
IMPROVING STRATEGIC READINESS THROUGH PERFORMANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AT UNIVERSITY OF SUMER

Amaal Khudhair Abbas¹ and Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sabah Helihel²

¹University of Sumer, Dhi Qar, Iraq

²Public Administration, College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer, Dhi Qar, Iraq

<http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2026.3789>

Received: 19 April 2026/ Published: 27 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the role of performance in enhancing strategic readiness at Sumer University. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to university leaders and administrative officials. The sample consisted of 143 respondents. The data were analyzed using several statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling. The results showed a positive correlation between performance and strategic readiness. This indicates that strategic readiness is enhanced through improved performance. The study concluded that University of Sumer possesses a solid foundation for improving performance and strategic readiness; however, this foundation requires further integration and institutionalization. The study recommended aligning the performance system, improving human resource processes by defining clearer responsibilities, and developing performance management systems linked to training, professional development, and strategic improvement.

Keywords: Strategic readiness, performance, performance management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing environment, characterized by intense competition and continuous technological advancements, organizations are required to enhance their strategic capabilities. This ensures their ability to adapt and respond to various environmental changes. Strategic readiness is a pivotal factor in improving organizational performance and strengthening the organization's capacity to make appropriate decisions. Watts et al. (2024) indicate that strategic readiness is broader than simply executing a mission. The U.S. Department of Defense defines "strategic readiness" as "the ability to build, maintain, and balance combat capabilities and competitive advantages," enabling the department to achieve its strategic objectives "in the face of threats and across different timeframes." From a change and implementation perspective, "strategic readiness" is often defined as "continuous organizational readiness" for "comprehensive and systematic change" to effectively implement the strategy. Since readiness is considered an ongoing, rather than a temporary, state, strategic readiness, from this perspective, encompasses all organizational aspects. That is, it includes the efficient and effective implementation of the strategy, not just its theoretical formulation (Al-Saedi et al., 2025). In addition, it is the ability of the organization, at the individual and group levels, to be prepared to commit to the strategic directions and implement them successfully to achieve the required goals through the psychological and behavioral readiness

of individuals (Roos & Nilsson, 2020).

Performance is central to business continuity because it is a competitive advantage capable of achieving organizational goals. High-performing organizations are characterized by their ability to respond quickly to changes, capitalize on opportunities, and achieve high levels of efficiency and productivity (Richard et al., 2019). Therefore, human resource performance is of great importance in management thought. Performance plays a significant role in enhancing organizational efficiency and achieving strategic objectives. Human resources no longer views performance as a traditional function limited to managing personnel affairs within the organization. Rather, it is a strategic element that directly contributes to enhancing organizational performance and competitiveness in a changing environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Consequently, human resource performance now relies on adopting flexible practices that support continuous learning, enhance employee engagement, and foster organizational commitment. Furthermore, effective human resource performance is reflected in the overall performance of the organization through improved service quality and the achievement of organizational sustainability (Bratton & Gold, 2022).

The importance of this study stems from its focus on the relationship between performance and strategic readiness in higher education institutions, particularly in light of the organizational challenges and rapid environmental changes facing contemporary universities. Strategic readiness is a fundamental pillar for ensuring universities' ability to adapt to changes and achieve their long-term goals efficiently and effectively. The study also gains significance from highlighting the vital role of performance in enhancing the university's strategic capabilities by improving implementation processes, supporting decision-making, and boosting human resource efficiency, thereby contributing to institutional sustainability and organizational excellence.

This study distinguishes itself from previous research by offering an integrated approach that links performance and strategic readiness within the Iraqi higher education environment. While most previous studies focused on each variable separately or within different sectors, this study employs an analytical model combining descriptive analysis with correlational and impact analysis using advanced statistical methods. This provides a more in-depth explanation of the relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the study contributes to providing an applied framework that can be used to develop performance and strategic readiness systems within universities, thereby enhancing their ability to meet future challenges and achieve their strategic goals more effectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Performance

Performance is a crucial factor in achieving an organization's strategic intentions and operational implementation, both tangible and intangible. Theoretically, performance is fundamentally based on Resource-Based Value (RBV) theory, which posits that human capital and physical capital are not merely operational inputs, but rather vital, value-generating resources essential for maintaining and improving an organization's financial position. Thus, performance is the extent to which these resources are utilized to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Usman et al., 2021). Performance extends beyond traditional financial metrics to encompass a broader spectrum of organizational success, including successful project execution and fostering innovation. Specifically, effective human resource performance has been empirically demonstrated to

positively impact project success and new product development (NPD), thereby stimulating numerous organizational benefits, such as market exclusivity and revenue growth (Hussain, 2022). Furthermore, performance critically integrates behavioral outcomes, defining success from the perspective of employee well-being and stability. It is directly linked to commitment-based human resource management practices and higher job satisfaction. This not only improves the overall well-being of the workforce but also significantly reduces job mobility and employee turnover intentions, particularly in high-growth sectors such as hospitality (Li et al., 2024; Azinuddin et al., 2021).

Performance is crucial in human resources as a key tool for measuring employee efficiency and their ability to achieve organizational goals. It helps identify achievement levels and detect deviations, thereby contributing to increased organizational efficiency. Performance also contributes to improved management decisions related to training, promotion, and human resource planning by providing information on employee performance levels (Matta et al., 2023). Furthermore, performance fosters organizational commitment and job satisfaction among employees, which in turn increases motivation and reduces employee turnover. It enhances the quality of services and organizational processes by increasing employee collaboration and promoting positive organizational behavior in the workplace (Pletzer et al., 2024). Finally, performance helps align employee goals with the organization's strategic objectives and guides individual and collective efforts (Biedma Ferrer & Medina Garrido, 2023).

2.2. Strategic Readiness

The concept of "readiness" is multi-layered. Its meaning varies depending on the nature of the organization, its level of analysis (unit-based, operational versus institutional, and strategic), and its field (military, public sector, business). In defense literature, readiness is often viewed as a state of capability. For example, at the operational level, readiness can be briefly defined as "the extent to which an organization is able to perform its task." The term has been defined in multiple ways across different contexts (Neri, 2019, 11). Readiness refers to the extent to which an element is able to execute an assigned task (L'Heureux, 2013, 3). This helps to establish the basic idea (capability) before expanding to "strategic readiness" at the strategic level. Strategic readiness can be considered either as a structure based on capabilities and balance (strategy), the ability to design and implement strategy (organizational readiness), or a state of continuous change and implementation (management). This set of concepts has evolved in parallel with changing environments and organizational forms. The concept of readiness and preparedness is linked to early readiness movements (including thinking about crisis preparedness before World War I) (Evans-Uzosike et al., 2025).

Strategic readiness is crucial because it serves as the practical "bridge" that transforms strategic intentions into sustainable performance and effective execution. This is especially true in turbulent environments where organizations must adapt quickly and avoid losing momentum. Strategic readiness is envisioned as a cornerstone for maintaining organizational performance in a dynamic environment and as a means of transforming disruptions into opportunities rather than operational inefficiencies (Al-Saedi et al., 2025). The importance of strategic readiness is further amplified by the increasing complexity of environments and systems, the evolving nature of threats, and the erosion of knowledge. This necessitates that leaders engage in continuous learning and possess interpretive capabilities to remain prepared over time (Galvin, 2024). Strategic readiness helps

organizations mitigate resistance to change and support a smooth transition towards organizational transformations, thereby fostering successful implementation and the achievement of desired objectives (Jalagat, 2015). Strategic readiness represents an organization's strengths and an understanding of available resources. In addition to developing strategic plans and supporting organizational flexibility (Al-Araji, 2025), preparedness helps organizations prepare to face future events in order to achieve their planned goals (Yasaad, 2022). Preparedness also enhances the ability of individuals and groups to deal with tensions and pressures through strategic dialogues within the organization (Burt, 2016). Furthermore, it represents one of the important methods for preparing for and dealing with uncertainties, as well as ensuring the conscious readiness of all employees within the organization for such circumstances (Mazlum, 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach for data collection and analysis. To measure the performance variable, the questionnaire from Al-Assadi et al. (2024) was adopted, with modifications tailored to the current study. The strategic readiness items were designed based on the Kaplan and Norton (2015) model, adapted to the study environment. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses of the sample, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

To verify the reliability of the instrument and the consistency of its results when reapplied to the same sample at different times, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. Values higher than 0.70 are considered statistically acceptable. Table 1 shows the reliability values for the performance variable (0.857) and for strategic readiness (0.893). The overall reliability of the instrument was 0.935, indicating a high and acceptable degree of reliability. High Cronbach's Alpha values indicate a high degree of internal consistency in the questionnaire items. This reflects the stability of participants' responses and their lack of random variation. This enhances the reliability of the data and its dependability in analyzing the relationships and effects between performance and strategic readiness. An internal consistency test was also conducted to verify the strength of the correlation between the items and their respective variables. High and statistically significant values indicate the quality of the indicators used in the measurement.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for measuring the stability of the axes

Variables	Symbol	Indicators	Consistency
Performance	X	5	0.814
Strategic readiness	Y	15	0.893
All axes		20	0.935

Table (2) reveals the results of the internal consistency analysis, which showed a statistically significant positive correlation between all measurement indicators. The correlation coefficients for the independent variable ranged from (0.764–0.828), and for the dependent variable, from (0.750–0.860), with significance levels less than (0.01). These results confirm the high degree of homogeneity among the items and the accuracy of their measurement of their respective dimensions. This indicates the validity of the questionnaire and its suitability for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 2: Internal consistency scores of the study variables items

Variables	Indicators	Correlation Coefficient	Sig
Performance	P1	0.818**	0.000
	P2	0.764**	0.000
	P3	0.799**	0.000
	P4	0.828**	0.000
	P5	0.827**	0.000
Strategic Readiness	SR1	0.761**	0.000
	SR2	0.802**	0.000
	SR3	0.825**	0.000
	SR4	0.800**	0.000
	ASR5	0.860**	0.000
	SR6	0.756**	0.000
	SR7	0.793**	0.000
	SR8	0.802**	0.000
	SR9	0.803**	0.000
	SR10	0.793**	0.000
	SR11	0.785**	0.000
	SR12	0.770**	0.000
	SR13	0.806**	0.000
	SR14	0.750**	0.000
	SR15	0.774**	0.000

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The results in Table (3) indicate that the performance variable achieved a relatively high level of agreement. The relative importance reached (74.35%), with a mean of (3.717). This reflects the respondents' perception of positive performance practices within the university. The standard deviation of(0.750) also indicates an acceptable degree of agreement and consistency in the sample's responses, which enhances the reliability of the results. The results demonstrate the university's interest in adopting modern performance evaluation methods. These methods rely on continuous monitoring rather than traditional periodic evaluation. However, there is an implementation gap between performance evaluation processes and the actual utilization of their results in developing skills and improving work practices. These results reflect that the university has an acceptable performance management system in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this system remains limited with regard to translating evaluation results into practical development plans that contribute to the sustainable improvement of institutional performance.

The results showed a positive level of agreement regarding the strategic readiness variable. The overall relative importance was 75.40%, with a mean of 3.770 and a standard deviation of 0.609. This reflects a reasonable degree of consistency in the respondents' answers and indicates that the university possesses a good level of readiness for change and strategic implementation. This suggests the availability of adequate leadership support and human resources to implement

strategic initiatives. However, the university still needs to enhance the integration of systems, policies, coordination mechanisms, and governance. Furthermore, it needs to develop flexible human resource management and evidence-based evaluation to contribute to a more effective and sustainable level of strategic readiness.

Table 3: Results of the descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variables	Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentages
Performance	P1	3.790	0.962	75.80%
	P2	3.797	0.921	75.94%
	P3	3.601	1.022	72.03%
	P4	3.674	0.983	73.48%
	P5	3.725	1.059	74.49%
	X	3.717	0.750	74.35%
Strategic readiness	SR1	3.797	0.937	75.94%
	SR2	3.681	1.025	73.62%
	SR3	3.703	0.955	74.06%
	SR4	3.710	1.075	74.20%
	ASR5	3.638	1.018	72.75%
	SR6	3.819	0.953	76.38%
	SR7	3.739	0.786	74.78%
	SR8	3.775	0.880	75.51%
	SR9	3.746	0.936	74.93%
	SR10	3.804	0.919	76.09%
	SR11	3.862	0.906	77.25%
	SR12	3.790	0.978	75.80%
	SR13	3.877	1.043	77.54%
	SR14	3.833	0.917	76.67%
	SR15	3.775	0.952	75.51%
	Y	3.770	0.609	75.40%

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Table (4) reveals a strong positive correlation between the study variables. The correlation coefficient between the two main variables is (0.776**). This indicates that an increase in one variable is clearly and consistently linked to an increase in the other. The results also showed positive correlations at the sub-dimension level, reinforcing the structural coherence between the components of the research model and confirming its internal consistency. All these relationships were found to be statistically significant at a significance level of less than (0.05). This means that the relationships are not random but rather reflect a real correlation that can be relied upon for scientific interpretation. Accordingly, the main hypothesis of the study, which posits a significant relationship between the research variables, is accepted. This supports the strength of the conceptual model used and confirms its suitability for analysis and interpretation.

Table 4: Correlation between performance and strategic readiness

IV \ DV		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y
X	Correlation Coefficient	.642**	.662**	.654**	.776**
	Sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

The results of the regression analysis, as shown in Table (5), indicate a significant effect of the performance variable on strategic readiness. The calculated F-value was less than the tabulated value, confirming the significance of the statistical model. This is further supported by the statistically significant p-value at a confidence level of (0.95). The regression coefficients also demonstrated a real effect of the independent variable. The constant ($\alpha = 1.427$) indicated a baseline value for strategic readiness even in the absence of a performance effect. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.630$) showed that a one-unit increase in performance leads to a corresponding increase in strategic readiness.

Table 5: Analysis of the impact of performance on strategic readiness

IV	DV	α	β	R^2	Value- F	P
Performance	Strategic Readiness	1.427	0.630	0.602	205.630	0.000
Critical F-value at $\alpha = 0.05$: 3.920				Critical F-value at $\alpha = 0.01$: 6.851		

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.602$) also indicated that performance explains 60.2% of the variance in strategic readiness. This reflects the strong explanatory power of the statistical model. Therefore, the research hypothesis, which posits a significant effect of performance on strategic readiness, is accepted. These results suggest that performance is one of the most important factors influencing the level of strategic readiness, as it represents a crucial link between strategic planning and practical implementation. This makes developing a performance management system a key approach to enhancing the university's readiness to respond to strategic changes. Therefore, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Strategic Readiness} = 1.427 + 0.630 (\text{Performance})$$

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results showed that the university treats strategic readiness as an ongoing process, not a temporary measure. This enhances its ability to adapt to institutional transformations and manage large-scale change efficiently and sustainably. The results also demonstrated a significant impact of performance on strategic readiness. This confirms that the efficiency of administrative and organizational procedures is a pivotal factor in enhancing the university's ability to effectively implement its strategies. Overall, the results indicate that the integration of performance elements and human resources directly contributes to raising the level of strategic readiness, improving responsiveness to changes, and implementing strategic initiatives more efficiently. In light of this, the study recommends adopting an integrated strategic readiness management system that includes periodic measurement of change readiness, risk monitoring, and resource availability assessment, along with periodic reports to senior management to ensure the sustainability of the institutional change process. It also proposes establishing a monitoring and management system to track

readiness levels across various aspects. Furthermore, it suggests supporting leadership, human resources, and implementation risk management, thereby enhancing the institutional capacity to adapt to and respond to strategic changes.

REFERENCES

- Al-Araji, I. H. (2025). *The impact of strategic readiness in reducing strategic ambiguity: An exploratory analytical study of the opinions of a sample of employees at Al-Joud Factory for Intravenous Analyses affiliated with Al-Abbas Holy Shrine in Karbala Province* (Master's thesis, University of Karbala, College of Administration and Economics), p. 33.
- Al-Assadi. (2024). *The golden triangle role of human resources in building organizational ambidexterity*. Eximia Journal, 13, 316–330.
- Al-Saedi, M. A. H., Husham Mayea Fazaa, H. M. F., & Murtaza Khachi Hayyawawi, M. K. H. (2025). Role The Strategic Readiness in Adoption The Behaviors of The Entrepreneurship Marketing. *Role The Strategic Readiness in Adoption The Behaviors of The Entrepreneurship Marketing*, 2(12), 126-139.
- Al-Saedi, M. A. H., Husham Mayea Fazaa, H. M. F., & Murtaza Khachi Hayyawawi, M. K. H. (2025). Role The Strategic Readiness in Adoption The Behaviors of The Entrepreneurship Marketing. *Role The Strategic Readiness in Adoption The Behaviors of The Entrepreneurship Marketing*, 2(12), 126-139.
- Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. (2023). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice* (16th ed.). Kogan Page.
- Azinuddin, M., Shariffuddin, N. S. M., Zain, W. M. A. W. M., & Som, A. P. M. (2021). The Impacts of Quality Work Life and Occupational Commitment on Job-Hopping Behavior of Chefs in 4 and 5 Star Rated Hotels in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(9), 1432-1444.
- Biedma Ferrer, J. M., & Medina Garrido, J. A. (2023). Impact of family-friendly HRM policies in organizational performance. *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.14358>.
- Bratton, J., & Gold, J. (2022). *Human resource management: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Burt, G., Mackay, D., van der Heijden, K., & Verheijdt, C. (2017). Openness disposition: Readiness characteristics that influence participant benefits from scenario planning as strategic conversation. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 124, 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.11.024>
- Evans-Uzosike, I. O., Okatta, C. G., Otokiti, B. O., Ejike, O. G., & Kufile, O. T. (2025). Closing the Cybersecurity Talent Gap: A Strategic Workforce Readiness Framework. *World Journal of Innovation and Modern Technology*, 9(6), 230-241.
- Galvin, T. (2024). *National preparedness and military readiness: Primer for senior leaders* (1st ed., July 2024 release). Department of Command, Leadership, & Management, U.S. Army War College.
- Hussain, M. R. (2022). Why Public Sector Projects Fail or Succeed in Pakistan - A Model for Evaluating Impact of HR Management Practices on Project Success. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Sciences*, 7(2), 77-90.
- Jalagat, R. C., Jr. (2015). The impact of change and change management in achieving corporate goals and objectives: Organizational perspective. *International Journal of Science and*

-
- Research (IJSR)*, 5(11), 1233–1239.
- Kaplan, .R. S. & Norton, D. P. (2015). *Balanced scorecard success: The Kaplan–Norton collection (4 books)*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- L’Heureux, J. A. J. (2013). *The readiness dilemma: Being ready for tomorrow today* (Master of Defence Studies paper, JCSP 39/PCEMI 39). Canadian Forces College.
- Li, D., Ying, F., Zhang, X., Wei, Q., & Chu, H. (2024). A Study on the Impact of Commitment-Based HRM, Value of HR Services on Job Satisfaction: Taking Financial Company A as an Example. *The 8th STIU International Conference*, 2247-2259.
- Matta, F. K., Newman, A., Scott, B. A., Koopman, J., & Guo, Z. X. (2023). Being on the same page matters: A meta-analytic investigation of leader–member exchange (LMX) agreement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(9), 1540–1558. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001089>
- Mazlum, A. A. (2022). Strategic Readiness as One of the Ways to Cope With Uncertainty during the Pandemic of COVID 19. *Educational Research*, 13(5), 1-20.
- Neri, P. B. (2019). *The emergence of readiness: The efforts that generate and consume ready forces (Monograph)*. School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.
- Pletzer, J. L., Breevaart, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2024). Constructive and destructive leadership in job demands-resources theory: A meta-analytic test of the motivational and health-impairment pathways. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 14(1), 131–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866231197519>
- Richard, P. J., Devinney, T. M., Yip, G. S., & Johnson, G. (2019). Measuring organizational performance: Towards methodological best practice. *Journal of Management*, 45(3), 718–804. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318785945>
- Roos, J., & Nilsson, V. O. (2020). Driving organizational readiness for change through strategic workshops. *International Journal of Management and Applied Research*, 7(1).
- Usman, A., Wirawan, H., & Zulkifli. (2021). The effect of human capital and physical capital on regional financial condition: the moderating effect of management control system. *Heliyon*, 7(4), e06945. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06945>
- Watts, S. B., Rhoades, A. L., Linick, M. E., Best, K. L., Fleming, J., Mayberry, P. W., ... & Ziegler, M. D. (2024). *Rethinking Readiness: A Framework for a Strategic Readiness Assessment*. RAND.
- Yasaad, A. Y. (2022). *The use of the balanced scorecard in measuring the strategic readiness of organizational capital in higher education institutions: A case study of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi University, Bordj Bou Arréridj* (Doctoral dissertation, Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi University, Algeria), p. 90.