

Analyzing the expected role of strategic leadership and supportive culture in executing business strategies: The mediating role of employee engagement

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationships between strategic leadership, supportive culture, and strategy execution. Employee engagement was assumed to mediate the relationship between the study variables. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 249 respondents. The researchers used many statistical techniques to test the study hypotheses and validate the proposed research framework. The findings of the study support the notion that the combination of supportive culture and strategic leadership is best to increase the likelihood of strategy execution success. The suggested conceptual framework reveals that organizations can execute strategies successfully by enhancing the capabilities of strategic leadership and creating a supportive culture. Employee engagement is also expected to play a pivotal role in supporting the leader's efforts and activating the role of the supportive culture. Further studies could be extended to cover other organizational factors such as digital culture in its relationship with strategy execution. Organizations should effectively communicate the strategy to the executors, increase the clarity of the strategic objectives, create an agile organization, and reward executors. Additional work will be necessary to generalize the findings to other management programs related to strategy execution. The study adds to the body of knowledge related to the strategy execution process. It fills a knowledge gap since most of the literature review focuses on strategy formulation rather than strategy execution. The study also provides corporate leaders with a framework to help them to overcome the hurdles of strategy execution.

Keywords

Strategic leadership; strategy execution; corporate culture; employee engagement

Article history

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1. Introduction

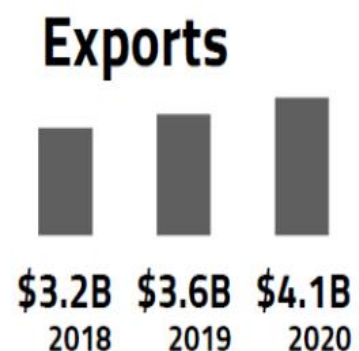
In strategic management, strategy formulation has been deemed to be more important than strategy execution (implementation). Scholars have given formulation more attention than strategy execution. Executing strategies, however, has recently been seen as being more crucial as a means of achieving exceptional organizational effectiveness (Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). While, in real-life situations, it is very evident that the success rate of strategy execution is remarkably low (Hrebiniak, 2006; Bernardo et.al. 2017; Cândido, 2019).

Without execution, a strategy is useless. Organizations should develop strategies to envision their future in business. To achieve the intended future for the organization vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives must be very clearly stated. On the other side, strategy execution is the procedure by which organizations turn the strategic plan into a dynamic document. It addresses the organizational resources needed to implement the strategy, such as funds, processes, and structures (Bhimavarapu et al, 2020). Strategy execution failure is relatively common, despite the fact that it is a critical component of success for modern organizations. The failure rates can be as high as 90%, according to many publications (Bernardo et.al. 2017; Hrebniak, 2006, Sabourin, 2015). Failure can have a variety of causes, including a lack of commitment from organization leaders, inadequate funding, and even internal miscommunications. The best-laid plans are therefore likely to fail if they are not carried out properly (Kraaijenbrink, 2018).

On the other hand, the ICT sector is recognized as having the fastest growth rate in Egypt, the industry expanded at a pace of about 16.3% during the fiscal year 2021–2022, outperforming all other state economic sectors. Despite the external environment challenges facing this sector, the ICT sector was able to maintain its superiority over the past four years compared with other sectors.

The ICT sector also generates 280K jobs when at least 30% of women participate. In addition, it attracted many international companies to operate in Egypt. More importantly, the sector achieved a high export rate. This rate is expected to reach \$4.9 billion in 2021–2022. Capitalizing on its strategic capabilities such as skilled labor, strategic location, cost leadership, and governmental support, the sector is expected to be the regional leader in IT powerhouse.

To maintain its superiority, the ICT sector is undertaking major strategic initiatives to enhance its competitive advantage. Such initiatives motivated the researchers to select this sector as the population of the study.



1.1. Study Problem

Both academics and managers agree that the importance of strategy execution is underrated; despite the numerous challenges it faces. In fact, many experts believe that after developing a new strategy, many organizations fall into the trap of believing that they do not need to put forth more work in putting it into practice (Kraaijenbrink, 2018, Saad, 2021, Hwang and Choi 2017). While creating a new strategic plan, many organizations may find that they did not implement the prior strategy(s).

Can organizations improve the strategy execution process? The real issue is that they had made hardly any progress executing it. Instead of focusing on executing the strategy, corporate leaders usually hire external consultants to generate a new plan. In fact, corporate leaders focus on strategy formulation much more than their focus on strategy execution (Sull et al, 2015). According to the American Management Association's report 2007, one of the main factors that contribute to the termination of CEO services is that they spend too much time formulating strategies rather than putting them into execution (Jamrong et al, 2007). In addition, the literature review indicates that a common factor among the many factors that contribute to strategy execution failure is the low commitment of the top corporate leaders (Sushil, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2006; Cândido and Santos, 2019).

Looking at the practices of the organizations that failed demonstrates that while their plan may not have been wrong, the execution was unquestionably a failure. The absence of a framework for carrying out the strategy, according to a number of scholars, is vital to create a solid framework for executing the strategy in order to avoid making disjointed and inconsistent decisions and taking inconsistent actions (Hrebiniak, 2006; Sushil, 2009; Olivier & Schwella 2018). It is important to understand the direct impact of strategic leaders on strategy formation and execution. Theoretically, different aspects of leadership may have an impact on how business and ICT plans match during the implementation stage. Evidently, there is a deep need to investigate the expected role of corporate leaders in execution strategies (Covin, J. G., & Slevin, 2017). Based on that, this study is designed to review and assess the role of strategic leadership in executing the strategy in the Egyptian Information and Communication Technology sector.

In this context, supportive culture is anticipated to be crucial to successfully implementing the plan. Because of this culture, it is anticipated that staff will be highly driven to work towards predetermined and all-inclusive goals. According to Kanungo et al. (2008) a supportive culture could be viewed as the type of culture that capitalizes on employees' freedom as well maximizes the benefits of interpersonal interactions. It opposes a top-down planning framework. It fosters a positive environment that is relationally centered, encouraging, and collaborative. Supportive cultures also foster openness, friendliness, and a pleasant work environment in addition to fostering teamwork and individual freedom (Sabourin, 2015; Odai et.al, 2021). Although strategic leadership and business strategies are highly correlated, there has not been as much focus on how the

two concepts combine and interact (Olivier & Schwella, 2018). Also, Olaka et al. (2017) argue that there is more work done on strategy formulation than on the execution of strategy.

In terms of how much organizations execute this, ensuring employees' involvement in the implementation process was placed 52nd out of seventy-five practices (Jamrong et al, 2007). But, in terms of its total significance, it was placed 25th. Leaders should make sure that all parties are on board with the strategy before beginning the execution phase. The findings of a recent study indicate that strategic decisions are questioned (Sull et al., 2015). Executing strategic plans will be the responsibility of the staff. Thus, it is anticipated that poor staff engagement will impede the process of implementing the strategy. Based on that the researchers can conclude that there is a wide theoretical gap between strategy formulation and implementation and efforts should be made to narrow this gap.

According to <https://itida.gov.eg>, by creating a "Digital Egypt," the ICT 2030 strategy helps Egypt's Vision 2030 to achieve its goals. Enhancing ICT infrastructure, advancing digital inclusion, completing the transition to the new era of the knowledge economy, creating an innovative work environment, increasing organizational capacities, fighting corruption, and increasing Egypt's stature in the local and international arena are some of these goals. Egypt is the Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region's frontier Global Business Services (GBS)/ Shared Services Centers (SSC) destination and provides top-tier capabilities including business continuity, a workforce with digital skills that speaks multiple languages, and high-value services like IT, HR, finance & accounting, and procurement. Business leaders who are constantly looking to expand their global footprint and offer client-centric solutions and services will find Egypt to be this. Without possessing the execution skills and capabilities, leaders should expect failure to execute strategies in return. Therefore, the current study is designed to investigate the role of strategic leaders and supportive culture in executing business strategies. The study also will incorporate employee engagement as a mediator variable. More specifically, the main question will be:

“To what extent can strategic leaders and supportive culture contribute to the strategy execution success, and how employee engagement can mediate the relationship between strategic leadership, supportive culture, and strategy execution?”

1.2. Study Questions

Despite the huge knowledge body of academic studies on strategy execution, there is still a deep need to answer the questions of “why do organizations fail to execute their strategic plans? And how can strategic leaders and supportive culture contribute to strategy execution success?”. Normally, the simple answer to these questions would be

that successfully executing a good strategy is just exceptionally hard. But that is hardly an acceptable answer. To summarize, this study will address the following questions:

1. Why do organizations fail to execute strategies?
2. How can strategic leaders play a pivotal role in enhancing strategy execution success?
3. How does supportive organizational culture influence strategy execution?
4. Does employee engagement mediate the relationship between strategic leaders and supportive culture and successful strategy execution?
5. How can organizations increase the likelihood of strategy execution success?

1.3. Study Objectives

By analyzing the understudied relationships between corporate culture, strategic leadership, employee engagement, and strategy execution, the prime goal of the current study is to contribute to the continued development of strategy execution techniques. In order to identify the intended function of strategic leaders, a detailed analysis of strategy execution's challenges is necessary.

The study aims to shed light on how supportive cultures and strategic leadership can work together to successfully implement a strategy. While businesses do not sufficiently invest in strategic leadership competencies to develop and maintain leaders who are effective at strategy implementation. Contrary to popular belief, failure of execution is significantly more destructive to a CEO's career than a lack of vision (Michael Murphy, 2005).

In conclusion, a solid understanding of the issues that companies encounter when implementing their strategy is important both academically and practically. Organizations can find answers when they are aware of these issues and the underlying causes of strategy implementation failure. According to De Flander (2010) and Loh (2016), the majority of corporate organizations encounter significant difficulties in properly carrying out their strategic goals. Consequently, the objective of this study is to fill in this theoretical gap.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses development

2.1. Strategic Leadership (SL) and Strategy Execution (SE)

Strategic leadership refers to an administrator's ability to present a clear strategic vision for the company, and motivate and influence others to adopt that goal (Shelley et al, 2014; Jabbar, 2017). Strategic leadership is described as "the process of creating a vision for the future, communicating it to subordinates, inspiring and motivating followers, and engaging in strategy-supportive exchanges with peers and subordinates," (Covin, J. G., & Slevin, 2017). According to Jamrong et al. (2007), a

company is performing its strategy execution at its best when it fulfills its strategic goals in four areas: revenue increase, profitability, market share, and customer loyalty. Effective strategic leaders should be able to track and comprehend both the internal and external environments in order to improve plan execution. This knowledge will make it easier for leaders to implement that plan. A difficult task that calls for numerous essential qualities like intelligence, skill, sympathy, and the humility to recognize that the managers don't have all the solutions (Pollitt 2005).

In developing and executing a strategy, leaders are crucial. They can make a big difference in the way a business carries out its strategic tasks. (Sull et al, 2015). According to Jabbar & Hussein (2017) SL is the capacity of an administrator to articulate a distinct strategic vision for the business and inspire and persuade others to adopt that objective. Taking that into consideration, leaders will be responsible to create, develop and practice the values and organizational culture to their employees.

Strategic leaders should make sure that everyone in the organization fully understands the significance of monitoring the reports provided to the important internal and external stakeholders (Al-Sada et al, 2017). Strategic reporting is preferable to goal-by-goal reporting (Bryson et al, 2022). According to Jooste & Fourie (2009), effective tracking and reporting are essential to the implementation of a strategy, starting with making sure that staff is constantly aware of the status of their strategic objectives. It normally just takes a few minutes per month to update employees on the status of the strategic objectives. In addition, dates should provide a comprehensive picture of progress by including both Key Performance Indicators measure of progress towards the goal and a brief line or few comments if needed.

Objectives shouldn't be viewed as being fixed. It is expected that as their company changes, executives will occasionally need to revise a goal's timeline or perhaps completely rewrite it. It is acceptable, and should even be encouraged, as long as such changes are visible (Jamrong et al, 2007). In conclusion, poor execution can cause a smart strategy to fail. A poor strategy may succeed if it is executed well. In light of the research mentioned above, this study suggests that:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between strategic leadership and executing business strategies.

2.2. Supportive Culture (SC) and Strategy Execution (SE)

According to Hwang (2017), organizational culture is a set of norms, beliefs, values, and underlying presumptions shared by organizational members and expressed in the missions, goals, policies, and practices of the organization. Organizational culture may enhance employees' commitment and encourage them to accept organizational changes at the execution stage (Ke & Wei, 2008). Establishing a company's vision and purpose, which become the determinants of a company's values and enable the specification of the

objective of operations, is typically the first step in creating an effective corporate culture (Bağ & Sukiennik, 2019).

According to strategy, specific challenges must be addressed with the proper response, which may depend on "habitual ways of thinking and feeling" among organizational members. The notion that companies culture is connected to the execution of strategy in this situation is supported by actual data. Without sustaining a strong beneficial culture, no company can carry out its objective and survive in the world of competition (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Kaul (2019) asserts that supportive culture may subsequently influence the execution process of strategic, functional, and operational strategies. It is better if strategy comes first and culture follows it in congruence, yet culture does not generate or co-create itself. Business prudence advises elevating culture to correspond with the strategies being implemented and aligning culture with strategy (Kaul, 2019).

In this study, the researchers assume that for an organization to execute strategy successfully, culture and strategy alignment are crucial. The researchers also assume that supportive culture could be viewed as a major key success factor in executing strategies. Organizations should be aware of the extent to which their culture can influence the strategy execution process (Ahmadi, 2012; Kaul, 2019; Olivier & Schwella 2018). Based on the aforementioned research, the researchers assumed that:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between supportive culture and executing business strategies.

2.3. Meditating role of employee engagement in relationships between the Strategic leadership and executing business strategies

Employee engagement is about personal actions that support or exceed organizational objectives. There is no possibility of executing strategies unless employees are engaged (Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). The willingness and capacity of organizational leaders to carry out the intended strategic plans is a key indicator of the strategy execution process. One could consider effective strategy execution to be the primary driver of organizational competitive advantage. Without execution, a strategy is pointless (Berger, 2001). Therefore, every employee must be completely aware of the organization's strategic aims (Saad et al, 2021). Yet if outstanding plans are not performed flawlessly, they lose their relevance (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017).

Even the most well-known company leaders occasionally encounter execution challenges brought on by competing demands. Maintaining a balance between the necessity to design a strategy for long-term strategic objectives and the need for immediate outcomes is one of the biggest challenges facing strategic leadership. Another problem is setting clear business objectives while being prepared to swiftly change strategic direction in response to unforeseen situations. But leaders don't always handle these issues on their

own, constantly relying on team assistance for execution (Al-Sada et al,2017). Workers must understand their responsibilities and do their assigned tasks in order to contribute to the overall strategy execution. While employees usually resist change, leaders can inspire and encourage people to embrace it (Odai et al, 2021). Leaders should assess emerging issues to identify any internal and external deficiencies. Then, in line with that, introduce the need for corrective actions to bridge the gaps through proper strategy execution (Raelin, 2011).

In the current global economic environment, strategic leadership helps businesses adapt to change that seems to be advancing exponentially. As organizations need to manage and engage employees as well as adapt to and integrate the organization's internal and external business environments through strategic leadership which possess these capabilities (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). The success of an organization depends on its employees. For that reason, they have to be engaged in the organization's strategies and processes (Ogola, 2019). Maas (2015) conducted research on the involvement of employees in the implementation of the strategy. The study found that both the creation and implementation of strategies require the participation of critical lower-level employees and middle-level managers. It was discovered that failing to include important personnel contributed to implementation failure. In light of the research mentioned above, this study suggests that:

H3: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and executing business strategies.

2.4. Meditating role of employee engagement in relationships between the supportive culture and executing business strategies

Highly engaged employees are a powerful organizational tool to transfer organizational dreams and hopes (strategy formulation) into reality (strategy execution). Their commitment goes above and beyond the call of duty. They are also very emotionally invested in what they do (Odai et al, 2021). Even though it is a human choice, not an organizational one, engagement is a strategy used by organizations to manage their workforce rather than a mental state that workers experience while carrying out their tasks (Pholoba, 2015). Whereas employees who are engaged are mentally and emotionally committed to their jobs and making a positive difference for their employers (Jovanovic, 2019). Engagement is a workforce management strategy that aligns with business objectives and aims to motivate employees' commitment, enthusiasm, and performance as well as their personal well-being (Bailey, 2017).

Employees are motivated to positively contribute to the effective implementation of the corporate plan in supportive environments. Trusting, safe, equitable, convivial, and relationship-focused are further characteristics of supportive cultures; they promote a collaborative environment (Burke et al. 2007; Berson et al. 2008). Hence, a supportive

culture should highlight the fundamental belief that the company values and is committed to its people. It equips staff to fulfill the dynamic requirements of strategy execution (Sok, 2014).

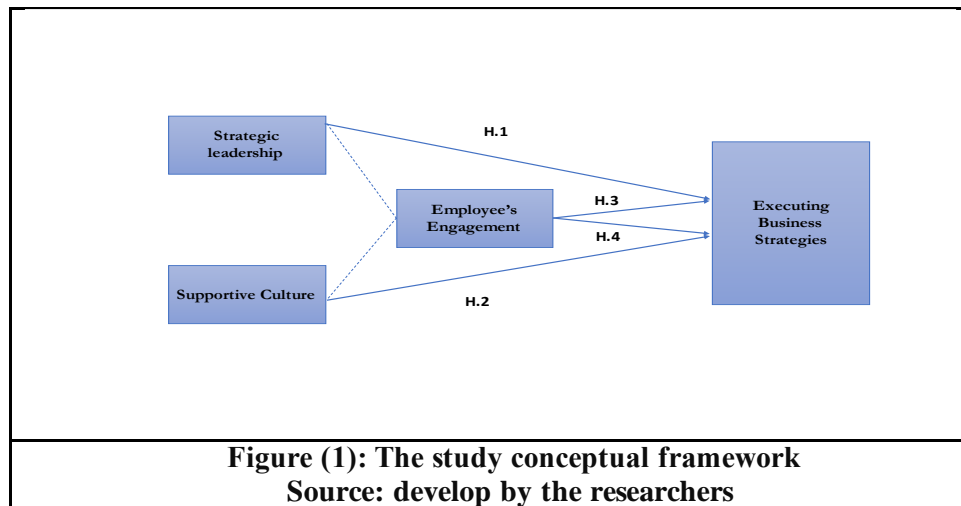
According to Hwang and Choi (2017), supportive culture (SC) boosts employees' trust, feeling of justice, sense of fairness as part of an organizational endeavor, sense of being active participants who are involved in the innovation process, energy, and embracing of organizational change. It also encourages initiative, creativity, and risk-taking. Everyone wins when staff is managed through engagement. This type of culture AI reinforces employees being involved in real connections to strategy, corporate performance, community, relationships, customers, energy, and well-being as we leverage, maintain, and convert our work connections into results is known as employee engagement (Bailey, 2022).

The social exchange theory explains the connection between a leader's support and employee engagement. According to the social exchange hypothesis, an employee is more likely to reciprocate by giving higher work performance and voluntarily adopting favorable work behaviors when they are continuously indulged by a significant actor at their place of employment (Odai et al, 2021). From the above literature, this study proposes that:

H4: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between supportive culture and executing business strategies.

3. Study Model

This study is intended to evaluate the anticipated role of both strategic leadership and supportive culture in the execution of a strategy, with a focus on the mediating role of employee engagement, as shown in figure (1). It is hypothesized that adopting strategic leadership will impact the execution of strategies positively. The same impact is expected when the corporate culture is supportive. However, the researchers argue that employees' engagement level is playing a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between supportive culture and strategic leaders, and successful strategy execution.



4. Methodology

4.1. Study Design

A quantitative approach was applied to achieve the study objectives. A link to an online survey was posted on the LinkedIn profiles of people who operate in a variety of ICT sectors in Egypt as part of the researchers' effort to collect data. The researchers were able to collect 249 fully completed questionnaires after a 2-month period. SPSS 23.1 and AMOS 23.1 were used to evaluate the data that had been gathered.

4.2. Measurement Tools:

The researchers utilized a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was created based on previously validated scales (appendix 1). De Oliveira et al. (2019) have three dimensions to measure strategy execution. These dimensions include unfolding (5 questions), communication (4 questions), and control and feedback (5 questions). To measure the supportive culture, five items were adapted from Al-Sada et al. (2017). To measure Strategic Leadership, five items were adapted from Al-Sada M et al, (2017). To measure employee engagement, five items were adopted from Pholoba (2015).

4.3. Population and Sample:

Employees of the Egyptian ICT sector represented the population of the study. The population of 285000 employees (MCIT, 2021). Applying the study to this sector ensures that all study variables are well represented. Actually, this sector's contribution to the economic and social development in Egypt is remarkable. To maximize the sector's contributions to the sustainability of economic and social development the ICT sector is required to design and execute new business strategies. In addition, the massive

technological advancement that the Egyptian ICT sector is experiencing has led to a strong need to adopt and apply new strategies.

By creating a Digital Egypt, the ICT 2030 strategy helps Egypt achieve its Vision 2030 objectives. These goals include modernizing the Infrastructural facilities, improving digital inclusion, making the shift to a knowledge-based economy, developing capabilities and stimulating innovation, combating corruption, ensuring cybersecurity, and strengthening Egypt's standing in the region and internationally.

Due to the fact the population size is too large, the researchers consulted the statistical tables developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the sample size. Accordingly, the sample size was 384 respondents. The researchers used probability sampling to randomly select 384 employees. A total number of 316 questionnaires (82.2%) were collected. The valid questionnaires were 249 (64.9%) after excluding the missing values. According to Seigel (2012) and Black (2019), this sample size is acceptable and good enough to test the study hypotheses.

4.4. Sample profile

The sample descriptive profile displayed in table (1) shows that most of the sample respondents (77%) were males while female respondents were (23%). A total of 126 respondents (51%) were middle managers, and 102 respondents (41%) were top managers. The designation with the smallest number of respondents is that of direct managers, with 21 respondents (8%).

Table (1) Sample Characteristics

	Count	%
Gender		
Male	192	77%
Female	57	23%
Management Level		
Top	102	41%
Middle	126	51%
Direct	21	8%

Source: Results of Statistical Analysis

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 23.0 in keeping with the objectives of the study and the suggested model. First, the means and standard deviations of all the study's variables were determined. Then the relationship between variables was established by using Pearson's correlation analysis, partial correlations of major variables, and a hypothesis test by Baron and Kenny (1986) method.

5.1. Measurement model assessment

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To assess the measurement models convergent and discriminant validity, Hu and Bentler (1999) cut-off criteria (i.e., X^2/DF less than 2; TLI, GFI, NFI, CFI greater than 0.90 and RMSEA less than 0.07) were utilized. To ascertain if the measurement model accurately represented diverse variables, the researchers performed a CFA. The proposed five-factor model demonstrated a good fit to the data, as shown in Table (2) which indicates that the model employed in this study is a good fit for the collected data. Therefore, the evaluation of the psychometric properties of the measurement model in terms of construct reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity may be pursued.

Table (2) Results of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) for the measures of the variables

Model	X^2	DF	X^2/DF	GFI	NFI	TAG	CFI	RMSEA
Model	723.45	371	1.95	.900	.913	.918	.853	.006

Note(s):

X^2 = Chi-Square, DF = Degree of freedom; GFI goodness of fit index; CFI comparative fit index; TLI Tucker–Lewis index; NFI normed fit index; RMSEA root-mean-square error of approximation.

Cronbach's Reliability Test

To assess the study measuring tool's reliability, the researchers used Cronbach's alpha method. As shown in table (3) the lowest dimension was employee engagement (0.832) while the highest dimension was unfolding (0.917). In other words, the reliability of the measuring tool indicates a consistent measure of a concept. The results also reveal that the Supportive Culture (SC) with 5 items ($\alpha=0.900$) and the Strategic Leadership (SL) with 5 items ($\alpha=0.872$) were found reliable. Similarly, the Employee Engagement (EE) scale with 5 items was also found reliable ($\alpha=0.832$). When it comes to the scales of Strategy Execution (SE), they were all reliable. The unfolding scale with 5 items ($\alpha=0.917$), the communication scale with 4 items ($\alpha=0.873$), and the control and feedback scale with 5 items ($\alpha=0.894$).

Table (3): Cronbach's alpha

	Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
supportive culture (SC)	.900	.900	5
Strategic Leadership (SL)	.872	.872	5
Employees Engagement (EE)	.827	.832	5
Unfolding	.917	.917	5
Communication	.873	.873	4
Control and feedback	.894	.896	5

Source: Results of Statistical Analysis

The overall finding indicates that all the coefficients of the study measurement tool exceeded the suggested values, signifying that the quality of scale reliability was highly

acceptable. According to Nunnally, these coefficients must be more than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

5.2. Descriptive statistics

With 249 respondents in the sample, table (4) shows that the majority of respondents believe the employees' engagement (EE) is the most impact variable on the strategy execution with the highest mean of 4.00. Followed by supportive culture (SC) with a mean of (3.82). In the meanwhile, respondents believe that control and feedback (C & F) are among the most important factors that increase their ability to implement the strategy because it has the highest mean of 3.69. Table (4) also reveals that the two independent variables; Strategic Leadership (SL), and Supportive Culture (SC) have high means of (3.76 and 3.82) respectively.

Table (4): Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables Measurement

	Variable*	Mean	Std-Error	Std. Deviation
	SC1	3.78	.068	1.078
	SC2	3.89	.070	1.100
	SC3	3.93	.067	1.052
	SC4	3.80	.063	.993
	SC5	3.72	.069	1.081
SC		3.82	.056	.896
	SL1	3.84	.066	1.037
	SL2	3.67	.070	1.101
	SL3	3.89	.061	.959
	SL4	3.70	.063	.993
	SL5	3.73	.062	.985
SL		3.76	.052	.826
	EE1	3.90	.073	1.149
	EE2	4.04	.062	.977
	EE3	3.87	.064	1.005
	EE4	4.20	.057	.904
	EE5	3.99	.063	.990
EE		4.00	.049	.775
	Un1	3.70	.061	.955
	Un2	3.65	.059	.939
	Un3	3.66	.061	.962
	Un4	3.65	.059	.926
	Un5	3.54	.066	1.047
UF		3.64	.053	.837
	Co1	3.59	.065	1.032
	Co2	3.36	.062	.979
	Co3	3.55	.059	.937
	Co4	3.63	.064	1.017

	Variable*	Mean	Std-Error	Std. Deviation
Comm		3.53	.053	.843
	CF1	3.67	.064	1.009
	CF2	3.73	.056	.881
	CF3	3.88	.059	.938
	CF4	3.58	.063	.997
	CF5	3.59	.068	1.067
C & F		3.69	.052	.821

Source: Results of Statistical Analysis

5.3. Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to verify that the distribution of the study sample means is normal. The statistical findings showed that the sampling distribution of the mean across the sample is normal with the Skewness score within the range of -3 and +3, and the Kurtosis score within the range of -20 and +20. The Skewness and Kurtosis scores for all measurement items, dimensions, and variables did not violate the skewness range (-3 and +3) where the minimum value was (-0.843) and the maximum value was (0.003). The same findings indicated that the Kurtosis score ranged from (0.022) to (0.713).

5.4. Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was first employed to measure the association between the dependent variable (SE) and the independent variables (SL and SC) taking into consideration the expected impact of the mediating variable (EE). The Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength and the direction of these relationships (Hair et al, 2017).

Therefore, the researchers tested the correlation among the study variables to identify many points such as the direction of the relationship, and significance, in addition to the multi-collinearity issue that may exist among the study variables (Hair et al., 2014). As indicated in table (5) the first independent variable (SC) has a significant positive relationship (0.849**) with the dependent variable (SE). It is also clear that the correlation coefficient exists between the second independent variable (SL) with the dependent variable (SE).673**. The table also reveals that supportive culture (SC) has a significant positive relationship with the mediating variable (EE) (0.729**). While Strategic Leadership (SL) has a significant positive relationship with the mediating variable (EE) by .654**. After that, the mediating variable (EE) significantly correlates with the dependent variable (SL) (.747**).

Table (5): Correlation Analysis among Study Variables

	SC	SL	EE	UF	COM
SC					
SL	0.745**				
EE	0.729**	0.654**			
SE	0.849**	0.673**	0.747**		
UF	0.814**	0.631**	0.644**		
Com	0.767**	0.622**	0.676**	0.796**	
Cont. and Feed	0.786**	0.628**	0.745**	0.796**	0.809**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.5. Partial Correlations of Major Variables

When the independent variable's impact on the dependent variable is lessened once the mediator is taken into account, there is partial mediation. The findings of the table (6) indicate that when the supportive culture was correlated with strategy execution without controlling for employees' engagement (mediator), the correlation was .849** coefficients was significant (.000). Also, this table indicates that when the supportive culture was correlated with strategy execution by controlling for employees' engagement (mediator), was .669** coefficients were significant (.000). This means that Employees' Engagement has some potential to mediate the relationship between supportive culture and strategy execution.

From table (6) it's observed that when strategic leadership was correlated with strategy execution without controlling for employees' engagement (mediator), the correlation was .745** coefficients was significant (.000). But from the table (5) it's observed that when Strategic Leadership was correlated with strategy execution by controlling for employees' engagement (mediator), was .527** coefficients was significant (.000). This means that Employees' Engagement has some potential to mediate the relationship between Strategic Leadership and Strategy Execution.

Table (6): Partial Correlation Analysis

Control Variable		SC	SL	SE
EE	SC		.527**	.669**
	SL	.527**		.377**
	SE	.669**	.377**	

* Correlation significance (2-tailed, n= 248)

5.6. Hypothesis Test by Baron and Kenny (1986) Method

From table (7) and figure (2) Employees' Engagement is partially mediated in the relationship between Strategic Leadership, Supportive Culture, with Strategy Execution.

Table (7): results of direct and indirect effects

	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects	Results
Strategic Leadership --> Executing Business Strategies	.028	.057	.084	Partial Mediating Effect
Supportive culture --> Executing Business Strategies	.547	.129	.676	Partial Mediating Effect
Employees' Engagement --> Executing Business Strategies	.268		.268	
Strategic Leadership--> Employees' Engagement	.214		.214	
Supportive Culture -->Employees' Engagement	.482		.482	

Source: Results of AMOS

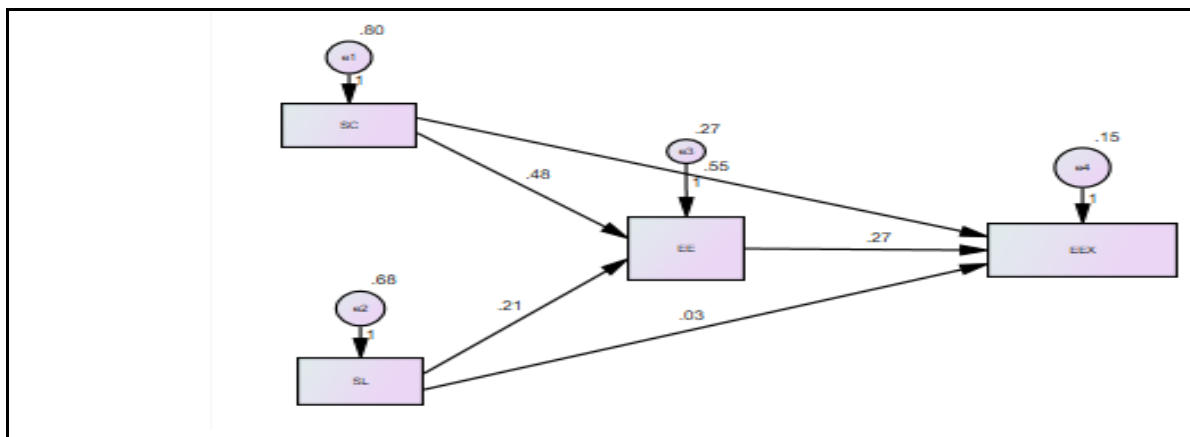


Figure (2) Results of Baron and Kenny Method

Source: Results of Amos

The researchers also assumed that the effect of the supportive culture (SC) and Strategic Leadership (SL) on Strategy Execution (SE) and that these relationships are mediated by Employee Engagement (EE). On the other hand, figure (2) shows that the Baron and Kenny (1986) method is an analysis strategy for testing mediation hypotheses. In this method of mediation, there are two paths to the dependent variables. The independent variables (SC and SL) must predict the dependent variable (SE), and the independent variables must predict the mediator (EE). To summarize:

1. Supportive culture (SC) significantly influences the strategy execution process (SE) (0.547) in the first regression equation.
2. Strategic leadership (SL) significantly influences strategy execution (SE) (0.028) in the first regression equation.
3. The independent variables (SC and SL) significantly influence employee engagement (0.48) and (0.21) respectively.
4. Employee engagement significantly influences strategy execution (0.27).

The overall findings of the statistical analysis support the study hypotheses. Supportive culture (SC) and Strategic leadership (SL) significantly influence strategy

execution (SE). In addition, Employee Engagement is partially mediated in the relationship between strategic leadership, supportive culture, with strategy execution.

6. Study Implications

6.1. Theoretical implications

At least four new ideas have been added to the body of knowledge by this investigation. This study first looks at the direct impact of strategic leadership on the implementation of corporate strategy. Strategic leadership was studied in the past as a general construct to assess its impact on organizational success. Theoretically, it is unknown how different strategy leadership facets may influence how business and ICT plans align throughout execution (Covin & Slevin, 2017). The results of the empirical research can be used to expand the existing literature on the implementation of ICT business strategy from a theoretical standpoint of strategic leadership.

Second, by taking supportive culture into account as an important contingency element in business plan execution, this study adds to the body of literature by revealing the direct impact of supportive culture on the implementation of business strategies. Thirdly, this study reveals the role that employee engagement plays as a mediator between strategic leadership and company strategy execution, and researching how leadership and workforce engagement interact to execute corporate strategy through ICT. Previous research has largely ignored leadership effectiveness in different organizational situations, concentrating instead on the direct impact of strategic leadership on organizational growth. like the implementation of strategy through employee involvement. From a theoretical perspective based on employee engagement, the research findings could further define the situational conditions affecting leadership effectiveness in facilitating ICT strategic execution.

Fourthly, this study reveals how employee engagement mediates the relationship between a supportive culture and successfully implementing corporate strategy, and researches how employee engagement and supportive culture interact to execute corporate strategy. This study can draw the researchers' attention to the perspective of supportive culture and how it supports employee engagement for the successful implementation of the organization's strategy in the ICT sector in Egypt.

6.2. practical implications

The study findings provide practitioners with some implications that will help management teams to execute strategies successfully. These implications are:

1. Communicate the strategy

Strategic leadership's ability to convey the corporate vision and mission to empower employees is one of the critical success factors in executing plans. According to study results, it is the main factor influencing strategy execution is communication. When it comes to carrying out a strategy, leaders shouldn't underestimate the impact of excellent communication. Leaders should improve their communication skills given that in many cases employees don't know or don't understand their organization's strategy. Therefore, employees should be aware of their role in achieving the strategic goals for the strategy execution process to be successful. Therefore, it is vital to ensure employees understand the organization's planned strategic objectives and to define their efforts to make the strategy a living document. Leaders should receive training on how to convey the effects of their team members' daily work, speak to the entire organization during a staff meeting, and promote a climate that celebrates small victories along the way to major strategic objectives.

2. Clarity

The study's findings demonstrated that both strategic leaders and the supportive culture are jointly responsible for clarity which is a critical success factor in effectively executing plans. It is expected that when organizations do not achieve clarity to the degree they should, the strategy execution will be cramped. According to a 2007 report by The American Management Association. The relevance of "setting clear goals to support strategy" was placed second out of 57 distinct methods of strategy execution., "ensuring clear accountability" was ranked fourth, while "having a clear focus on executing strategy" was ranked sixth. Additionally, corporate leaders who are more strategic-minded respond to new strategic possibilities more swiftly (Jamrong et al, 2007). The value that businesses place on having a defined plan and the degree to which they actually implement it differ significantly. To be clear, higher-performing businesses are significantly more likely to succeed than lower-performing ones. In fact, three of the top six factors that distinguish higher performers from lower performers (clear strategy, goals, and focus) are related to clarity.

3. Agile organization

Aligned organization deals with aligning functional management areas with the strategic direction (Sushil, 2009). Organizational success and survival in such a VUCA business environment greatly rely on these organizations' agility. The probability that agile organizations will grow is very high, while non-agile organization has no room to grow. An agile organization excels in speed and flexibility. In other words, an agile company should be able to show that it can act rapidly and successfully when fresh strategic opportunities present themselves. From the standpoint of strategy execution, the period between developing a plan and putting it into action should be relatively short to ensure quick decision-making. Since strategies are dynamic, they should be altered as new

opportunities and issues present themselves. Communication is crucial to ensuring that employees and organizations start on the same direction and stay on the same direction throughout time. Motivate employees to submit ideas, try new things, and take calculated risks in order to achieve strategic goals (Jamrong et al, 2007).

4. Alignment

Leaders must get the entire company process to reflect the significance of a strategy in order to properly implement it. Alignment techniques are frequently employed and highly regarded. Four of the top ten most popular ways for executing a strategy involve alignment practices. They rank among the top 10 practices that are most highly regarded. "Aligning strategy with the corporate vision/mission statement," "Aligning organizational objectives with strategy," "Aligning business units with strategy," and "Aligning business units with organizational goals" are among the top 10 (Alignment, AMA, 2007). Some alignment tactics are much more likely to be used in supportive cultures. They are more likely to link tangible and intangible rewards with strategy and organizational goals with strategy. (Jamrong et al, 2007).

Many organizations struggle to execute their plans because employee roles aren't developed with a strategy in mind. This might occur if employees are recruited before the strategic plan is created or if job descriptions are made to match a previous corporate strategy. Positions are optimized for high performance in strategy execution when they are in line with business strategies. It is crucial to ensure that executives can evaluate if the roles within their organization are set up for successful strategy execution.

5. Monitor execution progress

Strategy execution depends on assessing progress toward strategic objectives on regular basis. To do so, during the strategy formulation phase, key performance indicators (KPIs) should be chosen, and progress should be quantified. Negative and weak signs show that a strategic plan revision is necessary because it is not bringing about the desired transformation for the organization. Yet, if the KPI data demonstrates consistent month-over-month growth, a company can utilize that trend to reasonably anticipate whether the company will accomplish a specific strategic goal. This is the point where things start to move a little more quickly.

6. Reward the executors

What's In It for Me (WIFM) is a basic requirement for successful strategy execution. While organizations place a great emphasis on formulating the strategy, they underestimate the importance of tangible and intangible rewards. Rewards don't just have to be monetary. All other types of intangible rewards (recognition, attending conferences) would be effective tools to reward employees. In many cases, an organization's failure to create a rewarding system related to strategy execution will jeopardize the likelihood of strategy success. Therefore, a major question that needs an answer is: "Did employees receiving reasonable rewards make the highest contribution to the strategy execution? To

answer this question organizations should establish a direct link between tangible and intangible rewards and the strategy execution. Such a link is deeply embedded in the culture of the organization.

7. Conclusions

This study was designed to develop a model to examine the expected role of strategic leadership and supportive culture in executing business strategies: with the mediating role of employee engagement. In most cases, while a strategy was well formulated it was poorly executed. Strategy execution remains a difficult task with improbable success. Leaders must be proficient in a number of key disciplines, including change management, performance, and project management, in order to execute a strategy.

The researchers hypothesized that employees' engagement can mediate the relationship between the independent variables (SL and SC) and strategy execution. Four hypotheses were developed to test the expected relationships among the conceptual framework of the study. As predicted, the study hypotheses were all supported. It is evident that the more supportive the culture is the more the likely that strategy execution will be successful. The same conclusion was reached when researchers tested the impact of strategic leadership on strategy execution. The mediating role of employees' engagement was also supported. In brief, the research findings support the research hypotheses that employee engagement is partially mediating the relationship between strategic leadership and strategy execution.

This study contributes to an explanation of why so many strategy execution efforts fail. It is one of the very few studies addressing the issue of the relationships between strategy execution obstacles and corporate leaders, through employee engagement. The findings of the study suggest that strategic leadership can significantly improve strategy execution, when supported by employee engagement. The study contributes to the existing strategy execution discussion a suggests managerial implications. This result is consistent with previous studies ((Jabbar & Hussein, 2017; Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). In addition, the current research findings support the notion that supportive culture has a significant positive relationship with executing business strategies, which is consistent with the previous studies (Bağ & Sukiennik, 2019; Ahmadi et al., 2012) which found that supportive culture and executing business strategies are positively correlated to each other.

8. Suggested Future Research

Developing a comprehensive prescription for successful strategy execution process is a challenging task. However, the current study sheds light on three critical organizational factors that can increase the likelihood of the strategy execution process filling a well-defined literature gap. Namely, supportive culture, strategic leadership, and

employee engagement were investigated and tested. However, further research efforts could be extended to fill other practical gaps. Evidently, there is a lack of academic research investigating the impact of digital culture on strategy execution, especially during the digital transformation process. In this case, a new mindset is required if the strategy will be implemented successfully (Haroun, 2022).

Another research gap stems from the theoretical and practical existing shortage of studying the relationship between corporate performance management and strategy execution. Do organizations align their performance with strategic initiatives and priorities? Many aspects could be studied such as profitability, market share, and sustainability in their relationship with strategy execution. Finally, the strategy execution process could be studied in Small and Medium Enterprises.

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Appendix 1 Study Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to measure the impact of supportive culture and strategic leadership style on an organization's ability to execute its strategic plans. It also investigates the mediating role of employees' engagement affecting the strategy execution success. Your participation is highly appreciated; all information is used for scientific purposes only and treated confidentially. *Please respond to the following statements using the following scale*

5 (SA)	4 (A)	3 (N)	2 (D)	1 (SD)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Natural	Disagree	Strongly Agree

Thanks

	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
supportive culture (5 items)						
1	We have a well-defined set of shared values for our company that are in sync with the company's vision, and mission.	5	4	3	2	1
2	We strongly demonstrate our values while dealing with others internally and externally.	5	4	3	2	1
3	Our values are well integrated into the process of hiring new employees.	5	4	3	2	1
4	As part of our culture, we implemented coaching and mentoring for all employees.	5	4	3	2	1
5	Our employees are fairly recognized and appreciated.	5	4	3	2	1
Strategic Leadership (5 Items)						
6	In my company, leaders used to inspire me to have initiative at work.	5	4	3	2	1
7	In my company, leaders used to motivate me to grow in my career.	5	4	3	2	1
8	Our leaders are involved in the execution process.	5	4	3	2	1
9	Our leaders provide a management style that supports the cooperation of cross-functional teams.	5	4	3	2	1
10	Our leaders provide a management style that coordinates the decisions and actions of execution managers for them to implement the strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
Employees' Engagement (5 Items)						
11	I believe in my company's vision and mission.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I can easily see how my work affects the company's overall success.	5	4	3	2	1
13	I always know what is expected of me when it comes to my goals and objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
14	I always want to give my best whenever I'm at work.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I am proud to work in my company, and I confidently recommend to outsiders to consider working in my organization.	5	4	3	2	1

	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Strategy Execution (Unfolding, Communication, Control, and feedback) (15 Items)						
1. Unfolding (In my organization						
16	We establish specific actions to execute the strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
17	We establish actions to align organizational culture with the strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
18	We establish actions to commit employees toward the strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
19	We define resources and time limits and designate who will be responsible for each action	5	4	3	2	1
20	We define indicators and goals to monitor the execution of the strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Communication (In my organization						
21	We use multiple communication means (billboards, meetings, reports, emails) to disseminate information about strategy execution	5	4	3	2	1
22	We share information (about the strategy and related actions, responsible persons, deadlines, goals, results, and adjustments) in a broad manner.	5	4	3	2	1
23	We understand the strategy and the elements of its execution (actions, responsible persons, goals, deadlines, resources)	5	4	3	2	1
24	We understand the adjustments made to the strategic plan, the related actions, or the goals	5	4	3	2	1
3. Control and feedback						
25	We adopt a set of procedures to monitor results	5	4	3	2	1
26	We identify changes in the internal environment	5	4	3	2	1
27	We identify changes in the external environment	5	4	3	2	1
28	We analyze the collected data (results attained, changes in internal or external environment)	5	4	3	2	1
29	We can quickly respond to internal and external environmental changes.	5	4	3	2	1

II: Personal Information

1.	Gender:	Male ()	Female ()	
2.	Management Level:	Top ()	Middle ()	Direct ()