

The impact of strategic flexibility on entrepreneurial performance: a field study in the faculties of the University of Baghdad

By

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Abstract

This study highlights the impact of strategic flexibility on entrepreneurial performance in the faculties of the University of Baghdad in Iraq. The practical side targeted to know this effect by analyzing the dimensions of strategic flexibility as an independent variable on entrepreneurial performance as a dependent variable. Also, the field study was used and applied to a sample of deans and assistant deans and heads of departments in the faculties of the University of Baghdad, and the number of the sample was (174), and the data was collected by means of a questionnaire. All the tables in this work are prepared by the researcher unless stated otherwise.

Keywords: strategic flexibility, entrepreneurial performance

Introduction

This research paper shed discusses the strategic flexibility as it has great impact and repercussions in developing the field reality and achieving the pioneering performance of the faculties of the University of Baghdad. It is a field for the practical side, because of its importance in achieving local development in the country. Based on this perception, the following has been proposed:

First, the study methodology

The study Problem

The plans followed by the University of Baghdad in its faculties must be characterized by strategic flexibility, because the Iraqi environment is unstable in all political, economic, health, and even technological aspects. This requires a quick response and adaptation, with the changing environment with time and speed, the right ones. Therefore, the issue of the research is embedded in the need of the faculties at the University of Baghdad to activate the role of strategic flexibility in the face of the difficulties and challenges of the current time and its reflection in fulfilling ground-breaking performance and enhancing the pioneering status of the university. The features of the field issue are framed through the following question:

What is the effect of strategic flexibility on the entrepreneurial performance in the faculties of the University of Baghdad?

Study Hypothesis

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, there was a need to formulate one main hypothesis, represented in:

- There is a statistically significant effect of strategic flexibility on entrepreneurial performance.

The importance of the study

The significance of research, generally, lies in the benefits achieved, as a result of its application, and the extent of its contribution to the development of the field of research, as its importance can be manifested through the following axes:

- 1) The research sought to select the University of Baghdad, which plays a vital role in Iraqi education and is considered a primary source of providing educational service to the Iraqi community.
- 2) An organizational culture is established among the research sample, with the significance of strategic flexibility, and its effective impact on the pioneering performance of the faculties of the University of Baghdad.
- 3) The current research is a scientific contribution, in its attempt to provide an information base that can be employed, in the faculties of the University of Baghdad to update their methods of work. It aims to face current and future changes, by arousing their motivation and excellence in strategic flexibility in order to reach pioneering performance.

Objectives of the study

There are some objectives intend to be achieved through the research, the basic ones are as follows:

- 1) Recognizing the extent of interest in the strategic flexibility variable and the nature of dealing with it in the faculties of the University of Baghdad, the extent of its impact on entrepreneurial performance and the means that must be available to maintain it.
- 2) Explaining the important role played by strategic flexibility and its enhancement of the pioneering performance of the faculties of the University of Baghdad.
- 3) Reaching conclusions and making recommendations that would enhance strategic flexibility in the faculties of the University of Baghdad, which is reflected on its pioneering performance.

The hypothesis of the study

A scheme was developed by the researcher to be a path in specifying the key parameters giving a preliminary perception of the correlation and influence relations between the research variables and is represented by the strategic flexibility. This includes each of the dimensions of strategic change, the effectiveness of flexible communication, the adaptation of administrative procedures. The second characteristic of this model is the entrepreneurial performance, which in turn includes all of the dimensions (proactiveness, creativity, and risk taking), and Figure (1) illustrates these aspects:



Figure 1: The hypothesis of the research

The study Approach

The research depended upon the (descriptive-analytical) method, which focuses its attention on translating and describing the research variables and the characteristics of the phenomenon studied.

Second, some previous studies

Liao et.al, (2018) Examine how dispersed leadership and strategic adaptability might promote the development of new company models. The aim of the research was to examine the relationship between distributed leadership and strategic flexibility and how it affects innovation for the business model. The problem of the study was to explore how and when both distributed leadership and strategic flexibility enhance innovation for the business model. A random sample was selected, and a survey was conducted via questionnaire with 262 executives and 262 executive senior managers of high-tech firms in China. The study showed that distributed leadership can directly affect the innovation of the business model, and strategic flexibility indirectly affects the innovation of the business model (Abubakari, 2021).

Nwachukwu & Vu (2020) argue the relation among strategic resilience, strategic leadership and business sustainability, directly and indirectly, and intends to employ the dynamic ability and previous aspects to illustrate the relationship among strategic resilience, strategic leadership and business sustainability. Business sustainability and an intentional sample consisting of 520 financing banks were used, as small finance banks were used as a research community as it is suitable for testing hypotheses. It included positive for strategic flexibility and strategic leadership on business sustainability and indicators (economic, environmental, social and innovative performance) (Bassey, 2020).

Gao et.al, (2018) seek to fulfill many objectives, the basic one is to study how the competitive strategy and the moderate strategy can help companies obtain leading performance, provide products with high technology and improve the industry continuously. Distribution of questionnaires in the form of three phases. In the first phase, 120 questionnaires were distributed and received. In the second phase, 110 questionnaires were distributed and received. In the third phase, interviews were conducted with senior managers in companies located in an industrial complex in China for high technology. The most important results of the research are that the relation between proactive orientation and entrepreneurial performance is positive in light of the lowest level of industrial pressure, and that the moderate effect of the competitive strategy and the moderate strategy is also positive. Negative for competitive strategy (Duke & Osim, 2020).

Second, The Theoretical Side

To fulfill the aims of the study and test the hypothesis, we must accurately identify its basic variables, which are strategic flexibility as an independent variable and entrepreneurial performance as a dependent variable.

First: - Strategic flexibility

Strategic flexibility is defined as strategic choices created through the combined effects of the organization's coordination flexibility in obtaining and using flexible resources (Yawson, 2020:3). It has been defined as an important feature that the organization needs in order to survive in the competitive market (Schulze & Heidenreich, 2017:5). Here, the researchers showed some organizations that are highly efficient at a specific phase of their life span, and for maintaining this superiority and distinction, they ought to embrace strategic flexibility as an operative means to maintain this distinction and superiority (Hamdan, et.al, 2020). Strategic flexibility is considered the main source of gaining competitive advantage, which has an impact on the performance of organizations, as it includes responding to environmental changes and overcoming organizational inertia through the flexible employment of resources and the process of reconfiguration, and strategic flexibility can acclimatize to alterations in the environment, and rapidly seize outer opportunities and reduce business risks, increasing the likelihood of business achievement and positive impact on the performance of organizations (Li et.al, 2016). Strategic flexibility enables companies responding to changing market conditions, creating effective corridors to global success in company operations (Aldakhil & Nataraja, 2014).

Li et.al, (2017) have pointed out that the high consumption of resources and high uncertainty are two of the most important challenges facing organizations for innovation. It is necessary to adopt a resource structuring to manage activities to conserve resources, as well as to adopt strategic flexibility for effective management for high uncertainties.

Dimensions of strategic flexibility adopted in the study:

- 1- Strategic change: The literature defines strategic change as the organization's redefinition of its mission and goal or a fundamental shift in its priorities and general goals (Cornelissen et.al, 2011).
- 2- The effectiveness of flexible communication: It refers to how flexible communication works in organizations, which is the communication between the boss and subordinate in the workplace and effective understandings by employees of the practices and standards of work in the organization (Nordbäck et.al, 2017).
- 3- Adaptation of administrative procedures: Adaptation is defined as the modification in administrative or human systems in response to actual and expected changes or factors and their effects, which mitigate damage or take advantage of beneficial opportunities (Lehmann et.al, 2012).

Secondly, entrepreneurial performance

It can help researchers to better understand and broaden the evolution of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in the world. Also, the entrepreneurship includes work attitudes, modes of thinking, practices and social processes and is critical in today's societies because it promotes economic growth and improves organizational performance (Pasillas et.al, 2017). The performance depends upon the common perfect work language depended upon specifying objectives, detecting work issues, and pursuing to stress on the work method, to identify weaknesses and strengths in it. It also evaluates performance according to the high specified performance criteria, is called pioneering performance (Jalod et.al,2021). Many studies have indicated that the entrepreneurial performance of organizations is calculated as business information along with the experience of the entrepreneur, which is an important human capital for the organization (Sebikari, 2019). Entrepreneurial performance is defined as the performance that offers the organization with the capability to fulfill goals, strategy of long-lasting financing, customer service, development of its internal processes, education and

growth (Jalod et.al, 2021). In the twenty-first century, as business organizations compete globally, there is a need for them to a tendency to act in a pioneering manner, in order to thrive and gain distinction over its competitors in highly competitive and ever-changing business environments (Otache & Mahmood 2015). In addition, the generation of new capabilities is the process that adds new value, and thus creates new profits, as well as achieving a competitive advantage with the capabilities it possesses (Gifford, 2017). Its entrepreneurial behavior or style with its strategic plans when looking for new opportunities and advantages, and trying to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Kurtuluş, 2012). The researchers indicated that there are four models of the entrepreneurial organization, as shown in Figure (2): Wiese, (2009)

- 1) Empowerment Model
- 2) Product Model
- 3) Trimmer Model

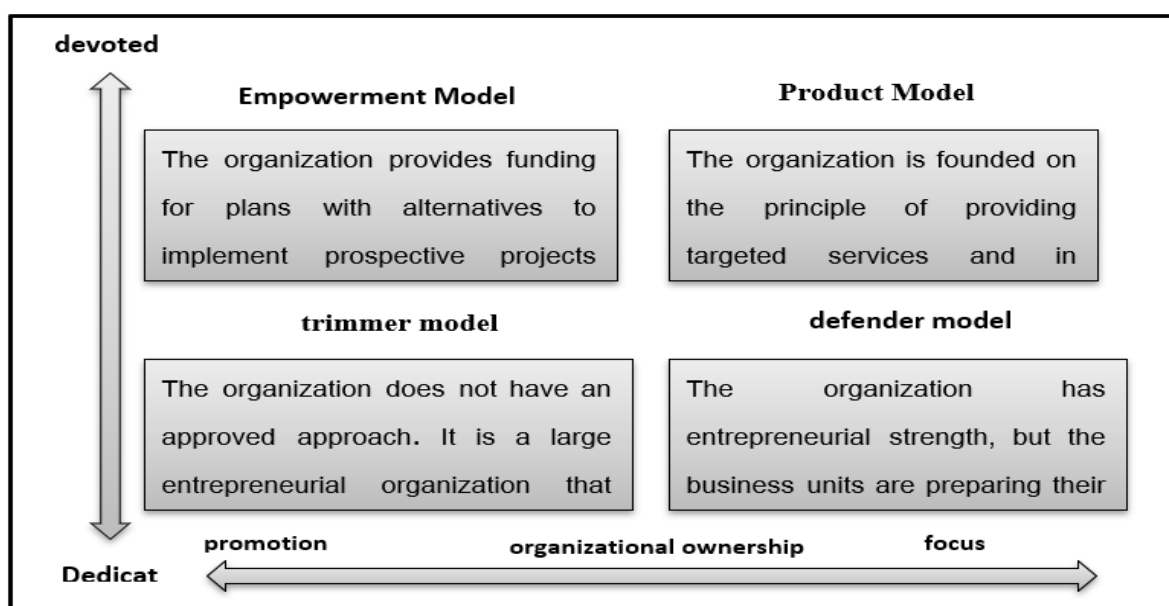


Figure 2: The four models of the entrepreneurial organization (Wiese, 2009)

- 4) *Defender Model*

Dimensions of entrepreneurial performance adopted in the study:

- 1) Proactivity: It means working on the requirements and needs of the future market, in order to meet the demand, seize future opportunities, and provide new products and services to competitors (Zhang et.al,2020).
- 2) Creativity: It is the use of a set of creative methods and tools to solve the problems and challenges facing organizations, discover opportunities and develop new creative solutions and try to present and publish ideas in order to create and develop the best creative solutions (Zuber & Moody, 2018).
- 3) Risk: It is the organization's tendency to provide new, creative and innovative services and business models that may be fraught with risks due to uncertainty about potential business, activities and decisions aimed at obtaining high performance (García-Granero et.al, 2015).

Third: The practical aspect of the study

This part of the study deals with the elements related to the field study that was conducted on a sample of deans, assistant deans and heads of departments in the faculties of *Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°2, Summer-Autumn 2022

the University of Baghdad by distributing the questionnaire for the study variables, to know the effect of strategic flexibility on the entrepreneurial performance in the faculties of the University of Baghdad and to analyze the results obtained

1) The population and sample of the study

The paper community dealt with all the faculties of the University of Baghdad with its various medical, scientific and human specializations, which numbered (24) faculties, as we distributed the questionnaire to a sample consisting of 182 deans, assistant deans and heads of departments in the faculties out of 252 people, where 174 questionnaires were retrieved. It is a stratified random sample and it was approved On a five-way Likert scale, the data were processed using the spssv28 program:

Completely disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	0
1	2	3	4	5

2) The characteristics of the study sampl

Table 1: Characteristics of the research sampl

No	feature distribution	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Social category	Mention	125	71.84
		feminine	49	28.16
	sum		174	100.00
2	age	less than 30 years old	0	0.00
		30- Less than 40 years old	8	4.60
		40 - less than 50 years old	86	49.43
		50 years and over	80	45.98
	sum		174	100.00
3	Educational qualification	Master	11	6.32
		PhD	163	93.68
	sum		174	100.00
4	Professional position	Dean	20	11.49
		Assistant Dean	49	28.16
		Head of Department	105	60.34
	sum		174	100.00
5	Number of years of service	Less than 5 years old	2	1.15
		5 - less than 10 years	0	0.00
		10 - less than 15 years	16	9.20
		15 - less than 20 years old	68	39.08
		20 years and over	88	50.57
sum		174	100.00	

The above sample according to gender was higher than the percentage of males than females, and that the percentage of those who obtained a doctorate was higher than the percentage of those who obtained a master's degree. This is because the scientific qualification is a prerequisite for filling leadership positions within the career hierarchy at the University of Baghdad. The highest percentage was the years of service from 20 years or more. This shows that the members of the research sample have, to a large extent, work experience, competencies and extensive knowledge that increases with age.

3) Studying the validity and reliability of the questionnaire: to find out the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was relied on the Alpha Cronbach coefficient. It was equal to 0.92 with respect to the strategic flexibility axis, which means that the reliability

coefficient is good, as for the pioneering performance axis, the ratio was 0.95 and this means that the reliability coefficient is also good, and as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: *The validity and reliability of the questionnaire*

No	Variables	Alpha Cronbach coefficient
1	Strategic flexibility	0.92
2	entrepreneurial performance	0.95

4) Describing the responses of the research sample to the independent variable (strategic flexibility)

Strategic flexibility includes three sub-variables for every variable, sub-questions that were answered within the questionnaire submitted to each of the deans, assistant deans and heads of departments in the faculties of the University of Baghdad. These variables included strategic change, the effectiveness of flexible communication, the adaptation of administrative procedures. This is by extracting the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation and the relative importance of the variable as a whole, and the findings are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Statistical Indicators for Total Strategic Resilience*

No	Variable	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Relative importance
	Strategic flexibility	4.10	0.59	14.35	82.08

Table (3) shows that the strategic flexibility variable has fulfilled an arithmetic mean (4.10) with a perfect level and a standard deviation (0.59). good rate.

5) Describing the responses of the research sample to the dependent variable (entrepreneurial performance)

The entrepreneurial performance includes three sub-variables for every variable, sub-questions that were responded within the questionnaire submitted to each of the deans, assistant deans and heads of departments in the faculties of the University of Baghdad. The coefficient of variation and the relative importance of the variable as a whole, and the results were as shown in Table (4).

Table 4: *Statistical Indicators for Total Entrepreneurial Performance*

No	Variable	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Entrepreneurial Performance
	Entrepreneurial Performance	4.04	0.67	16.70	80.74

Source: Prepared by the researcher according to the program SPSS V28

As Table (4) shows that the entrepreneurial performance variable obtained an arithmetic mean (4.04) with best level and a standard deviation (0.67). This confirms the degree of interest by the research sample in the entrepreneurial performance and that there is convergence in their views on the entrepreneurial performance in the faculties of the University of Baghdad, and the coefficient of variation reached (16.70) and the relative importance (80.74%), which is a perfect rate.

6) Testing the hypothesis of the study states (a statistically significant impact of strategic flexibility on entrepreneurial performance). Here, table (5) shows the results of simple linear regression analysis of the effect of strategic flexibility on entrepreneurial performance, and it is noted that the calculated (F) value has been achieved among strategic flexibility and Entrepreneurial performance (336,899), that could be greater than the tabular (F) value of (5.11) at the level of significance (0.05), and consequently we admit the alternative hypothesis stating (a statistically significant effect of strategic flexibility in the entrepreneurial performance). This means that if the colleges at the University of Baghdad wants to achieve entrepreneurial performance, it should be characterized by strategic flexibility, especially in terms of strategic change. The effectiveness of flexible communication and the adaptation of administrative procedures will give the university a high advantage and thus reach good levels of entrepreneurial performance through the value of the coefficient of determination (R²) of (0.662). It is shown that strategic flexibility explains about (66.2%) of the variables happen to be on the entrepreneurial performance, while the remaining percentage (33.8%) is because of other variables are not within the research model through the value of the marginal slope (β) of (0.931). This increases the strategic flexibility by one unit which increases the entrepreneurial performance by (93.1%), as the value of (t) calculated for the marginal slope coefficient of strategic flexibility reached (18.355) that could be greater than the t tabular value (1.97) at significance level (0.05). This shows the significance of the marginal slope of the strategic flexibility variable.

Table 5: Analysis of the dimensions of strategic flexibility in entrepreneurial performance

strategic flexibility variable	Dependent variable	Constant Limit Value (α)	The value of the marginal slope coefficient (β)	coefficient of determination (R ²)	Calculated F value	Calculated T value	Sig function
strategic flexibility	entrepreneurial performance	0.214	0.931	0.662	336.899	18.355	0.001 Significant
Tabular value (F) = 5.11							
Tabular value (t) = 1.97							
Sample size = 174							

Fourth: Conclusions and Recommendations

Via the theoretical side of the research variables and the results of the practical side, the researcher reached a set of conclusions and recommendations, which are as follows:

Conclusions

- 1) The results showed that there is an interest in the strategic flexibility variable, as it came in the first order, and this means that the faculties of the University of Baghdad enjoy high flexibility and pay increased attention to this subject and seek to strengthen it.
- 2) It was found that the interest of the faculties at the University of Baghdad in their quest to obtain a high level of performance and access to pioneering performance through strategic flexibility.
- 3) The colleges of the University of Baghdad possess maneuverability, adaptation, and proactiveness in the face of competitors' moves, which is reflected on their success, distinction and ability to compete.
- 4) Colleges at the University of Baghdad employ their creativity to achieve pioneering

- performance.
- 5) The faculties at the University of Baghdad depend on their ability to take risks as a result of the turbulent environment in which they operate and the changing factors that surround them. They may resort to taking risks and taking risks in terms of changing academic systems and sometimes changing curricula to keep pace with developments and modernity, as this will increase, do and add to their performance and distinction.

Recommendations

1. The faculties at the University of Baghdad should enhance and maintain their strategic flexibility and work on its sustainability through pre-determined programs and plans because of their effective and influential role in achieving leadership performance.
2. The faculties at the University of Baghdad should create a state of competition among them and strive to proactively reach distinguished and successful performance, study the reasons for the success of some faculties, delay others, and enhance their pioneering performance.
3. Deans, assistant deans and heads of departments in colleges should encourage all employees in them to be creative and strive to provide them with material and moral capabilities because of its positive repercussions on the colleges.
4. The colleges at the University of Baghdad should enhance their capabilities in taking risks and taking risks to increase their competitive advantage, especially with the emergence of private and international colleges and universities.

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