

## The Impact of Business Environmental Changes on the Adoption of a Strategic Pivot: A Case Study of Zar Industrial Group

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to examine the impact of business environmental changes on strategic pivot adoption in Zar Industrial Group and develop a conceptual model of this process.

**Methods and Materials:** This applied qualitative study used a grounded theory design. The study population consisted of Zar Industrial Group managers and university professors with expertise in strategic management and organizational change. Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and professional experience. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with managers of the holding company and its food-industry subsidiaries, together with academic experts. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation, resulting in a final sample of 12 participants. Interview transcripts were systematically coded, compared, and categorized to identify the principal dimensions and mechanisms associated with strategic pivot adoption.

**Findings:** The analysis produced seven main categories and 41 related concepts. The categories included macro-environmental changes and external pressures; risk, uncertainty, and financial pressure; supply-chain and operational disruptions; market-oriented and commercial responses; structural and business-model redesign; innovation, technology, and digital transformation; and human capital, organizational learning, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot. Environmental turbulence generated financial, operational, and market pressures that stimulated coordinated strategic responses. These responses involved market reorientation, business-model redesign, technological innovation, digital transformation, and capability development. Human capital and organizational learning played a central role in sustaining and institutionalizing the strategic pivot.

**Conclusion:** Strategic pivot adoption in Zar Industrial Group represents a multidimensional organizational response to environmental uncertainty rather than an isolated managerial decision. Successful pivots require alignment among market responses, structural transformation, technological innovation, operational resilience, and organizational learning. The proposed conceptual model can help managers recognize environmental signals, coordinate adaptive actions, and strengthen organizational resilience and long-term competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Business Environment; Strategic Pivot; Environmental Change; Business-Model Redesign; Digital Transformation; Organizational Learning; Zar Industrial Group.

## 1 Introduction

Contemporary organizations operate within business environments characterized by rapid economic fluctuations, technological discontinuities, political and regulatory uncertainty, changing customer expectations, intensified competition, and increasing pressure for environmental and social responsibility. These forces continuously reshape the conditions under which firms create value, allocate resources, manage operations, and maintain competitive positions. The business environment is therefore not merely an external setting surrounding organizational activity; rather, it represents a dynamic system of political, economic, technological, market, institutional, cultural, and ecological factors that can directly influence organizational performance and strategic choice. When environmental changes are gradual and predictable, firms may respond through incremental adjustments to existing strategies (Özdemirkol, 2025; Ramazani Borukhani et al., 2025; Singh et al., 2025). However, when such changes are intense, discontinuous, and multidimensional, incremental responses may become insufficient, compelling organizations to reconsider their fundamental assumptions, strategic priorities, target markets, operational configurations, and business models.

The quality and stability of the business environment can substantially affect enterprise-level outcomes. An improved business environment may facilitate access to resources, reduce transaction costs, strengthen institutional support, and enhance firms' capacity to allocate income and resources more efficiently. Evidence concerning business-environment optimization indicates that institutional and environmental improvements can influence internal organizational outcomes, including the distribution of labor income and the balance between capital and workforce interests (Lai et al., 2024). Similarly, the quality of the business environment has been associated with firms' innovation efficiency, suggesting that supportive institutional conditions can enable organizations to transform knowledge, investment, and technological resources into innovative outputs more effectively (Han et al., 2023). Conversely, an unfavorable environment characterized by regulatory ambiguity, financial constraints, weak infrastructure, instability, or limited market access can restrict organizational flexibility and reduce the effectiveness of strategic investments. Therefore, understanding the business environment is essential not only for identifying threats but also for recognizing emerging

opportunities that may justify a significant change in organizational direction.

Changes in the competitive structure of markets have further increased the importance of strategic adaptability. The rise of highly productive and dominant "superstar firms" has demonstrated how technological advantage, market concentration, scalability, and organizational capabilities can produce considerable differences in performance across firms. As leading firms expand their market shares, less adaptive organizations may experience declining competitiveness, reduced profitability, and increasing pressure to reconsider their strategic positions (Autor et al., 2020). These developments suggest that environmental change does not affect all organizations equally. Firms possessing advanced technology, flexible structures, strong human capital, and effective learning capabilities may convert environmental turbulence into opportunities, whereas firms with rigid structures and outdated business models may face strategic decline. Accordingly, the ability to recognize environmental signals and undertake timely strategic change has become a central determinant of organizational survival and long-term competitiveness.

One of the most significant forms of strategic change is the strategic pivot. A pivot generally refers to a substantive change in a firm's strategic direction while preserving selected elements of its existing resources, knowledge, vision, or organizational identity. It differs from routine adaptation because it involves reconsidering one or more fundamental components of the organization's strategy, such as its product, customer segment, market, revenue model, value proposition, technology, distribution channel, operational process, or organizational structure. A strategic pivot may arise when managers identify a persistent mismatch between the organization's existing strategic path and the realities of its environment. Kirtley and O'Mahony emphasized that pivoting involves managerial decisions concerning when and how to undertake significant strategic change in response to new information, unexpected outcomes, or altered environmental conditions (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020). Thus, a pivot is neither an entirely unplanned reaction nor a complete abandonment of the organization's prior trajectory. Instead, it represents a deliberate reconfiguration of strategic direction based on learning, interpretation, and the reassessment of organizational assumptions.

The concept of pivoting gained particular prominence through the lean startup approach, which views organizational development as an iterative process of

hypothesis testing, experimentation, feedback, and learning. According to this perspective, firms should avoid committing excessive resources to untested assumptions and should instead develop minimum viable solutions, obtain market feedback, measure outcomes, and either persevere with or revise their strategic direction (Ries, 2011). More recent theoretical developments have described the lean startup approach as an actionable theory of entrepreneurship that connects managerial action with experimentation, evidence generation, and strategic learning (Blank & Eckhardt, 2024). Although this approach was initially associated with startups, its underlying principles are relevant to established organizations operating in uncertain environments. Large firms and industrial holding companies may also need to test new products, redesign processes, enter emerging markets, modify distribution channels, and revise business models when their established practices no longer correspond to environmental demands.

Strategic pivoting is closely connected to business-model experimentation. Business models explain how organizations create, deliver, and capture value, and environmental changes may undermine one or more of these mechanisms. Experimentation allows managers to evaluate alternative value propositions, markets, revenue structures, technologies, partnerships, and operational configurations before implementing large-scale organizational change. Research on early-stage business-model experimentation indicates that pivoting emerges through interactions among experimentation, managerial interpretation, market feedback, and the progressive revision of strategic assumptions (Burnell et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial experimentation is similarly viewed as a central mechanism of business-model dynamics because it enables organizations to explore alternative configurations and learn which combinations of activities are most compatible with changing environmental conditions (Sanasi, 2023). From this perspective, a strategic pivot should not be reduced to a single decision made at a specific point in time. Rather, it may be understood as a process involving environmental observation, experimentation, evaluation, resource reallocation, implementation, and institutionalization.

Empirical studies of pivoting have shown that organizations may change different elements of their strategies in response to market, technological, operational, or financial pressures. Research on software startups, for example, has demonstrated that pivots may involve changes in products, customer needs, technological solutions, markets, and business models, with the specific form of the

pivot depending on the problems encountered and the evidence generated through organizational experience (Bajwa et al., 2016). Although startups and large industrial groups differ considerably in size, governance, resource availability, and organizational complexity, both may face a need to revise strategic assumptions under uncertain conditions. In established organizations, however, pivoting may be more difficult because strategic change must be coordinated across multiple business units, hierarchical levels, operational systems, stakeholder groups, and established routines. A pivot in a holding company may therefore require simultaneous changes in resource allocation, supply-chain policies, product portfolios, market priorities, technologies, decision-making mechanisms, and human-resource practices.

Strategic pivoting may also generate internal tensions related to organizational identity. Organizations develop relatively stable understandings of who they are, what they produce, which customers they serve, and how they compete. When a pivot challenges these established beliefs, employees and managers may experience uncertainty, resistance, or inconsistency between the organization's historical identity and its emerging strategic direction. Research on new-venture pivoting has shown that organizational identity dynamics can influence the success or failure of strategic change, particularly when changes are poorly aligned with the organization's core meaning or are not adequately communicated and institutionalized (Snihur & Clarysse, 2022). Consequently, the effectiveness of a strategic pivot depends not only on the technical quality of the new strategy but also on the organization's ability to create shared understanding, maintain commitment, develop new capabilities, and connect the pivot to an intelligible organizational vision.

Human capital and organizational culture are therefore essential elements of strategic adaptation. Employees' knowledge, technical competencies, readiness for change, participation, motivation, and learning capacity can determine whether a strategic pivot remains a managerial proposal or becomes an implemented organizational reality. Research examining individual, environmental, organizational, and cultural determinants of human-resource productivity has highlighted the interdependence of workforce-related and contextual factors in improving organizational outcomes (Ramazani Borukhani et al., 2025). In the context of strategic pivoting, these factors may influence how rapidly employees learn new processes, adopt new technologies, generate ideas, cooperate across

organizational units, and support revised strategic priorities. Training, participatory decision-making, performance-based incentives, knowledge sharing, and continuous environmental monitoring can consequently strengthen organizational readiness for strategic change.

Technological development represents another major environmental driver of strategic pivoting. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, data analytics, automation, smart manufacturing, and advanced information systems are transforming how organizations forecast demand, monitor customers, manage supply chains, develop products, and make strategic decisions. Organizations that fail to develop adequate technological capabilities may experience declining efficiency and competitiveness, even when their traditional products remain commercially relevant. In contrast, firms that integrate technology into their strategic and operational systems may improve decision speed, product quality, market responsiveness, and resource efficiency. The relationship between business-environment quality and innovation efficiency further suggests that technological transformation is shaped by both internal organizational capabilities and external institutional conditions (Han et al., 2023). Strategic pivots may therefore involve not only market or product changes but also the digital redesign of production, sales, communication, and decision-making processes.

Supply-chain instability has likewise become a significant source of strategic pressure. Global restrictions, geopolitical tensions, transportation disruptions, currency fluctuations, shortages of raw materials, dependence on imported equipment, and supplier concentration can weaken operational continuity and increase production costs. Sustainable supply-chain research emphasizes the importance of collaboration, environmental coordination, resilience, and the integration of sustainability considerations across supply-chain relationships (Singh et al., 2025). For industrial organizations, supply-chain disruptions may require changes in supplier portfolios, procurement timing, inventory policies, production volume, geographic sourcing, and product prioritization. When these adjustments alter the organization's broader approach to value creation and market participation, they become part of a strategic pivot rather than merely operational problem-solving.

Environmental sustainability has also expanded the meaning of strategic responsibility. Organizations are increasingly expected to consider the ecological consequences of production, resource consumption, waste,

logistics, packaging, and technological investment. Business ethics perspectives emphasize that corporate responsibility should extend beyond legal compliance and stakeholder interests to include obligations toward nature and environmental protection (Özdemirkol, 2025). At the same time, entrepreneurship and innovation can contribute to environmental sustainability by facilitating new technologies, business models, and resource-allocation practices aligned with sustainable development objectives (Köseoglu, 2025). Accordingly, strategic pivots may be driven not only by immediate financial or competitive pressures but also by the need to establish environmentally responsible and sustainable organizational models. For food-industry organizations, these concerns are especially relevant because production, packaging, energy consumption, agricultural inputs, transportation, and waste management are closely connected to environmental performance.

The consequences of failing to respond appropriately to environmental risks can be substantial. Environmental uncertainty may influence business failure by weakening financial stability, reducing forecasting accuracy, increasing operating costs, and intensifying exposure to market and institutional shocks. Predictive research on business failure has demonstrated the importance of incorporating environmental risk into models that assess organizational vulnerability (Romero Martínez et al., 2025). This implies that managers should not evaluate organizational performance exclusively through historical financial indicators; they must also examine external developments that may alter future demand, costs, access to resources, and competitive conditions. A strategic pivot can therefore function as a proactive mechanism for preventing decline when early environmental signals indicate that the existing business trajectory is becoming unsustainable.

Despite growing scholarly attention to pivoting, several conceptual and contextual gaps remain. Much of the pivot literature has focused on entrepreneurial ventures, startups, and early-stage business-model experimentation (Bajwa et al., 2016; Burnell et al., 2023; Sanasi, 2023). These studies provide important insights into experimentation and strategic learning but may not fully explain how strategic pivots occur within large, diversified industrial groups. Established holding companies possess multiple subsidiaries, formal governance systems, complex supply chains, substantial fixed assets, established brands, and broader stakeholder responsibilities. Their strategic pivots may therefore involve more extensive coordination and

greater organizational consequences than those observed in smaller ventures. Moreover, the factors driving pivots in volatile economic and institutional environments may differ from those in relatively stable markets.

Zar Industrial Group provides a relevant context for investigating these issues because it operates as a diversified holding company in the food industry and related sectors, where environmental pressures can simultaneously affect raw-material costs, consumer purchasing power, production systems, supply chains, pricing policies, domestic markets, export opportunities, technological investments, and workforce capabilities. Severe inflation, exchange-rate volatility, financial restrictions, changing consumer preferences, technological development, and disruptions in access to imported materials and machinery may create interconnected pressures that cannot be addressed through isolated operational adjustments. Under such conditions, the organization may need to reconsider its target markets, product portfolio, contractual arrangements, pricing mechanisms, governance structures, resource-allocation practices, technology, and human-capital policies. Examining these relationships through the experiences of managers and academic experts can generate a context-sensitive explanation of how environmental changes are interpreted and translated into strategic action.

A comprehensive examination of strategic pivot adoption should therefore integrate external drivers, organizational pressures, managerial responses, enabling capabilities, and implementation mechanisms. Macro-environmental change may increase risk and financial pressure; financial and operational constraints may generate a need for market and business-model reconfiguration; technological innovation may provide the means for implementing new strategic directions; and human capital and organizational learning may determine whether the pivot becomes sustainable. Such an integrated perspective extends beyond identifying individual environmental variables and instead explains the process through which environmental turbulence becomes a catalyst for strategic transformation. Developing a grounded conceptual model can assist managers in recognizing critical environmental signals, understanding the relationships among strategic pressures, and coordinating the structural, commercial, technological, and human responses required for organizational resilience.

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of changes in the business environment on the adoption of a strategic pivot in Zar Industrial Group and to develop a grounded conceptual model explaining the drivers,

mechanisms, responses, and organizational capabilities involved in this process.

## 2 Methods and Materials

This study employed an applied qualitative research design based on the grounded theory approach. It was considered applied in terms of purpose because its findings were intended to provide practical guidance for the managers of Zar Industrial Group in identifying environmental pressures, responding to changes in the business ecosystem, and making informed decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of strategic pivots. A qualitative design was selected because strategic pivoting within a large and diversified industrial holding company is a complex, multidimensional, and context-dependent phenomenon. The processes through which managers interpret environmental changes, perceive organizational threats and opportunities, reconsider existing strategic paths, and decide to redesign organizational activities cannot be adequately understood solely through numerical indicators. The qualitative approach therefore provided an appropriate framework for exploring participants' experiences, interpretations, managerial reasoning, and implicit knowledge concerning strategic adaptation. The grounded theory method was specifically used to generate an empirically grounded conceptual model explaining how changes in the business environment influence the adoption of strategic pivots in Zar Industrial Group.

The study was conducted in Tehran Province during 2025 and 2026. Its substantive scope focused on the nature, extent, and mechanisms through which changes in the business environment and business ecosystem affected the decision to adopt a strategic pivot. The study population comprised two groups of knowledgeable participants. The first group consisted of senior managers, executives, and specialists working in Zar Industrial Group and its affiliated companies. Zar Industrial Group operates as a holding company in the food industry and related sectors and includes several small, medium-sized, and large enterprises. Participants from the organizational group were selected because of their direct involvement in strategic planning, organizational decision-making, market development, operations, financial management, supply-chain management, innovation, or organizational transformation. The second group comprised university faculty members with relevant academic and research expertise in strategic management, marketing, business environment analysis, organizational change,

business-model innovation, and related areas. The inclusion of both managerial and academic participants enabled the study to incorporate practical organizational experiences as well as theoretical and analytical perspectives.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. This non-probability sampling method was selected because the study required individuals who possessed substantial knowledge, professional experience, and direct familiarity with the phenomenon under investigation. The principal inclusion criteria were having relevant managerial, professional, teaching, or research experience; possessing adequate knowledge of changes in the business environment and strategic organizational responses; and being willing to participate in an in-depth interview. Sampling and data collection were conducted concurrently with data analysis. After each interview, the emerging concepts and categories were examined to determine whether additional participants or further exploration of specific issues was required. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that subsequent interviews no longer generated substantively new codes, properties, dimensions, or relationships among the emerging categories. Theoretical saturation was reached after interviewing 12 participants, and this number constituted the final study sample.

Data were collected through a combination of documentary review and semi-structured expert interviews. The documentary review was conducted to establish the theoretical foundations of the study, identify relevant concepts, and develop the initial framework for the interview protocol. Persian- and English-language scientific resources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, research reports, dissertations, and credible online sources, were examined. Materials related to changes in the business environment, environmental uncertainty, strategic pivoting, organizational adaptation, business-model redesign, innovation, digital transformation, market reorientation, and organizational resilience were reviewed. Relevant information was systematically recorded, organized, classified, and retained using research forms, electronic records, conceptual matrices, and note-taking tools. The literature review was not treated as a substitute for empirical data but was used to increase the researcher's theoretical sensitivity and support the formulation of broad and exploratory interview questions.

The principal data collection instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol. The interview questions were formulated based on the research objectives, theoretical foundations, literature review, and preliminary

conceptual framework. The questions were designed to guide the interviews toward the central research issue while maintaining sufficient flexibility for participants to describe their experiences, interpretations, and viewpoints in detail. The interview protocol included principal questions, follow-up questions, and exploratory prompts. The main questions addressed participants' perceptions of significant changes in the business environment, the types of external and internal pressures experienced by Zar Industrial Group, the effects of environmental changes on organizational strategies and operations, the conditions that created a need for strategic pivoting, the organizational responses adopted, and the factors that facilitated or impeded the implementation of a strategic pivot. Follow-up questions were used to clarify responses, obtain practical examples, explore causal conditions, identify intervening factors, and examine the consequences of strategic decisions.

Semi-structured interviews were selected because this method allowed the researcher to preserve consistency across interviews while also exploring unexpected or emerging dimensions of the phenomenon. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to explain how environmental changes affected markets, customer preferences, competition, financial conditions, technology, supply chains, operational activities, organizational structures, human resources, and business models. When a participant introduced a relevant concept that had not been anticipated in the original protocol, supplementary questions were asked to examine the concept more deeply. This flexible process enabled the researcher to identify subtle managerial interpretations and organizational mechanisms that could not have been captured through a completely structured questionnaire.

Following each interview, the collected data were reviewed and transcribed in full. The transcripts constituted the principal empirical dataset of the study. Data collection and preliminary analysis occurred simultaneously so that concepts emerging from earlier interviews could inform subsequent interviews. This iterative process allowed the researcher to refine the interview questions, investigate insufficiently developed categories, and obtain additional information about emerging relationships. Brief analytical notes and memos were also prepared during and immediately after the interviews to record initial interpretations, recurrent ideas, contextual observations, and potential relationships among concepts.

Several procedures were used to enhance the credibility and validity of the qualitative data. The clarity and face

validity of the interview questions were examined through consultation with individuals familiar with strategic management and qualitative research. Participants were also provided with opportunities to clarify ambiguous statements and correct inaccurate interpretations of their responses. Where necessary, the researcher returned to participants' accounts to verify the intended meaning of important statements and concepts. Transparency was strengthened by documenting the stages of participant selection, data collection, transcription, coding, category development, and model construction. In addition, constant comparison was applied throughout the research process. Codes and categories developed at each analytical stage were continuously compared with the original interview data, previously analyzed interviews, and newly collected data. This procedure helped ensure that higher-order categories remained grounded in participants' accounts rather than being imposed solely by the researcher's prior assumptions.

The interview data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis within the coding procedures of grounded theory. Analysis commenced immediately after the first interview and proceeded concurrently with data collection. Each interview was transcribed, read repeatedly, and examined line by line to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' statements. The researcher initially identified meaningful units, including sentences, phrases, incidents, experiences, and explanations that were directly or indirectly related to environmental changes and strategic pivot adoption. These units were then labeled with preliminary codes that reflected their underlying meanings. The iterative nature of the analysis allowed emerging findings to guide subsequent interviews and facilitated the progressive refinement of concepts and categories.

The coding process consisted of open, axial, and selective coding. During open coding, the interview transcripts were divided into meaningful units, and initial conceptual labels were assigned to relevant statements. Similar codes were compared, merged, differentiated, or revised according to their conceptual similarities and differences. The purpose of this stage was to move beyond participants' literal expressions and identify the underlying concepts represented in their accounts. Constant comparison was used to compare each code with other codes within the same interview and across different interviews. Analytical memos were written to document the properties, dimensions, and possible interpretations of the emerging concepts.

During axial coding, conceptually related open codes were grouped into subcategories and broader main

categories. At this stage, the relationships among categories were examined to determine how different environmental conditions, organizational pressures, strategic actions, contextual factors, and consequences were connected. Particular attention was paid to the conditions that prompted the need for a strategic pivot, the environmental and organizational context in which strategic decisions were made, the intervening factors that facilitated or constrained organizational responses, the strategies adopted by managers, and the outcomes of these strategies. Categories were repeatedly compared with the original transcripts to ensure that they accurately represented the empirical data. Categories lacking sufficient evidence were revised, merged with related categories, or removed from the developing framework.

During selective coding, the principal categories were integrated around the central phenomenon of strategic pivot adoption in response to changes in the business environment. The researcher systematically examined the relationships among the main categories and developed an explanatory narrative describing how environmental changes generated strategic pressures, how these pressures were interpreted by managers, and how organizational responses were designed and institutionalized. The emerging categories were integrated into a final conceptual model representing the impact of business environmental changes on strategic pivot adoption in Zar Industrial Group. Theoretical saturation was confirmed when additional interviews and repeated examination of the transcripts no longer produced new categories or meaningful modifications to the relationships within the model. Through this analytical procedure, the study moved beyond surface-level descriptions of managerial statements and identified the fundamental patterns, mechanisms, and relationships governing strategic decisions within the organizational context.

### 3 Findings and Results

The participants consisted of 12 academic and executive experts identified by the interview codes P1 to P12. Of these participants, five specialized in strategic management, four in business management, and three in marketing management. All participants had extensive professional, managerial, academic, or research experience relevant to the business environment, organizational strategy, marketing, and strategic decision-making. Their reported experience ranged from more than 12 years to more than 25 years. Specifically, the participants specializing in strategic

management had more than 14 to more than 25 years of experience, those specializing in business management had more than 12 to more than 20 years of experience, and those specializing in marketing management had more than 15 to more than 23 years of experience. The diversity of the participants' expertise and the substantial length of their professional experience enabled the phenomenon of strategic pivot adoption in Zar Industrial Group to be examined from complementary managerial, commercial, and strategic perspectives.

The qualitative findings were derived from the analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with the 12 participants. After each interview, the audio-recorded material was transcribed in full, reviewed for accuracy, and read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the participants' experiences and interpretations. The interview transcripts were then examined line by line, and statements, phrases, and propositions related to changes in the business environment and the adoption of strategic pivots were identified as meaningful units. Each meaningful unit was assigned an initial code that represented its central meaning. Some codes were extracted directly from the participants' terminology, whereas others were reformulated at a more abstract conceptual level to capture the underlying meaning of the statements.

The open coding process resulted in the extraction of 173 initial codes from the 12 interviews. These codes reflected a wide range of environmental pressures, organizational challenges, managerial interpretations, and strategic responses. The codes included references to sanctions, inflation, exchange-rate fluctuations, liquidity shortages, supply-chain disruptions, changes in consumer demand, market diversification, business-model redesign, digitalization, innovation, workforce readiness, organizational learning, and the institutionalization of strategic change. The large number of initial codes demonstrated the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon and indicated that the adoption of a strategic pivot was influenced by interrelated economic, political, technological, operational, market, structural, and human factors.

Following the extraction of the initial codes, the constant comparison method was applied to compare codes within each interview and across all interviews. Codes that expressed similar meanings, represented different aspects of the same phenomenon, or differed only in wording were merged into broader concepts. Highly specific codes that lacked independent analytical significance were

incorporated into more comprehensive concepts. The principal criteria used in this refinement process included semantic similarity, conceptual proximity, repeated occurrence across interviews, reference to a shared phenomenon from different perspectives, and the possibility of abstraction to a higher conceptual level. This process reduced conceptual dispersion while preserving the substantive meaning of the participants' accounts.

The first category, macro-environmental changes and external pressures, represented the economic, political, regulatory, and international developments that compelled Zar Industrial Group to reconsider its existing strategic direction. Participants repeatedly referred to sanctions, financial and international restrictions, inflation, exchange-rate instability, declining purchasing power, dependence on political conditions, and the continuous emergence of environmental opportunities and threats. These findings indicated that strategic pivot adoption was initially stimulated by external changes that exceeded the organization's direct control but substantially influenced its markets, costs, investments, and strategic choices. The participants viewed strategic pivoting as a necessary response to persistent environmental turbulence rather than as an optional or isolated managerial initiative.

The second category, risk, uncertainty, and financial pressure, reflected the financial consequences of reduced environmental predictability. Participants emphasized that fluctuations in prices, exchange rates, demand, and operating costs weakened the organization's ability to forecast future conditions. These uncertainties increased business risk, restricted working capital, caused liquidity lock-up, and transformed some previously profitable sales contracts into loss-making commitments. The participants explained that such conditions encouraged the adoption of conservative and contractionary approaches, reductions in development plans, postponement of long-term investments, and stronger attention to organizational survival. Thus, financial pressure functioned as an important mechanism through which environmental changes influenced strategic decision-making.

The third category, supply-chain and operational disruptions, concerned difficulties in obtaining raw materials, machinery, spare parts, equipment, and other essential production resources. Participants reported that dependence on imported materials and equipment increased the organization's vulnerability to sanctions, exchange-rate changes, transportation restrictions, and international financial constraints. These conditions required

modifications in purchasing policies, including continuous purchasing under uncertainty, purchasing only a proportion of anticipated needs, diversifying suppliers, and adjusting production levels in selected areas. The findings showed that supply-chain disruptions did not merely create short-term operational problems; rather, they prompted broader strategic reconsideration of sourcing, production, inventory, and supplier-management policies.

The fourth category, market-oriented and commercial responses, represented the strategic actions adopted to maintain competitiveness and protect the organization's market position. Participants referred to the necessity of changing strategic approaches, adopting flexible pricing policies, shortening the duration of sales contracts, shifting production toward more profitable products, developing new products, entering less saturated markets, modifying sales channels, and identifying opportunities in neighboring countries. Diversification of products and markets was described as a means of overcoming recession, responding to changing demand, and reducing dependence on existing revenue streams. These findings suggested that strategic pivoting was operationalized through deliberate changes in target markets, products, pricing mechanisms, distribution channels, and competitive positioning.

The fifth category, redesign of structure and business model, reflected the need to align organizational architecture and value-creation mechanisms with changing environmental conditions. Participants described the existing holding structure as relatively semi-centralized and, in some areas, insufficiently flexible to respond rapidly to environmental change. They therefore emphasized movement from semi-rigid structures toward more flexible and network-based arrangements, improvement of organizational flexibility, prioritization of strategic projects, systematic resource allocation, and redesign of the business model. Rapid and systematic decision-making was also identified as a critical feature of structural adaptation. The findings indicated that strategic pivot adoption required changes not only in products and markets but also in

governance arrangements, decision-making processes, resource-allocation mechanisms, and the organization's fundamental approach to value creation.

The sixth category, innovation, technology, and digital transformation, represented the technological capabilities needed to support the strategic pivot. Participants emphasized the development of a long-term orientation toward innovation, modernization of production and packaging lines, use of artificial intelligence, analysis of sales and market data, digitalization of production processes, automation, and continuous improvement of product quality. Technology was viewed both as an external driver of change and as an internal instrument for responding to change. Participants also highlighted the importance of monitoring the speed of technological development and ensuring that the organization possessed the capabilities required to absorb and apply new technologies. Consequently, innovation and digital transformation were considered essential for improving efficiency, response speed, product quality, and competitive advantage.

The seventh category, human capital, learning, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot, concerned the organizational capabilities required to implement and sustain strategic change. Participants emphasized the necessity of employing personnel with high levels of technical and managerial knowledge, improving workforce readiness, providing continuous training, encouraging employee ideation, and adopting performance-based incentive systems. They also described a gradual transition from traditional top-down management toward more participatory approaches. Organizational learning, continuous environmental monitoring, scenario revision, rapid implementation, and systematic rather than purely reactive decision-making were identified as essential for creating an intelligent strategic pivot. The participants maintained that a strategic pivot would remain temporary unless it was embedded in organizational routines, workforce capabilities, incentive systems, and decision-making processes.

**Table 1***Aggregation of Open Codes and Their Categorization into Main Categories*

| Row | Main Category                                                            | Refined Subcategories                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Macro-Environmental Changes and External Pressures                       | Sanctions and financial or international restrictions; inflation and price instability; decreased purchasing power; dependence on political parameters; continuous changes in environmental opportunities and threats                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2   | Risk, Uncertainty, and Financial Pressure                                | Increased risk; pressure on working capital; liquidity lock-up; significant reduction in working capital; sales contracts becoming loss-making; lack of a positive future outlook                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 3   | Supply-Chain and Operational Disruptions                                 | Supply-chain disruption; dependence on imported equipment and materials; risks associated with supplying machinery parts; continuous purchasing under conditions of uncertainty; purchasing as a proportion of anticipated needs; diversification of supplier policies                                                                                                                 |
| 4   | Market-Oriented and Commercial Responses                                 | Necessity of changing the strategic approach; adoption of short-term contracts; transfer of production toward more profitable products; intelligent focus and differentiation; entry into less saturated markets; maintenance and strengthening of market leadership; modification of sales channels; overcoming recession through diversification and demand identification           |
| 5   | Redesign of Structure and Business Model                                 | Movement from a semi-rigid structure toward a network structure; recognition of structural alignment with environmental changes; improvement of organizational flexibility; redesign of the business model; allocation of resources to valuable opportunities; rapid and systematic decision-making                                                                                    |
| 6   | Innovation, Technology, and Digital Transformation                       | Emphasis on innovation at the holding-company level; analysis of sales data; attention to consumer preferences; attention to the speed of technological change; use of artificial intelligence; digitalization and automation of production; improvement of product quality                                                                                                            |
| 7   | Human Capital, Learning, and Institutionalization of the Strategic Pivot | Importance of human capital within the holding company; transition from a traditional model toward participatory management; encouragement of employee ideation; performance-based incentive systems; workforce readiness for strategic pivoting; continuous training requirements; employment of personnel with high technical knowledge; institutionalization of the strategic pivot |

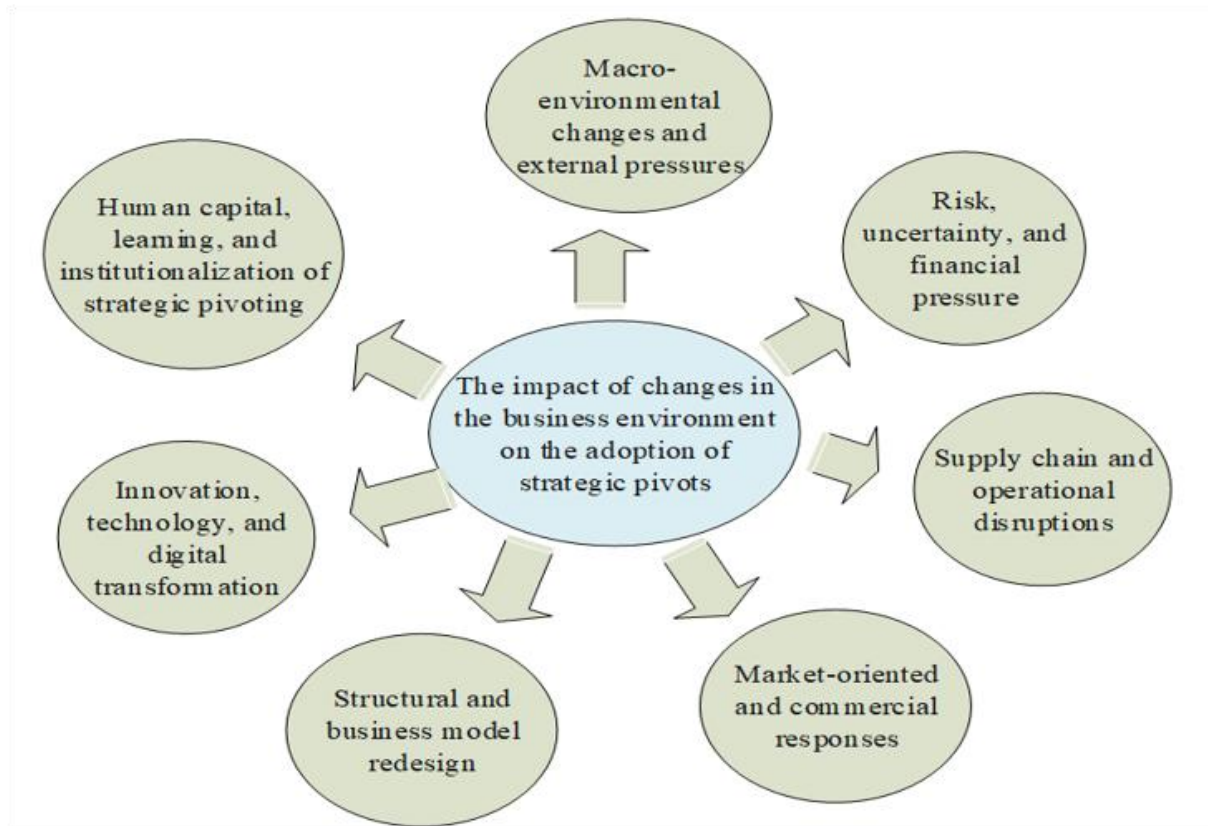
As shown in Table 1, the 173 initial open codes were refined and organized into seven main categories. Macro-environmental changes and external pressures comprised five refined subcategories, risk, uncertainty, and financial pressure comprised six subcategories, and supply-chain and operational disruptions comprised six subcategories. Market-oriented and commercial responses included eight subcategories, while redesign of structure and business model comprised six subcategories. Innovation, technology, and digital transformation included seven subcategories, and human capital, learning, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot comprised eight subcategories. Accordingly, the listed category structure contained 46 category-linked subcategories. The findings demonstrated that strategic pivot adoption in Zar Industrial Group was not the result of a single environmental factor. Instead, it emerged through the interaction of external pressures, financial and operational

constraints, market-oriented responses, structural redesign, technological development, and organizational capabilities.

During selective coding, the seven main categories were integrated around the core phenomenon of adopting a strategic pivot in response to changes in the business environment. Macro-environmental pressures were identified as the principal external drivers that increased risk, financial pressure, and supply-chain instability. These pressures created the need for market reorientation, structural and business-model redesign, and technological transformation. Human capital and organizational learning played an enabling role by supporting the implementation, stabilization, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot. The resulting model therefore explains strategic pivot adoption as a dynamic process through which external environmental pressures are interpreted and transformed into coordinated commercial, operational, structural, technological, and human-resource responses.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model of the Impact of Business Environmental Changes on the Adoption of a Strategic Pivot in Zar Industrial Group*



#### 4 Discussion

The present study investigated how changes in the business environment influence the adoption of a strategic pivot in Zar Industrial Group. The qualitative analysis identified seven interconnected categories: macro-environmental changes and external pressures; risk, uncertainty, and financial pressure; supply-chain and operational disruptions; market-oriented and commercial responses; redesign of organizational structure and business model; innovation, technology, and digital transformation; and human capital, organizational learning, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot. Taken together, these findings indicate that strategic pivoting in Zar Industrial Group is not a single managerial decision or a short-term reaction to an isolated crisis. Rather, it is a multidimensional organizational process through which external turbulence is interpreted, translated into strategic pressure, and addressed through coordinated market, structural, technological, operational, and human-resource responses.

The first major finding concerned the role of macro-environmental changes and external pressures as the primary drivers of strategic pivot adoption. Participants emphasized sanctions, financial and international restrictions, inflation, exchange-rate instability, declining purchasing power, political dependence, and the continuous emergence of environmental threats and opportunities. These factors created a context in which previously effective strategies could no longer guarantee stability, profitability, or organizational growth. This finding suggests that the need for a strategic pivot originates when the fit between the organization and its external environment weakens substantially. In such circumstances, continuing along the existing strategic path can expose the organization to greater risk than undertaking substantial strategic change.

This result is consistent with the view that the quality of the business environment influences internal organizational decisions, performance, and resource allocation. Research has shown that improvements in the business environment can affect organizational outcomes by reducing institutional constraints and supporting more efficient allocation of organizational resources (Lai et al., 2024). Similarly, a

favorable business environment can improve firms' innovation efficiency by facilitating access to resources, knowledge, and institutional support (Han et al., 2023). The present findings extend these arguments by showing that when the business environment deteriorates or becomes unpredictable, firms may be compelled to revise their strategic orientation. In Zar Industrial Group, environmental pressures were not perceived merely as temporary disturbances but as signals that the organization's markets, cost structures, value-creation mechanisms, and strategic assumptions required reconsideration.

The findings also showed that changes in the competitive environment intensified the need for strategic reorientation. Participants referred to the importance of preserving market leadership, entering new markets, differentiating products, and preventing declines in profitability. This finding can be interpreted in light of the growing concentration of markets and the emergence of highly productive dominant firms. Organizations with superior technology, scale, market access, and strategic capabilities may progressively strengthen their positions, whereas less adaptive firms may lose market share and bargaining power (Autor et al., 2020). Therefore, the strategic pivot identified in this study can be understood as a mechanism for avoiding strategic stagnation and maintaining competitiveness in an environment where advantages are increasingly concentrated among firms capable of rapid adaptation.

The second category concerned risk, uncertainty, and financial pressure. Participants reported that environmental instability reduced forecasting accuracy, intensified business risk, restricted working capital, caused liquidity lock-up, and made some sales contracts financially disadvantageous. These conditions encouraged conservative decision-making, contraction of development plans, cost reduction, and avoidance of long-term commitments. The findings demonstrate that financial pressure acts as a mediating mechanism between environmental change and strategic pivot adoption. External turbulence affects the organization through its consequences for liquidity, investment capacity, contractual risk, and expected profitability, thereby creating pressure to revise existing strategies.

This finding corresponds with evidence showing that environmental risk is an important determinant of organizational vulnerability and business failure. Predictive models of business failure indicate that environmental risk contributes meaningfully to the likelihood of organizational decline, particularly when external instability interacts with financial weakness (Romero Martínez et al., 2025). From

this perspective, the strategic pivot adopted by an organization may serve as a preventive response designed to reduce exposure to deteriorating conditions. Rather than waiting until financial distress becomes irreversible, managers may alter products, markets, contracts, cost structures, or investment priorities. The present study therefore supports the argument that strategic pivoting can function as an adaptive risk-management mechanism.

The third finding related to supply-chain and operational disruptions. Participants highlighted dependence on imported raw materials, machinery, and spare parts, as well as the effects of exchange-rate volatility, sanctions, transportation constraints, and supplier-related risks. These pressures required changes in procurement timing, purchasing volume, supplier diversification, inventory policies, and production planning. The results suggest that supply-chain instability can exceed the boundaries of routine operational management and become a strategic issue. When access to essential resources becomes unreliable, the organization may need to reconsider which products to manufacture, where to source inputs, how much inventory to hold, and which markets or production lines remain economically viable.

This result aligns with research emphasizing the strategic importance of supply-chain resilience, collaboration, and environmental coordination. Sustainable supply-chain management requires firms to develop flexible relationships, diversify sources of supply, improve information sharing, and integrate environmental and strategic considerations across the supply network (Singh et al., 2025). In Zar Industrial Group, the strategic pivot was partly driven by the realization that existing supply arrangements could not adequately absorb environmental shocks. Accordingly, changes in supplier policies, procurement practices, and production priorities became essential components of the broader strategic response.

The fourth category, market-oriented and commercial responses, represented the most visible manifestation of the strategic pivot. Participants referred to changing strategic approaches, using short-term contracts, adopting flexible pricing, shifting production toward more profitable products, entering less saturated markets, modifying sales channels, diversifying products, and identifying new customer demands. These findings indicate that a strategic pivot becomes operational when the organization changes the way it creates and captures value in the market. Market reorientation allows the organization to reduce dependence on declining segments and redirect resources toward more

promising products, customers, channels, or geographic markets.

These results are strongly supported by the literature on pivoting and business-model experimentation. A pivot involves a substantive change in strategic direction based on new information about customers, markets, technologies, or organizational performance (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020). The lean startup perspective similarly argues that firms should continuously test strategic assumptions and revise their direction when evidence indicates that the existing approach is ineffective (Ries, 2011). More recent theoretical work has conceptualized lean startup practices as an actionable theory that connects experimentation, feedback, and entrepreneurial learning to strategic change (Blank & Eckhardt, 2024). Although Zar Industrial Group is an established industrial holding rather than a startup, the underlying logic is comparable: managers observe environmental feedback, identify weaknesses in the current strategic model, and adjust products, contracts, markets, and channels accordingly.

The findings are also consistent with empirical studies showing that pivots may involve changes in products, customer groups, technologies, revenue mechanisms, or market positioning (Bajwa et al., 2016). Business-model experimentation enables organizations to examine alternative value propositions and configurations before committing substantial resources to a new direction (Burnell et al., 2023). Moreover, entrepreneurial experimentation is central to business-model evolution because it allows firms to explore, compare, and refine alternative strategic configurations (Sanasi, 2023). In the present study, market diversification, flexible pricing, product prioritization, and entry into neighboring markets represented forms of strategic experimentation through which Zar Industrial Group sought to identify more viable pathways under uncertain conditions.

The fifth category concerned redesign of organizational structure and the business model. Participants emphasized movement from semi-rigid arrangements toward more flexible network structures, alignment of organizational structure with environmental conditions, rapid and systematic decision-making, prioritization of strategic projects, and allocation of resources to valuable opportunities. These findings show that a successful pivot requires more than changes in products or markets. If the organization's governance system, decision-making hierarchy, resource-allocation processes, and value-creation

logic remain unchanged, the new strategic direction may not be implemented effectively.

This result supports the view that strategic pivoting entails a reconfiguration of organizational activities rather than a superficial modification of tactics. Research on business-model dynamics shows that experimentation and pivoting influence how firms organize their resources and activities to create, deliver, and capture value (Burnell et al., 2023; Sanasi, 2023). The findings of the present study further suggest that the complexity of an industrial holding company makes structural adaptation particularly important. Multiple subsidiaries, centralized governance, established routines, and interdependent operational units can slow strategic change unless decision-making authority, coordination mechanisms, and resource-allocation procedures are redesigned.

The sixth category involved innovation, technology, and digital transformation. Participants identified artificial intelligence, sales-data analysis, production automation, modernization of production and packaging lines, attention to technological change, and product-quality improvement as critical elements of strategic pivoting. These findings imply that technology operates simultaneously as a source of environmental disruption and as a means of organizational adaptation. Rapid technological change can render existing processes inefficient, but the adoption of digital tools can also improve forecasting, decision-making, production efficiency, customer analysis, and market responsiveness.

The relationship between environmental quality and innovation efficiency identified in previous research supports this interpretation (Han et al., 2023). Firms operating in dynamic environments require technological capabilities that allow them to process information and respond quickly to changing conditions. Furthermore, innovation and entrepreneurship can contribute to environmental sustainability by enabling firms to redesign production systems, reduce resource waste, and develop more sustainable business models (Köseoglu, 2025). The participants' emphasis on automation, artificial intelligence, and product quality suggests that Zar Industrial Group's strategic pivot is not limited to short-term survival but may also provide a foundation for longer-term competitiveness and sustainable value creation.

The environmental dimension of strategic change is also consistent with ethical perspectives that consider organizations responsible for the ecological consequences of their activities. Corporate decisions concerning technology, production, sourcing, and packaging should reflect

obligations toward environmental protection and nature, rather than being guided exclusively by immediate financial outcomes (Özdemirkol, 2025). Although environmental responsibility did not emerge as a separate main category in the present study, it can be inferred that technological modernization and business-model redesign provide opportunities to integrate sustainability principles into the strategic pivot.

The seventh category concerned human capital, organizational learning, and institutionalization of the strategic pivot. Participants emphasized workforce readiness, technical expertise, continuous training, employee ideation, participatory management, performance-based incentives, scenario revision, environmental monitoring, and systematic decision-making. This finding demonstrates that strategic pivoting cannot be sustained solely through senior-management directives. Employees must understand the new direction, acquire the necessary skills, participate in implementation, and incorporate new practices into everyday organizational routines.

This result is consistent with research indicating that individual, organizational, cultural, and environmental factors collectively influence human-resource productivity (Ramazani Borukhani et al., 2025). Workforce competencies, organizational culture, motivation, and participation determine whether strategic plans are translated into effective action. The findings also align with research on organizational identity dynamics in pivoting. Strategic change can create tension when the new direction conflicts with established beliefs about the organization's identity and purpose (Snihur & Clarysse, 2022). Continuous communication, participation, and learning may therefore reduce resistance and help employees connect the pivot to the organization's broader vision.

## 5 Conclusion

Overall, the findings reveal a sequential and reciprocal process. Macro-environmental turbulence creates financial, operational, and competitive pressures. These pressures stimulate market-oriented responses, structural and business-model redesign, and technological transformation. Human capital and organizational learning then enable the implementation and institutionalization of these changes. The proposed model therefore explains strategic pivot adoption as a dynamic capability through which the organization senses environmental changes, interprets their implications, reallocates resources, reconfigures activities,

and stabilizes a new strategic direction. The findings extend existing pivot research by demonstrating how pivoting occurs within a large industrial holding company operating under substantial economic, political, and supply-chain uncertainty.

This study had several limitations. First, the research was conducted within a single industrial holding company, which may limit the transferability of the findings to organizations operating in other industries, regions, or institutional environments. Second, the data were obtained from 12 academic and executive experts through purposive sampling; although theoretical saturation was achieved, other organizational stakeholders, including middle managers, operational employees, suppliers, distributors, and customers, may have provided additional perspectives. Third, the findings were based on participants' retrospective accounts, which may have been influenced by selective recall or subjective interpretation. Finally, the qualitative design identified perceived relationships among environmental changes and strategic responses but did not quantitatively test the strength, direction, or causal significance of the relationships represented in the conceptual model.

Future studies should test the proposed conceptual model using quantitative or mixed-method designs and larger samples from different industries and geographical regions. Researchers may develop and validate a measurement instrument based on the identified categories and examine the direct and indirect relationships among environmental turbulence, financial pressure, supply-chain disruption, strategic pivot adoption, technological capability, organizational learning, and performance. Comparative studies could investigate whether the drivers and forms of strategic pivoting differ between startups, established firms, family businesses, industrial holding companies, and public organizations. Longitudinal research is also recommended to examine how strategic pivots evolve over time and whether their effects on profitability, resilience, market share, innovation, and organizational identity are sustained.

Managers should establish formal systems for continuously monitoring economic, political, technological, market, and supply-chain developments and translating environmental signals into strategic scenarios. Strategic pivot decisions should be based on coordinated analysis rather than fragmented or purely reactive responses. Zar Industrial Group and similar organizations should strengthen flexible pricing and contracting mechanisms, diversify suppliers and markets, prioritize profitable product lines, and

accelerate digitalization and data-based decision-making. Structural flexibility should be improved by clarifying decision authority, shortening approval processes, and allocating resources toward high-value opportunities. Finally, continuous employee training, participatory management, ideation systems, performance-based incentives, and transparent communication should be used to embed the strategic pivot in organizational culture and routine practices.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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