

Review Article

Strategy Development, Implementation and Context in Organizational Stability: A Critical Literature Review

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Abstract

Background: Lack of consciousness of the business environment can lead to unforeseen sudden catastrophic outcomes. Pandemics, wars and extreme weather conditions have obviously interrupted firms' operations. Covid-19, Russia-Ukraine War, Tsunamis and cyclones come to mind. Therefore, there is need for conscious effort by scholars, strategists and management to reinforce strategy development and implementation practices in varying contexts with a purpose to spur organizational stability and consequently growth. **Method:** Qualitative research conducted through critical literature review. The researchers sampled the scholarly views on strategy development and implementation mediated by context. **Results:** When sound strategies in firms are developed and implemented from time to time with context sensitivity, there is bound to be a corresponding desired outcome in organizational stability. **Conclusions:** The literature review in this paper has revealed that the concepts of strategy development and strategy implementation are still equivocal to many a firm and scholars with regards to practice, research and policy. Organizational context mindfulness is even hazier. Worse still, scholars and managers are yet to agree on definition of terms, processes and measurements of organizational performance and stability in specific contexts. The researchers observed that they all had different notions about strategy as a concept, leave alone its development and implementation procedures with mindfulness to context. Organizational stability, as a measure of achievement, is a rare dependent variable in research and even scarcer objective in many firms' policies. However, a few scholars have actually come up with tangible measures to the dependent variable in question. Cartels for example are formed by some organizations to ward off competition from undesired quarters thereby allowing the colluding firms to maintain their clientele base and bottom-line. Maintaining board membership and other stakeholders such as employees and suppliers in the long term is another indicator of mindfulness towards firms' sustenance, especially in the eyes of shareholders and customers. Innovating firms also participate in continuous improvement to sustain their strongholds. This is usually done in response to and mindfulness of changes in the environment.

Keywords

Strategy Development, Strategy Implementation, Context, Organizational Stability

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1. Background of the Study

This paper addresses how two key variables in strategy, that is strategy development and implementation, can contribute to organizational stability in given contexts. Serious firms formulate and actualize strategies depending on their sizes and structures and the industries they belong to in order to attain stability. Stability is equated with equilibrium, evenness, equipoise, steadiness, balance and symmetry. Many large firms currently regard stability as a form of performance that leads to growth. A firm's competitive advantage (CA) will always determine the development of its strategy to remain stable in an industry [72]. Due to the fact that researchers have focused their attention mostly on organizational performance, this article focuses on how firms deliberately attempt to attain stability.

Strategy development when consciously done leads firms to desired goals. Goals include outperforming previous profit levels or attaining stability. It is a result of network formation. Formulation of strategies is currently taking a new path. Formulation of strategies has run away from the traditional means of documents, tools, actors and decisions and should not ignore the role of social media because the media permits stakeholders to take part in strategy making process. Media can be used in strategy development for visibility and marketing purposes especially. Stakeholders get the right timely information on urgent matters that need immediate attention [46].

Strategy implementation is the straightforward actualization of a strategic map [10]. Implementation of strategies demands lots of attention. Unfortunately, most strategies fail to be executed with success. Failure rates reach as much as 90% [54]. Implementation involves measuring progress, outcomes and assessing when modifications to policies may become necessary [47]. Planning in strategy making should be result oriented but implementation of the same should be a process [32]. Implementation of strategies purposes to stabilize organizations [54].

To shore up these strategy tenets, Miles and Snow [38] Typologies (Prospectors, Analysers, Defenders and Reactors) and related grounded theories such as Jacob Moreno's Social Network Theory (SNT), Ludwig von Bertalanffy's Systems Theory (ST), Mayo's Human Relations Theory and Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory have also been discussed insofar as organizational stability is concerned. The first key variable here is strategy development, but first of all what is strategy? It is "specifically for and about firms" [66]. Strategy is developed as "real people engage with real issues in ways that are rarely neat and tidy. The development takes place in an arena characterized by possible disagreement, by a shortage of relevant data and information and by a need to agree on desirable options" [70]. All this is deliberately done with a hope that it will lead to organizational stability and performance.

Dalton [13] connects strategy development to organiza-

tional behaviour while O'Brien [41] on his part links strategy development to strategy content before Schendel [51] finally associates strategy development to organizational stability and performance. Bausch *et al* [4] argue that strategy development, context and organizational performance interlink. Literature on strategy development and context and their linkage to organizational performance is still taking shape and strategists are yet to reach a consensus. Strategy implementation concerns actualizing the already rationally developed strategies. During actualization, there are attempts to invite balance in operations.

Another underlying variable discussed is context. Firms operate in given environmental and structural conditions, what strategy scholars and practitioners call context. Disturbance in the environment can interfere with stability [56]. Context is "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables" [35], p.368. This article is therefore to demonstrate that a harmonious relationship among the key variables herein can and should lead to organizational stability.

1.1. Strategy Development

Despite the fact that strategy development as a concept is still hazy, it is still practised in some ways by various organizations. The firms benefit as a result, especially the top management in defender firms in Miles and Snow's typology which ratify and sustain an environment for which "a stable form of organization is appropriate." The firms are happy to ward off competition and that becomes their success. Some strategy scholars such as Tapinos, Dyson and Meadows [59] show balance and stability by suggesting that strategy can be developed through Balanced Scorecard model. Strategy development as the procedure of conversion of strategic intents into strategic results. The transformation takes place through people in an organization. The basic model of strategy development is the procedure of crafting and actualizing organizational objectives which include stakeholders' expectations, internal strategists' motives, influence of managers (especially top management teams at board level [27]). When all this is considered, "constancy, robustness and resilience" will be realized" [28]. Growth in form of stability will have been realized.

In the Command Mode, a strong boss exercises total control in the organization [30]. This aims to assure stability. Dalton [13] observes that strategic development of an organization does take shape under an influential CEO. The Symbolic Mode entails the construction of a compelling vision and corporate mission which give meaning to the firm's operations and provide a sense of identity for workers so that this workforce can be sustained for a long time thereby guaranteeing stability. The third cog in his framework is Rational

Mode which involves processing information at a high level. Finally, Transactive Mode is strategy development that has more to do with learning and interacting as opposed to the implementation of a programmed plan. In strategy development, there is a lot of ongoing dialogue with main players in firms such as workers, governments, customers, suppliers and regulators of the industry. And finally, Generative Mode is a situation where strategy is created depending on how workers behave in an organization. Here, strategy is crafted through entrepreneurship. Strategists advise that firms should adopt more modes the way Ford has done and remained stable for many decades.

1.2. Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is the straightforward actualization of a strategic map [10]. Strategy implementation takes place when a firm's well-articulated strategic plan is operationalized. It is concerned with actualizing the already rationally developed strategies [47]. Strategy implementation involves people and politics will always be a factor where people interact. Development and implementation of strategy in firms is political and can therefore provide obstacles. One cannot therefore delink politics during strategy implementation because it involves people [60]. Hambrick and Cannella [27] advise that implementation should be made easier during strategy conception: it should be done with implementation in mind. Implementation of strategy is essential because if it is not done, the whole planning stage becomes a waste of time. Entities that are conscious of this planning-implementation relationship are expected to outperform those that have beautiful plans collecting dust in the shelves.

Strategy geared towards stability if well implemented will allow a firm to be where it wants to be even if it has to collude with others. Desarbo *et al.* [15] suggests that cartel formation can assure a firm's stability in foreseeable future. For big firms especially, maintaining certain operation and income levels is a success because "the success of organizations today mainly depends on successful implementation of well-conceived strategies" [57]. Chan and Mauborgne [11] believe that "there is need to bring "implementation" forward in the strategic management process" (p.45). This implies that strategy implementation needs more attention than strategy formulation. Strategy implementation is significant because if it is not done, the whole planning stage becomes a waste of time.

But implementation phase is not a walk in the park. Hrebiniak [32, 34] argues that whereas executing strategy is difficult, operationalizing it is even tougher. This is due to the fact that there are contextual obstacles during implementation phase such as management of change, the culture of the organization, the power structure of the firm and the leadership which can easily cause instability. To make implementation easier in a manner that guarantees stability, strategy conception should be done with implementation in mind. A sound

conceived strategy is that which is implementable.

Tadepalli and Avila [58] have also added their voices on strategy formulation/implementations dichotomy when they affirm that "strategies once formulated can be implemented" (p.70). There is also concern about gaps that exist between formulation and implementation of strategies. Top management teams that lack members with strategic thought may not be aware of the dichotomy between planning and implementation duality. Plans may exist but what is implemented may be something else [45]. It therefore becomes difficult to weave a unique Internal Standards Organization for the entity over time. In a nutshell, strategy implementation is probably more important than its formulation.

1.3. Strategy Context

Context in firms has a lot to do with size, industry and structure [12]. Strategic context is critical in an organization [9]. Johns [34] describes context as situational opportunities and constraints that affect an organization. Miller, Droge and Toulouse [38] define it as the hurdles and assets surrounding firms. Pettigrew [44] on his part says that context has a lot to do with structure and environment. Wesley [61] looks at context as instinctive understanding of the changes in an organization that affect its interests. Burgelman [8] sees in context a range of managerial machinery that management of an organization can manoeuvre to modify the interests of stakeholders in a firm. White [63] says that context focuses on adversaries and competition grounds while Johns [34] focuses on job design structures, tasks and motivational issues.

Due to the fact that context manipulation involves people's efforts in a firm, Burgelman [8] argues that the activation of the context calls for grand political mastery by managers of an organization. Top managers should communicate the context effectively and manage structures and compensation arrangement in a manner that gives confidence to the middle management. Each organization's context is therefore unique because people and environments cannot be exactly the same [69]. As a result, "different contexts require diverse approaches". In international strategy context, it is wiser to focus on fundamental differences in markets rather than on similarities due to the fact that markets often do not perform well across borders if stability is to be guaranteed [25].

Guerras-Martina, Madhokb and Montoro-Sánchezc [71] argue that when looking at international organization's context, a firm and its environmental matrix plus the firm's corporate and social responsibility matter. Pettigrew [44] adds political and economic aspects to international contexts as areas that must be looked at for optimal performance. When cordial relationships exist among employees, there is bound to be success as far as social context is concerned. Bausch *et al.* [4] observes that "shared beliefs are important, thus showing how elements of a firm's organizational context shape decisions" (p. 157).

Pauwels and Matthyssens [43] observe that strategic ar-

agement of an organization guides the firm towards stability under varying environmental situations. Eden and Ackermann [18] argue that coherent strategic context offers ways of “managing the future and allowing the organization to be coherently opportunistic” (p.857). Differences in contextual circumstances and strategy development of an organization can give explanation of varying performance outcomes [45]. Strategic positioning can pilot a firm towards a successful path in varying environmental contexts [24]. Lorange *et al.* [37] argue that strategy development is a valuable means to identifying “enduring necessary organizational contextual factors without which superior performance is less likely since it links organizational context with firm performance” (p.158). Johns [34] says that context makes us understand situations and therefore we are able to understand person situation interactions that assure stability. Again, context sensitivity is crucial along strategy development and implementation in organizational stability considerations.

1.4. Organizational Stability

Stability is equated with equilibrium, evenness, equipoise, steadiness, balance and symmetry; it is an ideal state for many companies especially those that have reached maturity stage [28]. They further look at some three concepts of stability: “constancy, robustness and resilience” (p. 219). Stability is linked to organizational performance according to Sridharan and St. John [57]. But how can stability be sustained? Desarbo *et al.* [15] and Escrhuella-Villar [19] believe that cartel formation can allow firms to sustain their operations because “no other firm will change its strategy concerning its membership in the cartel” (p. 143) in a manner that can cause instability through uncertainty.

Retaining board’s leadership that brought about the initial superior performance is associated with stability [12, 42]. Wooldridge and Floyd [66] found out that “retaining boards that experience initial good performance is associated with continued success and better performance leads to board retention (greater stability)” (p. 63). Here, board stability is equated with improved performance. Stability of top management team is a sign of organizational stability. This is because the shareholders and clients will retain faith in the firm. Board stability affects a firm’s performance. Sridharan and St. John [57] also agree on the leadership’s role (albeit at a lower level to the board’s) in defining organizational stability when they say that “recent stream of research has focused on the stability of leadership structure” (p. 470). They say that it is rewarding due to the fact that it allows for “clear delineation of leadership and control responsibilities that over time are well understood by management, Board members, and the investment community” (p. 470). They further argue that powerful leaders are most likely succeeded by powerful leaders and as a result there is continuity of stability and focus. But the problem with this trend is that stability in leadership structure is associated with entrenchment and rigidity because

some companies actually start performing when leadership style changes.

Firms also form cartels in an attempt to not rock the economic boat amongst rivals in a given industry. According to Desarbo *et al.* [15], no other firm in the coalition “will change its strategy concerning its membership in the cartel” (p.143). Thinking about and actualizing cartel to control a market thereby sustaining stability is innovative. It is some sort of strategic alliance with rivals to retain a niche. Baccara and Razin [3] believe that innovation in itself can be a source of stability. They did an empirical study whose results “suggest a link between the stability of innovative firms, their organization, and the market environment. The number of people exposed to the creation and implementation of new ideas in the firm is an important determinant of stability” (p.1099).

However, there is evidence too that shows how organizations can become unstable through innovation. Apart from cartel formation and innovativeness, Baccara and Razin [3] postulate that market conditions do as well affect the stability of organizations. Firms operating in young industries will experience more instability compared to those in mature ones. And talking about maturity, a study has been done to show that there is stability in workforce in companies that are over six years compared to those that are starting operations. In other words, stability of firms can be looked at in terms of employees’ constant faithfulness to an organization over time. Schnabel and Brixy [52] did a study particularly in Eastern Germany whose outcome show that individuals’ employment stability was higher in older firms. Stability can also be negotiated in advance. Farjoun [20] agrees with Porter [16] that stability can be realized when firms choose “well-adapted positions in attractive industries where rivalry and entry are restrained” (p.197). To continue sustaining stability, mergers and acquisitions should be avoided at all cost [14] because “the acquiring firm could have a different reaction to the environment, thereby generating instability” (p.23). Organizational stability, in summary, is and should be a desirable growth outcome.

2. Review of Theories

The following chapter will outline theoretical reviews and how they are related to the study. The theoretical review here involves a discussion of four theories providing foundations to the key variables in this study (that is, strategy development, strategy implementation and context in organizational stability) are Jacob Moreno’s Social Network Theory (which refers to the means and procedures interacting with network structures to lead to some results for individual and a collection of people), Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s Systems Theory (a system seen as a unit made up of related parts in a manner that the assembly is not only a unit, but it is something more than the unit), Mayo’s Human Relations Theory (which talks of activities amongst people to achieve a positive economic goal) and Max Weber’s Bureaucratic Theory which supports strat-

egy formulation and implementation.

Complementing these grounded theoretical foundations are Miles and Snow's [38] typologies – Prospectors, Analysers, Defenders and Reactors – some of which provide a framework that leans towards strategy development, strategy implementation and context in organizational stability. Just like the grounded theories, these typologies are also applicable across various fields of study including Business Administration. Typologies with orientations towards organizational behaviour are necessary tools for strategists analysing firms' stability and performance. The relevance of the mentioned grounded theories and typologies in this study are discussed below.

Jacob Moreno is credited with development of Social Network Theory (SNT) and he lived to see some aspects of his work applied in the realm of academia, business organizations and government entities [6]. For example, strategy development has been supported by the theory. According to Borgatti and Halgin [6] the theory refers to the means and procedures interacting with network structures to lead to some results for individual and a collection of people.

Strategy is people-managed according to the theory when he says that "... the point of beginning is the social atom ...". Strategy researchers can actually measure the ties and nodes in a system [7]. The latter observation implies empirical research in strategy studies and practices. Before a final decision, information has to be sought, questions asked (strategy development and implementation). Borgatta, Boguslaw and Haskell [5] argue for the theory by saying that when "different information is obtained from asking a question and phrasing a "test", he (Moreno) emphasized the distinction between a choice and a judgment" (p.151).

Bertalanffy's Systems Theory (ST) supports strategy development process (especially when looked at politically) and organizational stability variables are supported by the theory. An organisation is like a conglomerate according to Ludwig's Systems Theory. Bello [4] sees the system as a unit made up of related parts in a manner that the assembly is not only a unit, but it is something more than the unit. Realization of strategy objectives is a culmination of a process and the resulting content after human deliberate actions. Systems Theory describes activities in firms with profit motives but with reality of losses when the theory states that 'the different elements of a given complex are in "dynamic equilibrium", in the sense that they are constantly interchanging activities with their environment; they constantly experience "losses" and "gains"'.

Max Weber's Bureaucracy "is the basis for the systematic formation of any organisation and is designed to ensure efficiency and economic effectiveness" [17]. Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory supports development of strategies where formulation and implementation take an executive angle which he calls bureaucratic orders [67]. In public intuitions, strategies must be implemented as directed. He calls this "constitutionalized bureaucratic administration". He believes that bureaucratic strategies can adequately control organiza-

tions if the firms are to survive. Bureaucracies can lead to economic and administrative efficiency and by extension, stability.

Human Relations Theory refers to the "researchers of organizational development who study the behaviour of people in groups, in particular workplace groups and other related concepts in fields such as industrial and organizational psychology" [7]. Mayo's Human Relations Theory has relevance to some of the key variables in the study. A case in point is when he talks of activities amongst people to achieve a positive economic goal [50], that is, strategy formulation (activities amongst people) and organizational performance (positive economic goal) in business studies parlance. There is reference to the seeking of success for people and their organizations and the value of environmental considerations (context) when dealing with strategy in firms.

Typologies are usually theoretically attractive owing to the fact that they move thought past traditional models of causality [23]. Miles and Snow's generic typology was developed based on real case studies of organizations [62]. The strategic archetypes identified were Prospectors, Analysers, Defenders and Reactors. Defender serves a stable domain and deliberately "enacts and maintains an environment for which a stable form of organization is appropriate. Stability is chiefly achieved by Defender's definition of, and solution to, its entrepreneurial problem" [40]. Prospector creates a dynamic environment while Analyzer is a unique combination of Prospector and Defender. Reactor meanwhile is a fire-fighter. But how can one know that a firm is a prospector, analyser, defender or a reactor? [37] say that reading annual reports from organizations is one way of analysing and reaching a conclusion about a firm's true nature. For the purpose of this study, it is apparent that defenders fall within stability of organizations. He says that Defender is more typically a large and established firm that aims to protect its prominence in a product-market.

3. Conceptual and Empirical Studies

According to Figure 1 (The Conceptual Framework) and in line with this study, Organizational Stability depends on three variables: Strategy Development, Strategy Implementation and Context. Strategy Development helps the strength of an organization through the strategies adopted by management to mitigate risk factors, especially when the market conditions are unfavourable. Businesses face different market conditions, as explained in the intervening variables (business and work environments and external factors), which require the deployment of strategies to ensure sustainability in a firm's business operations. It is a strategy utilized by firms, especially those which are reluctant or slow to changes, for it stands for options that could be explored during change strategy. There are three types of stability strategy: "no change", "profit strategy", and "pause or proceed with caution". In the three methods, the primary concern by those

implementing such a strategy is attaining stability in an organization. Therefore, through this strategy, managers and top management team work closely to achieve the strength required.

Another process through which a firm can attain stability is through the implementation of selected strategies. In the above example, one can choose a method of “no-change”, for example, and work towards maintaining the company's culture, structure and even environment to attain stability. However, deciding on the strategy is not enough since one needs to implement the selected strategy. Strategy implementation involves translating the chosen design into an action to achieve a strategic objective. It is a method through which firm managers will develop, amalgamate and utilize organizational control system, structure and culture to allow strategies that will lead to comparative and CA and better performance. Organizational structure allocates exceptional value developing tasks and roles to the employees and states how these tasks and functions can be correlated so as to

maximize efficiency, quality, and customer satisfaction – the pillars of competitive advantage.

Context refers to surrounding circumstances that include industry, location, size and history a firm finds itself in. It also has a direct relationship with organizational stability. For instance, sustaining stakeholders such as employees and board membership and industry can be a recipe for growth in the form of steadiness in a firm’s operations.

Despite the three discussed variables that are significant in achieving stability in an organization, intervening variables affect these independent variables' smooth flow to attaining sustainability. A case example of a factor that can influence strategy development and implementation is the current pandemic. As outlined in the conceptual framework, business environment, work environment and other external factors like pandemics affect stability. Russia-Ukraine war and Covid-19 are such factors which the world is facing and their impacts have already destabilized business operations [56]. Below is the conceptual model.

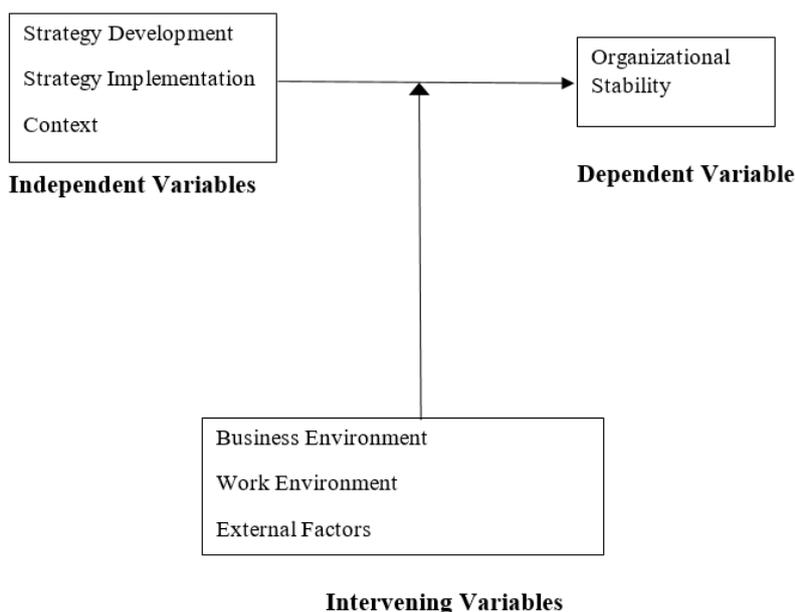


Figure 1. The Conceptual Model.

The table below presents a summary of selected empirical studies and their contexts, methodologies, findings and gaps thereof.

Table 1. Summary of Research Gaps.

STUDY	CONTEXT	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	GAPS
Arasa, Aosa and Machuki [1]. “Participatory Orientation to Strategic Planning Process: Does it Pay?”	Firms in Kenya’s Insurance sector.	Census survey through interviews that led to collection of primary data. A parametric statistical analysis was performed through a six-point Likert-scale. The Pearson’s product correlation	Strategy development participation is embraced well across the organizations in the insurance industry in Kenya.	The study focused on a service industry (within Insurance sector in Kenya). The same study needs to be done in other sec-

STUDY	CONTEXT	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	GAPS
		coefficients(r) and Partial correlations were also utilized.		tors such as manufacturing industries.
Awino and Nkirote [2]. “Bottlenecks in the Execution of Kenya Vision 2030 Strategy: An Empirical Study”	Government Department (Ministry) in charge of delivery of Kenya’s Vision 2030.	Descriptive Case Study design methodology adopted. Data gathered through face to face interview using a standardized tool.	Implementation of Kenya’s Vision 2030 has numerous challenges relating majorly to resources, politics, inflation, recession and corruption.	Vision 2030 is yet to be fully implemented so more research needs to be done in future to validate some of the findings in the article.
Eden and Ackermann [18]. “Evaluating Strategy – Its Role within the Context of Strategic Control”	A publishing firm (Electrical and Electronic Press) in Britain during the 1980s.	Single Case Study involving interviews, analyses of media reportage and observations of activities in the firm.	Strategic evaluation is more powerful if it is related to a review process that involves the managers who have to implement it.	The gap is in the methodology: a single publishing entity cannot be fully representative of all firms worldwide.
Miller, Droge and Toulouse [32]. “Strategic Process and Content as Mediators between Organizational Context and Structure.”	Canadian firms from Montreal and Quebec City areas. The firms were involved in electronics, lumber, construction.	Survey of 77 firms comprising 500 employees or less were randomly selected from a relevant industry inventory. Questionnaires were administered.	Strategic content and process appear to play a central role in relating context to strategy development.	The data were cross-sectional and did not allow inferences. The findings are tentative and there is need for validation by longitudinal analysis.

Some of the empirical studies accessed by this researcher as seen in Table 1 above (Research Gaps) cover periods between 1998 and 2012. The studies were done in and outside Kenya. Contexts, methodologies, findings and gaps analysed reveal what other researchers dealing with key variables in this study have come up with. For instance, the major gaps regarding context were leaning towards size and time. Eden and Ackerman [18] focused on evaluation of strategies of a publishing entity in the 80’s. Media content then was, to a greater degree, analogue. The current digital era may require a revision of strategies and therefore a new study becomes necessary. About size, Sridharan and St. John [57] surveyed largest and most recognized firms in America to understand the effects of organizational stability and leadership structure on firm performance. The gap here is that the many small firms (some existing in small economies) may not fully identify with their findings. This therefore, would call for a new study to cater for the larger group. In a nutshell, this researcher feels that context is such a delicate variable that frequent updates are necessary due to the fast changing digital world.

Methodologies preferred by many researchers were survey-based as opposed to case studies. For instance, Arasa, Aosa and Machuki [1]; Sridharan and St. John [59]; Miller, Droge and Toulouse [32]; Igor [26]; Rogers [49] and Izadikhah, Jackson and Ireland [72] went for survey. Arasa, Aosa and Machuki [1] narrowed their study to Insurance Firms in Kenya when looking at whether participation in strategy development pays as opposed to Miller, Droge and Toulouse [32]

who surveyed many and varied Canadian firms. The gaps here are that when more firms are surveyed, deeper insight is explored to create a bigger picture because it moves closer to a near-census analysis. On the other hand, Case Studies produced narrow but detailed analyses of specific firms. Awino and Nkirote [2], West [62] and Eden and Ackerman [18] opted for case studies. However, the knowledge gap in this empirical study lay in the age of respondents which turned out to be too low (between 19 and 20). This age set comprises mainly college students whose career paths are still shaping up. Employees in organizations are older and therefore these views may not be fully representative of real organizations out there. To conclude, not every study will be gap-free; however, all studies worth their salt will produce useful data for policy, research and practice.

4. Synthesis and Conclusion

Organizational stability depends on three variables: strategy development, strategy implementation and context. Strategy development helps the strength of an organization through the strategies adopted by management in an attempt to forestall risks, especially when the market conditions are unfavourable. Businesses face different market conditions, as explained in the intervening variables, which require the deployment of strategies to ensure sustainability in the business operation. It is a strategy utilized by firms, especially those which are reluctant or slow to changes, for it stands for op-

tions that could be explored during change strategy [48]. There are three types of stability strategy: “no change”, “profit strategy” and “pause or proceed with caution”. In the three methods, the primary concern by those implementing such a strategy is attaining stability in an organization. Therefore, through this strategy, managers and top management team work closely to achieve the strength required.

Another process which a firm can attain stability through is the implementation of selected strategies. In the above example, one can choose a method of “no-change”, for example, and work towards maintaining the company's culture, structure and even environment to attain stability. However, deciding on the strategy is not enough since one needs to implement the selected strategy. Strategy implementation involves translating the chosen design into an action to achieve a strategic objective or goal. It is a method through which firm managers will develop, amalgamate and utilize organizational control system, structure and culture to allow strategies that will lead to comparative and Competitive Advantage and better performance. Organizational structure allocates exceptional value developing tasks and roles to the employees and states how these tasks and functions can be correlated so as to maximize efficiency, quality, and customer satisfaction – the pillars of competitive advantage [39].

Organizational adaptation is equivocal, hence the need for top managers to exercise high expertise to determine the required strategies to boost a firm's performance. Through such strategies, a company can counter external adverse impacts that affect the business environment (context) and work out its normal operations. While organizational ecologists initially downplayed the role of agency in favour of the accountability and reliability of organizational forms, more recent studies suggest that organizations have some capacity to search and learn to reinforce survival odds for self-survival. This comes as a result of scanning the environment to understand it well ahead of competition.

Despite the three phases that are significant in achieving stability in an organization, intervening variables affect these independent variables' smooth flow to attaining sustainability. A case example of a factor that can influence strategy development and implementation is the current pandemic, Covid-19, which the world is facing and its impact felt in business [56]. As outlined in the conceptual framework, business environment, work environment, and other external factors like pandemics affect stability.

The intention of this article is to show that organizational stability is also a desirable destination for certain firms. Strategies can be developed and implemented in a given context with a purpose of sustaining an organization's market, income and attractiveness. Some organizations collude to ward off new entrants, thereby sustaining their clientele. This will lead to predictable income levels in the next sets of financial cycles. Empirical research has also revealed that mature companies attract employees who are not in a hurry to jump ship. This according to the researchers – *vide* Schnabel

and Brixy [52] – is another form of measuring an organizational stability. At a higher level in the organizational context, sustaining board membership and CEO tenure over time is evidence of stability. Smiles and Snow's typologies (Prospector, Analyser, Defender and Reactor) have enriched the strategy development-implementation-context matrix of this study.

Defenders are actually involved in the business of protecting their forte. Studies show that big organizations (this being the context lens) that have reached their acmes do not mind defending their strongholds. The variables used in the study have connections to grounded theories such as Jacob Moreno's Social Network Theory, Ludwig von Bertalanffy's ST, Mayo's HRT and Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory. Strategy development is the procedure of crafting and actualizing organizational objectives which include stakeholders' expectations, internal strategists' motives, influence of managers, objectives, strategic activities and projected relationships among the elements. Implementation is the straightforward actualization of a strategic map; it revolves around the activities of people and resources.

Context deals with the surrounding situations of a firm such as the environment, industry, structures and history. It is a “detailed, nuanced and intuitive understanding of the evolving circumstances that affect (a firm's) interests” [63], p.19. This article has addressed how three key variables in strategy – that is strategy development, implementation and context – can contribute to organizational stability.

Implications of this study are for research and management practice. The variables can be used to do an empirical study of organizations. Researchers can replicate the same study in different historical, geographical and industrial contexts. For example, one can do a research whose topic reads thus: How Strategy Development, Implementation and Context affect Organizational Stability: A Survey of Large Manufacturing Firms in Uganda. Thus, the findings by previous researchers can be validated from the model. Those in management can find proposals in this paper which they can apply in managing their organizations. For example, Izadikhah, Jackson and Ireland's [72] appraisal methods (supervisor vs. self-rating) can be expressly adopted because self-ratings (which are rarely used in performance management) are potentially informative due to self-insight despite being biased. Information regarding stability in the employee side can be analysed.

Grounded theories linked to this study have also been highlighted in a way that allows research designs. Jacob Moreno is credited with development of SNT where strategy researchers can actually measure the ties and nodes in a system [7]. The latter observation implies empirical research in strategy studies and practices.

Ludwig von Bertalanffy's ST will help researchers investigate principles shared amongst complex organizations. Max Weber's bureaucracy supports development of strategies where formulation and implementation take an executive

angle; when strategies must be implemented as directed by a higher authority. Mayo's HRT will help researchers to study activities amongst people to achieve a positive economic progress by seeking success for their organizations and the value of environmental considerations when dealing with strategy in firms.

Stakeholders too can start using organizational stability as performance indicator in itself. In the past, growth performance (as opposed to retrenchment or stability) has always been the dependent variable; rarely does management look at maintenance of status quo as a measure of performance. In actual sense, stability is equated with equilibrium, evenness, equipoise, steadiness, balance and symmetry; it is an ideal state for many companies especially those that have reached maturity stage [28]. Perhaps the small wannabe firms fighting to be noticed may not benefit much from this study as much as the giants would. In summary, the model created from these variables can be used as a tool for policy, research and practice.

Abbreviations

CA	Competitive Advantage
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HRM	Human Relationships Theory
SNT	Social Network Theory
ST	Systems Theory

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Declaration

This is the result of my original work. It has not been submitted to any other institution other than the University of Nairobi for academic credit. I further certify that all citations in the text have been duly acknowledged.

Author Contributions

Owino Meshack: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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