

The Effect of Patterns of Strategic Thinking in Strengthening the Elements of Strategic Alliances A Study of the Opinions of a Sample of Private Bank Administrations in Iraq¹

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DOI:10.37648/ijrssh.v13i03.030

Received: 30 May 2023; Accepted: 17 August 2023; Published: 21 August 2023

ABSTRACT

The research aims to study the impact of the transition of traditional banking operations to operations based on the policies and approaches of strategic alliances and their role in improving the performance of performance indicators for the research sample banks. Strategic thinking is far away or reluctant to adopt one of the most important strategic options in place in order to face challenges, whether it is to bridge a specific gap, or treat weaknesses, or to enhance strengths, or to face competitive positions, and that option is represented in the formation of strategic alliances through preparing and preparing the ingredients This option is a critical element in achieving the success of organizations, and the research sample was represented in 106 observations in a number of private banks that have experiences in partnership operations with Arab and international banks, whose opinions were surveyed through a questionnaire prepared for this purpose, as the opinions were analyzed through appropriate statistical tools. Among the most important conclusions, it was found that many banking departments are concerned about the aspects of the costs of dealing with organizations that They are allied with, such as the costs of those bodies and the costs of modifying the organizational structures of Iraqi banks, which may be difficult for the administrations in many cases to fulfill the obligations in this framework. And the semi-official (the Federation of Private Banks) to urge the line towards activating the actual and distinct strategic alliance policies through which it is possible to raise the level of performance of Iraqi banks that have suffered for long periods of a state of isolation from the variables of the banking environment.

Keywords: *patterns of strategic thinking; strategic alliances; Iraqi private banks*

INTRODUCTION

Prominent researchers in the field of management unanimously agree on the necessity for strategic management teams to practice various patterns of strategic thinking in their work. This is justified by the need for business leaders and organizations to employ diverse competitive strategies to ensure the organization's survival. This is analogous to the efforts of political figures seeking strategies for electoral victory or legislators requiring strategic measures to enact their future visions. Strategic thinking patterns enable a comprehensive and distinct view of systems, leading to a deeper understanding of the forces and mutual relationships that shape the system's behavior or the environment upon which options for action are based. In this research, strategic thinking patterns constitute the independent variable.

On the other hand, many phenomena have shaped the global business environment in recent years. These phenomena have emerged as a natural outcome of changing competition rules and the erasure of boundaries that once hindered the convergence of all production elements within a single environment. This convergence spans inputs, supply chains, personnel movement, outputs, and consumers. One of the most significant phenomena shaping the global performance landscape is strategic alliances. These alliances represent the fundamental characteristic of organizational work across different contexts and domains of operation. This variable is the focus of the research. The research problem is identified through diagnosing the issues surrounding the Iraqi banking sector. It is widely recognized that many banks struggle with the problem of adopting a strategic thinking pattern that is either divergent or lagging in embracing one of the key strategic options necessary to confront challenges. These challenges may include addressing specific gaps,

¹ How to cite the article: Enad N.Q. (August, 2023) The Effect of Patterns of Strategic Thinking in Strengthening the Elements of Strategic Alliances A Study of the Opinions of a Sample of Private Bank Administrations in Iraq; *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol 13, Issue 3, 323-339, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37648/ijrssh.v13i03.030>

rectifying weaknesses, reinforcing strengths, or competing effectively. The pivotal option is forming strategic alliances by creating and preparing the necessary components. This option serves as a critical factor in organizations' success.

One of the primary research goals is to study the impact of transitioning from traditional banking operations to operations based on strategic alliance policies and methodologies. The study aims to investigate the role of these operations in enhancing the performance indicators of the sample banks. The research sample comprised 106 respondents from various private banks with experiences in partnership operations with Arab and international banks. Their opinions were collected through a tailored survey. The collected opinions were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The research consists of four chapters: the first covers the methodology, the second presents the theoretical framework, the third encompasses the fieldwork, and the fourth highlights the most significant findings, recommendations, and proposals.

CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY

First : Problem Statement

The research problem is formulated through two axes. The first axis is built upon the conceptual framework based on the intellectual debate, particularly within various management literature. This is especially true when we consider the dynamics of the research variables (strategic thinking patterns and elements of strategic alliances). Both variables are characterized by their novelty, evolution, and continuous change, necessitating researchers to track and observe the nature of these changes in the mentioned concepts and test them in real-world environments. The second axis of the problem formulated by the researcher is manifested through the examination of several field indicators related to the performance of Iraqi banking sector organizations in general, and specifically those indicators that can be monitored through various research publications or statistics from relevant authorities. In general, these indicators reflect a decline in the performance data of these organizations. Many experts attribute this decline to various causes, one of which is the prevalence of a certain type of strategic thinking pattern among operating management. This pattern may diverge from or lag behind adopting one of the key strategic options necessary to confront challenges, whether it involves addressing specific gaps, rectifying weaknesses, reinforcing strengths, or facing competitive situations. This option is the formation of strategic alliances through creating and preparing the necessary components. This option is a critical element in achieving success for many organizations.

Second : The Questions

The problem referred to can be expressed through the following main and sub-questions: The main question: To what extent does the strategic thinking pattern adopted by banking departments affect the strengthening of the elements of the strategic alliance?

Sub-questions : They are expressed in the following

- 1- What is the level of awareness of the leaders working in the private banks of the concepts and images of strategic thinking patterns?
- 2- To what extent do the departments of private banks achieve actual preparation for the elements of a strategic alliance?
- 3- What is the level of correlation and influence relationships between the research variables?

Thirdly : Significance

The significance of the current study is evident through the following points :

1. The complex nature of the relationship between variables (strategic thinking pattern and strategic alliance elements), along with their sub-dimensions, adds a level of intricacy. This complexity makes the research important, as it attempts to explore the interaction between these variables within the realm of banking organizational management. Thus, it contributes modestly to the understanding of the concepts within the context of the banking sector.
2. The importance of the research is highlighted by providing a comprehensive diagnosis of the achieved viability through developing strategic thinking patterns and identifying a set of future directions for the multiple and most suitable patterns.

3. The research's significance arises from the crucial role played by the private banking sector as a field of study. It forms an essential part of the overall economic structure in any country.
4. The importance of the research becomes evident through the value and significance derived from comprehending and adopting the choice of strategic alliance and its impact on enhancing the financial and managerial performance and competitive capabilities of the sampled banks.

Fourthly : Objectives

The research aims to achieve the following:

1. Establish a theoretical and knowledge-based foundation for the study variables (strategic thinking pattern and strategic alliance elements) and their dimensions by reviewing and tracing relevant literature. Present the accomplishments achieved based on the examination of modern philosophical trends while avoiding conventional approaches as much as possible, in order to crystallize solutions related to answering the knowledge problem's questions.
2. Diagnose the levels of (strategic thinking pattern and strategic alliance elements) among the management of private banks in Iraq.
3. Study the impact of transitioning from traditional banking operations to operations based on policies and methodologies of strategic alliances, and its role in enhancing the performance of the study's sample banks.
4. Diagnose possible development areas needed by the researched organizations and develop a set of future directions to employ strategic thinking patterns in dealing with competitive levels in the Iraqi market.
5. Test the relationships and influence between the research variables (explanatory and responsive).

Fifthly : Theoretical Framework of the Research

The theoretical framework represents an expressive image of the research idea and aims to translate the current research problem into its practical framework for the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the results. The theoretical research framework also aims to clarify the relationships and influence between variables, as well as to illustrate the measured dimensions. Bidirectional arrows indicate correlational relationships, while unidirectional arrows indicate a cause-and-effect relationship. The dimensions of the variables have been selected based on the literature and available sources, according to the following variables:

1. The independent (explanatory) variable: It is embodied in the "strategic thinking pattern" and is measured through dimensions: "Concrete Structural Pattern / Abstract Analytical Pattern / Abstract Structural Pattern / Abstract Analytical Pattern".
2. The dependent (responsive) variable: It is embodied in "strategic alliance elements" and is measured through dimensions: "Institutional Framework / Transaction Costs / Resource Advantage." Figure (1) below represents the theoretical framework of the research.

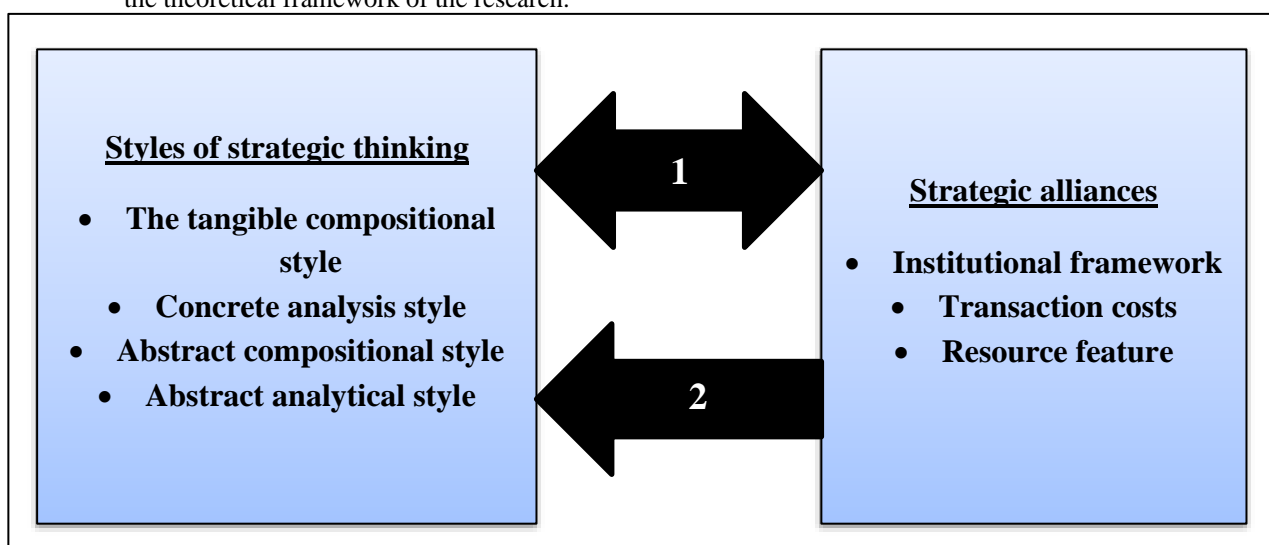


Figure. (1) The hypothetical scheme of the research

Source: Figure prepared by the researcher

Sixth : Research Hypotheses

Based on the hypothetical research scheme, the two main hypotheses were formulated as follows

1- The first main hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between the nature of the strategic thinking pattern of banking management and the strengthening of the elements of the strategic alliance in Iraqi private banks, and the following sub-hypotheses emerge from it:

1-1-1 There is a correlation of significant significance between the (tangible structural pattern) and strengthening the elements of the strategic alliance in the Iraqi private banks.

2-1 There is a significant correlation between (the tangible analytical style) and strengthening the elements of the strategic alliance in the Iraqi private banks.

3-1 - There is a significant correlation between the (abstract synthetic style) and the strengthening of the elements of the strategic alliance in the Iraqi private banks.

4-1 - There is a correlation of significant significance between the (abstract analytical style) and the strengthening of the elements of the strategic alliance in the Iraqi private banks.

2- The second main hypothesis: There is an influence relationship of significant significance to the nature of the strategic thinking pattern of banking management in strengthening the elements of the strategic alliance of Iraqi banks, and the following sub-hypotheses emerge from it:

1-2- There is an influence relationship with significant significance for the dimension (tangible structural pattern) of the banking administration in enhancing the elements of the strategic alliance of Iraqi banks.

2-2- There is an influence relationship with significant significance for the dimension (tangible analytical style) of banking management in enhancing the elements of the strategic alliance of Iraqi banks.

3-2 There is a relationship of influence of significant significance to the dimension (abstract structural pattern) of banking management in strengthening the elements of the strategic alliance of Iraqi banks.

2-4- There is a significant influence relationship for the dimension (abstract analytical style) of banking management in enhancing the elements of the strategic alliance of Iraqi banks.

Seventh : Research Methodology

The research methodology in management sciences serves as a plan that outlines techniques for data collection and analysis, considering the nature of the problem, objectives, research model, and hypotheses. In the current research, a descriptive methodology was adopted due to its suitability and alignment with the nature of the research and the variables under study.

Eighth : Data Sources and Collection Methods

A - The Theoretical Aspect: The sources utilized in this aspect included Arabic and foreign books, journals, theses, and dissertations that addressed the study variables. Additionally, specialized research articles and materials from the international information network (the Internet) were utilized.

B - The Practical Aspect: The research relied on the following methods for information collection:

1. Questionnaires: Prepared to gather opinions of the sample individuals regarding the research variables.
2. Personal Interviews: Personal interviews were conducted with several managers and administrative personnel in the banks under study to understand the nature of their work and diagnose the dimensions of the study variables.
3. Field Visits and Observations: These were carried out to gain insight into the actual operations of private sector banks and assess their overall work environment.

Ninth : Research Scope

1. Geographical Scope : The geographical scope is represented by the headquarters of a sample of Iraqi private sector banks.
2. Time Scope : It encompasses the time period of the field study, spanning the month of September in the year 2022.
3. Human Scope : This pertains to the management teams working in the banks of the research sample, covering various managerial levels.
4. Scientific Scope : It is embodied in the main variables, namely "Strategic Thinking Patterns" and its dimensions as an independent variable, and "Strategic Alliances" and its dimensions as a dependent variable.

Tenth - Statistical Tools Used in Data Processing and Results Extraction

Statistical analysis tools are the fundamental means through which the validity of hypotheses can be determined. Therefore, selecting appropriate statistical tools for data analysis, processing, and hypothesis testing is essential. In light of this, the study necessitates the use of the following statistical tools (Al-Qahtani, 2018: 30, 39):

1. Validity and Reliability Tools: These include the "Face Validity Test" and the "Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient" to verify the stability and accuracy of measurements in field data collection without complexity or overlap.

- **Descriptive Statistical Tools:** These consist of
 - **Mean:** Used to determine the level of agreement on items and the level of field measurements.
 - **Standard Deviation:** Used to gauge the spread of responses around the mean.
 - **Relative Variance Coefficient:** Utilized to ascertain the homogeneity of sample responses.
 - **Relative Significance:** Employed to assess the strength and relative importance of responses in the field.

2. Analytical Statistical Tools : These include

- **Pearson Correlation Coefficient:** Used to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between two variables.
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):** Utilized to measure the level of simple and multiple causal relationships between variables.
- **Execution of the above tools relied on computer software, including:**
 - **SPSS V24:** A statistical software used for analysis and interpretation.
 - **Amos V24:** A program for structural equation modeling.
 - **2010 Microsoft Excel:** Used for data organization and manipulation.

Eleventh : Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a crucial tool adopted in completing the process of scientific research across various sectors and fields of knowledge. A specialized questionnaire was developed for the current study, serving as the primary instrument for conducting the fieldwork. The researcher utilized the five-point Likert scale, which emphasizes differentiation in the strength of agreement between a statement and an option or phrase. This is achieved through assigning levels ranging from a strong positive relationship (concordant) to a strong negative relationship (discordant), using the values (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Additionally, the questionnaire was supplemented with information gathered through oral personal interviews with the researched sample.

A - Composition and Utilization of the Questionnaire:

In accordance with the problem, its questions, and hypotheses, the researcher developed a research questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section encompassed questions related to the personal variables of the sample

individuals, including educational qualifications, job positions, and years of service. Meanwhile, the second section of the questionnaire was devoted to the independent variable, "Strategic Thinking Style," and the dependent variable, "Strategic Alliances." The researcher endeavored to construct the questionnaire tool based on theoretical and practical data, drawing on studies and research that individually addressed the study variables. The researcher's construction of the measurement scale was guided by significant international studies. Table number (1) illustrates the main and subsidiary dimensions of the study variables along with their corresponding scale.

Table (1) the main and sub-dimensions of the study variables and their paragraphs with the approved scale O 4 4

Variables	dimensions	No of paragraphs	approved scale
Strategic thinking style	The tangible compositional style	4	Al-Jabri, 2016 Stamp, 2011
	The concrete analytical style	4	
	Abstract compositional style	4	
	The concrete analytical style	4	
Strategic alliances	Institutional framework	4	Melan Kuls, 2018 Tamimi and Khashali, 2015
	Transaction costs	4	
	Resource feature	4	

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher based on the mentioned sources

B - Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire: Validity is a necessary condition for constructing scientific tests and measurements. It refers to the ability of the measurement tool (questionnaire) to accurately represent what is intended to be measured. Determining the validity and suitability of the measurement tool is crucial in obtaining accurate results. To test the validity of the questionnaire used in the current study, the researcher employed the following statistical methods:

1- Face Validity: Also known as expert or judge validity, this method is used to confirm the ability of the measurement tools to assess the main study variables and their dimensions and items. The questionnaire was presented to a group of experts and specialists in strategic management, financial management, and banking to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of its dimensions and items for the study hypotheses and objectives. Their opinions were collected, and their feedback was incorporated into the questionnaire before it was distributed to the study sample. The questionnaire received an acceptance rate of 89.43%.

1- Construct Reliability of the Questionnaire: Construct reliability refers to the degree to which a measurement instrument provides consistent and stable results. A measurement or test is considered reliable if repeated measurements conducted under consistent conditions yield the same result. The measurement instrument exhibits high consistency if its elements measure the same underlying structure (Taherdoost, 2016:33). To assess the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument, the researcher relied on the Alpha Cronbach test, which is one of the best methods for assessing the reliability of behavioral measures. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, representing the square root of the value of Cronbach's alpha, was used. In this context, Sharma (2016:273) explained how to interpret the values of Alpha Cronbach to assess the achieved reliability in a specific application environment. The results are presented in Table (2).

Table (2) Stability levels according to (Alpha Cronbach) value

No	(Alpha Cronbach) value	stability level
1	$\alpha \geq 0.9$	excellent
2	$\alpha \geq 0.8 < 0.9$	good
3	$\alpha \geq 0.7 < 0.8$	acceptable
4	$\alpha \geq 0.6 < 0.7$	Doubtful
5	$\alpha \geq 0.5 < 0.6$	weak
6	$\alpha \leq 0.5$	unacceptable

Source : Sharma , B. (2016) . A focus on reliability in developmental research through Cronbach's Alpha among medical , dental and paramedical professionals . Asian Pacific Journal of Health Sciences , 3 (P232).

We note from Table (3) below that the values of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient for the main research variables and their sub-dimensions ranged between (0.955 - 0.748). The values of the structural validity coefficient were excellent and high within the sample's answers, and thus the research tool and its measures became valid for the final application as they are characterized by accuracy, stability and high honesty.

Table (3) the coefficient of stability and structural validity at the level of the main variables and their sub-dimensions

No	dimensions	(Alpha value	Cronbach)	Structural coefficient	honesty
1	The tangible compositional style		0.871		0.933
2	The concrete analytical style		0.832		0.912
3	Abstract compositional style		0.837		0.915
4	The concrete analytical style		0.858		0.926
5	Strategic thinking style		0.901		0.949
6	institutional framework		0.851		0.922
7	Transaction costs		.824		0.908
8	Resource feature		0.907		0.952
9	Elements of a strategic alliance		0.918		0.958

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS V24 program

Twelfth : Research Population and Sample

1- Research Population: The scientific methodological mechanisms, when scientifically and accurately applied in the process of selecting a research sample, provide a high level of precision in the nature of the obtained results, especially when the sample accurately represents the nature of the population. Upon reviewing the operational environment of the private banking sector in Iraq, the researcher identified numerous banks that have established partnerships and strategic alliances with Arab and regional banks. These banks could be effectively studied through field research. Therefore, the researcher selected six private banks listed in the Iraq Stock Exchange, known for adopting various alliance and partnership strategies. These banks could provide a genuine picture of banking performance aligned with the research variables. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, with 20 questionnaires administered to each bank. Of these, 106 questionnaires were retrieved for statistical analysis. Table (4) displays the selected research banks, the number of distributed and retrieved questionnaires.

Table (4) Research Sample Banks And The Number Of Questionnaires

No	Banks	number of distributed forms	Number of forms retrieved
1	Dar AISalaam	20	18
2	Iraqi Credit	20	19
3	Iraqi Al-Ahly	20	16
4	Baghdad	20	18
5	Mansour	20	18
6	Regional cooperation for development and investment	20	17
Total		120	106

Source: Table prepared by the researcher

2- Characteristics of the Research Sample

A. Education Level Distribution: Table 5 below highlights the main characteristics of the research sample as follows:
A- According to Educational Qualification: The table shows that individuals with a Bachelor's degree hold the highest percentage at 68.9% with a frequency of 73. The second place goes to Master's degree holders with a frequency of 23 and a percentage of 21.6%. Doctoral degree holders represent the third category with a frequency of 10 and a percentage of 9.5%. These percentages indicate that the study sample possesses university qualifications that contribute to their job performance and capabilities. This supports the comprehensibility of the research variables both in terms of the explanatory and responsive aspects.

B. According to Job Title: The most prevalent job title is "Department Head," ranking first with a frequency of 66 and a percentage of 62.3%. The second most prevalent title is "Department Manager" with a frequency of 29 and a representation percentage of 27.4%. "Board Member" ranks third with a frequency of 7 and a representation percentage of 6.5%. "General Manager" occupies the fourth position with a frequency of 4 and a representation

percentage of 3.8%. These job title categories reflect the diversity of functions based on the banks' organizational structure. The mentioned categories that received the highest rankings play a significant role in the functioning of banking organizations and are closely related to the operational reality.

C- According to Years of Service: The table reveals that individuals with 10 to 6 years of service hold the top position with a percentage of 38.7% and a frequency of 41. The second place goes to those with 20 to 16 years of service, with a frequency of 30 and a percentage of 28.3%. Individuals with 15 to 11 years of service rank third with a frequency of 17 and a percentage of 16. The fourth position is held by individuals with over 25 years of service, representing 14.2% with a frequency of 15. The fifth position goes to individuals with 25 to 21 years of service, with a frequency of 2 and a percentage of 1.9%. The last position, sixth, is for those with 5 to 1 year of service, representing 0.9% with a frequency of 1. These percentages indicate the diversity and blending of experiences, in addition to the progression in the accumulation of expertise and knowledge. Moreover, these percentages align with the age groups in terms of job hierarchy.

Table (5) Characteristics of the research sample

Characteristics	categories	Repetition	ratio
Scientific qualification	BSC	73	%68,9
	Masters	23	%21,6
	PhD	10	%9,5
	Total	106	%100
Job site	Director general	4	%3,8
	Member of the Board of Directors	7	%6,5
	Director of the Department	29	%27,4
	Division official	66	%62,3
	Total	106	%100
service years	5-1	1	%0,9
	10-6	41	%38,7
	15-11	17	%16
	20-16	30	%28,3
	25-21	2	%1,9
	More than 25 years	15	%14,2
	Total	106	%100

Source: Table prepared by the researcher

SECOND TOPIC: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

First : The Strategic Thinking Style

-1 Concept: Strategic thinking is defined as the pursuit of creating and envisioning a radically new future that may lead the company to redefine its core strategy and even its field of operation (Sloan, 2006:203). Fairholm (2009:10) considers it as a "highly complex set of cognitive and affective learning domains that require intensive use of diving deeper into the level of learning with high contemplative ability." Low et al. (2012:502) define it as the ability to accumulate ideas beyond analyzing them, focusing on understanding and comprehending both formal and informal functions of the organization.

The researcher views strategic thinking procedurally as an approach, style, and cognitive pattern with a distinct and learnable concept. It aims to gather and exchange ideas through an ongoing process of innovation, imagination, and reflection to generate new and focused ideas and plans. This capability involves the ability to collect, analyze, interpret, and evaluate information, analyze opportunities and challenges, and create a balance between intuition and analysis. It enables managers to anticipate crises and handle daily management within activities directed toward removing ambiguity, developing, unifying, and directing goals. This is achieved through understanding the past, facing present challenges, and aspiring towards the future.

-2 Models of Strategic Thinking: The theories of researchers and authors have addressed dimensions and types of strategic thinking patterns, stretching from distant time periods dating back to the early 20th century. These theories have evolved into numerous studies due to organizations' need for successful strategies by enabling individuals to practice strategic thinking patterns. Additionally, organizations seek individuals with managerial and professional

potential in practicing strategic thinking patterns. This has led to an increase in studies and research on developing models for strategic thinking patterns. Consequently, various models for strategic thinking patterns have been discussed by different authors and researchers, with notable contributions from Shahin (2018: 78-67).

1. Jung's Model: This model illustrates a study on the traits and characteristics of each individual within two dimensions: extraversion and introversion. In this model, extraverts tend to focus on practical matters and make decisions based on data. They possess a frequent sequence of fundamental decisions and actions, and their inner life is responsive to external circumstances. They are influenced by others and establish numerous relationships. On the other hand, introverts make decisions based on imagination and vision. They tend to be more intelligent than extraverts, exhibit strong emotions, and in 1971, this model was slightly modified to investigate how personal information processing relates directly to brain activity through the two dimensions of perception (gathering information) and judgment (processing information). Perception is achieved through sensing and intuition, while judgment is achieved through thinking and feeling. When both dimensions are combined, integrative thinking is achieved, leading to four dual-pattern types: sensing-thinking, sensing-feeling, intuition-thinking, and intuition-feeling.

2. Barnard's Model: Barnard describes mental processes as consisting of two sets: logical and non-logical. He perceives conscious thinking through logical processes that can be expressed in words or other symbols. Non-logical processes are those that cannot be expressed in words but can be recognized through procedures like judgment or decisions. These represent non-logical processes. By integrating both, integrative thinking is achieved. Those who possess this thinking style gain respect and admiration as there is a need for emotional and analytical integration, which encompasses both processes.

3. Keen and McKenney's Model: This model is based on the assumption of consistent patterns (duality). Thinking evolves through training and experience, and these patterns can be classified into two dimensions: information gathering and evaluation. Information gathering includes two patterns: intuitive and systematic. Evaluation includes two patterns: anticipatory and accepting.

4. Stamp's Model: Proposed by Stamp in 1981, this model classifies managers. It involves studying various aspects of individuals' strategic thinking styles. It suggests a need for: constructing a model to analyze individual styles, analyzing job tasks for style requirements, determining the alignment of individuals with job tasks, changing job roles when tasks are not subject to change to align with occupants' styles. Despite individuals seeking successful decisions in their job tasks, memory capacity constraints limit the success of decisions. Studies indicate that each person has predictable abilities and a systematic style that can be developed in each individual. Abilities vary in growth rates among different individuals, and there are no fixed limits to this growth. This model includes the following patterns: (Stamp, 2011:281)

- **Concrete Synthesis Style:** Generally, individuals within this level work steadfastly and focus on one thing at a time. All knowledge is experiential and comes directly from a tactile and sensory connection with reality. Within this level, there is only one complete and mature method of action, which is realistic and intuitive. A person who prefers this style can be termed procedural, seeking to work and build an implicit sense by focusing on a specific task in the moment.

- **Concrete Analysis Style:** Individuals within this style immerse themselves in conscious experiences and progress to consider the significance of those experiences. They delve deeper into observing outcomes and become more specific while individually searching for theories that explain behavior in specific situations.

- **Abstract Synthesis Style:** In this style, individuals engage in processes and computations to reorganize existing mental content, resulting in a relatively new structure of ideas and insights aimed at achieving a state of abstract thinking.

- **Abstract Analysis Style:** Within this level, individuals are concerned with the principles upon which the organization is built. They seek answers to the "why" of events and have the ability to see relationships between different departments of the organization and the activities occurring in the system.

The researcher believes that the patterns encompassed by the Stamp model, as referred to, are the most consistent with the current research environment and will be adopted in the field study. For instance, concerning the first pattern (Concrete Synthesis), bank administrations are required to focus on performance in a complete and mature manner and make decisions believed to be the closest to reality, especially given the challenges of the Iraqi economic environment characterized by high levels of instability and uncertainty. Additionally, within the context of the

Abstract Analysis pattern, banking administrations need to pay attention to providing compelling and methodical answers to the most impactful question in their operational foundations: "Why do events occur?" This is essential for adopting the most suitable options for the sensitive nature of the banking operations in the environment.

Secondly : Strategic Alliances

1. Concept: In general terms, a strategic alliance refers to "the substitution of cooperation for competition and conflict, often leading to joint efforts in controlling risks, threats, and sharing profits, benefits, and gains." (Chen et al., 2017:49) It is also defined as "a purposeful partnership relationship between two or more organizations to share goals, earnestly seek mutual benefits, and work with a high level of collaboration." (Pansiri, 2020:40) Additionally, Kale et al. (2021:58) describe it as "any arrangement in which two or more parties enter to participate in resources and technical expertise to achieve specific goals. Alliances can be in capital, joint ventures, or both, resulting in joint commitments towards the allied parties." The researcher views strategic alliances procedurally as "any form of collaboration, coordination procedures, and operations adopted between two or more organizations to pool resources, skills, exploit new opportunities, and respond quickly to changes in order to achieve strategic objectives."

2. Foundations: Before an organization enters into a strategic alliance with one or more other organizations, it is necessary for it to provide the following foundations: (Al-Tamimi & Al-Khashali, 2015:645)

A. Institutional Framework : The institutional framework refers to the standards, social values, laws, rules, regulations, and systems that individuals and organizations must adhere to and be guided by in order to gain legitimacy, support, and acceptance. Thus, organizations are a source of the institutional framework due to their provisions, laws, systems, rules, and procedures. The institutional framework assumes that organizations strive to adopt structures, processes, and practices to align with the institutional environment, reflecting society's view of what is correct, acceptable, legitimate, and lawful in terms of behaviors and practices.

B. Transaction Costs : These are costs incurred by organizations in exchanging ownership rights to economic assets, as well as those arising from monitoring, ensuring, and respecting others' rights and commitments. There are two types of costs spent to avoid dealing failures that may be caused by a range of conditions. The first type includes planning, contract drafting, and negotiation costs, while the second type emerges as a result of exploitation and application, where the exploited party bears costs such as monitoring and tracking the performance of the other party and adjusting organizational structures.

C. Resource Advantage : This aspect is based on two fundamental premises: • Considering organizations as non-homogeneous in terms of their resource mix. • The difficulty of resources seamlessly and fully transferring across organizations. Based on this, the unique resources and capabilities of a particular organization enable it to achieve economic benefits, leading to the sustainability of its competitive advantage. The researcher sees that the implications of the Iraqi political, economic, and technological environment place banking administrations before a real challenge, necessitating their reliance on global expertise and leveraging the experiences of banking organizations that have achieved exceptional performance, whether regionally or globally. Here, the alliance strategy emerges as one of the most important means in this approach. Experts emphasize the importance of the potential to acquire and learn new knowledge and capabilities through entering into strategic alliances. Through such alliances, collaborating organizations can achieve high levels of performance by leveraging the implicit knowledge, skills, and exceptional technical capabilities possessed by global banks.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FIELD FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly : Overview of Banking Alliances in Iraq

The opening of foreign banks or the participation of foreign banks in Iraqi banks brings about various technological, service, and financial benefits to Iraqi banks. Furthermore, it helps offer loans at competitive interest rates compared to the rates of the Iraqi banking system. It is noteworthy that the general policy direction of the state encourages such initiatives. The abolishment of the General Directorate for External Transfer Control in the Central Bank of Iraq and the establishment of the Anti-Money Laundering Bureau is a new legislation that facilitates the movement of capital to and from Iraq. Notably, there are distinctive steps taken in this direction, including partnerships between Iraqi commercial banks and foreign banks. These alliances include the Iraqi Commercial Bank's partnership with United Bank (Bahrain) by 49%, Dar Al Salam Investment Bank's partnership with HSBC (British) by 70%, Al-Itihad Al-Qawmi Bank's partnership with National Bank of Kuwait by 75%, and other similar partnerships.

From these partnerships, it can be observed that foreign banks have credibility in the international arena and have branches around the world. It is essential to mention that most Iraqi banks were established during the economic sanctions on Iraq. However, these banks did not fully exercise their role in utilizing available funds for banking facilities by providing loans for various activities. Their current role is mainly limited to purchasing foreign currency from the Iraqi Central Bank auction and transferring it to clients while benefiting from the differences between buying and selling rates. This current role does not represent a genuine banking activity as remittances are not contributing to the concept of developing the national economy's activities.

Moving towards activating the strategy of strategic alliances requires significant efforts, actual strategic and administrative work, and planning to enhance cooperation to ensure that Iraqi banks gain maximum benefit from advanced international and Arab banks.

Secondly : Description and Diagnosis of Research Variables

Description and statistical analysis define the study's measurement levels within the application environment. This section includes presenting the results of the analysis of responses from the study's sample and describing and diagnosing them using appropriate descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, variance ratio, and relative importance. This is done at the level of the current study's variables, their sub-dimensions, and the measurement items associated with them. The researcher used software programs such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS to perform these analyses.

In order to determine the best interpretation of the study participants' responses, the researcher relied on the opinion of Mazahreh et al. (2009), who indicated that in the case of using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree - Strongly Disagree), there are five categories to which the arithmetic means belong. This categorization is illustrated in Table 6.

Table No. (6) Classification of Mean Levels by Categories

Category sequence	category extent	category level
1	1.80-1	very low
2	2.60-1.81	low
3	3.40-2.61	Moderate
4	4.20-3.41	high
5	5.00-4.21	very high

Source : Mazahreh , A. , Hammad , H. & Abu - Jaber , H. (2009) " The Attitudes of Instructors and Faculty Members about the Quality of Technical Education Programs in Community Colleges in Jordan " *Journal of Social Sciences* 5 (4) , P.403

1. Description and diagnosis of variable strategic thinking patterns

Table (7) presents the descriptive statistics for the variable of Strategic Thinking Patterns. The calculated mean was (4.143), with a standard deviation of (0.518), and a variance ratio of (%12.49). The achieved relative importance was (%82.85), indicating that this variable holds a high level of significance according to the responses of the sample individuals. These results suggest a high level of agreement among the researched sample individuals regarding the existence of diverse dimensions of strategic thinking in the field. This confirms that the banking management of the study sample is highly interested in adopting various patterns of strategic thinking.

Among the sub-dimensions, the "Concrete Analytical Pattern" came first, with a variance ratio of (%14.11) and a relative importance of (%68.44). This indicates that the banking management in the research sample shows a tendency to adopt this pattern, as they value practical experiences and emphasize the importance of live experiments and the deep observation of results. Given their involvement with financial elements that often rely on specific indicators and measures, it is crucial for the banking management to closely monitor multiple outcomes.

On the other hand, the "Abstract Synthesis Pattern" ranked last with a calculated mean of (3.847), a variance ratio of (%16.13), and this signifies the urgent need for the working administrations to engage in processes and accounts of reorganizing the existing mental content. This is particularly important considering the emergence of relatively new structures of ideas and visions, especially given the rapidly changing economic and financial environment in Iraq due to various political factors and crises on multiple fronts.

Table (7) Descriptive statistics of the strategic thinking patterns variable

No	dimensions	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	coefficient of difference	Relative importance	Arrangement of dimensions according to the coefficient of difference
1	Concrete structural style	4.291	0.615	14.33	85.81	the second
2	concrete analytical style	4.322	0.610	14.11	85.44	the first
3	Abstract compositional style	4.110	0.663	16.13	82.21	the fourth
4	concrete analytical style	3.847	0.620	16.11	76.94	the third
	Styles of strategic thinking	4.143	0.518	12.49	82.85	-

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the statistical program

2. Description and diagnosis of the commitment variable

Table (8) presents a descriptive statistical analysis of the variable "Strategic Alliance Components." The computed mean was (4.184), with a standard deviation of (0.553), and a variance ratio of (%13.22). The achieved relative importance was (%83.67), indicating that this variable holds a high level of significance based on the responses from the sample participants. These results suggest a strong consensus among the surveyed individuals regarding the elevated importance of strategic alliance components.

When arranging the sub-dimensions by variance ratio, the "Institutional Framework" ranked first with a variance ratio of (%13.02) and a standard deviation of (0.553). This implies that banking organizations are endeavoring to embrace structures, procedures, and practices that align with the institutional environment, reflecting the societal perspective on what is considered right, acceptable, legitimate behavior, and practices. At times, this alignment can be attributed to a fundamental element that shapes the overarching framework for private sector activities within the banking environment, encompassing all facets of operations. This alignment can occasionally account for some imbalances between private sector entities and public sector organizations, indicating a genuine weakness in the private sector and its organizations.

On the other hand, the "Transaction Costs" dimension ranked last with a variance ratio of (%15.82) and an averaged mean of (4.126). According to the field researcher's observations, this dimension appears to be a concern for many banking administrations. It encompasses several aspects, including the costs associated with regulatory oversight involved in alliances and the expenses incurred for adjusting the organizational structures of Iraqi banks. Meeting the obligations within this context might prove challenging for administrations on numerous occasions.

Table (8) Descriptive statistics of the Strategic Alliance Components

No	dimensions	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	coefficient of difference	Relative importance	Arrangement of dimensions according to the coefficient of difference
1	institutional framework	4.348	0.553	13.02	84.95	the first
2	handling costs	4.126	0.653	15.82	82.52	the third
3	resource feature	4.177	0.604	14.45	83.54	the second
	Elements of a strategic alliance	4.184	0.553	13.22	83.67	-

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the statistical program

Secondly : Testing Hypotheses of Correlation

Testing hypotheses of correlation requires inferential analysis, assessing the Pearson correlation coefficient. Thus, we will present statistical analysis tables in this section, displaying correlation coefficients between study variables. The results also indicate the type of test as tailed-2 and the abbreviated Sig., which signifies the significance of the

correlation coefficient. If the symbol (**) appears next to the correlation coefficient, it signifies the significance at a level of 0.01 and a confidence level of 99%. Meanwhile, the symbol (*) indicates significance at a level of 0.05 and a confidence level of 95%.

To interpret the value of the correlation coefficient and how to judge it, it will be categorized into five main categories, as illustrated in Table (9) below:

Table (9) Categories for Interpreting Correlation Coefficient Levels

No	Interpretation of correlations	Correlation coefficient value
1	There is no relationship	$r = 0$
2	Completely positive or negative	$r = \pm 1$
3	Weak positive or negative	$\pm(0.00 - 0.30)$
4	strong positive or negative	$\pm(0.31 - 0.70)$
5	Very strong positive or negative	$\pm(0.71 - 0.99)$

Source : Saunders , M. , Lewis , P. , & Thornhill , A. (2009) . " Research methods for business students " 5th ed . Pearson Education Limited : Prentice Hall , England , P.459 .

Table (10) below presents a matrix of correlations between strategic thinking patterns and the components of a strategic alliance

Table (10) Correlation coefficients between strategic thinking patterns and components of the strategic alliance

patterns of strategic behavior	concrete analytical style	Abstract compositional style	concrete analytical style	Concrete structural style	independent variable	
					Pearson Correlation	Elements of a strategic alliance
.887**	.687**	.725**	.794**	.725**	Sig (2 tailed)	
.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	N	
106	106	106	106	106		

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the statistical program

The results of Table (10) indicate a significant positive correlation between the variables of strategic thinking patterns and the components of strategic alliance. The correlation coefficient value between them was (**0.887**). This value signifies a strong positive relationship between these variables at a significance level of 0.01 and a confidence level of 99%. Based on the presented information, this relationship can be interpreted as follows: The focus of the studied bank management on the dimensions of strategic thinking patterns, through enhancing their expertise and practice of strategic thinking frameworks in banking operations and improving their skills in dealing with strategic work elements, enhances the banks' ability to engage in successful strategic alliances.

Regarding the sub-variables, the following correlation coefficients were achieved with the components of strategic alliance: (Concrete Synthesis Pattern/Concrete Analytical Pattern/Abstract Synthesis Pattern/Concrete Analytical Pattern) had correlation coefficients of (.687**, .725**, .794**, .725**) respectively. Altogether, the results support the achievement of the main hypothesis and its derived sub-hypotheses.

Secondly : Testing Hypotheses of Influence

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an extremely effective technique for representing the direct and indirect effects of latent variables on the observed factors in the hypothetical model. This technique stands out because it reverses regression analysis. It allows for the inclusion of measurement errors in the analyses because ignoring measurement errors can lead to biased parameter estimates between variables, exacerbating the problem without resolving it (Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, 2017:31). As such, SEM is an advanced technique for determining the level of influence between variables, and it will be adopted for the purpose of selecting the main and subsidiary hypotheses of influence.

Table (11) presents the values of this test as follows:

Table (11) Paths and Parameters of Testing the Influence of Strategic Thinking Patterns on the Components of Strategic Alliance.

tracks			Non-standard weights	Non-standard rating	Standard error	critical ratio	Morale percentage
Elements of a strategic alliance	<---	Styles of strategic thinking	.887	.948	.047	20.125	***
Concrete structural style	<---	Styles of strategic thinking	.841	.999	.061	16.307	***
concrete analytical style	<---	Styles of strategic thinking	.775	.928	.072	12.869	***
Abstract compositional style	<---	Styles of strategic thinking	.894	1.054	.050	20.930	***
concrete analytical style	<---	Styles of strategic thinking	.796	1.019	.074	13.784	***
institutional framework	<---	Elements of a strategic alliance	.881	.881	.045	19.545	***
handling costs	<---	Elements of a strategic alliance	.918	1.083	.044	24.358	***
resource feature	<---	Elements of a strategic alliance	.949	1.035	.033	31.607	***

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical program

The second main hypothesis states: "There is a significant positive relationship between the nature of strategic thinking patterns of the banking management and enhancing the components of strategic alliances in Iraqi banks."

As demonstrated in the above Table (11), there is a significant positive influence of strategic thinking patterns on strategic alliance components. The results of the matching indicators of the model fall within the designated acceptance range. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) value is 0.20, which is less than its acceptable range of 0.08. The standardized effect coefficient value (0.89) indicates that strategic thinking patterns influence strategic alliance components by 89% among the sample banks. This means that a one-unit change in strategic thinking patterns in the sample banks will result in an 89% change in strategic alliance components. This value is significant because the Critical Ratio (C.R) value in the table is 20.125, significant at a significance level (P-Value) shown in the table itself. Additionally, the table illustrates that the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.79, meaning that the variable of strategic thinking patterns explains 79% of the variations in strategic alliance components in the sample banks. The remaining 21% is attributed to other variables not included in the study model. Based on the aforementioned results, the second main hypothesis is accepted.

Table (12) Paths and Parameters of Testing the Influence of Dimensions of Strategic Thinking Patterns on Strategic Alliance Components

tracks			Non-standard weights	Non-standard rating	Standard error	critical ratio	Morale percentage
Elements of a strategic alliance	<---	Concrete structural style	.208	.187	.062	3.038	.002
Elements of a strategic alliance	<---	concrete analytical style	.285	.258	.070	3.705	***
Elements of a strategic alliance	<---	Abstract compositional style	.317	.264	.048	5.538	***
Elements of a strategic alliance	<---	concrete analytical style	.265	.237	.049	4.805	***

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical program

1-2: There is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of "Tangible Analytical Pattern" of banking management in enhancing the components of strategic alliances in Iraqi banks. The table above illustrates the presence of a significant positive influence of the "Tangible Analytical Pattern" dimension on the components of strategic alliances. The standardized effect coefficient value is approximately 0.21, which means that the Tangible Analytical Pattern dimension influences the strategic alliance components by approximately 21% among the sample banks. This suggests that a one-unit change in the Tangible Analytical Pattern dimension in the sample banks will result in a 21% change in the strategic alliance components. This value is significant because the Critical Ratio (C.R.) value in the table is 3.038, significant at a significance level of 0.002. Based on this, the first subsidiary hypothesis is accepted.

2-2: There is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of "Concrete Analytical Pattern" of banking management in enhancing the components of strategic alliances in Iraqi banks. The table above shows the presence of a significant positive influence of the "Concrete Analytical Pattern" dimension on the components of strategic alliances. The standardized effect coefficient value is approximately 0.28, which means that the Concrete Analytical Pattern dimension influences the strategic alliance components by approximately 28% among the sample banks. This suggests that a one-unit change in the Concrete Analytical Pattern dimension in the sample banks will lead to achieving a higher level of strategic alliance-related components by 28%. This value is significant because the Critical Ratio (C.R.) value in the table is 3.705, significant at a significance level of 0.000. This confirms the hypothesis.

3-2: There is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of "Abstract Structural Pattern" of banking management in enhancing the components of strategic alliances in Iraqi banks. The table above demonstrates the presence of a significant positive influence of the "Abstract Structural Pattern" dimension on the components of strategic alliances. The standardized effect coefficient value is approximately 0.32, indicating that the Abstract Structural Pattern dimension influences the strategic alliance components by around 32% among the sample banks. This implies that a one-unit change in the Abstract Structural Pattern dimension in the sample banks will enhance the strategic alliance components by 32%. This value is significant because the Critical Ratio (C.R.) value in the table is 5.538, significant at a significance level of 0.000. This confirms the acceptance of the subsidiary hypothesis.

4-2: There is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of "Abstract Analytical Pattern" of banking management in enhancing the components of strategic alliances in Iraqi banks. The table above shows the presence of a significant positive influence of the "Abstract Analytical Pattern" dimension on the components of strategic alliances. The standardized effect coefficient value is approximately 0.27, indicating that the Abstract Analytical Pattern dimension influences the strategic alliance components by about 27% among the sample banks. This suggests that achieving a higher level of the "Abstract Analytical Pattern" by one unit leads to a 27% change in the strategic alliance components of the banks. This value is significant because the Critical Ratio (C.R.) value in the table is 4.805, significant at a significance level of 0.000. This confirms the acceptance of the subsidiary hypothesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS**Firstly : Conclusions**

1. The results of the field study revealed that the perspective of the sampled banking managements towards adopted strategic thinking patterns is primarily reflected in the managerial teams' engagement with real-world experiences and their progression towards recognizing the significance of expertise. Additionally, there is a trend towards delving deeper into observing outcomes, especially since they deal with the financial element, which often relies on specific indicators and measures. Therefore, banking managements are required to continuously monitor their diverse outcomes.
2. The field study results highlighted the inclination of banking managements towards securing entry into the processes and accounts of content reorganization, with the emergence of a relatively new structure of ideas and visions, especially considering the nature of the Iraqi economic and financial environment characterized by rapid and multifaceted changes due to political factors and crises on various fronts.
3. The field researcher's observations revealed that many banking managements are preoccupied with concerns related to the costs associated with dealing with the organizations they form alliances with. These concerns include expenses related to those entities and the costs of adjusting the organizational structures of Iraqi banks. This can often pose challenges for managements to fulfill the obligations required in this context.
4. The field study results indicated the achievement of testing the hypotheses of influence and correlation between the variables.

Secondly : Recommendations and Suggestions**A. Recommendations**

1. It is essential to deepen awareness regarding the strategic thinking patterns that should be followed or adopted. This should be done scientifically and systematically to understand various events and make different strategic decisions. The researcher observed that many administrations adopt multiple thinking patterns but not within scientific and methodical frameworks.
2. It is necessary to actively engage in activities such as awareness workshops, quality circles, seminars, and direct interactions with employees to build a robust organizational culture that places the idea of strategic alliances in a prominent position within the minds of various managerial teams. This will contribute to enhancing organizational commitment, especially considering that the banking sector requires openness to different global experiences for the development of the Iraqi banking sector.
3. Tourism administrations should implement mechanisms and training programs that enrich the aspects and skills of strategic thinking among employees at various managerial levels. There should be an effort to expand the scope and content of job descriptions for different roles within banking organizations, reinforcing them with additional tasks to establish a situation where employees feel responsible for decision-making processes based on exceptional strategic thinking.
4. Official financial and economic institutions such as the Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, Financial Control Bureau, and semi-official institutions like the Association of Private Banks should be proactive in promoting effective and exceptional strategic alliance policies. These policies can uplift the performance of Iraqi banks that have long suffered from isolation from the dynamics of the banking work environment.

B. Suggestions

The current research can serve as a foundation for further scientific efforts by researchers to cover areas that have not been addressed in this study. The following points outline some of the key suggestions:

1. Investigate the impact of strategic behavior of banking administrations on enhancing strategic performance.
2. Examine the effect of strategic orientation in strengthening strategic alliance components.
3. Explore the role of strategic thinking and its influence on the success of strategic partnerships.

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