

An Analysis of the Connection Among Strategic Adaptability and Competitive Advantage in Economic Organizations within Dynamic Business Environments: A Field Study of Small and Medium-Sized Firms in Blida Province

تحليل العلاقة ما بين الرشاقة الاستراتيجية والميزة التنافسية للمؤسسات الاقتصادية في ظل بيئات الأعمال الديناميكية: دراسة ميدانية لمجموعة من المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة بولاية البليدة

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore and analyze the relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage for economic organizations within dynamic, ever-evolving business environments, where the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to challenges and opportunities is essential for achieving competitive excellence.

To achieve this, the descriptive-analytical approach was employed. In its theoretical aspect, key variables strategic agility and competitive advantage were described and their interrelationship analyzed. In the practical phase, data were gathered via a questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 200 employees from the study population of senior managers at small and medium-sized industrial enterprises in Blida Province. The survey's validity and reliability were confirmed, and the responses were processed using SPSS. The results indicate a significant relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage in the organizations studied.

Keywords: Agility; Strategy; Competitive Advantage; Collective Commitment; Fluidity; Resources; Institutions.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف وتحليل العلاقة الجوهرية ما بين الرشاقة الاستراتيجية والميزة التنافسية للمؤسسات الاقتصادية في ظل بيئات الأعمال الديناميكية والمتغيرة باستمرار، إذ أصبحت قدرة المؤسسات على الاستجابة بفعالية وسرعة للتحديات والفرص أمر بالغ الأهمية سعياً للوصول إلى التفوق التنافسي.

لبلوغ ذلك، تم الاعتماد على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في جانبه النظري بالاعتماد على وصف أهم المتغيرات وتحليل العلاقة بينها كمفهوم الرشاقة الاستراتيجية، والميزة التنافسية. أما في جانبه التطبيقي فقد تم الاعتماد على توزيع الاستبانة في جمع المعلومات من خلال اختيار عينة عشوائية عددها 200 عامل من مجتمع الدراسة والمتمثل في فئة الرؤساء العاملين بالمؤسسات الصناعية الصغيرة والمتوسطة بولاية البليدة وتم التحقق من صدقها وثباتها، ومن ثم معالجتها باستخدام البرنامج الإحصائي *SPSS*. فمن بين النتائج المتوصل إليها وجود علاقة بين الرشاقة الاستراتيجية وبين الميزة التنافسية بالمؤسسات محل الدراسة.

كلمات مفتاحية: رشاقة، استراتيجية، ميزة، تنافسية، التزام جماعي، سيولة موارد، مؤسسات.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) striving for success have recognized that sustainability, continuity, and long-term survival depend significantly on their strategic agility and their understanding of leadership and differentiation within their field. Strategic agility refers to the capability to survive and thrive in a constantly evolving competitive environment by rapidly responding to changing markets and delivering unexpected products and services. The goal of strategic agility is to enhance SMEs' ability to capitalize on marketing opportunities and avoid threats, thereby laying the foundation for desired success, achieving a sustainable competitive advantage, and increasing value through their operations and activities relative to competitors.

Based on the foregoing, the study's core research problem is formulated as follows:

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Is there a link between the parts of strategic agility and the pillars of competitive advantage within the dynamic business environments of SMEs in Blida Province, according to the perspective of the surveyed sample?

This main question branches into several key areas of inquiry:

- From the perspective of the people who were surveyed, what is the current state of adopting strategic agility and its dimensions (strategic sensitivity, collective commitment, resource fluidity) in organizations?
- To what extent do organizations focus on achieving competitive advantage under dynamic business conditions across the dimensions of cost, quality, flexibility, and delivery, as perceived by the surveyed sample?
- Is there a statistically significant link (at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$) between competitive advantage and strategic agility?

To address these questions, several hypotheses can be formulated:

- The level of adoption of strategic agility dimensions (strategic sensitivity, collective commitment, and resource fluidity within organizations) is perceived as low by the surveyed sample.
- The extent to which organizations focus on achieving competitive advantage through cost, quality, flexibility, and delivery in dynamic business environments is perceived as low by the surveyed sample.
- At the 0.05 significance level, no meaningful relationship was found between strategic agility and competitive advantage, according to the study participants.

The primary objective of this study is to diagnose the nature of the relationship and the influence between the elements of strategic agility and the competitive advantage of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), aiming to derive conclusions that will enable decision-makers within organizations to enhance their operational strategies.

2. Theoretical Foundation of the Study

This section explores the concept of strategic agility and its dimensions, followed by a discussion of competitive advantage and its components, alongside an examination of the relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage.

2.1 The Concept of Strategic Agility

The term agility is derived from the Latin word *Agilitas*, which literally translates to the ability to think and draw conclusions swiftly (intellectual sharpness) (Kuda,

2017). The concept of strategic agility in modern business organizations emerged within the strategic management lexicon through the work of Finnish researchers Doz Yves and Kosonen Mikko, as presented in their 2008 publication. They defined it as “the capability to dynamically adjust or reshape the company and its strategy in a changing business environment, achieved through continuous anticipation and adaptation to customer needs and market trends, without abandoning the company’s vision” (Doz & Kosonen, 2008).

Agility has been defined as the capability to operate smoothly within a continuously competitive and unpredictable environment while adapting to changing customer opportunities (Oyedijo, 2012). It has also been described as an organization’s ability to respond to environmental changes at a pace faster than the rate of those changes (Ahmad, Hussein, & Akram, 2021).

Moreover, agility is characterized as the capacity for creativity and responsiveness to change in order to achieve desired benefits in a turbulent environment. The term AGIL represents four fundamental functions that constitute the essence of agility (Al-Faouri, 2015) Adaptation: addressing the challenge of acquiring sufficient resources;

- Goal Attainment: formulating and executing objectives;
- Integration: maintaining synergy and coordination among the system’s subsystems;
- Latency: creating, preserving, and transmitting the distinctive culture and values within the system.

The relationship between agility defined as the ability to detect opportunities and threats and respond with ease, speed, and skill and organizational performance underscores the necessity for organizations to rapidly adapt to new market conditions and the risks associated with failing to respond in a timely manner (Magno, 2017).

Furthermore, (Sabr, 2019) described agility as the process of rearranging and eliminating existing work units, markets, and industries to refocus on distinctive core competencies. Meanwhile, (Mahmoud & Medhat, 2021) emphasized that agility refers to an organization’s capacity to leverage both anticipated and unforeseen changes occurring within its complex, interconnected, and uncertain internal and external environments. This sensing capability must be accompanied by the organization’s development of innovative and dynamic responses to these changes through process redesign, reallocation of organizational resources, and restructuring. These measures enhance the organization’s ability to survive and

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thrive in the business world, thereby supporting its competitive position (Ahmad, Hussein, & Akram, 2021).

From the definitions outlined above, despite their variations, it is evident that the concept of strategic agility enables an organization to overcome various challenges and efficiently manage knowledge, serving as a critical success factor in navigating competitive environments.

2.2 Dimensions of Strategic Agility

In general, management literature has proposed several dimensions of strategic agility, each approached from the perspectives of different scholars and their respective fields of expertise (Sarraf, 2010).

- Strategic Sensitivity: This dimension encompasses early perception acuity, heightened awareness, and attentiveness in interacting with external factors through a proposed strategy. Strategic sensitivity is enhanced by combining a robust, externally oriented strategy with internal engagement, a high level of focus and vigilance, and an open, intense internal dialogue. It comprises three fundamental pillars through which an organization can build its strategic agility and achieve its objectives as quickly and cost-effectively as possible: (emphasis on strategic vigilance; open strategy processes; and internal dialogue as a quality factor).
- Collective Commitment: This is understood as the relationship that binds employees to the organization's course of action in pursuit of its goals. The ability of employees to commit to management domains and behaviors is crucial, reflecting their loyalty to the organization. Collective commitment is typically categorized into workplace commitment, job commitment, commitment to goal achievement, team commitment, and commitment from leaders and managers.
- Resource Fluidity: Both strategic sensitivity and collective commitment remain ineffective without resource fluidity. This requires the organization to be capable of flexibly reallocating resources as needed. Achieving this necessitates a diverse portfolio of independent units and a cadre of mobile managers who can be transferred across units, with corporate oversight maintaining control over key resources and organized processes for scaling down investments or divesting units. It is essential that resources within smaller units are not rigidly allocated in ways that prevent reconfiguration and that multiple channels exist to access resources across various

locations. This enables managers to secure resources when needed, rather than relying on a single gatekeeper. Additionally, resource fluidity demands disciplined processes for evaluating individual units and reallocating key resources accordingly.

2.3 Definition of Competitive Advantage

Given the critical importance of the concept of competitive advantage, several definitions will be presented to clarify this concept from multiple perspectives.

Competitive advantage is defined as a superiority or edge achieved by an organization when it follows a specific competitive strategy

Kotler defines it as a variable dependent on three primary strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, and diversification strategies (Choukal, 2010). Both of these definitions emphasize the source of competitive advantage as being rooted in the competitive strategy adopted by the firm.

However, Porter views competitive advantage as stemming from the value a firm can create for its customers, which may take the form of a lower price or superior product benefits compared to competitors. Competitive advantage is also defined as an area where the organization possesses greater capability than its competitors to exploit external opportunities or mitigate threats. It arises from the firm's ability to leverage its tangible and intangible resources, which may include quality, technology, cost reduction capabilities, marketing efficiency, innovation and development, financial resources, managerial expertise, or qualified human capital (Al Morsi, 2002).

This latter definition is more comprehensive and indicative of the essential dimensions of competitive advantage, focusing on the optimal utilization of organizational resources and highlighting other critical aspects such as quality, efficiency, innovation, and marketing skills. Competitive advantage, in this view, results from excelling in at least one of these dimensions.

From the above definitions, the key insights can be summarized as follows:

- The source of competitive advantage stems from a distinctive characteristic within the organization that differentiates it from competitors in the eyes of customers;
- Competitive advantage is built on differences and distinctions between the organization and its competitors, rather than similarities;
- It is developed with a long-term perspective, as it relates to future opportunities;

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- Ultimately, it leads to achieving superiority and preference over competitors because it originates internally within the organization and generates value for it.

For a competitive advantage to be effective, it must meet the following conditions:

- Decisiveness, meaning it provides precedence and superiority over competitors;
- Sustainability, meaning it can be maintained over time;
- Defensibility, meaning it is difficult for competitors to imitate or eliminate.

2.4 Dimensions of Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage encompasses various dimensions, among which the most commonly recognized are (Al Dhabit, 2022).

- Quality: Quality and value are considered paramount. Simply put, a product or service is deemed high-quality when customers and consumers perceive that they receive greater value.
- Efficiency: An organization is considered more efficient when the amount of input required to produce a certain quantity of output is reduced. This efficiency enhances the organization's competitiveness.
- Flexibility: Flexibility refers to the organization's ability to respond rapidly and adapt to changes affecting product design, service delivery methods, or variations in customer demand.
- Innovation: Innovation and renewal are fundamental pillars for building competitive advantage in both the short and long term. The innovation processes undertaken by an organization serve as a primary source of competitive advantage by offering something unique that competitors lack, enabling the organization to differentiate itself distinctively.

2.5 The Relationship Between Strategic Agility and Competitive Advantage

The relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage stems from a strategic perspective, providing explanations on how an organization achieves and sustains its competitive edge in an environment characterized by rapid disruption and unpredictability. This is accomplished through enhanced adaptability, as well as the integration and reconfiguration of the organization's capabilities with the necessary efficiency and effectiveness (Al Dhabit, 2022). Its significance lies in the dynamic business environment and explains how contemporary organizations can maintain their strategic success as follows (Al Shammari, 2019):

- Enables the organization to strategically renew itself, thereby ensuring its continued leadership position;
- Enhances the organization’s innovative performance to achieve rapid responses to changing customer demands;
- Equips the organization with the strategic flexibility necessary to effectively adapt to accelerating environmental changes;
- Provides the organization with innovative solutions to current and future challenges, relying on its strategic sensitivity;
- Achieves efficient utilization of available organizational resources and facilitates the acquisition of new resources.
- Strategic agility focuses on the ability to leverage the value chain of resources extensively and in a timely manner. It aims to deliver products and services correctly, anywhere. This requires transcending boundaries to seamlessly develop processes, transforming the organization into a knowledge-driven entity that prioritizes accelerated learning and adopts knowledge as a fundamental asset the most valuable resource an organization can possess to achieve strategic agility (Mahmoud & Medhat, 2021).
- Strategic agility contributes to enhancing institutional performance and increasing organizational effectiveness due to its numerous advantages (Masri & Suleiman, 2016).

3. Field Study

This section reviews the study population and sample, the research instrument, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, presentation and analysis of the study’s axes, and finally, hypothesis testing and interpretation of results.

3.1 Data Collection Tools

The researcher developed a questionnaire to diagnose the relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage in small and medium industrial enterprises in Blida Province. The instrument comprised several study axes and a number of items for each domain.

Table 1: Study Axes and Number of Items per Axis

Dimension	Number of Items
Strategic Agility	8
Competitive Advantage	11
Total	19

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

A five-point Likert scale was used for all the questionnaire items.

3.2 Instrument Validity and Reliability

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To verify the instrument's validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts. The researcher presented the instrument to a group of specialists with extensive experience in the field from various Algerian universities and solicited their opinions on the questionnaire items. The instrument achieved an agreement rate exceeding 80%, confirming the scale's appropriateness for application.

Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The following table presents these results.

Dimension	Alpha Value
Strategic Agility	0.775
Competitive Advantage	0.885
Overall Total	0.846

Source: Table prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output.

The values shown in the table above indicate that the instrument demonstrates an acceptable level of reliability, fulfilling the requirements of this study.

3.3 Study Population and Sample

The following table outlines the study population and sample size for each institution.

Table 3: Study Population and Sample Size by Institution

Institution	Number of Managers	Selected Sample
Food Industry Company	300	100
Wood Industry Company	150	80
Iron and Electronics Industries	120	40
Total	570	200

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

A random sample of 200 supervisors was selected for the study. Questionnaires were distributed to all participants, and 120 valid responses were recovered, yielding a response rate of 60%.

3.4 Statistical Analysis Methods

After data collection and coding using appropriate statistical techniques, the researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, linear regression analysis, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

3.5 Analysis of Study Results and Hypothesis Testing

3.5.1 Description of the Study Sample Characteristics

The following table illustrates these characteristics:

Table 4: Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	100	83.33
	Female	20	16.67
	Total	120	100
Age	25–30	5	4.17
	31–35	25	20.83
	36 and above	90	75
	Total	120	100
Educational Level	University Degree	90	75
	High School	30	25
	Total	120	100
Professional Experience	Less than 5 years	10	8.33
	5 to 10 years	20	16.67
	More than 10 years	90	75
	Total	120	100
Job Level	Manager	20	16.67
	Head of Department	70	58.33
	Deputy Head of Department	30	25
	Total	120	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output

From the above table, the following observations can be made:

- The majority of the sample are males, totaling 100 individuals, representing 83.33%;
- Most participants are over 30 years of age;
- The majority hold a university degree, accounting for 75%;
- Most participants have professional experience ranging from 5 to 10 years;
- Job positions are distributed as follows: Manager at 16.67%, Head of Department at 58.33%, and Deputy Head of Department at 25%.

3.6 Analysis of the Questionnaire Dimensions

The data from the study's questionnaire items can be analyzed and discussed for the dimensions of Strategic Agility and Competitive Advantage as follows:

Table 5: Results of the First Dimension Analysis – Strategic Agility

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No.	Strategic Agility Dimension Items	Mean	S. D	Rank
Strategic Sensitivity				
1	The organization's management possesses a clear vision of its future activities and how to confront challenges.	4.29	1.97	9
2	The organization's management demonstrates flexibility in reallocating and utilizing resources.	4.28	1.96	10
Collective Commitment				
3	Our company encourages team members to participate in formulating and discussing strategies.	4.42	1.8	2
4	Our company motivates its teams to treat mistakes as opportunities for learning and improvement rather than occasions for blame.	4.44	1.83	1
5	The company facilitates easy access to information relevant to both customers and employees.	4.41	1.81	3
Resource Fluidity				
6	Our company aligns its resources with its objectives based on strategic requirements in its market to serve customers by adding distinctive value.	4.34	1.79	4
7	Our company allocates a flexible financial budget to meet all operational demands and emerging changes.	4.31	1.81	7
8	The organization resorts to reallocating its physical resources according to changing work requirements in the industry sector.	4.33	1.8	5
Overall Mean of the First Dimension		4.32	1.93	

Source: Table prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output.

Based on the results shown in the previous table regarding Strategic Agility, the arithmetic mean of the items in this dimension ranges between 4.28 and 4.44. The table indicates that respondents generally agree with the content. The participants rank the dimensions in the following order: Collective Commitment ranks first, followed by Resource Fluidity in second place, and lastly, Strategic Sensitivity in third place.

Table 6: Results of the Second Dimension Analysis – Competitive Advantage

Competitive Advantage Dimension Items	Mean	S. D	Rank
Cost			

The company utilizes available resources economically and efficiently.	4.33	1.96	5
The company employs research and development to update its production processes to achieve objectives at lower costs.	4.4	1.9	4
Our company continuously strives to reduce direct production costs.	4.44	1.88	1
Quality			
The company applies diverse methods to improve quality.	4.41	1.9	3
The company uses multiple methods for quality control.	4.32	1.26	6
The company adopts ISO standards to ensure quality.	4.31	1.25	7
Our company designs its production processes properly to achieve the best possible level for the produced units.	4.43	1.91	2
Flexibility			
Employees in our company possess multiple skills enabling them to perform more than one role or task.	3.95	0.98	10
Our company has the ability to rapidly respond to required changes in product designs.	3.94	0.97	11
Delivery			
Our company consistently adheres to scheduled delivery dates for products to customers.	4.3	1.92	8
Our company has the ability to deliver customer orders faster than competitors.	4.27	1.9	9
Overall Mean of the Second Dimension	4.28	1.85	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output.

Based on the results presented in the previous table regarding competitive advantage, the arithmetic mean of the items within this domain ranges between 3.94 and 4.44. The table further indicates that the sample members generally agree with its content. Overall, the mean score exceeds the hypothetical midpoint, which demonstrates that the respondents endorse the content, with an average of 4.28 compared to the midpoint of 3. Moreover, the respondents rank the dimensions in the following order: cost in the first position with a mean score of 4.39, followed by quality in second place with a mean of 4.36, delivery in third place with a mean of 4.28, and flexibility in the last position with a mean of 3.94.

3.7 Hypothesis Testing

- Hypothesis 1: The level of adoption of strategic agility dimensions (strategic sensitivity, collective commitment, and resource fluidity in

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institutions) from the perspective of the surveyed sample is low. Analysis of the first dimension, strategic agility, as shown in Table 5, reveals that the surveyed sample's opinion leans toward a level above the mean. The dimensions are ranked as follows: collective commitment in first place, resource fluidity in second place, and strategic sensitivity in the third and last position. Accordingly, the first hypothesis is rejected.

- Hypothesis 2: The level of focus by organizations on achieving competitive advantage in dynamic business environments specifically regarding quality, delivery flexibility, and cost is low from the perspective of the surveyed sample.

The results of the factor analysis presented in Table 06 for the dimensions of competitive advantage indicate that the overall mean exceeds the hypothetical midpoint, suggesting that respondents agree with the content. Moreover, respondents prioritize the dimensions as follows: cost ranks first, followed by quality in second place, delivery in third, and flexibility last. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

- Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant relationship at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between strategic agility and competitive advantage from the perspective of the study sample.

To test Hypothesis 3, the t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient were employed to examine the relationship between strategic agility in industrial organizations and competitive advantage at the statistical significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table 07: Results of the relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage in the organizations under study

R	Calculated T-value	Critical T-value	Significance Level
1	58.89	1.65	0.05

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS program.

It is evident from the table above that the relationship between the two variables is strong, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.95. Additionally, the strategic agility variable accounts for 90.25% of the variance in the dependent variable (competitive advantage). The results also show that the calculated t-value exceeds the critical t-value at the 5% significance level, indicating acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms the

existence of a significant relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage in the industrial institutions under study.

4. CONCLUSION

Strategic agility enables organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy for managing changes and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. It also enhances organizational capabilities and structures, thereby increasing their capacity for sustainability and long-term success. The key findings include:

Industrial organizations prioritize the following dimensions of strategic agility:

- Strategic Sensitivity: Demonstrated by management's clear vision of future activities and approaches to addressing challenges;
- Collective Commitment: Evident through motivating team members to view mistakes as opportunities for learning and improvement rather than grounds for assigning blame;
- Resource Fluidity: Achieved by aligning organizational resources with strategic objectives based on labor market demands, aiming to serve customers in a way that adds distinctive value.

Industrial organizations focus on the following pillars of competitive advantage:

- Cost Dimension: Pursuing continuous reduction of direct production costs;
- Quality Dimension: Implementing ISO standards to ensure quality;
- Flexibility Dimension: Responding swiftly to required changes in product designs;
- Delivery Dimension: Demonstrating the ability to fulfill customer orders faster than competitors.

There is a strong relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage within the industrial organizations studied.

Study Recommendations

The study reached a set of recommendations:

- Organizations must adopt a strategic agility approach to maintain their competitive advantage.
- Organizations should enhance their capacity for rapid environmental adaptation in response to surrounding environmental changes.
- Human resources departments across various organizations should implement programs to educate employees about the latest developments in management science, given that many organizations practice aspects of strategic agility without being aware of the term itself.

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