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The Effect of Strategic Management on Crisis Management in the Oil and Gas Sector in Libya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of strategic management on crisis management within Libya's Oil and Gas sector. Using a cross-sectional survey method, a quantitative approach to gather data from 354 employees at Akakus Oil Operations in Libya. The survey targeted individuals in strategic and managerial roles, and employees in the security and safety, planning, follow-up and control, and engineering departments. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used for data analysis. The findings indicate a significant and positive relationship between strategic management and effective crisis management in the Oil and Gas sector in Libya. The study highlights the crucial role of strategic management in navigating and overcoming crises. Practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The Libyan environment is marked by recurrent crises across various levels, making crisis management a critical concern for private and public institutions. The persistence, growth, and recurrence of crises pose existential threats to organizations, necessitating the development of strategies to prevent and mitigate crises effectively (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2019). The situation in Libya stands out as one of the most complex regional challenges, affecting not only the Arab and African regions but also having broader global implications (Azouza & Masaud, 2023a; Belkhir, & Masaud, 2024). The structural changes in neighboring countries like Egypt and Tunisia have further exacerbated the instability in the region (Ghummiem & Alawi, 2022).

As a direct consequence of the ongoing crisis, the situation has significantly impacted oil and gas industry, leading to a substantial decline in production (Alsamawi *et al.*, 2019; Belkhir, & Masaud, 2024; Alsamawi *et al.*, 2019). This impact can be observed by comparing Libya's economic conditions before and after the onset of the current crisis (Belkhir, & Masaud, 2024). Libya was once ranked as the tenth-best economy globally, with oil production contributing a significant share of the Libyan economy (Araaf, 2017; Belkhir, & Masaud, 2024). Libya's crude oil production previously averaged between 1.5 and 1.8 million barrels per day, a metric indicative of particularly high-quality oil (Favour, 2020). However, during the current crisis, oil production has decreased dramatically, at times dropping to between 200,000 and 500,000 barrels per day (Bebas, 2023). This stark reduction clearly illustrates the crisis's effect on Libya's oil production and export, which, in turn, impacts the country's primary economic revenue source.

Given these circumstances, Libyan oil companies must

adopt crisis management strategies, which involve the science and art of mitigating risks and uncertainty to enable companies to achieve their objectives (Fink, 1986). Crisis management involves designing plans, procedures, and mechanisms to detect, prevent, contain, recover, and learn from crises. This requires adopting appropriate management practices considering readiness, knowledge, awareness, available resources, digitalization, and prevalent management styles (Hazaa *et al.*, 2021, Al-refaei *et al.*, 2024; Nasser *et al.*, 2024a; Ateeq *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, the leadership of Libyan oil companies must take on their responsibilities by consolidating crisis management strategies and adopting a management style that motivates employees to fulfill their duties in addressing the crisis, thereby enabling the companies to overcome it (Buhagiar & Anand, 2023).

Strategic management is considered one of the most critical factors influencing crisis management, as it relies on the ability of managers to translate high-level strategic tasks and objectives into practical operational strategies capable of addressing crises (Hazaa *et al.*, 2021). It involves establishing a clear vision and mission, which not only shapes the organizational culture but also drives individuals during the crisis to work collectively toward common objectives (Alsamawi *et al.*, 2019; Karam & Tasmin, 2020; Alshuhumi *et al.*, 2024). Strategic management offers a unique approach to anticipating future events by leveraging available resources through a precise decision-making system grounded in the realities of the situation, and using green technology as sustainable solutions to preserve the environment (Ateeq *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, it focuses on analyzing organizational problems and the opportunities and threats they may face in the long term (Thabit, 2021). Therefore, there is a necessity for inventive methods

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in anticipating and managing crises. Additionally, there is an immediate want for strategic management, as it enables organizations to use a systematic approach in determining their future possibilities and objectives. Furthermore, it actively contributes to the anticipation, preparation, and implementation of all essential actions required to address and deal with situations. Furthermore, strategic management seeks to improve organizational performance by recognizing fundamental problems, effectively predicting obstacles during crises, and adjusting to changes in the surrounding environment. This study aims to investigate the influence of strategic management on crisis management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basyuni (2023) discovered a substantial and immediate influence of strategic management on crisis management. Efficient crisis management depends on fundamental skills and the collective knowledge and abilities of the crisis management team. He emphasized that strategic leadership plays a vital role in an institution's capacity to identify early indicators of crises, whether they arise internally as difficulties or outside as threats. In their study, Hasan and Ismail (2022) found that strategic management, in all its aspects, has a beneficial influence on the efficacy of crisis management in the Iraqi Ministry of Health. The strategic thinking of administrative leaders in the ministry was found to be inadequate in influencing the phases of crisis management and enhancing the speed of decision-making in response to crises. Nevertheless, there is a need to employ changes in resources to further augment crisis management capabilities. According to Thabit is (2021) research, strategic management plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficacy of crisis management in the towns of Northern Gaza. The Northern Gaza municipalities had a high level of proficiency in managing crises and disasters, as evidenced by 75.9% of the effectiveness in crisis and disaster management being attributed to their strategic management capabilities.

Azouza and Masaud (2023) examined the effect of strategic planning on quality control in the Iron and Steel Industry in Libya, and found that strategic planning has a positive effect on quality control in the Iron and Steel Industry in Libya. John-Eke and Eke (2020) investigated how strategic planning influences crisis management within organizations. Their findings indicated that strategic planning plays a key role in improving crisis management. Additionally, the choice of crisis management style during a catastrophic event can determine whether the impact will be minimal or severe. The study also concluded that organizations that adopt a strategic approach to crisis management are more likely to handle crises proactively. Al-refaei *et al.* (2024) and Ibrahim *et al.* (2024) emphasized that organizations can improve their sustainable innovation performance through the leadership approach. Wang and Belardo (2015) illustrated through case analysis that aligning knowledge-based strategies with crisis management

strategies can reduce a firm's vulnerability to business crises. They utilized Mitroff's crisis management model to emphasize the key aspects of crisis management and identify the relevant knowledge for each stage of the model. Based on the previous discussion:

Hypothesis 1

The current study summed that; strategic management has a positive effect on crisis management in the oil and gas industry in Libya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach and utilized a cross-sectional method for data collection and analysis. A deliberate sample of personnel from Akakus Oil Operations in Libya was chosen with the specific intention of examining the influence of strategic management on crisis management at Akakus Oil Operations in Libya. A questionnaire was employed to gather strategic management and crisis management data. The questionnaires have been distributed to individuals holding leadership and managerial roles, as well as those employed in the departments of security and safety, planning, follow-up and control, and engineering. The selection of this sample was predicated on the assumption that employees occupying these roles have an extensive understanding of the research variables within the organization, hence making a valuable contribution towards accomplishing the study's aims. 500 questionnaires were issued to the intended sample, and 73% of them were returned. A total of 354 valid responses were collected and used for analysis. The high response rate improves the findings' dependability and helps to accomplish the intended research goals. The questionnaire also contained demographic queries regarding age, status, educational background, years of work experience, and employment sector type.

Measure

Strategic Management

This study measured strategic management was measured using 19 items. This scale was adapted from previous studies by Basyuni (2023), Sadiq (2023), and Yousef (2024). The items were distributed across four dimensions: 5 items for strategic thinking, 4 items for strategic planning, 5 items for strategic implementation, and 5 items for strategic control. Nevertheless, the study variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, which required participants to indicate their level of agreement on a scale from one to five, with one indicating "strongly disagree" and five indicating "strongly agree."

Crisis Management

Crisis management was measured by nine items adapted from Karaji and Aburghif (2019), and Al-Mulla and Al-Saadoun (2022). The measurement of crisis management in this study includes information regarding how the company's management ensures the provision of precise

reports and information regarding crises by establishing a dedicated task force to deliver comprehensive historical and up-to-date information. The management is actively focused on identifying tangible and personnel measures to address issues. In addition, the management provides awareness seminars for its staff and trains them in crisis management. Nevertheless, the crisis management was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, which required participants to indicate their level of agreement on a scale from one to five, with one indicating “strongly disagree” and five indicating “strongly agree.”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Profile Description

The sample included employees from the top management, Security and Safety Management, Planning, Follow-up, Control, and Engineering Management departments at Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. The results revealed that the number of males was 314, (88.7%), while the females were 40(11.3%) of the total study sample. Regarding the age of the respondents, 19 (5.4%) were under 25 years. Employees aged 25-34 were 94 (26.6%), while those aged 35-44 numbered 132, (37.3%). Finally, employees over the age of 44 totaled 109(30.7%) of the sample. Results reveal that the majority of employees hold a bachelor’s degree 179(50.0%) of the total study sample. Followed by a diploma of 120 (34.3%). Employees with a postgraduate degree were 40 (11.4%) Finally, employees with a high school 15(4.3%) of the total study sample.

Regarding the distribution of the study sample by job title, the number of executives or management members was 2 (0.6%). Consultants 32 (9.0%). Managers of departments 15, (4.3%). Department heads 78 (22.0%). Supervisory roles 135 (38.1%). Finally, employees in other positions 92 (26.0%) of the total study sample.

Assessment of Measurement Model

The measurement model, comprising strategic management, and crisis management, generated satisfactory results. The model fit indices showed indicated very good fit: $\chi^2 = 581.851$, $DF = 345$, $CMIN/DF = 1.687$ ($p < 0.000$), $CFI = 0.965$, $TLI = 0.961$, and $RMSEA = 0.044$. These findings demonstrate excellent fit, as presented in Table (1) of the model fit assessment. Moreover, reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity results summarized in Table (1) indicated that all factor loading exceeded the cut-off of 0.50, it was between 0.63 and 0.87 for all the items, composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.894 for strategic management to 0.949 for crisis management, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Al-refaei *et al.*, 2019; Ateeq *et al.*, 2024). The average variance extracted (AVE) surpassed 0.50, as suggested by prior research (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2013; Nasser *et al.*, 2024b). Average shared variance (ASV) was higher than the maximum shared variance (MSV) thresholds (Al_Refaei *et al.*, 2021; Zumrah *et al.*, 2021), confirming the model’s reliability and validity according to Table (1).

Table 1: Overall reliability and validity of all constructs

Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)
Strategic Management	.894	.678	.362	.897
Crisis Management	.949	.673	.462	.951

The second approach employed for the assessment of discriminant validity was the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), as recommended by previous studies (Henseler *et al.* 2015; Al-refaei *et al.*, 2024; Alshuhumi *et al.*, 2024). While the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (FLC) is traditionally regarded as an effective method for assessing discriminant validity (DV), it sometimes fails to detect a

lack of DV in certain research contexts (Al-refaei *et al.*, 2023). Henseler *et al.* (2015) proposed HTMT as a new method to address this issue, suggesting that the HTMT value for constructs should be below 0.85. In the current study, the HTMT values for all constructs were indeed below the recommended threshold of 0.85, establishing DV for all constructs as indicated in Panel B of Table 2.

Table 2: FLC and HTMT

Variables	Panel A: FLC		Panel B: HTMT	
	SM	CM	SM	CM
Strategic Management (SM)	0.823		-	
Crisis Management (CM)	0.602***	0.821	0.579	-

After verifying the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, the structural model was employed to assess the impact of strategic management on crisis management at Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. The hypothesized structural model indicated a positive and significant effect of strategic management on crisis management. The path coefficients showed $\beta = 0.760$, $t =$

9.281, and $P = 0.000$, the findings show that the t-statistics is higher than (1.96), and the p-value is 0.05, indicating the direct hypotheses are significantly supporting (Al-Refaei *et al.*, 2024b; Al-Refaei, Zumrah, & Al-Shuhumi, 2019) the hypothesis regarding the direct effects of strategic management on crisis management at Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. As shown in the table 3.

Table 3: Standardized regression estimation of direct effects

Path	Standardized	t-Value	P-Value	Result
SM → CM	0.760	9.281	0.000	Supported

Discussion

The results of the hypothesis of this study, which posited a direct impact of strategic management, with its dimensions (strategic thinking, strategic planning, strategic implementation, and strategic control), on crisis management in Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. The statistical test results for this direct hypothesis revealed a positive relationship between strategic management and crisis management in Akakus Oil Operations Company. This suggests that the more Akakus Oil Operations Company focuses on strategic management and develops both long-term and short-term strategic plans, the better its ability to confront crises, manage crises effectively and efficiently, and avoid the negative consequences of crises, thereby ensuring the continuation of its operations during crises and achieving positive outcomes.

This study interprets this result through Akakus Company's emphasis on the strategic management process for crisis management and dealing with crises through strategic thinking, long-term strategic planning based on nearly confirmed information by studying internal and external conditions and then building short-term and long-term strategic plans to confront the crises faced by the company. However, setting strategic plans alone is not sufficient unless these strategic plans are implemented across all departments and sections of the company, along with monitoring the execution of these plans and ensuring that all procedures and operations at all administrative levels and units are carried out according to the strategic plan.

The study reveals that Akakus Company's focus on strategic management and the development of scientifically rigorous and advanced strategic plans to deal with crises makes it more prepared and grants it a greater capacity to handle difficult conditions. Consequently, investing in strategic management and building effective plans can enhance the ability to respond to crises, manage them efficiently, and avoid their negative impacts. Instead of viewing crises as challenges, strategic management can assist Akakus Oil Operations Company in seizing opportunities during crises and leveraging them optimally to achieve positive results, ensuring the company's continuity and increasing its competitiveness, even while other companies face challenges. Moreover, through strategic management, Akakus Oil Operations Company can better organize its efforts and improve the speed of well-considered decision-making during crises, thereby reducing the negative impact of crises and helping the company restore stability and growth more quickly.

The finding of this study aligns with previous research, such as Youssef's (2024) study, which concluded that strategic management plays an important and positive role in enhancing the effectiveness of strategic

factors in the internal and external environments of business organizations during crises. This is achieved by strengthening strengths and addressing weaknesses in these factors, enabling organizations to capitalize on developmental opportunities and avoid various threats and risks during crises. Similarly, Al-Hababi's (2024) study revealed a positive impact of strategic control on improving crisis management efficiency in Jordanian industrial companies. In addition, performance standards, actual performance measurement, strategic performance evaluation, and corrective actions positively influence improving crisis management efficiency in these companies. The findings of this study also align with the results of the study by Hassan, Al-Lami, and Ismail (2022), which found that strategic leadership in all its dimensions affects the effectiveness of crisis management. The findings of this study are also consistent with Thabet's (2021) study, which found a significant and positive role for strategic management in managing crises and disasters in the municipalities of northern Gaza. Similarly, the study by Methani and Dhiabat (2021) found a positive role for strategic thinking in its essential elements on the stages of crisis management among employees in leadership and supervisory positions at the Irbid Electricity Company. Additionally, the study by Hussein *et al.* (2022) and Hasan (2020) found a strong correlation between strategic leadership and crisis management and confirmed the impact of strategic management on crisis management.

Practice Implication

The practical contributions of this study are evident as it investigates the direct impact of strategic management on crisis management at Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. The practical applications of this study lie in providing empirical evidence, through the collection and analysis of data from Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya, of the significant role strategic management plays in crisis management, its anticipation, and preparation through strategic plans based on information gathered from past experiences as well as from the company's external and internal environment.

However, this study offers practical guidance to the management of Akakus Oil Operations Company, demonstrating that overcoming and controlling crises requires a strong focus on strategic management, as its impact on improving crisis management is clear. Achieving strategic success and overcoming crises necessitates a spirit of collaboration between senior management and employees in other departments. Without such cooperation and prioritizing the company's interests over individual interests, success cannot be attained. However, the absence of cooperation may create internal conflicts between employees and the company's management.

LIMITATION

Despite the importance of the subject addressed by the current study, it is not without certain limitations. This is the nature of any work, which may contain some constraints or gaps in covering certain aspects that the study was unable to address. The reason could be the nature of the study itself, as it examines the direct impact of strategic management on crisis management in Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya. Therefore, some limitations that this study did not cover are summarized, along with suggestions for addressing them in future research. These limitations are as follows:

First, the current study was limited to testing the relationship between its variables within Akakus Oil Operations Company in Libya and did not include other oil companies. Thus, future studies could expand to include all oil companies affiliated with the National Oil Corporation in Libya. Second, this study focused on testing the relationship between strategic management and crisis management by collecting data within a specific timeframe. Therefore, collecting data over different time periods may yield similar results but could be more generalizable. Third, the current study doesn't examine the possible mediating role of some variables, such as employee satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and identification, this could provide more understanding of the effect of strategic management on employees' attitudes and behavior and crisis management.

CONCLUSION

The study presents empirical evidence demonstrating the crucial significance of strategic management in improving crisis management in Libya's Oil and Gas industry. Specifically in high-risk settings such as Akakus Oil Operations, the results indicate a strong and positive relationship between the adoption of strategic management methods and the capacity to handle crises successfully. The research emphasises the need to include crucial departments in strategic planning procedures, including security and safety, planning, continuation and control, and engineering. This study's findings validate the need for strategic planning in crisis readiness and provide useful perspectives for professionals and policymakers seeking to enhance crisis management systems. The paper elucidates significant correlations, recognises its limitations, and recommends more investigation to examine additional elements that impact crisis management in the Oil and Gas industry.

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