"Strategic fit and strategic drift in Jordanian pharmaceutical manufacturing: The moderating role of environmental factors"

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STRATEGIC FIT AND STRATEGIC DRIFT IN JORDANIAN PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING: THE MODERATING ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between strategic fit and strategic drift in Jordanian pharmaceutical manufacturing and tests whether environmental factors moderate this relationship. Motivated by rising environmental dynamism and uncertainty, the study examines how alignment between internal capabilities and external conditions relates to drift over time. Survey data were collected from 164 senior and middle managers in Jordanian pharmaceutical firms between late November 2024 and late January 2025. The model was tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that strategic fit has a statistically significant positive effect on strategic drift ($\beta = 0.283$, $p = 0.001$). In addition, environmental factors significantly moderate the fit–drift relationship ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.007$), suggesting that external conditions shape the strength of this linkage. The study contributes empirical evidence on how internal alignment and environmental context jointly influence strategic drift and offers practical implications for strengthening adaptive strategic practices in the pharmaceutical sector.

Keywords strategic fit, strategic drift, environmental dynamism, moderation, pharmaceutical manufacturing, Jordan, PLS-SEM

JEL Classification M10, L60, O30, M19

INTRODUCTION

In dynamic, complex, and uncertain environments, organizations increasingly rely on strategic management to sustain performance and protect their competitive positions. Yet, a persistent challenge remains: strategies often evolve more slowly than the external environment, creating conditions for strategic drift. Strategic drift can be understood as the gradual development of misalignment between an organization's strategic direction and changes in its external environment when strategic adjustment lags behind environmental change. Decision-makers may fail to interpret early environmental signals, allowing this misalignment to accumulate over time and weaken competitiveness (Maosa, 2015; Johnson, 1988).

In practice, organizations that underweight environmental change or delay responding to it are more likely to experience drift, especially when external shifts are rapid and uncertain (Ayoubi et al., 2018). This challenge is closely linked to strategic fit, which reflects the alignment between internal capabilities and external conditions and has long been associated with sustainable competitive advantage (Auster et al., 2018). However, maintaining fit is difficult because markets, technologies, regulations, and customer expectations can shift faster than strategic adjustment, producing a growing mismatch with industry requirements (Hill et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2017; Gachanja & Wambua, 2018).

This issue is particularly salient in the pharmaceutical industry, a sector characterized by intense regulation, technological advances, and demanding quality and compliance standards. In Jordan, pharmaceutical manufacturing plays a meaningful role in health provision and export activity (Jordan Chamber of Industry, n.d.). In such settings, alignment between internal capabilities and external requirements becomes critical, while delays in strategic adaptation can gradually result in drift and performance deterioration (M.H. Rahman & A. Rahman, 2020; Tajeddini & Mueller, 2019).

Importantly, environmental conditions may not only trigger drift but also shape how strongly alignment (fit) translates into drift outcomes over time. Environmental dynamism and complexity, for instance, can intensify strategic pressures and raise the cost of slow adaptation, increasing the risk of mismatch (Frank et al., 2017; Tajeddini & Mueller, 2019). Despite this relevance, empirical work that jointly links strategic fit, strategic drift, and environmental factors in Jordanian pharmaceutical manufacturing remains limited, creating a clear research problem for strategic management scholarship and practice.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

This paper reviews the literature on strategic fit, environmental factors, and strategic drift, and then links these perspectives to develop the study hypotheses. It also outlines why dynamic capabilities provide a relevant lens for the proposed relationships. The roots of strategic fit go back to the design school in strategic management, where strategic fit arises from the idea that organizations should seek to match, harmonize, and arrange the resources, capabilities, competencies, and knowledge they possess to use them to support this type of fit with the competitive environment in which the organization operates (Auster et al., 2018).

Fit can be understood as the degree of consistency among multiple organizational elements (such as strategy, structure, technology, culture, and the external environment), so the organizational structure must be well-suited to support the implementation of the strategy in a highly competitive and changing environment (Caniëls & Baaten, 2019).

The concept of strategic fit is most commonly used to evaluate the internal elements of an organization and the external environment of a firm (Trevor & Varcoe, 2017; Wadström, 2019). According to Chung (2017), strategic fit concerns how well an organization's resources align with its internal and external processes.

M.H. Rahman and A. Rahman (2020) assert that strategic fit refers to an organization's ability to meet the requirements of the external environment through its internal resources and capabilities. Strategic fit is a measure of how well an organization matches its resources and capabilities with the opportunities presented by the external environment (Mutamba, 2022).

Zajac et al. (2000) introduced the concept of dynamic strategic fit, which focuses on the importance of organizations understanding the need to adapt their strategies in response to environmental changes. It involves considering what, when, in what direction, and to what extent strategies should be adjusted to developments that vary over time (Auster et al., 2018).

Yusoff et al. (2016) note that strategic fit consists of two basic dimensions: internal and external. Lin et al. (2016) assert that strategic fit consists of internal and external strategic fit. Similarly, Hashem and Al-Maani (2019) determined that strategic fit is represented by internal and external strategic fit. Internal strategic fit refers to the degree to which an organization's structure and strategies are compatible with one another, as well as with the

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behaviors, events, abilities, concepts, and plans put into place by executives, managers, and staff. Internal strategic fit is considered the most important dimension of strategic fit because of its impact on the internal direction of the organization (Hashem & Al-Maani, 2019).

External strategic fit refers to how well an organization's strategy corresponds with key features of its environment, including customer needs, competitive actions, market structure, and evolving industry requirements (e.g., competitors' pricing and promotion campaigns) (Kaliappen & Hilman, 2017). Accordingly, Lin et al. (2016) asserted that external strategic fit is based mainly on the theory of resource dependence and the life cycles of the industry. Resource dependence theory (RDT) argues that organizations depend on external actors for scarce and critical resources and, therefore, must actively manage environmental interdependencies to reduce uncertainty and support survival and growth (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Hillman et al., 2009). In addition, industry life-cycle perspectives suggest that the sources of competitive advantage (and the strategies that are most effective) can shift across stages of industry development, including entry, growth, maturity, and shakeout/decline (Gort & Klepper, 1982; Klepper & Simons, 2005).

As a result of technological, political, information, and knowledge advancements, the concept of the environment has greatly expanded in terms of its complex dimensions and components as well as their interaction (Hill et al., 2016). A lack of clarity and mismatch between the departments' vision and the nature of environmental events and interactions continues to be a fundamental and significant challenge, despite the widespread adoption of the concept of the environment since the 1950s (Dess et al., 2015). Newkirk and Leeder (2006) and Chen et al. (2014) established the components of environmental factors and their measurement indicators. Organizational competitiveness, client service, and business growth are all affected by environmental dynamism, which is defined as "changes in the competitive environment" (Wilhelm et al., 2015).

According to Tajeddini and Mueller (2019), environmental dynamism is the degree to which power shifts rapidly in both the public and private economic contexts. Frank et al. (2017) defined environmental dynamism as a shift in an organization's growth capabilities within its industry, the rate of changes in organizational procedures, the rate of product and operation innovations, and the advancement of research and development activities. As a result, when the rate of environmental dynamism in the environment of organizations increases, organizations must face many sudden transformations in the market, which are usually similar to critical self-regulation, as they continue to structure the system until it reaches a critical stage that can cause any small action to collapse or disrupt the system, also known as the transition. An organization's inability to adapt to this kind of change may lead to a decline in activity levels. To deal with this kind of sudden and growing dynamic, businesses must be ready to scrap their old success formula and come up with a new one (Tajeddini & Mueller, 2019). Environmental complexity refers to the degree of improper homogeneity and the concentration of environmental factors, implying that a large multiplicity of environmental variables can lead to numerous complications (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Bezler et al. (2019) mentioned that there are many reasons for environmental complexity, and the most important are as follows.

The first is the diversity of the environmental effects facing organizations. The second is the breadth of knowledge needed to address these effects. The third is the degree to which these various environmental effects are interconnected.

Environmental complexity has an impact on both the organization's strategy and performance, either directly or indirectly, by reducing performance efficiency and effectiveness or by influencing the organization's structural and administrative features. As a result, environmental complexity displays a collection of functions related to the number of environmental components with which organizations are expected to engage based on two main factors: (1) the lack of similarity between environmental aspects; (2) the technical knowledge function necessary for efficient interactions with complex environmental elements (Mason & Dobbelstein, 2016).

Strategic drift refers to the gradual development of misalignment between an organization's strategic direction and changes in its external environment. Johnson (1988) explains that when strategic change happens mainly through incremental adjustments, managers may fail to recognize the scale of environmental shifts, allowing misalignment to accumulate over time.

This process is also discussed in the strategy literature as a progressive weakening of strategy–environment fit, where organizations continue with established strategic assumptions while external conditions evolve, which can ultimately erode competitiveness (Johnson et al., 2008).

From a conceptual standpoint, strategic drift can be viewed as a form of organizational inertia in which firms persist with familiar routines even as markets, technology, regulation, and customer expectations change. Sammut-Bonnici (2014) defines drift as a gradual deterioration of competitive action stemming from the failure to acknowledge and respond to environmental change, which may lead to performance decline.

This study builds on the conceptualization of strategic fit as the degree of alignment (congruence) between internal organizational arrangements and external environmental conditions (Venkatraman, 1989), and strategic drift as the gradual development of strategy–environment misalignment when strategic adjustment lags behind environmental change (Johnson, 1988; Sammut-Bonnici, 2014). Thus, we argue that the fit–drift linkage is contingent on the characteristics of the external environment. In environments characterized by higher dynamism and complexity (Dess & Beard, 1984), sustaining fit becomes more challenging and may increase the likelihood of drift if strategic adjustment does not keep pace with environmental change.

Prior empirical work links strategic fit to beneficial organizational outcomes. Lin et al. (2016) showed that total strategic fit (internal and external) positively affects performance, although effect sizes differ across sectors. Miles and Van Clieaf (2017) similarly argue that strategic fit contributes to enterprise value through innovation and operational differentiation. Hashem and Al-Maani (2019) further report that strategic fit enhances marketing performance, while alignment between resource allocation and organizational behavior supports customer value creation (Dellestrand et al., 2020). Chang et al. (2021) also indicate that strategic fit can mitigate the negative impact of customers' bargaining power on supplier performance. Collectively, this evidence underscores the value of maintaining strategic fit; however, when environmental change outpaces strategic adjustment, organizations may experience a growing strategy–environment mismatch, i.e., strategic drift (Johnson, 1988; Johnson et al., 2008; Sammut-Bonnici, 2014).

Dynamic capabilities theory emphasizes a firm's ability to sense emerging opportunities and threats, seize opportunities, and reconfigure resources and routines in response to environmental change (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). This perspective aligns with evidence that firms operating in dynamic contexts, such as developing economies, must continuously adapt their strategic choices and resource configurations to sustain performance (Rahman et al., 2023). It also complements the strategic fit argument that organizational plans and capabilities should be aligned with environmental conditions (Kalantari & Aslani, 2021). Likewise, research on export success suggests that strategic fit and firm heterogeneity shape outcomes under market complexity, reinforcing the relevance of dynamic capabilities for navigating turbulent environments (Hoque et al., 2022). Furthermore, as open systems, organizations must consider environmental influences while making strategic choices and pursuing organizational goals (Gachanja et al., 2022).

In summary, the literature suggests that maintaining fit is beneficial, but delayed adaptation under dynamic and complex conditions can increase the risk of drift.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between strategic fit and strategic drift in Jordanian pharmaceutical manufacturing and test whether environmental factors moderate this relationship. Accordingly, environmental factors are expected to shape how strongly strategic fit translates into (lower) strategic drift in practice.

Based on the theoretical background, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

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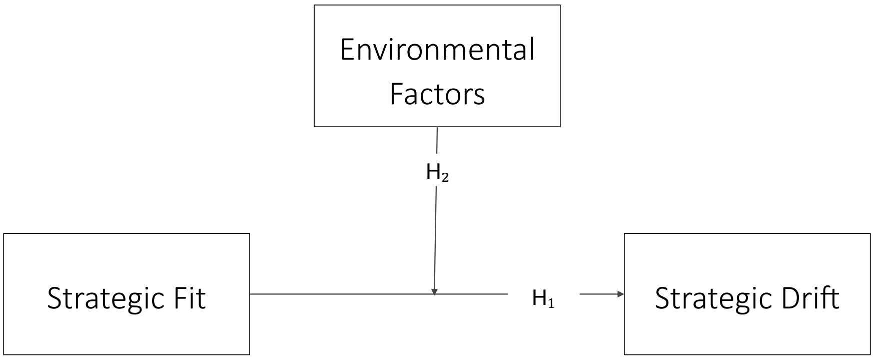

Figure 1. Research model

H1: Strategic fit is positively associated with strategic drift.

H2: Environmental factors moderate the relationship between strategic fit and strategic drift.

Building on these hypothesized relationships, Figure 1 presents the integrated conceptual model linking strategic fit, strategic drift, and environmental factors that guide the empirical analysis in this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

To record the variables considered in this study, we used measurement scales that were either adapted from prior literature or customized to fit the assessment context. A concise list of the exact questionnaire items used in the survey is provided in Appendix B.

The independent variable, strategic fit (SF), was operationalized using an eight-item scale designed and validated by Alshebli (2016), Lin et al. (2016), Yusoff et al. (2016), and Hashem and Al-Maani (2019). The dependent variable, strategic drift, was measured using eight items drawn from Maosa (2015), Sammut-Bonnici (2014), Gachanja and Wambua (2018), Hussein and Abdul Hassan (2020), Hussein (2022), and Abdel Latif and Abed (2023). The moderating variable, environmental factors, was operationalized using an eight-item scale developed and validated by Newkirk and Lederer (2006) and Chen et al. (2014). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Negatively worded strategic drift items were reverse coded in SPSS prior to importing the dataset into SmartPLS so that higher scores indicate lower levels of strategic drift. Before the main data collection, the instrument was subjected to a pilot assessment to evaluate clarity and preliminary psychometric quality. As part of this process, six faculty members examined the wording of the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study constructs, and their feedback was used to refine phrasing and reduce ambiguity before the full survey was administered (Lynn, 1986; Boateng et al., 2018). Following these revisions and the pilot assessment, the instrument was considered adequate to proceed to the main study, consistent with recommended procedures for establishing preliminary content validity and reliability prior to large-scale administration (Lynn, 1986; Boateng et al., 2018).

Regarding ethical considerations, participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. To ensure anonymity, the questionnaire did not collect personal identifiers, and responses were analyzed only in aggregate form. All respondents provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire, and the study complied with the ethical guidelines of the authors' institution.

Although the authors are institutionally affiliated with a Malaysian university, the empirical context of this study is Jordan. The first author is Jordanian and is familiar with the local socio-economic, cultural, institutional, and pharmaceutical manufacturing context. Data collection was conducted in Jordan through direct field coordination with eligible senior- and middle-level leaders in pharmaceutical factories. The questionnaire was administered in both Arabic and English to support respondent comprehension and maintain consistency with the original measurement items. For publication purposes, the English version of the questionnaire items is provided in Appendix B.

Survey data were collected from senior- and middle-level leaders in pharmaceutical factories in Jordan. The sampling frame derived from JAPM membership is provided in Appendix A. A total of 187 questionnaires were distributed, of which 172 were returned. Eight questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete information, resulting in 164 valid responses and an effective response rate of 87.70 percent. Descriptive statistics of the survey items are reported in Table 1, while the measurement properties, including indicator loadings and reliability, are reported in the Results section as part of the measurement model assessment.

We tested the proposed model using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2024). PLS-SEM is appropriate for models that include multiple latent constructs and interaction effects and is often recommended when the primary objective is prediction and theory development (Hair et al., 2019). It also offers flexibility regarding distributional assumptions and can accommodate reflective and formative measurement specifications (Hair et al., 2019). Following established guidance for PLS-SEM applications, we evaluated both the measurement model and the structural model and report the key quality criteria accordingly (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2014). In addition, the sample size (n = 164) meets commonly used minimum requirements in PLS-SEM applications (Hair et al., 2019).

3. RESULTS

In PLS-SEM, the first step is to evaluate the measurement (outer) model to ensure that the constructs are measured reliably and validly before testing the structural relationships. Accordingly, the assessment focused on (i) indicator reliability, (ii) internal consistency reliability, and (iii) convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Indicator reliability was assessed using standardized outer loadings. Following Hair et al. (2019), indicators with loadings of 0.708 or higher are generally considered acceptable. Therefore, indicators with loadings below 0.708 were removed to improve indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and the standardized loadings for all indicators. Based on the loading criterion, SF2, SF3, and EV7 were deleted, while the remaining indicators were retained for subsequent analyses (Hair et al., 2019).

To assess internal consistency reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were examined (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha and CR values exceed commonly accepted thresholds (≥ 0.70), indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, AVE values are above 0.50, supporting convergent validity because each construct explains at least half of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The reliability of the instruments was checked by determining the Cronbach's alpha coefficients. As shown in Table 2, the strategic fit scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.886, the environmental factor scale had 0.877, and the strategic drift scale had 0.929. Hair et al. (2019) proposed a criterion of 0.70, which the estimations exceeded, indicating the internal consistency of the scale's items. The composite reliability coefficients of all constructs were higher than the minimally acceptable level of 0.700, indicating that the measures had adequate internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), where values above 0.50 indicate that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was first examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of AVE for each construct to exceed its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We also assessed discriminant validity using cross-loadings, where each indicator should load highest on its associated construct (Chin, 1998).

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Table 1. Survey item indicator and loadings

Construct	Mean	SD	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Decision
Strategic Fit					
SF1	4.530	0.638	0.718	0.905	Accept
SF2	4.482	0.629	0.692*		Deleted
SF3	4.427	0.733	0.671*		Deleted
SF4	4.390	0.769	0.756		Accept
SF5	4.354	0.722	0.770		Accept
SF6	4.329	0.626	0.849		Accept
SF7	4.274	0.638	0.842		Accept
SF8	4.335	0.665	0.815		Accept
Environmental Factors					
EV1	4.201	0.691	0.709	0.884	Accept
EV2	4.268	0.717	0.792		Accept
EV3	4.104	0.786	0.769		Accept
EV4	4.152	0.754	0.825		Accept
EV5	3.860	0.883	0.746		Accept
EV6	3.896	0.831	0.728		Accept
EV7	3.933	0.797	0.657*		Deleted
EV8	3.970	0.858	0.712		Accept
Strategic Drift					
SD1	3.896	0.960	0.754	0.929	Accept
SD2	4.152	0.845	0.814		Accept
SD3	4.098	0.857	0.867		Accept
SD4	4.030	0.851	0.872		Accept
SD5	4.037	0.855	0.864		Accept
SD6	4.055	0.850	0.848		Accept
SD7	4.085	0.799	0.746		Accept
SD8	4.104	0.778	0.766		Accept

Note: * The acceptable range for factor loadings was from 0 to 1. According to Hair et al. (2019), factor loadings greater than 0.708 are considered strong and reliable, indicating a robust correlation between latent factors and their indicators.

Table 2. Internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity

Latent Constructs	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Strategic Fit	6	0.886	0.910	0.631
Environmental Factors	7	0.877	0.905	0.577
Strategic Drift	8	0.929	0.942	0.669

Table 3. Discriminant validity based on Fornell and Larcker criterion

	Strategic Fit	Environmental Factors	Strategic Drift
Strategic Fit	0.795		
Environmental Factors	0.280	0.760	
Strategic Drift	0.356	0.478	0.818

In addition, discriminant validity was evaluated using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). Values below commonly used thresholds (e.g., 0.85 for a stricter criterion) provide support for discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2019). As reported in Table 4, all HTMT values were below 0.85 (range: 0.304–0.518), indicating that discriminant validity was established.

Table 4. Discriminant validity based on heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	Strategic Fit	Environmental Factors	Strategic Drift
Strategic Fit			
Environmental Factors	0.304		
Strategic Drift	0.356	0.518	

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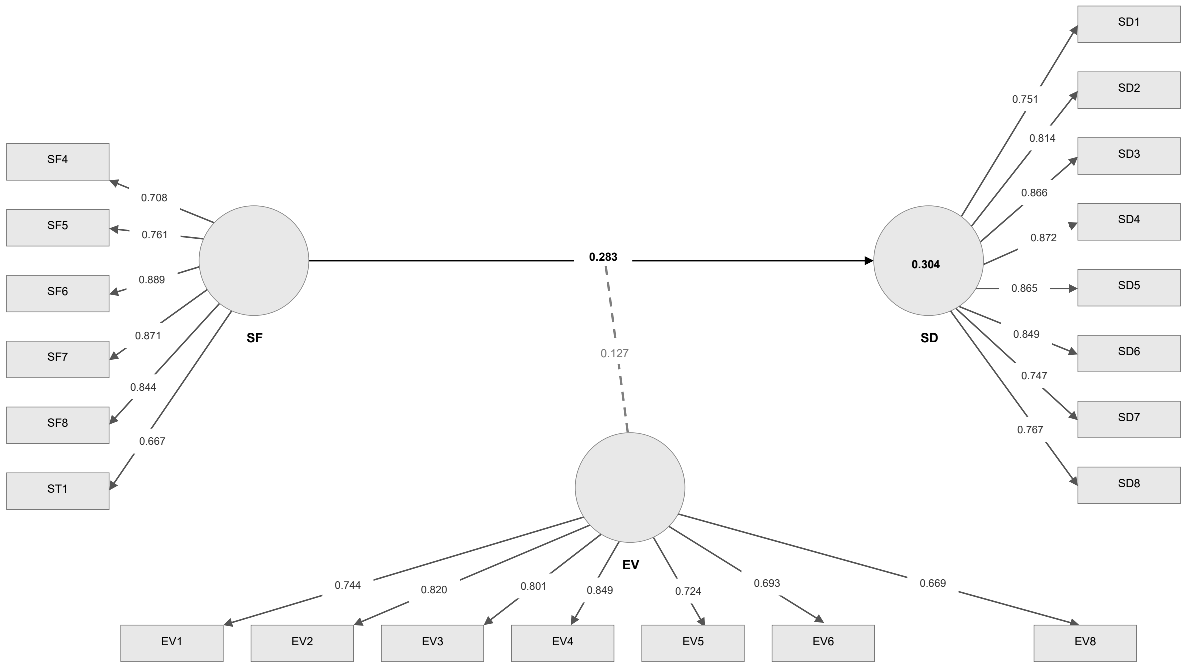

Note: SF = Strategic Fit, EV = Environmental Factors, SD = Strategic Drift.

Figure 2. PLS-SEM structural model analyses

After confirming the measurement model quality, we assessed the structural model by examining path coefficients and the model's explanatory and predictive performance. Following PLS-SEM reporting guidance, we evaluated the coefficient of determination (R2), predictive relevance (Q2, obtained via blindfolding), effect sizes (f2), and the statistical significance of the hypothesized paths (Hair et al., 2019). Figure 2 summarizes the estimated relationships and the key structural results.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct explained by its predictor constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Because acceptable R^2 values depend on the research context and model complexity, they should be interpreted relative to the study setting (Hair et al., 2019). As a commonly used guideline in PLS-SEM, R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Chin, 1998). Table 5 reports the R^2 values for the endogenous constructs in the model.

Table 5. Variance explained in the endogenous latent variables

Endogenous construct	Variance Explained (R^2)
Strategic Drift	0.304

Table 5 shows that 30.4% of the variation in strategic drift can be explained by the research model. Thus, according to Chin's (1998) criterion, the R2 values for the one endogenous latent variable were moderate and acceptable.

Predictive relevance was assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 statistic, which is obtained via a blindfolding (predictive sample re-use) procedure (Stone, 1974; Geisser, 1974). In PLS-SEM, Q^2 values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a given endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, we computed Q^2 for the endogenous construct(s) and report the cross-validated redundancy measure in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Q2 predict test

Endogenous construct	Q^2predict
Strategic Drift	0.256

Effect size (f2) evaluates the relative contribution of an exogenous construct to an endogenous construct by examining the change in R2 when the predictor is omitted from the model (Chin, 1998). Following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and

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large effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988). The f2 values for the structural relationships are reported in Table 7.

Table 7. Effect size (f2) of latent variables

Latent Variables		f^2	Effect Size
SF	SD	0.099	small
SF X EF	SD	0.031	small

Note: SF = Strategic Fit, EV = Environmental Factors, SD = Strategic Drift.

As shown in Table 7, the effect sizes for strategic fit and for the interaction term (strategic fit × environmental factors) were 0.099 and 0.031, respectively. Based on Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, both effects can be interpreted as small.

To test the hypothesized relationships, we used bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, which is a commonly recommended approach for assessing the significance of PLS-SEM path estimates (Hair et al., 2019). The results indicate that strategic fit has a statistically significant positive effect on strategic drift ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 4.383$, $p < 0.001$). The moderating effect captured by the interaction term strategic fit × environmental factors was also significant ($\beta = 0.127$, $t = 2.693$, $p = 0.007$), providing support for Hypothesis 2. Table 8 summarizes the hypothesis testing results, including path coefficients, standard errors, *t*-values, and *p*-values.

4. DISCUSSION

Within the context of pharmaceutical factories in Jordan, the findings of this study highlight the critical interplay among strategic fit, strategic drift, and environmental factors. By examining how these elements jointly shape strategic outcomes, the study provides empirical support for the view that maintaining alignment between internal capabilities and external demands is essential for avoiding strategic drift in a highly regulated and dynamic industry.

First, the positive and statistically significant association between strategic fit and strategic drift ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 4.383$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that higher levels of strategic fit are linked to lower levels of strategic drift in practice, given that strategic drift was reverse coded in this study. This result reinforces the argument that organizations are more likely to sustain performance and avoid misalignment when their internal structures, resources, and processes are aligned with external environmental requirements (Auster et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2016; Hashem & Al-Maani, 2019). Consistent with these studies, the present findings suggest that pharmaceutical companies that actively align their strategies with regulatory expectations, technological advances, and evolving patient needs are better positioned to maintain competitiveness and reduce the risk of drifting away from market and institutional demands.

Second, the significant moderating effect of environmental factors on the relationship between strategic fit and strategic drift ($\beta = 0.127$, $t = 2.693$, $p = 0.007$) shows that the strength of this relationship depends on the surrounding conditions. When environmental dynamism and complexity are high (as in the case of frequent regulatory changes, emerging biotechnologies, intense generic competition, and shifting patient expectations), the consequences of misalignment become more pronounced. This finding is in line with prior research showing that environmental turbulence amplifies the strategic implications of fit and misfit (Frank et al., 2017; Tajeddini & Mueller, 2019). In such settings, firms that fail to adjust their strategies in a timely manner are more vulnerable to strategic drift, whereas firms that preserve strategic fit can better absorb shocks and adapt to change.

Taken together, these results suggest that pharmaceutical firms in Jordan are particularly susceptible to strategic drift when they do not adequately respond to shifting industry trends, such as the growth of biotechnology, the expansion of generic drug markets, and evolving patient and healthcare

Table 8. Hypothesis testing results

	Hypothesis	Beta	SE	T-Value	P-Value	Conclusion
H_1	SF → SD	0.283	0.065	4.383	0.001	Supported
H_2	SF · EV → SD	0.127	0.047	2.693	0.007	Supported

Note: SF = Strategic Fit; EV = Environmental Factors; SD = Strategic Drift.

system needs. The evidence indicates that strategic fit functions as a protective mechanism: it allows firms to align their internal processes, innovation activities, and resource allocations with external pressures, thereby lowering the likelihood of drift and supporting long-term performance.

The study offers several actionable implications for managers in Jordanian pharmaceutical factories. The findings underline the importance of investing in strategic alignment through continuous environmental scanning, innovation, and capability development. Establishing robust monitoring systems that track regulatory updates, technological developments, and market signals in real time can help organizations respond proactively to external changes rather than reactively (Hill et al., 2016). Consistent with Tajeddini and Mueller (2019), the results support the view that sustained investment in research and development, digital transformation, and process automation enhances strategic flexibility and facilitates timely adjustment to environmental shifts. Likewise, forming strategic partnerships with international pharmaceutical firms, universities, and research institutes can provide access to advanced technologies, specialized knowledge, and additional financial resources that strengthen strategic fit (M.H. Rahman & A. Rahman, 2020).

Leadership capabilities also emerge as an important lever for managing strategic fit and mitigating drift. As Frank et al. (2017) emphasize, leadership development and executive skill enhancement can improve strategic flexibility, decision-making quality, and the organization's ability to navigate uncertainty. In the context of Jordanian pharmaceutical factories, building leadership competence in areas such as regulatory strategy, innovation management, and change leadership can help firms interpret environmental signals correctly and translate them into coherent strategic responses.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that strategic fit is crucial for avoiding strategic drift, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry, where external pressures from regulators, competitors, and patients are strong. For pharmaceutical factories in Jordan, maintaining strategic fit requires continuous attention to alignment between internal capabilities and external demands. Firms that proactively invest in innovation, regulatory compliance, digital transformation, and strategic agility are more likely to avoid the dangers of strategic drift and secure sustainable competitive advantages in a constantly evolving sector.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how strategic fit relates to strategic drift in Jordanian pharmaceutical manufacturing and how environmental factors condition this relationship. The findings show that higher levels of strategic fit are associated with lower levels of strategic drift in practice, given that strategic drift was reverse coded in this study. In addition, environmental factors significantly moderate the fit–drift relationship, indicating that the benefits of strategic fit become particularly important when the external environment is more dynamic and complex. These results reinforce the view that maintaining alignment between internal capabilities and external demands is a central mechanism for preventing gradual strategy–environment misalignment in highly regulated and innovation-intensive sectors such as pharmaceuticals.

The findings carry several implications for managers in Jordanian pharmaceutical factories. Strengthening strategic fit requires continuous environmental scanning, the systematic monitoring of regulatory changes, and close attention to technological and market developments. Investments in research and development, digital transformation, and process improvement can enhance strategic flexibility and help firms adjust their strategies in a timely manner. Furthermore, building strategic partnerships with international companies, universities, and research institutions can provide access to advanced technologies, specialized knowledge, and additional resources that support sustained alignment. Leadership development and the cultivation of a forward-looking strategic mindset are also essential for interpreting environmental signals and translating them into coherent strategic responses.

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AI STATEMENT

The authors used ChatGPT only for English language editing (grammar and clarity). No AI tool was used to generate data, conduct analyses (including statistical analyses), or produce scientific conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Pharmaceutical manufacturers included in the sampling frame

1. Amman Pharma Industries Co. (API)	2. Pharma International Co. (PIC)
3. Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Co.	4. Pella Pharmaceutical co.
5. Dar Al Dawa Development & Investment	6. Ram Pharmaceutical Industries Co.Ltd.
7. Hayat Pharmaceutical Industries Co. (HPI)	8. Sukhtian Pharma Co.
9. Hikma Pharmaceuticals.	10. Sana Pharma
11. Jordan River Pharmaceutical Industries	12. Total Quality Pharma Co.
13.MIDPHARMA	14.United Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Co.

Note: The list reflects JAPM membership as recorded on November 20, 2024 (Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers JAPM).

APPENDIX B. Questionnaire

Table B1. Measurement items used in the survey

Construct	Code	English item
Strategic Fit	SF1	Our firm designs its internal operations based on its available resources.
Strategic Fit	SF2	Our firm evaluates its strengths versus its weaknesses.
Strategic Fit	SF3	Our firm develops organizational structures according to its strategy.
Strategic Fit	SF4	Our firm defines strategic objectives with stakeholder involvement.
Strategic Fit	SF5	Our firm keeps pace with changes in the external environment.
Strategic Fit	SF6	Our firm seeks to find alternative solutions to the external environmental challenges.
Strategic Fit	SF7	Our firm has an alternative strategy that is compatible with external environmental conditions.
Strategic Fit	SF8	Our firm seeks to improve the products offered.
Strategic Drift	SD1	Our firm's future vision only partially reflects its strategic objectives.
Strategic Drift	SD2	Our firm's participation in the beneficiaries of its products is minimal.
Strategic Drift	SD3	Our firm's usage of strategic analysis tools is restricted.
Strategic Drift	SD4	Our firm's plans lack a culture of change.
Strategic Drift	SD5	The participation of our employees in the change planning process is restricted.
Strategic Drift	SD6	Our firm's work environment is characterized by disagreements between departments.
Strategic Drift	SD7	Our firm's culture is unable to adapt to new business requirements.
Strategic Drift	SD8	Efforts to change our firm's culture are met with opposition.
Environmental Factors	EV1	Our firm products meet all the changing needs of customers.
Environmental Factors	EV2	Our firm keeps pace with changes in product delivery technologies.
Environmental Factors	EV3	It is easy for our firm to quickly predict what competitors will do.
Environmental Factors	EV4	Scarcity of material resources plays a role in threatening the continuity of our firm.
Environmental Factors	EV5	Price competition plays a role in threatening the continuity of our firm.
Environmental Factors	EV6	Quality competition plays a role in threatening the continuity of our firm.
Environmental Factors	EV7	The purchasing habits of customers dealing with our firm are diverse.
Environmental Factors	EV8	The competition in pharmaceutical products is characterized by great diversity.

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