International Journal of Science Academic Research
Vol. 07, Issue 05, pp.905-917, May 2026
Available online at http://www.scienceijsar.com

ISSN: 2582-6425

Research Article

MIXED-METHODS MEASUREMENT OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION READINESS: VALIDATION OF A FOUR-FACTOR INSTRUMENT FOR DEVELOPING-COUNTRY CONTEXTS

[1, *]Prosper Mutswiri, [2]Tazvida Gaza and [3]Abubaker Qutieshat

[1]ZESA National Training Centre, 16676 Ganges Road, Belvedere Harare Zimbabwe
[2]University of Zambia, P.O. Box 32379, Lusaka, Zambia
[3]University of Dundee, Nethergate, Dundee DD1 4HN, United Kingdom

Received 16th March 2026; **Accepted** 19th April 2026; **Published online** 29th May 2026

Abstract

Execution failure remains a persistent barrier to organisational performance in developing economies, yet empirically grounded tools to assess implementation readiness are scarce. Drawing on resource-based, institutional, and dynamic capabilities perspectives, this study develops and validates a mixed-methods instrument to measure strategy implementation readiness across four dimensions: organisational, resource-related, environmental, and stakeholder.In Phase I, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Kenya. Thematically coded insights informed a 40-item pilot scale rooted in indigenous managerial practice, which achieved strong content validity. Phase II involved a survey of 743 managers from firms across manufacturing, agro-processing, telecommunications, and financial services. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed a four-factor structure explaining 72% of the variance. Confirmatory factor analysis supported a second-order model with robust fit indices (CFI = 0.947, RMSEA = 0.041), and reliability and validity exceeded accepted benchmarks.Structural modelling indicated environmental readiness had the strongest positive effect on early implementation performance ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$), followed by resource ($\beta = 0.29$) and organisational readiness ($\beta = 0.24$). Stakeholder readiness showed a negative direct effect ($\beta = -0.12$) but enhanced the impact of organisational and resource readiness through moderation, revealing its contingent nature. Measurement invariance across sectors and countries confirmed the instrument's generalisability.The findings extend readiness theory into mainstream strategic management and highlight the salience of environmental sensing in volatile contexts. Stakeholder alignment emerges as a double-edged capability, requiring nuanced management. The validated scale offers practitioners a diagnostic grounded in empirical data and equips policymakers with levers to strengthen execution capacity. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and interventions in public and non-profit settings.

Keywords: Strategy implementation readiness, Organisational change, Mixed-methods validation, Developing economies, Environmental turbulence.

INTRODUCTION

Despite significant investments in strategic planning, many organisations in developing economies continue to struggle with implementation failures that undermine competitiveness and developmental impact (Rodrigues *et al.,* 2021; Zahra, Petricevic, & Luo, 2022). These failures are not merely the result of flawed strategies but stem from a lack of *implementation readiness* the organisational and contextual capacity to activate, sustain and adapt strategic initiatives under volatile conditions (Tenggono, Soedjipto, &Sudhartio, 2024). Recent advances in the strategy literature have shifted focus from formulation to execution, recognising readiness as a multidimensional construct that includes organisational systems, resource adequacy, stakeholder engagement, and environmental alignment (Nyuur, Ochie, & Ludwig, 2022). While implementation readiness has been studied extensively in healthcare and public-sector reforms (Weiner, 2021), there is limited empirical instrumentation for private-sector contexts in the Global South, where environmental turbulence, institutional voids, and resource constraints prevail (Patnaik, Munjal, Varma, & Sinha, 2022). To address this gap, the present study integrates three foundational lenses: the resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991), which emphasises firm-specific capabilities; institutional theory, which considers formal and informal rules shaping strategic behaviour (North, 1990); and the dynamic capabilities framework, which provides adaptive capacity in changing environments (Teece, 2018). Emerging literature suggests that combining these perspectives offers a more holistic view of strategy execution under complexity (Alkaraan, Elmarzouky, &Hussainey, 2024; Sudhartio *et al.,* 2024). This study develops and validates a novel four-dimensional instrument to measure strategy implementation readiness in firms across Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Kenya. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research captures indigenous managerial logics while ensuring psychometric rigour. It contributes both theoretically by extending readiness scholarship into strategic management and practically, by offering managers and policymakers an actionable diagnostic for improving execution capacity in high-volatility contexts.

Background and rationale

The persistent gap between strategy formulation and execution remains a central concern in both academic and managerial discourse, primarily because the performance consequences of this disjunction are so profound. Cross-continental empirical surveys consistently reveal that most corporate and public-sector strategies fail to achieve their stated objectives once implementation begins. Reported failure rates typically range between 50% and 90% (Cândido & Santos, 2019; Weiser, Jarzabkowski, & Laamanen, 2020). While this is a global challenge, it is markedly intensified in developing countries,

Corresponding Author:** ***Prosper Mutswiri,
ZESA National Training Centre, 16676 Ganges Road, Belvedere Harare Zimbabwe.

where environmental turbulence, resource scarcity, and institutional fragility amplify implementation uncertainty (Haraguchi, Martorano, & Sanfilippo, 2019; Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020). At the core of the implementation problem lies the construct of *readiness*. Initially conceptualised within implementation science as a shared psychological and behavioural state indicating an organisation's willingness and capability to embark on change (Weiner, 2020), readiness has since evolved into a multidimensional capability encompassing leadership commitment, resource adequacy, organisational climate, and external alignment (Watson *et al.,* 2022). High readiness levels have been empirically linked to more effective, rapid, and sustainable implementation outcomes (Vax *et al.,* 2021). However, the overwhelming majority of readiness research has been conducted in high-income healthcare and social-service contexts, raising questions about its applicability to firms in emerging economies (Weiner *et al.,* 2020; Caci *et al.,* 2025). Enterprises across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America are now being called upon to implement ambitious strategies related to digitalisation, Industry 4.0, and market expansion amidst severe macroeconomic volatility, technological leapfrogging, and rising stakeholder demands (Machado *et al.,* 2021; Sony *et al.,* 2021; Ansari *et al.,* 2025). Strategic plans have become more sophisticated, embracing agile project methodologies, sustainability targets, and balanced scorecards, yet implementation success remains inconsistent. This suggests that decision-makers may be underestimating the full constellation of factors underpinning implementation readiness, including organisational systems, resource mobilisation, environmental fit, and stakeholder alignment (Brozzi, Riedl, & Matta, 2021).

Theoretically, three complementary perspectives help illuminate the readiness construct. The resource-based view (RBV) posits that sustained competitive advantage derives from owning valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable assets (Wernerfelt, 1984). Institutional theory stresses the importance of alignment with regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and cognitive expectations that bestow legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The dynamic capabilities approach integrates these views by arguing that firms excel when they can sense opportunities, seize them, and reconfigure internal assets accordingly (Teece, Pisano, &Shuen, 1997). Collectively, these frameworks suggest that readiness is a composite capability involving both internal robustness and external alignment. Despite growing theoretical sophistication, measurement instruments have not kept pace. A systematic review by Weiner et al. (2020) identified 43 readiness tools, but found that fewer than a quarter exhibited robust psychometric properties, and even fewer demonstrated practical applicability in resource-constrained environments. For instance, Fernández et al. (2019) proposed implementation mapping to develop change strategies, yet their approach assumes the prior existence of a validated readiness diagnostic. Lessa and Yigletu (2022) advanced an enterprise-resource-planning readiness tool for large firms in the Middle East, but their scale's cultural and linguistic assumptions limit its transferability to African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In response, recent scholarship has called for instruments that are both contextually grounded and psychometrically sound, capable of capturing leadership, resource, environmental, and stakeholder dynamics within the unique complexity of developing-country settings (Machado *et al.,* 2021; Sony *et al.,* 2021; Watson *et al.,* 2022). This study answers that call by theorising, developing, and validating a four-factor instrument specifically designed for use in developing economies. Drawing on qualitative insights from firms in sub-Saharan Africa and subjected to rigorous quantitative testing, the instrument balances contextual relevance with analytical rigour, and offers a practical diagnostic for researchers, managers, and policymakers seeking to enhance execution capacity in volatile environments.

The problem, objectives and strategy

Managers in emerging economies are frequently compelled to launch strategic programmes without access to robust diagnostics on their organisations' readiness for execution. This readiness blind spot is particularly consequential in volatile institutional environments, where implementation risks are significantly amplified. Existing assessment tools remain limited in scope, most are designed for single sectors or industries, and many adopt unidimensional approaches that fail to capture the complex interplay among organisational culture, resource availability, macro-environmental turbulence, and stakeholder dynamics (Machado *et al.,* 2021; Brozzi, Riedl, & Matta, 2021). As a result, strategic decision-making often relies on intuition, past experience, or donor-prescribed frameworks rather than evidence-based diagnostics. Such reliance may lead to misaligned resource allocations, unrealistic implementation schedules, and the premature abandonment of potentially viable initiatives. The lack of a robust, multidimensional, and context-sensitive readiness assessment tool therefore constitutes a significant bottleneck, both in advancing scholarly understanding of implementation dynamics and in improving strategic outcomes in developing-country firms.

Addressing this gap necessitates the development of a diagnostic instrument that not only integrates both internal and external determinants of readiness, but also satisfies psychometric criteria for validity and reliability. Without such a tool, the capacity to systematically diagnose and enhance implementation readiness remains constrained, limiting the effectiveness of strategic interventions in precisely those contexts where they are most urgently needed.
This study is guided by four interrelated objectives, each designed to advance theoretical insights and practical measurement of strategy implementation readiness in developing-country contexts:

1. **Theoretical Integration**: To synthesise perspectives from organisational readiness theory, strategic management, and implementation science in order to conceptualise a coherent four-factor model of strategy-implementation readiness, tailored to the operational and institutional realities of developing economies.
2. **Qualitative Scale Development**: To generate, refine, and validate scale items through qualitative inquiry, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and documentary analysis, conducted across multiple African settings, ensuring contextual accuracy and conceptual rigour.
3. **Psychometric Validation**: To evaluate the emergent instrument's psychometric properties through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and through reliability and validity testing, including convergent, discriminant, and criterion-related validity, across sectors and national contexts.

4. **Predictive and Moderation Analysis**: To assess the predictive influence of each readiness factor on early-stage implementation performance, and to determine whether environmental turbulence moderates the effects of organisational, resource, and stakeholder readiness on implementation outcomes.

From these objectives, the following research questions were derived:

1. What factor structure best represents the construct of strategy-implementation readiness in organisations operating within developing economies?
2. How reliable and valid is the proposed readiness instrument across diverse industrial sectors and national settings?
3. Which readiness dimension exerts the strongest predictive influence on early implementation performance?
4. Does environmental turbulence amplify or attenuate the effects of organisational, resource, and stakeholder readiness on perceived implementation success?

Intended contributions

This article makes several key contributions to theory, methodology, practice, and policy. The study advances theoretical understanding by extending organisational readiness research beyond its traditional roots in public health and implementation science into the broader field of strategic management. In doing so, it contributes to what Weiser, Jarzabkowski, and Laamanen (2020) term the "adaptive turn" in execution research, positioning readiness as a core component of strategic capability. By conceptualising readiness as a higher-order construct comprising four interdependent but analytically distinct dimensions, organisational, resource, environmental, and stakeholder readiness, the study adds nuance to existing frameworks within the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities literature. Methodologically, the research responds to longstanding calls for the development of diagnostic tools that are both psychometrically robust and pragmatically useful (Weiner *et al.,* 2020; Caci *et al.,* 2025). The study adopts a mixed-methods approach that integrates grounded qualitative item generation with rigorous quantitative validation, including factor analysis and multi-dimensional reliability and validity testing. The result is a context-sensitive scale that combines conceptual depth with operational feasibility, enabling deployment in time-constrained or resource-limited organisational environments.

Zee

Practically, the validated instrument provides managers and policy makers with a reliable diagnostic tool for identifying readiness gaps before large-scale strategic rollouts. This capability supports targeted intervention design such as leadership alignment workshops, resource mobilisation strategies, or stakeholder-engagement initiatives and enhances execution probability. By offering an evidence-based mechanism for prioritising strategic actions and allocating scarce resources efficiently, the tool addresses a pressing managerial need in low-income and high-opportunity-cost environments (Haraguchi, Martorano, & Sanfilippo, 2019). Finally, the study carries broader implications for sustainable development discourse. As strategic programmes in developing countries increasingly integrate environmental and enhances the likelihood of achieving integrated development outcomes. In this regard, the readiness instrument can be seen as a policy-relevant tool that supports progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020).

Strategy Implementation in Developing Countries

Strategy implementation is increasingly recognised not as a linear, technocratic exercise, but as a complex, socially embedded, and politically charged process shaped by continuous learning and adaptation (Noble, 1999; Hrebiniak, 2005). In developed economies, execution challenges frequently revolve around functional silos, inadequate performance metrics, and organisational resistance to change. In developing-country settings, however, these internal issues are compounded by volatile macroeconomic conditions, infrastructural deficits, and fragmented institutional environments (Haraguchi, Martorano, & Sanfilippo, 2019).

Weiser, Jarzabkowski, and Laamanen (2020) consolidate the adaptive strategy-implementation literature, demonstrating that firms perform more effectively when they embrace iterative adjustment rather than rigid adherence to strategic blueprints. Yet their synthesis draws predominantly from case studies in North America and Western Europe, raising questions about its transferability to the Global South. In the sub-Saharan African context, Kuada (2010) highlights how collectivist cultural norms, extended kinship obligations, and informal, relationship-based resource exchange reshape the context in which strategy is enacted. Empirical work by Mashavira and Chipunza (2019) confirms that in South African and Zimbabwean manufacturing firms, organisational flexibility and engaged leadership predict successful execution under conditions of turbulence. Similarly, Maganga, Mzumara, and Parahoo (2016) find that SMEs with feedback-rich systems that link formulation to implementation outperform those that treat strategic planning as a standalone activity.

A second critical dimension in the literature is the finance–strategy interface. In their study of ERP deployments in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Malik and Khan (2021) find that execution falters when financial flows do not align with implementation milestones. Sony et al. (2021) report parallel failures in Indian manufacturing sites undertaking Quality 4.0 initiatives, reinforcing the centrality of resource-related readiness in achieving execution outcomes. Emerging technologies also play a destabilising and transformative role. Mobile money, digital agriculture, and decentralised energy systems are reshaping entire sectors through rapid leapfrogging. Yet as Brozzi, Riedl, and Matta (2021) show, even when hardware is subsidised, African SMEs with limited digital literacy face long integration lags. In contrast, firms with high levels of *digital organisational readiness* reflected in IT leadership, modular systems, and data-centric cultures, are more agile in navigating Industry 4.0 transitions (Machado *et al.,* 2021). Stakeholder complexity represents another defining feature of developing-country strategy execution. Managers often straddle multiple institutional logics, balancing donor expectations, government regulation, community legitimacy, and informal norms. Alolabi, Ayupp, and Dwaikat (2021) argue that implementation can be derailed by overlooked factors such as middle-manager resistance and stakeholder scepticism. While Fernández *et al.* (2019) advocate for *implementation mapping* to enhance alignment, its efficacy

depends heavily on pre-existing levels of readiness to engage diverse stakeholders effectively. Taken together, these insights highlight the multifaceted demands placed on firms in developing economies. Successful strategy implementation is contingent not only on planning quality but on an organisation's capacity to synchronise internal capabilities, resource mobilisation, environmental scanning, and stakeholder management. This integrated capability, herein conceptualised as implementation readiness, forms the conceptual foundation for the present study.

Typical barriers and enablers

The literature identifies a wide range of obstacles that inhibit the effective execution of strategic initiatives, particularly in emerging-market environments. These barriers can be categorised into four broad domains: strategic, processual, contextual, and human (Cândido & Santos, 2019). Strategic barriers include unclear or ambiguous objectives, misaligned performance metrics, and incoherence between strategy formulation and execution. These 'disconnects' can obscure organisational priorities and dilute accountability. Processual barriers relate to failures in implementation procedures, such as inadequate internal communication, undefined lines of responsibility, and weak monitoring or feedback mechanisms. These factors collectively hinder timely course correction and reduce adaptive responsiveness. 'Contextual barriers' reflect the volatile external environments in which many firms in developing countries operate. These include macroeconomic shocks, policy and regulatory uncertainty, and disruptions in global and regional supply chains(Balogun & Hailey, 2008). Such external turbulence can render even well-formulated strategies obsolete or unfeasible within short timeframes(Chen *et al.,* 2024). Also, human barriers pertain to leadership deficiencies, diminished employee morale, and gaps in managerial and technical skills(Watson *et al.,* 2022). These human-resource constraints directly affect the organisation's capacity to sustain change and execute plans effectively. By contrast, the enablers of successful implementation correspond closely to the multidimensional construct of readiness developed in this study. Leadership commitment, structural alignment, and a culture that promotes initiative and accountability are widely acknowledged as key drivers of implementation effectiveness (Balogun & Hailey, 2008). Operational enablers include consistent access to funding, robust technological infrastructures, and the availability of skilled human capital (Ansari *et al.,* 2025). These elements form the resource-related foundations upon which implementation depends. Equally important are environmental enablers, such as real-time scanning of market and regulatory signals, proactive scenario planning, and adaptive organisational routines (Chen *et al.,* 2024). Finally, stakeholder-related enablers include transparent communication channels, participatory engagement mechanisms, and trust-building strategies that foster cooperative problem solving and legitimacy (Watson *et al.,* 2022). Together, these enablers form the backbone of execution readiness and directly shape the likelihood of successful strategy implementation in developing-country contexts.

Existing readiness and capability metrics

A growing body of literature has sought to operationalise readiness for implementation through structured measurement instruments. Weiner et al. (2020) provide a comprehensive classification of these tools into four principal categories: organisational readiness for change, implementation climate, facilitation maturity, and specific capability scales. While two instruments are commended for their internal consistency and construct validity, the review concludes that none are fully suited to the constraints of low-resource environments.

Lessa and Yigletu (2022) present a 23-item scale for assessing enterprise resource planning (ERP) readiness. Their model demonstrates a clear factor structure and strong psychometric performance, yet it includes technological and budgetary dimensions that may be inaccessible to micro- and small enterprises, particularly those in informal or resource-scarce sectors. Similarly, Brozzi, Riedl, and Matta (2021) develop a readiness framework tailored to European SMEs, but caution that digital capability must be interpreted with reference to firm size and supply-chain position, caveats that are equally salient in African contexts.

Sartas et al. (2020) introduce the concept of 'scaling readiness,' which integrates institutional and policy alignment with technical feasibility in assessing the scalability of agricultural innovations. While methodologically resonant with the mixed-methods approach adopted in the present study, their instrument is designed primarily for use in publicly funded research networks and lacks applicability to private-sector expansion efforts. Ardakan and Ebadi (2021) narrow the focus to human-capital readiness, showing through structural equation modelling that capability development mediates the link between training intensity and strategic performance.

Machado et al. (2021) further enrich the literature by introducing a digital-readiness dimension encompassing leadership orientation toward data, systems integration, and agile decision-making. Collectively, these contributions underscore the multidimensional nature of readiness. However, they also reveal a critical gap: the absence of a validated, context-sensitive instrument that simultaneously captures organisational, resource, environmental, and stakeholder readiness, particularly in the under-researched context of developing economies.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Resource-Based View

The resource-based view (RBV) posits that firms achieve and sustain competitive advantage by controlling resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Wernerfelt, 1984). Traditionally used to explain inter-firm performance differences, RBV has increasingly been applied in the implementation literature to frame organisational readiness as a composite strategic resource (Machado *et al.,* 2021). This broader interpretation of readiness encompasses not only tangible assets such as funding and infrastructure but also intangible capabilities, including leadership competence, technological integration, and operational routines. In the context of strategy execution, failures often stem not from flawed plans but from mismatches between the resource assumptions embedded within those plans and the actual inventory of deployable assets available to implementation teams (Malik & Khan, 2021). In resource-constrained environments, such as those prevalent in developing countries,

such discrepancies can be particularly damaging, leading to delays, cost overruns, or premature abandonment of initiatives. This study therefore conceptualises resource-related readiness not simply as the quantity of financial or technological resources held, but as the degree to which those resources are both *available* and *deployable* in alignment with the demands of implementation. It includes consideration of liquidity, system usability, staff competencies, and decision rights, all of which must coalesce to form a coherent resource platform for effective execution. In this way, the RBV provides a theoretical basis for assessing not only what resources an organisation possesses, but also whether and how those resources are positioned for timely and targeted deployment in strategic initiatives.

Institutional theory

Institutional theory (IT) reorients analytical attention from internal capabilities to the external pressures of legitimacy and conformity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It posits that organisations succeed not solely through efficiency or competitive assets, but through alignment with institutional logics, comprising coercive regulations, normative expectations, and culturally embedded cognitive scripts. These forces shape organisational behaviour by rewarding compliance with socially sanctioned practices and penalising deviance, irrespective of technical efficiency. In the context of developing economies, institutional environments are frequently marked by ambiguity, fragmentation, and competing rule systems. Firms are often required to navigate overlapping regulatory frameworks, informal norms, and politically contingent expectations, which together create a multi-layered legitimacy terrain (Kuada, 2010). As a result, strategic readiness is not confined to internal preparedness but includes the ability to interpret, anticipate, and engage with diverse institutional demands. Readiness under institutional theory thus entails *interpretive capacity*, the cognitive and relational competence to decode ambiguous signals, and *relational skill*, the ability to build alliances, cultivate legitimacy, and broker alignment across institutional actors. Sartas et al. (2020), for instance, show that agricultural research consortia in low-income settings succeed in scaling innovations only when institutional champions translate technical value into policy relevance. Such findings illustrate the necessity of institutional alignment as a precondition for successful implementation. Accordingly, any readiness instrument aiming to predict implementation outcomes in developing-country contexts must incorporate dimensions that capture the organisation's capacity to align with, adapt to, and influence its regulatory and cultural environment. Institutional theory, therefore, provides a critical lens for assessing *environmental readiness* as a strategic capability, not just a constraint to be managed, but a domain in which legitimacy can be actively constructed.

Dynamic-capabilities perspective

The dynamic capabilities theory (DCT) serves as a conceptual bridge between resource-based and institutional perspectives by asserting that sustainable advantage stems not from static resource endowments, but from an organisation's recurring ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure those resources in response to environmental volatility (Teece, Pisano, &Shuen, 1997). In this view, the ability to adapt and renew becomes the critical differentiator in environments marked by uncertainty and change. Implementation readiness, when seen through the dynamic-capabilities lens, constitutes a *meta-capability*, one that enables organisations to reallocate resources, redesign processes, and realign stakeholder relationships with agility and coherence. This dynamic orientation is particularly vital in developing-country contexts, where frequent shocks and institutional fluidity demand strategic flexibility rather than rigid plan adherence.

Weiser, Jarzabkowski, and Laamanen (2020) underscore that successful execution depends on the organisation's capacity to continuously frame and reframe strategy throughout the implementation phase, a process underpinned by dynamic managerial capabilities. Empirical evidence by Chen et al. (2024) further supports this claim, showing that *managerial readiness* significantly shapes the outcomes of digital transformation initiatives by accelerating strategic decision-making and enabling real-time resource reconfiguration. By integrating the resource-based, institutional, and dynamic-capability perspectives, a holistic conceptualisation of readiness emerges. It is simultaneously an *internal capability* grounded in assets and leadership; an *external alignment* with institutional structures and stakeholder demands; and a *dynamic process* of strategic reconfiguration under conditions of uncertainty. This synthesis forms the theoretical foundation of the present study and underpins the multidimensional construct of strategy-implementation readiness operationalised in the empirical investigation.

Four-factor readiness framework

This study conceptualises and operationalises strategy implementation readiness as a multidimensional construct, comprising four interrelated but analytically distinct dimensions: organisational readiness, resource-related readiness, environmental readiness, and stakeholder readiness. These dimensions are grounded in extant literature and collectively reflect the composite capability required to translate strategic intent into actionable results within complex, resource-constrained, and institutionally fluid environments. Each dimension draws theoretical justification from the resource-based view, institutional theory, and dynamic capabilities perspective, as previously outlined. Organisational readiness reflects internal alignment, leadership commitment, structural coherence, and cultural support for change. Resource-related readiness captures the availability and deployability of financial, technological, and human assets essential for implementation. Environmental readiness assesses an organisation's capacity to interpret, anticipate, and adapt to external turbulence, including macroeconomic, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges. Stakeholder readiness addresses the relational and communicative competencies required to manage complex, multi-actor environments involving regulators, donors, clients, communities, and internal staff. To ensure contextual relevance and conceptual fidelity, the framework was first validated qualitatively through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis across multiple African settings. These qualitative insights informed item generation and refinement prior to the quantitative phase. The resulting instrument was subsequently subjected to rigorous psychometric evaluation, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, to establish its dimensional structure and measurement robustness.

By capturing the interplay among these four domains, the framework offers a comprehensive and parsimonious

diagnostic for assessing implementation readiness in developing-country firms, and contributes to both scholarly theory-building and practitioner-oriented decision-making.

Organisational factors

Organisational readiness refers to the internal alignment and infrastructural conditions that enable effective strategy execution. It encompasses five core components: leadership commitment, structural alignment, communication clarity, employee empowerment, and performance-monitoring routines (Vax *et al.,* 2021; Ardakan& Ebadi, 2021). Leadership commitment is foundational, shaping the motivational dimension of readiness by signalling strategic seriousness and modelling behavioural expectations. Committed leaders legitimise the change process and create a climate conducive to action. Structural alignment ensures that formal roles, decision rights, and incentive systems are synchronised with strategic objectives, thereby translating high-level intent into operable mandates across the organisation. Communication clarity plays a crucial translational role, converting abstract strategy into shared, actionable language that is comprehensible at multiple organisational levels. When communication is fragmented or overly technical, implementation coherence suffers. In contrast, clear messaging fosters shared understanding and execution fidelity. Employee empowerment enhances local problem-solving by granting frontline actors the discretion necessary for adaptive responses. Particularly in turbulent environments, centralised rigidity can hinder responsiveness, whereas decentralised authority supports real-time decision-making. Finally, performance-monitoring routines close the learning loop by providing timely feedback on implementation progress. These routines enable *double-loop learning*, not only correcting actions, but also revisiting underlying assumptions, thus, reinforcing strategic agility (Weiser, Jarzabkowski, & Laamanen, 2020). Taken together, these organisational elements form the institutional scaffolding through which strategy is operationalised. Their presence or absence significantly influences the capacity of firms in developing-country contexts to move from formulation to execution.

Resource-related factors

Resource-related readiness refers to an organisation's ability to access and effectively deploy the tangible and intangible assets required for successful strategy implementation. It encompasses four critical domains: financial capital, technological infrastructure, skilled human resources, and timely market information (Brozzi, Riedl, & Matta, 2021; Ansari *et al.,* 2025).

Financial capital in the form of accessible liquidity or budgetary slack, acts as a strategic buffer, allowing organisations to absorb unexpected costs, mitigate delays, and respond flexibly to implementation contingencies. Financial readiness is especially vital in developing-country settings, where funding gaps and delayed disbursements frequently undermine project momentum.

Technological infrastructure provides the backbone for execution in digitally evolving environments. Platforms that support automation, data capture, and analytics not only improve operational efficiency but also facilitate real-time monitoring and performance optimisation. In contexts of technological leapfrogging, firms lacking foundational digital systems often experience delays in integrating new tools, even when these are externally subsidised (Brozzi *et al.,* 2021).

Skilled human resources are equally central. Employees with the technical and managerial competencies required to adapt processes, solve problems, and integrate innovations translate strategic directives into operational outcomes. Readiness in this domain involves both the availability and strategic deployment of talent aligned with execution needs. Finally, market information, timely data on customers, competitors, regulations, and trends enables organisations to adapt implementation in light of changing conditions. It supports evidence-based decision-making, opportunity recognition, and risk mitigation during execution. Taken together, these resource-related factors shape an organisation's operational platform. Their sufficiency, relevance, and deployability are essential to bridging the gap between strategic aspiration and practical delivery, particularly in resource-constrained and volatile markets.

Environmental factors

Environmental readiness refers to an organisation's capacity to systematically scan, interpret, and respond to external forces that influence strategic execution. These forces include macroeconomic fluctuations, regulatory changes, competitive dynamics, technological disruptions, and global market signals (Haraguchi, Martorano, & Sanfilippo, 2019; Chen *et al.,* 2024). In volatile and rapidly evolving environments, common in many developing economies, execution success depends not only on internal alignment but also on the ability to anticipate and adapt to exogenous pressures. Dynamic-capability theorists emphasise that the ability to *sense* emerging opportunities and threats, and to *seize* them through timely reconfiguration of resources, is critical to organisational survival and growth (Teece, Pisano, &Shuen, 1997). High environmental readiness manifests in several strategic routines. These include scenario planning that equips firms with contingency pathways under uncertainty, regulatory engagement that fosters proactive compliance and institutional influence, and competitive-intelligence mechanisms that track market shifts and competitor moves in real time. Together, these routines reduce the element of surprise and enhance strategic responsiveness during implementation. In this study, environmental readiness is conceptualised as a dynamic scanning capability that enables organisations to maintain situational awareness, update assumptions, and align strategic action with shifting environmental conditions. Its presence is particularly consequential in developing-country contexts where institutional volatility, infrastructural asymmetries, and geopolitical shocks frequently disrupt even the best-laid plans.

Stakeholder factors

Stakeholder readiness refers to the extent of alignment, participation, and support among internal and external actors whose cooperation is essential for successful strategy implementation (Fernandez *et al.,* 2019; Watson *et al.,* 2022). It captures not only the presence of supportive relationships but also the quality of engagement mechanisms that facilitate mutual understanding and coordinated action.

Internally, critical stakeholders include employees, mid-level managers, and labour unions, groups whose buy-in often determines whether implementation is met with commitment or resistance. Externally, key actors encompass customers,

suppliers, regulators, financiers, and community representatives. These parties influence, directly or indirectly, the organisation's operational licence, supply-chain resilience, and reputational capital. High stakeholder readiness is characterised by transparent communication, inclusive voice mechanisms, and joint problem-solving routines that allow strategic issues to be surfaced, negotiated, and resolved collaboratively. These mechanisms move beyond unidirectional messaging to enable active co-creation and mutual adaptation, practices particularly critical in pluralistic or politically sensitive environments. However, while stakeholder engagement is generally regarded as a positive force in implementation, it is not without risks. As noted by Alolabi, Ayupp, and Dwaikat (2021), mismanaged stakeholder involvement can result in scope creep, decision paralysis, or intra-organisational conflict, particularly when expectations are poorly aligned or governance mechanisms are weak. This suggests that the relationship between stakeholder readiness and implementation performance may be nonlinear, contingent on the quality, timing, and structure of engagement. In this study, stakeholder readiness is conceptualised as a relational capability, one that enables organisations to build coalitions of support, manage dissent, and adapt strategy through dialogue. Its role is viewed not as uniformly beneficial, but as conditionally advantageous depending on how effectively it is mobilised and integrated into the execution process.

Research gaps

Although each dimension of implementation readiness, organisational, resource-related, environmental, and stakeholder, has been examined in prior studies, existing research suffers from fragmentation. To date, no single instrument has integrated all four domains within a psychometrically validated framework, nor has such a structure been empirically tested across diverse developing-country contexts. This constitutes a significant conceptual and methodological gap in the literature on strategy execution in emerging markets. Existing instruments also reveal two recurring methodological limitations. First, many lack robust evidence of discriminant validity, leaving unresolved whether closely related constructs (e.g., organisational culture vs. leadership commitment) are empirically distinct (Weiner *et al.,* 2020). Second, few tools provide adequate demonstration of criterion validity, meaning they are rarely validated against tangible outcomes such as implementation success or early project milestones.

A further omission in the literature concerns the dynamic and contingent nature of readiness. Specifically, the moderating role of environmental turbulence, for example, whether macro-instability intensifies or attenuates the impact of resource slack on implementation outcomes, remains largely unexplored. While dynamic capabilities theory suggests such contextual effects are critical, empirical testing in low-resource, high-volatility environments is limited. This study seeks to address these gaps by designing and validating a four-factor readiness instrument that demonstrates internal consistency, convergent and discriminant validity, and criterion validity through its relationship with early-stage implementation performance. Additionally, the research examines whether environmental turbulence moderates the effects of organisational, resource, and stakeholder readiness, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of execution in developing economies.

Hypothesis development and propositions

Based on the four-factor conceptualisation and informed by resource-based, institutional and dynamic-capability theories, the following hypotheses are developed. The first hypothesis posits that organisational readiness will be positively associated with perceived strategy-implementation success because aligned structures, committed leadership and clear communication facilitate coordinated action (Balogun and Hailey, 2008; Vax *et al.,* 2021). The second hypothesis states that resource-related readiness will exert a positive effect on implementation success, reflecting the principle that adequate financial, technological and human assets enable effective rollout (Ansari *et al.,* 2025; Malik and Khan, 2021).

The third hypothesis predicts that environmental readiness will demonstrate the largest positive association with implementation success, given evidence that ability to anticipate and adapt to external turbulence often determines survival and growth in developing economies (Haraguchi, Martorano and Sanfilippo, 2019; Chen *et al.,* 2024). A fourth hypothesis proposes that stakeholder readiness will moderate the effects of organisational and resource readiness on implementation success, such that high stakeholder alignment amplifies positive impacts, whereas low alignment diminishes them (Fernandez *et al.,* 2019; Watson *et al.,* 2022).

In measurement terms it is hypothesised that the four dimensions will load on distinct first-order factors and that a second-order readiness factor will account for shared variance among them, producing superior model-fit indices compared with alternative uni-dimensional or three-factor configurations when tested through confirmatory factor analysis (Weiner *et al.,* 2020). Reliability coefficients for each factor are expected to exceed the .70 threshold, composite reliabilities are anticipated above .80, and average variance extracted should surpass .50, confirming convergent validity (Hair *et al.,* 2019). Discriminant validity is expected through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratio. Criterion validity will be demonstrated if the readiness factors collectively explain a significant proportion of variance in reported early implementation performance, even after controlling for firm size, age and industry sector. The ensuing conceptual model, methodological procedures and empirical tests are designed to evaluate these hypotheses, thereby contributing new knowledge to the implementation literature and offering a practical diagnostic tool for managers navigating the complexities of developing-country strategy execution.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

A conceptual model was constructed to integrate the four dimensions of strategy-implementation readiness organisational, resource-related, environmental and stakeholder and to capture their collective influence on early implementation performance. Drawing on resource-based reasoning, readiness is theorised as a higher-order strategic asset that can be decomposed into first-order latent factors representing distinct but complementary capabilities (Wernerfelt, 1984; Ardakan and Ebadi, 2021). Institutionally oriented research adds that alignment with external rules and stakeholder expectations conditions the value of internal assets (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Sartas *et al.,* 2020). Dynamic-capability scholarship finally emphasises that such assets must be reconfigured and redeployed in real time to match

environmental turbulence (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Weiser, Jarzabkowski and Laamanen, 2020). Combining these strands leads to a second-order model in which each first-order factor loads on a single overarching construct labelled Strategy-Implementation Readiness. Organisational readiness is conceptualised as the alignment of leadership commitment, structural arrangements, communication clarity, empowerment climate and performance-monitoring routines. Leadership actions establish collective change commitment and set the tone regarding task importance (Vax *et al.,* 2021; Watson *et al.,* 2022). Structural alignment ensures that decision rights, reporting lines and incentive schemes reinforce rather than undermine the strategic blueprint (Weiner, 2020). Communication clarity translates high-level goals into task-level meaning, while empowerment provides employees with discretion to adaptively manage unforeseen contingencies (Machado *et al.,* 2021). Performance measurement closes the loop through timely feedback that allows double-loop learning in the face of implementation drift (Weiser, Jarzabkowski and Laamanen, 2020).

Resource-related readiness is defined as the existence and deployability of financial, technological, informational and human resources sufficient to meet the execution demands of the intended strategy. Financial slack and funding reliability create buffers for overruns and market shocks (Malik and Khan, 2021). Technological infrastructure, ranging from enterprise software to data analytics, enables process automation and evidence-based decision making (Brozzi, Riedl and Matta, 2021; Chen *et al.,* 2024). Human capital reflects both hard skills and adaptive mind-sets required to digest new workflows (Ardakan and Ebadi, 2021). Information resources cover intelligence-gathering routines that deliver real-time market, regulatory and competitor data (Ansari *et al.,* 2025).
Environmental readiness captures an organisation's sensing and interpretation capacity with respect to macro-economic swings, regulatory change, competitive disruptions, technological shifts and global market trends. It draws on dynamic-capability literature's emphasis on sensing and seizing opportunities before rivals do (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). Firms that systematically scan their environments, construct scenarios and maintain relationships with policy makers can adjust more swiftly when exchange rates fluctuate, policies shift or new entrants emerge (Haraguchi, Martorano and Sanfilippo, 2019; Chen *et al.,* 2024).

Stakeholder readiness encompasses supportive attitudes and cooperative behaviours among groups whose resources and legitimacy are indispensable. Internally these groups include senior executives, middle managers and the workforce; externally they encompass customers, suppliers, financiers, regulators and local communities (Fernandez *et al.,* 2019; Watson *et al.,* 2022). Alignment is multidimensional, spanning cognitive agreement on goals, affective commitment to change and behavioural participation in the work of implementation. Where stakeholder configurations are fragmented, project timelines elongate and scope creep proliferates, potentially nullifying advantages attached to other readiness dimensions (Alolabi, Ayupp and Dwaikat, 2021). The model, therefore, positions Strategy-Implementation Readiness as a second-order latent construct measured reflectively by the four first-order factors. Each factor is expected to influence early implementation performance directly, but stakeholder readiness is also theorised to moderate the conversion of organisational and resource strengths into measurable progress because high alignment multiplies returns from internal capabilities, whereas low alignment can block or divert those capabilities. Environmental turbulence is posited as an exogenous contingency that strengthens the predictive salience of environmental readiness while diminishing the efficacy of poorly aligned resources and stakeholder configurations.

From these relationships five hypotheses are derived. Hypothesis 1: organisational readiness is positively related to early implementation performance because leadership commitment and structural alignment accelerate coordinated action (Vax *et al.,* 2021). Hypothesis 2: resource-related readiness is positively related to early implementation performance because sufficient financial, technological and human resources enable rapid conversion of plans into operations (Ansari *et al.,* 2025). Hypothesis 3: environmental readiness exhibits the strongest positive association with implementation performance in volatile contexts because proactive sensing and adaptive action guard against exogenous shocks (Haraguchi, Martorano and Sanfilippo, 2019). Hypothesis 4: stakeholder readiness positively moderates the effects of organisational and resource readiness on implementation performance such that their impacts are amplified under high stakeholder alignment and dampened under low alignment (Fernandez *et al.,* 2019; Watson *et al.,* 2022). Hypothesis 5: in confirmatory-factor analysis the four-factor model with a higher-order readiness construct will yield superior fit indices relative to alternative nested models, indicating discriminant yet integrating validity (Weiner *et al.,* 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a sequential-exploratory mixed-methods design that first generated context-grounded scale items qualitatively and then subjected them to rigorous quantitative validation. In Phase I, purposeful, maximum-variation sampling drew chief executives, implementation managers, supervisors and union representatives from firms in manufacturing, agro-processing, telecommunications and financial services in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya. Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews, three focus groups and extensive document analysis (strategy booklets, project charters and monitoring reports) were completed. Data were transcribed verbatim, imported into NVivo and analysed with an inductive constant-comparison technique by two independent coders whose inter-rater agreement reached Cohen's $\kappa = 0.81$. Axial coding clustered first-cycle codes into higher-order themes aligned with the four theorised readiness domains but retained indigenous expressions such as "quick-shift teams" and "stakeholder indabas." Thematic saturation was achieved, yielding a 40-item candidate pool phrased in plain, regionally intelligible English. Seven academic and industry experts rated item relevance on a four-point scale; the overall content-validity index was 0.86, and items scoring below 0.78 were revised or discarded, leaving a pilot instrument of 40 items equally distributed across organisational, resource, environmental and stakeholder readiness.

Phase II involved large-scale survey testing of this instrument. Items were formatted on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) and could be completed online—optimised for low-bandwidth mobile devices—or on paper.

From 1,200 invitations drawn through stratified random sampling of chamber-registered firms (augmented by snowballing to capture high-growth unlisted enterprises), 743 usable responses were obtained (61.9 % response rate). Data screening trimmed < 2 % univariate outliers; multivariate outliers were retained after sensitivity checks; missing values averaged 1.6 % and were imputed via expectation-maximisation. The dataset was randomly split: 45 % for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and 55 % for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). EFA with principal-axis factoring and promax rotation (KMO = 0.92; Bartlett $p < .001$) produced a clean four-factor solution explaining 72.4 % of variance; items with communalities < 0.40 or cross-loadings > 0.30 were removed, yielding a parsimonious 30-item scale. CFA using maximum-likelihood estimation supported a second-order model in which the four first-order factors loaded on a single strategy-implementation-readiness construct ($\chi^2 = 812.46$, df = 394; CFI = 0.947; TLI = 0.941; RMSEA = 0.041; SRMR = 0.046). Reliability exceeded benchmarks (Cronbach's α = 0.87–0.93; composite reliability > 0.90); convergent validity was confirmed (AVE > 0.60) and discriminant validity satisfied both Fornell–Larcker and HTMT (< 0.85) criteria. Criterion validity emerged through structural modelling: the four readiness dimensions collectively explained 63 % of variance in early implementation performance, with environmental readiness exerting the strongest positive effect ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$) and stakeholder readiness showing a negative direct effect ($\beta = –0.12$) but positive moderation of organisational and resource paths. Multi-group CFA established configural and metric invariance across sectors and countries and partial scalar invariance after freeing two intercepts, indicating the measure functions equivalently in diverse contexts. Throughout, ethical clearance was obtained in all jurisdictions; informed consent, GDPR-compliant data security, back-translation and reciprocity meetings safeguarded participant rights and cultural sensitivity. Also, qualitative and quantitative strands were integrated via joint displays, enabling meta-inferences that refined item wording and highlighted adaptive routines as a cross-cutting hallmark of implementation readiness in volatile developing-economy environments.

RESULTS

Seven hundred and forty-three usable questionnaires were returned from the three participating countries. Manufacturing firms accounted for 37 per cent of the sample, followed by agro-processing at 26 per cent, telecommunications at 21 per cent and financial services at 16 per cent. Average firm age was 18.4 years (SD = 6.9) and average full-time employment was 312 staff (SD = 274). Respondents held positions across the hierarchy, with 44 per cent occupying supervisory roles, 38 per cent managerial roles and 18 per cent executive positions. Ninety-one per cent reported university education, mirroring the skill profile found by Machado et al. (2021) in digital readiness surveys of African industry. Principal axis factoring was employed to explore the underlying structure of the readiness construct, yielding a clear four-factor solution. Each of the extracted factors had eigenvalues exceeding the conventional threshold of 1.0, and collectively they accounted for 72.4% of the total variance. This substantial proportion of explained variance suggests a strong underlying structure and supports the multidimensionality of the construct. Factor loadings for all retained items exceeded 0.50 on their respective target factors and remained below 0.30 on all non-target factors, indicating robust factorial separation and minimising concerns regarding cross-loadings or construct contamination (Weiner *et al.,* 2020).

Table 1. Sample profile (n = 743)

Variable	Category	%
Sector	Manufacturing	36.9
	Agro-processing	25.6
	Telecommunications	20.8
	Financial services	16.7
Country	Zimbabwe	34.0
	Zambia	32.3
	Kenya	33.7
Role	Executive	18.3
	Manager	37.8
	Supervisor	43.9

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), both of which demonstrated excellent psychometric robustness. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.87 (stakeholder readiness) to 0.93 (organisational readiness), exceeding the widely accepted threshold of 0.70 and aligning with implementation science standards. Composite reliability values for each factor surpassed 0.90, confirming that the scale exhibited high internal coherence and reliability across its subdimensions (Caci *et al.,* 2025). These results affirm the structural soundness of the instrument and support its use in future empirical investigations of implementation readiness in developing-country contexts.

Table 2. Exploratory factor statistics

Factor	Items retained	α	AVE	% Variance
Organisational readiness	8	0.93	0.66	22.7
Resource-related readiness	8	0.91	0.63	19.4
Environmental readiness	7	0.88	0.60	17.3
Stakeholder readiness	7	0.87	0.59	13.0

Confirmatory factor analysis

To evaluate the overall structure of the readiness construct, a second-order confirmatory factor model was estimated using the hold-out sample. The model posited that the four first-order dimensions, organisational, resource-related, environmental, and stakeholder readiness, loaded onto a higher-order latent construct representing overall implementation readiness. The model demonstrated excellent fit to the data, with fit indices satisfying recommended thresholds: χ^2 (394) = 812.46, $p < .001$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.947; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.941; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.041; and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.046. These values reflect both parsimony and explanatory adequacy, indicating that the hypothesised higher-order model was a robust representation of the underlying data structure. To assess discriminant validity and theoretical parsimony, three alternative models were tested for comparison. These included: (a) a single-factor model treating readiness as a unidimensional construct; (b) a correlated four-factor model omitting the second-order construct; and (c) a three-factor model in which organisational and resource-related readiness were combined into a single latent dimension. Each alternative specification produced significantly inferior fit statistics across all indices, with CFI values below 0.90 and RMSEA values exceeding acceptable thresholds. The second-order model thus outperformed competing configurations, confirming the empirical distinctiveness and interdependence of the four readiness dimensions.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit comparison

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	ΔCFI
Second-order (proposed)	812.46	394	0.947	0.941	0.041	—
Correlated first-order	968.21	390	0.921	0.913	0.053	−.026
Single factor	2 421.38	400	0.611	0.583	0.112	−.336
Three factors	1 147.27	392	0.893	0.885	0.066	−.054

These results provide strong support for Hypothesis 5, which proposed that a second-order model would offer superior explanatory power and model fit compared to less differentiated alternatives. They also affirm the multidimensional yet integrative nature of the strategy-implementation readiness construct in developing-country organisational contexts. Evidence for construct validity was established through the evaluation of both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was confirmed by average variance extracted (AVE) values, all of which exceeded 0.59, marginally below the conventional 0.60 threshold but within acceptable bounds for complex, higher-order models in social science research (Hair *et al.,* 2019). These results indicate that each construct captures a substantial proportion of variance from its indicators, affirming internal consistency and item cohesion within each factor. Discriminant validity was assessed using two complementary approaches. First, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was applied by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with its correlations with other latent variables. In all cases, the square root of the AVE exceeded the corresponding inter-factor correlations, providing strong evidence of discriminant separation between the readiness dimensions. Second, the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was calculated to assess discriminant validity more stringently. All HTMT values fell below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that constructs were empirically distinct and not redundant. Together, these validity checks support the psychometric integrity of the four-factor model, confirming that the instrument possesses adequate convergent validity (i.e., items within each construct share sufficient common variance) and discriminant validity (i.e., constructs measure conceptually and empirically distinct phenomena). These findings reinforce the robustness of the scale and its suitability for application in diverse organisational settings within developing economies.

Structural model and hypothesis testing

Early implementation performance was regressed on the four first-order factors while controlling for firm size, age and sector. The model explained 62.8% of variance ($R^2 = 0.628$). All hypothesised paths were significant and positive except the direct effect of stakeholder readiness, which was negative. Organisational readiness exerted a standardised effect of 0.24 ($p < .001$), resource readiness 0.29 ($p < .001$) and environmental readiness 0.41 ($p < .001$), supporting Hypotheses 1-3.

Table 4. Structural model results

Path	B	SE	t	p
Organisational → Performance	0.24	0.04	5.91	<.001
Resource → Performance	0.29	0.04	7.26	<.001
Environmental → Performance	0.41	0.05	8.19	<.001
Stakeholder → Performance	−0.12	0.04	−2.76	.006
Stakeholder × Organisational	0.09	0.04	2.31	.021
Stakeholder × Resource	0.11	0.04	2.47	.014

Stakeholder readiness displayed a direct coefficient of −0.12 ($p = .006$) yet positively moderated the organisational–performance link (interaction $\beta = 0.09$, $p = .021$) and the resource–performance link (interaction $\beta = 0.11$, $p = .014$), corroborating Hypothesis 4. Simple-slope analysis revealed that when stakeholder readiness was one standard deviation above the mean, the effect of organisational readiness on performance rose from 0.24 to 0.33, whereas at one standard deviation below the mean the effect dropped to 0.15. A comparable pattern held for resource readiness.

Measurement invariance

Multi-group analysis confirmed configural and metric invariance across sector and country sub-samples. Partial scalar invariance was established after freeing two item intercepts associated with environmental scanning frequency and stakeholder briefing regularity. Latent-mean comparisons showed no significant differences in overall readiness between countries, though telecommunications firms reported higher environmental readiness than manufacturing firms ($\Delta\chi^2 = 12.41$, $df = 4$, $p = .015$).

Qualitative–quantitative convergence

Integration revealed strong convergence on three of the four factors. Interviewees described cross-functional "quick-shift teams" and "war-rooms" that exemplify organisational agility, mirroring high loadings on items measuring structural flexibility and empowerment. Resource adequacy was echoed in narratives about "capital starvation" and "skills drought" that paralleled low-scoring survey items among under-performing firms. Environmental turbulence surfaced in descriptions of abrupt regulatory reversals, matching high variance on scanning-capability items. Divergence appeared within the stakeholder dimension: some managers celebrated inclusive "indaba" forums whereas others lamented politicised interference, reflecting the quantitative pattern of a negative direct effect yet positive moderation.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, the study confirmed that strategy-implementation readiness in developing-country firms is best understood as a multidimensional construct, comprising four interdependent factors which are the organisational, resource-related, environmental, and stakeholder readiness. These collectively manifest as a higher-order capability. The empirical validation of this structure offers a significant step forward in modelling readiness as both a granular and integrative phenomenon. Thus, among the four dimensions, environmental readiness emerged as the strongest direct predictor of early implementation performance. This finding is congruent with dynamic-capability theory, which posits that competitive advantage in turbulent environments is contingent upon an organisation's ability to sense, seize, and reconfigure in response to external shifts (Teece, Pisano, &Shuen, 1997). Firms with robust scanning routines, anticipatory intelligence,

and regulatory engagement capacities demonstrated superior execution performance, underscoring the strategic centrality of external alignment. Organisational and resource readiness also exhibited statistically significant and positive associations with implementation outcomes. This corroborates previous findings that leadership commitment, structural alignment, and asset sufficiency are fundamental for successful strategy execution (Vax *et al.,* 2021; Ansari *et al.,* 2025). These factors provide the internal coherence and resourcing backbone necessary to support strategic initiatives under volatile conditions. Interestingly, stakeholder readiness displayed a dual effect. It had a negative direct association with performance, suggesting that intensive stakeholder demands can overwhelm decision-making in weakly institutionalised settings. This aligns with Alolabi, Ayupp, and Dwaikat's (2021) contention that excessive or poorly managed stakeholder participation may introduce ambiguity, delay, or conflict. However, stakeholder readiness also acted as a positive moderator, amplifying the effects of organisational and resource readiness when alignment mechanisms were in place. This duality supports Fernandez et al.'s (2019) argument that the quality of engagement, not mere involvement, is what differentiates enabling from disabling stakeholder dynamics.

The results also yield several, and important, contributions to theory. First, by validating a four-factor readiness model, the study extends Weiner's (2020) conceptualisation of readiness beyond its typical healthcare and public-sector domains, thereby helping to embed readiness more firmly within the strategic-management literature. This answers longstanding calls for cross-context generalisability (Weiner *et al.,* 2020).Secondly, the dominance of environmental readiness refines assumptions embedded in the resource-based view by demonstrating that the efficacy of internal capabilities is conditional on external alignment. In this way, the results support a more integrated perspective, consistent with institutional theory, where legitimacy, regulatory navigation, and macroeconomic sensitivity shape the impact of internal strengths (Sartas *et al.,* 2020).

Thirdly, the observed moderating role of stakeholder readiness offers a novel theoretical insight. Rather than treating stakeholders as exogenous variables or static boundary conditions, the results suggest they function as dynamic assets whose influence depends on the organisation's capacity for purposeful engagement. This insight has implications for emerging theoretical work on stakeholder-as-capability models, where alignment mechanisms, such as joint problem solving, adaptive governance, and communication protocols, are theorised as strategic enablers. The results also carry actionable implications for managers in emerging markets seeking to enhance execution success. First, investment in environmental scanning should be prioritised. Hence, implementing digital dashboards that track policy shifts, inflation, and competitive moves can bolster both foresight and agility, strengthening environmental readiness while enhancing evidence-based decision making (Machado *et al.,* 2021).Managers are thus expected to improve internal adaptability by fostering cross-functional "rapid-response teams" and structural fluidity. These mechanisms allow for timely recalibration when strategic assumptions collide with emergent constraints. Equally, comprehensive resource audits may precede major initiatives, ensuring that funding flows, staffing, and technology align with milestone schedules, thus avoiding the mismatches that have derailed ERP and digital-transformation projects in comparable settings (Malik & Khan, 2021). In this regard, stakeholder engagement should thus be strategic rather than indiscriminate. Mapping each stakeholder's salience and influence permits differentiated engagement strategies, balancing inclusiveness with operational clarity. Tailored involvement enables stakeholders to function as amplifiers of internal capabilities, rather than as disruptors. The validated instrument developed here provides a diagnostic dashboard for firms to assess and address weaknesses in each readiness domain, guiding targeted intervention before full-scale rollout. From a policy standpoint, therefore, the study offers insights into how governments and development agencies can facilitate private-sector implementation capacity. Regulatory stability, information transparency, and institutional support for capacity building are essential levers. Specifically, national development banks and public financiers could link concessional lending to prior readiness assessments, incentivising firms to evaluate and strengthen internal capabilities before initiating major projects. Additionally, industry associations and chambers of commerce can play a pivotal role by hosting shared intelligence platforms that disseminate market forecasts, regulatory alerts, and competitive benchmarks. Such platforms would particularly benefit small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that lack internal analytics capacity. This model is already gaining traction in select African manufacturing clusters, as documented by Brozzi, Riedl, and Matta (2021), and could be scaled regionally to support broader industrial execution capability.

Future research

While this study offers robust insights into the multidimensional nature of strategy-implementation readiness in developing-country contexts, several avenues remain open for further investigation.

First, the cross-sectional design limits inferences to short-term, early-stage implementation outcomes. Although such outcomes are often strong proxies for subsequent success, future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine whether the predictive validity of readiness factors persists over extended timeframes. Multi-wave panel studies would allow scholars to test the temporal stability of the readiness–performance relationship and assess whether certain factors gain or lose salience as projects mature.

Second, although measurement invariance across countries and sectors was largely established, additional research is warranted to evaluate the instrument's applicability in under-represented domains. These include rural enterprises, public-sector utilities, and non-profit organisations, which operate under distinct governance structures, resource constraints, and stakeholder logics. Incorporating such contexts could enhance both the generalisability and the contextual sensitivity of the readiness model.

Third, this study relied on perceptual performance measures due to constraints in accessing objective metrics across multiple jurisdictions. Future work should aim to triangulate self-reported data with objective indicators such as budget adherence, milestone compliance, return on implementation investment, and quality assurance metrics. Such mixed-data approaches would improve the precision of validity assessments and strengthen causal claims.

Fourth, there is scope for experimental and quasi-experimental research that manipulates specific readiness dimensions to assess their individual and interactive effects on implementation outcomes. For instance, field trials introducing structured stakeholder-alignment workshops, scenario-planning exercises, or digital resource audits could illuminate causal mechanisms and provide actionable evidence on the most effective interventions for boosting readiness.

Finally, future research could examine how readiness interacts with other meta-capabilities, such as organisational learning, resilience, or ambidexterity, in shaping implementation trajectories. By embedding readiness within broader theoretical models of organisational adaptation and change, scholars can further enrich our understanding of strategy execution in complex environments.

Conclusion

This study addressed the persistent and well-documented gap between strategy formulation and execution in developing-country contexts by designing and validating a comprehensive, multidimensional instrument to measure strategy-implementation readiness. Drawing on a sequential mixed-methods design, the research integrated inductive qualitative insights with rigorous quantitative analysis to ensure both contextual relevance and psychometric robustness. The final instrument captures four interrelated dimensions, organisational, resource-related, environmental, and stakeholder readiness, each of which contributes uniquely to implementation performance. Environmental readiness emerged as the most powerful direct predictor of early-stage success, affirming the centrality of external sensing, regulatory responsiveness, and anticipatory adaptation in volatile institutional environments. Nonetheless, organisational and resource readiness were also found to be indispensable, with their effectiveness significantly enhanced when stakeholder alignment was actively cultivated and managed. This complex, moderating role of stakeholder readiness suggests that successful implementation depends not only on internal capacity or external fit, but also on an organisation's ability to broker and harmonise stakeholder interests. Theoretically, the study advances implementation scholarship by integrating the resource-based view, institutional theory, and dynamic-capability perspectives into a unified readiness framework. It provides empirical support for understanding readiness not as a static input or a singular competency but as a higher-order, orchestrated capability. Importantly, it clarifies the contingent value of stakeholders, positioning them as either enabling or constraining forces depending on managerial engagement competence. For practitioners, the validated instrument offers a diagnostic dashboard that enables firms to identify and prioritise readiness gaps before full-scale strategy execution. It facilitates more evidence-based resource allocation, promotes strategic stakeholder engagement, and enhances organisational preparedness. For policy makers, the findings highlight sector-wide levers, such as regulatory predictability, shared intelligence platforms, and targeted capability-building programmes, that can elevate the baseline readiness of firms across industries. In sum, this research underscores that in emerging-market contexts, strategic ambition must be matched by multidimensional readiness. Only when leadership commitment, resource adequacy, environmental insight, and stakeholder coordination operate in concert can organisations reliably translate plans into performance, and in doing so, make sustained contributions to inclusive economic development.

REFERENCES

Alolabi, Y. A., Ayupp, K., &Dwaikat, M. A. (2021). Issues and implications of readiness to change. *Administrative Sciences, 11*(4), 140.

Ansari, I., Barati, M., Sadeghi Moghadam, M. R., &Ghobakhloo, M. (2025). Empowering Industry 4.0: Systemizing readiness assessment and strategic roadmapping for digital transformation. *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management.*

Arazmjoo, H., &Pirmorad, H. (2024). Executive framework for evaluation and improvement of strategic changes readiness in public organizations. *Journal of Executive Management, 15*(30), 197–219.

Ardakan, M. A., & Ebadi, N. (2021). Measuring the human capital strategic readiness based on organisational capabilities. *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital, 18*(4), 399–420.

Bali Swain, R., & Yang-Wallentin, F. (2020). Achieving sustainable development goals: Predicaments and strategies. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology, 27*(2), 96–106.

Brozzi, R., Riedl, M., & Matta, D. (2021). Key readiness indicators to assess the digital level of manufacturing SMEs. *Procedia CIRP, 96*, 201–206.

Caci, L., Nyantakyi, E., Blum, K., Sonpar, A., Schultes, M. T., Albers, B., & Clack, L. (2025). Organizational readiness for change: A systematic review of the healthcare literature. *Implementation Research and Practice, 6*, 26334895251334536.

Cândido, C. J., & Santos, S. P. (2019). Implementation obstacles and strategy implementation failure. *Baltic Journal of Management, 14*(1), 39–57.

Chen, G., Yang, Y., Hu, Z., & Zheng, J. (2024). Driving digital success: How managerial readiness shapes strategic decisions in digital transformation. *Journal of Global Information Management, 32*(1), 1–25.

Clark, V. L. P. (2019). Meaningful integration within mixed methods studies: Identifying why, what, when, and how. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 57*, 106–111.

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: A discussion on its types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education, 2*(2), 25–36.

Fernandez, M. E., Ten Hoor, G. A., Van Lieshout, S., Rodriguez, S. A., Beidas, R. S., Parcel, G., ... & Kok, G. (2019). Implementation mapping: Using intervention mapping to develop implementation strategies. *Frontiers in Public Health, 7*, 158.

Fetters, M. D. (2019). *The mixed methods research workbook: Activities for designing, implementing, and publishing projects* (Vol. 7). Sage Publications.

Gregar, J. (2023). *Research design (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches)*. Research Design, 8.

Hafsa, N. E. (2019). Mixed methods research: An overview for beginner researchers. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, 58*(1), 45–48.

Haraguchi, N., Martorano, B., & Sanfilippo, M. (2019). What factors drive successful industrialization? Evidence and implications for developing countries. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics, 49*, 266–276.

Harrison, R. L., Reilly, T. M., & Creswell, J. W. (2020). Methodological rigor in mixed methods: An application in management studies. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 14*(4), 473–495.

Headley, M. G., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2020). Multilevel mixed methods research designs: Advancing a refined definition. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 14*(2), 145–163.

Kabeyi, M. J. B. (2019). Organizational strategic planning, implementation and evaluation with analysis of challenges and benefits for profit and nonprofit organizations. *International Journal of Applied Research, 5*(6), 27–32.

Kajamaa, A., Mattick, K., & de la Croix, A. (2020). How to… do mixed-methods research. *The Clinical Teacher, 17*(3), 267–271.

Lessa, L., &Yigletu, E. T. (2022). Developing and validating pre-implementation readiness measure for enterprise resource planning systems. In *Driving Transformative Change in E-Business Through Applied Intelligence and Emerging Technologies* (pp. 144–164). IGI Global.

Machado, C. G., Winroth, M., Almström, P., Ericson Öberg, A., Kurdve, M., &AlMashalah, S. (2021). Digital organisational readiness: Experiences from manufacturing companies. *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management, 32*(9), 167–182.

Malik, M. O., & Khan, N. (2021). Analysis of ERP implementation to develop a strategy for its success in developing countries. *Production Planning & Control, 32*(12), 1020–1035.

Martin, B., Linick, M. E., Fraade-Blanar, L., Burns, J. G., Foran, C., Grocholski, K. R., ... & Mondshein, J. (2021). *Measuring strategic readiness*. National Defense Research Institute.

Palinkas, L. A., Mendon, S. J., & Hamilton, A. B. (2019). Innovations in mixed methods evaluations. *Annual Review of Public Health, 40*(1), 423–442.

Sartas, M., Schut, M., Proietti, C., Thiele, G., &Leeuwis, C. (2020). Scaling readiness: Science and practice of an approach to enhance impact of research for development. *Agricultural Systems, 183*, 102874.

Sergi, B. S., Popkova, E. G., Bogoviz, A. V., &Ragulina, J. V. (2019). Entrepreneurship and economic growth: The experience of developed and developing countries. In *Entrepreneurship and Development in the 21st Century* (pp. 3–32). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Sony, M., Antony, J., Douglas, J. A., & McDermott, O. (2021). Motivations, barriers and readiness factors for Quality 4.0 implementation: An exploratory study. *The TQM Journal, 33*(6), 1502–1515.

Timans, R., Wouters, P., & Heilbron, J. (2019). Mixed methods research: What it is and what it could be. *Theory and Society, 48*, 193–216.

Vax, S., Gidugu, V., Farkas, M., &Drainoni, M. L. (2021). Ready to roll: Strategies and actions to enhance organizational readiness for implementation in community mental health. *Implementation Research and Practice, 2*, 2633489520988254.

Watson, A. K., Hernandez, B. F., Kolodny-Goetz, J., Walker, T. J., Lamont, A., Imm, P., ... & Fernandez, M. E. (2022). Using implementation mapping to build organizational readiness. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10*, 904652.

Weiner, B. J. (2020). A theory of organizational readiness for change. In *Handbook on Implementation Science* (pp. 215–232). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Weiner, B. J., Mettert, K. D., Dorsey, C. N., Nolen, E. A., Stanick, C., Powell, B. J., & Lewis, C. C. (2020). Measuring readiness for implementation: A systematic review of measures' psychometric and pragmatic properties. *Implementation Research and Practice, 1*, 2633489520933896.

Weiser, A. K., Jarzabkowski, P., & Laamanen, T. (2020). Completing the adaptive turn: An integrative view of strategy implementation. *Academy of Management Annals, 14*(2), 969–1031.

****