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ABSTRACT

The success of an organization is not random but is largely determined by the decisions made by its strategic leaders. Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs) held a significant presence in various sectors of the Kenyan economy, accounting for a large proportion of private sector enterprises. According to the State Department of Industrialization (2020), SMEs contributed 24% of the country's GDP, represented over 90% of private sector enterprises, and made up 93% of the total labour force. Empirical literature suggests that strategic implementation depends on various factors, including strategic leadership. However, the applicability of these strategies has not been tested or empirically studied in the context of youth-led SMEs in Kisii County. The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of strategic direction on strategy performance in youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was employed in the study, targeting the 106 managers of registered youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County. A census of these 186 managers was used. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire and analysed both descriptively and inferentially. The study found that strategic direction significantly had an effect on strategy performance in youth-led SMEs. Recommendations included enhancing strategic planning and situational analysis capabilities, with policymakers by providing support through training and mentorship programs.

Key words: *Strategic Direction, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Performance*

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INTRODUCTION

The success of an organization is largely shaped by the decisions made by its strategic leaders, rather than occurring by chance (Lynch, 2015). Senior managers play a critical role in overseeing both the internal and external environments, building resources and capabilities, monitoring industry trends and competition, identifying opportunities and threats, and creating a vision that inspires and guides their teams (Lussier & Achua, 2017). These tasks are collectively referred to as strategic leadership, which has become essential in today's rapidly evolving and unpredictable business environment. While some organizations recognize the importance of strategic leadership and invest in developing it, others neglect this area, often resulting in average or subpar performance.

Globally, researchers have developed various frameworks for strategy performance, many of which revolve around the concept of "fit." For an organization's strategy to be effectively implemented, there must be consistency between the strategy and key organizational dimensions such as structure, people, processes, and tasks. Other strategy performance frameworks similarly emphasize the importance of aligning the strategy with these organizational components. These frameworks highlight the integration of strategy performance with other aspects of strategic management.

In the United Kingdom, Andrews, Boyne, and Walker (2017) conducted a study on strategy implementation and public service performance. Their findings indicated that public organizations need to align their strategic orientation with their implementation approach to achieve higher levels of performance. In the Netherlands, Langereis (2015) explored the relationship between strategy and the performance of municipalities. The study identified various strategic orientations used by Dutch municipalities, revealing that economic, social-cultural, and ecological capital play a role in influencing organizational performance.

Studies in Africa have shown that strategy implementation is often regarded as the most critical and challenging aspect of the strategic management process. House and Aditya (2017) observed that successful strategy performance enhances the likelihood of achieving organizational goals, ultimately leading to improved performance for firms in Ghana. The process requires motivating employees and managers at all levels to translate formulated strategies into actionable results, with the primary objective of attaining desired outcomes. As such, attention must be given not only to strategy formulation but also to its execution

The level of strategy performance among organizations in Kenya remains low. Waititu (2016) conducted a study on the relationship between strategy performance and overall performance in commercial banks within Nairobi County. The results revealed that banks that significantly invested in innovation, effective communication systems, inspirational leadership, a functional organizational structure, and a supportive culture were able to achieve high levels of strategy implementation and organizational performance.

Establishing new businesses can have a positive impact on engaging young people in activities that lead to economic growth, including job creation and sustainable means of support for society, according to Ernst & Young (2013). Youth-owned enterprises have been shown to be particularly active in high-growth segments, and young people who are self-employed tend to exhibit more confidence than those who seek employment, creating a fertile ground for further job creation dynamics (Simpson & Christensen, 2009).

Muthaa (2018) conducted research into the impact of strategic direction on enrolment, resources, quality, and production. The cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was used in this report. In addition, questionnaires were used to collect data. A cross-sectional research design was also used. 90 representatives of management, including the principal, two deputy principals, the financial officer, and the registrar, the middle level management, which included the heads of departments and the dean of students, and the lower-level management, which included the heads of sections, took part in the study in the three technical training institutions within Meru County (Meru National polytechnic, Kirua and Nkabune Technical Training Institute). The study discovered that the strategic direction of technical training institutions has a major impact on their success. Moreover, the implementation of government policy had a significant improvement in Technical Training Institutions' performance.

In Dubai, Alosani, Yusoff and Al-Dhaafri (2019) assessed the effect of innovation and strategic direction on organizational performance of Police. The study targeted 150 employees in Dubai police station. The study employed primary data that was obtained by the use of a questionnaire. The study discovered that strategic direction and innovation have significant effect on organizational performance. These results back up the RBV theory that creativity and strategic direction provide useful insight into managers' role in incorporating these elements into their daily activities, resulting in competitive advantage and thus maintaining business performance. The results suggest that creativity and strategic direction are essential drivers of organizational success because they can prompt the company to take creative and constructive measures.

In the Petroleum industry in Kenya, Abdikarim (2018) argues that strategic controls, corporate communication, strategic direction, strategic forecasting and human capital development as components of strategic leadership significantly influence organizational change. As such, strategic leaders should provide elaborate strategic planning practice which is geared towards organizational change, the human resources competence should be continuously appraised with the view of ensuring and promoting organizational change due to heterogeneous skills alignment. In addition, Otieno and Lewa (2020) observed that there existed a positive association between strategic direction, strategic ethical practices, strategic control and strategic human capital and performance of organizations in maritime sector within Kenya. Therefore, strategic direction of the organization should be well articulated through ensuring that the development of organization's mission, strategic goals, vision and objectives are well implemented.

Khaleji (2019), conducted a study whose purpose was to establish the effect strategy performance and strategic leadership on the growth of real estate industry in Kisumu County. The study was based on the following objectives: to establish the effect of strategy performance on the growth of real estate industry, to establish the effect of strategic leadership on the growth of real estate industry and to establish the effect of strategic implementation and strategic leadership and the growth of real estate industry. Descriptive survey design was used to obtain a complete and an accurate description of statistics. The target population was 50 respondents out of which 48 were drawn. The data collection instruments were questionnaire. The study found out that strategic leadership significantly affected the growth in the real estate industry with a significance level of 0.007.

Statement of the Problem

According to Wanjohi (2016), Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs) have a significant presence in various sectors of the Kenyan economy, accounting for a large proportion of private sector enterprises. The State Department of Industrialization (2020) reports that SMEs contribute 24% of the country's GDP, over 90% of private sector enterprises, and 93% of the total labor force. In Kisii County, the SMEs account for up to 45% of the businesses (State Department of Industrialization, 2020). As a result, the development of this sector is essential for achieving national development goals, including providing job and income opportunities for marginalized segments of the population, particularly youth who face high levels of unemployment. To support the growth of SMEs, both the central and county governments in Kenya have implemented various policy interventions.

However, despite these efforts, the development of the MSE sector in Kenya is still hampered by several challenges and emerging issues. These challenges include inadequate skills, limited access to affordable finance and markets, outdated technology, regulatory gaps, and poor strategy performance, as noted by Linguli and Namusonge (2015). Furthermore, there are obstacles to accessing both domestic and export markets due to high production costs, low product quality, inadequate market information, and unfair competition from illicit trade. Despite the provisions in the SMEs Act of 2012, the support institutions involved in promoting and developing SMEs lack effective coordination, which weakens the synergies needed to accelerate the sector's growth (Nyaga, 2010). In Kisii county, youth-led SMEs face additional challenges, as an inter-regional survey by the International Trade Centre (2019) shows that their competitive acumen is the lowest in the country. This points to issues of strategy performance.

Andrews, Boyne & Walker (2011) conducted a study in the United Kingdom on the relationship between strategy performance and public service performance. Langereis (2015) examined the link between strategy and performance of municipalities in the Netherlands, and the research revealed the presence of strategic orientations used by these municipalities. Oyinloye (2014) researched the relationship between strategic management and organizational performance in the Nigerian banking industry and found that strategic management had a positive impact on performance. Winfred (2016) investigated the impact of strategic decision making and strategy performance on commercial bank performance in Zimbabwe and found that they had a positive and significant impact. Omoro (2016) conducted a case study on the Geothermal Development Company in Kenya and found that strategic leadership played a crucial role in effective strategy performance. Abass *et al*. (2017) studied the relationship between strategy performance and performance in county governments in Kenya using the case of Wajir county government and found that organizational structure, leadership styles, and strategic decision making were significantly associated with organizational performance.

Empirical literature review suggest that strategic implantation is dependent on many factors including strategic direction. But, the applicability of these strategy has not been tested and empirically studied in case youth-led SMEs in Kisii county. Numerous studies on effect of strategic direction on strategic implementation have been conducted in other sectors with little attention being given to youth-led SMEs in Kisii county. Based on the research gap, the aim of this study was to analyze the effect of strategic direction on strategy performance in youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County, Kenya.

Study objective

To determine the effect of strategic direction on strategy performance in youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County, Kenya.

Research Question

What is the effect strategic direction on strategy performance in youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review;

Open Systems Theory

The open system theory, originally proposed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1956, is a modern theory of organization that emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships between an organization and its environment. According to Haque & Rehman (2014), the theory views an organization as an adaptive system that is composed of interconnected and mutually dependent subsystems. There are three approaches to the theory: systems approach, contingency approach, and socio-technical approach.

The open system approach posits that organizations must continually interact with their environment, taking in inputs and disposing of outputs, in order to survive and succeed. The organization and its environment are seen as being in a dynamic equilibrium, where changes must be made in response to changes in the environment. The external environment of an organization includes social, political, technological, and economic factors, and it is essential for organizations to adapt to these changes to remain viable. Hrebiniak and Joyce (2006) note that the literature on organizational adaptation has focused on creating strategies for efficient adaptation and the reasons why some firms perform better than others.

Adaptation also involves the search for information, as organizations must actively seek out information to understand their own behavior and that of others, and to identify potential threats and opportunities. A firm that cannot search for and use information effectively is likely to fail in responding to environmental changes and implementing strategies.

According to Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson (2007), strategic leadership refers to a leader's capacity to anticipate, visualize, and maintain flexibility, and to empower others to effect strategic change when necessary. Huey (1994), as cited in Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson (2007), suggests that strategic leadership is a multifaceted role that involves managing through others and helping organizations to navigate the increasingly rapid changes of today's globalized business environment. To be effective, strategic leadership requires the ability to understand and integrate both the internal and external factors that affect the organization, as well as to manage and process complex information.

Theory of Strategic Balancing

The concept of strategic balancing is rooted in the idea that an organization's strategy is influenced by the behavior of its actors, including the values of its leaders. Casley and Krishna (2017) suggest that alliances can fluctuate between cooperation and competition, resulting in various configurations. The strategic balancing approach consists of three models: relational, symbiotic, and deployment. The relational and deployment models both involve competition, and the company can alternate between the two strategies to maintain balance in the alliance. Corporate intelligence professionals should integrate competitive intelligence with marketing intelligence to monitor developments in the business environment. The focus of attention should be on potential risks and counterintelligence that protects blind spots, and intelligence should be interpreted from a theory building and problem-solving perspective. Competitive intelligence programs are typically located within marketing, planning, or research and development functions. The approach by Hammer and Champy (2013) is useful for identifying strategic issues, and actionable intelligence can be achieved with the involvement of senior management.

Kaplan and Norton (2015), note that experience indicates that human capital is greatly enhanced when processes align employees and their development to the strategy. The alignment of both, the personal goals of employees and the goals of the strategy is of great significance for successful strategy performance. By linking employee focused processes to strategy, every employee’s goals, objectives, compensation and development plans become aligned and make strategy everyone’s job (Kaplan & Norton, 2005).

Strategic Leadership Theory

The Strategic Leadership Theory originated from Hambrick and Mason's Upper Echelons Theory, which aimed to investigate how top managers influence strategic decision-making. This theory is used to examine how the top leadership influences strategic decisions in commercial banks for effective implementation of strategy. Over the past 30 years, research has been conducted on different leadership styles, with a focus on transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership. More recent studies have explored styles such as servant, authentic, and responsible leadership, providing insights into how leadership styles affect performance outcomes. However, most of this research has been on lower level managers and their influence on team performance rather than the overall organizational performance in meeting stakeholder expectations. There is a lack of research on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. Newer leadership theories highlight the interpersonal processes and relationships between the leader and the follower, such as charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership.

Hitt *et al*. (2013) defines transformational leadership as a type of strategic leadership that is highly effective. This leadership style focuses on motivating followers to exceed expectations, continuously improving their abilities, and prioritizing the interests of the organization over their own. Transformational leaders develop and communicate a vision, and use strategies to achieve this vision while encouraging their followers to aim for greater achievements. On the other hand, Rowe (2021) describes managerial leadership as more focused on stability, order, and the preservation of the status quo. These leaders tend to prioritize short-term goals and have a passive attitude towards goals as they arise out of necessity rather than desires or dreams. They are deeply embedded in the history and culture of the organization and maintain the current state of affairs.

Managerial leadership is akin to transactional leadership and does not create wealth, but instead maintains the wealth that has already been created. In contrast, visionary leaders shape ideas and influence the direction of the organization. They are proactive in seeking out risky ventures and are future-oriented. Visionary leaders maintain control over the organization through socialization and the sharing of norms, values, and beliefs. They make decisions based on their values rather than their dependence on the organization for their sense of identity.

Rowe (2021) suggests that organizational control is maintained through a shared set of norms, values, and beliefs, which is similar to the inspirational aspect of transformational leadership. However, organizations led solely by visionary leadership may be at risk of failure in the short term, and Rowe proposes a combination of managerial and visionary leadership, with the visionary leader having more influence.

Kotter (2021) also suggests that having an individual who can exercise both managerial and visionary leadership is ideal. This approach is known as strategic leadership, which combines both mindsets and emphasizes the importance of both short-term financial stability and long-term viability. However, Priem *et al*. (1999) criticize the use of demographic indicators as proxies for strategic leadership behaviors in Strategic Leadership Theory, as these sacrifices construct validity for measurement reliability. Boal and Hooijberg (2001) even question whether Strategic Leadership Theory should be considered a theory of strategic leadership without an alternative theoretically derived measure.

Upper Echelon Theory

The Upper Echelon Theory was introduced by Hambrick and Mason in 1984, which suggests that the characteristics of dominant actors within an organization, particularly the top management team, are critical in determining strategic choices and business performance. This theory contends that an organization's strategic choices and performance are partly predicted by the background characteristics of its powerful actors. It argues that individual psychological factors and experiences influence strategic choices, which then impact performance. The discretion enjoyed by the top management team will moderate the relationship between strategic choices and outcomes.

Despite criticism regarding the use of demographic indicators as a proxy for strategic leadership behaviors, there is still no alternative measure for strategic leadership. Furthermore, most studies on upper echelons theory have been conducted in Western, developed economies, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of strategic leadership behaviors in other parts of the world. While the upper echelons perspective has provided good theoretical and empirical arguments for the central role of strategic leadership, our knowledge of the subject is still lacking in significant ways

Conceptual Framework

Strategic Direction:
- Mission Statement
- Vision Communication
- Objectives

Independent Variable

Strategy Performance:
- Working Towards Targets
- Meeting challenges
- Leadership direction

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Ader, Mellenbergh, and Hang (2018) define research design as a logical and meaningful method of observing the world. For this study, a descriptive survey design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods was utilized. Descriptive survey design, as defined by Kothari (2004), involves describing, recording, analyzing, and reporting existing conditions. Tavakoli (2012) explains that descriptive survey design investigates individuals, groups, institutions, methods, and materials in order to describe, categorize, analyze, and interpret entities and events across various fields of inquiry.

Target Population: According to Dawson (2019), a population is a group of people who bear the characteristics that can assist a researcher in making conclusion. Therefore, the study's target population comprised employees from two hospitals in Kiambu County. Specifically, the target population includes 113 employees from Gatundu level five hospital, and 137 employees from Thika level five hospital, making a total of 250 employees (Kiambu County Government, Ministry of Health, 2024).

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample refers to a portion of the population that is considered sufficient to make generalizations about the population. Sampling is a method used to choose a sample from the entire population that accurately represents the entire population. Sampling methods are necessary to prevent bias during the selection process, and effective sampling can reduce the cost of obtaining samples (Creswell, 2013). Sampling involves the identification of a few units from the whole population that have common characteristics, and the results of the study are then generalized to the entire population. The sampling frame is the total number of items from which a representative sample is drawn for the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). The sampling design is a research plan that outlines how cases was selected for observation or as respondents. For this study, purposive sampling was used to select all the 186 registered youth-led SMEs in Kisii County.

Research Instrument: For this study, primary data was gathered using a survey questionnaire, which is deemed to be an appropriate tool for quick and efficient data collection. Additionally, the use of a survey questionnaire enabled descriptive, correlation, and inferential statistical analysis of the collected data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2017). The questionnaire was designed with a Likert scale to assess the level of agreement of respondents with specific variables in the study. Closed-ended questions were also included in the questionnaire to ensure that the respondents' opinions are captured comprehensively, thereby enabling wider generalization of the findings.

Pilot Test: To ensure that the questionnaire aligns with the research questions, a pilot test was conducted to refine the questions before it is administered to the selected sample. The pilot test will help identify any weaknesses in the questionnaire design and instrumentation and provide proxy data for the selection of a probability sample. According to Creswell (2013), a pilot study in academic research can be done using between 10% and 20% of the sample size. Therefore, 18 respondents (which is 10% of the sample size) were selected for the pilot test.

Data Analysis: The data collected underwent editing, coding, tabulation, and analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24. Descriptive measures such as percentages and weighted means were used to analyze the quantitative data. In order to address the research questions, inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation, and regression analyses were conducted. The study tested regression model, which includes specific variables in order to identify their significance and contribution to the model;

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$...

Where;

Y = Strategy performance

X_1 = Strategic Direction

β_0 is the coefficient intercept

β_1, the parameter predicted.

ε being the random error term

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

A total of 175 questionnaires were distributed to the sampled respondents using research assistants. After they were filled, the researcher collected them for subsequent analysis. A total of 105 of the 175 questionnaires that were sent out to the respondents were filled out in their whole and given back. The overall response rate was 60%, as a result of this. According to Kothari (2014), who indicated that a response rate of 50% and above is good for a social sciences study. This implies that the response rate for the study was deemed good.

Descriptive Statistics of the Variable in the Study;

Descriptive Statistics on Strategic Direction

The first independent variable of the study was strategic direction. The descriptive statistics from the responses based on 105 respondents are shown table 1. The results show the means and standard deviations about questions on strategic direction.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Strategic Direction

Statement	N	Mean	Std. D.
My enterprise has a strong mission statement that is clear	105	4.0190	.89851
The vision of the enterprise is always communicated to the employees	105	3.5048	.86740
The enterprise ensures that its employees know the objectives	105	3.6190	.72564
The mission and vision are clearly outlined to the employees on employment	105	3.5048	.97195
The mission and vision were developed collectively	105	2.5143	1.04802
The mission and vision of the enterprise are always reviewed	105	3.8781	.98991
Valid N (listwise)	**105**		

According to the descriptive statistics, the respondents agreed that their enterprise has a strong mission statement that was clear (N=105, Mean=4.0190, Standard Deviation=0.89851). In addition, the findings demonstrated that the respondents agreed that the vision of the enterprise was always communicated to the employees (N=105, Mean=3.5048, Standard Deviation=0.86740). It was further demonstrated that the respondents agreed that the enterprises ensure that their employees knew the objectives (N=105, Mean=3.6190, Standard Deviation=0.72564). A low standard deviation is indicative of the respondents' provision of responses that are comparable to one another in relation to the statement. The descriptive statistic results also indicate that the respondents agreed that the mission and vision are clearly outlined to the employees on employment (N=105, Mean=3.5048, Standard Deviation=0.97195). The descriptive findings also demonstrated that the mission and vision were developed collectively (N = 105, Mean = 2.5143, Standard Deviation = 1.04802).

Inferential statistics

Correlation Analysis

In order to determine the nature of the relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables, a correlation analysis was carried out. The Pearson correlation coefficients indicate the strength and direction of these relationships, while the significance levels assess their statistical validity. The independent variables of the study were strategic direction (X_1), strategic communication (X_2), strategic decision making (X_3), and situational analysis (X_4). The dependent variable was strategy performance (Y). In Table 2 below, the results of the correlation are presented.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

		Y	X_1
Y	Pearson Correlation	1	
	N	105	
X_1	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	105	105

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data reveals that all four independent variables exhibit significant positive correlations with strategy performance (Y). Specifically, strategic direction shows a moderate positive correlation with strategy performance (R = 0.521, p = 0.005). This suggests that a well-defined strategic direction is associated with better strategy performance.

Analysis of linear regression;

Strategic direction on strategic performance

This tested the direct influence strategic direction on performance. The results are shown in table 3. Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the independent or predictor variables and a dependent variable.

Table 3: Strategic direction on strategic performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	.840[a]	.7056	.7011	.31953	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), **X_1,**

b. Dependent Variable: Y

From the results in table 3, analysis of variance statistics was conducted to determine the differences in the means of the dependent and independent variables to show whether a relationship exists between the two. The P-value of 0.005 implies that strategic direction e has a significant relationship with strategic performance, which is significant at 5 % level of significance.

Table 4: ANOVA TEST

ANOVA for goodness of fit

ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.695	1	41.695	179.7	.000b
	Residual	23.135	100	0.232		
	Total	64.83	101			

a Dependent Variable: strategic performance
b Predictors: (Constant), strategic direction

According to the model summary, the correlation coefficient (R) square of 0.7056 indicates a strong positive relationship between the observed and predicted values of strategy performance, suggesting that the model captures a substantial amount of the variance in strategy performance. The R Square value of 0.7056 shows that 70.56% of the variance in strategy performance is explained by the model, reflecting its strong explanatory power. The significance level of 0.000 for the F Change test underscores that the model is statistically significant, affirming that the independent variables meaningfully contribute to explaining the variance in strategy performance. The regression equation would be as below;

$y = -0.251 + 0.192X_1$

Where;

Y is Performance

X_1 is strategic direction

Conclusions and Recommendations

The first objective was to establish the influence of strategic direction on strategy performance in youth-led Small and Micro Enterprises in Kisii County. The fact that strategic direction and strategic direction exhibited a positive and significantly positive Pearson correlation is evidence that the two variables tend to advance in the same direction. It was revealed that the regression coefficient for strategic direction was significant and favorable. The significance of the regression coefficient was determined to be significant at the 5% level implying that when all other parameters remain the same, a change in strategic direction will cause a significant shift in strategy performance.

This finding underscores the importance of having a well-defined strategic direction, as it directly impacts the success of the business. From a practical perspective, these results emphasize the need for youth-led SMEs to prioritize setting clear and focused strategic directions. Entrepreneurial training and coaching programs should aim to help these businesses sharpen their strategic vision to improve outcomes. Moreover, policymakers should recognize the role of strategic direction in business success and design initiatives that support SMEs in crafting robust strategic plans.

Entrepreneurs should invest time in defining their business goals and outlining actionable steps to achieve them. To support this, training and coaching programs should be implemented to help these businesses refine their strategic vision and improve their planning processes. Policymakers should also take an active role in fostering business success by creating initiatives that provide guidance and resources for SMEs to develop strong strategic plans. These initiatives could include workshops, mentorship programs, and access to strategic planning tools, ensuring that youth-led SMEs have the necessary support to drive their success.

Areas for further studies

Based on the methodological limitations of the present study which focused on four strategic leadership elements and on youth-owned SMEs, the study recommends that future studies be conducted to investigate more strategic elements. Further research could explore the specific elements of strategic direction that most significantly influence strategy performance in youth-led SMEs.

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