

Renewable Energy as a Mediating Variable in the Relationship between Strategic Planning and Sustainable Development in Palestinian Local Authorities

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Abstract

This study primarily aims to explore the correlations between strategic planning practices and the achievement of sustainable development in Palestinian local authorities. To accomplish the study's objectives, a descriptive-correlational approach was employed to examine the relationship and impact between the study variables from the perspectives of members of strategic planning committees in the major governorates of the northern West Bank (Nablus, Tulkarm, Jenin, Tubas, Salfit, and Qalqilya). The study model was tested using a sample of 262 members, whose responses were collected through an electronic questionnaire. Non-probability (convenience) sampling was used for ease of data collection. The questionnaire served as the research tool, and the data were analyzed using the Smart-PLS4 software. The results revealed a statistically significant correlation between strategic planning and sustainable development, between strategic planning and the orientation toward renewable energy, and between the orientation toward renewable energy and the achievement of sustainable development. The study emphasized the role of renewable energy as an intermediary between strategic planning and sustainable development. These findings highlight the importance of strategic planning focused on sustainability and the transition to renewable energy as key drivers for achieving sustainable development in Palestinian territories.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Sustainable Development, Renewable Energy.

1. Introduction

Sustainable development represents a pivotal global issue, having gained significant attention in recent decades due to the exacerbation of environmental degradation caused by prioritizing economic aspects over environmental and social ones. The concept of sustainable development became evident in the 1987 report by the World Commission on Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland Report, which aims to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, while achieving a balance between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Cressida, 2020).

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, relying on 233 global indicators to monitor the achievement of these goals. The SDGs serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the next 15 years, with a focus on people, planet, economic growth, partnerships, peace, and justice. Considering these transformations, the crucial role of strategic planning in considering current and future requirements and achieving a balance between them is emphasized. The term "planning" first emerged in 1910 through an article by Austrian economist Christian Schwind. Planning involves setting goals and directing resources towards achieving them in effective ways. The term "strategy" has Greek origins, meaning "the art of leadership," and in management, it refers to setting organizational goals and directing resources to achieve them over the long term. Strategic planning is defined by (Salem.2021) as a process of guiding management in relation to the work environment over the long term, identifying the strengths and weaknesses that the organization may encounter to ensure business growth. (Al-Araimia .2023) describes it as a roadmap to achieve organizational goals by allocating resources and making necessary decisions. (Othman.2021) emphasizes that strategic planning is an effective tool for enabling organizations to achieve their goals, as it helps identify current and future capabilities and provides the requirements for growth and stability. It also links organizations to their environment, contributing to the selection of optimal strategies to deal with environmental changes, exploit opportunities, and avoid threats. Recent evidence shows that countries that follow strategic planning in sustainable development are more capable of achieving their goals. Fang et al. (2022) agree that integrating SDGs into local plans is the starting point for localization and effective implementation.

Furthermore, (Al-Koni.2019) pointed out that local authorities in Palestine play a vital role in local sustainable development, as they represent a direct interface between the government and citizens, enabling them to identify and meet the needs of the population, thereby improving the quality of services provided to the Palestinian community. (Abdulkarim.2023) confirmed in his study that solar energy projects and the promotion of renewable energy production are among the most important projects that can be supported by local authorities, given the political, economic, and social challenges facing Palestine in providing energy sources. Renewable energy is defined as energy derived from inexhaustible natural sources that are replenished faster than they are consumed. These sources include biomass, sunlight, wind, water, and geothermal heat. These energies are characterized by being clean and not causing environmental pollution, unlike fossil energy, which is polluting. The current energy system is responsible for two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions, and the cost of climate change is expected to reach \$150-170 billion by 2030, with developing countries bearing more than half of this cost (Ghanem, 2023). Palestine also suffers from a scarcity of energy resources, importing 88% of its electricity needs from Israel at an annual cost estimated at around \$2.6 billion (Energy Authority, 2019). Hareizat (2021) added that the cost of energy is a significant burden on the government and citizens, with the share of electricity from an individual's income ranging between 12-17%, which is much higher than neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, where it ranges between 2%. This reality presents a serious challenge for local authorities in formulating and implementing strategies that provide wider

alternatives and options for electricity supply, relying on renewable, clean, and sustainable energy sources. This aligns with global trends towards using alternative and sustainable energy sources, reducing the impact of fossil fuels on the environment, human health, and various channels of influence. In this context, measuring the ability of renewable energy as an intermediary variable to explore the interconnected relationship between strategic planning and sustainable development through renewable energy can enhance local authorities' capabilities in achieving environmental and economic sustainability

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Strategic planning

Strategic planning plays a crucial role in guiding organizations' paths and enhancing administrative processes. Organizations that embrace strategic planning tend to outperform those that don't, as it directly contributes to improved performance and efficiency. The concept of planning dates to 1910 when Austrian economist Christian Schwinder first introduced it, gaining further prominence after the Soviet Union adopted "comprehensive planning" in 1928. At its core, planning involves setting goals and aligning resources to achieve them efficiently, minimizing costs and maximizing productivity. The term "strategy," derived from the Greek word for "the art of the general," underscores its deep connection to leadership and management, focusing on long-term goals and resource allocation to drive success.

While strategic planning has various definitions, scholars agree on its core purpose. Salem (2021) defines it as the process of guiding management to navigate the long-term work environment, identifying opportunities and challenges to ensure sustainable growth and profitability. Al-Araimia (2023) highlights its importance in achieving organizational goals, offering a clear roadmap that defines direction, allocates resources, and supports critical decisions for future success. Thus, strategic planning is a scientific process that involves setting the main goals of an organization and determining effective ways to achieve them. This is done by analyzing the internal and external environment of the organization and identifying the strategies and plans needed to achieve these goals with minimal cost and effort. Strategic planning requires a clear and forward-looking vision that interacts with continuous environmental changes and helps direct the organization's efforts towards achieving excellence and success

Dimensions of Strategic Planning

In this study, the stages of strategic planning are adopted as dimensions of the variable "strategic planning practices." These stages represent key steps in the strategic planning process, each contributing to the overall effectiveness and success of strategic decision-making within organizations. By examining these stages as distinct dimensions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how each phase influences the execution and outcomes of strategic planning practices.

Strategic planning involves several stages aimed at systematically and methodically defining goals and the means to achieve them. These stages, according to Shabir (2022), are as follows:

1. **Planning Stage:** In this stage, the organization's goals and nature of work are determined, as well as what it should be in the future. The planning team is identified, the current leadership's readiness to use strategic planning is assessed, and potential obstacles are identified.
2. **Internal and External Environmental Analysis:** This stage aims to understand the extent of changes in the external environment and identify opportunities and threats that the organization may face, in addition to determining its competitive attributes. Othman (201) referred to some common methods used for environmental analysis, such as SWOT for internal environment analysis and PESTLE for external environment analysis.
3. **Formulating the Strategic Plan:** As defined by Riyad et al. (2023), this stage involves the organization's approach in setting its vision, defining its goals, and directing its efforts through analyzing its internal and external environments to identify opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses. This stage is divided into three steps:

A. Defining the Vision: According to Kafsi (2020), the vision is a future description related to the ambition the organization seeks to achieve, as its duration extends into the distant future. The vision aims to serve as a guide in the organization's decision-making and policy direction in the present and future. According to Al-Khazaaleh (2023), the vision should be growth-oriented, forward-looking, realistic, flexible, measurable, and time-specific.

B. Formulating the Mission: a summary of the organization's primary purpose of existence. The mission relates to the fundamental goal of the organization, as it describes the overarching aim and serves as a tool to guide employees, the public, and stakeholders, capturing their attention with passion and enthusiasm towards the organization's goals (Al-Araimia, 2023).

Hence, the mission differs from the vision, where the vision represents the organization's future ambitions and hopes, while the mission forms the foundation upon which the vision is based. For instance, if the organization's vision is to become a leader, the mission specifies how the organization seeks to achieve this dream.

C. Setting Objectives: These are the outcomes or performance levels intended to be achieved within a specific timeframe. Qotb (2023) summarized the important considerations when setting objectives. He emphasized the importance of aligning with the organization's general purposes, being measurable and verifiable, flexible, clear, and involving wide participation of employees in setting them.

4. **Implementing the Strategy:** where the strategy is transformed into concrete actions and programs of action. The budgets and actions necessary to initiate implementation of the strategy are identified, and the strategic objectives are transformed into measurable annual targets. According to Othman (2021) implementation stage contains the following

elements: Programs are activities and steps that support the strategy. Budgets securing financial resources for each activity, with attention to financial resources during strategic plan implementation. Procedures are a system that contains a set of steps or detailed working methods to explain the implementation of a particular task

5. **Evaluation and Control the Strategy:** Al-Harari (2024) emphasized that this final step in the strategic planning process, focusing on performance evaluation and taking necessary corrective actions by comparing the achieved results with the predetermined objectives.

Obstacles to Strategic Planning

The strategic planning process faces numerous challenges that affect its success and effectiveness. According to Riyadh et al. (2023), the challenges of the formulation stage include conflict and ambiguity of goals, a focus on short-term goals, and a lack of managerial competencies. In the implementation stage, the challenges include difficulty in information transfer due to a bureaucratic organizational structure, lack of resources, and administrative slackness. In the evaluation stage, challenges arise in setting quantitative measures for goals, focusing on input control, difficulty in obtaining information, and a lack of performance-linked incentive systems.

In the Palestinian context, significant challenges emerge in implementing strategic plans in local authorities, as many previous plans were not effectively applied. Afana (2023) points to the gap between strategic goals and achieved outcomes, because of the complex political conditions and the challenges imposed by the Israeli occupation. Unrealistic planning and misalignment with available resources are major factors in planning failures. Additionally, the misalignment of strategy with the organizational structure and the employees' lack of understanding of its nature lead to internal resistance. Sabri et al. (2020) noted that some local authorities perceive developmental plans as routine, which negatively affect resource management. Abdel qader (2023) explained that obstacles include ambiguity in the concept of strategic planning, decision-making, limited budgets, and weakness of the incentive system. Implementing strategic goals practically represents an additional challenge that must be overcome.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, first defined in the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report, is the concept of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. This definition encompasses social, political, cultural, and environmental aspects and laid the foundation for the 1992 Rio Declaration, which launched global sustainability initiatives. While there are various definitions, they all emphasize balancing societal prosperity with resource preservation for future generations (Issa, 2023). The World Bank highlights it as ensuring equal opportunities across generations by maintaining capital (Al-Tamimi, 2020). Sustainable development aims to enhance well-being while protecting future potential, integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Forkuo, 2019). Ultimately, it requires collaboration between local governments, communities, and the private sector, along with strategic planning and smart decision-making to ensure long-term sustainability.

Sustainable Development Dimensions: The concept of sustainable development, as mentioned earlier, includes three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic.

First: The Environmental Dimension: The environmental dimension of sustainable development focuses on preserving natural resources and ecosystems by achieving environmental balance and addressing challenges such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. This includes protecting soil, vegetation cover, water resources, combating global warming, and preventing extinction and destruction of ecological habitats. The dimension relies on the principle of resilience to ensure the sustainability of ecosystems and their ability to adapt. Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference, environmental issues have become an integral part of the sustainable development agenda and are reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), and Goal 15 (Life on Land) (Daqah, 2022).

Second: The economic dimension of sustainable development aims to balance economic growth with the preservation of natural resources and improving quality of life. This is achieved by reducing energy and resource consumption and mitigating negative environmental impacts (Ali, 2021). Ali also highlights the importance of improving income and distributing resources fairly, while ensuring sustainable access to essential needs like food, housing, education, and healthcare. On the other hand, Daqah (2022) points out the necessity of enhancing efficiency in production and consumption and avoiding unsustainable resource depletion. Furthermore, Shmouly (2022) emphasizes the importance of raising living standards, welfare, and economic opportunities, which in turn reduces poverty and provides decent work opportunities, all contributing to sustainable development.

Third: The social dimension of sustainable development focuses on human aspects, making development a means to enhance social interaction and policy development based on justice between generations and nations, turning it into a democratic project and a platform for dialogue between different development models (Ali, 2021). Hassan (2021) pointed out that the social dimension prioritizes humans as the core of development, emphasizing social justice, poverty alleviation, and the provision of social services to all individuals within the community. Furthermore, Abdel Karim (2023) identified three main trends in social development: social welfare, social change, and social services, with indicators such as the availability of government services, cultural awareness, and acceptance of others.

Sustainable development challenges represent a significant hurdle for many countries and communities around the world. The obstacles to sustainable development are as follows, as indicated by the study (Hosny, 2023): Achieving sustainable development presents a significant challenge for many countries and communities around the world, with several obstacles hindering progress. First, poverty and economic inequality have a profound impact on individuals' ability to access essential services such as education and healthcare, deepening economic instability. Second, external debt is a heavy burden on developing countries, limiting their resources for investment in sustainable development. Additionally, wars and conflicts destroy the infrastructure

and economies of affected nations, making it difficult to rebuild and achieve sustainable development after the conflict ends. Moreover, climate change and the scarcity of natural resources threaten both environmental and economic sustainability, negatively impacting agriculture, industry, and the livelihoods of populations. On the other hand, weak education and healthcare systems hinder individuals from actively participating in sustainable development. Finally, increasing environmental challenges driven by globalization, such as pollution and resource depletion, exacerbate these obstacles through the rising flow of trade, industry, and resource consumption.

According to the researcher's perspective, the process of sustainable development in Palestine faces significant challenges due to a combination of internal and external obstacles. Among the external obstacles, the Israeli occupation is the most prominent. Its policies, such as land confiscation, control over natural resources, and restrictions on developmental projects, significantly reduce the Palestinian Authority's ability to implement its development plans. Moreover, the Oslo Accords and the Paris Protocol reinforce economic dependency on Israel, limiting the Palestinian Authority's capacity to formulate appropriate economic policies (Salama, 2019). Additionally, Israeli measures affect the provision of basic services and increase agricultural production costs, hindering economic stability (Ghafri, 2020). On the internal front, the Palestinian Authority faces issues related to governance and institutional coordination. The overlap of responsibilities between various Palestinian institutions leads to weak coordination and a lack of clear developmental priorities. Furthermore, Palestinian institutions struggle with planning and implementation, preventing the achievement of comprehensive and effective development (Hosni, 2023). The political division between the West Bank and Gaza also contributes to deepening gaps and complicates national policy coordination. Other obstacles include a shortage of natural resources, difficulties related to the geographical disconnection between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the uneven distribution of population between rural and urban areas, which increases poverty in rural areas and affects development opportunities (Ghafri, 2020). In conclusion, the occupation and its related policies are the main obstacles to achieving sustainable development in Palestine, as these policies contribute to structural distortions in the Palestinian economy and limit future growth prospects (Ghafri, 2020).

Renewable Energy

According to the United Nations Environment Protection Programme, renewable energy is defined as energy derived from sources that are not fixed or specific reserves in nature. It renewed periodically faster than the rate of its consumption and appears in the following five forms: biomass, sunlight, wind, and energy. All renewable energy sources are derived from inexhaustible non-fossil energy sources. These are natural, permanent, inexhaustible sources available in nature in unlimited quantities, without environmental pollution when used. These clean energies include solar, wind, hydropower (tidal), and geothermal energy, unlike fossil energy sources that produce polluting gases. The current energy system is a major environmental pollutant, responsible for two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions. The cost of climate change is expected to reach \$150-170 billion by 2030, with developing countries bearing more than half of this cost (Ghanem, 2023).

Therefore, we define renewable energy as energy obtained from permanent and inexhaustible natural sources. These sources are characterized by their ability to renew sustainably without depletion, which makes them a sustainable energy source, such as solar, wind, water, and geothermal energy. Renewable energy is a clean alternative to fossil fuels, as it does not cause greenhouse gas emissions or environmental pollution. It also contributes to enhancing energy independence and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Motivations for Shifting to Renewable Energy

According to Ghanem's study (2023), there are three primary drivers propelling the world towards the development and utilization of renewable energy. Firstly, global energy security is at stake as the demand for conventional energy is projected to increase, threatening global energy security, especially with escalating conflicts in regions rich in petroleum resources. Secondly, concerns about climate change have surged, with renewable energy emerging as a sustainable option that contributes to meeting energy needs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Thirdly, the decreasing cost of renewable energy has made renewable energy technologies more cost-competitive due to technological advancements. On the other hand, as highlighted in another study by Rabea et al. (2023), nations are gravitating towards renewable energy due to the ubiquitous availability of energy sources, reduced costs, enhanced energy security, and improved health outcomes. The International Renewable Energy Agency projects that 90% of global electricity could be generated from renewable sources by 2050.

In the Palestinian context, researchers highlight several driving forces that motivate local authorities to adopt renewable energy. Firstly, growing environmental challenges such as pollution and climate change make the reliance on renewable energy a necessary step to protect the environment. Secondly, achieving energy independence through locally generated power enhances both economic and political autonomy. Thirdly, it stimulates local economic activity by creating new job opportunities and fostering collaboration with local businesses. Fourthly, the decreasing cost of renewable energy due to technological advancements makes it an economically attractive option. Fifthly, Palestine's commitment to achieving international sustainability and climate change goals is facilitated by the adoption of renewable energy. Lastly, local leaders perceive the importance of investing in renewable energy sources as part of a long-term vision aimed at achieving sustainability and securing a better future for generations to come.

2. Study Problem and Questions

Palestinian local authorities face a multitude of challenges that significantly hinder their ability to achieve sustainable development, with the ****Israeli occupation**** standing out as the most prominent barrier. According to the MAS Institute report (2022), the occupation imposes severe restrictions that stifle Palestinian development, systematically undermining the societal infrastructure. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (2022) echoed these concerns, highlighting that occupation policies not only prevent development but also lead to humanitarian crises, making the Palestinian economy heavily dependent on external aid and the occupation itself.

As pointed out by Sbagnah (2020), the occupation further compounds these issues by restricting Palestinians' control over their land and resources. By closing crossing points, limiting movement, and destroying vital infrastructure, the occupation exacerbates economic distortions and deepens structural poverty. Ghafri (2020) added that these policies also hinder access to clean and affordable energy for Palestinians. While the Oslo Accords had outlined the transfer of electricity generation to the Palestinian government, this was only realized in Gaza after the Israeli disengagement in 2005. In the West Bank, electricity generation remains under Israeli control, resulting in mounting debts for the Palestinian government to the Israeli Electric Corporation. In fact, by the end of the first nine months of 2023, deductions from clearance revenues had reached a staggering 716.6 million shekels (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Moreover, Safarini (2024) pointed out that Israeli policies further restrict energy development, particularly in **Area C**, which comprises about 60% of the West Bank. These restrictions prevent the utilization of renewable energy sources, obstructing the potential for energy independence and hindering Palestinian aspirations for sustainable energy solutions. Abdulkarim (2023) also highlighted that frequent electricity shortages and outages are taking a heavy toll on local authorities, exacerbating economic challenges, raising poverty and unemployment rates, and diminishing the quality of essential social services. The MAS Institute (2024) underscored that **the transition to sustainable energy** in Palestine has become not just a goal but an urgent necessity, especially in light of the Israeli war on Gaza. This conflict has exposed the risks associated with relying on electricity imports from Israel and large, vulnerable power plants. Khalidi stressed that the cost of transitioning to sustainable energy is significantly lower—four and a half times less than importing electricity—highlighting that solar energy projects in Palestine could generate electricity at 40-50% lower costs. He also emphasized the need for a unified Palestinian vision and strategy in this vital sector. According to Al-Quds newspaper (2023), renewable energy could meet up to 13% of Palestine's electricity demand, with 6.6% coming from wind energy alone, while converting animal waste into biogas could address 20% of the rural population's energy needs. Considering the above, the study aims to address the following central question: What is the role of renewable energy as a mediating variable in the relationship between strategic planning and sustainable development in Palestinian local authorities?

2.1 Study Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the correlation between strategic planning practices and achieving sustainable development in Palestinian local authorities?
2. What is the correlation between strategic planning practices and the adoption of renewable energy in Palestinian local authorities?
3. What is the correlation between the adoption of renewable energy and achieving sustainable development in Palestinian local authorities?

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4. What is the mediating role of renewable energy in the relationship between strategic planning and achieving sustainable development in Palestinian local authorities?

3. Methodology and Procedures

This section describes the study's methodology, target population, tools, procedures, and statistical methods used.

3.1 Study Methodology

The study examined interactions and causal relationships between the study variables by addressing its research questions. The descriptive correlational method was used due to its suitability for the study's purposes.

3.2 Study Limitations

During the preparation of this research, several limitations were encountered that affected the scope and results. The study relied on a convenient sample of strategic planning committee members from larger municipalities in the northern West Bank, which limited the generalizability of the findings to all Palestinian municipalities. Due to the dispersed geography of the region, there were challenges in distributing and collecting surveys, which slowed data collection. Additionally, some municipalities had varying degrees of data availability, affecting the uniformity of analysis. The reliance on surveys alone, without personal interviews, also restricted the ability to explore certain aspects in greater depth. Lastly, difficulties in accessing central and southern West Bank governorates prevented a full representation of all regions. Despite these challenges, the study effectively gathered meaningful data on the subject.

3.3 Study Population & Sample

The target population for this study consisted of members of strategic planning committees in local authorities in Northern West Bank, totaling 763 members according to the most recent local development plan issued for major local authorities in Northern West Bank (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Tubas, Salfit) . A convenience sample of 256 members was selected according to Thompson's formula.

3.4 Study Instrument

To answer the research questions, the study utilized the **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) ** approach, employing **Smart-PLS4** software. This method enabled a thorough analysis of the study's three core latent variables: **strategic planning practices** (independent variable), defined by its dimensions of internal and external environmental analysis, plan formulation, plan implementation, and plan monitoring and evaluation; **orientation towards renewable energy** (mediating variable); and **sustainable development** (dependent variable), measured through its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021), the evaluation of the study model was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved analyzing the **measurement model** (external model) to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs, while the second

stage focused on the **structural model** (internal model), examining the relationships between the variables. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how strategic planning, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable development are interrelated, highlighting the critical mediating role of renewable energy in fostering sustainable development.

Reliability of the Study Instrument

For a study instrument to be considered valid, it must also demonstrate reliability, as emphasized by Tavakol and Dennick (2011). Reliability, in this context, refers to internal consistency—the degree to which the items within the measurement tool are interrelated and effectively measure the same underlying construct. In research, the most widely used method to assess both the validity and reliability of an instrument is the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) (Kline, 2015). This coefficient helps ensure that the tool consistently captures the intended variables, offering confidence in the accuracy and robustness of the study's measurements.

Table (1): Reliability Coefficients for Study Tool Dimensions

Variable	Number of paragraphs	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Strategic planning practices	26	0.946
Sustainable Development	15	0.912
Renewable energy	11	0.907

(Prepared by researchers from the SPSSv28 program)

Table (1) demonstrates that the reliability coefficients for the questionnaire items ranged from 0.907 to 0.947, reflecting an exceptionally high level of internal consistency. These values make the instrument highly suitable for scientific research, particularly in the fields of economics and humanities, as recommended by George (2003). This strong reliability ensures that the research instrument is robust, dependable, and capable of yielding valid results, reinforcing its scientific credibility.

4. Study Results

Results of the Measurement Model Evaluation

The evaluation of the measurement model focuses on analyzing the relationships between latent variables and their respective indicators (questions). To assess this model, two key criteria must be met: convergent validity, which ensures the reliability and credibility of the indicators, and discriminate validity, which confirms that each latent variable is distinct and does not overlap with others in explaining the model.

Table (2) presents the results of the convergent validity tests. According to Hair et al. (2021), three criteria must be met for convergent validity: factor loadings should exceed 0.50, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.50, and both composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha should be above 0.70. The study instrument included 52 items, as shown in Figure 3. Upon testing internal consistency (factor loadings), item a08 was found to have a loading below 0.50 and was therefore removed. All remaining items had loadings exceeding

0.50. Additionally, the results for composite reliability (CR) were all above 0.70, meeting the internal consistency criterion, confirming a high level of consistency among the study factors (Hair et al., 2016). The AVE values also exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating that the AVE criterion was met and demonstrating strong agreement among the questions related to each factor. This evaluation confirms the robustness of the measurement model, ensuring both the reliability and validity of the study instrument.

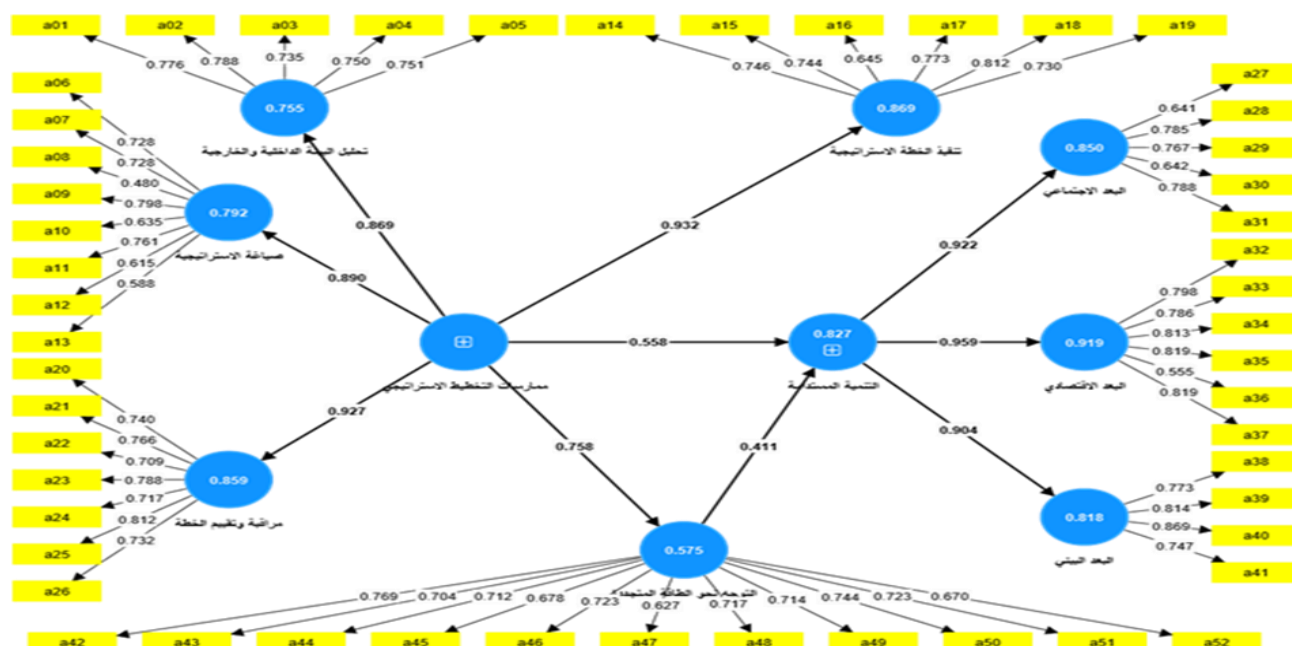


Figure (1): Results of the analysis of the standard model Measurement Model

Table (2): Results of convergent validity tests for study variables

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor loadings	Items	Variables
0.578	0.819	0.815	0.776	A01	Environmental Analysis
			0.788	A02	
			0.735	A03	
			0.750	A04	
			0.751	A05	
0.591	0.834	0.816	0.728	A06	Strategic Plan Formulation
			0.728	A07	
			Delete	A08	
			0.798	A09	
			0.635	A10	
			0.761	A11	

			0.615	A12	
			0.588	A13	
			0.746	A14	
			0.744	A15	
0.553	0.840	0.835	0.645	A16	Strategic Plan Implementation
			0.773	A17	
			0.812	A18	
			0.730	A19	
			0.740	A20	
			0.766	A21	
			0.709	A22	
0.567	0.875	0.870	0.788	A23	Strategic Plan Monitoring and Evaluation
			0.717	A24	
			0.812	A25	
			0.732	A26	
			0.641	A27	
			0.785	A28	
0.529	0.788	0.761	0.767	A29	Social Dimension
			0.642	A30	
			0.788	A31	
			0.798	A32	
			0.786	A33	
			0.813	A34	
0.594	0.874	0.845	0.819	A35	Economic Dimension
			0.555	A36	
			0.819	A37	
			0.773	A38	
0.643	0.822	0.913	0.814	A39	Environmental Dimension
			0.869	A40	
			0.747	A41	
			0.769	A42	
			0.704	A43	
			0.712	A44	
			0.678	A45	
			0.717	A46	
			0.714	A47	
0.502	0.905	0.907	0.717	A48	Renewable Energy
			0.714	A49	
			0.744	A50	
			0.723	A51	
			0.869	A40	
			0.747	A41	

The discriminate validity of the study model was assessed using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) criterion, following the guidelines of Henseler et al. (2015). For the discriminate validity to be considered satisfactory, the HTMT value between any pair of variables should be less than 0.90. Table 3 presents the HTMT values, demonstrating that the model meets this criterion, confirming that the latent variables are distinct and do not overlap in their explanations. This ensures that the study's variables are properly differentiated, enhancing the model's overall validity.

Table (3): HTMT test results

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Environmental Analysis										
Strategic Formulation	0.714									
Strategic Implementation	0.777	0.417								
Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategic	0.487	0.397	0.714							
Strategic Planning Practices	0.741	0.547	0.511	0.414						
Social Dimension	0.871	0.444	0.617	0.571	0.647					
Economic Dimension	0.666	0.471	0.628	0.555	0.663	0.714				
Environmental Dimension	0.657	0.357	0.712	0.639	0.702	0.814	0.754			
Sustainable Development	0.587	0.774	0.711	0.601	0.814	0.571	0.347	0.711		
Renewable Energy	0.479	0.357	0.801	0.714	0.889	0.499	0.598	0.571	0.814	

Prepared by researchers using SmartPLS-4

Based on table (3) findings, the measurement model demonstrates both discriminate and convergent validity, confirming that the scale is both valid and reliable. With these criteria met, the study's measurement model is robust, allowing for the next step: the evaluation of the structural model.

Structural Model Evaluation Results

After confirming the reliability and validity of the latent variables, the next stage involved evaluating the structural model, which examines the relationships between the latent variables. This evaluation encompassed several steps, beginning with hypothesis testing, where the significance of the path coefficients was assessed. If the path coefficients were significant, the hypotheses were accepted. The R^2 value was then used to determine how much of the variance in the dependent variables could be explained by the independent variables, followed by the f^2 value to assess the strength of each independent variable's effect. Finally, the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index was calculated to evaluate the overall fit of the model.

Bootstrapping was performed on a sample of 261 cases to assess the statistical significance of the model, following the methodology outlined by Hair et al. (2021). The R^2 values for sustainable development and renewable energy orientation were found to be 0.826 and 0.575, respectively, exceeding the minimum recommended value of 0.26 (Cohen, 2013). This indicates that strategic planning practices and renewable energy orientation together explain 82.6% of the variance in sustainable development, while 57.5% of the variance in renewable energy orientation is explained by strategic planning practices. The f^2 values indicate a large effect size for both strategic planning (which has a strong impact on both sustainable development and renewable energy orientation) and renewable energy orientation (which significantly affects sustainable development). Path coefficients were assessed for statistical significance using bootstrapping, with t-values and p-values calculated for all structural paths. A p-value below 0.05 and a t-value above 1.96 confirm significant relationships. The beta coefficient indicates the direction of the relationships, where positive values show positive relationships, and negative values indicate negative ones. These findings are summarized in Table (4).

Table (4): Results of the fourth hypothesis H4

Relationship	P-value	T-value	Beta	The path	Hypotheses
Significant	0.000	8.554	0.557	Strategic Planning Practices -> Sustainable Development	H1: Direct
Significant	0.000	16.622	0.758	Strategic Planning Practices -> Renewable Energy	H2: Direct
Significant	0.000	6.280	0.412	Renewable Energy -> Sustainable Development	H3: Direct
Significant	0.000	5.689	0.312	Strategic Planning Practices -> Renewable Energy -> Sustainable Development	H4: Indirect

The results in the previous table show that all direct hypotheses are valid with a strong significance level of 0.000. The path coefficient for the relationship between strategic planning practices and sustainable development is Beta = 0.557, with a T-value greater than 8.554, indicating that improved strategic planning practices lead to 55.7% achievement in sustainable development, thus supporting the first hypothesis. Similarly, the path coefficient between strategic planning and renewable energy is Beta = 0.758, with a T-value exceeding 1.96, confirming the second hypothesis.

For the relationship between renewable energy and sustainable development, the path coefficient is Beta = 0.412, with a T-value above 1.96, showing that a shift towards renewable energy contributes 41.2% to sustainable development, thus supporting the third hypothesis. Lastly, the indirect relationship between strategic planning and sustainable development, mediated by renewable energy, has a Beta value of 0.312 and a T-value greater than 1.96, confirming the mediating role of renewable energy and validating the fourth hypothesis.

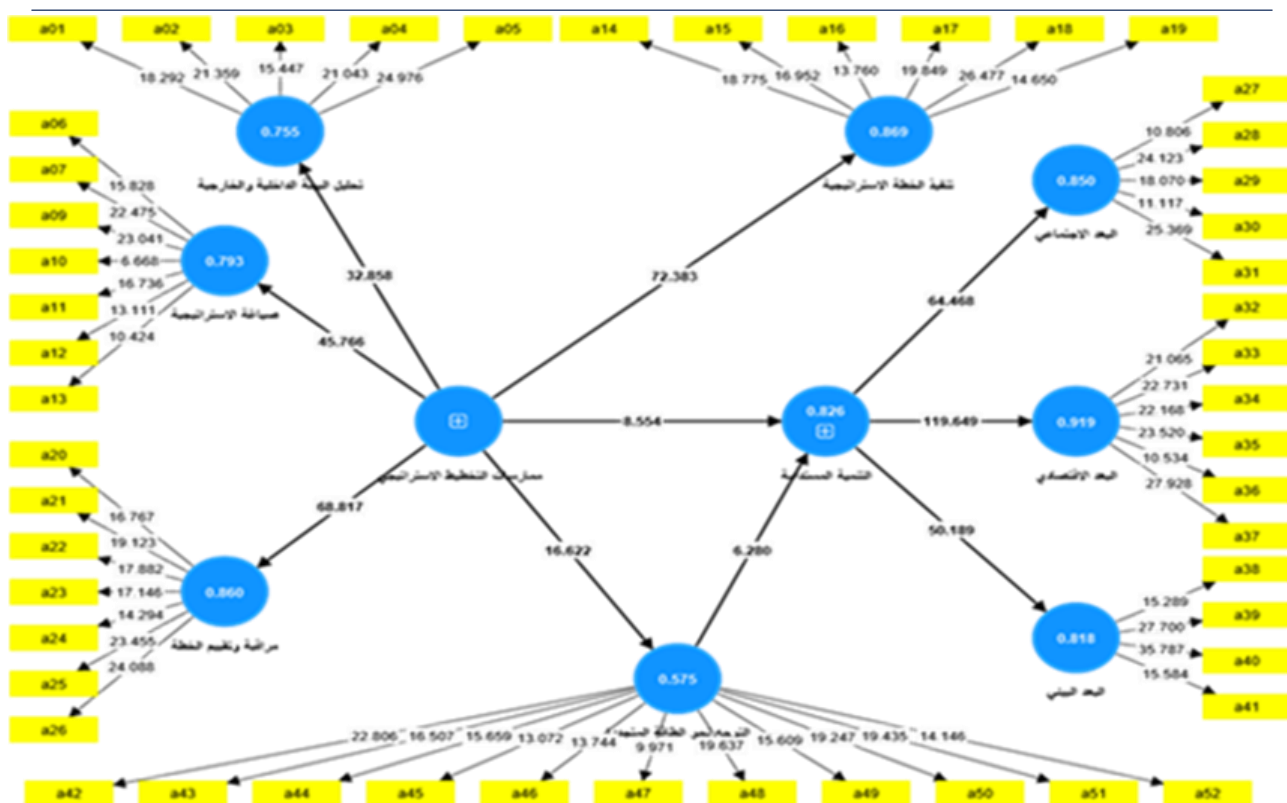


Figure (2): Results of the analysis of the Structural model using Smart-PLS4

5. Analysis & Results

Researchers attribute this to the fact that Palestinian local authorities are considered the backbone for achieving sustainable development in local communities. Strategic planning plays a vital role in effectively realizing this goal. Through strategic planning, local authorities can identify priorities and challenges, directing their efforts and resources towards achieving sustainable development. This process also fosters cooperation and coordination between local entities, government institutions, and civil society, enhancing the effectiveness of efforts and accelerating the pace of development. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation allow these bodies to adjust their strategies in line with the needs of the local community, strengthening the chances for success and sustainability. In this way, strategic planning is a cornerstone for building a sustainable and prosperous future for Palestinian local communities. These findings align with the study by Malekpour et al. (2017), which demonstrated how comprehensive strategic planning can create a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogues on sustainable development challenges, thus enhancing adaptive capacity. Forkuo's study (2019) also supports the need to integrate sustainable development goals into local strategic plans. Cressida's study (2020) emphasizes the importance of incorporating sustainable development goals into local strategies to strengthen cooperation among different levels of governance. Al-Obaidi's study (2022) indicates a positive relationship

between strategic planning and sustainable development at the University of Mosul, demonstrating that strategic planning can improve educational quality and institutional sustainability. These findings are consistent with the studies of Moharrer (2023) and Othman (2021), which confirm that effective strategic planning enhances sustainable development. Moreover, the study found a significant and positive correlation between the overall strategic planning practices score and the overall orientation towards renewable energy. Effective strategic planning directs resources towards renewable energy investment and attracts investments in this field by creating a favourable investment environment and offering incentives to investors. This is in line with Abdulkarim's study (2023), which called on local authorities to prioritize solar energy in their strategic plans. Harizat's study (2022) supports this finding, highlighting the need for strategic plans to enhance partnerships in the renewable energy sector. Studies like SIDRA (2018) demonstrate the importance of government policies to develop solar energy in order to increase awareness and use of renewable energy, thus supporting sustainable growth. Fang et al.'s (2022) study in South Asia shows how research and development in renewable energy can stimulate green economic growth, highlighting the role of technological innovations in supporting sustainable development. Also the study found a positive correlation between the shift towards renewable energy and the achievement of sustainable development goals. The focus on renewable energy reflects a mutually beneficial exchange between environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Environmentally, renewable energy reduces harmful emissions, protects natural resources, and ensures energy security. Economically, it creates job opportunities, while socially, it provides affordable energy for all. Abdel Karim's (2023) study highlighted that local authorities that do not engage with solar energy lack environmental, social, or economic development, which ultimately benefits neither the municipality nor its citizens. This finding aligns with Ganem's (2023) study, which discovered a linear relationship between renewable energy and sustainability in Egypt. The increase in renewable energy improves real wealth and reduces the environmental deficit.

Additionally, the results revealed that the shift towards renewable energy mediates the relationship between strategic planning practices and sustainable development in local authorities. Researchers attribute this to the fact that renewable energy acts as a link between strategic planning practices and sustainable development goals. By adopting renewable energy, local authorities can ensure comprehensive and effective development. Harizat's (2021) study recommended developing strategic plans for partnerships between local authorities and the private sector in renewable energy, aiming to reduce energy dependency on the Israeli occupation, promote economic development, and minimize environmental pollution. Furthermore, Sidra's (2018) study highlighted the importance of localizing Goal 7 of the Sustainable Development Goals to increase solar energy usage, stressing the need for the government to establish policies for solar energy development.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations for relevant government authorities

- **Enhance Local Government Engagement:** Greater attention should be given to the roles and responsibilities of local government authorities as key partners in developing,

planning, implementing, and monitoring comprehensive and effective urban policies and strategies aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their involvement is essential to ensure that local contexts and challenges are properly addressed in national frameworks.

- **Support for Renewable Energy Initiatives:** Direct donors and funding bodies to support renewable energy projects that are spearheaded by local government authorities. This will not only promote sustainable energy solutions but also empower local governments to lead the transition toward greener energy sources, enhancing energy security and reducing environmental impacts.
- **Adopt a Comprehensive, Integrated Approach:** It is crucial to adopt a holistic and integrated approach that aligns national and local policies. This should ensure a balance between economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development. Enhanced coordination between national and local levels is needed to align strategies and guarantee that local funding is available to generate necessary revenues, ensuring efficient and effective service delivery, while supporting sustainable and inclusive growth.
- **Establish a Specialized Department for Sustainable Development:** Establish a dedicated department within the Ministry of Local Government focused on sustainable development, particularly Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). This department should spearhead efforts to localize sustainable development goals, raise awareness among local authorities, and provide training for both executive and political levels on the objectives and implementation of sustainable development. Additionally, it should monitor and ensure that these goals are being effectively carried out at the local level, ensuring progress towards sustainability.

Recommendations for local authorities

- **Regularly Update the Strategic Development Plan:** It is essential to regularly update the strategic development plan to ensure it stays aligned with evolving developments and changing circumstances. These plans should be considered "living documents" that adapt to new opportunities and challenges, enabling authorities to remain flexible and responsive to local and global changes.
- **Promote Renewable Energy Awareness and Investment:** Local authorities should take an active role in raising awareness about the importance and benefits of renewable energy, guiding investors and citizens towards greater investment in this sector. This can be achieved by prioritizing renewable energy within strategic plans and adopting supportive measures, such as providing financial incentives, tax exemptions, or grants for investors. Additionally, organizing awareness campaigns and workshops highlighting the long-term benefits of renewable energy investments can play a key role in driving change.
- **Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation Practices:** Increase the frequency and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by adopting robust systems and using clear, measurable

indicators. Regular evaluation will ensure that sustainable development goals are being met and that progress is made according to plan. Commitment to issuing periodic reports on the implementation of these goals will help local authorities stay accountable and transparent.

- **Allocate Adequate Financial Resources:** It is critical to allocate sufficient financial resources within local authority budgets to implement the strategic plans. This requires ensuring that program budgets are fully aligned with the objectives of these plans. Authorities should regularly monitor budget implementation, assess the effectiveness of resource allocation, and make necessary adjustments to ensure that resources are being used efficiently to meet the needs of the local community and achieve sustainable development objectives.

Recommendations for future studies

Through this study, the researchers propose the following future studies:

1. Evaluating the impact of renewable energy use on economic and social development in Palestinian rural areas.
2. Developing an integrated model for strategic planning for Palestinian local authorities that integrates renewable energy.
3. Studying the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in promoting renewable energy projects in Palestine.

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Ethics Declarations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of Al-Quds Open University, as well as the major local authorities in the Northern West Bank (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Tubas, and Salfit, Palestine). The following ethical standards were strictly observed:

- **Voluntary Participation:** Informed consent was obtained from all relevant authorities and participants prior to their involvement.
- **Minimization of Risk:** All necessary precautions were taken to minimize any potential risks to participants.

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- Confidentiality: The identities and responses of participants were kept strictly confidential.
 - Transparency: Participants were clearly informed about the study's objectives and procedures.
 - Documentation: All stages of the research process were accurately documented.
 - Reliability: The study's methodology and instruments were designed to ensure consistency and dependability.
 - Validity: Data collection and analysis procedures were developed to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the findings.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets collected and analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

- **Salamah Salem and Ola Quzmar:** Conceived and designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the initial manuscript.
- **All authors:** Reviewed, edited, and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Consent for Publication

The authors consent to the submission of this paper for publication and, pending the editorial board's decision following the peer-review process, agree to its publication. This work has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by any other journal.

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