$ . Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 are rejected. The analysis that produced a significant result (t=2.504, p < 0.05) supported H4, which claimed that OL has a strong mediating influence between SE and OP. Finally, Hypothesis 5 predicted a direct impact of OL on OP, and the analysis results supported and confirmed this prediction with a high t-value of 29.224 and p < 0.05. Hence, Hypothesis 5 is supported. Table 2 and Figure 2 summarize the results.

Table (2): Hypothesis Results.

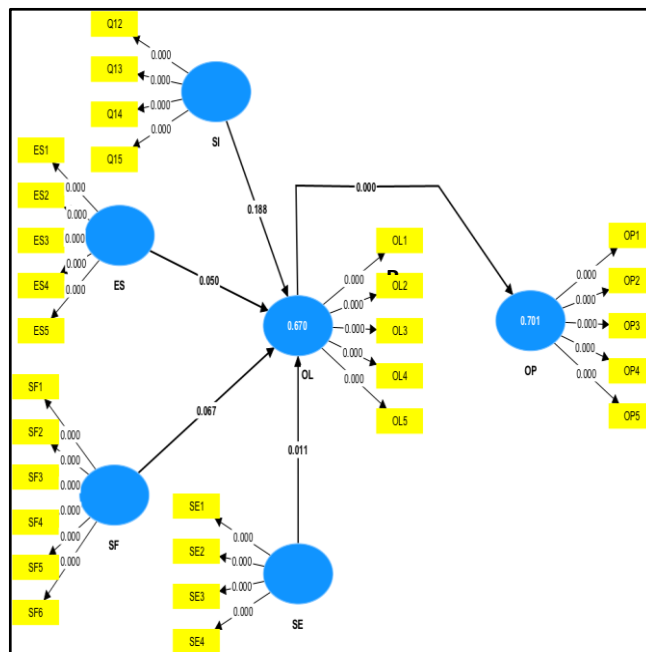
Path (hypothesis)	coefficient	S D	T Statistics	P Values
→ → H1: ES OL OP	0.167	0.085	1.966	0.049
→ → H2: SF OL OP	0.184	0.102	1.807	0.071



→→→	H3: SI	0.13	0.0	1.309	0.191
OL	OP		99		
→→→	H4: SE	0.255	0.1	2.504	0.012
OL	OP		02		
→	H5: OL	0.837	0.0	29.224	0.000
	OP		29		

#### 4. Discussion

In our current investigation, we explored how SM impacts OP and the mediating role of OL. Our findings revealed that OL plays a mediating role in the relationship between ES and OP ( $t = 1.966, p < 0.05$ ). ES is a vital component of SM because it provides valuable insights into factors that could affect an organization's future. Although it may not be entirely accurate to claim that ES directly leads to improved OP, as performance is influenced by multiple factors (Zhang, 2011), it does have a significant effect on how well an organization's strategy aligns with its environment. As such, it is crucial for leaders to gather all necessary information from both internal and external sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their organization's current state. To generate a comprehensive SWOT analysis, it is essential to accurately, thoroughly, and promptly identify all relevant environmental factors. Failure to do so may negatively impact an organization's responsiveness to its environment, which, as this study suggests, ultimately affects OP. An open, dynamic, and participatory OL approach is necessary to involve all employees in an extensive ES process.



**Figure (3):** Hypothesis Results.

The findings also indicated that OL did not play a mediating role in the relationships between SF, SI, SE, and OP. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that ES and SE directly influenced OL. To effectively maintain a strong dedication to strategic organizational activities, evaluating

ES should be an ongoing process that constantly monitors and assesses the environment to adapt activities to changing dynamics. Effective leadership is crucial for fostering commitment and flexibility. To achieve the desired outcomes of an organizational strategy and its potential impact on OP, a high level of commitment is essential. This commitment can be ensured through leaders' follow-up and intervention efforts, as well as a dependable reporting system. The adaptability of the organization depends on the presence of a supportive leadership style, which is a vital element that promotes seamless and fluid adjustment to new pressures (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Furthermore, this study supports our prediction ( $t=29.224, p < 0.05$ ) by demonstrating a direct effect of OL on OP. This finding was supported by the results of numerous studies. Para-González et al. (2018) claimed that a leader's style can result in synergies between HRM, learning, and innovation, which they claimed had an impact on performance. To support this claim, Farooq Sahibzada et al. (2021) examine the connections between knowledge-oriented leadership, knowledge worker satisfaction, knowledge worker production, and OP. They showed that knowledge-oriented leadership has a considerable influence on the productivity and content of knowledge workers, eventually boosting OP. Rahman et al. (2018) further highlight the strong connection between OL and OP's strategic direction. Khajeh (2018) went into further detail regarding the connection between leadership and OP philosophies. In his conclusion, he found that transformational, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles are positively associated with OP, whereas charismatic, bureaucratic, and transactional leadership styles are negatively correlated with OP.

## **5. Implications and Conclusion**

The study has implications for organizations of different types, which should consider the availability of effective leaders to facilitate the development and implementation of organizational strategies that create synergy and value addition. Leadership development programs that foster specific competencies are necessary to enhance OP, particularly in relation to transformative SM processes such as ES and SE. Managers should also be aware that leadership skills and qualities impact transformative SM processes.

Other additional implications that can be drawn from the study:

1. The importance of communication: Effective communication is critical for ensuring that the organizational strategy is clearly understood by all members of the organization. Leaders need to be able to communicate their vision, goals, and objectives in a way that resonates with their team members. This requires good communication skills, as well as the ability to adapt communication styles to suit different audiences.
2. The need for collaboration: Effective collaboration between different departments and teams is necessary for successful organizational strategy implementation. Leaders need to encourage a collaborative culture and provide the necessary resources and support to enable effective collaboration. This requires building trust, establishing clear communication channels, and fostering a culture of openness and transparency.
3. The importance of continuous learning: In a rapidly changing business environment, continuous learning is essential for organizations to remain competitive. Leaders need to promote a culture of learning and development, where employees are encouraged to acquire new skills and knowledge. This requires providing training opportunities, encouraging knowledge sharing, and creating an environment where learning is valued.
4. The need for flexibility: Organizational strategies need to be flexible and adaptable to

changing circumstances. Leaders need to be able to adjust strategies quickly and effectively in response to changes in the business environment. This requires a willingness to take risks, a focus on innovation, and the ability to think creatively.

5. The significance of employee engagement: Engaged employees are more productive, more innovative, and more committed to the organization's goals. Leaders need to create an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and appreciated. This requires providing opportunities for employee input, recognizing and rewarding good performance, and promoting a culture of inclusiveness and diversity.

In conclusion, the Missing Point Theory is a theoretical framework that suggests that organizational leadership serves as a mediator between strategic management processes and organizational performance. This theory emphasizes the importance of effective leadership in successfully implementing strategic plans and achieving desirable outcomes in organizations. Specifically, it proposes that strategic management processes, such as planning, implementation, and evaluation, can only lead to improved organizational performance if they are accompanied by effective leadership practices.

According to this theory, organizational leaders could shape organizational culture, motivate employees, and foster innovation and creativity. Effective leaders are able to align the organization's vision and mission with its strategic objectives and communicate these goals clearly to all stakeholders. They are also able to identify and overcome obstacles that may hinder the organization's progress towards achieving its strategic objectives.

Therefore, the Missing Point Theory suggests that organizations should focus not only on developing and implementing effective strategic management processes, but also on cultivating and nurturing strong leadership capabilities at all levels of the organization. By doing so, organizations can create a culture that values and prioritizes strategic thinking, planning, and execution, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance and success.

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