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The Role of Strategic Agility in The Relationship Between Strategy of Work-Life Quality and Sustainable Competitive Advantage: A Survey in The Yemeni Manufacturing Industry

Dr. Tawfiq Sarea Ali Basrda Faculty of Administrative Science Aden University, Yemen
Aden, Yemen.
tawfiq258@yahoo.com

Dr. Maged Mohammed Barahmah Faculty Economics and Administrative Shabwah University, Yemen
Shabwah, Yemen.
magedbarahma@gmail.com

Dr. Mohammed Ali Al-Awlaqi The school of Business Lebanese International University Sana'a, Yemen.
alzooka@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explored the direct and indirect relationships between strategy of work-life quality and its dimensions, strategic agility and its dimensions, and sustainable competitive advantage. In order to achieve the research objectives, 454 questionnaires were distributed to both heads of companies and their deputies in big- and medium-sized Yemeni manufacturing companies. Using simple random sampling technique, a total of 227 out of 554 companies were involved. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and exploratory statistics were conducted to identify the quality of measurement and primary data, and CB-SEM was used to examine the proposed hypotheses. The results of the present research revealed that there is a significant and direct relationship between the research variables. Particularly, there is an indirect effect of strategy of work-life quality on sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility as a mediator variable. The findings confirm the validity of the proposed model. In short, this research filled in the knowledge gap by examining the relationships between research variables, made substantial theoretical and practical implications, and highlighted the challenges faced by the Yemeni manufacturing companies.

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Keywords

strategy of work-life quality, strategic agility, sustainable competitive advantage

1. Introduction

The world has witnessed a dramatic development and change in the first decade of the present century that enforced organisations to operate in a highly competitive and dynamic environment (Sheel, Sindhwani, Goel, & Pathak, 2012). In this sense, organisations, especially those operating in the least developed countries have to create and adopt new and modern concept, system, and mechanism to attract and retain more effective human resources. These mainly help organisations to raise awareness about their current status, hence enabling them to adopt and adapt more proactive strategies and reduce external threats (Alwehabie, 2017; Pfeffer, 1994).

The Yemeni manufacturing companies are no different from other companies in the least-developed countries in which they are facing intense competition from foreign companies that can dominate the local market due to their superior experience and production capacity. Moreover, the Yemeni manufacturing companies are worse off in their attempt to enter the foreign and regional markets (Annual Report, 2015).

In 2010, it was reported that the total contribution of the manufacturing industry to the country's GDP was 24%. This decreased to 5% in 2013 and only slightly increased in 2014 and 2015 with 6% and 6.4% respectively. This occurred due to various reasons; for example, manufacturing companies' lack of experience and inappropriate work environment. Meanwhile, there are a total of 105,270 employees in the manufacturing industry; indicating the importance of the industry to Yemen (Annual Report, 2015). At the moment, Yemeni

manufacturing companies face many problems that hinder them from dominating the local market and penetrating the regional market.

Previous literature related to these challenges have shown many solutions; for instance, the application of modern theories that identify the challenges together with suitable solutions, particularly on the positive impacts of strategy of work-life quality in improving competitive advantage (Chimoi, 2012; Esfahani, Soltani, & Shirouyezad, 2013; Huzzard, 2003). However, sustainable competitive advantage has received little attention within the same research field. On the other hand, Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig (2013), Alavi, Abd. Wahab, Muhamad, & Arbab Shirani (2014), Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014), and Shafer, Dyer, Kilty, Amos, & Ericksen (2001) confirmed that there is an impact of the strategy of work-life quality on organisations' strategic agility. However, this issue has also not received sufficient attention from researchers. Next, previous studies focused on the relationship between strategic agility and competitive advantage (Almahamid, Awwad, & McAdams, 2010; Chen, 2012; Dabiri & Gholami, 2015), but they did not investigate the sustainable competitive advantage directly.

In fact, there are many important points that should be known about the roles of both strategy of work-life quality and strategic agility in enhancing sustainable competitive advantage in a diverse business environment. To the best knowledge of the researchers, there is no research that has examined the indirect effect of strategy of work-life quality in enhancing sustainable competitive advantage using strategic agility as a mediator. Therefore, the present research tries to fill this gap by studying this indirect role in the big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies in Yemen.

Consequently, this research provides practical evidence on how companies can meet the challenges of the competition and improve competitiveness position to ensure their survival in a resource-constrained market of the least developed countries. The main objective of this research is to fill in the knowledge gap because the previous researchers of the same research field have addressed this issue from other perspectives.

Using big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies in Yemen as samples, this research examined the direct effects between the following variables: strategy of work-life quality and its dimensions and sustainable competitive advantage, as well as strategy of work-life quality and its dimensions and strategic agility and its dimensions. This research also focused on the indirect effects between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage mediated by strategic agility.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-life quality strategy

Since the mid-1980s, the concept of strategy of work-life quality has been an ongoing struggle to be practically applied by organisations because this concept differs in definition and understanding from one individual to another and from one organisation to another. This leads to the lack of consensus among researchers who have various perspectives (J.-H. Lin, Wong, & Ho, 2013; Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001).

Flippo (1984) explained that the employees of the American Centre of Work-life Quality have developed a concept related to work-life quality. They argued that it is associated with the activities that aim to raise organisations' effectiveness at all levels by enhancing and developing workers' efforts. It adopts new techniques and strategies related to work-life quality and identifies any changes in organisations. Anderson (1988) viewed that work-life quality increases the employee participation in the decision-making process. This can improve the employee productivity and guarantee employees with job security, good work environment, career satisfaction, and shares return. Srivastava and Kanpur (2014) viewed work-life quality

as a process involving common interaction among managers, supervisors, and employees to solve problems at work. This process is also described as cooperative, not following the status quo, flexible, open, and informal.

Strategy of work-life quality also varies according to different activities with different scopes. Flippo (1984) and Dermol & Rakowska (2014) showed that strategy of work-life quality is a multi-faceted concept that begins by improving the work environment and extending it to employee participation in decision-making, returns, as well as gains and benefits achieved by organisations, such as better work-life balance and improved work productivity.

On the other hand, Nadler & Lawler (1983) presented the following dimensions in describing the work-life quality: open communication, fair reward system, job security, job design participation, job enrichment effort, teamwork improvement, and less work pressure. These dimensions also act as indicators to measure whether or not an appropriate work environment exists. Additionally, Davoine, Erhel, & Guergoat-Lariviere (2008) identified that strategy of work-life quality consists of the following six dimensions: social and economic security, wages, safe mobility, training and development, work situation, and work-life balance. Meanwhile, Chimoi (2012) examined four dimensions of work-life quality: work environment condition, adequate and fair compensation, training and development, and career growth opportunities. These dimensions have been adopted by the present research to meet the research objectives.

2.2 Strategic agility

Due to rapid global changes, businesses face a turbulent and uncertain work environment, hence contributing to increased competition among organizations and their survival. In such a context, knowledge mechanisms can allow organizations to detect and adapt to environmental changes, thus adaptive capacity is highly significant. Additionally, recognizing and adapting to changes will lead the organizations to achieve greater success by leveraging opportunities and their key resources to gain competitive advantage. This is known as strategic agility and is a fundamental ability for survival in the face of serious threats or intense competition (Cai, Huang, Liu, & Wang, 2018; Felipe, Roldán, & Leal-Rodríguez, 2016). Strategic agility can be applied by dynamically reconfiguring organizations and their strategies to be in line with the dynamic business environment. Organizations need to continuously anticipate, adapt to, and interact with market and competitive trends and customer needs without compromising the organizations' strategic vision (Saha, Gregar, & Sáha, 2017).

Goldman and Nagel (1993) described strategic agility as the ability to operate profitably in an increasingly competitive environment and to deal with unexpected changes in customer needs. According to Dove (2002), strategic agility is the ability to survive and continue to compete by focusing on knowledge and effectively and quickly responding to changes and development in terms of marketing new products or improving the production of existing products. This can be done by enhancing operations, leveraging opportunities, and overcoming threats. Lin, Desouza, & Roy (2010) defined strategic agility as the ability to continuously adjust and adapt to businesses' strategic directions and changing circumstances through the creation of new products and business models and coming up with innovative ways to create value.

As for the dimensions of strategic agility, previous studies indicated that there are no substantial differences in the views of researchers and writers about these dimensions. If any, it would be an attempt to diagnose the situation to enable organizations to keep pace with changes and development in the surrounding environment (Muduli, 2017). Therefore, Doz & Kosonen (2008) explained that there are three dimensions of strategic agility, i.e. strategic sensitivity, collective commitment, and flow of resources. Sharifi & Zhang (1999) determined four dimensions of strategic agility as the main methods for achieving it, i.e. efficiency, flexibility,

speed, and responsiveness. On the other hand, Dabiri & Gholami (2015) identified two dimensions of strategic agility: differentiation in innovation and differentiation in the market. With the implementation of the strategic agility concept in a wide range of supply chains in non-rigid organizations, Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj, & Grover (2003) postulated three dimensions of strategic agility, i.e. customer agility, operational agility, and partnership agility. These are the same dimensions which were adopted by Vagnoni & Khoddami (2016) and Hijjawi & Al-Shawabkeh (2017). The same dimensions are adopted by this research to meet the research objectives.

2.3 Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA)

Over the last century, sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) has become one of the most promising concepts, especially in the field of strategic management. Many management schools have concentrated on the wide range of issues that have been dealt with under this concept (Huang, Dyerson, Wu, & Harindranath, 2015) . For example, Porter (1985), in his early writings, proposed that competitive strategies help in the sustainability of competitive advantage. Porter discussed the main competitive strategies through which organizations could obtain the lowest cost or cost distinction to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). Beal (2001) considered that the traditional way of achieving sustainable competitive advantage depends on environmental structure and overall competitive strategy. Barney (1991) is considered as one of the pioneers of the modern resource-based view (RBV) of sustainable competitive advantage. He highlighted that an organization is said to have sustainable competitive advantage when it simultaneously implements a value-creating strategy with the current and future competitors.

Sustainable competitive advantage can also be achieved when other organizations are not able to capitalize on the benefits of this strategy. Dickson (1992) believed that for an organization to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, it must learn how to create new features that can maintain its strategic leadership in the market and remain ahead of its competitors. Hoffman (2000) stated that sustainability requires a new way of thinking and strategic intelligence that differ from the conventional way of thinking.

Consequently, Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson (2012) described sustainable competitive advantage as a long-term benefit to organizations that cannot be replicated or duplicated by other organizations for the purpose of providing greater value to the customers and for continuing claims of the superiority of their products. Cushman & King (2001) explained that sustainable competitive advantage is an organization's combination of business strategies to achieve its strategic objectives and customers' satisfaction locally and globally as well as to establish a long-term profit position.

As for the sources of sustainable competitive advantage, these have become multiple and complex. There is also no consensus on the definition of this concept. Many individual interpretations of this concept that have not been agreed to in the related literature still exist. A few researchers, e.g. Coyne (1986) stated that sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved by exploiting the gaps; for example, business system gap, position gap, regulatory or legal gap, and quality management gap. Day & Wensley (1988) also identified two main factors that contribute to the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage, i.e. superior skills and company's concrete requirements. Hunt and Morgran (1995) showed a range of sources of sustainable competitive advantage, i.e. financial, legal, human, organizational, and informational sources. Hill & Jones (1998) identified four factors in building sustainable competitive advantage: superior efficiency, superior quality, superior innovation, and responding to customer needs, which are considered as the foundations for building and sustaining competitive advantage. It also explains the way to reduce costs and achieve

excellence in its entirety. Moreover, Barney (1991) argued that all organizations' internal resources can be used to achieve sustainable competitive advantage if they are characterized by four attributes: scarcity, value, the impossibility of imitation, and the impossibility of finding an alternative.

Through the analysis of previous findings, it is clear that most researchers agree that the sources of sustainable competitive advantage depend on the organizations' superior skills and resources, which must be combined to achieve the sustainable competitive advantage. Consequently, in the present research, the researchers adopted the factors of superior efficiency, superior quality, superior innovation, and responding to customer needs as outlined by (Hill, Jones, & Schilling (2014) in order to measure this research's dependent variable which is treated as a one-dimensional variable.

2.4 Research Hypotheses Development

To the researchers' best knowledge and from the review of previous studies on the variables of this research, it was found that there were very few analytical studies that examined the direct relationship between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage of business organizations. Huzzard (2003) conducted an empirical study on the relationship between work-life quality and competitive ability of seven participating countries of the European Union, more specifically, in Sweden. He explained that work-life quality contributes to the promotion of innovation, cost reduction, increased work capacity, and improved corporate performance. These are achieved by allowing greater freedom to work and supporting the employees' creative ideas, which in turn, contributes to strengthening the organizational competitive ability.

On the other hand, Chimoi (2012) confirmed the existence of relationship between work-life quality and its dimensions, i.e. work environment conditions, fair and adequate compensation, training and development, career growth opportunities, and competitive advantage. For example, the Ministry of Finance in Kenya discovered a positive impact on the employee motivation such that their competencies could be used as a tool to enhance productivity and gain competitive advantage. In this regard, Esfahani, et al. (2013) emphasized the positive role of the factors of work-life quality in achieving competitive advantage. There is a correlation between the impact on strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage. Strategy of work-life quality plays a positive role in creating an appropriate work environment that enables companies to provide a conducive work environment to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

However, there is a paucity of studies on this relationship in Yemen, as far as the authors know. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₁: There is a direct effect between the strategy of work-life quality and its dimensions and sustainable competitive advantage in Yemeni big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies.

As for the relationship between strategy of work-life quality and strategic agility, Beltrán & Puig (2013) emphasized the impact of the human resources (HR) practices, such as fair compensation, performance assessment, and work environment that specifically enhance the employees' agility and generally improve the organizations' agility. In the same context, Alavi et al. (2014) and Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014) posited that management characteristics like employee collaboration, participation in decision-making, training and development, organizational work structure, work environment conditions, social support, skills, and diversity contribute in enhancing the agility of workforce. Shafer et al. (2001) also agreed on the impacts of HR management programs and practices, for instance, selection and placement, quality of work environment, training and development, performance management, and

promotion and rewards, on the strategic agility of organizations. The study also ensured that HR management practices play a pivotal role in the agility of the workforce and the enhancement of the strategic agility of organizations by capturing opportunities, coping with threats, and achieving competitive leadership. Rashidi, Cherabin, Akbari, & Maghool (2019) also asserted that human factors, in regards to staffs' involvement, flexible training, skills and abilities, increasing capabilities for risk management, and formation of inter-functional teams, are among the important factors influencing strategic agility.

However, there is a paucity of studies on this relationship in Yemen, as far as the authors know. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₂: There is a direct effect between the strategy of work-life quality and its dimensions and strategic agility and its dimensions in Yemeni big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies.

On the other hand, several studies, including Dabiri and Gholami (2015), agreed on the direct relationship between the strategy of work-life quality and strategic agility which is represented by differentiation in innovation and differentiation in the market and achievement of competitive advantage through price, quality, reliability, delivery, and product innovation. It was found that the effect of strategic agility in terms of differentiation in innovation is more effective than market differentiation in achieving competitive advantage. Chen (2012), in his study, addressed the impact of business intelligence and the flexibility of IT infrastructure on competitive advantage using strategic agility as mediator. Based on the analysis of the research, the results confirmed the direct impact of strategic agility on competitive advantage, in addition to the indirect effect of each independent variable on dependent variable "competitive advantage" through mediator variable "strategic agility".

Next, Almahamid et al. (2010) evinced that there is a significant and statistical correlation between strategic agility, knowledge exchange, and the dependent variable "competitive advantage" in Jordanian industrial companies. Baškarada & Koronios (2018) proposed five dynamic capabilities, i.e. sense, search, capture, switch, and configure, in order to support strategic agility in achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

However, there is a paucity of studies on this relationship in Yemen, as far as the authors know. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₃: There is a direct effect between strategic agility and its dimensions and the sustainable competitive advantage of Yemeni big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies.

In examining the body of literature, it was discovered that there are no other studies that have examined the indirect relationship among the strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage with strategic agility as mediator in Yemen based on the conditions of the intermediate relationship which states when to consider a variable as a mediator variable as stated in Baron & Kenny (1986). These conditions are needed in: (i) a statistically significant relationship between independent variable (strategy of work-life quality) and mediator variable (strategic agility), (ii) in a statistically significant relationship between mediator variable (strategic agility) and dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantage), and (iii) in a statistically significant relationship between independent variable (strategy of work-life quality) and dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantage).

Therefore, hypothesis 4 is as follows:

H₄: There is an indirect effect between the strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility as mediator in Yemeni big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Building on the theoretical background of the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), the dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997) and the theory of human needs (Maslow, 2013), the conceptual framework of this study is constructed as shown in Figure 1.

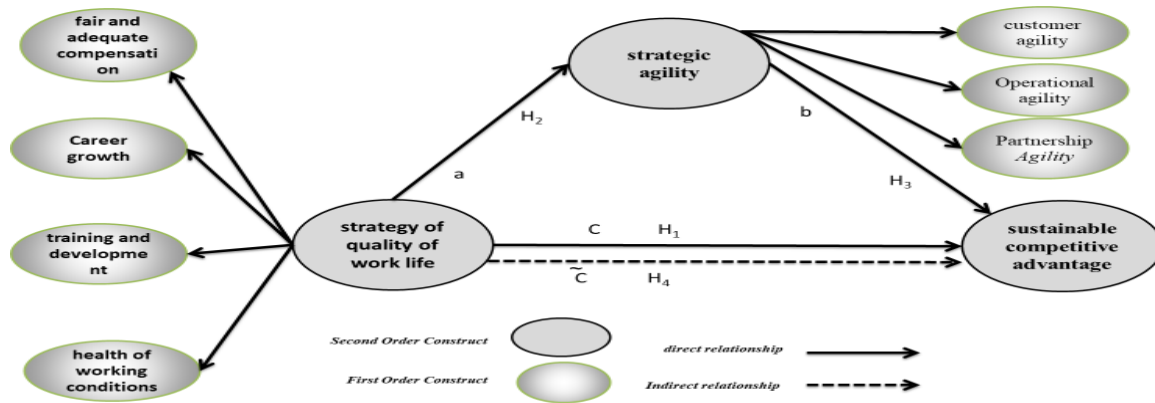


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

3. Research Methodology

Primary data were collected using a questionnaire for the selected sample from the target population. The questionnaire items used were based on criteria developed by different researchers and also adapted from similar studies especially in terms of the purpose and target population. In this case, the independent variable “strategy of work-life quality” was taken from Chimoi (2012), the mediator variable “strategic agility” was taken from Sambamurthy et al. (2003), and the dependent variable “sustainable competitive advantage” was taken from (Hill et al., 2014).

Next, the validity and reliability of this questionnaire were measured using Cronbach’s alpha: independent variable “strategy of work-life quality” was .894, mediator variable “strategic agility” was .861, and dependent variable “sustainable competitive advantage” was .883. Meanwhile, the coefficient of stability for all variables was .90 to ensure the reliability of the instrument used by the present research.

The selection of suitable sample for this research was confined from a target population of big- and medium-sized medium manufacturing companies in Yemen. A total of 554 manufacturing companies were selected due to their economic vitality and good reputation. The companies also met the criteria in terms of number of years of experience and the number of employees specifically for big- and medium-sized companies as outlined by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Annual Report, 2015).

The sample was randomly selected from the total target population which reached 227 companies according to Thompson’s (2012) formula. The selected respondents consisted of the heads of companies and their deputies (almost 454 respondents) because they understood the research variables and because their strategic natures were better than employees at other levels. Next, 454 questionnaires were distributed according to the sample of the target population. However, only 330 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 72%. A total of 57 questionnaires were found to be invalid for analysis, and therefore, only 273 questionnaires were analysed, representing a response rate of 60%. This is considered to be an acceptable percentage as stated by Sekaran & Bougie (2016).

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, the researchers used a number of statistical processing methods, such as (i) Cronbach's alpha to test the stability and consistency of the research parameters, (ii) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the degree of saturation of the items of the measurement and non-interference in more than one factor through the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), (iii) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ascertain the quality of the model's conformance to the indicators, and (iv) structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS statistical program to test the research hypotheses and verify the compatibility of the proposed model with the research data as explained below:

3.1 Statistical methods of the research

3.1.1 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The researchers conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with factor loadings of greater than 0.50 for all variables as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2016). Three items were trimmed away from the mediated variable (strategic agility). Moreover, KMO and Bartlett's test revealed the sampling adequacy and confirmed that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis. Meanwhile, the KMO values were .875 for strategy of work-life quality, .926 for strategic agility, and .903 for sustainable competitive advantage. The Bartlett's test was significant at $\alpha = .05$ for all variables.

After using EFA for measuring constructs by assessing the actual correlations between items and trimming away items which were not strongly correlated, the researchers conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the assessment of fit between observed data and the theoretical model which specified the hypothesized causal relationships between latent factors and their observed indicator variables.

3.1.2 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model of the variables

Initially, EFA produced eight-factor solution explaining 78.677% of the variance. Using AMOS 21, the first-order CFA was performed to estimate the validity and reliability of these eleven constructs (fair and adequate compensation, career growth opportunities, training and development, work environment conditions, customer agility, operational agility, partnership agility, superior efficiency, superior quality, superior innovation and responding to customer needs), representing the three variables, i.e. independent variable (strategy of work-life quality), mediator variable (strategic agility), and dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantage). Furthermore, CFA confirmed promising results in its goodness of fit tests as the chi-square results showed ($\chi^2=1496.958$, $df = 847$; $P < .000$; CMIN/DF 1.767; CFI .936; TLI .928; RMSEA .053; GFI .804; AGFI .771; IFI .937; and NFI .865) (Byrne, 2010; Bentler, 2010; Hair et al., 2016).

As shown in Table 1, the average variance extracted (AVE) was higher than the test ratio, 0.50 (Hair et al., 2016), hence confirming the convergence validity. Moreover, the internal consistency of the variables (CR) was also confirmed as the calculated values exceeded the recommended value of 0.70. In addition, the correlation ranged within the interval of 0.109 until 0.692. This was lower than the threshold value of 0.85. Consequently, the external correlation was confirmed among the factors lesser than the inner bonding value of the same factor (Kline, 2011). Thus, this confirmed a discriminant validity of all research constructs as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Loading, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE

| Research variables | Items | Loading | α (> 0.7) | CR (> 0.7) | AVE (> 0.5) |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Work-life quality strategy | | | .892 | | |
| Fair and adequate compensation | | | .951 | 0.950 | 0.792 |
| | SWFQA3 | .959 | | | |
| | SWFQA2 | .938 | | | |
| | SWFQA1 | .865 | | | |
| | SWFQA4 | .884 | | | |
| Career growth opportunities | | | .840 | 0.915 | 0.683 |
| | SWFQB6 | .871 | | | |
| | SWFQB5 | .702 | | | |
| | SWFQB8 | .791 | | | |
| | SWFQB7 | .682 | | | |
| Training and development | | | .805 | 0.977 | 0.914 |
| | SWFQC10 | .917 | | | |
| | SWFQC11 | .782 | | | |
| | SWFQC9 | .613 | | | |
| Work environment conditions | | | .829 | 0.952 | 0.832 |
| | SWFQD13 | .770 | | | |
| | SWFQD12 | .776 | | | |
| | SWFQD14 | .812 | | | |
| Strategic agility | | | .945 | | |
| Customer agility | | | .977 | 0.907 | 0.711 |
| | Customer2 | .985 | | | |
| | Customer4 | .928 | | | |
| | Customer1 | .960 | | | |
| | Customer3 | .951 | | | |
| Operational agility | | | .949 | 0.864 | 0.619 |
| | Operational4 | .894 | | | |
| | Operational2 | .910 | | | |
| | Operational5 | .870 | | | |
| | Operational3 | .900 | | | |
| | Operational1 | .874 | | | |
| Partnership agility | | | .915 | 0.849 | 0.586 |
| | Partnership4 | .844 | | | |
| | Partnership5 | .814 | | | |
| | Partnership2 | .818 | | | |
| | Partnership3 | .875 | | | |
| | Partnership1 | .777 | | | |
| SCA | | | .929 | | |
| superior efficiency | | | .903 | 0.857 | 0.608 |
| | SCAA2 | .923 | | | |
| | SCAA3 | .880 | | | |
| | SCAA1 | .800 | | | |
| | SCAA4 | .759 | | | |
| superior quality | | | .854 | 0.848 | 0.595 |
| | SCAB4 | .555 | | | |
| | SCAB3 | .879 | | | |
| | SCAB1 | .835 | | | |
| | SCAB2 | .836 | | | |
| superior innovation | | | .847 | 0.829 | 0.618 |
| | SCAC1 | .523 | | | |
| | SCAC4 | .769 | | | |
| | SCAC2 | .919 | | | |
| | SCAC3 | .849 | | | |
| responding to customer needs | | | .832 | 0.820 | 0.610 |
| | SCAD3 | .897 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------|------|--|--|--|
| | SCAD1 | .445 | | | |
| | SCAD4 | .841 | | | |
| | SCAD2 | .820 | | | |

Note: $\alpha > 0.7$ = Cronbach's alpha (calculated by SPSS tool); AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability calculated by Amos

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Structural equation model

According to the SEM fitted model below, in order to test the direct and indirect hypotheses of the present study and to know the direction, strength, and effect of the relationship, the researchers used SEM to ascertain the model efficiency of its conformity with the data. The obtained fit indices results were (Chi=1465.131, df = 846; P <.000; CIMIND 1.732; CFI .938; TLI .934; RMSEA .052; GFI .799; AGFI .776; IFI .939; and NFI .866), which are under acceptable criteria as recommended by (Bentler, 2006; Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; Hair et al., 2016). Thus, the results of goodness-of-fit indices indicated irrefutable evidence of an adequate model fit to the data (See figure 2).

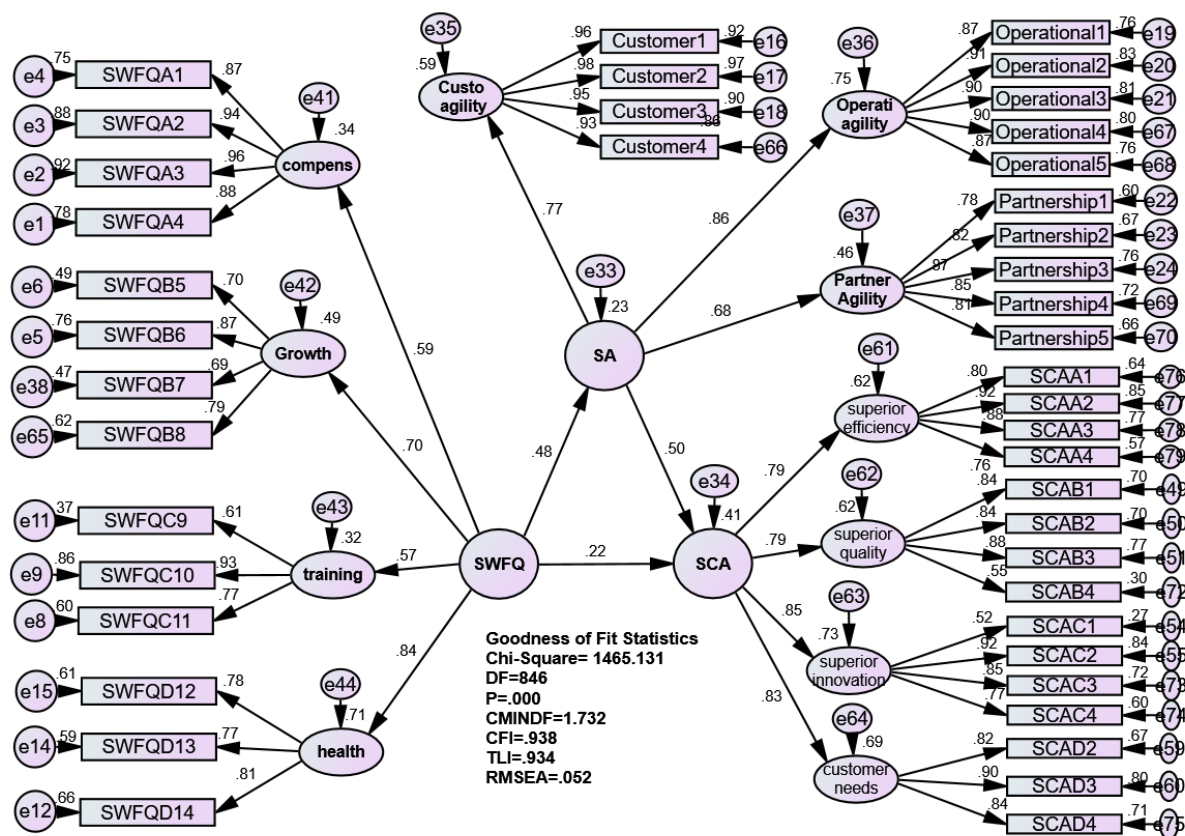


Figure 2: Structural model SEM

4.2 Hypotheses testing

After verifying the model fit, this study examined the effects (direct and indirect) among the study variables, and the proposed hypotheses were tested by conducting a path analysis using AMOS (version 20).

Table 2 shows the path analysis between variables that there is a significant direct effect between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage ($\beta=.22$; $P=.007$; t -

value=2.679) in Yemeni Large and Medium Manufacturing industries. This finding is consistent with the studies by (Chimoi, 2012) which emphasizes the relationship between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage, and which found that strategy of work-life quality plays a positive role in creating an appropriate work environment that enables companies of achieving the sustainable competitive advantage.

The results of the sub-hypotheses test of the main hypothesis H1 confirm that the factor of (fair and adequate compensation) positively affects the sustainable competitive advantage with a score of (Beta= 0.35, p -value $\leq .000$ **), t -value of (4.639), and a standard error rate of (0.041). Also, the results of the study showed that there is a positive effect of the training and development of human resources on the sustainable competitive advantage with a score of (Beta=0.24, p -value = .032), t -value (2.150), and standard error rate (0.078). Conformity indicators show that (CMIN / df = 2.384-Rmse = .075-CFI = .96-GFI = .92-TLI = 92). These indicators are acceptable as recommended by (Bentler, 2006; Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; Hair et al., 2016). Additionally, the results indicate that there is no effective relationship of the working environment conditions and career growth on the sustainable competitive advantage due to lack of awareness of the heads companies and deputies of the manufacturing companies.

Moreover, there is a significant direct effect between strategy of work-life quality and strategic agility ($\beta=.48$; $P=.000$; t -value=5.587) in Yemeni Large and Medium Manufacturing industries. This finding is in concurrence with previous studies like (Alavi et al., 2014; Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013; Shafer et al., 2001) which confirmed the impact of quality of work environment on the agility of the workforce and the enhancement the strategic agility by capturing opportunities, containing threats and achieving competitive leadership.

Table 2 shows the direct effects the dimensions of the strategy of the work-life quality on the dimensions of the strategic agility.

Table 2: sub hypothesis for the H2 main hypothesis

| Dimensions of the independent variable | | Dimensions of the mediator variable | path | S.E. | C.R. | P | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|------|------|--------|-------|----------|
| Adequate and Fair Compensation(Q1) | → | customer agility | .15 | .078 | 2.083 | .037 | accepted |
| Adequate and Fair Compensation(Q1) | → | Operational Agility | .15 | .056 | 2.093 | .036 | accepted |
| Adequate and Fair Compensation(Q1) | → | Agility Partnering | .20 | .047 | 2.735 | .006* | accepted |
| Career growth(Q2) | → | customer agility | -.11 | .109 | -1.448 | .148 | rejected |
| Career growth(Q2) | → | Operational Agility | .02 | .078 | .192 | .848 | rejected |
| Career growth(Q2) | → | Agility Partnering | .08 | .066 | .994 | .320 | rejected |
| training and development(Q3) | → | customer agility | .22 | .144 | 2.187 | .029 | accepted |
| training and development(Q3) | → | Operational Agility | .22 | .104 | 2.085 | .037 | accepted |
| training and development(Q3) | → | Agility Partnering | .16 | .087 | 1.521 | .128 | rejected |
| working environment conditions (Q4) | → | customer agility | .17 | .145 | 1.968 | .049 | accepted |
| working environment conditions (Q4) | → | Operational Agility | .19 | .048 | 2.614 | .009* | accepted |
| working environment conditions (Q4) | → | Agility Partnering | .18 | .088 | 1.973 | .048 | accepted |

It is clear from the results that there is no direct effect between the second dimension of the strategy of the work-life quality (career growth) and any of the dimensions of the strategic agility. This is due to the fact that the companies offer job promotions based on the employee's relationship with the employer. The results also confirmed the absence of the direct effect of

training and development on the agility of the partnership, which is due to the inability of the companies to build and expand their networks. On the other hand, there is a direct positive impact of the training and development on the customer agility and operational agility. There is also a direct positive impact of the adequate and fair compensation and working environment conditions on the dimensions of strategic agility (customer agility, operational agility, and agility partnership. Conformity indicators are shown as follows: (CMIN / df = 2.384-Rmse = .075-CFI = .96-GFI = .92-TLI = 92) which are acceptable as recommended by (Bentler, 2006; Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; Hair et al., 2016).

Furthermore, there is a significant direct effect between strategic agility and sustainable competitive advantage ($\beta=.50$; $P=.000$; $t\text{-value}=5.504$) in Yemeni Large and Medium Manufacturing industries. This finding supports the results of (Dabiri & Gholami, 2015; Khoshnood & Nematizadeh, 2017) which show that there is an effect of strategic agility on the achievement of competitive advantage in business organizations through focusing on knowledge and effectively and quickly responding to changes and developments in terms of marketing new products or improving the production of the existing products.

The results of testing the sub-hypotheses of the main hypothesis H3 demonstrates that there is a positive effect of strategic agility dimensions (the operational agility and the agility of partnership) on the sustainable competitive advantage. The strength of their effects was (.29, .41), the values of the p-value were (.001*, .000**), the value of $t\text{-Value}$ were (3.248, 4.347), and the standard error factors are (.063, .069) respectively. On the other hand, customer agility was not related to sustainable competitive advantage due to the lack of flexibility of the managers and deputy managers towards customer needs and the lack of their awareness of the fact that customers' new ideas could lead to new products and improve the current products. The conformity indicators were (CMIN / df = 2.384-Rmse = .075-CFI = .96-GFI = .92-TLI = 92)

In addition, the results of squared multiple correlations confirm that strategy of work-life quality explained a total of 23.3% of the strategic agility variance, whereas 40.6% variance of sustainable competitive advantage is considered of medium- and high-range (Cohen, 2013).

4.3 Mediation effect

In this research, the mediation effect was tested using Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach. Calculated using the multiplying path ($a*b$), H1, H2, and H3 met the conditions in testing the mediation effect. The results in Table 3 show that there is a positive indirect effect of strategy of work-life quality on sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility, whereas the strength of the indirect effective relationship was (0.238) that has a high impact level under the distributions of indirect effective strength (small = .01, moderate = .09, and large = .20) (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). This explains the high indirect impact of strategy of work-life quality on sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility.

Furthermore, the validity of the indirect relationship of H4 is explained through bias-corrected percentile method for upper value (BC)/lower value (BC) of 0.775/0.194. This is considered a good range. Researchers also used variance accounted for (VAF) to determine if strategic agility has a complete mediation or partial mediation on the relationship between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage as well as the strength of this mediation. The VAF equals the direct effect (0.27) divided by the total effect (0.508) and has a value of 0.531. Thus, 0.531% of the strategy of work-life quality's effect on sustainable competitive advantage is explained through strategic agility as partial mediator variable suggested by Hair et al. (2016). He argued that partial mediation occurs when the VAF is greater than 20% and less than 80% as shown below.

In short, H4 could not be rejected and the strategy of work-life quality has indirect effect on the sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility as a mediator in Yemeni big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies. This supports the fundamental idea of this research that strategy of work-life quality has a causal relationship with sustainable competitive advantage through strategic agility. Therefore, the proposed theoretical model fits with the data collected from the target population. This contributes to the theoretical perspective of strategic agility and its role as a mediator in the relationship between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage.

Table 3: Indirect relationship path analysis.

| Hypothesis | P value | T value (CR) | Bias-corrected percentile method | | | Bias-corrected percentile method | | Indirect effect test result | Result |
|---|---------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------|--------------|----------------------------------|------------|---|-------------------|
| | | | Indirect | Direct | Total effect | UPPER (BC) | LOWER (BC) | | |
| Indirect positive relationship between SWFQ and SCA using strategic agility as a mediator | .000 | 3.377 | 0.238 | .27 | 0.508 | 0.755 | 0.194 | Bootstrap stand error Two-tailed significance (BC) | Partial mediation |

Future Research

While the scope of this study was confined to companies in Yemeni large and medium manufacturing industries, future research is recommended on other countries, and subsequently cross-country examinations can be performed to identify similarities and differences.

Future research could investigate the role of employee commitment as a mediator variable in the relationship between the strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage in Yemeni medium and small manufacturing industries to know if they affect sustainable competitive advantage.

5. Conclusion

The present research has enriched the empirical evidence to the theories and body of knowledge in human resources management and strategic management, i.e. resource-based view theory by Barney (1991), theory of dynamic capacity by Teece et al, (1997), and theory of human needs by Maslow (2013). The results of this study revealed many ambiguities about the intermediate effects of strategic agility in explaining the indirect effects of strategy of work-life quality on sustainable competitive advantage in Yemeni manufacturing industries.

The proposed structural model of this research emphasises on the positive impacts of strategy of work-life quality in enhancing employees' motivation, abilities, skills, knowledge, and safety at work. These aspects strengthen their loyalty and sense of belonging towards their

companies and ensure a systematic production process. In return, companies are able to meet the customers' ongoing changes in needs by formulating strategic directions that are aligned with organisations' work environment; externally and internally. It also explains how to reconfigure the operational process for an organisation in a proactive way to adapt with the emerging events and overcome the threats posed to them in achieving competitive leadership.

The limitations of this research create an opportunity for future researchers to use other variables than this research, particularly in the context of Yemen because there are not many studies done there before. The results of this research are also important for decision makers in business organisations, especially for the big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies. Finally, the proposed structural model highlights some important ways to overcome the unexpected challenges and competitions to improve organisations' competitive advantage and ensure their ability to survive in the global market of the 21st century.

This research was confined to big- and medium-sized manufacturing companies in Yemen, therefore future research is recommended to be conducted on other countries or other industries so that any similarities or differences can be identified and highlighted. Future research may also consider to investigate the role of employee commitment as a mediator variable in the relationship between strategy of work-life quality and sustainable competitive advantage to know if it affects organisations' sustainable competitive advantage.

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دور خفة الحركة الإستراتيجية في العلاقة بين إستراتيجية جودة حياة العمل والميزة التنافسية المستدامة: دراسة ميدانية في قطاع الصناعة التحويلية اليمنية

د. محمد علي العولقي

كلية إدارة الأعمال، الجامعة اللبنانية
الدولية، صنعاء
الجمهورية اليمنية
alzooka@gmail.com

د. ماجد محمد بارحمة

كلية العلوم الإدارية، جامعة شبوة
الجمهورية اليمنية
magedbarahma@gmail.com

د. توفيق سريع علي باسردة

كلية العلوم الإدارية، جامعة عدن
الجمهورية اليمنية
tawfiq258@yahoo.com

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف العلاقة المباشرة وغير المباشرة بين استراتيجية جودة حياة العمل وابعادها، وخفة الحركة الاستراتيجية وابعادها، والميزة التنافسية المستدامة. لتحقيق ذلك، تم توزيع 454 استبيانات على كل من رؤساء ونواب شركات الصناعة التحويلية اليمنية الكبيرة والمتوسطة، باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات العشوائية الطبقية، ثم العينة العشوائية البسيطة، والتي بناءً عليها بلغ حجم العينة المختارة 227 شركة من أصل 554 شركة. حيث تم اختبار الثبات للمقياس (الاستبيان) من خلال معامل كرونباخ ألفا لتحديد جودة قياس البيانات الأولية، وكذلك البرنامج الاحصائي أموس CB-SEM للتحقق من الفرضيات المقترحة. والذي بناءً عليه أكدت نتائج الدراسة الحالية بأن هناك علاقة مباشرة بين متغيرات الدراسة، كما أكدت النتائج كذلك بأن هناك تأثير غير مباشر للمتغير المستقل إستراتيجية جودة حياة العمل والمتغير التابع الميزة التنافسية المستدامة من خلال المتغير الوسيط خفة الحركة الاستراتيجية. مما يدل على أن النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها تؤكد على صحة النموذج المقترح للدراسة. وبالتالي فإن النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها تؤكد على تغطية الفجوة العلمية وتقديم إضافة نظرية إلى جسد التراكم المعرفي في مجال الدراسة الحالي، علاوة عن الإضافة العملية للدراسة حول أبرز التحديات التي تواجهها شركات الصناعة التحويلية اليمنية الكبيرة والمتوسطة وكيفية مواجهتها لها.

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جودة حياة العمل، خفة الحركة
الإستراتيجية، الميزة التنافسية
المستدامة