

## Strategic Leadership for Effective Strategy Implementation and The Performance of Construction Companies

*Kepimpinan Strategik untuk Pelaksanaan Strategi yang Berkesan dan Prestasi  
Syarikat Pembinaan*

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### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 10th December 2025

Revised: 03rd Mac 2026

Accepted: 23rd April 2026

Published: 27th April 2026

### KEYWORDS

Strategic Leadership  
Strategy Implementation  
Strategic Performance  
Companies' Performance  
Construction Companies

**ABSTRACT** - Strategy implementation is a process driven by a company's visionaries that influences its performance, enhancing rather than disrupting daily operational routines. Strategic leadership plays a crucial role in the success of strategy implementation, yet its specific impact on company performance remains underexplored. The objective of this research is to analyse the relationship between strategic leadership and companies' performance in the context of strategy implementation in construction companies. Nine key elements of strategic leadership were examined in this research. These elements include communication, influence, facilitation, empowerment, resourcefulness, humility, courage, forward thinking, and dynamism. The framework highlights the relationship between strategic leadership and company performance. A survey was conducted among contractors in the Klang Valley, and 180 samples were analysed using SmartPLS 3.0 software to test the relationship. The data analysis, which included convergent validity, discriminant validity, heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio, bootstrapping, and the blindfolding procedure, showed support for the nine key elements of strategic leadership and confirmed the research hypothesis. The findings provide valuable insights for top management in construction companies to implement strategies more effectively and successfully.

## INTRODUCTION

Strategy implementation is a dynamic and complex process (Obeidat et al., 2017; Theodore et al., 2022). It is not something that top management can simply “hand off” to lower levels for execution (Amoo et al., 2022; Obeidat et al., 2017; Suri & Sushil, 2022). Successful implementation requires well-orchestrated management processes, with top leaders actively involved beyond routine business operations to ensure effective execution (Obeidat et al., 2017; Theodore et al., 2022). A lack of focus during the implementation phase often results in misaligned priorities, contributing to strategy failure (Sekar et al., 2021; Obeidat et al., 2017).

Traditional leadership approaches have become outdated, rigid, and insufficient to meet today's strategic challenges (Bolland, 2017). In contrast, strategic leaders must be forward-thinking and adaptive. They are expected to anticipate change, envision the future, foster learning, remain flexible,

think strategically, and collaborate with others to drive transformative change that ensures the company's long-term viability (Opoku et al., 2015; Dehdasht et al., 2022; Tabassi et al., 2014).

In construction companies, strategic leaders must practice transparent communication and remain open to feedback from others (Dionne et al., 2012; Ebekozién et al., 2024; Brandão et al., 2022; Oke et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2023). Construction projects typically involve a wide range of personnel with diverse areas of expertise. In this context, open and transparent communication enhances the accessibility, visibility, and distribution of relevant information among both internal and external stakeholders throughout project management and strategy implementation processes (Ebekozién et al., 2024; Brandão et al., 2022; Kissi et al., 2023).

Strategic leaders are both inspirational and influential, capable of shaping organizational direction and motivating others toward strategic goals (Shao, 2019). An influential strategic leader possesses the ability to guide and align employees' efforts to achieve desired strategic outcomes (Fernandes et al., 2022).

Strategic leaders must recognize and facilitate individual employee needs, as each person brings unique abilities and perspectives to the organization (Krier, 2022). In doing so, they must also navigate and reconcile the conflicting needs of different employees, particularly when these conflicts intersect with the challenges (Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2022; Chinowsky & Meredith, 2000).

Strategic leaders cannot operate in isolation and must delegate authority by dispersing power among employees (Krier, 2022). Empowerment involves placing trust in employees by transferring a degree of ownership and responsibility to them (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2020; Dionne et al., 2012; Krier, 2022). It also requires leaders to refrain from providing all the answers, instead allowing employees the space to make decisions and take initiative (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2020).

In the construction industry, strategic leaders must proactively seek new knowledge to stay current with evolving construction technologies and innovations (Chinowsky & Meredith, 2000; Oke et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2023). Resourceful strategic leaders possess strong absorptive capacity; the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply new knowledge (Sinha, 2017; Naim & Lenka, 2018; Ebekozién et al., 2024).

Humility in strategic leadership refers to a leader's ability to recognize their own limitations and appreciate the contributions of others (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021). A humble leader prioritizes the needs of employees by focusing on their interests, goals, and well-being, thereby fostering a culture of mutual respect and trust (Bhardwaj et al., 2020). In addition, a strategically effective leader demonstrates strong emotional intelligence, which enables them to manage their own emotions, build meaningful relationships, and lead with empathy (Barbuto & Bugenhagen, 2009; Duan et al., 2023).

Strategic leaders should embody courage and fearlessness in their character (Phillips & Phillips, 2020). Courageous leaders possess the discernment to know the right time to delegate responsibilities, initiate new strategies, or assume challenging roles, demonstrating boldness and decisiveness in guiding the organization (Phillips & Phillips, 2020; Calabrese & Costa, 2015).

Strategic leaders are forward-thinking individuals with the ability to anticipate change, envision the future, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and collaborate with others to initiate transformative actions that ensure a viable future for the company (Samimi et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2022). As visionary leaders, they play a key role in shaping a realistic and compelling vision that guides critical leaders and directors within the organization (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021; Samimi et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2022).

Strategic leadership is crucial in promoting alignment between business objectives and contingency plans, ensuring the organization can adapt effectively to changing conditions (Shao, 2019; Samimi et al., 2020). Dynamic strategic leaders typically exhibit high levels of self-confidence, emotional maturity, initiative, and stress tolerance, enabling them to navigate uncertainty and lead effectively (Meng, 2012).

Effective strategic leaders inspire, empower, and adapt to change while aligning strategies with organizational goals. They prioritize others' needs, seek knowledge, and build trust to drive lasting success. By enhancing the strategy implementation process, strategic leaders help achieve strategic

objectives within set timeframes, contributing to financial growth and improved performance (Tabassi et al., 2014).

In conclusion, strategic leadership represents a transformative approach that surpasses the limitations of traditional leadership. There are nine (9) key strategic leadership attributes, including open communication, influence, facilitation, empowerment, resourcefulness, humility, courage, forward thinking, and dynamism.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

There are nine (9) strategic leadership attributes identified based on previous research. These nine (9) attributes constitute the variables of the research framework presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 also illustrates the relationship between strategic leadership and strategic performance, based on key elements identified in the literature review. A corresponding hypothesis was then developed and tested. Hypothesis: Perceived strategic leadership influences strategic performance.

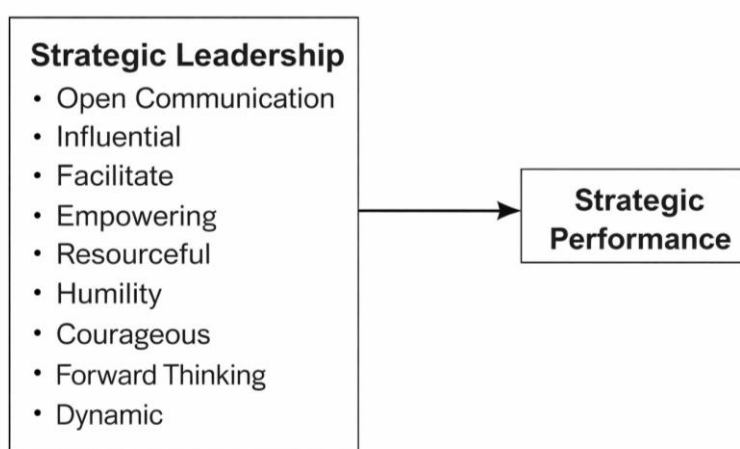


Figure 1. The research framework

## METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on contractors in Klang Valley, Malaysia's most competitive and rapidly developing region, where effective strategic management is critical for survival. Using G\*Power ( $f^2 = 0.15$ , power = 0.8, alpha = 0.05, predictors = 9), the minimum required sample size was 114 (Faul et al., 2007). A total of 180 usable questionnaires were collected from top management in construction companies, including Heads of Strategic Planning, CEOs, Administration Managers, and Human Resources Managers, all with over five years of experience in their respective companies. These leaders are typically responsible for strategic planning and possess extensive knowledge in this area. The requirement of more than five years of experience ensures respondents have a deep understanding and active involvement in their companies' strategic planning processes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Hair et al. (2018) stated that Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis is a statistical tool used to measure structural models without requiring normality in survey data distribution. Non-normal data distribution affects standard errors, which in turn can influence test results. In this study, data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Based on Mardia's multivariate skewness ( $\beta = 124.1337$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and multivariate kurtosis ( $\beta = 610.7083$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ), the data were determined to be non-normally distributed. Therefore, SmartPLS 3.0 software was employed, which provides a bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2018; Monecke & Leisch, 2012). SmartPLS also enables testing of structural relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2018). In this research, single-source data were collected, meaning that both independent and dependent variables were obtained

from the same respondents at the same time, raising concerns about common method variance (CMV) (Wolter & Joseph, 2017). To address this, two marker variables; (1) "Strategy implementation is not important" and (2) "Company does not have a strategy" were included in the survey but excluded from the main model. When correlations involving these markers were controlled for, no other correlations lost statistical significance, indicating that common method bias is unlikely to be a concern in this study.

**Table 1.** Convergent validity of strategic leadership (SL)

Item Strategic Leadership (SL)	Loading	CR	AVE
<b>Item No 1: Communication</b>			
1a	0.796	0.87	0.700
1b	0.875	5	
1c	0.837		
<b>Item No 2: Influential</b>			
2a	0.910	0.93	0.822
2b	0.903	3	
2c	0.907		
<b>Item No 3: Facilitate</b>			
3a	0.920	0.93	0.826
3b	0.890	4	
3c	0.917		
<b>Item No 4: Empowering</b>			
4a	0.921	0.95	0.867
4b	0.930	1	
4c	0.943		
<b>Item No 5: Resourceful</b>			
5a	0.910	0.92	0.804
5b	0.889	5	
5c	0.890		
<b>Item No 6: Humility</b>			
6a	0.888	0.92	0.807
6b	0.906	6	
6c	0.902		
<b>Item No 7: Courageous</b>			
7a	0.897	0.92	0.804
7b	0.894	5	
7c	0.899		
<b>Item No 8: Forward Thinking</b>			
8a	0.878	0.92	0.801
8b	0.890	4	
8c	0.917		
<b>Item No 9: Dynamic</b>			
9a	0.927	0.95	0.875
9b	0.929	5	
9c	0.951		

Measurement models were evaluated using convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is assessed by examining factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2018). Acceptable thresholds include factor loadings above 0.7, AVE greater than 0.5, and CR values exceeding 0.7. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, all items meet these convergent validity criteria. For discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) must not exceed 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). Table 3 demonstrates that all items satisfy the discriminant validity requirement.

**Table 2.** Convergent validity of strategic performance (SP)

Item Strategic Performance (SP)	Loadin g	CR	AVE
<b>Item No 1: Strategic Objective Achieved</b>			
1a	0.839	0.85	0.745
1b	0.887	4	
<b>Item No 2: Company's Performance</b>			
2a	0.895	0.84	0.842
2b	0.893	2	
2c	0.705		
<b>Item No 3: Employee's Retention &amp; Expansion</b>			
3a	0.948	0.94	0.894
3b	0.942	4	

**Table 3.** HTMT Ratio

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10
Communication (X1)										
Courageous (X2)	0.83									
Dynamic (X3)	0.48	0.89								
Empowering (X4)	0.48	0.38	0.89							
Facilitate (X5)	0.56	0.38	0.61	0.89						
Forward Thinking (X6)	0.82	0.51	0.53	0.60	0.90					
Humility (X7)	0.53	0.28	0.48	0.54	0.54	0.89				
Influential (X8)	0.56	0.35	0.45	0.68	0.62	0.44	0.90			
Resourceful (X9)	0.65	0.47	0.65	0.67	0.70	0.56	0.55	0.89		
Strategic Leadership (X10)	0.82	0.60	0.74	0.81	0.85	0.72	0.74	0.85	0.68	

Strategic leadership has positive relationship with strategic performance in construction companies. Based on Table 4, P Values is  $p < 0.05$ , indicating statistical significance (Ramayah, 2014; Hair et al., 2018). Therefore, the hypothesis is supported, and the research framework illustrated in Figure 1 is accepted.

**Table 4.** Hypothesis Testing Direct Effects

	<b>OS</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>P Values</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Strategic Leadership -> Strategic Performance (SP)	0.368	0.366	0.086	4.299	0.000	Supported

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper highlighted nine key elements of strategic leadership attributes including communication, influential, facilitate, empowering, resourceful, humility, courageous, forward thinking and dynamic. SmartPLS 3.0 was used due to the non-normal data distribution. The findings provide valuable insights for top management in construction companies to implement strategies effectively. While this research focuses specifically on the construction industry, the framework is grounded in broad strategic management literature applicable across industries and thus may be adapted for use in other sectors. The framework is based on literature up to mid-2024. Future research could expand this framework by incorporating additional variables or mediators to further enrich understanding of these relationships.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam for providing institutional support and research facilities throughout the duration of this study. Special gratitude is also extended to the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch for providing the opportunity to publish this paper. This study did not receive any grants or external funding.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or publication of this research. The study was carried out independently, and no financial or personal relationships could have influenced the results or interpretations presented in this paper.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed substantially to the development of this study.

**Faza Ihsan Zaidi.:** Research Design, Data Collection, Analysis, Manuscript Writing and Editing.

**Emma Marinie Ahmad Zawawi.:** Research design, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

**Rumaizah Mohd Nordin.:** Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

## AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

## DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using the ChatGPT, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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