



Enhancement of the role of strategic leadership to ensure a successful turnaround strategy.

24129110

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Change Leadership 2024/25.

24 November 2025

Abstract

The cement industry has faced prolonged operational, financial, and competitive pressures stemming from declining demand, rising operating costs, infrastructure backlogs, regulatory constraints, and intensified competition from imports and new rivals. These challenges and new dimensions underscore the urgent need for effective turnaround strategies that restore organisational stability and long-term capabilities. The study examines how to enhance strategic leadership to ensure successful turnaround implementation in the cement industry. Considering leadership theory and turnaround strategy literature, the research identifies key indicators signalling when a turnaround is required, including continuous financial decline, operational inefficiencies, loss of market share, and critical skilled personnel. It further analyses the internal factors that the company can influence and the external factors that it has less influence over, which affect the design and execution of turnaround strategies.

The study followed an exploratory qualitative methodology to investigate research questions. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with nine senior-level participants in the cement industry. The findings showed that adaptive leadership, which improves operational efficiency and promotes effective cost management and employee engagement, is vital for driving performance recovery, regaining market share, and rebuilding organisational capabilities. The study recommended that leadership development should emphasise strategic clarity, operational discipline, people engagement, and skill enhancement to enable the company to improve efficiency and create a competitive edge in a rapidly changing and challenging business environment. The insights benefit both academia and industry by connecting theoretical ideas with real-world leadership demands, providing practical guidance for leaders managing complex turnaround situations.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Turnaround Strategy, Strategic Turnaround.

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Change Leadership at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

24 November 2025

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract..... | 2 |
| Declaration..... | 3 |
| 1. Introduction..... | 7 |
| 1.1. Business Relevance | 7 |
| 1.2. Theoretical Relevance | 10 |
| 1.3. Research Questions | 12 |
| 1.3.1. Research Question 1 | 12 |
| 1.3.2. Research Question 2 | 12 |
| 1.3.3. Research Question 3 | 13 |
| 1.4. Objectives of the Study | 13 |
| 1.5. Scope of Research | 14 |
| 1.6. Research Contribution Business and Academic..... | 15 |
| 1.7. Overview of the research report..... | 18 |
| 2. Literature Review..... | 20 |
| 2.1. Introduction..... | 20 |
| 2.2. Corporate Decline and Turnaround..... | 20 |
| 2.3. Strategic Leadership..... | 21 |
| 2.4. Characteristics of the leadership..... | 24 |
| 2.5. Dynamic capabilities and Resources-Base View..... | 26 |
| 2.6. Turnaround strategy..... | 27 |
| 2.6.1. Strategic turnaround intervention | 29 |
| 2.6.2. Operational Turnaround Intervention..... | 30 |
| 2.6.3. Internal Factors leading to failure | 31 |
| 2.6.4. External Factors..... | 31 |
| 2.6.5. Integration of the turnaround strategy | 32 |
| 2.6.6. Success factors of turnaround strategy | 32 |

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| 2.6.7. | Evolving environment and turnaround strategy | 34 |
| 2.6.8. | Challenges for the implementation of the turnaround strategy..... | 35 |
| 2.6.9. | Failure to implement turnaround strategy | 37 |
| 2.6.10. | Theoretical Anchor | 37 |
| 3. | Research Questions | 39 |
| 3.2. | Introduction | 39 |
| 3.3. | Research Questions | 39 |
| 3.4. | Research Questions | 39 |
| 3.4.1. | Research Question 1 | 39 |
| 3.4.2. | Research Question 2 | 40 |
| 3.4.3. | Research Question 3 | 40 |
| 3.5. | Conclusion..... | 41 |
| 4. | Methodology Choices | 42 |
| 4.2. | Introduction..... | 42 |
| 4.3. | Population and Targeted Population | 43 |
| 4.4. | Unit of analysis | 43 |
| 4.5. | Sampling method and size..... | 44 |
| 4.6. | Measurement Instrument | 44 |
| 4.7. | Date Gathering Process..... | 45 |
| 4.8. | Analysis approach..... | 46 |
| 4.8.1. | Data Cleaning-up | 47 |
| 4.8.2. | Organizing Data and Initial analysis | 47 |
| 4.8.3. | Creating Initial codes..... | 48 |
| 4.8.4. | Creating Themes | 48 |
| 4.8.5. | Conceptual Leap..... | 48 |
| 4.9. | Quality controls | 50 |
| 4.10. | Research Ethics..... | 50 |
| 4.11. | Limitations | 51 |
| 4.12. | Conclusion..... | 52 |

| | | |
|---------|---|-----|
| 5. | Results/ Findings | 53 |
| 5.1. | Introduction | 53 |
| 5.2. | Sample Description and Findings..... | 53 |
| 5.3. | Research Question 1: | 55 |
| 5.3.1. | Cost Management..... | 56 |
| 5.3.2. | Brand Management | 59 |
| 5.3.4. | Awareness of Challenges | 63 |
| 5.3.8. | Data Analysis Skills..... | 67 |
| 5.3.9. | Resources..... | 68 |
| 5.3.10. | System..... | 70 |
| 5.3.11. | Conclusion | 71 |
| 5.4. | Research Question 2 – Internal and External Factors | 72 |
| 5.4.1. | Strategic Planning and Implementation | 73 |
| 5.4.5. | Operation Efficiency | 82 |
| 5.4.6. | Organisational Climate..... | 84 |
| 5.4.7. | Quality Monitoring | 86 |
| 5.4.8. | Competitive Analysis..... | 90 |
| 6. | Reference list..... | 145 |
| | Appendix 1: Interview guide..... | 159 |
| | Appendix 2: Informed Consent..... | 160 |
| | Appendix 3: Ethics Clearance | 160 |
| | Appendix 4: Data Analysis - Codes..... | 162 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1. Introduction

The study examined how strategic leadership facilitates the implementation of turnaround strategies in the cement industry, which faces ongoing challenges. The business environment faced by the cement manufacturing sector in South Africa demands strategic leaders to review and adopt new strategies to sustain their businesses in a continually changing operating environment.

1.1. Business Relevance

In the South African cement industry, growth has stagnated due to limited infrastructure development and the influx of cheaper cement. According to Parrott (April 2024), the South African construction sector has experienced a significant backlog, which negatively affects economic growth and low investment in the country. The cement industry in South Africa contributes positively in infrastructural development, but the country's economic expansion faces macroeconomic shifts and challenges related to the increased import of lower-cost cement (Gibs, Sept. 2023). Over the years, the local cement industry has encountered an increase in cheaper imports into South Africa, which has displaced domestically produced cement. It has also faced rising operational costs owing to environmental barriers and increasingly stringent regulations, demanding new strategies.

In addition to the above, there have been two new rivals in the local cement producer space that have entered the market, adding to the existing pressure and causing disruption in the market. The cement producers in South Africa have a production capacity of approximately 22 million tonnes annually, yet it effectively produces only 13 Mtons, creating a market gap for imports to replace locally produced cement at prices up to 40% lower (Gibs, Sept. 2023). Considering that the construction sector has been significantly inactive in South Africa, coupled with lagging economic growth, the local cement industry is focusing on a turnaround strategy within its control rather than chasing market growth (Arnoldi, March 2025).

The cement producers face a dynamic environment in a highly competitive market, characterised by limited infrastructure investment and high production costs in manufacturing companies. Zack et al. (2009) argued that a turnaround strategy is necessary to improve efficiency and compliance with regulations for successful and

sustainable performance. Cement production enables infrastructure development and contributes to economic growth, ultimately contributing to the country's economic progress (Oduro & Haylemariam, 2019). However, it is highly capital-intensive and requires significant energy to produce high-quality cement consistently, which significantly contributes to high production costs.

The challenges faced by the cement manufacturing industry threaten its future trajectory, with a noticeable decline in performance and a significant drop in utilisation of installed capacity. To remain competitive and expand market share, a business must implement a comprehensive turnaround strategy as a key activity to support sustainability and performance in a highly competitive and dynamic environment (Agarwal & Helfat, 2009). The strategic leadership role is vital in ensuring that an effective turnaround strategy is crafted and executed to deliver sustainable performance and a viable future for the local cement producers.

The turnaround strategy is essential to boost product and market penetration; it should focus on internal organisational factors to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness (Chukwuka, 2023). The business environment in the 21st century is dynamic and constantly evolving, characterised by various challenges that make strategic leadership vital for optimising operational results and responding effectively to market demands (Kowo & Akinbola, 2019).

The cement manufacturing sector contributes positively to job creation, social development, and economic growth. Poudyal et al. (2025) argued that the use of cement contributes to a country's economic growth and significantly enhances people's living standards. Considering the challenges faced by local cement producers, such as low demand and the competition from imported cement, which is priced lower than locally produced cement and results in utilisation of only 59% of the current installed capacity of 22 million tonnes annually. Additionally, other challenges like high energy costs, production inefficiencies, a surge in imports, and intense competition affect the competitiveness of local cement, negatively impacting the profitability and sustainability of cement industry producers.

Strategic leadership in the cement industry must be repositioned to address industry challenges and sustain competitiveness by developing and implementing turnaround strategies that will improve the industry's standing amid the current turbulent environment. The changes and uncertainty faced by manufacturing companies threaten the sustainability of local producers; some have reported declines in profitability and

performance, and instability could lead to business closures (Faisal et al., 2022). According to Kharub et al. (2022), innovation initiatives should focus on enhancing operational efficiency and financial performance. Cost leadership as a competitive strategy improves firm performance in the manufacturing sector.

Importers do not encounter the same production difficulties as local producers, which enables a low cost (Gibs, Sept. 2023). Therefore, strategic leaders need managerial insight to recognise opportunities (Castellanos & George, 2020) and cognitive skills to analyse and resolve problems effectively (Coban et al., 2019).

Cost-efficiency is essential in the cement industry's competitive climate. It is therefore essential for local cement producers to craft a turnaround strategy to improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency, enabling them to compete despite low market prices and survive stagnant infrastructure investment in South Africa.

The industry must maintain a competitive edge by continually adopting new turnaround strategies, innovative approaches, and responding rapidly to changing market demands (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023). Considering that the cement market in South Africa faces challenges affecting the rising demand for local manufacturing, cost and operational efficiency are vital for the company's sustainability.

Companies that fail to implement a turnaround strategy or adopt a new approach risk losing their competitive edge, leading to a decline in performance and, ultimately, business deterioration. These companies remain vulnerable to economic difficulties; a climate of unpredictability often results in organisational failure (Oehninger et al., 2020). According to Hendrawan (2021), strategies that improve efficiency in the manufacturing sector include strict monitoring of working capital for raw materials, such as inventory; closely managing production and process costs; increasing production volumes; and using alternative fuels and other process inputs. It is essential to maximise resource utilisation, enhance employees' productivity, improve performance, and contribute positively to cost reduction (Ollonde et al., 2024). Teklu (2022) argued that a company's high productivity hinges on high operational efficiency, optimising resource utilisation, and refining sourcing strategies to grow the business.

Strategic leaders need to ensure that resources are used efficiently to boost productivity, define the organisation's direction, and support effective decision-making (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018). In a challenging business environment, it is essential to

recognise that strategic leadership can guide the cement company in reversing declining trends, improving performance, withstanding the impacts of high imports, and building a sustainable future (Santana et al., 2019). Furthermore, strategic leaders in local cement firms need to have managerial insight to recognise opportunities (Castellanos & George, 2020) and employ cognitive skills to analyse and address problems effectively (Coban et al., 2019).

The ongoing challenges faced by local cement producers emphasise the need to develop a turnaround strategy that establishes and implements initiatives for a sustainable future. This will enable strategic leadership to craft a response strategy to the current business environment and operational difficulties, guiding efforts to reverse declining performance and foster a sustainable future for the industry. Boudia & Slevogt (2024) demonstrated that overcoming challenges and achieving long-term recovery requires strategic leadership that formulates a renewal strategy. This strategy should prioritise re-evaluating business models, improving operational efficiency, exploring new markets or product diversification, and promoting innovation.

1.2. Theoretical Relevance

Strategic leadership is crucial for developing and implementing turnaround strategies. Effective turnaround plans require organisational changes and strong leadership to communicate the company's approach for reversing the situation and adopting sound practices (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024). Strategic turnarounds aim to improve a firm's competitiveness in favourable industries, driven by changes in external conditions (Gotteiner et al., 2019). Barker III et al. (2024) describe turnaround strategy as the dynamic process through which businesses in crisis shift from an uncertain situation threatening their survival to one that fosters sustained success. The turnaround strategy includes a retrenchment component, involving cost reductions, asset sales, and restructuring the team for short-term financial stability (Balioukas et al., 2022). The literature highlights the importance of companies embedding sustainability into their strategic plans to demonstrate commitment to environmental and social issues, which significantly impact cement operations and require a more strategic, profitable approach (Silvestre et al., 2022).

The role of strategic leaders also involves ensuring timely actions that focus on executing the turnaround strategy for the company's sustainability (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024). The turnaround strategy can be categorised as either an operational or a strategic turnaround. The operational turnaround focuses on cost and asset reductions, primarily

driven by internal actions. Effective strategic leadership is essential, requiring an understanding of the dynamic internal factors and external surroundings to develop a clear, realistic, and adaptable vision. This enables the implementation of effective measures to create a competitive advantage and sustainability performance (Atanassova et al., 2025).

Strategic leaders must improve their skills in conceptual areas, including systematic thinking, analysis, and leadership. Strong critical and creative thinking, alongside innovation, is vital for creating a flexible and effective control and oversight system (Atanassova et al., 2025). Strategic leaders need both tangible resources that the company can utilise and intangible resources which the company leverages on to build and maintain a competitive edge. Based on resource-based theory (Mailani et al., 2024), companies choose resources strategically that will effectively support their turnaround plans. Zahra (2021) notes that the value of resources is affected by multiple factors and aspects, not just demand and supply.

Efficient and cost-effective models are essential to ensure that cement producers maximise productivity and cash inflows. The industry faces intense pressure, making it crucial to eliminate non-core activities in the operation, improve labour efficiency, and enhance machine productivity to sustain overall performance. With high competition, customer demands for shorter lead times are critical to ensuring delivery is completed as quickly as possible. The lean approach has been adopted as part of the turnaround strategy to boost productivity by reducing machine breakdowns and increasing labour efficiency (Irfan et al., 2025). Alignment of the turnaround plan and its impact on corporate performance remains highly needed (Nyagiloh, 2020).

It is essential to analyse strategic leadership effectiveness in engaging their roles to align deliberate actions, change management, and the operational team with these initiatives, ensuring buy-in during the turnaround strategy execution. When examining the micro-to-macro factors influencing the success of turnaround strategies, it is important for strategic leaders in the cement industry to identify the principles needed for formulating and achieving strategic objectives in this changing environment. This study aims to pinpoint strategic activities that industry leaders should adopt to enhance performance by reducing cash outflows and increasing cash inflows. It also examines the factors that contribute to successful turnarounds in cement producers.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1. Research Question 1

What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

In the constantly evolving business environment, changes in the marketplace, such as new innovations, shifting preferences, and evolving regulations, require companies to adjust and refine their strategies, along with their operational systems, to respond effectively and stay competitive (Atela & Sitienei, 2023). According to the Cascade team (2023), a consistent decline in financial performance, with clear evidence of decreasing revenue and cash flow, indicates that the company needs to undertake strategic changes. Furthermore, industries facing significant market disruptions, including new revivals and increased imports, make the existing business model less effective and less competitive, resulting in customer losses, which necessitates a turnaround strategy (Cascade team, 2023).

Atela and Sitienei (2023) identify multiple challenges confronting the cement industry that affect its performance, emphasising the need for a shift in mindset to maintain competitiveness and profitability. A business turnaround strategy involves a series of actions and initiatives designed to steer a company out of financial difficulties or significant challenges, ultimately transforming it into a more profitable and resilient organisation.

1.3.2. Research Question 2

How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

Internal and external factors within a business enable development and effective operation, helping it achieve its goals; their disruption can either promote growth or pose a challenge (Shatilo, 2019). Although the external environment presents challenges, it also offers resources that support internal capabilities. According to Shatilo (2019), these two operating environments influence the company's capacity to innovate, manage operations, and make decisions. Tao et al. (2020) argued that the complexity of executing turnaround strategies comes from the difficulty in connecting the two factors that impact the success of execution. Implementation requires simplifying the approach through clear communication, forming a dedicated team, involving middle managers through the process, and employees in the inputs (Buhusayen et al., 2020).

Innovations have transformative power for organisations, encouraging companies to incorporate external knowledge through diverse approaches and resources into the innovation process. According to Purnama et al. (2020), the integration approach fosters harmony between external contributions and internal capabilities, enabling brainstorming to align on the model to follow. This includes leveraging existing knowledge from the external environment to improve performance (Purnama et al., 2020), formulating an integrated approach to internal and external processes, and commercialising discoveries resulting from open innovation efforts.

1.3.3. Research Question 3

What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

The studies have indicated that organisational changes are crucial for growth and creating a highly competitive advantage in a dynamic environment (Hussain et al., 2018). The turnaround implementation faced numerous challenges that top management needs to overcome to achieve sustainable turnaround performance. Various challenges include misalignment on expectations, lack of buy-in to change, inadequate resources, and leadership style (Mpete & Maier, 2024).

A leadership role in managing turnaround and challenges related to organisational change involves creating an encouraging openness and adaptability approach and achieving set objectives (Hubbart, 2023). To accomplish a sustainable turnaround, adequate resources are required to implement change and enforce the change process within the organisation. Leaders need to eliminate barriers and provide the resources needed to help employees overcome challenges and adapt to change (Hubbart, 2023).

1.4. Objectives of the Study

- The objective of the study is to investigate the role of strategic leadership that is necessary to ensure successful turnaround strategy execution.
- The study intends to identify the strategic activities leaders in the cement industry should adopt to enhance performance by reducing cash outflow and increasing cash inflow.
- In the declining market, what are the key actions that the strategic leadership should take to ensure sustainability of local cement producers through operational efficiency?

- The study is concerned with identifying the factors that lead to a successful turnaround in cement manufacturing. Local cement producers face increased operational costs; the industry is confronting an economic downturn, inexpensive imports, rising material costs, and a lack of significant construction projects.
- Considering the micro-to-macro elements influencing turnaround strategy success, strategic leadership in the cement sector must identify the principles required for developing and accomplishing strategic goals in this dynamic environment.
- To determine the strategy to overcome challenges and implement turnaround strategy to reverse declining performance.

1.5. Scope of Research

Focus the research on a turnaround strategy aimed at achieving long-term performance and competitiveness through improved operational efficiency, increased cash inflow, and higher profitability in the local cement manufacturing sector. The study concentrated on how the local cement industry enhances performance and boosts profitability despite the lack of infrastructure investment in South Africa. It examined how strategic leaders can drive long-term investments to better position companies for future growth, and how initial cash outflows can benefit cement manufacturers in delivering improved results over time. The turnaround strategy was conceptualised as improving operational efficiency, generating cash flow, and expanding market development.

The methodology scope includes employing a descriptive research design to guide the process, focusing on the three least cement-producing companies in South Africa. This research concentrates on the turnaround strategy to effectively improve the performance of cement producers, despite stagnant infrastructure investment. The turnaround is conceived as enhancing operational efficiency, generating cash flow, and increasing profitability. The theoretical framework is based on resource-based theory and dynamic capabilities theory.

The study will examine local cement producers in South Africa, who face challenges such as declining market demand, increased cement imports, and rising operational costs. These problems threaten the viability of local cement companies and necessitate a shift in the industry's mindset. A turnaround strategy is essential to revitalise the industry, generate cash flow, and enhance the performance of local cement producers. The study aims to identify the leadership roles needed to facilitate change and implement a successful turnaround. It also seeks to understand how local cement producers can

improve their performance and recover a competitive edge in a rapidly dynamic environment characterised by a stagnant market, high operational costs due to energy prices, and environmental regulations. This research aims to explore how participants adopt the turnaround approach to restore recognised levels of performance.

1.6. Research Contribution Business and Academic

The study aims to develop a clear, actionable approach that leadership can use to assess and implement a turnaround strategy with a leadership team better equipped to navigate industry crises. It will highlight factors that enable or hinder the success of a turnaround. The study emphasises internal factors that are available and external factors that influence turnaround performance, including operational inefficiencies, organisational culture, dynamic competitiveness, regulatory pressure, and skills constraints. Having these insights enables companies to anticipate risks and address potential contributors to decline more effectively. The findings will guide strategic leaders on how to align strategic execution, operational improvements, and financial discipline during turnaround efforts, thereby improving strategic prioritisation. The study offers recommendations to strategic leaders and businesses that support sustainable competitiveness and resilience. It also highlights actions to enhance leadership effectiveness, reduce inefficiencies, and navigate market pressures, positioning organisations for sustainable growth within a complex business environment.

The study aims to assist leaders in the cement manufacturing industry in identifying the main factors that contribute to a successful change strategy. It will provide insights into how the turnaround strategy pinpoints focus areas to enhance performance. Clear objectives enable leaders to influence performance and help teams achieve more. The research will identify the success factors that drive the turnaround and how leaders utilise different levers to implement a turnaround strategy within operations, thereby reducing costs. It will also explore how team members need to adapt their approaches to improve operational decisions and enhance efficiency. The study will allow the researcher and leaders to draw from the theoretical foundation to validate the findings. The conclusions from this research will benefit the cement manufacturing sector by emphasising turnaround initiatives and fostering positive change in cement production amidst various challenges.

Therefore, this study advances theory by integrating positive enablers that a company can leverage (agility) as well as negative stressors (resource depletion, market loss),

and by formulating a coherent framework rooted in the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities theory.

The cement manufacturers in South Africa face an increasing influx of competitively priced imported cement, threatening the sustainability of the local industry. Despite playing a vital role in infrastructure development, they constantly contend with macroeconomic shifts that impact growth. The industry has experienced a decline in consumption due to a lack of infrastructure investment, which remains dormant. This has led to a reduction in the utilisation of the installed capacity of 22 million tonnes to just 13 million tonnes. Although production levels are low amid weak demand, the rate indicates waste and inefficiency, resulting in high production costs and poor performance ratings. These inefficiencies and elevated costs require strategic leaders to develop and execute strategies to improve performance and explore process enhancements (Ollonde et al., 2024).

South Africa's cement industry faces several challenges and is undergoing a significant transition characterised by constraints on private sector activities, limited infrastructure-led demand, and strong competition from imports. Having dealt with such a challenging environment, local cement producers need to look into and implement turnaround strategies to counter these industrial changes. Strategic leaders must recalibrate operational efficiency, optimise energy usage since cement manufacturing is energy-intensive, apply cost containment measures to manage prolonged margin pressure, and optimise sourcing of products to maximise contribution margins (Wood, July 2025).

Local cement producers must navigate increased load shedding, rail inefficiencies, and inconsistent demand due to the lack of execution of infrastructure projects. The role of strategic leaders focus in implementing a recalibrated mindset that effectively responds to challenges and enhances the performance of the cement industry. Atela (2023) highlighted other challenges, such as high energy costs and inconsistent product quality, coupled with the rise in imports, which hinder local producers from achieving sustainable growth. The study will examine how strategic leaders can ensure the success of the turnaround strategy to enhance performance despite these challenges and contribute to creating a long-term future for cement producers in South Africa.

According to Dechezleprêtre and Sato, M. (2017), energy and environmental regulations redefine operational capabilities. Leadership must adopt a flexible strategy as a key factor for company success. Although the government has imposed import tariffs to address the high influx of cheap cement, strategic leaders need to recalibrate

and implement a defence strategy to improve process efficiency, control costs, and increase profitability. This study aims to formulate actions that leaders must take to successfully execute the turnaround plan.

The drive to achieve more efficient operations is one of the levers that the turnaround strategy seeks to implement. Local cement producers need to adopt cost-saving initiatives that require a shift in mindset from traditional operational methods, aiming to reduce energy consumption by utilising alternative fuels and increasing cement extension to attain a better clinker factor (Dechezleprêtre & Sato, 2017). In the dynamic business environment, it's impossible to compete without leveraging digitalisation. Local producers are using digitalisation to enhance their logistics and distribution divisions, aiming to shorten delivery times. Digitalisation improves managerial flexibility in recovery strategies for the ongoing turnaround (Barker III et al., 2024). In the manufacturing sector, digitalisation can be utilised to enhance efficiency and support the operational team's resource capabilities.

Strategic turnarounds aim to enhance business competitiveness in areas where it can succeed, and changes in external forces prompt these efforts (Gotteiner et al., 2019). Turnaround strategy is an ongoing process to transform declining performance into sustainability, requiring the monitoring of direction, resources, and capabilities to advance strategic intent, along with an established structure (Nyagiloh & Kilika, 2020). Consequently, strategic leaders need to leverage digitalisation to improve service delivery. The inefficiency of the electricity supplier disrupts the cement operation; local cement producers are investing in solar plants and exhaust gas electricity generation to mitigate the impact of power shortages on operations (Ollonde et al., 2024).

Environmental regulations are becoming tougher, which impacts the new application licence due to the increasing number of requirements. Companies are boosting limestone beneficiation to extend quarry life and reduce reliance on new licence approval. The research problem is that local cement producers face many challenges that threaten their survival and long-term sustainability. Strategic leadership needs to create a recalibrated turnaround strategy to reverse declining performance, optimise operations, and address external factors.

The study broadens academic understanding by examining strategic leadership in an industry that has underperformed despite its economic significance. It concentrates on the turnaround strategy within the cement sector in a developing country, whereas most turnaround research is carried out in developed economies. The study provides value by demonstrating how strategic leadership, leveraging its capabilities and competencies,

can influence turnaround processes to improve the performance of the declining cement industry.

The study presents an approach for achieving turnaround success in a resource-constrained environment, where the cement industry in South Africa faces unique external pressures. These pressures include high imports, energy instability, rising energy costs, infrastructure decline, and market contraction. Božič and Dimovski (2019) emphasised that effective resource use is vital for maintaining competitiveness and achieving sustainable performance. The study extends turnaround strategy theory by demonstrating how leaders adapt strategies in volatile and constrained environments, emphasising how strategic leadership effectively guides organisations through complex and uncertain settings. Through a qualitative study, the research provides foundational evidence on leadership decision-making patterns and strategic capabilities that can address challenges related to turnaround strategies, potentially reversing poor performance.

1.7. Overview of the research report

Chapter 1: This Chapter Presented the research topic by examining both business and theoretical viewpoints. It offers contextual information regarding the research issue and the importance of the study.

Chapter 2: The literature review that underpins the comprehension of the study constructs.

Chapter 3: This Chapter establishes the research questions and sub-topics based on the literature review.

Chapter 4: This Chapter explains the research plan and methodology used during the study to obtain data and approach to be followed to analysis and maintain credibility.

Chapter 5: This chapter will lay out the findings derived from the data collection.

Chapter 6: This chapter presents an analysis of the findings in the literature.

Chapter 7: This chapter serves as the concluding chapter, presenting the research findings along with recommendations for strategic leadership and suggestions for future research projects.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on strategic leadership and the implementation of turnaround strategies, as well as theories underpinning the study variables. It highlights various levers that strategic leadership can use to improve operational efficiency, boost cash inflows, and increase sustainable performance within the local cement producers. The chapter underscores the significance of strategic leadership in effectively implementing turnaround interventions. Additionally, it examines empirical studies, critiques existing research, and identifies opportunities for future investigation.

2.2. Corporate Decline and Turnaround

2.2.1. Cost Management

The cement process is highly capital-intensive, involving substantial energy costs while facing significant financial volatility, systematic disruptions, and regulatory changes (Awwad et al., 2025). Strategic leadership can enhance the company's competitiveness through detailed analysis with aim to understand and identify the company effectiveness in the market. In industries where volume has not increased, leaders must be creative in their operations, creating value more efficiently and competing effectively in the challenging market (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

The literature argues that cost reduction and asset reduction are not the only options available in response to a company's declining performance, but a strategic turnaround is necessary to reverse organisational decline. Rico et al. (2021) suggested that efficiency-focused actions are a critical leverage point through which strategic leadership designs the response to restore performance and define them as central to a credible turnaround strategy. Furthermore, they highlight that a company recovery rely less on the variety of turnaround techniques presented and more on the leadership's ability to prioritise efficiency-oriented interventions that reverse the declining performance.

The research stresses that strategic leaders must integrate operational and strategic plans to reverse declining companies, not just ensure their availability. Barker et al. (2024) challenge the notion that cost-cutting alone can stabilise a struggling organisation by arguing that retrenchment and recovery must work together. Focusing on

retrenchment as a short-term solution may underestimate its strategic significance: recovery efforts lack the financial and organisational support needed without targeted reductions that directly address inefficiencies. Rico et al. (2021) demonstrate that aggressive cost reduction is vital for liquidity and performance. The literature indicates that in a turnaround, intentional retrenchment is essential for meaningful recovery, rather than choosing between operational initiatives and strategic activities.

Balioukas et al. (2023) noted that conducting a SWOT analysis, diagnosing the company's market positioning, and developing a strictly activity-based cost analysis, guided by management actions, are essential to improving performance. The turnaround strategy aims to direct efforts towards maintaining business continuity, identifying cost-cutting opportunities, optimising asset utilisation, and increasing revenue. Prayag et al. (2024) argued that vulnerability to changing environments not only threatens its long-term viability and survival but also necessitates a turnaround strategy to reverse declining performance and achieve sustainable improvement. Setyopurnomo et al. (2025) suggested that a turnaround strategy involves diagnosing the business to identify inefficiencies and opportunities for cost savings.

Awwad et al. (2025) believe that the enabler of the turnaround is organisational dynamic capabilities, which are crucial for improving the company's processes' efficiency, enabling adaptive responses that drive down operational costs. Aipinge & Shopati (2022) highlighted that a team with the necessary capabilities enables the turnaround strategy execution, with the mindset to improve cost efficiency through team motivation to operate efficiently within a specific time. Setyopurnomo et al. (2025) propose a consistent daily profit-and-loss discussion through operational control, while incorporating other KPIs to increase operational efficiency and achieve cost savings.

The essential step in developing turnaround strategies is to thoroughly understand what led to the decline, which is fundamental for choosing the right strategy to reverse it (Tao et al., 2020). Moreover, the company should mobilise relevant strategic resources to support the execution of the turnaround strategy while enhancing dynamic capabilities to implement the plan with strong commitment, restoring alignment and building resilience for the company (Awwad et al., 2025).

2.3. Strategic Leadership

Samimi et al. (2022, p. 3) characterise strategic leadership as the actions executed by persons at the highest echelons of an organisation, aimed at producing strategic

outcomes for the organisation. The primary focus for strategic leadership is to gain a competitive advantage over rivals to create a sustainable future for the company. Nahak & Ellitan (2022) argued strategic leadership should be able to predict, conceptualise, implement and be adaptable through critical thinking and a strategic mindset, and through collaboration to drive transformative change that offers a competitive edge.

Strategic leadership enable a company's effective organisational performance in a dynamic and complex business environment through formulating a direction for company (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018). Strategic leadership must tackle information ambiguity, a chaotic environment, and resource shortages while making decisions that guarantee organisational sustainability and meet performance objectives (Schaedler et al., 2022; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018). This process certainly requires a collective of individuals who not only foresee and create a vision but also maintain flexibility, engage in strategic thinking, and collaborate effectively. These elements are crucial for initiating changes that enhance competitiveness and ensure a more promising future for the organisation (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

Strategic leaders empower others by cultivating an environment that encourages innovation and shared goals. Strategic leadership promotes teamwork, which is vital for the company's growth in its sector. Often, departments work in silos, and a strategic leader must foster cooperation. Strategic leadership involves operational improvements without being confined to a specific leadership style. To develop an effective turnaround strategy with clear milestones, a company requires diligent and capable strategic leadership to guide it in the right direction.

Luciano et al. (2020) assert that top management acts as the key leaders in the organisational structure, guiding and implementing strategic direction within the organisation. In today's complex and constantly changing business environment, it is crucial for strategic leaders to steer their companies through turbulent periods. Failure to do so can lead to declining performance and a significant loss of market leadership. Leaders, therefore, need to be flexible in developing and implementing turnaround strategies; the strategies themselves must be sufficiently agile to respond to unexpected changes. Strategic leaders must interpret a dynamic threat landscape with limited information. They must be adaptable and flexible enough to incorporate new insights into their turnaround strategies (Ayamga et al., 2024).

This creates a cognitive working environment that prioritises both individual and collaborative work (Luciano et al., 2020).

It enables top management to lead the company towards shared value by independently fulfilling their roles while continuously seeking guidance and support from board members to create more value and regain its competitive advantage, thereby promoting interdependence between the two groups of leaders. The CEO, the executive team, certainly hold important positions in influencing strategic decisions and navigating crises. The CEO certainly holds the position of primary strategic decision-maker, with the top management team playing a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of strategic decision-making and its implementation. During crises, the board of directors plays a crucial role, actively guiding and moderating responses (Schaedler et al., 2021).

The top management leading the turnaround strategy can be viewed through the agency-theoretical lens, which emphasises the need for independence to improve performance and achieve sustainable growth (Luciano et al., 2020). Leaders guide the organisation in a specific direction, and strategic leadership effectiveness is assessed by how well the team collectively achieve shared objectives. The primary responsibilities of the top management and board are to develop a strategic vision for the company, align the necessary goals, and process information on how to attain them, including identifying critical resources to meet the established objectives (Luciano et al., 2020).

Strategic visioning is fundamentally shaped by strategic leadership, which is responsible for articulating the company's purpose and objectives. This process must consider not only the company's history and current state but also the future landscape and various internal and external factors that can drive transformational initiatives (Gavetti & Rivkin, 2007). Top management and the board must align and share goals to minimise discord within the ecosystem of the turnaround process. The conceptualisation of the company's core status is important and involves repeatedly gathering information, interpreting what is found, and selecting the data to use in driving change. The straightforward turnaround strategy execution is crucial, as leadership should identify, understand, and capitalise on opportunities more quickly than the competition to gain and create a competitive advantage (Dagnino et al., 2021).

The primary role of strategic leadership is to manage a crisis and ensure that resources are allocated effectively so the team can fully perform their duties (Bower and Gilbert, 2005) amid conditions of uncertainty and time pressure. Strategic leaders must communicate effectively with stakeholders, providing identify critical factors that

influence the company's efficiency. The studies by Schaedler et al. (2021) indicated that during a turnaround, CEO with appropriate characteristics and values and to communicate practical actions clearly to reverse the company's decline. In a turnaround strategy, effective planning and execution are essential.

The responsibilities of strategic leaders include crisis prevention and management, overseeing recovery measures, upholding ethical leadership, and ensuring resource availability during crises to support implementation of plans (Schaedler et al., 2021). Strategic leader holds the highest authority within the organisation to shape the company's vision, formulate strategies, design the organisation, and cultivate an collaboration culture that enhances performance (Martins, 2020).

Effective leadership is important for designing and implementing successful turnaround strategies. It involves setting proactive goals, identifying key issues, and initiating changes that lead to substantial improvements, rather than merely managing crises and adjustments. Strategic leadership undeniably plays a pivotal role in crucial practices. It is essential for setting long-term strategic objectives, leveraging organisational core capabilities, and effectively managing human and social assets to significantly boost the company's performance. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise that the effectiveness of strategic leadership initiatives hinges on the cultivation of a sustainable organisational culture, the prioritisation of ethical values, and the establishment of a balanced system of controls (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

The implementation of the turnaround requires demonstrating sustainable competitiveness through products, service delivery, and the competencies of the team. Competitiveness is the ability of company leaders to achieve results faster, cheaper, and better than other industry players (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Human resource management practices, such as job security, selectivity in recruitment, and skills training result to competitive advantage. The HR function must align its activities with business strategy, processes, and measurement methods to stay competitive.

2.4. Characteristics of the leadership

The CEO and top management team are crucial pillars of the turnaround strategy, and the qualities of individuals in these roles influence how people respond to the strategy's success. Leaders who value their employees and focus on opportunities can help address a crisis and reverse a declining situation (Schaedler et al., 2021). The research highlights that the capacity of influential CEOs to become captured in a self-reinforcing cycle may result in corporate malfeasance and crises (Schaedler et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, traits such as conservatism, narcissism, and overconfidence can have impacts on organisational crisis management.

The facial appearance, crisis communication, and social capital greatly influence stakeholder perception of the top management team during a crisis (Schaedler et al., 2021). A facial expression that shows traits of integrity and honesty positively affects stakeholders' views on how the company manages decline and conducts a turnaround during a crisis. Social capacity is demonstrated through effective communication and the presence of top management in social engagements, which helps build valuable social relationships that can benefit the company (Schaedler et al., 2021).

The traits of top management, including financial incentives, power, and personality qualities like risk aversion, self-centredness, and narcissism, can affect both the occurrence of a crisis and its resolution. A top manager with considerable power is able to take calculated risks and drive superior company performance. The shareholders help in organisational crisis management, and its characteristics also influence how a company handles a turnaround. Independence, expertise, age, size, and interlocks impact the effectiveness of decisions made to turn around the business and manage crises. The shareholder should be suitable for the organisation to handle crises effectively, coordinate responses accurately, and provide clear guidance to reverse declining performance (Schaedler et al., 2021).

The capabilities of leaders are essential factors that determine the company's success or failure. Strategic leadership directly impacts the organisation's strategic agility and the company's competitiveness in the market. It greatly influences strategic flexibility and competitive positioning by fostering the dynamic growth of core competencies within the team. This, in turn, encourages initiatives that develop and retain human resources, utilise digital transformation to execute the turnaround strategy, and effectively implement cost-saving measures (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

It is the strategic leader's essential role to communicate the company's future vision, establish a direction that helps achieve the organisation's goals, and enhance the organisation's competitiveness while setting a long-term vision for the company. The primary challenge for leadership is to inspire commitment among both internal staff and external stakeholders to adopt change, envision the future, and implement strategic objectives to create a sustainable and prosperous position for the company (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

2.5. Dynamic capabilities and Resources-Base View

Companies depend on sets of capabilities with dynamic traits to utilise both internal and external skills, ensuring they can adapt quickly to a changing environment (Teece, 2014). The dynamic capabilities required by companies are determined by process needs, which are guided by the goals that must be met. Company objectives can group resources. Companies rely on reconfigured and readjusted capabilities to continually reposition for turbulence in the operating environment (Omondi et al., 2017). Additionally, companies depend on active actors interested in the company's market success to respond to dynamic operational conditions and business challenges through the effective use of resources within the organisation (Kero & Bogale, 2023).

According to Božič & Dimovski (2019), a company's ability to remain competitive while achieving sustainable performance depends on securing valuable, inimitable, unique, committed, and non-substitutable resources. According to Donnellan & Rutledge (2021), the dynamic business environment has compelled organisations to develop resource competence alongside the resource-based view to innovate and achieve their objectives creatively. The resource-based view emphasises that a company's capacity to anticipate changes and utilise capable resources to find solutions and address industry challenges innovatively influences its effectiveness, competitive position, and profitability (Chahal et al., 2020).

Yu et al. (2018) describe the company's capabilities as bundles of knowledge that can be leveraged to improve its performance, enabling the proper planning and execution of strategies utilising the company's resources. Furthermore, in order to establish a competitive edge, organizations must continuously integrate and develop both tangible and intangible resources to effectively adapt to the ever-changing market conditions (Yu et al., 2018). The resource-based view is essential for not only acquiring but also sustaining effective responses to the market, which ultimately leads to competitive advantage. It is imperative to recognise their significance in today's business landscape. This is due to their ability to allow the company to reorganise its resources and distribute them based on the immediate need to react to the external environment (Kero & Bogale, 2023).

Competent resources enable the company to generate economic value by executing turnaround strategies that surpass competitors' in the market. The resource-based view foundations enable the company to implement effective strategies, outperforming its competitors in the market.

The company's knowledge-based resources are its main competitive advantage, providing product expertise to customers and facilitating the practical use of its products, thereby maintaining a competitive edge. Operational efficiency is achieved through the effective utilisation of competencies within the company and intellectual capital, which is crucial for high performance and gaining an advantage over rivals (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019). The company must invest in developing its team's skills to enhance the sustainable performance of its internal resources. These internal competencies and capabilities enable the company to remain strategically focused on improving overall performance, leveraging on culture, continuous improvement, diversification, and adaptable strategies to deliver customer service (Bamgbade et al., 2022).

Applying a resource-based approach presents an opportunity to develop a competitive advantage through efficiently utilising resources to deliver customer needs in a distinctive way that is difficult to imitate (Lukovszki et al., 2021). In a turnaround strategy, the company must foster a culture of innovation, which is seen as the company's willingness to move away from its usual or current practices to create new products or services through resource integration, creative processes, and an innovative mindset (Lukovszki et al., 2021).

Shahri and Sarvestani (2020) see the Innovation function in a declining company as a vital business model that involves creating something new or a different approach to solving existing problems. Osiyevskyy et al. (2021) assert that the objective of a turnaround is to discern effective strategies during a crisis by fostering managerial decision-making through entrepreneurial thinking. Furthermore, the company's innovative capacity through its products or services can enable it to differentiate its offerings, add value, and secure a competitive advantage, thereby supporting sustainable performance.

2.6. Turnaround strategy

The turnaround strategy, as defined by Barker III et al. (2024), is a dynamic process that guides companies from decline to more sustainable success. The research emphasises that a turnaround strategy is a time-sensitive and adaptable process requiring swift adjustments to shift a company's survival threat mode into sustainable performance (Barbero et al., 2020). This involves management addressing resource scarcity and misalignment that may have contributed to the decline (Baker et al., 2024). In the turnaround journey, the CEO acts as the driving force behind the entire process,

ensuring the necessary resources are available to execute it effectively. Leadership at the forefront in implementing the turnaround plans.

A turnaround strategy is an ongoing process aimed at transforming declining performance into sustainability. It requires monitoring direction, resources, and capabilities to pursue strategic goals, supported by an established structure (Nyagiloh & Kilika, 2020). Turnaround strategies are intentional action plans designed and executed to halt deterioration and restore organisational performance (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024). Therefore, innovation is vital in the turnaround strategy for developing and implementing new ideas and creatively modifying procedures to increase the company's value. Resources must be proficiently managed and utilised efficiently to create value for the organisation. It is crucial for strategic leadership to define the framework to be employed, identify key success criteria, and then incorporate them into a well-structured approach that guides turnaround efforts and resource allocation to achieve meaningful impact (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024).

The organisation frequently struggles with a lack of vital resources needed to operate at the required level and meet expectations, leading to a decline in performance. When priorities are misaligned, it results in the misallocation of resources, which hampers operations and causes a continual decline in performance. The research emphasises that a turnaround strategy is a time-sensitive, adaptable process that requires swift adjustments to shift a company from survival mode to sustainable performance (Barbero et al., 2020). Organisations implementing a turnaround strategy must continually adapt to a dynamic, evolving environment. They need to regularly assess the causes and nature of decline, evaluate the overall impact, and reconsider the company's positioning and required responses more frequently (Baker III et al., 2024).

Organisational pathologies, such as the lack of a proper managerial decision-making approach, contribute to the company's decline. The company that experiences limited information processing and centralised decision-making often hampers organisational agility in addressing crucial issues, leading to declining performance (Abebe et al., 2024). Decline occurs when there is no accountability within the team, resulting in a scapegoating mentality and reduced cognitive flexibility (Abebe et al., 2024). The absence of accountability and decision-making causes stagnation, which leads to poor performance, as vital decisions for the company's growth are not made.

The commitment received by the declining organisation that is embarking on a turnaround strategy, particularly from the director ownership and board independence,

strengthens the likelihood of the strategy's success due to the strong support of decision-makers (Miglan et al., 2020). Strategic leaders must involve key stakeholders and outside directors in implementing a turnaround strategy; aligning the strategic intent of the turnaround with stakeholders positively influences successful turnaround outcomes (Miglan et al., 2020).

According to Bhattacharyya & Malik (2020), the turnaround strategy is divided into two levels: operational and strategic. An operational intervention helps develop an agile turnaround and ensure value creation, thereby increasing cash inflows through efficiency while reducing cash outflows. Changes at the operational level are implemented to improve efficiency in marketing, operations, purchasing, human resources, and logistics (Schaedler et al., 2022). The operational levers in the turnaround strategy focus on improving operational efficiencies, which minimise cash outflow. Strategic turnaround intervention, management focuses on more proactive activities to generate new revenue, which require initial expenditure and capital to activate long-term ideas that will boost cash inflows (Bhattacharyya & Malik, 2020). The strategic intervention may require an initial capital outflow to implement changes in the short term, with the expectation that it will lead to greater cash inflow over time (Bhattacharyya & Malik, 2020).

The strategic levers focus on long-term profits; they may include expanding the product range to diversify income streams and enlarging market channels to reach different segments. The recovery pillar of the turnaround strategy emphasises the company's long-term growth through market-focused strategic decisions and its competitive position (Barker et al., 2024).

2.6.1. Strategic turnaround intervention

The turnaround strategy involves actions that management undertakes to restore the organisation's profitability. It aims to rescue a company facing losses (Balioukas et al., 2023). Bhattacharyya & Malik (2020) emphasise that the primary aim of a corporate turnaround strategy is to transform a poorly performing company into a successful one.

Change Top Management Team (TMT) leadership: enable realignment of organisational goals to rethink business strategy, enable fresh perspective and new energy, improve strategic planning and implementation, and accelerate building a new culture.

Enhanced customer focus: Identifying why the customer is switching to another option is crucial. The company can then precisely develop a relevant turnaround plan, adaptable dynamic product pricing, and a better or personalised product.

Culture Building: Culture building helps build employee confidence in the company's management's renewed intentions and is critical for retaining talent.

Innovation: An innovation culture enables the company to creatively respond to rapid changes and develop new products and how customers are served, thereby gaining a competitive edge. Innovation can also help the company create new revenue streams, enter markets, and offer new products.

Collaborative Strategy: Companies can form strategic alliances and joint ventures. These alliances can share resources and costs, diversify risk, and transfer knowledge. Consequently, the companies can collaborate and swiftly acquire a durable competitive edge.

Diversification into new geographic and market areas: Companies tap into new markets and manage risk by reducing the harm caused to the business in the downturn phase. Companies in different places can quickly build a cooperative footprint and a long-term competitive edge.

2.6.2. Operational Turnaround Intervention

Inventory Management: Effective inventory management would enable the company to significantly reduce operational costs, including holding costs, interest costs, and raw material expenses, while also preventing obsolete stock and minimising operational expenses.

Price-sensitive purchasing: Procurement should negotiate better prices with suppliers and expand the supplier base to ensure sufficient price comparison. Control work in the capital.

Strong accounting and administration system: The company requires a reliable information base to make informed decisions during the turnaround; the accounting system must be both reliable and accurate.

Operating process optimisation: Evaluating operational procedures to enhance efficiency, eliminate cost leakage, and optimise asset use.

The success of a turnaround becomes clear when the organisation's value is restored to its competitive level by reversing a decline in performance. To achieve a sustainable turnaround, it is crucial to identify competence gaps and utilise inter-organisational relationships while maintaining control over value creation. The organisation's declining performance may be influenced by internal which is within the company control and external that management was unable to address effectively in response to their impacts (Handoyoa et al., 2023). The performance is mostly influenced by internal elements such as corporate strategies, operational efficiencies, financial control, and ownership, which require attention and enhancement from the management team (Handoyoa et al., 2023).

While tackling internal factors that hinder the organisation's profitability is relatively easier, it requires a management team willing to turn things around and reverse the downward trend. External factors are more challenging to manage and usually take longer to see positive outcomes from the turnaround strategy.

2.6.3. Internal Factors leading to failure

The internal factors behind include a lack of resources that hinder its ability to compete effectively, creating a comparative disadvantage that results in a failure to keep pace and compete in the market (Bhattacharyya & Malik, 2020). The discussion concerns not only the quantity of resources but also what makes a significant contribution. It enhances the organisation's ability to perform, which depends on the quality of the available resources. The primary issue for the organisation is a lack of, and poor organisational capabilities, which significantly contribute to company performance trending downwards.

2.6.4. External Factors

External factors that contribute to the decline of organisational performance are often difficult to identify, and organisations may not always accurately assess the impact of change. Companies that fail to recognise shifting environments and customer needs risk missing opportunities to innovate and adapt their strategies to meet new demands. Unrest can lead to ineffective activities that disrupt operations. Technology has increasingly posed a major threat to businesses, as they struggle to manage technological changes that undermine value creation. In some cases, technology has also jeopardised the worth of the company's core assets and activities. The organisational rigidity in resisting change further exacerbates these challenges.

2.6.5. Integration of the turnaround strategy

Strategic interventions capitalised on opportunities that would substantially enhance cash inflows. The successful turnaround depends on it. The strategic and operational turnaround strategies mainly focus on their impact on cash flows. The operational levers in the turnaround strategy aim to reduce cash outflows and boost cash inflows. Understanding the decline root cause is fundamental to developing the turnaround plans; selecting the appropriate levers depends on the underlying reasons for the decline.

The turnaround strategy aims to stop the declining cash flow trend and improve the company's performance. A well-designed turnaround plan boosts managers' confidence and offers a competitive edge despite challenges and shortcomings. Having a comprehensive overview of the entire turnaround process can be a valuable tool for understanding the crisis and guiding recovery efforts. The detailed roadmap of the turnaround plans and their implementation should be prepared to identify crucial activities needed to revive the company and reverse the decline.

Five critical stages must be followed to implement a turnaround strategy: a) managing change, which involves restructuring the management team and boosting employee morale. In the turnaround strategy, it is clear that poor management stands out as the primary factor leading to a decline in performance (Balioukas et al., 2023). This assertion is supported by the various stages involved: b) assessment stage, c) crisis stage, d) stabilization stage, and e) return to growth stage.

The turnaround involves high-level business leadership and shareholders who expect senior leadership to take control, improve performance, and be accountable.

2.6.6. Success factors of turnaround strategy

A turnaround strategy is usually described as a change management aimed at making significant shifts in organisational structures, processes, culture, and environmental focus (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024). Additionally, turnaround is regarded as a defensive strategy that returns the declining performance trend to intervene in the organisation's major financial difficulties (Nystrom and Starbuck, 2015).

Schweizer & Nienhaus (2017) emphasise that a key success factor is the managerial transition, which can occur through hiring capable leaders, or an alternative option is a significant shift in the mindset and approach of the current management. Implementing the turnaround plan requires management to act quickly and effectively to create a

meaningful impact and change (Schweizer & Nienhaus, 2017). Moreover, it is vital to strengthen the organisation with financial resources to support core operations, aiming to establish a successful and world-class enterprise with clearly defined objectives (Aipinge & Shopati, 2022). For a successful turnaround, the company needs a skilled and experienced management team to swiftly guide and execute strategic activities while maintaining operational liquidity. Additionally, it is essential to have decisive management capable of making prompt decisions to minimise losses and enable changes that support the turnaround strategy (Aipinge & Shopati, 2022).

The success of the turnaround depends on collaborative leadership to develop a strategy that achieves shared objectives, combined with capital resources to ensure quality control in accounting and financial management (Setyopurnomo et al., 2025). Additionally, implementing proper planning and utilising the expertise and training of the management team are vital factors for securing a successful turnaround.

A comprehensive understanding of the organisation's need to change its practices, coupled with a clearly defined strategic goal for the turnaround, is crucial for guiding implementation throughout the process (Aipinge & Shopati, 2022). Petrova (2017) argues that strategic management must also examine the decision-making protocols that govern organisational activities. Effective communication with employees regarding the rationale and turnaround strategy execution is vital for aligning strategic leadership with operational staff. Clear internal communication fosters employee trust, encourage commitment, and develop satisfaction (Men & Stacks, 2014), thereby boosting employee engagement (Verčič & Vokić, 2017). Good communication helps minimise resistance to management change initiatives and encourages enthusiasm and willingness to support the turnaround effort.

Top management acts as the change agents in implementing the turnaround strategy; their commitment is essential and greatly influences the enhancement of competitive advantage and employee engagement by establishing clear policies and strategies (Siagian et al., 2022). The team possessing the necessary capabilities is vital for executing the turnaround strategy and delivering results within the specified timeframe, while also improving cost efficiency and consciously motivating the team to achieve the set objectives (Aipinge & Shopati, 2022).

2.6.7. Evolving environment and turnaround strategy

In the current business environment, the turnaround strategy faces the complexities of digitalisation, where every change is met with the forces of digital transformation (Barker III et al., 2024). This has altered fundamental industrial principles, driven a shift from traditional views on industrial value chains, revisited value-creating activities, and made organisations more agile by updating their strategic processes (Barker III et al., 2024). The evolving complex business landscape requires organisations to stay open-minded and recognise the turbulence caused by digitalisation and corporate turnaround. Embarking on a journey of rapid change demands adaptability in executing a turnaround strategy, vigilance in recognising market trends and responding swiftly, and a comprehensive understanding of the firm as a vital part of the broader network.

In the process of turnaround strategies, it is important to consider the use of digital technology to enhance asset retrenchment and recovery strategies (Baker III et al., 2024). The struggling organisation that adopts a digital reorientation strategy unlocks digital dynamic capabilities and is more likely to achieve a successful turnaround, as it enables the organisation to overhaul the business model, create alternative distribution channels, and generate new revenue streams (Abebe et al., 2024). Digital reorientation offers a strategic roadmap towards a successful turnaround, addressing key strategic challenges such as business model obsolescence (Abebe et al., 2024). The digital reorientation allows strategic leadership to make relevant, timely decisions that positively impact the current business environment.

The organisation should adopt a transformational mindset to successfully implement a turnaround strategy, develop a broader strategic framework, embrace flexible practices, and promote managerial agility to effectively navigate the digital ecosystem and utilise it for accelerating the execution of turnaround activities. The current complex and evolving digital era environment facilitates progress and growth in the industry; however, it also changes the competitive forces. Digitalisation enables companies to optimise business processes and alter industry value creation and generation operations (Rossi et al., 2020).

The agency theory is the main concept behind the turnaround strategy, which looks at how senior leaders assume responsibility, monitor performance, and shape decisions to enhance the company's outcomes. It clarifies how ownership concentration, board composition, and director interlocks relate to an organisation's financial recovery. Several definitions and approaches exist; however, the core steps in a turnaround

include management change, including evaluation, plan for emergency response, creating a stabilisation, resulting to returning to normal growth (Gotteiner et al., 2019).

The company experiences successful turnarounds when the balance sheet has improved, profitability is restored, and it can confidently compete in the market (Mpete & Maier, 2024) and achieve strategic objectives. A successful turnaround indicates that the leaders have correctly implemented the turnaround strategy and accomplished the set objectives. The effectiveness of turnaround strategies depends on how well the system aligns with long-term goals in a constantly evolving environment (Baker III et al., 2024). Turnaround outcomes should be evaluated by measuring future change and learning potential, and by using dynamic capabilities to create, extend, or modify resource bases.

2.6.8. Challenges for the implementation of the turnaround strategy

Implementing the turnaround strategy presents challenges that strategic leadership must navigate to successfully reverse declining performance. According to Mpete and Maier (2024), strategic leaders should develop a clear roadmap to guide strategy implementation, addressing issues such as appointing capable individuals to leadership and management roles. Other challenges involve clarifying the dividing line between the duties of the board and shareholders. For the strategy to succeed, there must be alignment on initiatives between the board and leadership. The effect of leadership instability is a major challenge that hampers strategy implementation, as it causes a lack of continuity, delays progress, and results in an ineffective turnaround effort (Mpete & Maier, 2024)

One of the key pillars of a successful turnaround is improving inefficient internal operations, ensuring compliance with legislation, and strengthening corporate governance. The CEO, as the leader responsible for executing the turnaround, must navigate and unify various instructions from multiple stakeholders and provide clear guidance to focus efforts on successfully implementing the strategy (Mpete & Maier, 2024). A lack of resources to allocate and enable progress in the strategy is one of the challenges strategic leaders must address and overcome, aligning with both agency theory and resource dependence theory (Mpete & Maier, 2024).

Resources enable leaders to carry out actions and monitor progress. Poor leadership fails to meet expectations, struggles to create shared values within the team, and high staff turnover creates a vacuum that hampers the implementation of strategies. There is no continuity; new leaders start to introduce new risks and lose corporate memory.

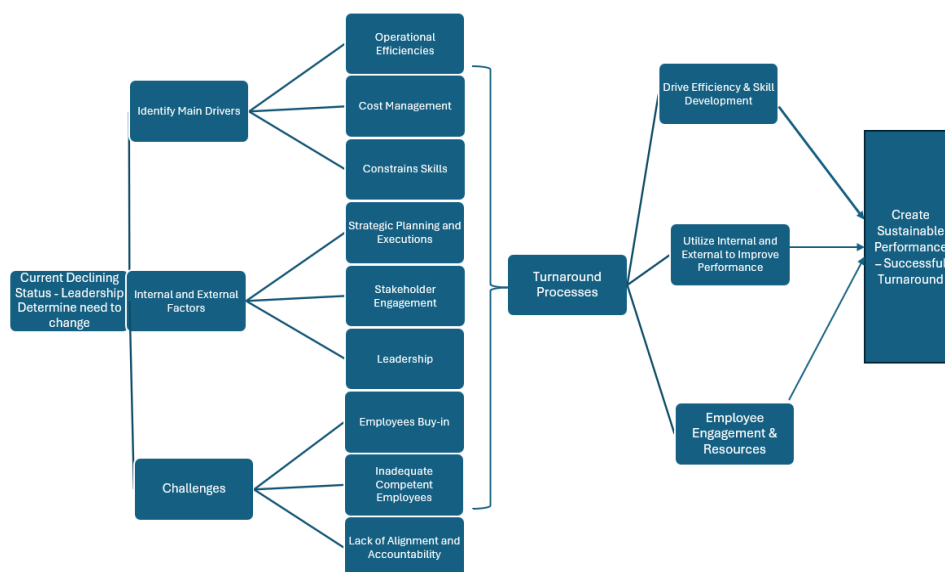
Another obstacle impeding performance is ineffective cost management, which affects the ability to deliver strategic objectives and restricts capital available for investment in the improvement plan (Mpete & Maier, 2024).

The strategic leadership is not empowered to drive the execution of a turnaround without interference from different levels within the company who need to give authority for small decisions that could be made at the operational level (Mpete & Maier, 2024). Inefficient internal operations pose a major challenge, with liquidity shortages and under-capitalisation significant issues. The absence of requisite skills for effective change management, inadequate execution capabilities due to resource or financial constraints, and inefficient procedures and structures restrict the effectiveness of turnarounds (Mpete & Maier, 2024)

It is critical to gain the buy-in of employees; without this, the strategic leadership will struggle to leverage operational levers to drive change. Ineffective stakeholder management also contributes to challenges and affects the success of turnarounds.

In the effort to illustrate the process flow of the turnaround strategy considering the literature gained thus far Figure 1 set up the approach the strategic leadership need to consider and follow. This enables the strategic leadership to apply literature insight and deliver sustainable performance for the company

Figure 1: Mapping turnaround strategy implementation



The subsequent stage of the turnaround is stabilisation, where the primary goal is to boost profitability by focusing on the core business to enhance efficiency (Balioukas et al., 2023). After establishing its core business functions, the company aims to return to growth by modifying its internal structure, with a key focus on expanding into more profitable markets and developing new products (Balioukas et al., 2023).

2.6.9. Failure to implement turnaround strategy

The leadership's ability to effectively carry out turnaround activities is essential for developing strategies that generate revenue and sustain business operations (Sithomola, 2019). Some of the key factors affecting successful turnaround implementation include poor leadership and performance, which influence decision-making; corruption, leading to resource misuse; and ineffective performance management systems (Mashamaite & Raseala, 2019).

Ugoani (2020) stated that the quality of leadership is the main factor driving successful turnarounds; it suggests that a lack of leadership could be the primary cause of failure in turnaround strategies within organisations (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2019). The frequent turnover of CEOs undeniably disrupts the continuity of the turnaround process. It is imperative to have a reliable data system along with effective financial, effectiveness, and accountability processes (Chauke & Motubatse, 2020). Without these essential components, deficiencies can significantly obstruct the accurate implementation of turnaround strategies. The absence of a system to manage consequences and the presence of weak governance structures (Chauke & Motubatse, 2020) hinder discipline in executing plans, thereby reducing the urgency to implement strategies as they should be.

2.6.10. Theoretical Anchor

Resource dependence theory helps explain that the leaders of the turnaround are contracted to implement it, following the principal who employs them. 'Agency theory' analyses the issues arising between the agency relationships and the leaders, including the company board, to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. In managerial and organisational cognition, emphasis is placed on the strategic leadership in individual cognition including perceptions (Schaedler et al., 2021).

The resource-based theory clearly highlights the critical role that external resources play in implementation and their significant impact on organisational performance. It is

essential to recognize that without these resources, achieving optimal performance becomes increasingly challenging. Insufficient access to appropriate external resources can significantly obstruct execution and lead to its ineffectiveness. Resource dependency theory acknowledges the capacity of senior leaders to furnish important assets. The resource boundaries for the organisation may exist within the company, where the knowledge-based view, resources-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective influence the company's performance (Ambrosini et al., 2009). If the management of organisational resources and capabilities is weak, the company will find it difficult to maintain strong performance. Beyond organisational boundaries, factors contributing to failure from an organisational perspective are attributed to political, legal, social, technological, and environmental influences. According to Santana et al. (2019), poor industrial conditions related to managing Porter's forces, if not properly considered and addressed in the organisational environment, can lead to organisational failure.

In the turnaround strategy, the agency's theoretical foundation and resource-based dependence theory are crucial drivers for successful implementation. Agency theory suggests that the company's agents and principals are mainly responsible for its failure. Meanwhile, the resource-based view emphasises that a company's internal competencies and environment create a competitive advantage. The resources developed within the company strategically position it for success, and acquiring external resources further enhances the company's ability to execute a turnaround effectively.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3. Research Questions

3.2. Introduction

This chapter outlines the main research questions that the researcher aims to address to build knowledge grounded in the study's foundation. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 offers guidance in formulating these questions. The researcher's questions are intended to enhance the strategic leadership role in ensuring a successful turnaround strategy within the cement producers. The research question seeks to close gaps to strategies execution by focusing on how strategic leadership effectively coordinates efforts to change mindsets, improve operational efficiency, and sustainably boost the company's performance. Additionally, the questions aim to explore the characteristics and flexible approaches that strategic leadership can adopt to create a competitive edge in the cement industry.

3.3. Research Questions

The literature review was consulted to develop the research questions, which will serve as the basis for investigating the turnaround strategy and strategic leaders in the manufacturing company.

3.4. Research Questions

3.4.1. Research Question 1

What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

In the constantly changing business environment, market shifts such as new innovations, shifting preferences, and changing regulations require companies to adjust and refine their strategies and operational systems to respond effectively and remain competitive (Atela & Sitienei, 2023). According to the Cascade team (2023), a consistent decline in the financial performance, with clear evidence of decreasing revenue and cash flow, indicates that the company needs to implement strategic changes. Furthermore, industries facing significant market disruptions, including new revivals and increased imports, make the existing business model less effective and less competitive, leading to a decline in market share and requiring a strategy to improve (Cascade team, 2023).

According to Atela & Sitienei (2023), the cement industry faces several challenges that affect its performance and require a change in mindset to stay competitive and profitable. A business turnaround strategy involves a series of actions designed to improve financial difficulties, ultimately transforming it into a more profitable and resilient organisation.

3.4.2. Research Question 2

How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

The internal and external factors within a business enable the company to develop and operate effectively, achieving its set goals; their disruption can either be a source of growth or pose challenges (Shatilo, 2019). Although the external environment presents difficulties, it also offers resources that support internal capabilities. According to Shatilo (2019), the two operating environments influence the company's ability to innovate, manage operations, and make decisions. Tao et al. (2020) argued that the complexity of implementing turnaround strategies arises from the difficulty of integrating internal factors within the company while considering external factors that affect execution success. Implementation requires simplifying the approach through clear communication, forming a dedicated team, involving middle managers throughout the process and improving employee engagement (Buhusayen et al., 2020).

Innovations possess transformative power for organisations, encouraging companies to integrate external knowledge through various methods and resources into their innovation process. According to Lam (2021), the integration approach promotes harmony between external contributions and internal capabilities, supporting the development of new initiatives. The structured framework of collaborative innovation engineering involves careful management of open innovation efforts. This includes recognising and assessing external knowledge sources (Lam, 2021), incorporating external insights into internal processes, and efficiently commercialising findings from open innovation initiatives.

3.4.3. Research Question 3

What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

The studies have indicated that organisational changes are crucial for growth and creating a highly competitive advantage in the dynamic business environment (Hussain et al., 2018). The turnaround implementation encountered various hurdles that senior management must address to achieve sustained success. Numerous problems encompass the absence of a definitive strategy plan, employee opposition to change, insufficient resources, cultural contexts, and leadership approach (Mpete & Maier, 2024).

Leadership roles in managing turnaround and challenges associated with organisational change involve creating a culture of openness and remaining adaptable to initiate plans to overcome resistance and achieve set objectives (Hubbart, 2023). To effectively achieve a durable turnaround, executives must eliminate barriers and supply the requisite resources to facilitate change and strengthen the change process within the organization. To achieve these objectives, leaders must eliminate obstacles and provide the necessary resources and assistance to assist employees in overcoming challenges and adapting to change (Hubbart 2023).

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter delineated the research questions that form the foundation of the investigation. These inquiries will facilitate an examination of the function of strategic leadership in a deteriorating and tough business landscape, empowering the organization to effectively reverse its performance decline. Understanding will be acquired regarding which tactics effectively induce performance transformation. The subsequent chapter will elucidate the research technique, specifying the processes of data gathering and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. Methodology Choices

4.2. Introduction

This chapter describes the study approach and explains the research design used to address the topic. It details the population of interest and provides information on the sampling process, including how it was carried out to achieve the appropriate sample size. Another section of this chapter covers data collection tools, the analysis method, validity and reliability verification, and the analytical procedure. It concludes with a discussion of research ethics, which guided all research activities. This section covers philosophies, methodological choices, and research strategies, and addresses the fundamental pillars of research design. Qualitative research emphasises words over numerical data, prompting the researcher to adopt an interpretive and inductive approach (Bell et al., 2019).

The study adopted the interpretivism philosophical approach, gaining knowledge and understanding from participants' experiences. The participants' contributions showcased diverse experiences and perspectives on the turnaround strategy phenomenon, and the researcher interpreted this input to respond to the research question holistically. Interpretivism is inherently subjective (Saunders et al., 2023) and is used to explore various interpretations, thereby generating meaningful insights.

This is a qualitative exploratory study, wherein the researcher sought to obtain novel insights from participants to augment the function of strategic leadership in facilitating a successful turnaround plan. This qualitative approach allowed the researcher to interpret subjective and socially constructed understandings of strategic and turnaround ideas within the complex and evolving business environment (Saunders et al., 2023). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) associate qualitative research design with interpretivism, asserting that qualitative research relies on verbal interpretation rather than numerical data. In qualitative research, researchers focus on understanding the phenomenon's meaning from the insider's perspective and engage with the content.

The study examined and gained insight into the challenges of implementing a turnaround strategy and how to overcome them to achieve success. The choice of a qualitative research approach is justified, as it aimed to understand how strategic leaders can develop sustainable turnaround strategies in a changing and dynamic environment. The research was carried out within a tight schedule; therefore, a cross-sectional study

was conducted. Saunders et al. (2023) describe the analysis of a single event at a specific point in time as cross-sectional, emphasising that scholarly inquiry is limited in time. They offer an overview of the research issue and its conclusions.

4.3. Population and Targeted Population

The population allows the researcher to study the entire group under investigation thoroughly and supports the analysis of the phenomena. It comprises all units used as variables in the survey (Shukla, 2020) and represents the complete set of units evaluated to draw conclusions. A population is essential to research methodology; it consists of individuals sharing common traits within specific geographic regions (Willie, 2024).

The population comprised companies within the cementitious industry in the manufacturing sector, with an average of 250 employees per manufacturer for this study. The study focuses on major cement producers in South Africa, providing insights into how they manage successful turnarounds and the challenges faced in enhancing performance. The aim was to understand the strategic leadership role in enabling a successful turnaround strategy in the capital-intensive cement manufacturing sector, which demands careful actions to improve performance.

The targeted population was a specific subset of the broader population being studied, characterised by particular traits that were crucial for the research (Alvi, 2016). This identified group allowed the researcher to concentrate on relevant segments that significantly contributed to achieving the research objectives (Willie, 2022). The alignment of goals and sampling procedures with the overall study aim depended on selecting the appropriate target group (Alvi, 2016). The study focused on senior management personnel from leading cement companies in South Africa, including roles such as Human Resource Managers, Sales and Commercial Managers, Operations Managers, Engineering Managers, and Finance Managers.

4.4. Unit of analysis

Zikmund et al. (2013) defined the unit of analysis as the individuals providing data, organised at an appropriate level and in a suitable combination to yield a meaningful outcome. It identified the group or subject that the inquiry will analyse (Bell et al., 2022). The researcher used the collected data to inform coding decisions based on the material's content. The unit of analysis comprised senior managers or executives from leading cement producers. The research aimed to ascertain whether senior leadership influenced the effective turnaround strategy implementation. For gaining insight Data

was collected by capturing the perceptions and insights of the interviewees during semi-structured interviews. The companies should access the research findings and incorporate the recommendations into their strategic planning and execution.

4.5. Sampling method and size

Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016) defined a sample as a finite selection of people from the specified population. A representative sample is essential for the study, as conclusions are drawn with a certain level of confidence (Saunders et al., 2023). Farrugia (2019) characterised the sampling strategy as the process of data collection for the study and analysis. Gill (2020) argued that researchers must have sufficient, high-quality data to address the study problems. The non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select specific interview participants to gather information from top management. Participants must hold decision-making positions and have experience in improving organisational performance. The participants included senior managers and those with demonstrable proof of implementing a turnaround based on specified performance metrics.

The researcher adhered to confidentiality laws, and consent to participate was obtained before the interview to protect confidentiality. The study was conducted over a limited period and involved 9 participants from reputable cement manufacturers in South Africa, focusing on their methods for organisational turnaround as senior leaders to achieve specific goals. The researcher justified the sample size based on data saturation, which relates to the sampling method and size; however, a sufficient sample is essential for obtaining quality data (Gill, 2020). Data saturation was reached when no new information was obtained from the participants (Gill, 2020). A clear and well-defined topic required a select group of articulate participants skilled in discussing the research issue regarding the studied phenomena (Gill, 2020). The qualitative research findings improved the disjointed turnaround sector and guided the formulation of specific procedures and policies (Gill,2020).

4.6. Measurement Instrument

This exploratory study employed an interview guide as the measurement tool, enabling consistent face-to-face interviews with various participants. The research methods highlighted that a semi-structured interview was appropriate for qualitative exploratory research, offering valuable insights into the analysis of social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2023). During the interview, open-ended questions were posed,

allowing unforeseen discoveries and anticipated topics to surface during the discussion. The interview question guide functions as a conceptual structure derived from the literature review, handling the research concerns this study aimed to address. These inquiries helped the researcher steer the discussion and, through an open-ended approach, permitted the interviewee to respond freely and honestly, thereby revealing a deeper understanding of the topic.

The interview guide ensured the discussion remained consistently aligned with the study topic as insights emerged during participant interactions. The guide consisted of 3-4 questions for each research question. The interview questions were initially piloted with two relevant voluntary participants from the target population to ensure validity and assess the coherence and clarity of the questions. The findings from the pilot interview were utilised to refine the interview guide.

The interview included additional questions to clarify or expand on the information collected. The interview questions guide was a compilation of concepts derived from reviewing other research papers related to the study's issues. Appendix 2 contains the consistency matrix linking the interview questions and research questions. The interviews are expected to be conducted and completed within one hour.

4.7. Data Gathering Process

Saunders et al., 2023 described data collection as a systematic and accurate method for gathering information through interviews, observations, surveys, and case studies. This study employed a semi-structured interview to collect data through direct engagement with participants (Saunders et al., 2023). Standardised questions were used to interview senior management from the cementitious sector, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and thereby enhance the quality of the findings. Due to the industry's close connections, a list of potential interviewees was compiled from contacts within the cementitious sector in South Africa. These potential interviewees were contacted by telephone, LinkedIn connection requests, or email to initiate communication. Those who were successfully reached and agreed to participate were scheduled for the interview via Teams, Google Meet, or in person at a mutually convenient time and date.

The interview was conducted online via Teams and Google Meet, subject to their consent, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. The researcher outlined the study's setting to the participants to build rapport, gather authentic and reliable information (Saunders et al., 2023), and provide definitions of the concepts being examined before the interview.

Securing consent to record before starting the session is essential. If approval is not obtained, notes are recorded manually during the interview. During the session, a recording device with transcription capabilities ensures accurate content capture and preserves the participant's contextual comments.

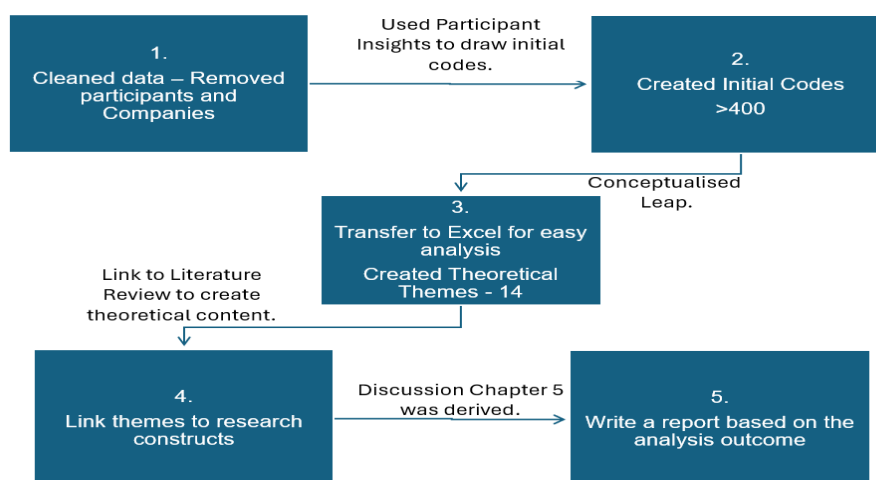
4.8. Analysis approach

Thematic analysis is a widely used method to identify, analyse, and interpret qualitative data to extract meaningful themes (Clarkea & Braun, 2017). Ahmed et al. (2025) highlighted that following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework keeps the researcher engaged with the data throughout the process, as each phase systematically develops meaningful insights during the analysis. The researcher used a thematic methodology to analyze the data gathered from nine individuals.

The researcher employed an inductive methodology to analyse the collected data, coding and categorising it through transcripts. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), the inductive approach involves identifying themes based on the data itself, which will be used in this study. The other approach is deductive, where themes are identified in relation to the theory.

The researcher followed a systematic approach: first, cleaning the data and then becoming familiar with it. Secondly, generating initial codes (>400) using Atlas.IT web. Thirdly, transferring the initial codes to Excel to conceptualise and categorise them (14). Lastly, establishing theoretical themes (how many).

Figure 2: Data Analysis process followed



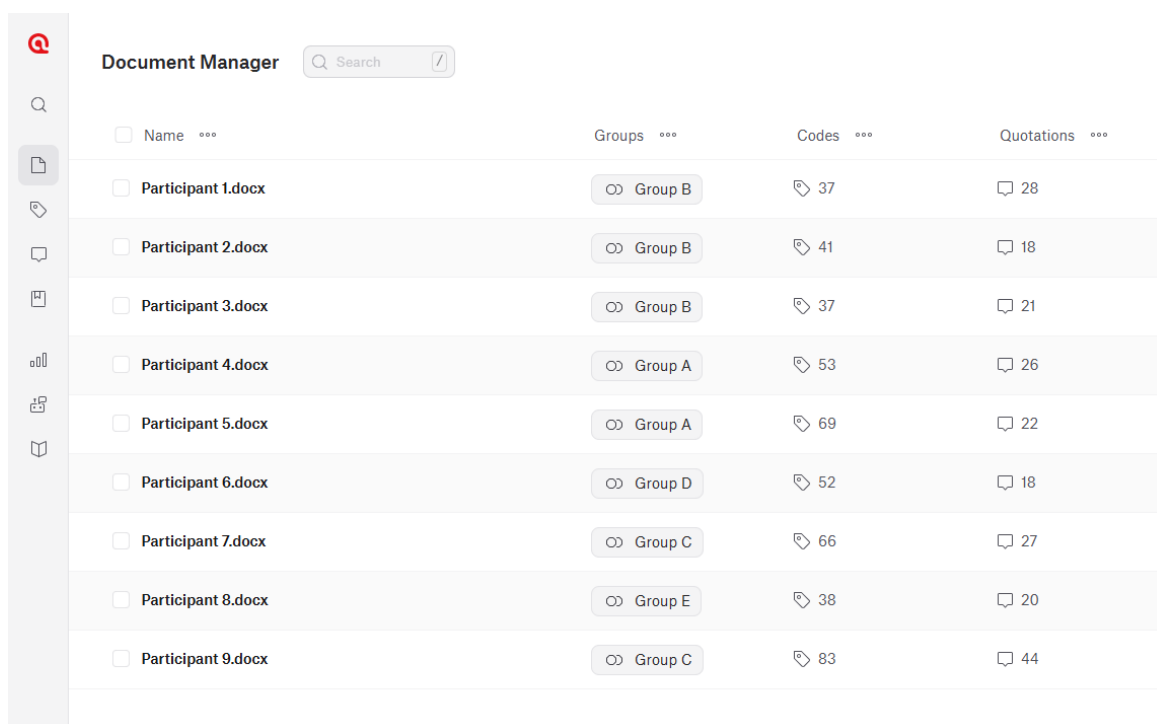
4.8.1. Data Cleaning-up

The interviews were conducted, and transcripts were generated during the engagement with the participants. The data collected during the interviews formed a baseline for analysis of the research questions. Before the data was prepared for processing, it was first cleaned to remove repeated words, as well as participants' and companies' names. The content of the interview responses was not altered to preserve the integrity of the data collected.

4.8.2. Organizing Data and Initial analysis

The cleaned data was uploaded to Atlas.ti Web. The researcher faced challenges with the university's Atlas.ti, where no response was received after a few requests. As a result, the researcher ended up purchasing Atlas.ti Web to process the collected data. ATLAS.ti is a widely used tool for analysing qualitative research data and generating codes for further analysis. The data was sorted according to individual participants and later grouped into five categories: Group A for mining participants, Group B for operational participants, Group C for support function participants, Group D for sales participants, and Group E for senior participants. These groups will help the researcher draw insights from individuals and analyse perspectives across different positions within the company. Figure XXX below illustrates the data organised in Atlas. ti Web.

Figure 3 Data Analysis from ATLAS.ti web



The screenshot shows the ATLAS.ti Document Manager interface. It features a search bar at the top and a table of documents. The table has columns for Name, Groups, Codes, and Quotations. The documents are listed as Participant 1.docx through Participant 9.docx, each assigned to a specific group (A, B, C, D, or E) and showing the number of codes and quotations associated with it.

| Name | Groups | Codes | Quotations |
|--------------------|---------|-------|------------|
| Participant 1.docx | Group B | 37 | 28 |
| Participant 2.docx | Group B | 41 | 18 |
| Participant 3.docx | Group B | 37 | 21 |
| Participant 4.docx | Group A | 53 | 26 |
| Participant 5.docx | Group A | 69 | 22 |
| Participant 6.docx | Group D | 52 | 18 |
| Participant 7.docx | Group C | 66 | 27 |
| Participant 8.docx | Group E | 38 | 20 |
| Participant 9.docx | Group C | 83 | 44 |

4.8.3. Creating Initial codes

The transcript generated during the interview process was individually analysed, and the process was repeated for each participant's transcript. The researcher systematically examined the data to identify meaningful thoughts, perspectives, and insights for each participant (Ahmed et al., 2025). In each transcript, the researcher highlighted quotations and phrases to reflect the meaning of the units. The analysis tools allowed for choices either to create a code related to the selected section or to choose from the suggestions list when assigning meaning to the quotation.

4.8.4. Creating Themes

Due to limited knowledge of the Atlas.ti data analysis tool, the information generated up to this stage was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for easier analysis and to facilitate further conceptual development for the study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify patterns in data and analyse the resulting narratives within the research context (Nowell et al., 2017). Qualitative research emphasises words over numerical analysis, prompting the researcher to adopt an interpretive and inductive approach (Bell et al., 2019). After transferring the data to Excel, the researcher grouped similar responses to categorise them and create themes based on initial codes to address the research questions. This enabled the researcher to connect the themes to the theory discussed in chapter 2. It led to the conceptualisation of the data within a theoretical framework.

4.8.5. Conceptual Leap

The researcher used the themes created to link to the literature and analyse further with the aim of answering research questions, drawing similarities between the empirical data obtained and what has been gathered through the literature regarding the successful implementation of turnaround strategies in the cement industry. Rivard (2024) defined a conceptual leap as an intellectual jump from empirical data into theoretical ideas that encompass various conceptual concepts. Through the application of the conceptual leap, the data in Excel derived the information presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Mapping initial codes to Categories to Themes.

| Categories per group | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| Group A (Participant (4 & 5)) | Group B Participant (1,2 & 3) | Group C Participant (7 & 9) | Group D Participant (6) | Group E Participant (8) | Themes |
| RQ 1: What are the Main Indicators of Turnaround need | | | | | |
| Production Cost Management | Capital Investment Cost Control Goal Setting | Performance Measurement | Production Cost Management | Cost Control | Themes 1: Cost Management |
| Quality Assurance, Market Share Brand Visibility | On-time Delivery | Brand Visibility Customer Satisfaction Market Awareness Performance Indicators | Reactive Approach | | Themes 2: Brand Performance |
| Communication of Intent External Competition Infrastructure Development | Data Analysis Skill | EBITDA Margin Efficiency Enhancement Data Analysis Skill Goal Setting | Efficiency Reduction | EBITDA Margin | Themes 3: Diagnose of Challenges |
| Adequate Resourcing | | Sense of Urgency | Competent Resources | | Theme 4: Resources Allocation |
| Technology Adoption | CO2 Emission Initiatives | | | | Theme 5: Systems |
| RQ2: What are Internal and External Factors to consider during turnaround implemented | | | | | |
| Need Agility | Influencer Situational Leadership | Need Agility | | | Theme 1: Agility |
| Strategic Planning, | Prioritization Strategy Strategic Planning | | Prioritization Strategy Strategic Planning, | Open Communication Channels | Theme 1: Strategic Planning and Implementation |
| Efficiency Improvement Operational Cost Reduction Production Efficiency | | Human Resources Organizational Culture | Organizational Climate Operational Challenges | Efficiency Improvement Operational Cost Reduction Organizational Climate | Themes 2: Operation Efficiency |
| Quality Assurance | On-time Delivery Quality Assurance Service Quality | Product Quality | Quality Consistency, | | Theme 3: Quality Monitor |
| Data Alignment | Transportation Efficiency | Competitive Advantage Strategic Partnerships | Service Quality, | Business Efficiency | Theme 4: Competitors Analysis |
| Value Chain Understanding | Visionary Leadership Strategy | Motivated Workforce | | Listening Skills True Reflection | Theme 5: Leadership |
| RQ3: Challenges of turnaround strategy | | | | | |
| Buy-in Importance Team Involvement Organizational Climate | Two-way Communication Organizational Climate Employee Engagement | Buy-in Importance Employee Engagement Goal Alignment Communication of Intent | Buy-in Importance Employee Engagement | Buy-in Importance | Theme 1: Employee Engagement |
| Stakeholder Alignment | Demand Management Economic Value | Demand Management Economic Value | Demand Management Economic Value | Measurement Strategy | Theme 2: Alignment |
| Change Implementation | Clarity of Strategy | Change Implementation Clarity of Strategy | Change Implementation | Change Implementation Stakeholder Alignment | Theme 3: Change Management |
| Mindset Shift Economic Value | | Alignment of Goals | | | Theme 4: Lack of Accountability |

The themes established through the analysis were used to discuss the findings and aim to answer research questions.

4.9. Quality controls

Miller & Spiegel (2025) asserted that maintaining the integrity of research data is essential for the accuracy and repeatability of any study's findings. According to Ahmed (2024), establishing trustworthiness is crucial for the legitimacy and dependability of qualitative findings. This is achieved through the following pillars to uphold the integrity of the research data.

1. Credibility – Participants should have the chance to decline participation, ensuring that those involved are really inclined to contribute significant information. They should be encouraged to be candid from the outset. Establishing trust and rapport with the participant allows the researcher to acquire detailed insights into their experiences, behaviours, and beliefs.
2. Transferability – It verifies the accuracy of the findings. A comprehensive description of the content, participants, and methodology allows the reader to assess the parallels between the context and the study, hence evaluating its applicability and relevance to other studies or circumstances.
3. Dependability – Maintaining audit trails is crucial; all decisions made during the study, together with any methodological adjustments and analyses, must be documented to ensure transparency and traceability. Completely documenting each phase of the research process facilitates transparency, enables replication of the study, and evaluates the reliability of the findings.
4. Confirmability – Receiving feedback from colleagues and peers helps in validating interpretations and reducing personal biases. Facilitating an alternative perspective enhances objectivity and validates the accuracy of the findings. Involving participants in the data cleaning and verification process ensures that their perspectives and experiences are adequately captured and that interpretations are validated.

Ensuring and maintaining trustworthiness in qualitative research is crucial due to its significant implications for the practical application of research findings. The above features help the researcher establish trustworthiness in qualitative research.

4.10. Research Ethics

The researcher obtained consent from the participants before collecting data. Participants were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. The consent letter must clearly outline the research's aims and objectives, as well as any relevant ethical considerations. Bos (2020)

emphasised the need to uphold ethical standards throughout data collection and processing, as well as to assess moral correctness. Research ethics are essential for conducting responsible and credible studies, protecting the welfare, dignity, and integrity of participants.

The researcher considered the key ethical principles throughout this study. They protected participants' rights, remained anonymous, did not disclose the names of organisations or interviewees, and upheld academic integrity. The researcher complied with the POPI Act and ensured the participant's personal information was kept secure. Ethical approval was obtained from GIBS prior to data collection, and the researcher ensured adherence to GIBS's ethical guidelines to avert exploitation. The researcher ensured that participants' rights were respected and maintained throughout the study. It is vital to recognise the importance of participant well-being during the research process; researchers must avoid using terminology that could disempower or demean individuals. A clear and transparent rapport with participants was maintained during the procedure, adopting a formal yet approachable manner throughout data gathering (Mirza et al., 2023).

Research ethics ensured that data collection methods were properly regulated and not misused, enabling data analysis and the distribution of results within set guidelines (Mirza et al., 2023). The researcher respected participants, allowing them to communicate freely in their most proficient language. Providing material rewards during research is unethical. The researcher shared a copy of the participants' response transcripts and kept them regularly informed about the research progress.

4.11. Limitations

The research was carried out within a strict timeframe. This project employed a unique approach for data collection. Due to time constraints, there was a risk of overlooking issues in the data collection process. The cross-sectional study was conducted over a limited period, which resulted in a restricted sample size and insufficient depth because of the limited data available during the study. The small number of interviews might have led to limited information that could be obtained. The researcher served as a sampling instrument, making it difficult to avoid subjective bias.

The rigour of data analysis and conclusions was affected by the novice researcher's ability to analyse the data and extract accurate insights. The research focused on local cement manufacturing plants in South Africa; the findings cannot be generalised, as they are limited to the cement industry. The participants were from the researcher's

competitors; there was a possibility that they were not fully open and could withhold information that would influence an accurate picture of the study. An inexperienced researcher was conducting this study, potentially undermining the quality of the data collected.

4.12. Conclusion

The research methodology provided the researcher with a structured approach to data collection and ensured consistency throughout the process. The quality of the data and managing bias were essential for gaining deep insights in the study and identifying suitable actions to implement a successful turnaround strategy.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5. Results/ Findings

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the key findings from data collected via semi-structured interviews conducted through Teams meetings with the sample population of cement manufacturers in South Africa, as outlined in Chapter 4, are analysed. A full description of the sample will be supplied to give context for the results and to demonstrate the sample's relevance to the criteria. The findings were compared with the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 2. The main themes emerging from the qualitative analysis after the interviews are then discussed.

The structure findings in this report were obtained through a mapping exercise that linked the study's objectives with the research questions outlined in the guide questions. The main research questions that the study aims to investigate are provided for reference.

Research Question 1: What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

Research Question 2: How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

Research Question 3: What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

5.2. Sample Description and Findings

The participants' identities were protected by assigning a code to each individual. Nine participants from cement manufacturing companies in South Africa were interviewed to gather diverse perspectives and gain more insight into the phenomenon. The interviews were conducted individually via Teams to create a safe environment where respondents felt comfortable speaking openly. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Reflecting on the interviews, the researcher found it difficult to secure suitable time slots for the participants. There was also some tendency for participants to hold back information during certain interviews. However, interview engagement improved as the researcher gained confidence in conducting the study's interviews. The participants included senior managers from various operations, occupying leadership positions that

frequently required critical decision-making. All participants worked for cement producers in South Africa that had experienced market disruption, necessitating a turnaround strategy for the company to adapt and survive the changes.

We have protected the identities of all participants and company names by removing the specific names and replacing them with the term "participant"; the company name was entirely removed. The respondents were divided into five groups based on their functional areas within the organisation: Mining Team, Operational Team, Support Function, and the teams involved include the Team, Sales Team, and Senior Management Team. These are all part of the company's turnaround strategy, which varies in expectations depending on their functional experience. A total of nine participants were interviewed, and the information collected was used to identify relevant themes to address the research questions.

The participants were intentionally selected from various leading cement producers involved in turnaround strategies, overseeing their conceptualisation and implementation. They provide insights based on their specific roles within the value chain. The participants are categorised as follows: the findings are summarised into fourteen (14) themes derived from the research questions outlined in chapter 3. The discussion of these themes will address the research questions. The participants were divided into five groups: senior management within the cement industry (including mining, human resources, operations, sales, support functions, and general management). Participants from the cement companies view the turnaround through the perspective of core functions and how each department can contribute to the company's overall turnaround strategy.

| Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | Group E |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Mining managers | Process/Operation Managers | Support Function Managers | Sales Managers | General Managers |

Several topics emerged from different participants in the findings, although these may not be more important than others. The themes will be discussed, highlighting the insights gained from participants' experiences and perspectives. These insights will help address the research questions, and any themes that recur frequently will be emphasised in the report.

Table 2: Summary of interviews

| Number of Samples | Quantity |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Number of Interviews | 9 |
| Duration of Interviews (minutes) | 292 |
| Average Interview (minutes) | 32 |
| Longest Interview (minutes) | 40 |
| Shortest Interview (minutes) | 23 |

Table 3: Respondent Categories

| Respondant Categories | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Respondants | Gender | Role | Tenure with Employer | Categorisation | Category |
| P1 | Female | Senior Process Engineer | 5 -10 years | Operation | Group B |
| P2 | Female | Despatch Manager | 0-5 years | Operation | Group B |
| P3 | Female | Process Optimization Manager | 10 years or more | Operation | Group B |
| P4 | Female | Mine Manger | 10 years or more | Mining | Group A |
| P5 | Female | Mining Manager | 11 years or more | Mining | Group A |
| P6 | Male | Sales Manager | 10 years or more | Sales | Group D |
| P7 | Male | Human Resource Manager | 5 - 10 years | Human Resources | Group C |
| P8 | Male | Plant Manager | 10 years or more | General manager | Group E |
| P9 | Female | Quality Manager | 10 years or more | Quality Manager | Group C |

5.3. Research Question 1:

What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

In this section, we will examine the theme that emerged from the research question on improving strategic leadership to achieve a successful turnaround. The data collected from various participants showed the company's approach and reliance on different main drivers to develop and promote a sustainable turnaround. The data analysed resulted in five (5) themes that revealed key factors prompting organisations to embark on a turnaround strategy, typically due to signs of decline or performance issues against fundamental business objectives.

Research question 1 aims to identify the key indicators that suggest a company requires a turnaround strategy. Figure 1 below displays the insights from the participant, highlighting five themes emerging from the interview that showcase the primary drivers for turnaround initiatives in cement producers. The summary below details the insights gained from the participant regarding these themes.

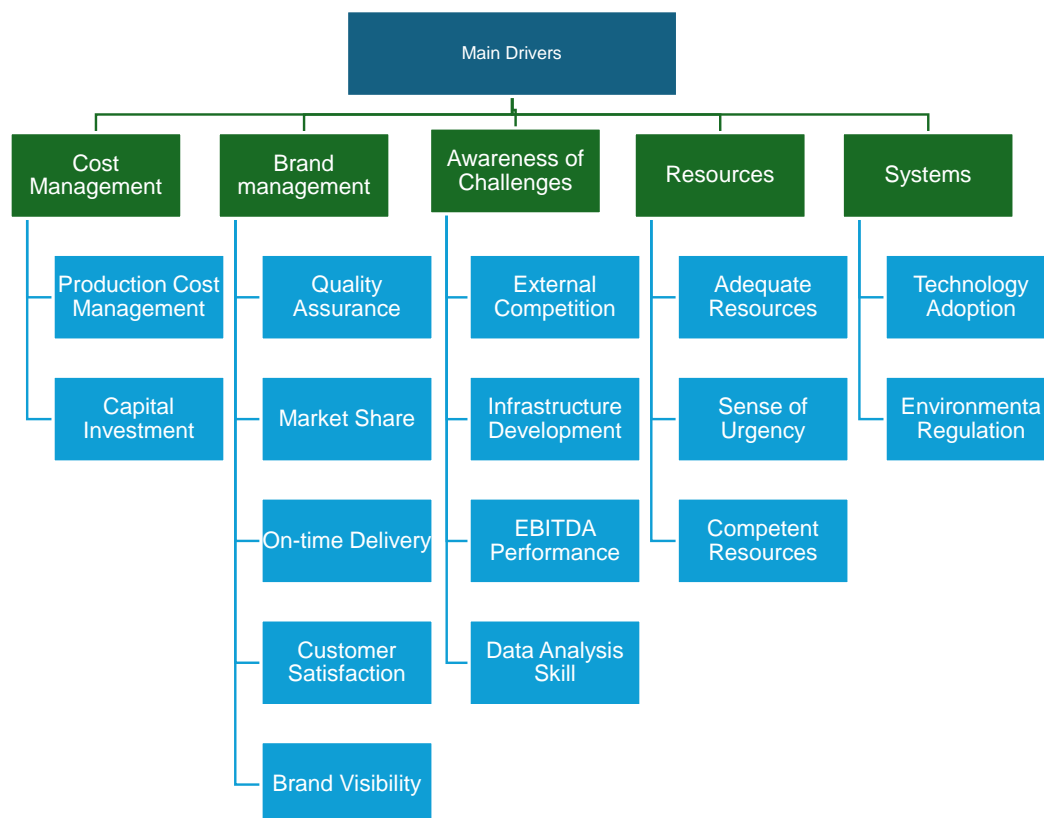


Figure 4: Themes Emerging from Participants in relation to Question

5.3.1. Cost Management

The data analysis showed that the cost of producing cement has risen considerably, prompting companies to adopt a turnaround strategy to find innovative ways to optimise cement production. The participants acknowledged that increasing production costs negatively affect the contribution margin and stressed the importance of doing things

"I would say the cost of manufacturing the clinker itself has gone up due to the increase in the price of coal, which is one of the raw materials that we use for the burning process to make the clinker that is used to make the cement. With the coal cost increasing, it makes it a bit difficult. Other materials can be used in conjunction with coal to lower the cost. In some plants, they have added oils, and in some, they've added waste material to try and reduce the operational costs. So, coal is one of those"

differently. They emphasised the need for cost control, ensuring the plant runs at manageable costs, and establishing a functional plant, all of which were seen as crucial. The participants highlighted that not only is a well-maintained plant essential, but also one that is well-resourced to effectively utilise technology and stay competitive in the market. Participant 1 noted that the production cost of the cement intermediate product, clinker, has shown an upward trend.

Participant 1's experience in the industry emphasises that coal costs are the primary factor driving production expenses, which affect the contribution margin and overall production costs. Participant 3 concurred with this view and added that electricity costs, which they both identified as the energy needed to produce cement, are also significant. The participant proposed that cement producers should explore alternative materials to replace coal in order to reduce high production costs.

“We need to find better ways of production. We need to find areas where we can reduce the cost of, for instance, substituting your coal with an alternative fuel. I think one of the two most expensive, the highest expenses other than labour in a cement factory, is coal and electricity. Those are the two. If you were to go drastic on those two, you would have won half the war because you cannot really do much on labour. But on coal and electricity, those would give you higher incentives when it comes to your production cost.”

On the other hand, Participant 4 underlines that cement producers require a well-functioning plant to efficiently control manufacturing costs, strongly suggesting that if the plant is not operational, it serves no purpose; having a strategically located plant is

“Have a functional plant with a system that flows—not just a plant that's well maintained, but a plant that is well-resourced. If it costs most of your money to make your plant flow, it's not worth it, even if it's state-of-the-art. You want a plant that has enough technology to compete, and you can't continue to maintain a system that is now costing you and basically breaking even in the market. Those would be the key ones because they all contribute to your bottom line.”

crucial for success.

The insight above also emphasises a crucial element: resources. The plant must be well equipped technologically to minimise the ongoing costs of maintaining the system. Participant 7 echoed this view, highlighting the importance of cost management.

“If the organization is not performing well financially, one of the best levers would be cost management. You'd want to look at how to save as much cost as possible while still being responsible.”

As the interview progressed, the participants highlighted several factors contributing to high production costs, including raw material prices and regulations on the carbon footprint. Participant 1 noted that the carbon tax is increasing production costs within the cement industry.

Participant 5's insight emphasised that to succeed in the market, cement producers require a good deposit to deliver quality products, and this, combined with operational efficiency, can help reduce production costs.

“In the cement industry, if your strength is having the best deposits compared to your competitors, you will utilize those deposits. Having good deposits enables you to deliver a quality product at a lower cost and with less mining effort. So, I think competitive advantage is one of them. You also need to consider how to improve the efficiency of your operations because increased efficiency results in lower costs.”

In the industry, it is crucial to take ownership, which involves reducing the number of contractors performing work within operations and fully assigning responsibilities to employees. Participant 8 demonstrated that the substantial costs associated with reliance on contractors highlighted the need to modify and lower operational expenses.

“We also looked at contractors. We had contractors doing the same engineering work as our employees. We made them justify why their function couldn't be done by an employee. We did a full analysis and realized we didn't need so many. We reduced the number of contractors and only kept them for vacant positions, which saved us a lot of money. The wins in the plant came from this analysis of where we could cut costs.”

The data collection showed that most cement producers' equipment has endured years of operation, requiring capital investment to restore the plant's integrity and efficiency. The low efficiency of the operating equipment affects operational costs and compliance. Participant 2 emphasised the importance of accurate cement bag weights, which were causing significant losses for the company and issues with compliance with weight

“One of the projects that I've had on my side is that I am running a packing plant system that is dating back to 1984. So the bag weight systems are not working. Capital investment has become one of the things that I'm relying on this year. It's one of the projects that I am working on with OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) to make sure that we bring this bag control system because the bag weight control was

standards.

Data collected showed that most participants believe that in the capital-intensive cement industry, which utilises many costly raw materials, managing production costs is a key factor for considering turnaround strategies. If production costs remain high, a new approach will be necessary to maintain competitiveness in the industry. The insight from the participant in group B, which deals with process and optimisation, emphasised that process efficiencies through raw material optimisation are critical to reducing production costs.

5.3.2. Brand Management

5.3.2.1. Brand visibility

The cement industry is highly competitive and faces ongoing disruption, requiring strong initiatives to maintain brand presence. Participants emphasised key factors: when control is lost, the company risks a decline in market share, leading to reduced revenue and performance. New entrants have entered the cement market, and a significant influx of imports has caused instability in supply and demand, underscoring the need for a robust brand architecture to remain competitive. Participant 4 stressed that brand visibility is

“You need a skilled marketing team that can ensure that when your customers walk into a shop, they first ask for your brand before they ask for cement in general. So making sure that you are a visible supplier is important. Your market share must be protected first. While you're protecting your market share, you then need to come back and ensure that you are able to produce.”

crucial and that the company must be deliberate in its branding to gain a competitive edge; this view was echoed throughout.

Participant 9 underscored the significance of brand visibility.

“The brand visibility as well, it's very important that we keep advertising; you know, we have to be visible out there. An important strategy as well would be just to remain competitive, of course.”

5.3.2.2. Quality assurance

The quality of the product serves as a powerful tool for a strong marketing team to defend against and surpass competitors in the market. Participant 9 clearly demonstrated and highlighted the significance of high-quality products. When presenting in the marketplace, the findings indicated that

“When we come to the market, people may say our cement is expensive, but we can highlight the quality of our products. When we are strong in quality, strong in performance, and strong in managing our resources with discipline and efficiency, people will hear that we are doing well. They will start comparing. They may find that while a competitor offers a cheaper price, our company offers quality, discipline, and customer service. They may realize they are saving a lot more by buying from us than by going for the cheap option. I'm saying the market will respond to you doing well at

“In cement, the two best things would be quality and on-time delivery because the majority of cement is actually being used in concrete. When you are able to deliver just before the batching process so that the project doesn't stand still because there's no cement, that is actually a success on its own.”

In the competitive and dynamic business environment in which cement producers operate, the interviews revealed that each producer faces numerous disruptions and challenges. A common response from participants was that it is easier to manage

“I can try by all means to prevent people from entering the market, but there's not much that I can do as one producer, so my effort then would be focused on the things that are within my control, which is: How do I become efficient? How do I improve on my quality? How do I become a consistent producer? I think that's important. If you can maintain quality, consistency, and efficiency, I think for me, those are the things that one should focus on.”

aspects fully within their control. Participant 5 emphasised this throughout the discussion, highlighting it as

In brand management, quality and punctual delivery are vital, especially in a declining industry like cement manufacturing. The participant clearly demonstrated this point during the operation. Similarly, there was a shared view among the participants that maintaining a consistent process, service, and quality in the market is crucial, as any deviation can result in lower revenue and a shift in market share for the company. Participant 5 and Participant 9 argued that:

“I think once you have stability within your process, that's when you can assess that your turnaround strategy is effective. Number one, you have a stable process. You have consistency, which means your plants are running and you are able to produce a consistent quality product at the targeted amounts.”

“To keep our competitiveness in the market is to make sure that we give them a consistent quality of the products because we're in the business of selling a product. So our quality has to be consistent, not just in the product, but in terms of delivery.”

5.3.3. Market Share

The information gathered during the interview indicated that one of the main indicators signalling the need for a turnaround strategy is market share; if it is declining, that suggests there are issues within the company that need to be addressed to maintain competitiveness. The company must prioritise profitability and increasing market share, which was clearly alluded to by Participant 4, who stated that:

“Prioritization is largely dependent on the bottom line. We can prioritize and motivate people and do all the other things, but if you're not making money, then we are not in business. So it's quite important that firstly, you prioritize making money and winning market share. That means you need a skilled marketing team, because it's not every marketing person that can sell cement.”

Participant 5 emphasised the importance of considering market share and company positioning to differentiate and aim to regain market share, stating that:

“Being a low-cost producer also differentiates you from your competitors. You should also assess your market to identify opportunities to regain market share from your rivals. Therefore, those are the key points a strategic leader would consider when devising a turnaround strategy.”

The issue of market share for the local cement producer is also influenced by imports, where competitors in the market can offer lower prices due to their ability to import cheaper clinker than the locals, resulting from high regulations. This leads to customers purchasing cheaper cement, which has a significant impact on the market share of local producers. On a global scale, the market share is significantly affected, as revealed by participant 5.

“it goes back to market share. Who are your competitors, and where are they situated in your market? I think for South African and African producers, the biggest thing is that the global market plays a key factor. You're operating in an environment where people are able to deliver clinker at ports at a lower price than we are able to produce internally. If you think about how this industry is structured within South Africa and also within the Southern African region, it's very difficult for you to compete in

The participant emphasised that the market share must be protected and remain visible to the customer; in doing so, they highlighted the importance of a skilled marketing team serving as brand ambassadors. The participant conveyed a similar sentiment:

“Like I indicated, your market share is quite critical. You don't have a market share if you don't have the buy-in of your suppliers.”

The issues related to market share directly impact the company's performance and require attention to enable a turnaround and seize growth opportunities. To effectively address market share challenges, operations must focus on efficiency to enhance customer satisfaction within the market space.

“Factors related to market share and competitive advantage generally lie outside your control. However, efficiencies within your plants are under your control. So, concentrate on the things you can influence because those are the actions that fall within your scope and can deliver the quickest value.”

5.3.4. Awareness of Challenges

The company must recognise its challenges that lead to decreased performance and then formulate and implement a turnaround strategy, as expressed by all interview participants. The experiences of those in cement manufacturing highlighted several key industry indicators that require each cement producer to consider a turnaround plan. The data collection indicated that other main factors driving the need for a turnaround include external competition, a decline in company profits over several years, lack of infrastructure development, and the ability to analyse performance data to identify KPIs that affect performance.

5.3.5. External Competition

The focus of the external should be reviewed and understood; however, the cement producers should focus on the things that can be controlled internally. During the interview with participant 8, who indicated that the company CEO stressed that the competition and imports will always be there, producers must focus on internal controls. The participant highlighted that

“The focus was to stop using external factors as an excuse. Our CEO always said this because whenever we talked, we would bring up imports and make it the government's problem to stop them. But imports are imports. They should not determine how you run your business efficiently. Our CEO insisted that we should not discuss imports because they have been a convenient excuse for not doing well.”

Participant 8 further outlined that

“There will always be other players in the industry; that's natural competition. You don't say you're not doing well because of competition. You become competitive to deal with competition. If you don't do that, you might as well stop now.”

The internal question and urge to examine the turnaround are crucial, with internal questions being asked to identify opportunities that can be explored to enhance efficiency, cut costs, and develop innovative solutions within the cement production

industry. As Participant 3 mentioned, raising awareness creates an opportunity to brainstorm and assess the key indicators that fall below acceptable levels.

"So, just create that sense of awareness that this is the problem, this is the challenge, and this is where we need to move. It's not always about accessible information for everyone, especially when you need to drive efficiency because people think, "But we are doing it; what's wrong?" But we might not be doing it at the right cost."

5.3.6. Infrastructure Development

The cement industry is experiencing a decline in demand, driven by reduced infrastructure spending and innovations aimed at redesigning buildings to use less cement and clinker in order to lower CO₂ emissions. Construction, which depends on infrastructure investment for economic development or population growth, drives the demand for cement. Participant 4 strongly believes that cement is essential for the success of the interconnectedness between infrastructure development and population growth. A lack of infrastructure development impacts the demand for cement, leading to decreased production. The participant highlighted that

"Cement is a very lagging industry. It looks at other leading indicators and then reacts. The economics of the cement industry respond to the actions of other industries on which it depends. So one of the key things that we look at is whether there's potential for population growth, because if you've got population growth, then you've got infrastructure development that will be needed. But for the infrastructure development to also thrive, you would then need to have policies that support that and economics in the country that generate sufficient cash flow for people to be able to spend on this need, which is a need for infrastructure."

5.3.7. EBITDA Performance

Financial indicators are crucial for evaluating a company's health; if there is a significant decline in profit or a lack of cash flow, the company cannot expand or maintain itself.

"I think the main indicators for any organization are primarily financial. For me, one would be EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization). This looks at what the organization is generating and its bottom line. The EBITDA margin also tells you whether you're succeeding in your business or not. For example, one of the issues in our company was the decline of growth and the EBITDA margin over seven years, to a point where it was less."

Many local cement producers have faced profit drops, partly due to limited economic growth caused by low infrastructure investment and increasing operational costs, including those linked to decarbonisation. Participant 7 highlighted that one of the key indicators for a turnaround strategy is financial performance and shared the following opinion:

Participant 8 emphasised that the declining profit trend necessitates a change in the company's operations to improve margins and cut high operational costs. The participant stressed that

"The obvious one was our year-end results, which were not looking good. If you look at EBITDA, it had been going down since 2010. All our previous attempts focused on trying to optimize what we had, but we weren't doing things entirely differently. Our biggest mistake was trying to polish the same old approach instead of looking outward and questioning if we were doing it right."

Due to the nature of the process, the implementation of the carbon tax in South Africa disadvantages local cement producers, who are the major emitters of CO₂. Participant 2 highlighted the importance of considering the carbon footprint; the participant maintained the view that

"Another thing that is even more challenging for the manufacturers of cement in South Africa is the fact that the carbon tax has been implemented, and it's not going down; it's actually going up. That's what squeezes the little profit margin that is there. It squeezes the profit right out, unlike the other companies that are bringing clinker into the country. They actually have more room and can give prices like it's going out of fashion. But if you're producing clinker in South Africa, then the authorities are on your case."

Participant 9 maintains that the company's primary objective is to generate revenue, and it is crucial to identify and address any factors that reduce profit margins.

"So you will have to first look at what is the primary objective of that business, and I understand every primary objective. It's basically to make profit look at exactly where within the business chain are you leaking? Are you having some loopholes?"

One of the main indicators highlighted by Participant 8 during the interview is that a local cement producer was heavily reliant on the consultant to perform essential functions of

the company, such as selling products and managing logistics. As the participant argued, such activities diminished profit margins and necessitated a turnaround to enable better ownership of the business. Participants clearly outline that:

“You have to take ownership of the business. You don't give your business to someone else to run. We had people selling cement and transporting cement on our behalf, but all they did was take away money and reduce our margins. We took all of that back and decided to do these things ourselves with fewer people and at a much cheaper cost. We are now seeing an increase in sales because they are in our hands, and we determine how much cement we can sell. The cost of transport was also huge, but now it's under our control, and we can manage it.”

Participant 4 supported the idea of making money for the business, clearly outlining the main drive for change and key pointers to consider when starting a turnaround journey.

“So when you talk about this in the concept of the big drivers, when you talk about which ones to prioritize first, prioritization is largely dependent on the bottom line. We can prioritize and motivate people and do all the other things, but if you're not making money, then we are not in business. So it's quite important that firstly, you prioritize making money and winning market share. That means you need a skilled marketing team, because it's not every marketing person that can sell cement.”

To prioritise profit, it is essential to concentrate on highly efficient operations that positively impact the bottom line. Participant 8's company exemplified this by restructuring its business around operational efficiency and encouraging a mindset shift among remaining operations to enhance efficiency and optimisation, thereby lowering costs and increasing profits.

“If you look at our company, we have different plants; some are efficient and some are not. The ones that were not efficient were put to rest. For example, some blending plants were not making money, so we stopped them. We kept the ones that could make money, but then we went inside and started optimizing. We focused on things we were scared to do before.”

5.3.8. Data Analysis Skills

The participants indicated that the primary driver indicator can be clearly identified if the company has the skills to analyse the existing data; data analytics remains an enabler to stay competitive. The primary goal of collecting and analysing data is to identify gaps and underperforming KPIs, and to develop a turnaround strategy using accurate information within the company. Participant 1 indicated that.

"The primary steps to achieve the turnaround strategy are, I would say, the first thing is to be able to recognize where you are at that very moment. For example, I always like to use the example of coal or operational costs because I spend so much time in operations. So you'll have to find out how much, for example, my coal is contributing to the overall cost of the company. If the coal is, let's say, 60% of the production costs, then you've already noted that."

The data analysis skills enable leaders to formulate a clear vision and direction for the company, as Participant 3 outlined.

"Anything in terms of operational involvement requires a lot of buy-in from employees. One of the things that I think, when the leaders have a clear vision, is to involve employees in creating the strategy for the vision's implementation. So that looks like having site-specific workshops where you say, " This is the vision;

In a competitive environment, there is significant growth in knowledgeable employees and data resources within the company, enabling decision-makers to utilise them in shaping and implementing strategy. Data analysis skills are vital for driving the turnaround. Having the right data can better guide the business and assist it in navigating challenging economic times and market conditions. Participant 6 stated that the available data is the main guide that directs the company, as outlined:

"If you have a turnaround plan, then of course you know at what stage you're supposed to be monitoring. For example, if the plan is to increase operational efficiencies, using your OEE as a measure of your operational performance, then you would say, "I was at 65% OEE. I'm targeting a world-class OEE of 85%." "Then maybe you know that whatever activities you're doing along the way are going to help you to move from 65% to a 70% or 75%."

5.3.9. Resources

Cement manufacturing requires resources with high integrity due to the complexity and intensity of the work involved. The entry of new competitors into the market creates an imbalance in the availability of skilled resources within the cement industry; as a result, redistributing resources or altering production methods leads to a significant skills gap in cement production companies, causing inefficient operations. Losing skilled workers to competitors reduces productivity and impacts the company's overall performance. Skilled resources are the most valuable assets a company can utilise to gain a competitive advantage because they enable more efficient and consistent cement production. Participant 5 reinforced this.

“Making sure that you are adequately resourced to be able to drive the change is also important because sometimes you want to change, and you find that you don't have the right resources, whether it's people, the tools, or the machinery that you need. So making sure you're adequately resourced to drive the strategy is also important.”

Participant 7 shares similar views that strong resources enhance operational efficiency and position the company favourably to produce high-quality products. This allows the company to charge a fair price for the standard product supplied to the market. The participant noted that:

“When we are strong in quality, strong in performance, and strong in managing our resources with discipline and efficiency, people will hear that we are doing well. They will start comparing. They may find that while a competitor offers a cheaper price, our company offers quality, discipline, and customer service.”

Participant 7 elaborated further on resources beyond human capacity and also introduced a different perspective regarding equipment resources, indicating that

“Another challenge is that your other resources, like your equipment, are not used to being used as intensely. So, while you're tightening the belt, you need to check where you can invest. As a leader, you might decide to buy new equipment or refurbish old equipment. You might lose some time and production, but the efficiency you gain will be worth it.”

Participant 4 emphasised that the company's resources must be encouraged to go beyond expectations; these resources are part of the elements that internal processes should utilise to achieve better outputs.

“What's within your control is creating a conscious internal environment for being productive, managing the teams that you already have, because one of your key resources are the people and their skills, and managing those effectively. You need to ensure that those skills stay motivated. Motivation really, while it has a lot to do with money, it also has a lot to do with people being seen and people being valued.”

The participants' perspectives were remarkably similar regarding the need for the right resources, which will empower strategy implementation and enhance the company's competitiveness. The participant's ability to meet expectations is crucial and supported by the view shared by participant 5, who said

“Once all of that is communicated, the entire business sort of understands all these different things. You have the right people, the planning is in place, and you have the right resources. Then, I think that will ensure your strategy is , or the implementation of the strategy is, successful.”

Participant 6 emphasised that the plan must be adequately resourced, either with new equipment or by maintaining current assets. They continued to emphasise that if it is people resources the company needs to invest in to create a competitive edge and outperform rivals, it must be done. These views echoed similar thoughts as those of other participants, clearly outlining it as follows.

“That's where the strategic plan comes in. They need to start to brainstorm around it, of course, involving all the key stakeholders that will form key inputs to that plan. And then, of course, they'll check what sort of resources they'll need to achieve the plan. If there are additional capabilities that their competitors wouldn't be able to copy from them, they need to ensure that they recruit. If it's in the form of equipment, they need to buy it. If it's in the form of new people, they need to look for those people that have certain skills that they need to drive the plan.”

Participant 5 offered a different perspective on resources, emphasising that in the

“I think in the cement industry, we need to focus more on new developments. We need to move with the times, especially in terms of technology. I once visited a lab somewhere that was operating with robots. There was no person there; the same person was operating the control room and operating the lab using the robot. I found that very fascinating.”

turnaround strategy, it does not mean people must lose their jobs; instead, a change in mindset is required to operate more efficiently. This involves working smarter, creating value with the same resources, which leads to increased productivity and improved service for customers. The participant emphasised that gaining buy-in from those involved is crucial, as it can determine the success or failure of the strategy. This was clearly outlined as follows:

“People tend to translate efficiencies with people losing jobs because if something is efficient, then you need fewer bodies. You need to change that mindset so that efficiencies do not translate to people losing jobs but translate to us operating at a different level. We're not necessarily working harder, but we are working smarter. By working smarter, you are able to produce more with the same amount of resources. So I think getting buy-in from people is a problem, and that's what can make or break

Building on the previous points, Participant 5 continued to shed light on the resource, emphasising that the turnaround process might also require external business resources. Not having a strong connection indicates that the business needs to change. The participant indicated that:

“The other thing is thinking that a turnaround is going to be driven by resources from outside the business. In some cases, you would require resources from outside the business to drive that strategy, but very often, it takes the people who are internal to drive the change as long as everybody is working towards the

5.3.10. System

The participants shared a greater similarity in their perspectives regarding the new developments that cement producers need to undertake to counteract high operating

costs. The industry has shifted, according to most participants, which requires a new approach in cement production to stay competitive. Among the indicators highlighted by the participants was technological change; participant 1 noted this in the interview, highlighting that

Participant 4 offers a different perspective on the technology. While recognising its necessity, the main point the participant highlights is that the system must function properly and perform well to give local producers a competitive edge. If it results in increased maintenance or requires more attention, it might not be worthwhile. The

“It’s one thing to say your plant is state-of-the-art, but if it costs you the bulk of your money to make it flow, then it’s not worth it. You want a plant that has enough technology to compete, and you can’t continue to maintain a system that is now costing you and basically breaking even in the market.”

participant emphasised that

The participants recognise the necessity of the technology; however, there is considerable reluctance to adopt too much of it, as it could cause disruption and demand more unnecessary attention, as the participants emphasised the concern.

5.3.11. Conclusion

The main themes identified by participants as indicators requiring a turnaround strategy for the company related to cost management, especially focusing on operational costs. The implication is that high operational costs reduce profit margins and cause declining performance. There is a consensus that the company needs adequate resources capable of efficient operation; a lack of skills leads to operational inefficiencies and higher costs. The participants strongly believe that, in a competitive business environment, the company's brand demands that leaders ensure product quality is maintained.

The discussion highlighted that a more compliant system requires a transformation in cement operations and innovation in the utilisation of these systems to meet new regulations, thereby encouraging a change in the mindset of cement producers. The insights shared by participants concluded that the main drivers of turnaround strategy in the cement industry include cost management, brand performance, awareness of market competitiveness and challenges, and the availability of adequately skilled resources and systems.

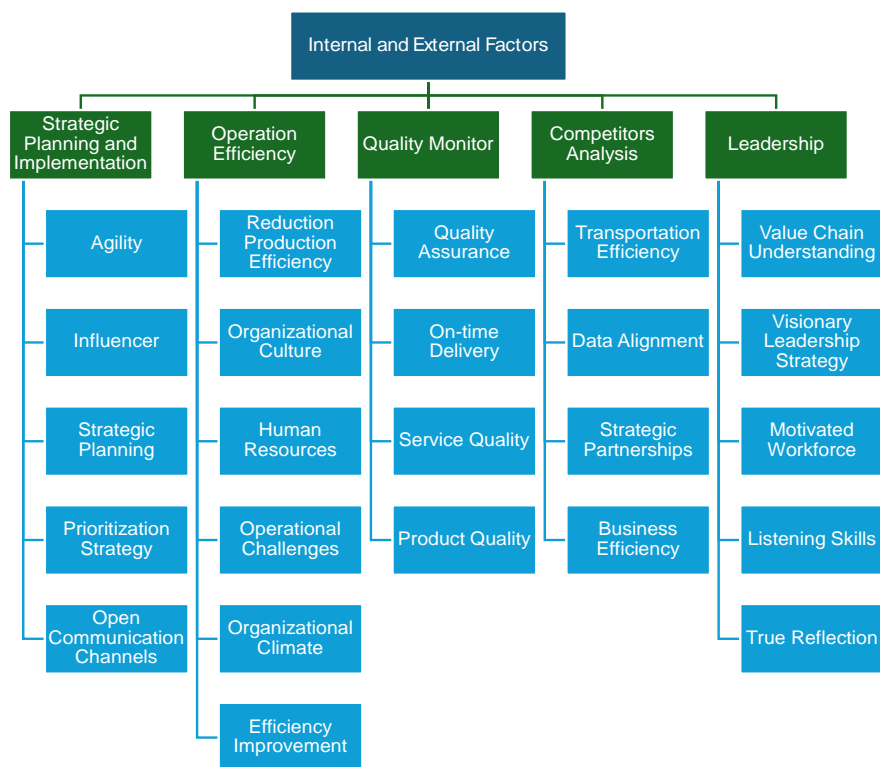
“It’s also important to have enough technology to keep you afloat, but not too much that you spend the bulk of your time managing the technology.”

5.4. Research Question 2 – Internal and External Factors

Research Question 2: Research Question 2: How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

The turnaround plan is influenced by many internal and external factors that can determine its success or failure. Leaders in the cement production industry must address internal operational efficiencies while also considering external market dynamics to reverse the industry's declining trend. The decline in the performance of local cement producers may be caused by external factors; however, internal challenges must also be tackled to regain control over performance.

Figure 5: Internal and External Factors affecting turnaround strategy, source



During the interviews, participants identified several internal and external concerns as crucial for maintaining the expected upward trend. Participants assert that continuous monitoring of both internal and external factors is essential before any adverse effects occur. From the interviews with various participants, it was clear that the key factors for a successful turnaround relate to strategic planning and execution, operational efficiency, quality assessment, competitive analysis, and leadership guiding the turnaround strategy. Figure 2 below illustrates the main themes derived from the participants that highlight the internal and external factors affecting the turnaround strategy.

5.4.1. Strategic Planning and Implementation

5.4.1.1. Agility

The participants strongly share the view that one of the key factors in the turnaround process is agility. The participant urged that leaders must be flexible enough to try new approaches to improve performance, while participant 2 clearly outlined that the journey to turnaround requires an agile individual.

“You need to... you need someone who takes risks. You need to be agile. You need to think on your feet. You also need to be open-minded because there's no way to say that the person that has been operating a certain equipment cannot tell you exactly where the problem is. So you need to actually go down and go through a session of what we've been doing, which is visible, felt leadership—walk about and find out and also get the honesty of the people in terms of what happens, what works,

Participant 7 made a similar argument that, for the turnaround to succeed, the business must be very agile and continuously re-strategise as the process unfolds, with a clear note that:

“We need to continuously assess, communicate, and re-strategize. This keeps your finger on the pulse and makes you very agile.”

Participant 4 shared a similar perspective to participant one and further elaborated, stating that in the turnaround strategy, the goals should remain the same; however, the execution must be adaptable and flexible to suit the dynamics of the environment in which the local company operates. This was demonstrated through the statement made by the participant indicating that

“But if I have done my analysis very well and understand my problem and all these influences that we spoke, then I would be in a position to have clear goals and be able to see them and track them. Some might come sooner, some might come a little later, but a strategy needs to be adaptable. As I'm doing it, I might realize that maybe I had missed a step or needed to be a bit more flexible. The goals need to be clear, but the strategy itself needs to be adaptable, because we monitor to manage the change, and change is not overnight.”

5.4.2. Influencer

In the turnaround strategy, it is crucial to have an influencer to promote the idea of change and create enough urgency and necessity for change so the company can reverse its declining trend. The influencer helps foster behavioural change to achieve measurable results by influencing motivation within the team's performance. The participants emphasised that, for the turnaround to gain momentum and achieve the desired results, it is important to have influencers, as highlighted by participant 1's perspective.

“I think you need to be more of an influencer. You need to be a person that has influence on people because without that characteristic, it can become a bit of a challenge to drive a turnaround plan. So you need to be an influencer. I mean, the word "influencer" itself has been known on social media to have a bad name, but in the workspace, it could work very effectively if one possesses that character. In such a way that when you talk or when you do something, people easily tend to follow your

Other participants shared a similar important perspective of the influencer across organisational levels, emphasising that

“There are key people that you know that if you involve them, things will happen. So you would start from the top down. I have a team of supervisors and team leaders, so that was the first selection. The second selection is the people who are below them that also have an influence or that want to make things happen. Furthermore, you would have to select people that are actually experienced in the work, and you also need to include the sceptics.”

Participant 3 shares the same insight that.

“I think one of the best ways is having change agents who are your influencers in your operation, who can filter down the leadership. Don't just make it a leadership or management role, but involve your employees to influence each other in that implementation.”

The findings clearly demonstrated that an important factor is effectively communicating the strategic intent of the turnaround strategy to other employees, thereby increasing the likelihood of gaining their buy-in, as outlined by participant 9.

“Every person in every level, most leaders usually would think that they just need to influence the people at the top level. But the people that literally drive the strategy is the guys that are sitting on the ground so. You know, keeping focus in influencing the people on the ground, that would be a a key key driver to a successful strategy.”

5.4.3. Strategic Planning and Prioritisation Strategy

In the turnaround strategy, leaders undertake new actions to guide the company out of decline or financial distress, aiming to restore profitability and build a strong, resilient presence in the market. The findings indicated that participants strongly believe that leaders should brainstorm with employees to identify internal opportunities for improving performance. Participant 6 recommended that leaders develop a plan, emphasising the following points.

“They have to actually have a plan on how to get there. That’s where the strategic plan comes in. They need to start to brainstorm around it, of course, involving all the key stakeholders that will form key inputs to that plan.”

The participants shared similar insights that

“The leader needs to identify the need first for the turnaround and then, of course, engage with the stakeholders who are key to driving the change or driving the strategic objective. You need to drive that specific task.”

Participant 5 offered further insight into how leaders select their identity and manage initiatives based on their capacity to meet immediate survival needs, delivering quick results while setting the foundation for a sustainable future. The participant described

“You prioritise the tasks that require less effort but deliver the greatest value. You also consider the risk; as much as there’s an opportunity, there’s a risk involved. If the risk is acceptable, then you rank that in your priorities. I would say you prioritise based on the effort involved. This is the return on—well, you can call it return on effort, really. Then, there’s the risk, and I think you also evaluate whether it offers immediate turnaround, medium-term, or long-term benefits. Can you see value immediately, or are you aiming for long-term gains? I believe those are the factors a leader considers when deciding how to prioritise opportunities. You would focus on opportunities that

this understanding as

Participant 6 shared a similar insight with the statement above, recommending that the leaders should focus on initiatives that deliver quick wins and prioritise those actions.

"I think in terms of that, you're just going to prioritize the early wins or the quick wins. That's the only option. Despite you having the plan, the plan will then have the timelines to say, "If I do this, this is how much I'm hoping to start monitoring my results." And of course, the early wins in the short term, that is what needs to be prioritized."

The findings suggest that strategic leaders should focus on plans that deliver quick wins to create urgency, build momentum, and secure the organisation's long-term survival. Participant 7 shared a viewpoint similar to others, highlighting that leaders in the strategic plan must prioritise internal measures that provide long-term benefits to reverse the declining trend and achieve sustainable profitability. Participant 7 emphasises the insight that

"An organization cannot sustain itself if it is not financially disciplined. Therefore, cost containment should be priority number one. Priority number two would be the discipline around the processes that the company uses to perform. The measurement of performance would also become a priority. Finally, evaluating whether the people helping you in the process are the right people will also be one of your top priorities. Of course, from there, you look at the real business."

Participant 4 provided a different view during the interview on the importance of building key external relationships with authorities and stakeholders that leadership should focus on in the action plan. The participant suggested that

“That license needs to be maintained, so relationships are key in prioritizing stakeholders. Internal relationships are key because you want to reserve your technical expertise that are inside. But you also want to preserve the relationships that you have with the people that give you the social license to operate, that being your communities, and you want to continue to have a good relationship with the suppliers so that your contracts are always guaranteed. You also want to have a good relationship with the people that regulate; it's important to have leaders who understand that internally, one of the key things we can ever do is build relationships with our regulators.”

5.4.4. Open Communications

A common theme emerged from the interview responses, emphasising that communication is crucial for alignment, recognising gaps, and supporting initiatives that can improve performance. Participants largely agreed that leaders should involve the team from the outset of the turnaround process and maintain clear communication throughout. Participant 7 discussed that.

“Once you've communicated the situation and your communication strategy, you need to address what you are going to do. You start by looking at the business we're here for: the cement manufacturing process from beginning to end. You look at the bottlenecks in the process, communicate them, and then present the plan. For example, our raw materials and mining teams are crucial. They cannot do their jobs

The implication of the finding above suggests that leadership needs to clearly define the current performance, which will then enable the team to diagnose organisational issues and identify areas for a turnaround initiative. Participant 8 highlighted the effect that over-communication and micromanagement had, with real-time communication being initiated. However, other team members struggled to handle the pressure of continuous communication and detailed questions aimed at improving root cause analysis.

“Because we had to implement micromanagement, some people left. They couldn't handle reporting on an hourly basis, even though it was necessary to make this change. As performance improved, we were able to shift to daily reporting. The key is that the lines of communication must be open 24 hours a day. If something goes wrong, you report it immediately, and people will be deployed to assist you immediately. They don't wait until tomorrow.”

Participant 4 emphasised the importance of honest communication, whether good or bad, so that essential and accurate actions can be taken. According to Participant 4, a leader must communicate with a firm but fair stance, highlighting the critical nature of the situation. The team should be able to gauge the tone of the atmosphere and respond with urgency. The insight shared by the participant was that

“The other thing would then be to ensure that your internal teams are aligned. Your teams cannot continue to show up at work and not know when you're in trouble. It's one thing when we say that as leaders, we need to be the air hostess where everything is shaking on their legs, but the upper body should stay firm. You also need to be able to do that while communicating bad news. Tell people when to put on their seatbelts because the plane is about to crash. Open internal relationships and communication when it comes to key things are very, very important. People need to

The participants concluded that communication is essential for a successful turnaround; it keeps people informed and engaged in various activities within the company to generate more value. Participants 7 shared similar views with the other participants that

“Communication is the key. Keep people engaged. Keep people informed about exactly where we are. Sometimes you may be afraid of people becoming complacent, but don't shy away from telling them that they are doing well. You should also mention the things that still need to be done, but make sure the good news is shared. For example, the CEO can communicate, but the management needs to discuss that communication. Employees at all levels need to hear and discuss the

Employees feel appreciated when leaders communicate transparently and foster an atmosphere of trust. Participant 4 emphasised that

“It also has a lot to do with people being seen and people being valued. You need to keep open communication channels, because if we can manage that which is within our reach, then the bigger noise from the outside becomes a little bit easier for you to deal with if you know that your internal house is in order.”

“The best way is once you involve them and have their views, keep them informed. Communicate where you are with the implementation phase. Communicate the results of what you're doing with them and have them feel part of the process of what you're doing. It should not be a leadership strategy; it should be the operation's or the site's strategy.”

Insight was supported by Participant 1, who stated that leaders should maintain an open channel of communication with employees, which will facilitate solid strategy formulation. The participants clearly outline this in their response by saying.

“I think it's very advisable and good to have a two-way communication with your employees or subordinates. So once you've gathered that data and you analyse it with the management team, you will have to put out a strategy for how to improve.

A strong conclusion can be drawn from most participants; they suggest that maintaining open communication channels is vital for ensuring ongoing alignment between employees and leadership. The participants' views on communication underline its significant influence, which is essential for making certain the turnaround process is understood and that deliverables match the strategy. The participants emphasised that

“People need to see the results. You don't just send out a letter and say this is what we're doing, and then people continue doing it and they don't even know if it's working or not working. So it's important to have your regular updates on whatever your drivers are. It's also important to ensure that you continue to have an open line of communication so that people who have taken ownership of the implementation don't feel like it has become only the manager's role.”

The above point was supported by Participant 7, who indicated that.

“You need to show them that it's possible to make things happen. You can put together a communication strategy with a plan. The strategy outlines what you are communicating, and the plan specifies when you are communicating it. You should do this with your senior management team first. Make sure you know who sees the real picture and decide who will be a part of the movement. It is important to have communication on a monthly basis. You first communicate the grave picture and then, on a monthly basis, you communicate the plans you are coming up with.”

Participant 6 concluded that.

“If there's no clear communication about what the strategy is about, that's where you get employees not having the right attitude because they don't know what is actually coming. If you constantly engage with the guys from the beginning like we mentioned, then that can save a lot of things, like time in terms of resistance to change and people not being willing to participate.”

5.4.5. Operation Efficiency

Operational efficiency is a vital lever that the company fully controls, involving initiatives to boost output with minimal resources such as time, cost, and effort. In the interview, participants' insights emphasised cost management or production costs as a key factor to leverage. During a turnaround, leaders aim to restore a struggling company to profitability, with operational efficiency being essential. This includes increasing production through effective plant operation, optimising resource allocation to improve response times, and ensuring consistent quality delivery.

There was a notable consensus among participants that reducing production costs is essential for improving efficiency. Most discussed alternative methods to cut expenses. A common theme emerged from the interviews: raw materials, whether coal or other additives, are the primary factors driving higher operational costs.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 shared similar views about raw materials being the main drivers of operational costs in the cement industry, especially energy sources and additives. The findings indicated that the operations team needs to develop innovative ways to reduce costs and operate more efficiently. Participant 1 emphasised that even the delivery cost of these materials contributes to the steep landing costs in the

“Additionally, some of the raw materials, such as alumina in one of our plants and gypsum in one of our grinding stations, serve as sources for additives used in cement production, specifically for controlling setting times. That one is also costly, so you'll always have to source cheaper alternatives. Even if you don't change the raw materials, you need to look into the transportation of that material. If it was being transported all the way from Cape Town, then you need to find out if you can get this material nearby. If so, do a feasibility study and have the numbers right in such a way that you reduce your operational costs.”

operation.

Participant 3 continued with a similar pattern to emphasise the high-cost contribution from coal and related transportation expenses. The participant highlighted that the company is exploring different alternatives to cut operational costs and reduce production expenses. It was evident in the discussion with the participant that

“I would say the cost of manufacturing the clinker itself has gone up due to the increase in the price of coal, which is one of the raw materials that we use for the burning process to make the clinker that is used to make the cement. With the coal cost increasing, it makes it a bit difficult. Other materials can be used in conjunction with coal to lower the cost. In some plants, they have added oils, and in some, they've added waste material to try and reduce the operational costs. So, coal is one of those.”

“Coal is one of the highest factors. So we've stopped bringing coal by rail because of the expense of the rail market or the rail transportation. But there is consideration to bring coal from somewhere else, which is outside of South Africa, but it still doesn't resolve the issue of the effectiveness or efficiency of the rail network. But there is that consideration, but it's good quality coal, which will... except for the fact that road coal comes in a backhaul, so it becomes cheaper.”

Participant 5 highlights that new competition will always emerge in the marketplace and cannot be prevented by rivals. However, as the operation continues, it is essential to identify critical actions that can be implemented to enhance efficiency and ensure consistent quality, thereby increasing the competitive advantage.

“I can try by all means to prevent people from entering the market, but there's not much that I can do as one producer, so my effort then would be focused on the things that are within my control, which is: How do I become efficient? How do I improve on my quality? How do I become a consistent producer? I think that's important. If you can maintain quality, consistency, and efficiency, I think for me, those are the things that one should focus on.”

Participants in the various responses demonstrated a deeper understanding that, in the cement industry, remaining competitive requires having high-quality limestone deposits. This enables process optimisation downstream and reduces operational costs. The participants outlined their insights as

“In the cement industry, if your strength is having the best deposits compared to your competitors, you will utilise those deposits. Having good deposits enables you to deliver a quality product at a lower cost and with less mining effort. So, I think competitive advantage is one of them. You also need to consider how to improve the efficiency of your operations because increased efficiency results in lower costs.”

Participant 1 holds a similar perspective that.

“I would say in the cement industry, one of the things that’s mostly looked at as a strategic plan—not just in cement but in other organizations as well—is cost control. Over time, you can already see if you always know what you’ve been spending per month and what your budget was. You can always compare that.”

5.4.6. Organisational Climate

The organisational climate pertains to the collective perception of the work environment, shaped by the company's atmosphere. It directly impacts employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity, which are influenced by practices, communication levels, and leadership style. A positive organisational climate encourages engagement, performance, and a sense of achievement through openness and motivation within the team. The findings revealed that participants value reaching established goals; however, a common theme emerged indicating that members need a supportive working

“For me, the other thing is the work environment atmosphere and the feel of the place. You want to reach the KPIs, but you also want to achieve a well-balanced workplace where you have a good employee engagement in your business unit. So yes, you are driving the KPIs, but employee engagement also needs to be a good one. If you get those two right, I think it drives that sense.”

environment to enhance their enjoyment while achieving objectives. Participant 3 emphasised that.

The participants further explained that leaders must foster an environment conducive to teamwork to progress towards a common goal, highlighting this by saying that

“You would need to create a team cohesion. You would need to create an environment of collaboration within that team to be able to implement that strategy. But also, you would need to create a goal-driven mindset because you have this objective, you want to reach this, you want to turn this around.”

Participant 8 offered a different perspective on the approach to organisational environment and driving a turnaround, noting that a top-down strategy is sometimes crucial for implementing vital changes swiftly. Leaders need to develop the strategy and present the carefully crafted plan to the team to set direction and expectations with a sense of urgency for change. Insights from interactions with participant 8 suggest that, at times, a turnaround approach requires severe measures, where there is not enough time for explanation or gradual change; instead, immediate action is necessary, as outlined below.

A notable similarity among participants emerged regarding the belief that a methodical, step-by-step approach to engaging the team in assessing the current situation and identifying potential improvements is the most effective means to initiate change. A similar trend was drawn from

“So, you'll be able to gather the actual truth about the organization. And then, with knowing exactly what the climate is like and how people feel, it can actually aid in making sure that everyone is aligned with the new turnaround plan.”

“It's the small steps that put you toward your end goals. Don't change too many things at once. Sometimes culture needs to change, and sometimes it doesn't. You might find that the culture of the business is correct; it just needs to be defined. Make sure we are hitting our targets correctly.”

"Where we did well, we said, "Okay, that's fine; we can remove that or keep it to measure next time." Where we didn't do well, we had to recalibrate and figure out what else we needed to get things going. The way the strategy was implemented, it was enforced, which was the only practical way to get immediate results. The buy-in came after the enforcement."

Participant 3 offered insights into the culture of accountability, which fundamentally underpins the turnaround plan as new initiatives are launched with high expectations that rely on individual responsibility to drive change and achieve established targets.

"You would also want to create a culture of accountability in terms of implementing a turnaround strategy so that everybody who's involved is doing what they're supposed to be doing and is accountable for it. In that way, collaboration can easily drive the results when everyone is doing what they're supposed to be doing."

Participant 5 agreed with the culture of accountability, sharing similar views as above to achieve the set objectives.

"Sometimes culture needs to change, and sometimes it doesn't. You might find that the culture of the business is correct; it just needs to be defined. Make sure we are hitting our targets correctly. The other thing is thinking that a turnaround is going to be driven by resources from outside the business. In some cases, you would require resources from outside the business to drive that strategy, but very often, it takes the people who are internal to drive the change as long as everybody is working

5.4.7. Quality Monitoring

Quality in cement production is a continuous process that ensures consistency in the final product; it reflects the culture and attitude of the company, offering customers products and services that increase satisfaction. Participants share a common understanding that quality in the cement industry involves rigorous testing throughout

the process. A prominent theme among all participants is that cement producers use product quality and service delivery to gain a competitive edge. Participants 7 and 4 also mention that high-quality products and services allow local cement producers to command a premium price for their offerings.

“When we come to the market, people may say our cement is expensive, but we can highlight the quality of our products. When we are strong in quality, strong in performance, and strong in managing our resources with discipline and efficiency, people will hear that we are doing well. They will start comparing. They may find that while a competitor offers a cheaper price, our company offers quality, discipline, and customer service.”

Participants further emphasised the thoughts.

“What are the commodities that really make money for us? In our organization, clinker production is a very important lever because there is a great need for it in the market. Another thing is the quality of our products, starting from the raw materials all the way to the final product.”

Participant 2 shared a different perspective, emphasising that in tenders where the cement industry is heavily involved, price takes precedence over quality.

“The tenders are actually considering the price first before they consider anything else. It's very few engineers that would consider the quality because it has worked for them and then the price. The tender process always goes for the price first, and everything else follows.”

Participant 4 emphasises that regulating product quality is vital to ensure the product meets standards and to mitigate the risk of low-quality cement being discarded.

“Because we've got a lot of people, or let me say companies, that are taking shortcuts. In cement, the two best things would be quality and on-time delivery because the majority of cement is actually being used in concrete. When you are able to deliver just before the batching process so that the project doesn't stand still because there's no cement, that is actually a success on its own.”

“We should also be regulating policies regarding the infrastructure that gets developed, because if you can have your infrastructure regulated, then you would ensure that it supports a certain quality of cement. That also to some extent limits the amount of lower-quality cement that gets developed in countries that have less standards than what we currently have in the country.”

Participant 5 echoed the same insight as the above statement, highlighting that.

“It's about working with the regulatory body to ensure that those quality assurance processes are kept stringent and are also adhered to. I think that's important. It goes back to how you become a low-cost producer, and that basically speaks to the business having to look at its entire value chain and seeing where it can improve its efficiencies and also just leverage on its competitive advantage. It goes back to what's within your control and what's outside your control.”

The participants share a similar insight that, in cement processing, it is essential to have high-quality open reserves and raw input materials to improve process efficiency downstream. The cement industry depends on high-quality inputs to produce top-quality cement. The participants emphasised the importance of quality monitoring during the interview, highlighting aspects such as

“On the internal side, it's important to have quality open reserves on the mining side. It's important to have a functional plant that flows. It is important to retain the technical experts that are necessary for you to operate.”

The participants also stirred up discussions to further brainstorm how to become a high-quality, consistent producer and also be able to be cost-effective.

“I made an example at the beginning that your deposit could be a competitive advantage for a cement producer. What that means is that your focus then is on making sure that you are able to get your primary cement-making material at a lower cost, and not only that, but you also have quality material. So, I think it's about understanding your value chain and the constraints within it. How do you then become a quality producer? I'm not going to say "cheap producer" because "cheap" and "low-cost" are not necessarily the same thing.”

“There are people that are stealing coal. You buy coal, it gets stolen, and what gets delivered to you is not the same. It's not the quality that you bought. “

‘Number one, you have a stable process. You have consistency, which means your plants are running and you are able to produce a consistent quality product at the targeted amounts.’

Participant 9 states that delivering high quality requires teamwork. This realisation encourages the team implementing a turnaround strategy to collaborate in reaching set goals and satisfying customer expectations. The idea was described as follows:

“That one strategic objective I'll think about in our case, we've got one of the objectives of reducing the clinker factor. It is not an engineering; it's not an engineering objective. It's not neither not a quality objective however there can be some activities that are driven from both engineering from engineering, from production, from quality, from the mining that could be driving those activities. But collectively in those

The participants strongly agreed that to stay competitive and understand customer expectations, it is essential to maintain consistent product quality and actively engage with customers to gather insights on product performance and other valuable constructive feedback for improvement.

“Importantly, to keep our competitiveness in the market is to make sure that we give them a consistent quality of the products because we're in the business of selling a product. So our quality has to be consistent, not just in the product, but also in terms of delivery.”

5.4.8. Competitive Analysis

The competitive analysis in the cement industry assesses activities that distinguish cement producers in the market, allows responses to competitors' strategies, and utilises the company's strengths while addressing weaknesses. Understanding the capital expenditure required to enhance plant performance, monitoring rivals' activities, and thoroughly analysing and securing key raw material locations are essential. Competitive analysis helps the company understand market dynamics related to supplier and buyer power, manage disruptions caused by new entrants, and identify potential cement substitutes that could threaten sales.

“But close to your customers always works. Putting your ear on the ground and knowing what the next best thing is that's going to require cement, and also making sure you deliver based on the customer's needs, because it's not always the case that the customer will make a decision based on the price. If you are offering a very good service, which in this case is delivery time, good quality also becomes a

The industry participants highlighted key elements related to the turnaround strategy, particularly the impact of transportation strategy on the performance of local cement producers. Transportation is a significant cost and a complex activity that the company sometimes outsources, which can have a negative effect on its performance. During the turnaround effort, this becomes a crucial issue that must be addressed. The participants also noted that the transportation of either raw materials or finished products impacts the company's profitability, as described by the participants.

“You have to take ownership of the business. You don't give your business to someone else to run. We had people selling cement and transporting cement on our behalf, but all they did was take away money and reduce our margins. We took all of that back and decided to do these things ourselves with fewer people and at a much cheaper cost. We are now seeing an increase in sales because they are in our hands, and we determine how much cement we can sell. The cost of transport was also huge, but now it's under our control, and we can manage it.”

“Additionally, some of the raw materials, such as alumina in one of our plants and gypsum in one of our grinding stations, serve as sources for additives used in cement production, specifically for controlling setting times. That one is also costly, so you'll always have to source cheaper alternatives. Even if you don't change the raw materials, you need to look into the transportation of that material. If it was being transported all the way from Cape Town, then you need to find out if you can get this material nearby. If so, do a feasibility study and have the numbers right in such a way that you reduce your operational costs.”

Participant number 2 emphasised key factors influencing operational costs, including the potential to utilise rail transport to reduce transportation expenses. Participants expressed genuine concerns about South Africa's rail system performance in delivering bulk materials for manufacturing companies. The inefficiency of rail transport has increased reliance on road transport to reach customers, resulting in higher costs, as observed by participants who share similar views on the transport factor affecting the company's profitability. Consequently, various backhaul solutions are being explored to

“Coal is one of the highest factors. So we've stopped bringing coal by rail because of the expense of the rail market or the rail transportation. But there is consideration to bring coal from somewhere else, which is outside of South Africa, but it still doesn't resolve the issue of the effectiveness or efficiency of the rail network. But there is that consideration, but it's good quality coal, which will... except for the fact that road coal comes in a backhaul, so it becomes cheaper.”

minimise costs.

Participant 6 highlighted a key point about engaging with the customer to implement a transport system that benefits both customers and suppliers. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring the solution is clearly communicated to the customer.

“For example, from a customer's point of view, if the customer is part of the turnaround plan, they also have a role to participate. For example, back in the day, most companies would say they are investing in a transport management system as part of the action plans to execute strategies. If the customers are being engaged in that change, then you'll get less resistance to change because they are being engaged from day one. You, as the supplier to the customers, know the benefits of you using such kind of tools for a business because you don't want to lose your customers in the process. So engaging with them on the external side and making them understand the benefits on their side, not just your side, can also help the plan to stick with minimal interruption.”

5.4.8.1. Strategic Partnership

Participant 5 emphasised the importance of establishing a strategic partnership with external stakeholders once internal factors, over which the company has full control, have been addressed, in order to work toward achieving common goals.

“If you can maintain quality, consistency, and efficiency, I think for me, those are the things that one should focus on. The rest, you can then seek out partnerships with critical stakeholders in order for you to try and address the external factors.”

The participant 5 emphasised that importance of partnership with the suppliers for quick response in case of needed to minimize respond time and increase uptime for operation and illustrate with the example how the strategic partnership enable the high running time for the cement operation.

The relationship extends beyond suppliers; participant 9 emphasised the crucial point, aligning with participant 4's perspective on the significance of collaboration with the authorities.

“But there has to be at a high level, there has to be a partnership between our the executive of the business with the government. You need their buy in in order for you to operate and that’s why I talk about the regulatory bodies. But the regulatory bodies would Obviously, form part of the umbrella of the government, so there has to be a very close relationship between the executive as well as the government and then that that would be one of the key external influences.”

“I think within a business, you have strategic partners. I'll make an example: if you have a partnership with your equipment suppliers, whether that's for your mobile equipment or you have a partnership with your machine partnerships, by building a key partnership, those people will always prioritize you over anyone else because you've fostered a partnership that's beneficial to both parties. So, it's making sure that you create strategic partners within that cement-making process, whether it's for your crushers, mobile equipment, or your brick suppliers. Just making an example in terms of the running of your kiln, ensuring that you have strategic partners that share and benefit in you being successful because those partners will always prioritize you over the next person.”

“We need to form relationships that allow us to walk into the regulator's office and say, "I'm in trouble here. I need to do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. How do I proceed?" Because nobody knows the law more than the person who needs to implement it and ensure compliance, so those relationships are key. They supersede all others because they can stop you today, and you wouldn't even know.”

5.4.8.2. Business Efficiency

The success of the business depends on the culture of accountability and ownership it cultivates within the organisation. Participant 8 clearly explained how the new leadership, which was guiding the business turnaround, addressed the issue of operational efficiency.

“The current leadership looked deep inside to see what was exactly wrong with the way we were doing business. For example, we had one player selling our cement, so we completely relied on them. We weren't prepared to sell it ourselves, so they dictated the terms. Additionally, we had no control over the cement transportation and distribution. We also had too many people at head office and relied too much on consultants, paying for things we could have done ourselves.”

This was further highlighted by revealing the problem the company was engaging in, which removed accountability and, in turn, affected the company's profitability.

“You have to take ownership of the business. You don't give your business to someone else to run. We had people selling cement and transporting cement on our behalf, but all they did was take away money and reduce our margins. We took all of that back and decided to do these things ourselves with fewer people and at a much cheaper cost. We are now seeing an increase in sales because they are in our hands, and we determine how much cement we can sell. The cost of transport was also huge, but now it's under our control, and we can manage it.”

“Improve business performance, I suppose you need to analyze exactly what the performance is, what is initially hindering it. You can't fix what you do not know. After you have analyzed it, I think, on my side, involving the team that I work with helps a lot, because they've been in the business as well. So they know what works and what doesn't work, or they know where the problems are. It's good to have a session with your team, and they will feel like they are part of a solution, and as such, they actually become willing to enable you to make sure that whatever actions you've implemented get carried through because they were part of the solution.”

The CEO of Participant 8, when discussing the need to implement a new turnaround strategy, emphasised the importance of focusing on controllable factors while disregarding external elements that have consistently been cited as reasons for the company's underperformance.

“The focus was to stop using external factors as an excuse. Our CEO always said this because whenever we talked, we would bring up imports and make it the government's problem to stop them. But imports are imports. They should not determine how you run your business efficiently. Our CEO insisted that we should not discuss imports because they have been a convenient excuse for not doing well.”

5.4.9. Leadership

The effectiveness of the turnaround strategy is closely connected to the leadership's ability to establish a clear direction for the company's future. Participant 3 offered insight that one factor influencing the success of the turnaround is the personalisation of the process, rather than concentrating on the corporate strategy and efforts to enhance performance. When leadership fails to utilise the existing turnaround plan and instead attempts to introduce a new, personalised approach, the process becomes inconsistent.

“And these businesses that we are in don't keep the same leaders for a long time. But anyway, even the leaders themselves need to grow further, so you can't keep them. So I think that's where we lose the momentum and where we create a lack of trust. When we bring in the new strategy, people now identify it with "Leader's strategy" instead of the "firm's strategy." That is the biggest problem. And when that leader goes, that strategy dies. But the aim is the same. You have a cement manufacturing industry; the objective is not changing. You still want to produce that quality cement efficiently. So the strategy should not be changing from Leader A to Leader B. Yes, you can improve on it.”

Participants 2 and 3 echoed a similar insight that, in the turnaround, leaders need to be flexible and able to adapt the plan as the dynamic environment requires constant adjustments to achieve set goals.

“You need someone who takes risks. You need to be agile. You need to think on your feet. You also need to be open-minded because there's no way to say that the person that has been operating a certain equipment cannot tell you exactly where the problem is. So you need to actually go down and go through a session of what we've been doing, which is visible, felt leadership—walk about and find out and also get the honesty of the people in terms of what happens, what works, and what doesn't.”

“Situational leadership involves someone who can be flexible enough to adapt to the strategy's driving forces and also align with the culture it aims to foster. So yes, visionary leadership definitely, but from there I think you need leaders who will be flexible enough to go with where the need is for them to get this turnaround to be the way you wanted to be.”

“Leaders need to be flexible enough to provide what is needed to get that strategy implemented. In cases where coaching is needed, leaders need to be able to provide that. In cases where you need innovation to be driving the strategy, you will need somebody who is strong in innovation to lead that. So I think it always depends on what your key objectives are, but you will need leaders to also be flexible enough to be driving and actually leading in that strategy themselves.”

There are several significant common insights and themes that emerge among the participants, highlighting that leadership needs to identify the main lever to focus on to turn around the company's performance. The participants discussed the need for leadership to encourage people to brainstorm and identify potential opportunities.

“I think it's one of the critical internal factors that strategic leadership has identified as the main lever to be used to turn around the performance of a cement producer. I think it's important when you're a cement producer to understand your entire value chain of the cement-making process, all the way from where you get your primary components to when you have the final cement. I think it's important for you to understand that value chain and then to understand what your main constraints are. If you understand where your dominant constraints lie, then you can focus your

“This is the vision. How do we, as an operation, implement it?” The workshops can start from your senior team to the junior team, also including the shop floor workers to say, “If this is the vision, how can we, as a team, implement that?” I think one of the best ways is having change agents who are your influencers in your operation, who can filter down the leadership. Don't just make it a leadership or management role but involve your employees to influence each other in that

“The current leadership looked deep inside to see what was exactly wrong with the way we were doing business.”

The participants echoed that the most important factor for leadership to embrace the journey to turnaround is resilience, as implementing change is not easy and requires leaders who can press through the difficulties of change. Participant 2 also brings an insight that the leader needs to be firm but fair to implement the strategy.

“I think strategic leadership skills required during a turnaround time are having leaders that are resilient, because sometimes it's not easy to implement change. So you will need to take baby steps. As I've explained earlier, you have to take baby steps, and consultations as well will help.”

“It needs to be a leadership that is firm but fair, where you can also give recognition where recognition is due. If you have to implement disciplinary action because of things that did not go right, you need to be in that era as well.”

“You need your whole team and the right leadership who understand why we need to run efficiently. You need to look at your teams at all levels. It's one of the most important levers. When you are involved in a transformation and you don't have the right people, especially in leadership, you will have problems. This is where you need to make difficult decisions. You have to ask if the people you have are the people you need. If not, you must come up with strategies to address this quickly. You'd rather have vacancies in an organization than have the wrong people, especially at the leadership level.”

Building on the insights shared by other participants, there is a consistent alignment among the views that participants hold regarding leadership. Participant 3 echoed the same insight.

“To improve business performance and for an effective leadership strategy for me, I think the best one I can think of, if you implement a turnaround, is a visionary leadership strategy, where the whole strategic initiative is based on a new leadership vision that is being implemented. The vision is then properly communicated and cascaded throughout the business. I find that a visionary approach aligns very well with a turnaround strategy.”

The participant shared a similar view that leadership must specify expectations, outline them, and ensure continuous monitoring to review performance and take necessary steps to achieve the expected outputs. Participant 2 outlined it that

"We need to know exactly and outline exactly what the expectations are. If the expectations are not met, you need to make sure you implement a plan. If it's a "fun care" situation, you apply an informal review. If that doesn't work, then you go to a disciplinary. If they do work, that is well done, and you give recognition where it's due,

Leading change is not easy; the observation made by participant 2 and the shared insight gained from the leadership experience indicate that.

"You need resilience. Resilience as a leader. You need a little bit of stubbornness; it's a requirement because you would find people that are telling you that "We've done this, and it has never worked." Stubbornness actually works in that regard, and you get to reap results, and then they say, "Oh, yeah, we didn't know." What if it never worked before? There's nothing that can say that it will never, ever work."

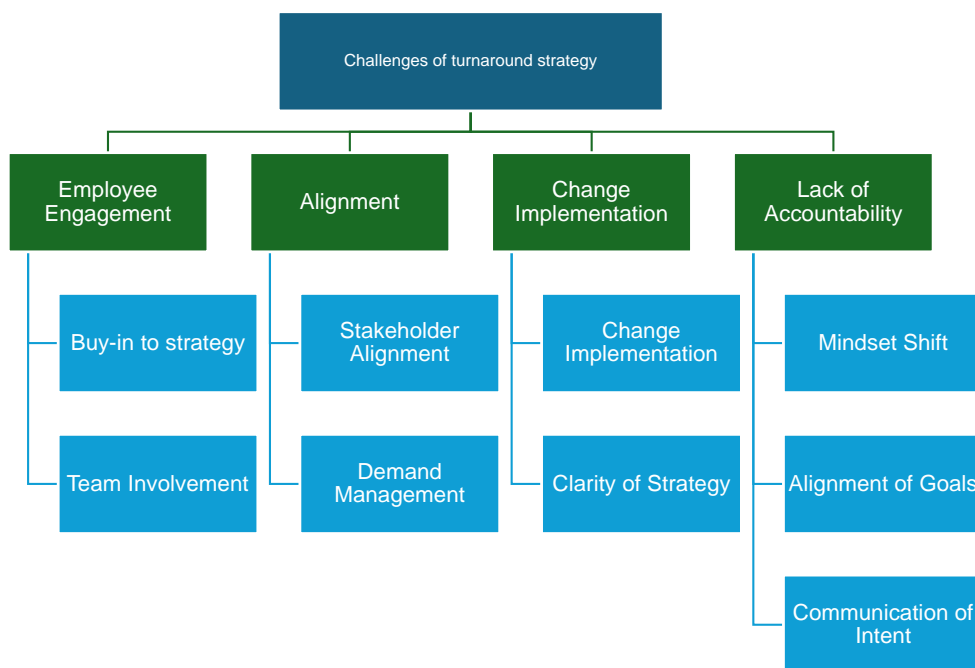
5.4.10. Conclusion

Leadership must consider both internal and external factors when developing a turnaround strategy, ensuring proper strategic planning and execution to minimise disruptions in the process. Operational efficiency is the most crucial internal factor; therefore, it is vital to develop a plan for transitioning from inefficient operations to more effective ones. During the formulation, it was clear to all participants that monitoring quality is vital for improving the company's growth and competitiveness in the market. It is essential to understand competitors' actions and to match or surpass their performance in the marketplace. Agile and flexible leadership is vital for enabling effective adaptability during a turnaround strategy.

5.5. Research Questions 3: Challenges for turnaround strategy

Research Question 3: What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

Figure 5: Challenges and dynamics for turnaround, source



5.5.1. Employee Engagement

The other theme that was established is that all the participants expressed a very similar perspective: the primary problem confronting the turnaround strategy is securing stakeholder buy-in for the proposed approach. All participants agreed that for the turnaround strategy to succeed, it must secure buy-in from all levels of the organisation. Buy-in boosts emotional commitment to achieving organisational objectives, thereby transforming performance and reversing the downward trend. The participants assert that buy-in is essential for increasing efficiency and creating opportunities for greater profitability through turnaround initiatives.

Participant 4 continues to emphasise the importance of buy-in from the people, because if the people are not engaged in the proposed turnaround strategy, it will face challenges during implementation. The participant expresses the need for buy-in very deeply.

"We don't go and implement turnaround strategies out of the blue because then people's buy-in is not going to be there, and without the buy-in, it's already a failed strategy, no matter how good it looks. If people can understand that we have an issue with the plant and we are not doing as good as we need to, we can create the stocks so that when the plant is ready, and this is the plan that we need to implement for the plant to get ready in whatever period, then the other stakeholders must not be caught unprepared."

"You know, most definitely the buy in from the people. So you'll have to have change ambassador change ambassadors that will drive change in the organisations to make sure that you've got the buy in."

"I can say on this is that you cannot have buy-in from the internal stakeholders if it only comes from the top down. It's important to always make people feel involved, and even if it is your plan as the leader, it's not for you to take ownership of this great plan that you came up with. You get your team in and you say, "What do we need to do? Can we look at this?" and you start driving them toward the common goal that you know in your head. As people start taking ownership, it will ensure a successful implementation, and it will take it from the planning to the implementation phase. It will also make it easier for people to report when they are stumbling blocks in this plan because it is their plan and not your plan that you want them to implement."

“I think it speaks back to how you get buy-in from your different stakeholders because change for any organization is difficult. So how do you then get buy-in from all the different levels of your business to ensure that your turnaround strategy is being implemented? I think that's number one. People tend to translate efficiencies with people losing jobs because if something is efficient, then you need fewer bodies. You need to change that mindset so that efficiencies do not translate to people losing jobs but translate to us operating at a different level. We're not necessarily working harder, but we are working smarter. By working smarter, you are able to produce more with the same amount of resources. So I think getting buy-in from people is a problem, and that's what can make or break a strategy.”

Participants share the insight that the buy-in and turnaround of the company to be effective means there will be a loss of jobs, which turns out to be the reason for the resistance from the employees, thinking that if things go well in the company, people will be laid off. The leaders help the people change their mindset to look at turnaround as an opportunity to increase productivity with the same resources. The limitation of not seeing the positive side of turnaround can lead to resistance, participant 5 outlined it as

Participant 8 offered a different view on the buy-in method, noting that an alternative turnaround plan involved leaders commanding necessary actions to boost performance without consulting others. This approach reflected a top-down style aimed at swiftly improving results.

“The strategy was developed and presented, and then everyone had to abide by it. There was no time for climate creation or alignment sessions, which would have taken five years. The turnaround needed to happen immediately. We are still on track, and the team came to review the implementation of the strategy to see how we did.”

The buy-in also includes the authorities that need to be able to allow the company to operate, issue required permits, and other

“There has to be at a high level, there has to be a partnership between our the executive of the business with the government. You need their buy in in order for you to operate and that's why I talk about the regulatory bodies.”

Participant 4 introduces an additional dimension of buy-in, emphasising the necessity for not only employee engagement but also the involvement of suppliers who serve as strategic partners, thereby facilitating the acquisition of essential resources for effective operations. Participant 6 emphasised the importance of the company securing customer buy-in. In times of decline, customers may lose hope or consider alternatives. A turnaround strategy requires articulating a new narrative for customers, as noted by one participant.

“Like I indicated, your market share is quite critical. You don't have a market share if you don't have the buy-in of your suppliers.”

The importance of share value in the turnaround makes it easy to get buy-in from all stakeholders, as participant 5 insight highlighted.

“There has to be a shared value for all the stakeholders. If there's a shared value among all stakeholders, it's easier to get buy-in. But it's always "What's in it for me?" I think that's one thing every individual stakeholder looks for. How does this benefit me? So, if there's a shared value between stakeholders, everybody is then working towards achieving the same goal. So, that's how you gain buy-in for the need to change and implement a turnaround strategy.”

5.5.2. Team Involvement

Most participants emphasised that team involvement is a crucial factor in achieving success. Its lack diminishes the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at enhancing company performance. Collaboration promotes better understanding and problem-solving. The institution's knowledge of operations stems from individuals with extensive experience at the plant, and participant 2 offered deeper insights in this regard.

“So how do the leaders achieve buy-in? We know change is not an easy thing. So we can look at maybe the buy-in from the internal stakeholder and then also how do they get buy-in from the customers? They've been disappointed for long; how do they buy-in on the new story of there's a change that we're implementing and it's going to turn around things?”

A common theme among participants is the suggestion that leaders conduct a workshop to engage the team in discussing the organisational strategy's vision. This involvement

"I think, on my side, involving the team that I work with helps a lot, because they've been in the business as well. So they know what works and what doesn't work, or they know where the problems are. It's good to have a session with your team, and they will feel like they are part of a solution, and as such, they actually become willing to enable you to make sure that whatever actions you've implemented get carried through because they were part of the solution."

is intended to shape the implementation process and enhance collaboration regarding expected outcomes. Participant 3 emphasised the method of engaging the team through questions that generate ideas for implementation. In the discussion with the participants, it became evident that sometimes the strategic leadership had conducted preliminary work and approached the team for execution. The other participants examined the team's engagement from the outset of the turnaround initiatives, which were effective in increasing the chances of buy-in.

"This is the vision. How do we, as an operation, implement it?" The workshops can start from your senior team to the junior team, also including the shop floor workers to say, "If this is the vision, how can we, as a team, implement that?" I think one of the best ways is having change agents who are your influencers in your operation, who can filter down the leadership. Don't just make it a leadership or management role, but involve your employees to influence each other in that

Participant 4 agreed with the insight shared above

"It's important to always make people feel involved, and even if it is your plan as the leader, it's not for you to take ownership of this great plan that you came up with. You get your team in and you say, "What do we need to do? Can we look at this?" and you start driving them toward the common goal that you know in your head. As people start taking ownership, it will ensure a successful implementation, and it will take it from the planning to the implementation phase. It will also make it easier for people to report when they are stumbling blocks in this plan because it is their plan and not your plan that you want them to implement."

The discussion with the participant brought in the insight that the leaders need to use the resistors of the change to convince and get buy-in from them, as it's easier for them to

“Because the sceptics are the ones that can actually have a negative effect on whether this happens or it doesn't happen, even if there is a buy-in from the team leaders. You need to make sure that they see the reason for what we want to implement and how we're going to make sure that it works. They actually need to have a firsthand experience, as it's easier for the sceptics to convince everybody else to make sure that things get done.”

In operational challenges, teamwork alleviates difficulties, fosters growth opportunities, and engages the team to unlock innovative potential. Participant 7 identified it as a crucial element in the turnaround strategy.

“You need your whole team and the right leadership who understand why we need to run efficiently. You need to look at your teams at all levels. It's one of the most important levers. When you are involved in a transformation and you don't have the right people, especially in leadership, you will have problems. This is where you need to make difficult decisions. You have to ask if the people you have are the people you need. If not, you must come up with strategies to address this quickly.”

Participant 8 points out a critical aspect of innovation in the process of change: the team tends to be reserved in trying new approaches. However, there is a huge cost savings in implementing some of the initiatives that arise from the pressure of declining performance, which require teamwork to deliver better results. The high production cost

“The kiln at one of the plants is capable of running at a higher TSR (Thermal Substitution Rate) to reduce costs. The team was scared to do it without any valid reason, but with the new strategy, we pushed the boundaries. We were given a target, and even though we had never reached it before, we said we would do it because it wasn't a negotiation. The same applies to other plants; when they were told to run the kilns at a certain rate, they just did it.”

reduces the team's ability to try out new alternatives and create more value for the product.

"You can always compare that on a month-to-month basis. If you see that you're over budget, then you need to find ways to lower the cost."

The findings suggest that team involvement is essential for applying critical thinking collectively and innovating to ensure the strategy for reversing declining performance succeeds. Sometimes, a quick implementation of changes is necessary to minimise lengthy discussions, with strategic leaders providing vision and the team engaging in the implementation. Collaboration at all levels within the team is required to urgently develop and follow the plan for execution.

"You would need to create a team cohesion. You would need to create an environment of collaboration within that team to be able to implement that strategy. But also, you would need to create a goal-driven mindset because you have this objective, you want to reach this, you want to turn this around. You don't want to continue doing the same thing the way you have been doing it. So a goal-oriented

5.5.3. Lack of alignment

Regular feedback sessions are essential within the company to ensure that everyone understands the current performance of the company and the actions required to continue the turnaround journey. That's the common insight that was drawn from the majority of the participants

"So, there has to be a balance between what management requires and how your processes are structured. For instance, if your processes don't lend themselves to efficiency, let's say your process is too manual and you want to drive efficiency from that manual perspective, it might be a bit difficult for you to do because they might tell you that, for example, "We can't improve this process because if we try and improve it, we are going to slow down the process ahead or the process that feeds into the next process." So you need to make sure that your processes are evaluated, and evaluating those processes speaks to the people that are involved within that

The participants noted a common observation regarding the continuity of the turnaround strategy, indicating that the challenges associated with change fatigue stem from the ongoing leadership changes, which consistently introduce new turnaround strategies. The formulation and implementation plan for the company must be established to guarantee continuity of execution during leadership transitions.

“The biggest mistake is that each time the strategy changes. I don't think that has to be. I don't think even we as leaders go to a different school of learning; it is the same learning, but how we implement it? We like to personalize it to what we want, and I think because of that, in a good way, we want to turn around the place, but what we are not aware of is we are driving change fatigue. That is the biggest flaw.”

The findings suggest that resolving issues and enhancing performance requires an understanding that business strategies, operations, and support functions must align in recognising factors within the company's control, rather than attributing internal failures to external influences. However, involving external stakeholders and shareholders to obtain their support in formulating and implementing changes is critical. Participant 6

“I think if the leaders are involving the stakeholders from the beginning in terms of planning the turnaround strategy, if they are part of it from day one, that could definitely ease the process of implementation because it's not going to be the leader's plan; it's going to be their plan to get out, both the internal and the external

outlined that

“If one can then engage the shareholders and make them understand what the return will be in terms of what they want to do from a financial reward point of view, then develop a clear business case that justifies the need to change how things are being done so that they can then get the right dividends both in the short term or long term, however the dividend payout is structured. If those shareholders are being engaged, that will also create less resistance to implementing such strategies to make the business survive.”

5.5.4. Change Implementation

Turnaround strategy is a change management approach that is systematically structured to transform a declining company into a more profitable organisation. The companies embarking on the change need a procedure that will guide the change and clearly stipulate the expectations associated with it. Participants discussed the importance of having a change management procedure to specify what's expected in the change clearly. In most cases, there is no established procedure to guide managers through the change and navigate its complexities.

"I think a change management procedure. You cannot implement anything strategy-related that is such a big change if a company has not had change management procedures. At least the managers and the junior management need to have gone through change management training so that they can know what they are looking out for. Beyond that, there has to be a procedure that supports the changes. It shouldn't just be about pushing you to do better, but no procedure on the HR side supports the changes, because this is when you will see people's true colors."

Participant 8 represents a different strategy implemented by one cement producer, characterised not by negotiation or consultation regarding the implementation of change, but rather by a directive mandating that change must occur, accompanied by rigorous micromanagement to monitor progress and facilitate immediate reporting. The participant conveyed that it was a top-down technique with a definitive purpose to accomplish, characterised by a resolve to achieve improvements quickly and yield the expected results.

"At the sites, we made it clear that this was not a negotiation; it was an instruction that everyone had to follow. This is why the turnaround was quicker for the sites. We started with micromanaging, which was a painful concept but was needed at the time. There were daily follow-ups to ensure the strategy was being implemented. Buy-in came after enforcement. As enforcement progressed, people started to see the benefits. We did not have sessions to convince people, like we did

Participant 5 emphasized the necessity of explaining the rationale for change and its associated elements, stressing the beneficial impact of engaging all stakeholders in the change process.

"I would say how you would deal with those challenges is ensuring that your communication is key. Number one, the benefit of the strategy is communicated very well, and that benefit speaks to every individual stakeholder of that business. There has to be a value add to all the stakeholders. It's communicated very well, and it's driven not only from top down because with the top-down approach, you tend to miss some of the concerns that are coming from the bottom up."

"When people start talking about a turnaround strategy, they normally think that something radical needs to happen for the organization to change. It's not always the case that something radical needs to happen for an organization to change. It's the small steps that put you toward your end goals. Don't change too many things at once. Sometimes culture needs to change, and sometimes it doesn't. You might find that the culture of the business is correct; it just needs to be defined. Make sure we are

Participant 8 indicated that the process was streamlined to ensure a more structured approach and openness, making the process more transparent.

"We implemented a new procedure for anything that was not budgeted for. Step one: get a decision note to ensure everyone is aligned with what you want to do. Step two: get your quotations. Step three: create orders, making sure everything is put in the correct accounts. Step four: when the work is done, you attach the invoice. The processes are now streamlined, and we have to follow them precisely. It's not like before, where you could just say, "We need this; let's just do it." Now, you need a decision note and a justification, including the risks involved and how you will mitigate them. It's more transparent; nothing is done by one group of people without the other group knowing."

5.5.5. Demand management

Participants from various disciplines agree that customer needs are vital in driving organisational change and ensuring the company satisfies customer expectations. They emphasised the importance of being aware of competitors' activities and the value of strategic positioning to respond effectively and stay competitive in the market. These views were shared by participants regarding market demand and competitors.

“The market will respond. They'll hear that you have saved money or achieved a new goal. They'll see that a company that was declining for the past five to seven years is now picking up. The market will start responding positively mainly because you have been concentrating on the things you can control. The influx of competition from Asian markets is detrimental to us, but it's what we do that will make us competitive.”

“You also have to understand what is happening with your competition. It's important to know things that are not in your face when it comes to your competition. And you also need to understand what your total customer demands are because one of the biggest mistakes we can make is that we could over-engineer or over-advance our products so much that the customer does not want to pay the price for it because it's above what they need. And then it's the general things really, like what we spoke about on.”

“But close to your customers always works. Putting your ear on the ground and knowing what the next best thing is that's going to require cement, and also making sure you deliver based on the customer's needs, because it's not always the case that the customer will make a decision based on the price. If you are offering a very good service, which in this case is delivery time, good quality also becomes a success

5.5.6. Clarity of Strategy

Clarifying strategy and aligning expectations are fundamental to ensuring strong acceptance of the strategy and fostering motivation to achieve company objectives.

Your change leaders need to let you know what is happening, but they would not be able to let you know if you had not set up clear key performances and objectives at the beginning of this whole thing. And we spoke about also having the lower-hanging fruits. The quick-to-achieve things should be seen in the first month or the first two

Participant 7 highlighted the importance for leaders to effectively convey the strategy's objectives to all staff, ensuring the whole organisation is aligned in the same direction.

Communication is often overstated, but if you want to achieve the change you're after, it will never succeed without a very clear communication process. I'm not just talking about meeting people. I'm talking about communicating things like financial results. The process of that communication is very important because it will let the entire organization, at all levels, know where we are. It will also keep your board informed.

"If you constantly engage with the guys from the beginning like we mentioned, then that can save a lot of things, like time in terms of resistance to change and people not being willing to participate. Remember, at the end of the day, you are doing it for the entire team, not just for yourself. If people are not well clarified about what is happening, you will have a lot of resignations and people not willing to stay for long. Then you have to stop focusing on the goal and start trying to speak to HR to retain people, while in the first place, the strategy was not about letting people go; it was for the good of the business."

First, people within the company need to know that we are doing well, but without becoming complacent. When employees know they are doing well, they will continue to do what they're doing and will want to improve. They will start talking about how good we are, and the market will begin to hear about it.

5.5.7. Chapter 5 Conclusion

The interviews highlighted key factors to consider when implementing a turnaround strategy. There was widespread agreement on the importance of communicating and engaging with all levels to establish a shared vision for the necessity of change. This helps individuals align with the strategy, fosters buy-in and encourages the team to work towards a common goal. Another key theme mentioned by participants was operational costs, which have been rising among cement producers. This calls for a change in mindset to develop new methods for achieving greater cost-efficiency while maintaining competitive quality in cement production. The performance of the cement industry is influenced by various internal and external factors, including inefficiencies, inadequate personnel skills, and declining volumes in a competitive market. The profit contribution to the company in the cement process is significantly impacted by high production costs, leading to initiatives aimed at improving operational efficiency and reducing input costs to boost profitability. The turnaround strategy requires sufficient resources and active employee participation to implement change effectively and enhance competitiveness.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6. Discussion

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data analysis and compares them with existing literature. The aim is to align with the research questions by integrating themes for each question and discussing them in relation to the theory and literature outlined in chapter 2. Chapter 5 features themes that are analysed concerning the literature from chapter 2. The researcher will explore similarities and differences in the findings and seek additional scholarly sources to validate these differences within the context of existing literature.

6.2. Discussion of Research Question 1

What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

6.2.1. RQ1: Theme 1: Cost Management

This research question allows the researcher to identify the key factors influencing turnaround strategies in the cement industry. The objective is to discern the critical indicators that strategic leaders monitor to develop turnaround strategies before the company faces complete decline. The research aims to identify essential factors that will support a sustainable turnaround strategy by addressing the fundamental principles of cement manufacturing to improve performance.

The findings indicate that cost management is a crucial indicator of the company's decline, as profitability trends downward while operational costs increase, thereby reducing the contribution margin. Johan and Handika (2018) emphasised that organisations depend on financial efficiencies to implement turnaround strategies. Rossouw (2023) noted that many companies adopt turnaround strategies focused on cost efficiencies because they are easy to implement, require minimal capital, and generate immediate cash flow before more complex strategies are undertaken. The findings show that participants highlighted the importance of improving operating costs and fostering innovation to discover new cement production methods in a dynamic environment to stay competitive. The finding aligns with existing literature, suggesting that cost efficiency in the cement industry offers significant potential for savings. These savings can be realised through improved operational efficiency, enhanced resource

competencies, and exploring alternative raw materials to reduce high input costs in the production process.

According to Ollonde et al. (2024), inefficiencies and high production costs necessitate strategic leaders to formulate and implement improvements in operations. This insight from the literature is similar to the findings obtained related to cost.

The study supports Gitau (2019), who found a positive relationship between cost management and organisational performance; the literature and the findings gained during the interviews shared a similar core message. The findings revealed that cost containment within the organisation led to improved performance.

The findings revealed that cement producers are highly intensive energy users, which requires a new mindset to operate the machines and create opportunities to innovate alternative energy sources that can be utilised. This confirms the literature, which highlights that the cement manufacturing process is classified as highly capital-intensive, involving significant energy costs and facing considerable financial volatility, systematic disruptions, and regulatory changes (Awwad et al., 2025).

The implication of cost management in the cement producers in the local environment requires a well-functioning plant to control operational cost effectively, keep the plant running consistently for quality and efficiency. Findings indicated that if the plant is not reliable, it is not possible to optimise the process. The findings align with the literature, where Rico et al. (2021) emphasise that efficiency-focused strategies in declining organisations are crucial for creating stable performance and driving internal factors to ensure the organisation's survival. It was further emphasised by Nahak & Ellitan, (2022) that in industries where demand has not increased, leaders must be creative in how they operate effectively, create value in a more cost-efficient manner, and compete in the challenging market.

The findings emphasised that operational efficiency is a critical lever under the company's control, involving initiatives aimed at enhancing output while minimising resources such as time, cost, and effort. In the turnaround, leaders aim to restore a struggling company to profitability, where operational efficiency is essential and involves increasing production through effective plant operations. Setyopurnomo et al. (2025) assert that for a company to implement cost management effectively, it must concentrate on improving operational effectiveness. Handoyoa et al. (2023) emphasized the significance of operational efficiencies, indicating that a company's performance is primarily influenced by internal factors such as business strategies, operational

efficiencies, financial control, and ownership, which require attention and enhancement by the management team. The literature reviewed aligns with the findings obtained from participant engagement.

The findings align with existing literature on operational efficiency and cost control as mechanisms to boost company profitability and counteract the declining trend. Adobor (2019) asserts that to improve profitability, company leadership enhances execution capability by prioritising operational effectiveness through well-established and clear objectives within operational control.

6.2.2. RQ1: Theme 2: Brand Performance

The findings indicated that brand visibility and brand management in the market are crucial, and the company must be deliberate about its branding to gain a competitive advantage. It is further acknowledged that the cement industry is a highly competitive space, which constantly encounters disruptions associated with new revivals and flux of imports in the market, requiring a strong initiative to sustain brand presence. The findings highlighted some levers that the company can leverage to remain highly competitive, including high-quality cement products and delivery services as key differentiators to manage brand performance.

According to the Cascade team (2023), industries facing significant market disruptions, including new revivals and increased imports, find their existing business models less effective and less competitive, leading to a loss of market share, which necessitates a turnaround strategy.

The decline in market share indicates that the company needs to develop a turnaround strategy to address the falling performance and implement initiatives that will help regain its market position. The company must focus on internal activities that enhance efficiency and restore the product's competitive advantage in the market.

The findings also revealed that the performance of the cement industry is affected by the lack of infrastructure development, which directly impacts negatively on cement demand resulting in low production. The observation aligns with Zack et al., (2009) study, indicating that the changing environment in a highly competitive market, characterised by limited infrastructure investment and high production costs in manufacturing companies, demands a turnaround strategy to improve efficiency and compliance with regulations for successful and sustainable performance. The recovery pillar of the

turnaround strategy highlights the company's long-term expansion through market-focused strategic choices and its competitive stance (Barker et al., 2024).

There was limited alignment between brand management and the turnaround strategy; however, the high-quality delivery and punctuality in the cement industry enable the company to compete successfully and position the brand for rapid growth.

6.2.3. RQ1 Theme 3: Resources

The findings showed that strong resources improve operational efficiency and position the company favourably to produce high-quality products. It was clearly emphasised that the company needs adequate resources capable of efficient operation to stay competitive; a lack of skills results in operational inefficiencies and higher costs. The finding aligns with the literature which highlights that to create a competitive advantage, tangible and intangible resources are continually integrated and developed to respond effectively to changing market conditions (Yu et al., 2018).

The findings strongly emphasise that if it is people resources the company needs to invest in, it should focus on developing the skills and competencies necessary to create a competitive edge and outperform rivals. The primary responsibilities of top management and the board are to develop a strategic vision for the company, align the essential goals, and process information on how to achieve them, including identifying critical resources needed to meet the established objectives (Luciano et al., 2020). This implies that strategic leaders must identify resources that will drive the turnaround during implementation.

The turnaround strategy does not mean people must lose their jobs; rather, a change in mindset is necessary to operate more efficiently. This involves working smarter and creating value with the same resources, which leads to increased productivity and better service for customers.

The findings suggested that for the turnaround to be successful, it needs to be supported by capable and adequate resources, either through new equipment or by maintaining the current assets, to meet customer expectations. It was also further discovered that achieving sustainable performance requires investing capital expenditure to repair or replace equipment, thereby improving reliability and maintaining high performance levels.

The production of cement demands resources of exceptional quality due to the intricate and demanding nature of the process. The findings revealed that the arrival of new

competitors in the market disrupts the balance of skilled resource availability in the cement industry. As a result, reallocating resources or modifying production processes creates a significant skills gap within cement manufacturing companies, leading to operational inefficiencies. Additionally, the literature supports the resource-based view, indicating that a company's capacity to anticipate changes and leverage skilled resources to develop solutions and creatively overcome industry challenges impacts its effectiveness, competitive stance, and profitability (Chahal et al., 2020).

The reallocation of resources to competitors negatively impacted operational efficiency and production. The discovery aligns with existing literature indicating that operational efficiency is achieved through the skilled use of the company's competencies and intellectual capital, which are essential for greater productivity and competitive advantage (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019). This suggests that trained resources are the company's most valuable assets, serving as the primary foundation for establishing a competitive edge through high competency in maintaining successful operations and continuous cement output. To accomplish these goals, leaders must remove barriers and provide the necessary tools and support to help employees overcome challenges and adapt to change (Hubbart 2023).

The findings indicate that the right competent resources are essential for successful turnaround execution and enhancing the company's competitiveness. The literature highlights that organisational dynamic skills are crucial for a firm's activities, enabling the mobilisation and structuring of resources to deliver adaptive responses, thereby fostering a resilient organisation (Awwad et al., 2025).

It can be concluded that having competent resources is vital for the successful execution of a turnaround strategy. Despite the many challenges faced by change management and turnaround efforts concerning reliable resources, adopting a resource-based approach can help establish a sustainable competitive advantage by effectively utilising resources to meet customer demands in a unique way that is difficult to replicate (Lukovszki et al., 2021). The turnaround process involves several issues, including but not limited to the lack of a clear strategic plan, resistance to change, resource scarcity, cultural factors, and leadership style (Mpete & Maier, 2024). There is a strong link between organisations with competent resources and their ability to operate efficiently, thereby creating a competitive edge.

6.2.4. RQ1: Theme 4: Awareness of challenges

Financial indicators are crucial for evaluating a company's financial health; a substantial decline in profits or inadequate cash flow can significantly restrict the company's growth and sustainability. The findings indicate that many local cement manufacturers have experienced a decrease in profitability, attributed in part to stagnant economic growth resulting from insufficient infrastructure investment and escalating operating expenses, particularly those related to decarbonization. The production of cement is essential for infrastructure development and industrial expansion, ultimately contributing to the nation's economic advancement (Oduro & Haylemariam, 2019). Insufficient investment in infrastructure results in decreased cement requirements, thereby diminishing demand and ultimately production. Uratani & Griffiths (2023) assert that the cement and concrete sector constitutes a vital foundation for contemporary infrastructure. The findings and literature align with the deterioration of the cement industry, which is attributed to insufficient infrastructure investment.

The findings show that the operational costs of the cement industry have increased due to the introduction of carbon tax regulations. According to Uratani and Griffiths (2023), the cement industry supports global infrastructure, and its importance to societal development is vital for advancing urbanisation. This suggests that the industry must decarbonise to achieve environmental sustainability. The findings also indicate that cement production is an energy-intensive process that releases a significant amount of carbon during processing, highlighting the need for decarbonisation for sustainable development (Barbhuiya et al., 2024). The discussion revealed that the cement industry is exploring various methods to reduce its carbon footprint by using alternative fuels and improving operational efficiency. Barbhuiya et al. (2024) assert that adopting decarbonisation offers cement producers the chance to gain a competitive advantage, establish themselves as industry leaders, and enhance brand reputation.

The findings highlighted an extra challenge facing the cement industry, specifically the influx of low-cost, poor-quality cement into the country. This shift and disruption in the industry prompt the exploration of alternative process methods and encourage innovation. Barbhuiya et al. (2024) indicate that it fosters innovative processes in the search for energy-efficient practices. The results also indicated that a CEO of a cement producer emphasised the ongoing presence of competition and imports. Producers must focus on internal controls, highlighting the importance of process efficiencies to reduce operational costs and improve product quality, thereby gaining a competitive edge over imported goods.

The company's internal competencies and capabilities support a strategic focus on improving overall performance by leveraging attributes such as culture, quality emphasis, product diversification, and adaptable strategies to provide exceptional customer service (Bamgbade et al., 2022). The discussion highlighted an imbalance of skilled resources in the cement industry, caused by skill poaching and a lack of deliberate personnel development. It clearly indicated that cement producers need a turnaround strategy that requires sufficient skills to enhance operational efficiency and reduce costs. The findings align with existing literature, suggesting that organisational dynamic capabilities are vital for firm processes. They enable the mobilisation and structuring of resources to produce adaptive responses, ultimately fostering a resilient company (Awwad et al., 2025).

In a competitive environment, there is notable growth in skilled employees and data sources within the organisation, enabling decision-makers to utilise these resources in devising and implementing strategy. Data analysis skills are vital for facilitating the turnaround process. Access to relevant data improves business decision-making and aids navigation through challenging economic conditions and market fluctuations. The challenges faced by the cement industry are well-documented in the literature and align with findings from interviews, emphasising the need for an adaptive approach to effectively produce cement in a dynamic business environment and during economic disruptions. This approach requires excellence in all aspects of the organisation's operations, ensuring that processes are executed correctly on the first attempt to eliminate defects and waste (Hossain & Hossain, 2025).

6.2.5. RQ1: Theme 5: Systems

The findings highlight the importance of a well-functioning operational system that enables cement producers to operate efficiently and stay competitive in a declining industry. The system needs to work effectively to give local producers a competitive edge. The findings also show that the plant must be properly equipped with technology to reduce ongoing maintenance costs. Engagement with the participants revealed that the plant has enough technology to compete, but it must continuously maintain a system that is currently incurring costs and mostly breaking even in the market. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasises the efficiency of the company's operational systems and the vital activities for a successful turnaround strategy Setyopurnomo et al. (2025).

This study developed a system for operational effectiveness to implement the turnaround strategy for the company's operations, utilising the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Sousa et al., 2023). Employees must understand the importance of the organisation, focusing on enhancing existing systems and innovating to transform outdated ones, thus fostering new visions that improve organisational productivity (Hubbart 2022). Systematic refinement and improvement of operational workflows enable companies to create a dynamic environment that maximises efficiency and boosts profitability.

Strategic leaders must improve their skills in conceptual thinking, including systematic analysis, analysis, and leadership. It is crucial to demonstrate advanced critical and creative thinking, along with innovation, to create a flexible and effective control and oversight system (Atanassova et al., 2025). The changing business environment requires companies to adjust their strategies and operational systems in response to marketplace shifts, such as innovations, changing preferences, and new regulations (Atela & Sitienei, 2023).

The findings show that the company needs a reliable information base to support informed decision-making during the turnaround; the accounting system must be both dependable and accurate. The success of turnaround strategies relies on the system aligning with long-term goals within a dynamic environment (Baker III et al., 2024). The absence of a system for managing consequences and the presence of weak governance structures (Chauke & Motubatse, 2020) hinder discipline in plan execution, thereby reducing the urgency for proper strategy implementation.

The company needs a system for critical performance analysis to effectively communicate its operational results. A successful turnaround strategy requires a comprehensive review of all business operations to spot inefficiencies and potential cost-saving opportunities. This underscores the importance of process optimisation, productivity improvement, and a focus on core competencies that underpin the organisation's success. Setyopurnomo et al. (2025). The findings align with the literature, suggesting that functional systems boost performance and a systematic approach promotes a sustainable upward trend in performance.

6.3. Discussion of Research Question 2

6.3.1. RQ2: Theme 1: Strategic Planning and Implementation

The qualitative data analysis indicated that when the right people, proper planning, and secured required resources are in place, the strategy can be implemented successfully. It was evident that the determinants of a successful turnaround relate to strategic planning and execution, operational efficiency, quality assessment, competitive analysis, and leadership guiding the turnaround strategy. This finding aligns with (Buhusayen et al., 2020) view that implementation of the strategy requires a simplified approach through clear communication, forming a dedicated team, with the involvement of managers in planning and engaging the team for feedback.

The implementation of the turnaround, according to the findings, requires leaders to brainstorm with employees to identify internal opportunities for improving performance and to plan carefully on how to execute these strategies. The findings agree with Balioukas et al. (2022), who state that implementing a turnaround strategy necessitates thorough planning with clear guidance, including change management, processes for divestment, and cost reduction. Furthermore, Balioukas et al. (2022) emphasise that companies focus more on their core business to create change and plan investments aimed at improving efficiency.

Findings indicate that the effectiveness of strategic planning and prioritisation depends on a comprehensive analysis of data assessing both internal and external factors to discover opportunities for boosting profitability through operational excellence and financial restructuring. Nyagiloh and Kilika (2020) emphasise that turnaround strategies are crucial, focusing on process evaluation aimed at corporate renewal via analysis and planning mechanisms designed to restore declining firms to solvency.

Planning and execution are vital components of a turnaround strategy. Strategic leaders are responsible for crisis prevention and management, overseeing recovery initiatives, maintaining ethical leadership, and ensuring resource availability during crises to effectively implement plans (Schaedler et al., 2021). The qualitative findings indicate that leaders must focus on identifying and implementing initiatives to address immediate challenges, securing quick wins while also laying a foundation for long-term sustainability efforts. Strategic leaders facilitate the realignment of organisational goals to reassess business strategy, introduce new perspectives and energy, improve strategic planning and execution, and accelerate the development of a new culture. Furthermore, effective planning and leveraging the expertise and training of the management team are crucial for achieving a successful turnaround.

The planning phase is crucial to the turnaround strategy, as strategic leaders must identify the key factors contributing to decline and develop plans to improve performance. The core idea in the turnaround strategy is that, when survival is at risk, the organisation must adopt assertive and cost-cutting measures to stabilise performance decline, secure essential cash flow, and lay a foundation for survival and recovery (Rico et al., 2021). The planning process allows the company to identify vital factors that support the development and implementation of turnaround strategies aimed at establishing a competitive advantage and reversing declining performance (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

The findings and recommendations show similar content compared to the literature on strategic planning and the perspectives presented in this study's findings. Strategic planning functions as a framework for carrying out initiatives aimed at improving performance, supported by relevant literature in the field.

6.3.2. RQ2: Theme 2: Operational Efficiency

The qualitative findings indicated that improving operational efficiency is a key lever the company can use to boost performance. Operational efficiency is a crucial lever over which the company has full control, covering initiatives aimed at increasing output while reducing resources such as time, cost, and effort. Teklu (2022) asserts that a company's high productivity depends on elevated operational efficiency, which involves optimising resource use and improving its sourcing strategy to support business growth. High-quality inputs are vital for producing superior products and enhancing operational performance, thereby positioning the operation for advancement. Improving operational efficiency significantly impacts production costs.

The findings indicate that improving operational efficiency is essential for boosting company profits, as it directly affects the bottom line. Improving operations requires a change in mindset to effectively identify areas for enhancement and to stay flexible in exploring different approaches. Innovation initiatives should focus on improving both operational efficiency and financial performance, as stated by Kharub et al. (2022). If an operation is not showing progress, it may be removed from the system to retain the most effective plants, aligning with the retrenchment pillar of the turnaround strategy, which involves deliberately contracting a company's operations to address weaknesses and financial decline. Retrenchment activities include short-term cost-cutting measures aimed at reducing expenses while increasing operational efficiency (Barker et al., 2024).

The findings suggest that a key element of the turnaround strategy is operational

efficiency. Adobor (2019) asserts that to overcome organisational hurdles and improve profitability, firms must focus on strategy execution capabilities, emphasise operational effectiveness, and set clear objectives within the process. The findings also indicate that the turnaround strategy seeks to restore the performance of struggling companies to profitability by boosting operational efficiency, improving productivity, enhancing quality, and reducing operational costs through process optimisation. Operational efficiency is achieved by effectively utilising the company's competencies and intellectual capital, which are vital for high performance and gaining a competitive advantage.

The findings suggest that improving operational efficiency requires capital investment in equipment maintenance or procurement, resulting in immediate cash outflow. This will be followed by cash inflow as performance and efficiency improve. The quantitative results correspond with existing literature, highlighting that financial restructuring should mainly focus on operational efficiency. A comprehensive review of all operations is essential for the success of the turnaround strategy, as it helps identify inefficiencies and potential cost-saving opportunities (Setyopurnomo et al., 2025).

To address challenges and achieve sustainable recovery, strategic leadership should develop a renewal strategy that focuses on reevaluating business models, improving operational efficiency, exploring new markets or diversifying products, and fostering innovation (Boudia & Slevogt, 2024). The findings did not cover expansion into other markets within the industry, highlighting an opportunity to explore various building alternatives and operational strategies to boost cost efficiency through different extensions and methods.

6.3.3. RQ2: Theme 3: Quality Monitoring

The quantitative data showed that in order for the brand to build a lasting reputation and gain a competitive advantage, it is vital to consistently deliver high-quality products. Customers are more drawn to products that maintain consistent quality and tend to spread positive word of mouth. Ebrahim et al. (2024) suggest that product quality is a key factor affecting customer loyalty, as high-quality products and customer service foster positive customer experiences, encouraging repeat business and enduring loyalty. The company's ability to deliver such quality relies on the standard of resources and expertise available to support high-quality operations.

The findings also highlighted that the high quality of the cement product strongly depends on the quality of the deposit on the quarry side and the raw mix design to ensure their operation produces high-quality cement for the market. Having good deposits enables the company to deliver a quality product at a lower cost and with less mining effort. It also allows the operation to improve efficiency, resulting in lower operational costs.

Consistent product quality is a vital tool for a strong marketing team to defend against and surpass competitors in the market. High-quality cement and continuous workability of the product enable the marketing team to charge a premium price and outperform rivals through superior product quality and customer service. In the highly competitive and dynamic cement sector, delivering the product on time greatly enhances the quality of service provided to customers. Ebrahim et al. (2024) suggest that buyers are more likely to develop lasting brand loyalty if they perceive the product as high-quality and more effective in performance compared to competitors.

The findings indicated that the drive for quality creates a product that is fit for purpose and ensures high quality of cement, which is essential for infrastructure development and creating a better economy for the country. Hudaya et al. (2021) establish a strong relationship between product quality and consumer satisfaction, which enhances brand loyalty, resulting in increased sales and providing a competitive advantage for the company.

In the development of the country, engineers and project leaders can struggle to decide which product to purchase due to the similarity of products and the reputation of their quality. Customer service and the store's ability to market also influence the customer's choice of product (Ebrahim et al. (2024)). Consistent product quality enhances brand awareness among competitors, thereby fostering customer trust in a brand and providing a sense of security that reduces perceived risk in purchasing decisions (Fortes et al., 2019).

Therefore, maintaining high quality in production is crucial, as both the findings and literature highlight the importance of consistent product quality. This underlines that high-quality products aid decision-making, especially in the cement industry, where major projects and infrastructure decisions are essential for national development. Superior quality enhances customer satisfaction, leading to increased product demand and helping achieve goals of boosting revenue and profitability. Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah (2020) stressed the importance of excellent customer service, noting

that positive and satisfying experiences with both service and products generate positive emotions that foster brand loyalty and product acceptance.

6.3.4. RQ2: Theme 4: Competitor Analysis

The findings suggested that local cement producers are encountering many obstacles that contribute to a decline in profitability. The challenges encompass inadequate investment in infrastructure, which directly affects demand, while an influx of imported cement influences market pricing due to its lower cost. Moreover, the recent innovations in the cement sector have disrupted traditional practices, introduced more efficient manufacturing processes and created enhanced employment opportunities for workers, leading to a skills imbalance. The affordability of trained resources has drastically changed, complicating the retention and acquisition of talent, as the new revival presents more competitive offers, so putting pressure on older local cement firms' capacity to retain competent employees.

The qualitative findings revealed that cement production significantly contributes to economic growth and job creation. The challenges faced by the industry mentioned above require local producers to develop a turnaround strategy to counteract the impact of these challenges by operating effectively and reducing operational costs. This approach is necessary to sustain the company and compete effectively in the market space. According to Wood (July 2025), strategic leaders need to recalibrate operational efficiency, optimise energy usage since cement manufacturing is an energy-intensive process, implement cost containment measures to manage prolonged margin pressure, and optimise sourcing of products to maximise contribution margins for sustainability.

'During the engagement and analysis of the data, certain strategic leaders indicated that competitors will persist in the market, and imports will continue in local markets. However, it is crucial for local companies to manage and enhance the factors within their control to effectively address market disruptions. This suggests that the best strategy to outperform competitors is to succeed in operations, produce products efficiently, and manage quality and costs, thereby enabling the marketing team to source successfully from operations with high contribution margins. Optimising commercial sourcing is vital for improving profitability and boosting brand recognition in the marketplace. This positively contributes to the expansion of market share.

The research confirms the findings, highlighting that the effective implementation of a turnaround strategy is vital, as strategic leadership must identify, understand, and

capitalise on opportunities more quickly than competitors to secure and maintain a competitive advantage (Dagnino et al., 2021). The sustainability of local cement manufacturers depends on the utilisation of high-quality human resources and a favourable organisational climate to optimise operations, improve operational efficiency, and boost production (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). According to the resource-based strategy approach, Bel (2018) stressed the need for local companies to develop capabilities to build a competitive edge. This would enhance operational competence, thereby supporting effective and consistent cement manufacturing. Literature emphasises that organisations must integrate strategy and diverse resources to attain a superior competitive advantage over rivals (Farida & Setiawan, 2022).

Cement manufacturing heavily relies on quality inputs from various sourcing environments; therefore, establishing a solid supplier baseline is crucial for negotiating large-scale supply agreements to reduce raw material costs. The cement sector offers limited opportunities for product innovation due to strict regulations; however, the ability to obtain more affordable raw materials for early processing and blending enables cement companies to compete more effectively in the market.

6.3.5. RQ2: Theme 5: Leadership

The leaders need to learn not to panic, as doing so creates unnecessary stress. The findings showed that strategic leadership is crucial for optimising operations and providing adequate resources to support the turnaround strategy. The leadership role in managing turnaround and challenges related to organisational change involves creating a culture of openness and adaptability to overcome resistance and achieve set objectives (Hubbart, 2023). The findings indicated that leadership need to maintain open communication to align strategic objectives with operational outcomes and expectations.

The qualitative findings indicated that strategic leadership needs to clearly define current performance to highlight the reasons for change, which will then allow the team to diagnose the organisation to identify opportunities for the turnaround initiative. Strategic leadership must address information ambiguity, a chaotic environment, and resource shortages while making decisions that ensure organisational sustainability and meet performance objectives (Schaedler et al., 2022; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

The findings highlight the importance of leadership engaging directly with on-site operations to fully understand the issues faced, thereby enabling the anticipation of necessary adjustments in cement processing. This suggests that strategic leadership,

without a thorough grasp of operational challenges, must dedicate enough time and demonstrate visible, felt leadership to identify opportunities for revitalising the cement factory. This is corroborated by the literature. In a tough business environment, it is crucial to understand how strategic leadership can empower the local cement company to turn around negative trends, improve performance, withstand the pressures of rising imports, and build a sustainable future (Santana et al., 2019). To improve performance in a constantly changing cement manufacturing setting, leadership needs to be innovative, flexible, and responsible to create a sustainable organisation.

Leaders must provide essential training and skill development for the team to ensure a sufficiently skilled group capable of efficiently managing cement processes. Luciano et al. (2020) stated that top management and boards of directors act as the primary leaders within the organisational framework, guiding and delivering strategic leadership for the company. The 21st-century corporate environment is dynamic and continuously evolving, characterised by numerous challenges that make strategic leadership vital for optimising operational outcomes and effectively meeting market demands.

The leadership must foster positive relationships with external stakeholders, particularly authorities, to promote transparency and clarity regarding the company's activities. Strong interaction with stakeholders enables the organisation to achieve a significant turnaround without disruption, as collaboration encourages progress and maintains ongoing operations. Strategic leaders must involve key stakeholders and outside directors in executing a turnaround strategy; aligning the strategic intent with stakeholders positively influences successful turnaround outcomes (Miglan et al., 2020).

6.4. Discussion of Research Question 3

6.4.1. RQ3: Theme 1: Employee Engagement

There was a strong belief that for the turnaround to be successful, the strategic leaders' initiatives or business initiatives must obtain buy-in from the team. The findings highlight that employee engagement increases the chances of the strategy being successful. There was a strong sense that buy-in from people is important and has the capability to make or break a strategy. Literature aligns with the findings of the study; Scheinker and Brandeau (2020) indicate that to succeed, strategy execution needs support from all stakeholders, proper alignment with all priorities, and strong engagement throughout the process, from formulation to implementation. In this manner, all insights will be explored, avoiding the overlooking of important aspects that affect performance and preventing the lack of organisational support. This correlates with the qualitative findings from the

participants, who indicated that the leader needs to first identify the need for the turnaround and then, of course, engage with the stakeholders who are key to driving the change or achieving the strategic objectives.

Transforming a turnaround strategic plan into actionable business processes with achievable objectives encourages employee engagement, sharing ideas on how to accomplish the goals, and fostering a sense of commitment to executing the strategy (Setyopurnomo et al., 2025). The findings clearly indicate that one of the key aspects is that when leaders have a clear vision, they involve employees in creating strategies for its implementation. Most participants highlighted that communication is crucial for a successful turnaround, keeping people informed and engaged in various activities within the company to create more value.

While most participants concurred with the initial involvement of individuals from the crafting process through to execution, participant 8 offered an alternative viewpoint, suggesting that a top-down method may be employed to instigate urgency for change and achieve rapid successes. This empowers strategic leaders to implement change swiftly and get immediate outcomes. Another insight discussed was that individuals may resist change due to the perception that increased efficiencies could lead to job loss. However, strategic leadership must clearly articulate that enhanced effectiveness results in greater output with the same resources, potentially increasing profitability rather than necessitating job reductions.

Johan and Handika (2018) support the top-down strategy, asserting that it aligns with the responsibilities of senior management, particularly during turbulent times for the organisation. Furthermore, the senior executives are tasked with defining the company's long-term profitability, prioritising it over strategic initiatives. Moreover, the senior leaders take the initiative to prevent employees from becoming caught in their functional tasks, which hinders their understanding of present and future trends (Johan & Handika, 2018). The literature confirms that senior leaders have legitimate power to formulate and implement turnaround strategies to restore firm performance. Consequently, it is not inappropriate for leaders to devise and execute the strategy without fully involving the employees, as turnaround constitutes a strategic concern.

Identifying influential individuals whose involvement can catalyse progress is crucial; securing their endorsement is essential to ensure that execution is not hindered and produces favourable outcomes. Therefore, you should start from the top and work downwards. I have assembled a team of supervisors and team leaders, who made up

the initial selection. Top management serves as the change agent in implementing the turnaround plan; their commitment is vital and significantly affects improvements in competitive advantage and employee engagement through the establishment of clear policies and strategies (Siagian et al., 2022).

The literature agrees on two approaches to turnaround strategies, emphasising that the primary duty of top leadership is to predict the company's future direction and develop ways to stay competitive. A top-down approach is not necessarily flawed; however, the leader must involve people to continually refine the strategy during implementation. Effective communication is vital to ensure that all individuals are adequately informed.

6.4.2. RQ3: Theme 2: Alignment

Another challenge faced by the turnaround strategy was the lack of alignment. The findings indicate that if the teams are not aligned with the strategic intent, it will be difficult to achieve set goals. It was clearly stated that to achieve alignment, communication at all levels is important to identify gaps and initiatives that can contribute to improving performance. Clear communication of the strategic intent and expectations will ensure that internal teams are aligned. Your teams cannot continue to show up at work without knowing when you are in trouble.

The findings highlighted the importance of aligning employees with leadership, as well as ensuring alignment between board members and strategic leadership. This coordination is vital for setting the company's strategic direction; misalignment at this level results in frequent changes in senior leadership, which disrupts development and hampers performance improvement. Executive leadership and the board of directors must have cohesive, strong objectives that propel the organisation towards outstanding performance and the realisation of its goals.

The previously mentioned aligns with research emphasising the importance of alignment between the board and top management. The main responsibilities of top management and the board include developing a strategic vision for the organisation, aligning necessary goals, and processing information to achieve them, which involves identifying essential resources to meet the set objectives (Luciano et al., 2020). Top management and the board must work together and communicate objectives to reduce disagreement within the turnaround process ecosystem.

In the competitive business environment, companies often face a lack of essential resources needed to operate effectively and meet expectations, leading to a decline in

performance. Misaligned priorities result in resource misallocation, slowing operations and causing a persistent decline in performance. The successful implementation of the turnaround strategy depends on leadership skills to achieve results through others. It involves organising, motivating, fostering a culture, and creating effective alignment between strategic objectives and the organisation's operational procedures (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). This involves management addressing resource limitations and misalignments that may have contributed to the decline (Baker III et al., 2024).

The company must mobilise essential strategic resources to successfully improve performance, execute the turnaround strategy, and strengthen dynamic capabilities with consistent commitment, thereby restoring alignment and fostering resilience (Awwad et al., 2025). Literature emphasises the need for a transformation in Top Management Team (TMT) leadership to facilitate the realignment of organisational objectives, reconsider business strategy, introduce diverse viewpoints and energy, enhance strategic planning and execution, and accelerate the development of a new culture (Bhattacharyya & Malik, 2020).

In conclusion, effective communication with employees regarding the reasoning and implementation of the turnaround strategy is crucial for aligning strategic leadership with operational personnel. The success of turnaround strategies depends on how well the system aligns with long-term objectives in an ever-changing environment (Baker III et al., 2024). Successful execution of the turnaround strategy requires alignment between the board of directors and leadership. Strategic leaders must involve key stakeholders and external directors in implementing a turnaround plan; aligning the strategic objectives of the turnaround with stakeholders positively influences successful outcomes (Miglan et al., 2020). To foster alignment, it is essential to maintain continual communication, provide feedback on the company's performance relative to set targets, and identify the next area of focus to achieve defined objectives.

6.4.3. RQ3: Theme 3: Change Implementation

The cement sector often undergoes changes in top leadership, necessitating effective change management procedures to handle the operational adjustments that come with these transitions. The findings showed that modifications related to turnaround strategies require a comprehensive plan, including the reasons for the changes and the methods for their execution. Changes in procedures and regulations need operations to innovate to function more efficiently, either to meet new requirements or to reduce the impact of

legislation. A turnaround strategy is a systematic approach to change management aimed at transforming a declining company into a more profitable one.

Organizations initiating transformation require a protocol that will guide the transition and explicitly outline the associated expectations. Participants emphasised the need for a change management procedure that clearly defines expectations around the transition. In many cases, there is no established procedure to assist managers in managing change and its complexities. Phillips & Klein (2023) assert that businesses must undergo transformation to survive; through change management processes, a organisation evolves from conception and planning to implementation and resolution.

The turnaround often necessitates quick implementation of changes to avoid extended discussions; strategic leaders must provide vision, while the team engages in collaborative efforts at all levels to urgently develop a plan for execution. To achieve these objectives, leaders must eliminate barriers and supply the requisite tools and assistance to assist employees in overcoming challenges and adapting to change (Hubbart 2023).

The leadership role in managing turnaround and issues linked to organisational transformation involves fostering a culture of openness and agility to mitigate resistance and achieve established objectives (Hubbart, 2023). Phillips & Klein (2023) asserts that for an organisation to implement changes successfully, it must prepare both logistically and culturally, as change is inherently challenging. The strategic intervention may require an initial capital expenditure to effect short-term changes, with the expectation of increased cash inflow in the long term (Bhattacharyya & Malik, 2020).

6.4.4. RQ3: Theme 4: Lack of Accountability

A major theme that emerged during participant interaction regarding the challenge of implementing a successful turnaround strategy is the lack of accountability and ownership of the process. The findings indicated that a culture of accountability is the essential foundation of the turnaround plan, where new initiatives are implemented to enhance operational performance, with high expectations that depend entirely on individuals fulfilling their responsibilities and being accountable for the outcomes. Incorporating EBITDA performance into company processes will allow operational executives to assess performance, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and accountability (Setyopurnomo, 2025).

The implementation of turnaround programs necessitates that strategic leadership fosters a culture of accountability for success. The success of the enterprise depends on the culture of accountability and ownership cultivated within the organization. The literature indicates that in declining organizations, commitment from director ownership and board independence significantly increases the likelihood of strategic success due to robust support from decision-makers (Miglan et al., 2020).

The change agency approach in many firms implementing turnaround strategies employs influencers to motivate individuals to assume ownership of their roles, monitor performance, and increase decision-making to improve organisational outcomes. The issue encountered by the turnaround is the frequent change of CEOs, which impacts the continuity of the process (Mpete & Maier, 2024), disrupting the flow and altering ownership and accountability as a new leader assumes control and modifies the strategy to attain the turnaround.

The findings showed that employees must take responsibility and carry out their duties independently, rather than relying on contractors, as this raises costs and diminishes employees' sense of ownership. Decline happens when there is no accountability within the team, leading to a scapegoat mentality and reducing cognitive flexibility (Abebe et al., 2024). The lack of accountability and decisive action causes stagnation and results in poor outcomes due to the failure to make key decisions for the company's growth.

The discussion acknowledged that significant costs arise from contractors who are not fully responsible for their results and often deliver lower quality outputs. The lack of employee accountability hampers the success of turnaround programmes, leading to rework, production losses, and narrower profit margins caused by higher production expenses. To advance the turnaround efforts, employees must take full ownership and responsibility, with the necessary authority to make prompt decisions that generate expected outcomes.

The findings and literature both highlight the importance of internal factors and their influence on the success of a turnaround. Handoyoa et al. (2023) argue that a company's success is mainly driven by internal factors, such as corporate strategies, operational efficiencies, financial oversight, and ownership, requiring the management team to focus on improving performance. Setyopurnomo (2025) maintains that developing systems for

operational effectiveness aimed at maximising profitability across all business processes fosters a sense of ownership and accountability throughout all divisions of the firm.

It is important to have a person in charge with the decision-making authority to take necessary actions and be accountable for the outcome. This enhances the execution process, ensures that decisions are taken promptly to prevent failure during the execution phase (Zwikael & Chih, 2018).

6.4.5. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the importance for strategic leadership to align with the team to achieve improved outcomes. Improving strategic leadership is a critical enabler for effective turnaround implementation in the cement sector. The discussion highlighted the significance of operational efficiency as an essential tool to enhance the company's performance potential. The findings affirm that effectively diagnosing performance difficulties is essential for formulating an effective turnaround strategy, and that the offered solutions must adequately address these concerns. The studies highlighted internal and external factors that contribute to the successful execution of a turnaround strategy.

The insights from the discussion confirm the primary point of the study that a deliberate enhancement of strategic leadership is essential across all organizational levels for effective turnaround. The findings suggested that skilled individuals are crucial for achieving a successful turnaround in the cement business. The primary challenge is alignment; if established, it is likely that individuals will demonstrate commitment and accountability towards attaining the turnaround objectives.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7. Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the study outcomes derived from analysing the findings in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 6. It provides a summary of the research findings and objectives, aiming to determine whether the study's outputs meet the established aims. The research focused on enhancing strategic leadership to ensure the successful implementation of turnaround strategies among cement companies in South Africa. The research setting involved various leadership roles within the cement sector, including key decision-makers with expertise and experience in executing turnaround strategies within the organisation.

The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

Research Question 2: How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

Research Question 3: What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

This chapter presents the research outcomes for each of the questions it set to answer. Research questions organise the research outcomes.

7.2. Main Findings

A successful turnaround strategy involves a delicate balance between swift actions and strategic planning aimed at reversing the company's performance. The success of a well-crafted turnaround is never dependent on a single factor to meet expectations. According to Rossouw (Sept 2023), successful execution of a turnaround strategy requires resilience, adaptability, and deep commitment to reverse declining performance. The entire organisation must follow a structured approach characterised by transparent, honest communication, urgency, and sound decision-making to create a sustainable future. The main findings of the study are highlighted.

7.2.1. Research Question 1 Main Findings

The company's turnaround must start with a thorough understanding of the key indicators signalling decline, as well as an assessment of its current state and the anticipated outcome. It involves recalibrating and enhancing employee skills to help the organisation reach its goals. Transforming the organisational culture to match the new approach is crucial, along with improving processes through a comprehensive plan to boost operational efficiency, optimise vital assets, and establish a shared vision to counteract declining performance and achieve sustainable results. The themes identified from the analysis emphasised the main indicators pointing to the need for a turnaround strategy, highlighting existing challenges and opportunities that could support performance recovery.

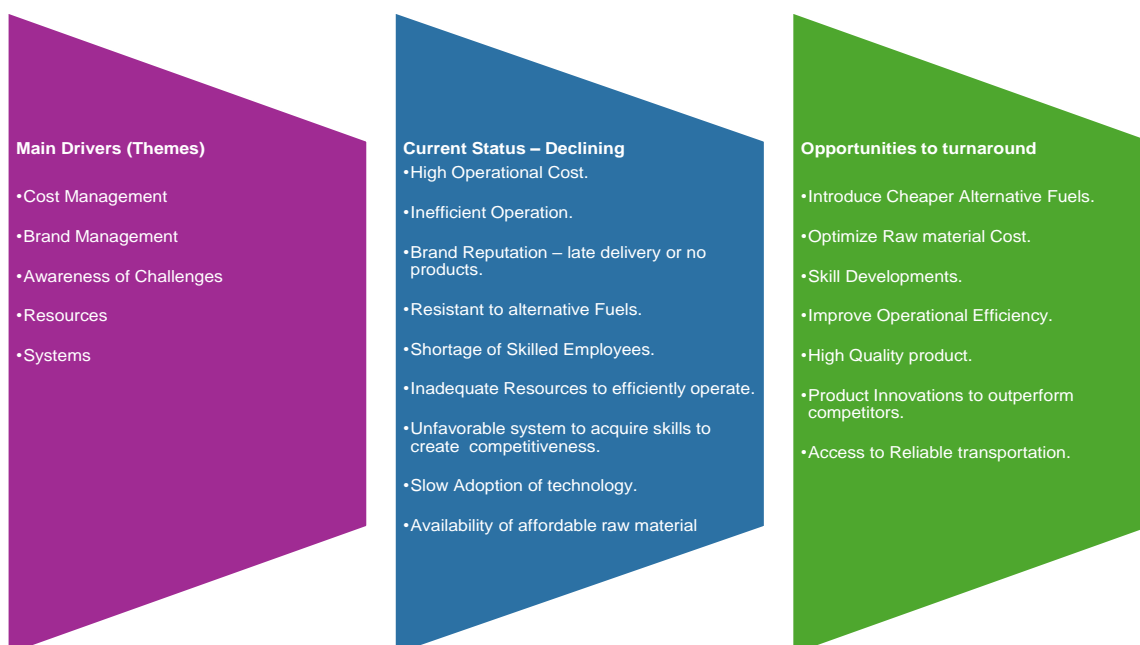


Figure 6: Main Indicators for turnaround strategy need, (Research Owner)

The research findings aligned with existing literature, highlighting that a critical element for a successful turnaround is understanding current processes to identify inefficiencies and find cost-saving opportunities (Setyopurnomo, 2025). Cost management emerged as a key theme in the discussion, suggesting that the organisation could achieve a significant turnaround if applied effectively. The outcome also confirmed Rico et al. (2021) claims that the fundamental idea in turnaround literature is that when a business's sustainability is at risk, implementing asset and cost retrenchment may be necessary to reduce impact, stabilise performance, and lay the groundwork for survival and recovery strategies.

The brand in the competitive cement sector is heavily influenced by product quality and punctual delivery. The findings suggest that brand management is an intangible resource of vital importance, aligned with the literature indicating that shorter lead times boost sales, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and enhancing the company's profitability. Conversely, longer lead times raise costs and lead to unmet delivery commitments (Kaunda & Otuya, 2023). The cement industry in South Africa is undergoing significant changes, and improving efficiency is vital for maintaining sustained competitiveness; quality and prompt delivery set a producer apart from its competitors. The results show that the dynamic and competitive market demands modern, cost-effective assets and environmentally conscious cement producers for successful competition.

For the company to stay relevant in the industry, it is vital to recognise obstacles, monitor competitors' actions, and develop a turnaround strategy that sets the company apart from its rivals. The results showed that cement manufacturing needs skilled individuals, but new competitors have exploited the recruitment of skilled teams, leading to an imbalanced skill base within the business. This suggests that the successful execution of a turnaround strategy depends on proper resource allocation (Morgenshtern, 2022). The findings align with the observations made by Mailani et al. (2024) regarding organisations' strategic choice of resources to effectively facilitate the turnaround strategy. It is crucial for strategic leaders to initiate programmes that develop and sustain human resources to deliver the turnaround strategy and implement cost-saving measures efficiently (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

The increase in environmental regulation compliance, as indicated by the outcome, shows that cement production is no longer business as usual. It requires innovation and a change in mindset, as new systems are implemented to produce cement more

effectively. New technology is used to create products with a smaller carbon footprint and to help the company save costs in the process.

The study outcomes indicated several opportunities that strategy leaders can explore to address the core findings, which serve as indicators that the company needs a turnaround. In cost management, the cement industry is a high energy-intensive user, as processing requires large quantities of energy sources (Cantini et al., 2021). It was then highlighted that the use of alternative, cheaper fuel could alleviate the financial performance pressures faced by cement producers. Another clear opportunity for turning around operational efficiency in the cement plant lies in the optimisation of raw materials, including the deposit of the main source, limestone.

Furthermore, research findings show that limited resources and the development of personnel with suitable skills in the cement industry are crucial for ongoing performance and operational efficiency. The training required for a thorough understanding and optimisation of cement operations demands a comprehensive training approach. This aligns with literature indicating that operational efficiency is achieved through effective use of a company's capabilities and intellectual capital, which are vital for superior performance and competitive advantage (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019). The key success factor for a turnaround strategy is enhancing operational efficiency through resource optimisation to increase productivity and improve contribution margins. Farida and Setiawan (2022) emphasise that the sustainability of local cement producers depends on employing high-quality human resources and fostering a supportive organisational environment to streamline operations, boost operational efficiency, and increase production.

The main drivers of the turnaround strategy present an opportunity to improve performance and gain a competitive edge. To achieve optimal operational efficiency, the company must focus on continuous improvement initiatives and aim to maximise assets while minimising their use, with the goal of improving the efficiency of current operations through better asset utilisation.

7.2.2. Research Question 2 – Internal and External Factors

Tao et al. (2020) indicated that the turnaround strategy is complex, which is fuelled by the interconnection of internal and external factors. Lam et al. (2021) argued that the turnaround strategy must be formulated in a manner that effectively harmonises internal capabilities and external contributions. The outcomes highlighted the critical factors that contribute to the success of the turnaround for both internal and external elements, which is consistent with the literature. The results also emphasised the possibility of leveraging both internal and external factors to improve operational efficiency. The figure below illustrates the possible opportunities.



Figure 7: Internal and External Factors (Author, own)

The theme of internal and external factors highlights that strategic planning and implementation are crucial elements for the successful execution of a turnaround strategy. The findings, aligned with the literature highlighted by Buhusayen et al. (2020), suggest that strategy implementation requires a straightforward approach through clear communication, forming a dedicated team, involving managers in planning, and engaging the team for feedback.

Balioukas et al. (2022) stated that achieving successful turnaround execution relies on proper planning and specific processes to guide change management, decide on divestment strategy, cost reduction approach, and strategic acquisitions. The outcome indicated that clear communication of the turnaround plan and its execution is likely to drive the team towards commitment. The research findings were consistent with the

literature regarding identifying the causes of ongoing decline as the starting point, which can be triggered by environmental changes or internal weaknesses (Yulihastri et al, 2018).

The research findings consistently emphasise operational efficiencies at all stages; they are a critical element for the success of the turnaround. The findings affirm that to overcome company challenges and improve profitability, firms must focus on strategy execution capabilities, prioritise operational effectiveness, and establish clear objectives within the process, Adobor (2019). It is also crucial to understand what competitors are engaged in to respond effectively and safeguard market share; the research highlights that awareness of competitors is vital. The findings align with the literature, which emphasises that leaders need to be aware of trends and crises in the business environment in which the company operates.

The research emphasised that leaders are vital to the turnaround plan, showing that strategies often halt when a new leader takes charge, resulting in change fatigue. Balioukas (2022) revealed that poor management is a major factor in decline, which is why most corporate turnaround strategies are linked to leadership changes. The findings aligned with existing literature on the essential role of leadership in driving successful turnarounds, indicating that execution relies on clear strategic objectives, motivating leadership to engage staff, a resilient culture to overcome challenges, and strong support systems (Setyopurnomo, 2025).

The research findings emphasised leadership as a crucial factor for success, aligning with the literature that regards leaders as having the ability to influence people to work towards achieving set goals (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). In a dynamic business environment, competent leaders are essential for understanding current trends and adapting to enable the business to reach its objectives. The research highlighted a top-down approach, where the turnaround strategy is presented to employees; the literature supports this approach when there is an urgent need to rescue the company. Usually, buy-in follows once the team begins to see first results.

There is a strong sense of certainty that competent people in the cement turnaround journey are required to achieve consistent operational performance and optimise quality. It is also important that the turnaround is staffed with adequately skilled individuals to enable successful implementation. The outcome indicated that logistics and proper sourcing are important to maximise the bottom line and ensure on-time delivery of the products.

The research outcome highlighted the opportunities that come with the internal and external factors, which is consistent with the literature. Lušňáková (2022) argued that the most important and irreplaceable internal factor is people, through their commitment, competence, and the implementation of experience in turnaround success. This enables the company to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace and create a sustainable future. All other benefits are highly dependent on having the right people in the right place to help the company reverse declining performance.

7.2.3. Research Question 3 – Challenges of turnaround strategy

The research outcomes strongly emphasised that the main challenge of the turnaround is gaining buy-in from employees. While it is crucial and important for success, achieving full buy-in is challenging. The literature emphasised that successful strategy execution requires support from all stakeholders, proper alignment with priorities, and strong engagement throughout the process, from formulation to implementation (Scheinker & Brandeau, 2020). Among the challenges of turnaround strategy, employee engagement was highlighted as a key factor that can make or break strategic intent. It was found that communication and open discussion are vital to a successful turnaround; keeping people informed and engaged in turnaround initiatives is essential.



Figure 8: Summary of the Challenge Themes and Opportunities

The research findings highlighted two strategies for effectively executing a turnaround: The first involves engaging personnel to gather team input, diagnose the causes of decline, and develop potential initiatives to reverse the downward trend. The literature indicates that strategy execution requires support from all stakeholders, alignment with

company objectives and priorities, and, crucially, engagement throughout the process from formulation to implementation (Scheinker & Brandeau, 2020). The second method is the top-down approach to strategic execution, which involves a hierarchical structure where decisions and directives are made by upper management and then communicated to lower levels (Li, 2023). The research findings demonstrated that this method is effective, as it emphasises centralised control and ensures that processes are formalised and standardised in situations requiring urgent intervention to improve firm performance (Li, 2023). The outcome shows that buy-in is only considered at the later stages and can be easily achieved if individuals see the effects and understand the reasoning behind the changes implemented.

The research findings support the assertions of Tawse and Tabesh (2021) that translating corporate strategic objectives and plans into actionable business processes improves understanding, alignment, and employee engagement, thereby fostering a sense of commitment and accountability. This enhances communication and collaborative efforts to boost achievements among operational leadership and the team (Setyopurnomo, 2025).

In the declining phases of the company, there is disengagement within the team, where individuals are not working towards a shared goal. Resistance to change is one of the challenges that strategic leaders face during the execution phase; however, the main cause of resistance is when there is no alignment on why the change is needed and what the expectations are.

The success of the turnaround strategy relies largely on the buy-in and engagement of the people in the process, as Setyopurnomo (2025) highlighted, the conversion of the strategic plan into actionable operational processes encourages commitment to execute the strategy and work towards achieving company goals. Communication is continuously emphasised as the critical tool that the strategic leadership needs to utilise to keep people informed and align the team on expectations. The research outcome and the literature agree that involving all stakeholders in the turnaround strategy execution increases the likelihood of the strategy's success. Involving people in the turnaround process fosters a culture of accountability, with the team taking ownership of ensuring that the set objectives are achieved.

7.3. Take-outs for Strategic Leadership

The cement industry has faced several disruptions and dynamic changes that need recalibration, requiring the development of a new turnaround strategy to overcome

challenges and establish a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace. It is crucial for strategic leadership to consider the following to ensure a proper framework for executing the strategy. The diagram below illustrates the turnaround strategic framework with the levers to utilise to achieve the desired target.

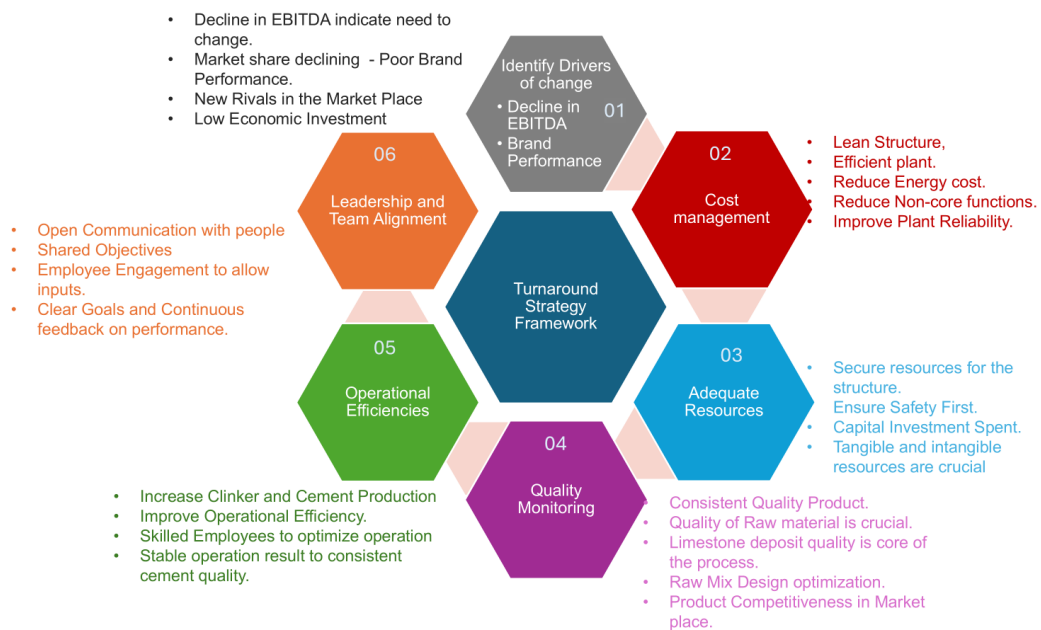


Figure 9: Turnaround Strategy Framework for cement industry

The figure above shows the phases in the turnaround and is act as the recommendation to the strategic leaders.

- Strategic leadership in cement manufacturing companies should view the ongoing decline in financial performance as a significant indicator that the company's performance is deteriorating and requires intervention. The leadership should utilise EBITDA as the primary KPI, which is directly linked to operational control.
- The imperative of leadership decision-making that is aligned with a clear turnaround vision and the role of agility and commitment of leaders to the dynamic process is crucial to ensure successful turnaround.
- Leaders should view market share performance as an early warning sign of increased volume going to competitors. This should prompt them to actively respond to declines in market share. The company must reposition itself to regain, and surpass, its previous market share.

- The new rivals in the cement industry introduced disruption, which forced the local cement producers to craft a turnaround plan to respond to the new rivals, implement product recalibration, and develop skill retention strategies. This indicates that the companies need to revisit their current operational efficiency; competing in the space with new technology and a different operating philosophy requires a turnaround strategy.
- Cost management is a crucial aspect that strategic leadership should prioritise to ensure successful turnaround. Leaders should identify operational inefficiencies that lead to high operational costs and seek opportunities to reduce expenses. The cement production process is highly energy-intensive; therefore, strategic leaders must identify opportunities to save energy costs, such as electricity and fuel.
- The research outcome clearly highlighted operational efficiencies as one of the levers that strategic leadership can use to turn around the performance of the cement industry. There are other sub-benefits linked to operational efficiency, such as consistent quality derived from steady operational performance, cost savings over longer runs, skill development to improve performance, and gaining a competitive advantage.
- The skill development within the company enables the organisation to utilise institutional knowledge and loyalty to create a competitive advantage. However, it is important that strategic leaders adequately resource the strategy with both tangible and intangible resources to achieve strategic objectives. The new rival leverages well-trained and competent people, and remunerates them accordingly, which has shifted the affordability of skilled employees. It is crucial for local cement producers to recalibrate their ability to attract a skilled workforce in order to remain competitive.
- In a dynamic cement industry, to achieve a successful turnaround, adaptive leadership is essential to be flexible in execution and to engage employees in taking responsibility for their roles and fostering a culture of accountability. Empower the team to take ownership of processes and be accountable for outcomes.
- Turnaround strategy should focus on long-term leadership and competitiveness in the market by enhancing profitability and cash flow for sustained investment to generate long-term value for stakeholders.

- A new area of academic interest for researchers could be the leadership behaviours that prove effective during prolonged periods of industry stagnation, rather than only in crisis situations.
- The literature can additionally investigate theories regarding strategic leadership within emerging markets characterized by volatility, infrastructural constraints, and slow economic progress.
- It is important to also review how the middle managers influence turnaround strategy plans and translate plans into operational activities.
- Empirical investigation into culture-led turnaround strategy is important to gain insight into how it shape the company future.

7.4. Limitations of the research

In addition to the limitations of the research that were discussed in chapter 4, the following cover the rest of the research study:

- The participants were limited in number, with some critical positions represented very minimally, which restricted the potential for a deeper understanding of the research questions.
- The researcher initially aimed for a 45-minute to one-hour interview; most of the interviews were completed before the scheduled time, and all questions were answered. There might have been limited perspective and experience shared during that duration and missed out opportunities to get deeper insights.
- The research did not uncover the aspect of safety in the execution of turnaround, which introduces certain risks that are not considered in the crafting and execution of the strategy.
- The researcher tried to maintain neutrality; however, the researcher's interpretations, assumptions and engagement with the participants might have resulted in unintentional influence on the analysis and findings.
- The findings are only valid for cement industry they could not be generalise the take-outs.
- Assumption was that the interviewees were honest and transparent in their deliberations, which might not have been the case throughout the interview.

7.5. Future Studies

- The studies are quiet about the impact of safety during turnarounds in the cement industry. The cement processing process is critically dangerous, operating at high temperatures, yet there hasn't been much discussion about it. There is an opportunity to study the impact of turnaround objectives on safety and the mindset of the workers to balance both factors.
- The studies have now explored the sustainability of cement in light of innovative constructions that use less or no cement; how can cement producers be positioned for future eco-buildings?
- In the future, it will be beneficial to further determine the extent of the top-down approach in the turnaround strategy for the cement industry, how it is implemented, and how it achieves employee engagement.
- Cement industry is energy intensive and high-risk processes; there is an opportunity to explore the impact of safety in turnaround of declining company.
- Leaders significantly influence a company's turnaround; future academics may investigate the effects of strategic leadership style and values on organizational performance, along with the execution of strategic initiatives.
- The research indicates that future studies could explore the effects of digitalization on companies and their capacity to recover from financial crises.

6. Reference list

- Abebe, M. A., Tangpong, C., & Ndofor, H. (2024). Hitting the 'reset button': The role of digital reorientation in successful turnarounds. *Long Range Planning*, 57(1), 102102.
- Adobor, H., 2019. Opening up strategy formulation: benefits, risks, and some suggestions. *Bus. Horiz.* 62 (3), 383–393. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2019.01.005>.
- Agarwal, R., & Helfat, C. E. (2009). Strategic renewal of organizations. *Organization science*, 20(2), 281-293. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0423>
- Ahmad, I., & Ahmad, S. B. (2019). The mediation effect of strategic planning on the relationship between business skills and firm's performance: Evidence from medium enterprises in Punjab, Pakistan. *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, (24), 746-778.
- Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., Ameen, B. M. M., & Khdhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 6, 100198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>.
- Aiping, L. P., & Shopati, A. K. (2022). Identifying the Success Factors for Effective Turnaround Strategy Implementation and Outcomes in a Public Sector Organisation in Namibia. *Namibia Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 5(1), 8-13.
- Ambrosini, V., & Bowman, C. (2009). What are dynamic capabilities and are they a useful construct in strategic management?. *International journal of management reviews*, 11(1), 29-49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00610.x>
- Arnoldi, M (2025, March 27). Deputy Editor OnlinePPC unpacks turnaround progress, rationale behind new plant. <https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/ppc-unpacks-turnaround-progress-rationale-behind-new-plant-2025-03-27>
- Assensoh-Kodua, A. (2019). The resource-based view: A tool of key competency for competitive advantage. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 17(3): 143. [http://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.17\(3\).2019.12](http://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.17(3).2019.12)
- Atanassova, I., Bednar, P., Khan, H., & Khan, Z. (2025). Managing the VUCA environment: The dynamic role of organizational learning and strategic agility in B2B

versus B2C firms. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 125, 12-28.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2024.12.008>.

- Atela, N. O. & Sitienei, k. (2023). *Competitive Strategies and Performance of Manufacturing Cement Companies in Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta University).
- Awwad, A., Anouze, A., & Cudney, E. (2025). Navigating Crisis: A Resource-Based and Dynamic Capability Approach to Turnaround Strategies in the Pharmaceutical Sector. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-7456495/v1>.
- Awwad, M. S. (2025). Dynamic capabilities, intellectual capital and organisational performance: mediation and moderation effects. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 26(3), 738-760. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIC-09-2024-0258>.
- Ayamga, M., Annosi, M. C., Kassahun, A., Dolfsma, W., & Tekinerdogan, B. (2024). Adaptive organizational responses to varied types of failures: empirical insights from technology providers in Ghana. *Technovation*, 129, 102887.
- Baliuskas, P., Llopis, J., Gasco, J., & Gonzalez, R. (2023). Implementing turnaround strategies as an entrepreneurial process. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 19(4), 2037-2063. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-022-00810-9>.
- Bamgbade, J. A., Nawi, M. N. M., Kamaruddeen, A. M., Adeleke, A. Q., & Salimon, M. G. (2022). Building sustainability in the construction industry through firm capabilities, technology and business innovativeness: empirical evidence from Malaysia. *International journal of construction management*, 22(3), 473-488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15623599.2019.1634666>
- Barbero, J., de Lucio, J. J., & Rodríguez-Crespo, E. (2021). Effects of COVID-19 on trade flows: Measuring their impact through government policy responses. *PloS one*, 16(10), e0258356. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258356>.
- Barbhuiya, S., Kanavaris, F., Das, B. B., & Idrees, M. (2024). Decarbonising cement and concrete production: Strategies, challenges and pathways for sustainable development. *Journal of building engineering*, 86, 108861.
- Barker III, V. L., Luger, J., Schmitt, A., & Xin, K. R. (2024). Corporate decline and turnarounds in times of digitalization. *Long Range Planning*, 57(1), 102211.

- Bel, R. (2018). A property rights theory of competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(6), 1678-1703. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2707>
- Bell, E., Harley, B., & Bryman, A. (2022). *Business research methods*. Oxford university press.
- Bhattacharyya, S. S., & Malik, A. (2020). Development of an integrated canvas on turnaround strategy. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 28(2), 523-554. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-02-2019-1646>
- Bhattacharyya, S. S., & Malik, A. (2020). Development of an integrated canvas on turnaround strategy. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 28(2), 523-554.
- Bos, J. (2020). *Research ethics for students in the social sciences* (p. 287). Springer Nature. 10.1007/978-3-030-48415-6
- Boudia, Z., & Slevogt, M. C. (2024). Strategic Turnaround Management: Defining the Success Factors of a Turnaround. *Lahore Journal of Business*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.35536/ljb.2024.v12.i1.a1>
- Božič, K., & Dimovski, V. (2019). Business intelligence and analytics use, innovation ambidexterity, and firm performance: A dynamic capabilities perspective. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 28(4), 101578.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can “thematic analysis” offer health and wellbeing researchers?. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 9(1), 26152. <https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.26152>.
- Buhusayen, B., Seet, P. S., & Coetzer, A. (2020). Turnaround management of airport service providers operating during COVID-19 restrictions. *Sustainability*, 12(23), 10155.
- Cantini, A., Leoni, L., De Carlo, F., Salvio, M., Martini, C., & Martini, F. (2021). Technological energy efficiency improvements in cement industries. *Sustainability*, 13(7), 3810. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13073810>
- Cascade Team. (September 26, 2023). Turnaround Strategy: A Guide To Efficient Execution. <https://www.cascade.app/blog/turnaround-strategy-overview>

- Castellanos, J. D., & George, B. (2020). Boardroom Leadership: The Board of Directors as a Source of Strategic Leadership. *Economics and Business Review*, 6 (20)(1), 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.18559/ebr.2020.1.5>
- Castellanos, J. D., & George, B. (2020). Boardroom leadership: The board of directors as a source of strategic leadership. *Economics & Business Review*, 6(1).
- Chahal, H., Gupta, M., Bhan, N., & Cheng, T. C. E. (2020). Operations management research grounded in the resource-based view: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 230, 107805.
- Chauke, K. R., & Motubatse, K. N. (2020). King IV State-Owned Enterprise supplement: the impact on the SOE's approach to governance in South Africa. *PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES (IPADA)*, 249.
- Chukwuka, N. K. (2023). Market penetration strategies and customer loyalty in Starline Nigeria LTD Aba, Abia State. *Ulysses International Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Studies*, 4(1), 169-185.
- Coban, O., Ozdemir, S., & Pisapia, J. (2019). Top Managers' Organisational Change Management Capacity and Their Strategic Leadership Levels at the Ministry of National Education (MoNE)*. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 81, 129–146. <https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2019.81.8>
- Coetzee, M., & Bezuidenhout, M. L. (2019). The relationship between chief executive officer compensation and the size and industry of South African state-owned enterprises. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(1), 1-10. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1786669389>
- Dagnino, G. B., Picone, P. M., & Ferrigno, G. (2021). Temporary competitive advantage: a state-of-the-art literature review and research directions. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1), 85-115. 10.1111/ijmr.12242.
- Dechezleprêtre, A., & Sato, M. (2017). The impacts of environmental regulations on competitiveness. *Review of environmental economics and policy*. doi: 10.1093/reep/rex013
- Donnellan, J., Rutledge, W.L. (2019). A case for resource-based view and competitive advantage in banking. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 40(6): 728-737. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mde.3041>

- Ebrahim, A., Alhudiri, A., Elanizi, A., & Eltaiash, A. (2024). The Impact Of Product Quality On Customer Satisfaction And Loyalty. *Unpublished*. [https://Doi.Org/10.13140/RG, 2\(33657.07528\)](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.33657.07528).
- Faisal, M., Maarif, M. S., Fahmi, I., & Yulianto, B. (2022). Business environment turbulence and industrial connections instruments as determinants of firm performance mediated by an industrial connections climate. *Sustainability*, 14(19), 12150.
- Farida, I., & Setiawan, D. (2022). Business strategies and competitive advantage: the role of performance and innovation. *Journal of open innovation: Technology, market, and complexity*, 8(3), 163. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030163>
- Fortes, V. M., Milan, G. S., Eberle, L., & TONI, D. D. (2019). Brand loyalty determinants in the context of a soft drink brand. *RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, 20(5), eRAMR190015. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-6971/eRAMR190015>.
- Gavetti, G., & Rivkin, J. W. (2007). On the origin of strategy: Action and cognition over time. *Organization Science*, 18(3), 420-439. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1070.0282>
- Gibs (2023, Sept. 21). Sustainable Growth & Green Transition in South Africa's Cement Industry. <https://www.gibs.co.za/news/-sustainable-growth---green-transition-in-south-africa-s-cement-industry>.
- Gill, S. L. (2020). Qualitative sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(4), 579-581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420949218>.
- Gitau, L., Nzuki, D., & Musau, F. (2022). Effects of IT capability on Performance of Manufacturing Firms in Nairobi City County Kenya. *Technium Soc. Sci. J.*, 28, 595.
- Gotteiner, S., Mas-Machuca, M., & Marimon, F. (2019). Turnaround types, stages, strategies, and tactics: Putting things in order. *European Accounting and Management Review*, 5(2), 12-37. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3481359>
- Handoyo, S., Suharman, H., Ghani, E. K., & Soedarsono, S. (2023). A business strategy, operational efficiency, ownership structure, and manufacturing performance: The moderating role of market uncertainty and competition intensity and its implication on open innovation. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 9(2), 100039.

- Hirose, M., & Creswell, J. W. (2023). Applying core quality criteria of mixed methods research to an empirical study. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 17(1), 12-28.
- Hossain, M. S., & Hossain, S. (2025). Sustainability Practices and Business Strategies in the Recycling Industry of Bangladesh: A Study on Rashed & Brothers.
- Hosseinzadeh Shahri, M., & Nematollahi Sarvestani, M. (2020). Business model innovation as a turnaround strategy. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, 13(2), 241-253. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-08-2019-0154>.
- <https://doi.org/10.64375/8z5k3663>
- Huang, J. W., & Li, Y. H. (2018). How resource alignment moderates the relationship between environmental innovation strategy and green innovation performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 33(3), 316-324. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-08-2019-0154>.
- Hubbart, J. A. (2023). Organizational change: The challenge of change aversion. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(7), 162. ; <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13070162>.
- Hudaya, A., Djumarno, D., & Djubaedah, S. (2021). Analysis of Factors affecting customer satisfaction to get customer loyalty. *Dinasti International Journal of Digital Business Management*, 2(5), 783-793.
- Hussain, N., Rigoni, U., & Orij, R. P. (2018). Corporate governance and sustainability performance: Analysis of triple bottom line performance. *Journal of business ethics*, 149(2), 411-432. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3099-5>
- Irfan, M. T. H., Rafiquzzaman, M., & Manik, Y. A. (2025). Productivity improvement through lean tools in cement industry—A case study. *Heliyon*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42057>.
- Jaleha, A. A., & Machuki, V. N. (2018). Strategic leadership and organisational performance: A critical review of literature. *European Scientific Journal*, 14(35), 124-149. 10.19044.
- Johan, A. P., & Handika, R. F. (2018). A qualitative investigation on the successful turnaround strategy from top leader perspectives: examples from Indonesia. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 19, 114-122.

- Kaunda, K., & Otuya, W. (2023). Lead time, new product development strategy and organizational performance . *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 10 (1), 679 – 686.
- Kero, C. A., & Bogale, A. T. (2023). A Systematic Review of Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities of Firms and Future Research Avenues. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning*, 18(10).
<https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.181016>.
- Kharub, M., Ruchitha, B., Hariharan, S., & Vamsi, N. S. (2022). Profit enhancement for small, medium scale enterprises using Lean Six Sigma. *Materials Today: Proceedings*, 56, 2591-2595.
- Kim, W. C., & Mauborgne, R. A. (2023). *Beyond disruption: Innovate and achieve growth without displacing industries, companies, or jobs*. Harvard Business Press.
- Kimanzi, M. (2021). COVID-19 and Economic Recovery in South Africa. How can state-owned Enterprises be reformed? In *Social Sciences International Research Conference* (p. 580).
- Kowo, S. A., & Akinbola, O. A. (2019). Strategic leadership and sustainability performance of small and medium enterprises. *Ekonomicko-manazerske spektrum*, 13(1), 38-50.
- Lam, L., Nguyen, P., Le, N., & Tran, K. (2021). The relation among organizational culture, knowledge management, and innovation capability: Its implication for open innovation. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 7(1), 66. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7010066>.
- Li, Y. (2023). The influence of top-down mode and bottom-up mode to national innovation and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Innovation and Development*, 2(3), 158-161. DOI:[10.54097/jid.v2i3.7640](https://doi.org/10.54097/jid.v2i3.7640).
- Luciano, M. M., Nahrgang, J. D., & Shropshire, C. (2020). Strategic leadership systems: Viewing top management teams and boards of directors from a multiteam systems perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 45(3), 675-701.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0485>.
- Lukovszki, L., Rideg, A., Sipos, N. (2021). Resourcebased view of innovation activity in SMEs: An empirical analysis based on the global competitiveness project. *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal*, 31(3): 513-541.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/CR-01-2020-0018>.

- Lušňáková, Z., Benda-Prokeinová, R., & Juríčková, Z. (2022). Attitudes and involvement of employees in the process of implementing innovations and changes in companies. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(6), 174. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12060174>.
- Mailani, D., Hulu, M. Z. T., Simamora, M. R., & Kesuma, S. A. (2024). Resource-Based View Theory to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage of the firm: Systematic literature review. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies*, 4(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijeass.v4i1.2002>.
- Mailani, D., Hulu, M. Z. T., Simamora, M. R., & Kesuma, S. A. (2024). Resource-Based View Theory to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage of the firm: Systematic literature review. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies*, 4(1), 1. DOI:[10.31098/ijeass.v4i1.2002](https://doi.org/10.31098/ijeass.v4i1.2002)
- Marliawati, A., & Cahyaningdyah, D. (2020). Impacts the brand of experience and brand image on brand loyalty: Mediators brand of trust. *Management Analysis Journal*, 9(2), 140-151. DOI:[10.15294/maj.v9i2.36945](https://doi.org/10.15294/maj.v9i2.36945).
- Martínez-Mesa, J., González-Chica, D. A., Duquia, R. P., Bonamigo, R. R., & Bastos, J. L. (2016). Sampling: how to select participants in my research study?. *Anais brasileiros de dermatologia*, 91(3), 326-330. DOI:[10.1590/abd1806-4841.20165254](https://doi.org/10.1590/abd1806-4841.20165254)
- Martins, L. L. (2020). Strategic diversity leadership: The role of senior leaders in delivering the diversity dividend. *Journal of Management*, 46(7), 1191-1204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320939641>
- Mashamaite, K.A. and Raseala, P.S. (2019). Transgression of corporate governance in South Africa's state-owned enterprises. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*. 16(1):124–134.
- McKinley, W., Latham, S., & Braun, M. (2014). Organisational decline and innovation: Turnarounds and downward spirals. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(1), 88–110.
- Men, L. R., & Stacks, D. (2014). The effects of authentic leadership on strategic internal communication and employee-organization relationships. *Journal of public relations research*, 26(4), 301-324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.908720>
- Miglani, S., Ahmed, K., & Henry, D. (2020). Corporate governance and turnaround: Evidence from Australia. *Australian Journal of Management*, 45(4), 549-578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0312896220902225>.

- Mirza, H., Bellalem, F., & Mirza, C. (2023). Ethical considerations in qualitative research: Summary guidelines for novice social science researchers. *Social Studies and Research Journal*, 11(1), 441–449.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370838199_Ethical_Considerations_in_Qualitative_Research_Summary_Guidelines_for_Novice_Social_Science_Researchers.
- Morgenshtern, O., Rosenstein, R., & Allen, P. L. (2022). The quest for a killer KPI. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 63(3), 29-34.
- Mpete, M., & Maier, C. (2024). Challenges faced by CEOs in executing turnaround strategies in state-owned enterprises in South Africa. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), 4220. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/eic-busman_v55_n1_a4220.
- Nahak, M., & Ellitan, L. (2022). The role of strategic leadership in supporting strategic planning and increasing organizational competitiveness. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 6(3), 1441-1446.
www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd49730.pdf.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.
- Nyagiloh, K. A., & Kilika, J. M. (2020). Theoretical review of turnaround strategy and its organizational outcomes. *Available at SSRN 3514730*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3514730>.
- Nystrom, P., & Starbuck, W. H. (2015). To avoid organizational crises, unlearn. *Unlearn* (December 25, 2015).
- Oduro, S., & Haylemariam, L. G. (2019). Market orientation, CSR and financial and marketing performance in manufacturing firms in Ghana and Ethiopia. *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, 10(3), 398-426.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-11-2018-0309>.
- Oehninger, R., Kendzia, M. J., & Scherrer, F. (2020). Preventing corporate turnarounds through an early warning system. *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning*, 9(2), 185–205.

- Ollonde, J. O., STRATION, A., & ATTA, K. (2024). *Intensive Growth Strategy and Performance of Cement Manufacturing Firms Listed in Nairobi Securities Exchange Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta University).
- Omondi, E. O., Engels, C., Nambafu, G., Schreiner, M., Neugart, S., Abukutsa-Onyango, M., & Winkelmann, T. (2017). Nutritional compound analysis and morphological characterization of spider plant (*Cleome gynandra*)-an African indigenous leafy vegetable. *Food Research International*, 100, 284-295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2017.06.050>Get rights and content
- Omondi, E. O., Engels, C., Nambafu, G., Schreiner, M., Neugart, S., Abukutsa-Onyango, M., & Winkelmann, T. (2017). Nutritional compound analysis and morphological characterization of spider plant (*Cleome gynandra*)-an African indigenous leafy vegetable. *Food Research International*, 100, 284-295.
- Osiyevskyy, O., Shirokova, G., & Ehsani, M. (2023). The role of effectuation and causation for SME survival amidst economic crisis. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 29(7), 1664-1697. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-04-2022-0350>
- Paais, M., & Pattiruhu, J. R. (2020). Effect of motivation, leadership, and organizational culture on satisfaction and employee performance. *The journal of asian finance, economics and business*, 7(8), 577-588. DOI:[10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no8.577](https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no8.577).
- Pandit, N. R. (2000). Some recommendations for improved research on corporate turnaround. *M@n@gement*, 31-56.
- Parrott, G. (2024, April 23). *Cementing change: The impact of cheap imports on South Africa's construction sector*. <https://www.crown.co.za/construction-world/marketplace/28221-cementing-change-the-impact-of-cheap-imports-on-south-africa-s-construction-sector>
- Petrova, E. (2017). *Genesis of Strategic Management*. Retrieved from Bookboon.com
- Phillips, J., & Klein, J. D. (2023). Change management: From theory to practice. *TechTrends*, 67(1), 189-197. doi: [10.1007/s11528-022-00775-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-022-00775-0).
- Poudyal, R., Paneru, B., Paneru, B., Giri, T., Paneru, B., Reynolds, T., ... & Dangi, M. B. (2025). Exploring cement production's role in GDP using explainable AI and sustainability analysis in nepal. *Case Studies in Chemical and Environmental Engineering*, 11, 101128.

- Prayag, G., Jiang, Y., Chowdhury, M., Hossain, M., & Akter, N. (2024). Building Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Resilience in Tourism Firms During COVID-19: A Staged Approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(3), 713–740. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231164976>
- Purnama, C., Wardana, L. W., Rahmah, Y., Fatmah, D., & Rahmah, M. (2020). The impact of external integration and internal integration to product innovation and competitive advantage on small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development*, 6(4), 82-95. .DOI:[10.18775/ijied.1849-7551-7020.2015.64.2006](https://doi.org/10.18775/ijied.1849-7551-7020.2015.64.2006)
- Purnama, C., Wardana, L. W., Rahmah, Y., Fatmah, D., & Rahmah, M. (2020). The impact of external integration and internal integration to product innovation and competitive advantage on small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development*, 6(4), 82-95. .DOI:[10.18775/ijied.1849-7551-7020.2015.64.2006](https://doi.org/10.18775/ijied.1849-7551-7020.2015.64.2006)
- Rico, M., Pandit, N. R., & Puig, F. (2020). SME insolvency, bankruptcy, and survival: an examination of retrenchment strategies. *Small Business Economics*, 57(1), 111–126.
- Rivard, S. (2024). Unpacking the process of conceptual leaping in the conduct of literature reviews. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 33(1), 101822.
- Rossouw, D., & Goldman, G. A. (2023). Technology and collaboration as strategic drivers shaping higher education. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 19(1), 1307. <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v19i1.1307>
- Rossouw, L., (Sept 2023). Business Turnaround Strategies: A Lifeline for Struggling Businesses. <https://laross.co.za/business-turnaround-strategies-a-lifeline-for-struggling-businesses/>
- Samimi, M., Cortes, A. F., Anderson, M. H., & Herrmann, P. (2022). What is strategic leadership? Developing a framework for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 33(3), 101353.
- Santana, M., Valle Cabrera, R., & Galán González, J. L. (2019). Sources of decline, turnaround strategy and HR strategies and practices: The case of Iberia Airlines. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 40(3), 583-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X18772356>

- Saunders, M.N.K, Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th edi-
- Schaedler, L., Graf-Vlachy, L., & König, A. (2022). Strategic leadership in organizational crises: A review and research agenda. *Long range planning*, 55(2), 102156.
- Scheinker, D., Brandeau, M.L., 2020. Implementing analytics projects in a hospital: successes, failures, and opportunities. *INFORMS J. Appl. Anal.* 50 (3), 176–189. <https://doi.org/10.1287/inte.2020.1036>.
- Schweizer, L., & Nienhaus, A. (2017). Corporate distress and turnaround: integrating the literature and directing future research. *Business Research*, 10(1), 3-47. DOI 10.1007/s40685-016-0041-8.
- Setyopurnomo, R., Wiryono, S. K., Lestari, Y. D., & Sukarno, S. (2025). Enhancing operation effectiveness by maximizing daily EBITDA as a turnaround strategy execution system to enhance operation performance and profitability. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 11(1), 100431.
- Shatilo, O. (2019). The impact of external and internal factors on strategic management of innovation processes at company level. *Ekonomika*, 98(2), 85-96. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Ekon.2019.2.6>
- Siagian, H., Tarigan, Z. J. H., & Basana, S. R. (2022). *The role of top management commitment in enhancing competitive advantage: The mediating role of green innovation, supplier, and customer integration* (Doctoral dissertation, Petra Christian University). DOI:[10.5267/j.uscm.2021.12.003](https://doi.org/10.5267/j.uscm.2021.12.003).
- Sithomola, T. (2019). Leadership Conundrum in South Africa's State-Owned Enterprises. *Administratio Publica*, 27(2), 62-80. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-adminpub-v27-n2-a5>
- Sousa, R., Camanho, A.S., Silva, M.C., da Silveira, G.J.C., Arabi, B., 2023. Best practices, performance advantage and trade-offs: new insights from frontier analysis. *J. Product. Anal.* 62, 91–110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11123-023-00714-y>.
- Tao, Y., Xu, G., & Liu, H. (2020). Compensation gap, retrenchment strategy and organizational turnaround: a configurational perspective. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 33(5), 925-939. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-11-2019-0340>

- Teece, D. J. (2014). The foundations of enterprise performance: Dynamic and ordinary capabilities in an (economic) theory of firms. *Academy of management perspectives*, 28(4), 328-352. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2013.0116>.
- Teklu, S. W. (2022). Mathematical analysis of the transmission dynamics of COVID-19 infection in the presence of intervention strategies. *Journal of biological dynamics*, 16(1), 640-664. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513758.2022.2111469>.
- Ugoani, J. (2020). Organizational behaviour and its effect on corporate effectiveness. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Research*, 6(6), 121-129. <https://doi.org/10.32861/ijefr.66.121.129>
- Uratani, J. M., & Griffiths, S. (2023). A forward looking perspective on the cement and concrete industry: Implications of growth and development in the Global South. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 97, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.102972>
- Verčič, A. T., & Vokić, N. P. (2017). Engaging employees through internal communication. *Public relations review*, 43(5), 885-893. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.04.005>
- Willie, M. M. (2024). Population and target population in research methodology. *Golden Ratio of Social Science and Education*, 4(1), 75-79. <https://doi.org/10.52970/grsse.v4i1.405>.
- Wood, L. (2025, Jul 14), South Africa Cement Industry Report 2025 | Public Projects and Urban Housing Are Stabilizing Cement Demand - Forecast by Value and Volume Across 80+ Market Segments to 2029 - ResearchAndMarkets.com
- Yu, W., Chavez, R., Jacobs, M. A., & Feng, M. (2018). Data-driven supply chain capabilities and performance: A resource-based view. *Transportation Research Part E: logistics and transportation review*, 114, 371-385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tre.2017.04.002>
- Yuliharsi. (2018). A qualitative investigation on the successful turnaround strategy from top leader perspectives: Examples from Indonesia (Vol. 19). <https://doi.org/10.3846/btp.2018.12>.
- Zack, M., McKeen, J., & Singh, S. (2009). Knowledge management and organizational performance: an exploratory analysis. *Journal of knowledge management*, 13(6), 392-409. [10.1108/13673270910997088](https://doi.org/10.1108/13673270910997088)

- Zahra, S. A. (2021). The resource-based view, resourcefulness, and resource management in startup firms: A proposed research agenda. *Journal of management*, 47(7), 1841-1860. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063211018505>
- Zikmund-Fisher, B. J. (2013). The right tool is what they need, not what we have: a taxonomy of appropriate levels of precision in patient risk communication. *Medical Care Research and Review*, 70(1_suppl), 37S-49S.
- Miller, G., & Spiegel, E. (2025). Guidelines for research data integrity (GRDI). *Scientific Data*, 12(1), 95. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-024-04312-x>.
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>.

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Research Question 1: What are the main drivers and indicators that prompt a strategic leader in the cement industry to recognise the need for a turnaround strategy?

Research Question 1.1 What are the leading indicators that strategic leaders consider that identify the need for a turnaround strategy?

Research Question 1.2 How do strategic leaders identify the key levers that will produce immediate change?

Research Question 1.3 How does the strategic leader prioritise the actions that need to be taken to deliver on the identified opportunities?

Research Question 1.4 How do leaders achieve buy-in from the stakeholders that there is a need to change and implement a turnaround strategy?

Research Question 2: How do leaders perceive the balance between internal and external factors when developing turnaround strategies for the cement industry?

Research Question 2.1 What are the critical internal factors that strategic leadership has identified as the main lever to be used to turn around the performance of cement producers?

Research Question 2.2 What external factors are crucial to consider when developing and implementing a turnaround in the cement industry?

Research Question 2.3 How do strategic leaders balance internal and external factors to ensure the successful implementation of the turnaround?

Research Question 3: What organisational challenges and dynamics do leaders perceive as the most significant barriers during the implementation of a turnaround?

Research Question 3.1 What are the typical challenges that the turnaround initiatives face, and how do the leaders deal with those challenges?

Research Question 3.2 What are the specific actions and procedures that leaders perceive as essential to drive a successful turnaround?

Research Question 3.3 How do leaders evaluate the progress and effectiveness of a turnaround strategy during its implementation phase?

Research Question 3.4 What changes do they think are needed to keep momentum going?

Appendix 2: Informed Consent

Informed consent for interviews

Dear Sir/Madam

I am researching ways to enhance the role of strategic leadership to ensure the success of the turnaround strategy. Our interview is expected to last 60 minutes. It will help us understand what strategic interventions leadership in the cement sector could implement to enhance performance in the current complicated and uncertain cement environment.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. By signing this letter, you are indicating that you are permitting:

- The interview is to be recorded.
- Verbatim quotations from the interview may be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation.
- The data to be used as part of a report that will be publicly available once the examination process has been completed; and
- All data to be reported and stored without identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact either my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Ethics Clearance

GIBS ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM 2025/26

G. APPROVALS FOR/OF THIS APPLICATION

When the applicant is a student of GIBS, the applicant must please ensure that the supervisor and co-supervisor (where relevant) has signed the form before submission

STUDENT RESEARCHER/APPLICANT:

29. I affirm that all relevant information has been provided in this form and its attachments and that all statements made are correct.

Student Researcher's Name in capital letters: **SUGG INNOCENTIA PHUNGDA**

Date: 06 Jul 2025

Supervisor Name in capital letters: **ANDRE VERMAAK**

Date: 06 Jul 2025

Co-supervisor Name in capital letters:

Date: 06 Jul 2025

Note: GIBS shall do everything in its power to protect the personal information supplied herein, in accordance to its company privacy policies as well the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013. Access to all of the above provided personal information is restricted, only employees who need the information to perform a specific job are granted access to this information.

Decision:

Approved

REC comments:

Date: 07 Jul 2025

Appendix 4: Data Analysis - Codes

| Data Analysis Details - Initial Codes | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| | Themes 1: Poor Cost Management reduce Profit Margin | Themes 2: Brand Performance is losing market share | Themes 3: Awareness of Challenges | Themes 4: Resources Allocation | Themes 5: Systems | |
| RQ1: What are the Main Indicators of Turnaround need | Cost Control | Brand Visibility | EBITDA Margin declining | Losing Right Talent | Technology Adoption | |
| | Infrastructure Development | Customer Satisfaction | Operational Efficiency Enhancement | Skills Training | CO2 Emission Initiatives | |
| | Profit Margin Consideration declining | Market Awareness | Need to define Goal Setting | Talent Development | Controlled Environment | |
| | Performance Measurement | Market Share Dropping | Infrastructure Development | Sense of Urgency | | |
| | Production Cost Management | Product Quality | Data Analysis Skill | Clear Deliverables | | |
| | SMART Goals | Reactive Approach | Performance Indicators Below target | Continuous improvement | | |
| | Capital Investment | | Process Evaluation | Adequate Resourcing | | |
| | Raw Material Sourcing Competition | | Performance Indicators | Resource Management | | |
| | | | Population Growth | | | |
| | | | Feasibility Study | | | |
| RQ2: What are Internal and External Factors to consider during turnaround implemented | Themes 1: Agility | Themes 2: Strategic Planning and | Themes 3: Operation Efficiency | Themes 4: Quality Monitor | Themes 5: Competitors | Themes 6: Leadership |
| | Innovation | Strategic Planning | Operational Cost Reduction | Product Strengths Leveraging | Market Assessment | Situational Leadership |
| | Recognition | Focus on Control | Organizational Culture | Quality Consistency | Data Alignment | Value Chain Understanding |
| | Growth Path Development | Strategy Evaluation | Quick Wins | Quality Assurance | Strategic Partnerships | Listening Skills |
| | Assertiveness | Strategy Evaluation | Efficiency Improvement | Service Quality | On-time Delivery | Leadership Influence |
| | Firsthand Experience | Prioritization Strategy | Organizational Climate | Quality Producer | Relationship Management | Immediate Turnaround |
| | Flexibility | Open Communication Channels | Human Resources | Control Issues | Competitive Advantage | Manage Pitfalls |
| | Influencer | Prioritization Strategy | Operational Cost Reduction | On-time Delivery | Transportation Efficiency | Policy Support |
| | Quick Wins | Resourcing Strategy | Functional Plant | | Business Efficiency | Resilience |
| | Goal-Driven Mindset | Short-term Focus | Alternative Fuel Use | | Service Quality, | Stubbornness |
| | | Importance of Consistency | | | Goal Setting | |
| | | KPI Improvement | | | Collaboration | |
| | | Continuous Improvement | | | True Reflection | |
| | | Operational Challenges | | | Motivated Workforce | |
| | | | | | Visionary Leadership Strategy | |
| RQ3: Challenges of turnaround strategy | Themes 1: Lack of Innovation | Themes 2: Employee Engagement | Themes 3: Lack Alignment | Themes 4: Change Management | Themes 5: Lack of Accountability | Themes 6: Lack of Communication |
| | Alternative Fuel Use | Buy-in Importance | Budget Management | Change Implementation | Performance Responsibility | Communication of Performance |
| | Business Efficiency | Employee Engagement | Economic Value | Resistance Management | Excuse Management | Monthly Progress Tracking |
| | Momentum Building | Communication of Intent | Change Fatigue | Individual Stakeholder Benefit | Performance Improvement | Clarity of Strategy |
| | Influence on Industry Changes | Team Involvement | Customer Needs not understood | Stakeholder Alignment | Operational Improvement | Momentum Building |
| | Competitive Advantage | Mindset Shift | Supplier Buy-in | Value Proposition | Leadership Responsibility | Monitoring Performance |
| | Market Response | Understanding Goals | Internal Resource Trust | Stakeholder Alignment | Performance Culture | |
| | Emission Reduction Strategy | Monitoring Results | Team Alignment | Change Implementation | Disciplinary Action | |
| | Focus on Goals | Two-way Communication | Measurement Strategy | Clarity of Strategy | Informal Review | |
| | | Team Cohesion | Resource Allocation | Expectations Management | Expectations Management | |
| | Understanding Goals | Market Awareness | Leadership Change | Alignment of Goals | | |
| | Organizational Climate | Competition Awareness | | | | |
| | Lack of Empowerment | Demand Management | | | | |
| | Work Environment Atmosphere | Balancing Supply and Demand | | | | |
| | Talent Development | Production Control | | | | |
| | Career Growth | Time Allocation | | | | |
| | Goal Alignment | Performance Management | | | | |
| | | Stakeholder Alignment | | | | |

| Categories per group | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| Group A (Participant (4 & 5)) | Group B Participant (1,2 & 3) | Group C Participant (7 & 9) | Group D Participant (6) | Group E Participant (8) | Themes |
| RQ 1: What are the Main Indicators of Turnaround need | | | | | |
| Production Cost Management | Capital Investment Cost Control Goal Setting | Performance Measurement | Production Cost Management | Cost Control | Themes 1: Cost Management |
| Quality Assurance, Market Share Brand Visibility | On-time Delivery | Brand Visibility Customer Satisfaction Market Awareness Performance Indicators | Reactive Approach | | Themes 2: Brand Performance |
| Communication of Intent External Competition Infrastructure Development | Data Analysis Skill | EBITDA Margin Efficiency Enhancement Data Analysis Skill Goal Setting | Efficiency Reduction | EBITDA Margin | Themes 3: Diagnose of Challenges |
| Adequate Resourcing | | Sense of Urgency | Competent Resources | | Theme 4: Resources Allocation |
| Technology Adoption | CO2 Emission Initiatives | | | | Theme 5: Systems |
| RQ2: What are Internal and External Factors to consider during turnaround implemented | | | | | |
| Need Agility | Influencer Situational Leadership | Need Agility | | | Theme 1: Agility |
| Strategic Planning, | Prioritization Strategy Strategic Planning | | Prioritization Strategy Strategic Planning, | Open Communication Channels | Theme 1: Strategic Planning and Implementation |
| Efficiency Improvement Operational Cost Reduction Production Efficiency | | Human Resources Organizational Culture | Organizational Climate Operational Challenges | Efficiency Improvement Operational Cost Reduction Organizational Climate | Themes 2: Operation Efficiency |
| Quality Assurance | On-time Delivery Quality Assurance Service Quality | Product Quality | Quality Consistency, | | Theme 3: Quality Monitor |
| Data Alignment | Transportation Efficiency | Competitive Advantage Strategic Partnerships | Service Quality, | Business Efficiency | Theme 4: Competitors Analysis |
| Value Chain Understanding | Visionary Leadership Strategy | Motivated Workforce | | Listening Skills True Reflection | Theme 5: Leadership |
| RQ3: Challenges of turnaround strategy | | | | | |
| Buy-in Importance Team Involvement Organizational Climate | Two-way Communication Organizational Climate Employee Engagement | Buy-in Importance Employee Engagement Goal Alignment Communication of Intent | Buy-in Importance Employee Engagement | Buy-in Importance | Theme 1: Employee Engagement |
| Stakeholder Alignment | Demand Management Economic Value | Demand Management Economic Value | Demand Management Economic Value | Measurement Strategy | Theme 2: Alignment |
| Change Implementation | Clarity of Strategy | Change Implementation Clarity of Strategy | Change Implementation | Change Implementation Stakeholder Alignment | Theme 3: Change Management |
| Mindset Shift Economic Value | | Alignment of Goals | | | Theme 4: Lack of Accountability |