



# The Role of Strategic Leadership on Organisational Performance

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## Abstract

The paper explores the role of strategic leadership on organizational performance especially in emerging industries in Cameroon where innovation, agility, and foresight are indispensable. This article analyses key leadership practices, decision-making approaches, and the alignment of leadership strategies with organizational goals. Using a case study methodology, this paper investigates firms within emerging industries with a total sample of 110 participants in Cameroon, drawn from firms such as MTN Cameroon, Agrofarms and Chint Electric International to assess how leadership drives competitive advantage, fosters innovation, and sustains growth. The article highlights leadership traits and practices that contribute to high performance, including vision-setting, adaptability, talent management, and stakeholder engagement. The findings highlight the importance of aligning leadership strategies with rapidly changing market dynamics and suggest practical insights for organizations seeking to improve their leadership practices. The article therefore concludes by offering recommendations for enhancing leadership development programs.

## Subject Areas

Business Management

## Keywords

Strategic Leadership, Organizational Performance

## 1. Introduction

The concept of organizational performance has been the decisive objective for any firm's continued survival in the market. Numerous studies on organizational performance have stressed the need for strategic leadership which can tap into the unique capabilities that firms develop to become successful [1]. In this context,

leadership refers to exercising authority either informal or formal with policies and rules under law being taken into consideration when responsibilities and rights are being explained among the parties within and without the activities of the organization aimed at ensuring the vision is achieved [2]. On the other hand, strategic leadership has been defined as the process that drives vision, and motivates staff to own the company objectives and ideals ensuring the staff share the vision which is a critical tool for organizational performance [3]. Strategic leadership is defined as the ability to articulate a vision and develop a team to execute the vision into tangible outcomes. Strategic leadership can therefore be perceived as the use of well-considered tactics to articulate the organization's vision and work seamlessly with others to achieve the set targets.

According to Judge (2012) [4] leadership at the strategic level gives followers an opportunity to interact with leaders to pursue what is known as the goals of the organization. The strategies and moments at strategic change are well defined by leaders at the strategic level, so that targeted strategies are put into action to get the strategic change [5]. Thus, strategic leadership is required to harness and deploy requisite organizational capabilities that allow entities to ensure successful performance [6]. Strategic leadership measurements are derived from Conger (2013) [7] who suggested such indicators like strategic orientation, competencies, strategic values and strategic direction. This article therefore seeks to explore the role of strategic leadership on organizational performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Concept of Strategic Leadership

The concept of strategic leadership has garnered significant attention in organizational studies over the past decade, particularly concerning its role in driving organizational performance in dynamic and complex environments. Strategic leadership refers to the ability of leaders to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change [8]. Central to this approach is the alignment of leadership actions with organizational goals and long-term strategic objectives, which is particularly vital in emerging industries where market conditions are unpredictable. Theories on strategic leadership have evolved to emphasize adaptability, innovation, and stakeholder management, which are critical in industries experiencing rapid technological change.

Hitt (2020) [9] argued that for strategic leadership to enhance overall performance it requires a strategic orientation and ability to provide a strategic direction for organisational stakeholders. Jassmy and Bhaya (2016) [10] stress the importance of strategic direction in achieving superior performance noting that it enables embedding strategies aimed at responding to consumer needs while keeping pace with the competition. Kirimi and Minja (2011) [11] posit that strategic leaders influence others through actions and ensure that the employees understand and observe the corporate governance and ethical codes. Therefore, the direction that a firm takes in its performance would be an indication of the kind of

leadership exhibited by the leadership. Carter and Greer (2013) [1] argue that strategic leaders will always strive to meet the bottom line of the organization which translates into better financial performance, product market performance and shareholder returns. Strategic leaders would thus endeavour to foster strategic direction and share it with other stakeholders for collective efforts to achieve set goals.

Rowe (2017) [12] shows that strategic leaders exhibit a synergy of managerial competencies and skills which play critical role in the short term and long-term strategic positioning which ultimately ensures superior performance within the firm. These competencies enable harnessing of organizational resources to achieve set performance. Nyabdza (2008) [13] says strategic leaders also exhibit behaviour that enables the firm to effectively execute its strategies. However, Oladele and Akeke (2016) [14] opine that strategic leadership does not necessary lead to performance and only some aspects for example inspiration exhibited significant positive relationship with leadership. It can therefore be implied that strategic leaders need to possess and are willing to learn in a bid to improve their capacity to steer organizations for better performance.

Kitonga (2016) [15] examined the impact of leadership at strategic level on organizational execution in not-revenue driven associations in Nairobi. It is a county utilizing a blended technique approach of both the illustrative and explanatory as well as survey relating to descriptive design. It was indicated that direction in strategy and ethical values is key to positively influence non-financial performance. Ofori (2019) [16] studied the associations with full range initiative model, results relating to manpower, and the culture involving an organization in associations with bona fide pioneers in Singapore utilizing cross sectional review procedure and found that moral administration is emphatically connected with the influence that is idealized, individualized thought, pioneer adequacy, ability of workers to invest additional exertion, and fulfillment with the leaders in positions. The impediment of this examination is that the exploration configuration was cross sectional in nature. The impact of fleetingness can be inspected in longitudinal examinations.

Ozer and Tinaztepe (2014) [17] conducted a study on the impact of key styles in the leadership forum on firm execution utilizing a contextual analysis that applied to an organization of export nature in Turkey. It uncovered that relationship-arranged and transformational initiative styles are fundamentally identified with firm execution. However, styles of leadership transformational initiative in a stronger way affect firm execution. A few styles of leadership are applicable to key initiative, especially those attentive to behaviour or rather conduct of leaders and that have been the subject of later examination.

Carter and Greer (2022) [1] did an examination on initiative of leadership at strategic level: qualities, styles, and leadership execution in Midwest Academy of Management in Chicago in an observational investigation utilizing empirical information sources. Results show that leader's encounters, qualities, and characters

significantly impact their translations of the circumstances they face, and, thus, influence their decisions. These decisions, thus, impact execution in their capacity. As the roles of key leaders keep on extending, thoughtfulness regarding the performance ramifications of these progressions is justified. There is requirement for more prominent comprehension of the variables that decide the presentation of key leaders in form of strategy utilizing proportions of effectiveness past execution of financials alone.

Matzler *et al.* (2018) [18] analyzed style of leadership, and effect on development and execution of small medium scale undertakings (SMEs) in the assembling area of Ghana utilizing a field overview (by methods for surveys). It was built up that leadership and business procedure measurably and significantly affected organizational execution. However, methodology had the more noteworthy impact. The investigation neglected to recognize that inspiration and intrinsic advantages influence performance. Regardless of whether the presentation of SMEs is additionally a result of procedure, in which the entrepreneur or supervisor assumes a significant job in the definition of the company's methodology was not set up.

Ullah (2021) [19] studied the effect of conduct of leadership on organizational execution in D&R Cambric Communication Company in UK. Both subjective and quantitative research technique was utilized in the investigation. It was found or revealed that practices of leadership influences in a significant way on execution by organizations. However, the investigation concentrated uniquely on the conduct of a leader as a factor affecting performance. Regardless of whether the conduct of the CEO with the representatives of the organization was one of the significant purposes behind the organization's prosperity required a review further. Katana (2018) [20] in the examination on the leadership at strategic level role for the upper hand that is sustainable in Kenyan private as well as colleges utilizing quantitative research plan and cross-sectional review investigate configuration found that there was a critical role of key leadership for manageable upper hand in Kenyan public as well as private colleges.

A study by Bartlett and Ghoshal (2014) [21] on building competitive advantage through people concluded that the future of any organization must be planned by strategic leaders for the results to be realized. This involves strategic leaders integrating vision, innovation and creating necessary plans for success and the stable operation of the organization. Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2013) [22] in the literature reviewed on issues of management at strategic level as well as competitiveness and globalization emphasizes that performance of the firm is of independent to leadership at strategic level when they create competitiveness in the firm. Further Center for Creative Leadership (2004) argues in the context that strategic leaders develop and execute strategies through formulation, implementing, reassessing and revision. It is argued that there is scarcity of strategic leaders with only ten percent exhibiting these skills thus leading to failed organizations.

According to an argument by Daft (2023) [23] on the leadership experience

found that the advantage and success of an organization determines how selection and recruitment of top leaders are carried out. This is from the view that top cream leaders will understand the organization and steer strategies towards the future demands. Judge (2020) [4] in his qualitative and quantitative review study found that personality and leadership connecting and bonding with the surrounding people in the organization is key to a strategic leader since it results to improved performance. Bower (2020) [24] in behavioural leadership and success to organization gives his views in the sense that the challenges involving management is key to performance of the firm. The gaps within the organizational performance can be bridged if the right strategic leaders of the organization are identified and recruited to steer the organizational objectives. These gaps are threats to performance of any organization since they affect the effectiveness and more so efficiency of the management teams.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

The article is guided by the Upper Echelons Theory, which suggests that top leaders' characteristics directly impact organizational outcomes, as well as Transformational Leadership Theory and Strategic Agility frameworks. These theories help frame the analysis, offering insights into how leadership traits and behaviors correlate with the organization's ability to thrive in fast-paced, competitive environments.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Approach**

This article employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of strategic leadership in enhancing organizational performance within emerging industries in Cameroon. The case study method is particularly well-suited for in-depth examination of complex phenomena within real-life contexts, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of leadership practices in dynamic and fast-evolving sectors. In this case, emerging industries, such as manufacturing, telecommunications and agribusiness are characterized by rapid innovation and unpredictable market shifts, making them ideal contexts for studying the impact of strategic leadership. This methodology enables the researcher to gather detailed insights from multiple sources and to explore how strategic leadership enhances organizational success.

### **3.2. Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The research focuses on a purposive sample of 3 firms in Cameroon, selected based on their demonstrated ability to innovate and sustain growth under volatile market conditions. Such firms were chosen from manufacturing, telecommunications and agribusiness and these include MTN Cameroon, JK Agrofarms and Chint Electric International. These firms were examined through interviews with 30 senior leaders, 50 managers, and 30 key stakeholders from all the 3 firms. The

total sample was 110 participants. The interviews were designed to uncover leadership practices, decision-making processes, and the alignment of leadership strategies with organizational goals. In addition to interviews, secondary data sources such as company reports, industry analysis, and strategic documents were reviewed to triangulate findings and provide a broader context for understanding the role of leadership.

### **3.3. Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure for this study was designed to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous exploration of the relationship between strategic leadership and firm performance. The approach combined qualitative interviews with key informants from the selected firms, supported by secondary data to triangulate findings. Prior to the interviews, a formal invitation was sent to participants, explaining the study's objectives, confidentiality assurances, and the voluntary nature of participation. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, ensuring that core themes are systematically covered while permitting spontaneous exploration of emerging insights. The protocol includes an introduction where the researcher established rapport, explained the interview process, and reiterated ethical considerations. The main section followed, delving into predefined question areas, and concludes with a summary and an opportunity for participants to add any further remarks.

The interviews focused on several key thematic areas to comprehensively assess strategic leadership and firm performance. These include leadership Style and Strategic Decision-Making. Participants are asked to describe the leadership approaches employed in their firms, including decision-making processes, vision formulation, and adaptability to market changes. They were also asked questions on organizational Culture and Alignment where questions explore how leadership influences corporate culture, employee engagement, and the alignment of strategic objectives with operational execution. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately 5 to 7 minutes. This duration allowed sufficient time to explore responses in depth without causing participant fatigue. In cases where additional clarification or elaboration is required, follow-up sessions or supplementary questions were arranged with consent.

With participants' prior consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in data capture. Detailed notes were also taken during the sessions to record non-verbal cues and contextual observations. The recordings are transcribed verbatim, and transcripts are anonymized to protect participant identities. The audio files and transcripts are stored securely, with access restricted to the research team to maintain confidentiality.

### **3.4. Coding and Reliability Checks**

The qualitative data from interviews undergoes a rigorous coding process to identify patterns and themes. An initial codebook was developed based on the research

objectives and interview questions. Two independent coders analyze the transcripts to enhance reliability, with discrepancies resolved through discussion or consultation with a third researcher if necessary. To further ensure consistency, a subset of transcripts was re-coded after a time interval to check for intra-coder reliability. Member checking was also conducted, where participants were given the opportunity to review and validate the interpretations of their responses.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, in which interview transcripts and other data are systematically coded and categorized into key themes related to strategic leadership and organizational performance. This thematic analysis helped to identify recurring patterns, behaviors, and leadership traits that contribute to high performance in emerging industries. The analysis also focused on how strategic leaders manage innovation, navigate market challenges, and foster a culture of adaptability and growth within their organizations.

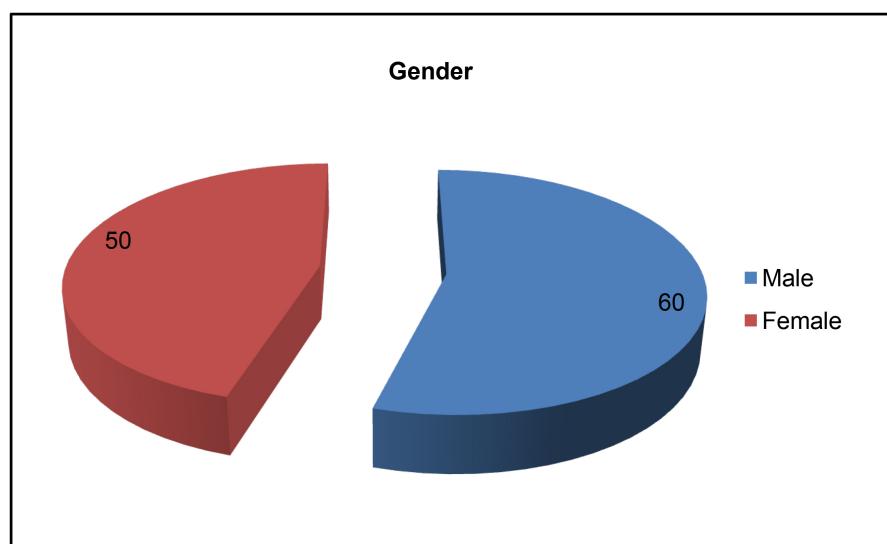
### 3.6. Ethics

Ethical considerations, including participant confidentiality, privacy, avoidance of harm, debriefing and informed consent, were strictly observed throughout the research process to ensure the integrity of the study and the protection of participants' rights.

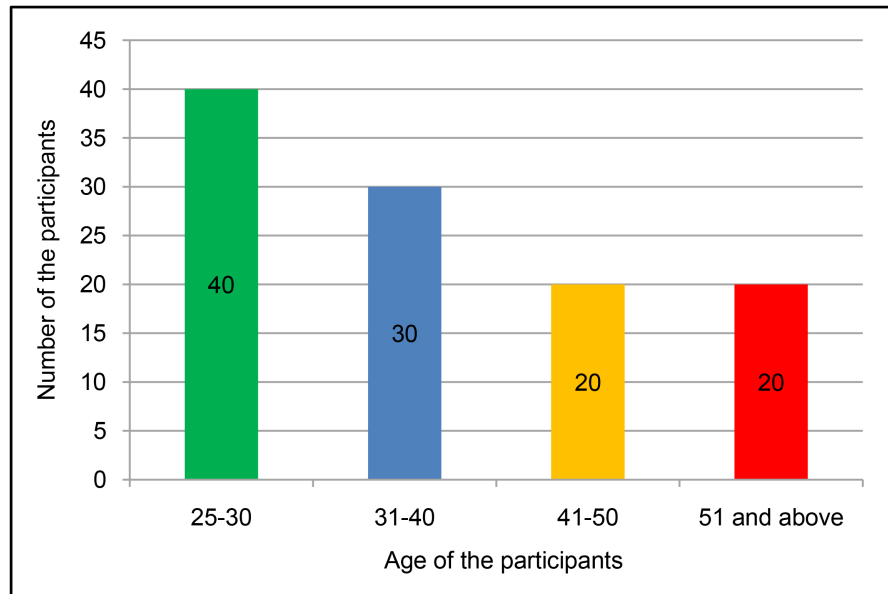
## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants (See Figures 1-3)

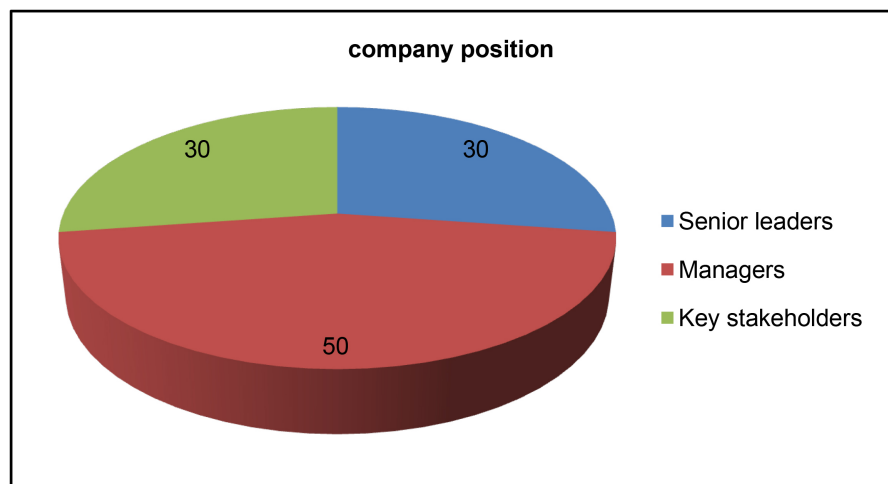
**Figure 1** shows the gender of the participants. The chart depicted those 60 males and 50 females took part in the study which shows gender inclusivity in gathering data about the role of leadership on organisational performance.



**Figure 1.** Respondents by gender.



**Figure 2.** Respondents by age.



**Figure 3.** Respondents by company position.

#### 4.2. Impact of Strategic Leadership on Organizational Performance

Findings from the study highlighted that strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in determining the success and long-term viability of organizations, especially in emerging industries where rapid change, uncertainty, and intense competition are prevalent. The impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance is profound, influencing not only a company's operational efficiency but also its capacity for innovation, adaptability, and growth. In the context of emerging industries, effective strategic leadership is essential for navigating complex market dynamics and fostering an organizational culture that promotes high performance. The following five themes were derived from the study.

##### **Theme 1: Aligning leadership with organizational vision**

It was found out that one of the primary ways strategic leaderships enhance

organizational performance is through the alignment of leadership actions with the organization's long-term vision and goals. One of the participants submitted that, *“Our CEO's vision for sustainability has been instrumental in driving our company's success and by aligning our leadership with a clear and compelling vision, we have been able to inspire and motivate our employees to work towards a common goal”*.

Leaders who possess strategic foresight are better equipped to anticipate market trends and disruptions, allowing them to make proactive decisions that position their organizations for sustained success. Another participant said, *“The alignment has enabled us to make intentional decisions about where to invest our resources, talent and time. Our employees are empowered to take ownership of our vision and contribute to its realization, which has resulted in increased motivation and productivity”*.

Research on dynamic capabilities emphasizes the need for leaders to continually reconfigure resources and adapt strategies in response to environmental changes. In industries like technology and biotechnology, where innovation cycles are short, and market conditions are volatile, strategic leadership ensures that organizations remain agile and responsive to new opportunities. This alignment between leadership and organizational strategy creates a clear sense of direction, enabling firms to pursue growth objectives while maintaining flexibility.

### **Theme 2: Innovative culture**

Strategic leadership significantly impacts organizational performance by fostering a culture of innovation. This has been supported by one of the participants who said: *“Our organisation is a champion of innovation and the leadership style has trickled down to the entire organisation. Leaders have created an ecosystem that supports creativity, collaboration and experimentation”*.

In emerging industries, the ability to innovate is often the defining factor that sets high-performing firms apart from their competitors. Leaders who promote creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking within their organizations create an environment conducive to innovation. One participant supported this view by saying: *“The culture of innovation empowered us to think outside the box and explore new ideas, which has led to the development of new products and services that drive revenue growth”*.

According to the Innovation Leadership Model (O'Connor & Ayers, 2020) [25], leaders who prioritize innovation initiatives, invest in research and development, and encourage cross-functional collaboration can drive breakthrough ideas that propel organizational growth. In sectors such as renewable energy and artificial intelligence, where staying ahead of technological advancements is critical, strategic leaders who champion innovation helps their organizations maintain a competitive edge and capitalize on new market opportunities.

### **Theme 3: Transformational leadership and organizational performance**

Transformational leadership, a subset of strategic leadership, is particularly influential in enhancing organizational performance. Transformational leaders in-

spire and motivate their employees to go beyond their immediate tasks and engage deeply with the organization's vision. One participant corroborated that: *“Transformational leadership approach has led to breakthroughs in our products and services, improved our operational efficiency and enhanced our competitive edge”*

By fostering a sense of purpose and commitment among team members, transformational leaders improve employee engagement and productivity, which directly correlates with organizational success. This was supported by another participant who submitted that: *“Through focusing on employee development and empowerment, our leaders have built a high-performing team that is committed to achieving our goals”*.

In emerging industries, where organizations often face high levels of ambiguity and rapid change, transformational leaders play a crucial role in sustaining morale and encouraging creative problem-solving. Secondary sources have shown that transformational leadership is linked to higher levels of innovation, adaptability, and overall performance in sectors where innovation is vital or significant to survival.

#### **Theme 4: Enhancement of decision-making processes**

Another significant impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance is the enhancement of decision-making processes. Strategic leaders possess the ability to analyze complex situations, weigh the risks and benefits of various options, and make decisions that align with long-term objectives. This was supported by one of the participant who affirmed that: *“Our leaders encourage critical thinking, analysis and debate which has helped us avoid knee-jerk reactions and make more thoughtful decisions”*.

Furthermore, in developing businesses, where market situations can change quickly, leaders who demonstrate strategic agility, the ability to pivot in response to external shifts are more likely to guide their organizations through periods of uncertainty and volatility. Agile leaders can swiftly reallocate resources, adjust strategies, and seize new opportunities as they arise, ensuring that their organizations remain competitive and resilient. Participants pointed out that: *“This approach has encouraged collaboration and cross-functional input, ensuring that decisions are well-rounded and consider multiple perspectives”*.

The ability to make timely and informed decisions is particularly valuable in industries like biotechnology and clean energy, where technological advancements and regulatory changes can dramatically alter the competitive landscape.

#### **Theme 5: Management of stakeholder relationships**

Moreover, the study found that strategic leadership influences organizational performance by effectively managing stakeholder relationships. One participant was quoted saying: *“Our leadership team prioritizes building strong relationships with stakeholders including customers, employees, suppliers and investors. Through understanding their needs and expectations, we are able to deliver value and create mutually beneficial partnerships”*.

In evolving trades, where firms must navigate complex networks of customers,

investors, regulators, and partners, leaders who can build and maintain strong stakeholder relationships are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth. Strategic leaders understand the importance of aligning the interests of internal and external stakeholders with the organization's goals. Participants submitted that, "*Our leaders take a proactive approach to communication, engagement and feedback, ensuring that we are responsive to stakeholder concerns and needs*".

By fostering open communication, transparency, and trust, strategic leaders can secure the support and resources needed to drive organizational performance. This is especially true in industries like healthcare technology and renewable energy, where securing investment and regulatory approval is critical for scaling operations.

Thus, it was revealed that strategic leadership has a profound and multifaceted impact on organizational performance, particularly in emerging industries. By aligning leadership actions with organizational goals, fostering a culture of innovation, improving decision-making processes, managing stakeholder relationships, and investing in talent, strategic leaders drive the long-term success of their organizations. In rapidly evolving sectors, the ability of leaders to anticipate changes, adapt strategies, and inspire their teams is essential for maintaining competitiveness and achieving sustainable growth. As emerging industries continue to expand and evolve, the role of strategic leadership will remain a critical determinant of organizational performance.

## 5. Conclusions

The paper explored the role of strategic leadership in enhancing organizational performance, particularly in emerging industries. As industries continue to evolve at a rapid pace, the need for strong and adaptive strategic leadership becomes increasingly critical. Leaders who can effectively navigate the complexities of these dynamic environments, align organizational objectives with market demands, and foster a culture of innovation are better positioned to drive sustained performance and achieve long-term success.

Throughout this exploration, it has become clear that strategic leadership directly influences multiple dimensions of organizational performance. From aligning the organization's vision and long-term goals with its strategic actions to fostering an environment conducive to innovation and growth, leaders play a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of their companies. Emerging industries, by nature, are marked by high levels of uncertainty, competition, and technological disruption, making strategic foresight, agility, and adaptability essential qualities for leaders. Effective strategic leaders anticipate market shifts, respond swiftly to technological changes, and position their organizations to capitalize on emerging opportunities while mitigating risks. This proactive approach ensures that organizations are not only reactive to external pressures but also capable of driving industry trends and innovations.

One of the central themes in this study is the importance of innovation in driv-

ing organizational performance. Emerging industries are often at the forefront of technological advancements, and organizations in these sectors must continuously innovate to maintain their competitive advantage. Strategic leaders are instrumental in creating and sustaining a culture of innovation, where employees are empowered to experiment, take risks, and pursue new ideas. By fostering an environment that encourages creative thinking and collaboration, leaders can unlock the full potential of their teams and ensure that their organizations remain agile and responsive to market changes.

Conclusively, strategic leadership is a critical determinant of organizational performance in emerging industries. Leaders who possess strategic foresight, foster a culture of innovation, demonstrate agility in decision-making, manage stakeholder relationships effectively, and prioritize talent development are better positioned to navigate the complexities of these dynamic sectors. As industries continue to evolve and new challenges emerge, the role of strategic leadership will only grow in importance. So, through embracing these leadership qualities and approaches, organizations in emerging industries can achieve sustained success, outperform competitors, and drive innovation in their respective fields. Strategic leadership, therefore, is not just a function of managing the present but also shaping the future of industries that are at the cutting edge of technological advancement and market change.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

Firstly, the study used self-report interviews to collect data and the information collected in the paper was based on the participants' honesty, perception and emotions at the time of responding to the questions. This was overcome by providing an explanation of the purpose of the study and an assurance of confidentiality.

Secondly, the study was based on a cross-sectional research design, which meant that the data were collected at one point in time. This means that the study was unable to establish the long-term effects of strategic leadership styles on firm performance.

The study therefore recommends that a similar study be conducted using a longitudinal research design to determine the long-term effect of strategic leadership styles on firm performance.

## 7. Recommendations

The study recommends that firms in Cameroon consider a transformational leadership style due to the evidence of its efficacy. Firm leaders should focus on adopting elements of transformational leadership just like their senior managers and thus harness the benefits of transformational leadership which is enhanced performance. The firm management should also consider shorter tenure periods to maximize the gains of new leadership teams. Otherwise performance will sharply decline especially when leaders serve more than five years.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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