

The Effects of Strategic Leadership, Organizational Learning, and Innovation Capability on Organizational Performance in Selected Manufacturing Firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: Manufacturing firms in emerging economies continue to face challenges in achieving optimal organizational performance despite investments in leadership development, learning initiatives, and innovation programs. Existing studies have largely examined strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability separately, creating a gap in understanding their combined influence on organizational performance, particularly within the Nigerian manufacturing sector. This study investigates the effects of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The target population comprised 312 mid-level managers across 78 manufacturing firms, from which 175 respondents were selected using Yamane's formula and proportionate stratified sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression in SPSS (v26). The findings revealed significant positive relationships between strategic leadership and organizational performance ($r = 0.624, p < 0.001$), organizational learning and organizational performance ($r = 0.658, p < 0.001$), and innovation capability and organizational performance ($r = 0.701, p < 0.001$). Regression results showed that the three predictors jointly explained 58% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.580$). The study concludes that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability are key drivers of organizational performance. It recommends strengthening leadership development, institutionalizing organizational learning, and enhancing innovation capability to improve performance and competitiveness.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Organizational Learning, Innovation Capability, Organizational Performance, Manufacturing Firms, Delta State, Nigeria

Introduction

Organizational performance remains a central concern for both academic researchers and business practitioners, as it reflects the extent to which firms achieve their strategic and operational objectives (Barney & Hesterly, 2021). In the contemporary business environment, characterized by rapid technological change, intensified global competition, and shifting customer expectations, manufacturing firms face persistent pressure to enhance performance (Teece, 2023). In Nigeria, the manufacturing sector contributes significantly to gross domestic product and employment; however, many firms continue to struggle with suboptimal performance due to internal capability deficiencies (Adeyemi et al., 2023; Nwosu & Eze, 2025).

Strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability have emerged as three critical organizational capabilities that individually and collectively influence performance. Strategic leadership refers to the ability of top managers to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change (Boal & Hooijberg, 2016). Organizational learning encompasses the processes through which firms acquire, distribute, interpret, and store knowledge to adapt behavior and improve performance (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Innovation capability represents an organization's capacity to generate, accept, and implement new ideas, processes, products, or services (Saunila, 2020). Understanding how these three capabilities interact to drive performance is theoretically and practically vital.

In Delta State, Nigeria, manufacturing firms operate in a unique socio-economic environment characterized by infrastructure challenges, a growing youth workforce, and increasing competitive pressure. Despite the presence of several manufacturing firms in cities such as Asaba, Warri, and Sapele, empirical evidence on how strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability affect organizational performance in this context remains scarce. Most existing studies have focused on national-level analysis or data from Lagos and Abuja, thereby overlooking regional contexts that may present different organizational realities (Ofune et al., 2025).

The significance of this study lies in its integrated examination of all three constructs within a single empirical model, grounded in dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2018). Unlike prior research that examined these variables in isolation, this study provides a holistic understanding of their collective effect on performance. By focusing on Delta State, the study addresses a geographical gap in the literature and offers context-specific insights for managers and policymakers.

Statement of the Problem

Many Nigerian manufacturing firms continue to experience low productivity, declining market share, operational inefficiencies, and weak competitiveness despite substantial investments in leadership development, knowledge management systems, and innovation initiatives. This persistent gap between capability-building efforts and organizational performance raises concerns about how effectively strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability are being developed and integrated within these firms. While these capabilities are widely recognized as important drivers of performance, many organizations have yet to realize their full benefits.

A major limitation in existing research is the tendency to examine strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability independently rather than as interconnected factors influencing organizational performance. This fragmented perspective limits understanding of their combined effects and may lead managers to prioritize one capability at the expense of others. In addition, the influence of contextual factors such as firm size, firm age, and subsector has received limited attention. To address these gaps, this study investigates the collective effect of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria, while accounting for relevant contextual variables.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the effect of strategic leadership on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the effect of organizational learning on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.
3. To examine the effect of innovation capability on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.
4. To determine the combined effect of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. How does strategic leadership affect organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State?
2. What is the effect of organizational learning on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State?
3. What is the effect of innovation capability on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State?
4. What is the combined effect of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Strategic leadership has no significant effect on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State.

H₀₂: Organizational learning has no significant effect on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State.

H₀₃: Innovation capability has no significant effect on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State.

H₀₄: Strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability have no significant combined effect on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State.

Conceptual Review

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership refers to the ability of organizational leaders to provide long-term direction by anticipating future challenges, recognizing emerging opportunities, and making decisions that ensure the continued growth and competitiveness of the organization. According to Boal and Hooijberg (2016), strategic leaders do more than supervise daily operations; they focus on positioning the organization for future success by aligning people, resources, and strategies with its long-term goals. In this study, strategic leadership is examined through three key dimensions: vision articulation, change-oriented communication, and resource allocation and employee empowerment.

A defining feature of strategic leadership is the leader's ability to communicate a clear and compelling vision that inspires employees and guides organizational activities. When employees understand where the organization is heading and how their roles contribute to achieving that future, they are more likely to remain committed to organizational goals. Effective vision communication promotes unity, strengthens employee engagement, and creates a shared sense of purpose across different levels of the organization. Recent evidence by Ji, Gong, and Guo (2024) suggests that organizations whose leaders consistently communicate strategic direction experience higher employee commitment and improved organizational performance because employees become more motivated to support long-term objectives.

Strategic leadership also involves ensuring that organizational resources are allocated effectively while creating an environment where employees are encouraged to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making. Leaders who communicate openly during periods of change help reduce uncertainty and build trust among employees, making organizational transformation easier to implement. At the same time, empowering employees to take initiative encourages innovation, accountability, and problem-solving. Studies have shown that organizations led by strategic leaders who promote inclusive communication and employee participation are generally more successful in implementing strategic changes and achieving sustainable organizational performance.

Organizational Learning

Organizational learning refers to the continuous process through which organizations acquire, share, interpret, and retain knowledge to improve their operations and adapt to changing business conditions. Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) describe organizational learning as more than the accumulation of individual knowledge; rather, it is a collective process that becomes embedded in organizational systems, routines, and culture. In this study, organizational learning is examined through four interrelated dimensions: knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation, and organizational memory.

The ability of an organization to acquire and share knowledge plays a vital role in enhancing its effectiveness. Knowledge acquisition involves obtaining useful information from both internal experiences and external sources such as customers, suppliers, competitors, industry experts, and technological developments. However, acquiring knowledge alone is not sufficient. Organizations must also ensure that valuable information is shared across departments so that employees can apply it in solving problems and improving organizational performance. According to Elbawab (2024) and Hael, Belhaj, and Zhang (2024), organizations with effective knowledge-sharing practices are better prepared to adapt to environmental changes, encourage innovation, and maintain long-term competitiveness.

Another important aspect of organizational learning is the ability to interpret and preserve knowledge for future use. Knowledge interpretation enables employees to develop a common understanding of information, thereby improving decision-making and coordination across the organization. Organizational memory, on the other hand, ensures that valuable knowledge is retained through documented procedures, databases, organizational routines, and institutional practices. As noted by Rupčić (2024) and Jiao and Bu (2024), organizations that effectively preserve organizational knowledge experience fewer disruptions caused by employee turnover and are better positioned to sustain innovation and continuous improvement over time.

Innovation Capability

Innovation capability refers to an organization's ability to develop and successfully implement new ideas that improve products, services, production processes, or management practices. According to Saunila (2020), organizations with strong innovation capability are better able to respond to changing customer needs, technological developments, and competitive pressures. In this study, innovation capability is examined through three major dimensions: product innovation, process innovation, and managerial innovation.

Product innovation focuses on developing new products or improving existing ones to meet changing customer expectations and strengthen an organization's competitive position. Organizations that consistently invest in research, creativity, and product development are often better equipped to respond to market changes and sustain customer satisfaction. Product innovation enables firms to create unique value, differentiate themselves from competitors, and improve their long-term performance. Studies by AlNuaimi et al. (2022) and Le and Ikram (2023) indicate that organizations with strong product innovation capabilities generally experience higher levels of competitiveness, adaptability, and business growth.

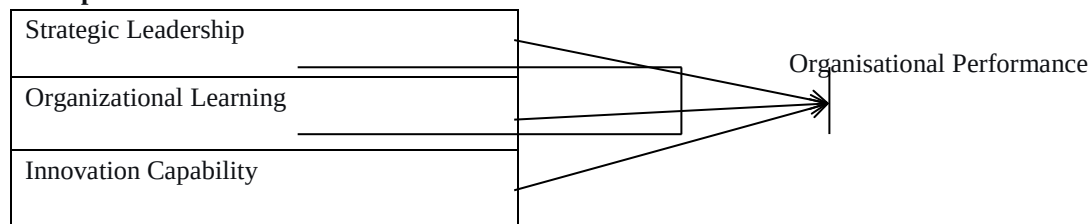
Beyond developing new products, organizations also improve performance through process and managerial innovation. Process innovation involves introducing improved production techniques, technologies, or operational procedures that increase efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance product quality. Managerial innovation focuses on introducing new leadership approaches, organizational structures, and management systems that improve collaboration, flexibility, and organizational effectiveness. Research by Kraus et al. (2022) and Usai et al. (2024) shows that organizations that combine technological improvements with innovative management practices are more capable of responding to environmental uncertainty, accelerating digital transformation, and sustaining superior organizational performance. These findings suggest that innovation capability is a broad organizational competence that supports continuous improvement and long-term competitive advantage.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its objectives through the efficient use of available resources and the successful implementation of its strategies. Barney and Hesterly (2021) explain that organizational performance cannot be evaluated from a single perspective because it reflects financial outcomes, operational efficiency, and market success. Accordingly, this study measures organizational performance using self-reported indicators relating to financial performance, operational performance, and market performance.

Financial performance remains one of the most widely used indicators of organizational success because it reflects the organization's ability to generate profits, increase revenue, and utilize resources efficiently. Measures such as return on investment, profit margins, and revenue growth provide valuable information about management effectiveness and overall business sustainability. Nevertheless, recent management research argues that relying solely on financial indicators provides an incomplete assessment of organizational performance. Abubakar et al. (2023) emphasize that combining financial measures with operational and strategic indicators provides a more balanced evaluation of organizational success and long-term competitiveness.

Operational performance and market performance have become equally important in assessing organizational effectiveness. Operational performance focuses on improving productivity, efficiency, quality, and innovation within organizational processes, while market performance reflects how successfully the organization satisfies customers, increases market share, strengthens its reputation, and maintains a competitive position. Organizations that consistently improve internal operations while responding effectively to customer expectations are generally more resilient and better positioned for sustainable growth. Nguyen et al. (2023) therefore argue that organizational performance should be viewed as a multidimensional concept that captures financial success, operational excellence, and market competitiveness rather than relying on a single measure of performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability as the independent variables and organizational performance as the dependent variable. It posits that effective strategic leadership enhances organizational direction and decision-making, organizational learning promotes continuous improvement and knowledge sharing, while innovation capability enables firms to develop new products and processes. Collectively, these factors are expected to improve the overall performance of selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework**Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2007; 2018; 2023)**

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), introduced by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) and further developed by Teece (2007, 2018, 2023), provides a useful explanation of how organizations maintain competitiveness in environments characterized by rapid technological, economic, and market changes. The theory argues that long-term success is not determined solely by the resources a firm possesses but by its ability to continuously renew and reconfigure those resources in response to changing conditions. According to Teece (2023), organizations that can identify emerging opportunities, respond quickly to market changes, and transform their internal capabilities are more likely to sustain superior performance than organizations that rely only on existing competitive advantages.

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of strategic leadership in guiding organizational adaptation. Strategic leaders play a critical role in scanning the business environment, identifying opportunities and threats, and making decisions that position the organization for future success. They also create the vision and direction needed to align organizational resources with changing customer needs and competitive pressures. As noted by Teece (2018), effective leadership serves as one of the key foundations for building dynamic capabilities that support sustainable organizational performance.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory also explains why organizational learning and innovation capability are essential for organizational success. Through continuous learning, organizations develop new knowledge, improve existing practices, and strengthen their ability to respond to environmental changes. Innovation capability enables firms to convert this knowledge into improved products, services, production methods, and business processes that create value for customers. When strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability operate together, they reinforce one another and improve the organization's ability to compete effectively in dynamic business environments. This interconnected relationship makes Dynamic Capabilities Theory an appropriate framework for explaining how these variables influence organizational performance in manufacturing firms.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies provide evidence that organizational capabilities contribute significantly to improved organizational performance across different sectors. Adeniyi (2024), in a study of mobile telecommunication operators in Ibadan, Nigeria, found that employee empowerment and autonomy significantly enhanced employee performance through improved information sharing and decision-making. Similarly, Adeyemi et al. (2023) reported that organizational culture had a significant positive effect on employee performance among Nigerian telecommunication firms, indicating that supportive organizational environments encourage higher levels of productivity. In another Nigerian study, Ofune, Ubogu, and Ebo (2025) observed that organizational culture accounted for a substantial proportion of employee engagement among organizations in Delta State. Likewise, Saunila (2020), through a systematic review of manufacturing organizations, concluded that innovation capability remains one of the strongest predictors of organizational profitability and competitiveness.

Several studies have also established a strong relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance. Martínez-Costa, Jiménez-Jiménez, and Dine Rabeh (2023) found that organizations with strong learning cultures consistently recorded better operational performance because they encouraged knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, and continuous improvement. Similarly, Almulhim (2024) reported that firms that invest in employee learning and organizational knowledge management are more capable of adapting to environmental changes and sustaining long-term competitive advantage. These findings suggest that organizational learning provides the knowledge base required for continuous organizational improvement.

Innovation capability has equally received considerable attention in recent studies. Ferreira, Coelho, and Moutinho (2023) demonstrated that organizations with stronger innovation capabilities were more successful in introducing new products, improving production processes, and enhancing overall business performance. In the same vein, Li, Wang, and Zhang (2024) found that innovation positively influenced market competitiveness, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. Their findings indicate

that organizations that continuously invest in innovation are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth and remain competitive in increasingly dynamic markets.

Gap in Literature

Although previous studies have confirmed that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability individually contribute to organizational performance, relatively few studies have examined how these variables interact within a single research model. Most existing studies have concentrated on one or two of these variables, thereby providing only a partial understanding of the factors that influence organizational performance. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on the combined contribution of these strategic capabilities.

Another limitation of previous research is its geographical focus. Much of the available evidence originates from developed economies in Europe, North America, and Asia, where business environments differ considerably from those of developing countries. In Nigeria, many studies have focused on organizations located in major commercial centres such as Lagos and Abuja, while manufacturing firms operating in Delta State have received comparatively little scholarly attention. This study addresses this gap by examining the combined effects of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance among manufacturing firms in Delta State.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between strategic leadership, organizational learning, innovation capability, and organizational performance. The target population comprised 312 middle-level management staff, including operations managers, production supervisors, quality control officers, and strategy analysts drawn from 78 manufacturing firms operating within the plastics and rubber, food and beverage, metal fabrication, and wood and furniture subsectors in Delta State, Nigeria.

The sample size of 175 respondents was determined using Yamane's sampling formula at a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error. To ensure that all manufacturing subsectors were adequately represented, proportionate stratified sampling was adopted. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each participating organization, thereby giving every eligible employee an equal opportunity to participate in the study.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section captured respondents' demographic information, while the second measured strategic leadership (9 items), organizational learning (12 items), innovation capability (9 items), and organizational performance (9 items). All measurement items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The questionnaire items were adapted from previously validated instruments reported in related studies.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the research instrument adequately measured the intended constructs, content validity was established through the evaluation of two experienced academics with expertise in management and organizational research. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire before data collection commenced.

A pilot study involving 20 employees from a manufacturing firm outside the study population was subsequently conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument. The results showed satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86 for Strategic Leadership, 0.88 for Organizational Learning, 0.84 for Innovation Capability, and 0.87 for Organizational Performance. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 exceeded the commonly accepted benchmark of 0.70, confirming that the instrument was reliable for the main study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out between March and April 2025 through the physical administration of questionnaires to respondents across the selected manufacturing firms. Before administering the questionnaires, permission was obtained from the management of participating organizations, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that all information provided would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

A total of 175 questionnaires were distributed, of which 162 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92.6 percent. The completed questionnaires were screened, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' characteristics, while Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were employed to test the study hypotheses at a 5 percent level of significance ($p < 0.05$).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	98	60.5
	Female	64	39.5

Age	20–30 years	42	25.9
	31–40 years	68	42.0
	41–50 years	35	21.6
	51 years and above	17	10.5
Job Role	Operations Manager	38	23.5
	Production Supervisor	52	32.1
	Quality Control Officer	31	19.1
	Strategy Analyst	18	11.1
	Other Management	23	14.2
Tenure	Less than 2 years	29	17.9
	2–5 years	58	35.8
	6–10 years	46	28.4
	Above 10 years	29	17.9
Subsector	Plastics and Rubber	41	25.3
	Food and Beverage	52	32.1
	Metal Fabrication	38	23.5
	Wood/Furniture	31	19.1

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategic Leadership	162	1.78	4.89	3.75	0.72
Organizational Learning	162	1.67	4.92	3.68	0.78
Innovation Capability	162	1.56	4.78	3.52	0.81
Organizational Performance	162	1.44	4.89	3.45	0.84

Source: SPSS Output, 2026

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	R	p-value	Decision
Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance	0.624	0.000	Significant
Organizational Learning and Organizational Performance	0.658	0.000	Significant
Innovation Capability and Organizational Performance	0.701	0.000	Significant

Source: SPSS Output, 2026

Table 2: shows that strategic leadership ($r = 0.624$), organizational learning ($r = 0.658$), and innovation capability ($r = 0.701$) all have significant positive relationships with organizational performance ($p = 0.000$ for all). This indicates that increases in these variables are associated with improved organizational performance, with innovation capability showing the strongest relationship.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.762	0.580	0.572	0.448

Source: SPSS Output, 2026

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Predictors: Strategic Leadership, Organizational Learning, Innovation Capability

Table 4: shows a strong relationship between the predictors and organizational performance ($R = 0.762$). The model explains 58% of the variation in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.580$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.572, indicating good explanatory power. The low standard error (0.448) suggests a reliable model fit.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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Regression	42.867	3	14.289	72.145	0.000
Residual	31.133	158	0.197		
Total	74.000	161			

Source: SPSS Output, 2026

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 5: shows that the model is statistically significant ($F = 72.145$, $p = 0.000$), indicating a good fit. This confirms that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability jointly have a significant effect on organizational performance.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.892	0.156		5.718	0.000
Strategic Leadership	0.284	0.082	0.244	3.463	0.001
Organizational Learning	0.312	0.078	0.289	4.000	0.000
Innovation Capability	0.358	0.074	0.345	4.838	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 6 shows that all the independent variables significantly influence organizational performance. Innovation capability has the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.345$, $p = 0.000$), followed by organizational learning ($\beta = 0.289$, $p = 0.000$) and strategic leadership ($\beta = 0.244$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that all variables positively contribute to organizational performance, with innovation capability being the most influential predictor.

Hypothesis Testing

All four null hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 significance level.

H₀₁ (Strategic leadership has no significant effect) was rejected based on correlation ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$) and regression ($B = 0.284$, $p = 0.001$).

H₀₂ (Organizational learning has no significant effect) was rejected based on correlation ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.001$) and regression ($B = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$).

H₀₃ (Innovation capability has no significant effect) was rejected based on correlation ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.001$) and regression ($B = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$).

H₀₄ (No significant combined effect) was rejected based on the regression model ($R^2 = 0.580$, $F = 72.145$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability each make meaningful contributions to improving organizational performance among manufacturing firms in Delta State. The regression results reveal that strategic leadership has a positive and statistically significant influence on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.244$, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that organizations with leaders who communicate a clear strategic direction, anticipate environmental changes, and motivate employees are more likely to achieve better performance outcomes. This finding agrees with earlier studies by Wang et al. (2022) and Vera and Crossan (2018), which reported that effective strategic leadership strengthens organizational competitiveness and long-term performance. It also supports the assumptions of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which emphasizes the role of leadership in identifying opportunities and guiding organizational adaptation.

The study also found that organizational learning positively and significantly influences organizational performance ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that firms that continuously acquire, share, and apply knowledge are better equipped to improve operational efficiency, respond to market demands, and sustain competitive advantage. In the context of manufacturing firms in Delta State, learning enables employees and managers to improve production processes, minimize operational waste, and respond more effectively to changes in customer preferences. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle (2019) and Argote and Lee (2021), who argued that organizational learning strengthens innovation and overall business performance. Among the three explanatory variables, innovation capability recorded the highest influence on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.345$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that the ability of manufacturing firms to introduce new products, improve production processes, and adopt innovative technologies plays a critical role in achieving superior organizational outcomes. In an increasingly competitive business environment where local manufacturers compete with imported products, innovation has become an important source of survival and growth. The finding supports previous studies by Rosenbusch et al. (2013) and Saunila (2020), which concluded that organizations with stronger innovation capabilities generally perform better than those that rely solely on traditional business practices.

The overall regression model explained 58% of the variation in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.580$; $F = 72.145$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that the combined influence of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability provides a strong explanation of organizational performance. This finding suggests that these capabilities reinforce one another rather than operating independently. Organizations that invest simultaneously in effective leadership, continuous learning, and innovation are more likely to achieve sustainable performance improvements than those focusing on only one capability. The result provides additional empirical support for Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which argues that organizational success depends on the ability to integrate and continuously renew strategic capabilities in response to changing business environments.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability on organizational performance among manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that each of these strategic capabilities contributes significantly to organizational performance, with innovation capability emerging as the strongest predictor. The results further show that organizations achieve better outcomes when these capabilities are developed together rather than individually.

The study also revealed that the three variables jointly account for a substantial proportion of organizational performance, highlighting the importance of adopting an integrated approach to organizational development. Manufacturing firms that promote visionary leadership, encourage continuous learning, and invest in innovation are more likely to improve productivity, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on strategic management by providing evidence from manufacturing firms in Delta State, an area that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. The findings reinforce the relevance of Dynamic Capabilities Theory in explaining how organizations can achieve superior performance in rapidly changing business environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Manufacturing firms should strengthen strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability simultaneously rather than treating them as separate initiatives. Since innovation capability recorded the strongest influence on organizational performance, management should allocate adequate resources toward research, product improvement, and process innovation while continuing to develop effective leadership and employee learning programmes.
- ii. Organizations should establish formal systems for knowledge sharing and innovation management. This can be achieved through digital knowledge repositories, regular employee training, innovation reward schemes, suggestion programmes, and stronger collaboration with universities and research institutions to encourage continuous improvement.
- iii. Management should promote closer collaboration among departments responsible for strategic planning, human resource development, and innovation activities. Regular cross-functional meetings, shared performance objectives, and integrated planning processes will enhance coordination and ensure that organizational capabilities support common strategic goals.
- iv. Manufacturing firms should conduct periodic assessments of their strategic capabilities to identify strengths and areas requiring improvement. Such evaluations should consider the unique characteristics of different manufacturing subsectors and guide management in developing targeted improvement strategies.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability collectively explain a significant proportion of organizational performance among manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. Unlike many previous studies that examined these variables independently, this research provides evidence of their combined influence on organizational success.

The study also extends the application of Dynamic Capabilities Theory by showing that organizations achieve superior performance when leadership, learning, and innovation are developed as complementary capabilities. Furthermore, the research fills an important geographical gap by providing empirical evidence from Delta State, where limited studies have investigated these relationships. In addition, the validated research instrument offers a reliable framework that can support future studies on organizational performance in similar contexts.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study achieved its objectives, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design means that the findings reflect conditions at a single point in time, making it difficult to establish long-term cause-and-effect relationships.

Second, the study was limited to manufacturing firms operating in Delta State, which may restrict the generalization of the findings to other regions or industries. The research also focused primarily on selected manufacturing subsectors and middle-level management employees, which may not fully represent the views of all organizational members.

In addition, the study relied mainly on self-reported questionnaire responses, making the findings susceptible to common method bias and respondents' personal perceptions. Finally, other organizational and environmental factors such as firm size, ownership

structure, organizational culture, and market competition were not included in the analysis and may also influence organizational performance.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to examine how strategic leadership, organizational learning, and innovation capability influence organizational performance over time. Such studies would provide stronger evidence of causal relationships.

Researchers should also extend similar investigations to manufacturing firms in other states of Nigeria and across other African countries to improve the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies across industries would also provide valuable insights into sector-specific differences.

Furthermore, future research should incorporate objective performance indicators such as profitability, productivity, market share, and operational efficiency alongside perceptual measures. Researchers may also examine the moderating or mediating roles of variables such as organizational culture, firm size, environmental uncertainty, employee engagement, digital capability, and absorptive capacity. Finally, adopting mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative surveys with interviews or case studies would provide a deeper understanding of how these strategic capabilities influence organizational performance in practice.

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