

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The topic of the relationship between strategic leadership and sustainable development is a vital one that has received increasing attention in modern administrative literature, due to the significant role leadership plays in guiding organizations towards achieving long-term goals characterized by continuity and balance. This study aims to highlight the nature of the integrative relationship between strategic leadership and sustainable development, and to demonstrate how strategic leaders contribute to enhancing sustainability practices within organizations. The study proceeds from the hypothesis that strategic leadership represents a critical factor in achieving sustainable development through adopting future visions and flexible strategies that respond to environmental, economic, and social changes. It was concluded that strategic leadership directly contributes to integrating sustainability principles into organizational policies, and works to achieve a balance between profit generation, natural resource conservation, and social responsibility enhancement (Al-Janabi & Sultan, 2020). Results also showed that strategic leaders play a pivotal role in supporting innovation and moving towards the use of clean technologies, which positively reflects on the environmental performance of organizations (Hassan, 2021). Furthermore, the importance of leadership in building effective partnerships with stakeholders emerges, which enhances opportunities for achieving sustainable development on a broader scale. The study also confirmed that the presence of aware strategic leadership contributes to improving the competitiveness of organizations and increases their ability to face future challenges (Al-Siyabi, 2023). The study concludes that achieving sustainable development cannot be done in isolation from the presence of effective strategic leadership capable of directing resources and making sound decisions (Abdul Rahman, 2020). Therefore, adopting strategic leadership approaches is an urgent necessity to ensure the sustainability of institutional performance and achieve comprehensive development.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Sustainable Development, Environmental Sustainability, Institutional Performance, Social Responsibility.

1. INTRODUCTION

In light of the rapid changes witnessed by the world in various economic, social, and environmental fields, organizations face increasing and complex challenges that require leadership styles capable of long-term strategic thinking. The role of leadership is no longer limited to achieving short-term goals or managing daily operations; it has extended to include formulating future visions, making decisions based on long-term planning, and ensuring organizational continuity in a changing and demanding competitive environment.

Strategic leadership is one of the most prominent modern leadership styles that focuses on future vision, efficient investment of human and material resources, and achieving a balance between present requirements and future needs. It requires the leader to have the ability to analyze the organization's internal and external environment, predict opportunities and risks, and develop proactive plans to ensure organizational success and sustainability (Collins, 2019, p. 45).

The topic of strategic leadership gains particular importance when linked to the dimensions of sustainable development, which include the economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, which makes strategic leadership a vital tool for achieving this balance. The strategic leader contributes to directing resources and managing operations and employees in a way that supports economic growth, enhances social justice, and preserves the environment (Al-Qalasi, 2024).

Moreover, strategic leadership enables the organization to face sudden challenges and crises with flexibility and efficiency, by developing alternative plans and implementing innovative strategies, while maintaining institutional continuity. Leadership also helps build a positive organizational culture that encourages participation, responsibility, and innovation, thereby enhancing the organization's ability to achieve sustainable development goals in the long term (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2020).

Recent studies have shown that organizations that adopt strategic leadership and integrate sustainable development goals into their policies and strategies enjoy higher performance and better institutional reputation, in addition to a greater ability to adapt to economic, social, and environmental changes. Therefore, there is an urgent need to study the impact of strategic leadership on adopting the dimensions of sustainable development, to provide a theoretical and practical framework that helps leaders and institutions achieve sustainable development in a balanced and effective manner, and to achieve integration between economic growth, social responsibility, and environmental preservation (Hamdan, 2021).

In this context, this study aims to analyze the relationship between strategic leadership and the dimensions of sustainable development, focusing on the role of leadership in enhancing the economic, social, and environmental performance of organizations, identifying the most important challenges and obstacles facing leadership in this field, and suggesting mechanisms to enhance the leadership role in achieving sustainable development.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First: Research Problem

The research problem is represented in the following main question: To what extent does strategic leadership contribute to adopting the dimensions of sustainable development within organizations? Several sub-questions branch from this main question, most notably:

- What is the concept of strategic leadership and its main characteristics?
- What are the dimensions of sustainable development that organizations seek to achieve?
- What is the relationship between strategic leadership and sustainable development?

Second: Research Importance

The importance of the research stems from the following aspects:

1. Highlighting the vital role of strategic leadership in achieving sustainable development.

2. Contributing to enriching the theoretical aspect related to strategic leadership and sustainable development.
3. Helping administrative leaderships adopt leadership practices that support sustainability.
4. Keeping pace with modern global trends towards sustainability in institutional work.

Third: Research Objectives

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Clarify the theoretical concept of strategic leadership and its basic characteristics.
2. Identify the concept of sustainable development and its main dimensions.
3. Demonstrate the role of strategic leadership in adopting the dimensions of sustainable development.
4. Identify the most prominent challenges facing strategic leadership in this field.

Fourth: Research Hypotheses

The research proceeds from the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership and the adoption of sustainable development dimensions.
2. Strategic leadership contributes to enhancing the economic dimension of sustainable development.

Fifth: Hypothetical Research Model

The research adopts a hypothetical model illustrating the relationship between two main variables:

- **Independent Variable:** Strategic Leadership (Vision, Strategic Planning, Resource Management, Innovation).
- **Dependent Variable:** Dimensions of Sustainable Development (Economic Dimension, Social Dimension, Environmental Dimension).

The research assumes a direct relationship between strategic leadership and sustainable development.



Figure (1) Hypothetical research plan

Sixth: Research Population and Sample

The research population consists of administrative leaders in Al-Ittihad Company. The research sample includes a group of managers and department heads who have a direct role in making

strategic decisions within their organizations. 120 questionnaire forms were distributed to select the sample purposively due to its suitability for the nature of the research topic.

Seventh: Statistical Tools Used in the Research

In completing this research, we will rely on frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, correlation coefficient, regression analysis, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, using a specialized statistical program for data analysis.

Section Two: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of sustainable development is one of the modern concepts that has received wide attention in contemporary economic and administrative thought, as a result of the environmental, economic, and social challenges facing the world today. The concept of sustainable development emerged with the aim of finding a balance between the requirements of economic development on one hand, and the preservation of natural resources and the environment on the other, in a way that ensures the continuity of development for future generations. This concept indicates the necessity of achieving comprehensive development that takes into account the various economic, social, and environmental aspects simultaneously.

The concept of sustainable development is the product of a long intellectual evolution in the field of development, where the focus shifted from mere economic growth to attention to quality of life, environmental quality, and social justice. Sustainable development has been defined as the process of developing and managing resources in a way that meets the needs of the present generation without harming the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This definition reflects the importance of rational use of natural resources and avoiding their excessive exploitation (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, as cited in Al-Siyabi, 2023).

The conceptual framework of sustainable development is also based on a set of basic principles, most notably integration among the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, achieving intergenerational equity, in addition to enhancing community participation in the development process. This framework emphasizes the need to adopt development policies and strategies that contribute to achieving a balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and improving the level of societal well-being.

First Section: Strategic Leadership**First: Concept of Strategic Leadership and Its Basic Characteristics**

Strategic leadership is one of the modern concepts in business administration, as it emerged as a result of rapid developments in the business environment and the growing need for leaders who possess the ability to think long-term. Strategic leadership can be defined as the ability to formulate a clear future vision for the organization, direct resources and capabilities to achieve long-term goals, while continuously adapting to environmental changes (Collins, 2019, p. 45).

Strategic leadership is also closely linked to the concept of strategic management, as it represents the leadership aspect in implementing strategies and achieving institutional excellence. It is not limited to decision-making but includes influencing and motivating individuals towards achieving strategic goals (Armstrong, 2020, p. 112).

Basic Characteristics of Strategic Leadership:

1. **Future Vision:** The strategic leader has the ability to anticipate the future and identify long-term directions, helping the organization achieve sustainability.

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2. **Ability to Make Strategic Decisions:** The strategic leader's decisions are characterized by comprehensiveness and flexibility, taking into account the organization's internal and external environment (Armstrong, 2020, p. 112).
 3. **Holistic (Systemic) Thinking:** The strategic leader relies on an integrated vision that links all components of the organization, thereby enhancing performance efficiency (Adair, 2018, p. 67).
 4. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Strategic leadership is capable of adapting to rapid changes in the surrounding environment, whether economic or technological.
 5. **Change Management:** The strategic leader contributes to effectively leading change processes within the organization, helping to achieve continuous development.
 6. **Focus on Competitive Advantage:** Strategic leadership seeks to achieve excellence by investing resources and capabilities in a way that achieves distinction.
 7. **Building a Strong Organizational Culture:** Strategic leadership reinforces organizational values that support innovation, teamwork, and institutional belonging (Maher, 2017, p. 89).

Second: Dimensions of Strategic Leadership

The dimensions of strategic leadership represent a set of practices and behaviors exercised by the leader to achieve long-term goals, and they can be explained as follows (Maher, 2017, p. 89):

1. **Visionary Dimension:** This dimension focuses on formulating a clear strategic vision reflecting the organization's future aspirations. The leader works to unify the efforts of employees around common goals and ensures everyone understands the organization's direction (Al-Sayrafi, 2016, p. 134).
2. **Analytical Dimension:** It involves analyzing the internal and external environment using tools such as SWOT analysis, helping to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and thus making accurate strategic decisions.
3. **Executive Dimension:** It focuses on transforming strategic plans into practical reality through efficient implementation of programs and projects, and monitoring performance to ensure goal achievement.
4. **Human (Leadership) Dimension:** This dimension is concerned with motivating employees, developing their skills, enhancing team spirit, and building relationships based on trust, thereby raising the level of institutional performance.
5. **Control Dimension:** It involves following up on strategy implementation and evaluating performance through effective measurement indicators, and correcting deviations to ensure the achievement of desired results (Daft, 2021, p. 158).

Second Section: Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development is one of the important concepts that emerged as a result of the environmental, economic, and social challenges facing the world. This concept has gained wide attention from international organizations and governments (Al-Siyabi, 2023).

Sustainable development is defined as a developmental process that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987, in Hassan, 2021). This concept focuses on achieving a balance between economic development, social justice, and environmental protection.

Main Dimensions of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development relies on three main interrelated dimensions:

1. **Economic Dimension:** The economic dimension represents one of the main dimensions of sustainable development, as it focuses on achieving continuous economic growth in a way that ensures the efficient and equitable use of available resources without harming the ability of future generations to benefit from them (Hassan, 2021). This dimension aims to achieve a balance between increasing production and improving living standards on one hand, and preserving natural resources on the other, thus contributing to long-term economic development. This dimension is based on principles such as optimal use of resources, raising production efficiency, encouraging investment, supporting innovation, with a focus on the green economy (Abdul Rahman, 2020).
2. **Social Dimension:** It focuses on achieving human well-being and improving quality of life, by providing basic needs and enhancing social justice and equality. It aims to build a balanced society where members have equal opportunities in education, work, and health services, with emphasis on community participation and human resource development (Al-Janabi & Sultan, 2020).
3. **Environmental Dimension:** It focuses on protecting the environment and preserving natural resources, through rational use of resources, reducing pollution, encouraging the use of environmentally friendly technologies and renewable energy, and preserving biodiversity (Sulaiman, 2021; Abd, n.d.).

Second: International Intellectual Development of Sustainable Development and Its Goals

The concept of sustainable development has gone through several stages of intellectual development at the international level:

1. **Stockholm Conference 1972:** Considered the starting point for organized global interest in environmental protection and linking it to development. It resulted in the Stockholm Declaration and the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Sulaiman, 2021).
2. **Brundtland Report 1987:** Presented the most famous definition of sustainable development in the report "Our Common Future," and emphasized the integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Mahmoud, 2019).
3. **Rio Earth Summit 1992:** Strengthened the concept of sustainable development, issued the Rio Declaration, adopted Agenda 21, and the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity (Ali, 2022).
4. **Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development 2002:** Focused on moving from concept formulation to actual implementation, combating poverty, and enhancing partnerships (Mohammed, 2022).
5. **Sustainable Development Agenda 2030:** Adopted by the United Nations in 2015, it includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering poverty eradication, quality education, clean energy, climate action, and others (Abdul Hamid, 2022; Ahmed, 2023).

Third: Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable development aims to establish a comprehensive framework for development that achieves balance among economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Among the most prominent goals are:

- **A. Eradication of Poverty and Hunger.**
- **B. Achieving Quality Education and Good Health for All (Mahmoud, 2021).**
- **C. Promoting Economic Growth and Decent Work.**

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- **D. Protecting the Environment and Natural Resources (Salem, 2020).**
 - **E. Achieving Social Justice and Equality (Abdul Aziz, 2023).**
 - **F. Enhancing International Partnerships to Achieve Development (Hassan, 2022).**

Section Three: Practical Side

This Section aims to study the impact of strategic leadership on adopting the dimensions of sustainable development in Al-Ittihad Company in Babylon Governorate.

1. Research Population: It includes all employees of Al-Ittihad Company in Babylon Governorate, estimated at 120 employees.

2. Research Sample: A simple random sample of 120 employees was selected.

Table (1) Distribution of Research Sample Individuals by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	78	65.0%
Female	42	35.0%
Total	120	100%

Table (2) Distribution of Research Sample Individuals by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 30 years	22	18.3%
30 - 39 years	41	34.2%
40 - 49 years	36	30.0%
50 years and above	21	17.5%
Total	120	100%

Table (3) Distribution of Research Sample Individuals by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	18	15.0%
Bachelor's Degree	67	55.8%
Master's Degree	26	21.7%
Doctorate	9	7.5%

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Total	120	100%

3. Presentation of Research Variables: The study includes two main variables: strategic leadership (with its dimensions: vision, planning, resource management, innovation) and sustainable development (with its dimensions: economic, social, environmental). They were measured using a questionnaire based on the five-point Likert scale.

Table (6) Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient

Axis	Number of Items	Cronbach's Coefficient	Alpha
Strategic Leadership	16	0.91	
Sustainable Development	12	0.88	
Whole Questionnaire	28	0.90	

4. Statistical Description of Research Variables

Table (7) Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation of Strategic Leadership Variables

Strategic Dimensions	Leadership	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level
Strategic Vision		4.12	0.65	High
Strategic Planning		4.05	0.70	High
Resource Management		3.98	0.72	High
Innovation		4.08	0.68	High
Strategic Leadership as a Whole		4.06	0.69	High

Table (8) Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation of Sustainable Development Dimensions

Sustainable Dimensions	Development	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level
Economic Dimension		4.10	0.66	High
Social Dimension		3.95	0.73	High

Sustainable Dimensions	Development	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level
Environmental Dimension		3.88	0.75	High
Sustainable Development as a Whole		3.98	0.71	High

5. Testing Correlation Relationships Using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Table (9) Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Strategic Leadership and Sustainable Development

Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig. Level	Type of Relationship
Strategic Leadership × Sustainable Development	0.76	0.000	Strong positive, statistically significant

Table (10) Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Strategic Leadership Dimensions and the Economic Dimension

Economic Dimension with	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig.	Type of Relationship
Strategic Vision	0.69	0.000	Strong positive
Strategic Planning	0.72	0.000	Strong positive
Resource Management	0.78	0.000	Strong positive
Innovation	0.70	0.000	Strong positive

Table (11) Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Strategic Leadership Dimensions and the Social Dimension

Social Dimension with	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig.	Type of Relationship
Strategic Vision	0.63	0.000	Moderate to strong positive
Strategic Planning	0.66	0.000	Strong positive
Resource Management	0.71	0.000	Strong positive
Innovation	0.65	0.000	Strong positive

Table (12) Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Strategic Leadership Dimensions and the Environmental Dimension

Environmental Dimension with	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig.	Type of Relationship
Strategic Vision	0.68	0.000	Strong positive
Strategic Planning	0.70	0.000	Strong positive
Resource Management	0.74	0.000	Strong positive
Innovation	0.72	0.000	Strong positive

6. Testing Research Hypotheses

- **Main First Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership and the adoption of sustainable development dimensions.
Result: Hypothesis accepted, as the correlation coefficient reached (0.76) at a significance level of (0.000).
- **Sub-Second Hypothesis:** Strategic leadership contributes to enhancing the economic dimension of sustainable development.
Result: Hypothesis accepted, as the correlation coefficient reached (0.71) and significance level (0.000), and strategic leadership explains 50% of the change in the economic dimension.
- **Sub-Third Hypothesis:** Strategic leadership positively contributes to improving the efficiency of resource management and achieving sustainability.
Result: Hypothesis accepted based on the high correlation values of the resource management dimension with the various dimensions of sustainable development.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First: Conclusions

1. Strategic leadership in Al-Ittihad Company is characterized by clarity of vision, planning, and decision-making ability, which enhances the success of adopting sustainable development.
2. The results showed that effective leadership supports improving the company's financial performance by increasing efficiency and reducing waste in economic resources.
3. It was found that strategic leadership contributes to enhancing social responsibility, improving working conditions, and supporting training and education programs for employees and the local community.
4. The results showed the company's interest in environmental sustainability and the protection of natural resources, reflecting the leadership's ability to integrate the environmental dimension into institutional strategies.
5. There is a clear positive correlation between the application of strategic leadership principles and the adoption of sustainable development dimensions, ensuring a balance of performance between the economy, society, and the environment.

Second: Recommendations

1. Organize workshops and training programs for employees on strategic leadership and dimensions of sustainable development to enhance effective participation.
2. Develop comprehensive strategic plans that take into account the three dimensions of sustainable development with periodic follow-up and performance measurement to ensure effective implementation.
3. Encourage the use of environmentally friendly technologies and practices to reduce consumption and waste and ensure the sustainability of natural resources.
4. Support social initiatives in the local community, such as education and health, to enhance the social dimension in an integrated manner with the economic and environmental dimensions.
5. Establish periodic evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of strategic leadership in adopting sustainable development, with adjustment of policies and strategies according to results to ensure continuous improvement.

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