

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES AND STRATEGIC GOAL ACHIEVEMENT: A SURVEY-BASED STUDY OF SMES

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Abstract

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In the dynamic landscape of technological advancements, managerial competencies and a flexible approach are essential for achieving predefined strategic goals. The study examines managerial competencies and other important factors in strategic goal achievement (SGA) within the context of Kosovo's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The methodology of our study, aimed at fulfilling this objective, is constructed based on the approach applied by Spahiu and Durguti (2023). Meanwhile, the context of analyzing these parameters for determining SGAs is inspired by the study of Raghavan (2024). To accomplish the stated objective, the study gathered data through surveys, which gathered 336 responses. Within the context of the methodology, the study employs the ordinal logit approach to examine the influence of managerial competencies, gender, education level, investments in research and development (R&D), negotiation skills, as well as the application of the online marketing strategy in SGA of SMEs. The results of this exploration disclose that managerial competencies and gender exhibit positive statistical effects, while investment in R&D, negotiation skills, and the integration of online marketing strategy exhibit a negative statistical effect on the SGA of SMEs. The conclusions and findings of this study will serve as an appropriate foundation for the opening of the wide discussion across the various stakeholders involved in this field.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Strategic Goal Achievement, Ordinal Logit

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1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamic and innovative nature of technology is viewed as both an advantageous opportunity and a potential threat for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which have consistently held

a crucial position in the overall economic landscape at worldwide levels, including in Kosovo. In contemporary thinking, these SMEs are recognized as accelerators that influence economic growth, the deployment of innovative strategies, and, most significantly, their contribution to creating

job opportunities. Nevertheless, the strategic goal achievement (SGA) by an organization is influenced by an extensive number of factors categorized as internal and external. Therefore, understanding the consequences of these factors becomes essential to maintaining control over the achievement of SGA and improving the performance of SMEs. According to di Bella et al. (2023), in the countries of the European Union (EU), respectively in the EU27, there were around 24.3 million active SMEs; expressed as a percentage, 99.8% of SMEs are non-financial organizations. Additionally, these SMEs employ around 84.9 million people in the EU27 until December 2022, which constitutes 64.4% of the total number of employees. As stated in the same report, the prediction for the year 2023 in light of the growth rate of added value and the number of employees for SMEs, considering that inflation remains steady (unadjusted), is expected to have an increase of about 4.8% in added value, however, on the contrary, it is predicted that the added value will be affected by a decrease of 1.5% and -0.9% in the reduction of employment (di Bella et al., 2023, p. 45).

If we compare SMEs in Kosovo versus those in the EU27, we identify that these businesses total 99.84% of the overall private sector companies, and the private sector has a 75.5% employment ratio (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022, p. 554). The structure of business registration over the years in Kosovo, in recent years, has started to change in terms of the form of organization, and there is considerable progress in shortening the registration time, where the mean duration for business registration is 3.83 days, and the overall number of registered businesses in January 2023 was 230,404 (Agjencia e Regjistrimit të Bizneseve [ARBK], 2023, p. 4). Additionally, Kosovo has established different legislative packages attempting to create an appropriate environment for entrepreneurship, however, it should be stated that the owners or managers of SMEs conform to various impediments in achieving their strategic goals. In this mindset, strategic management has become an important function in every organization, including SMEs in achieving strategic objectives (Březinová & Průšová, 2014). Essentially, strategic management comprises certain fundamental issues of the organization, in the long term, incorporating financial and non-financial objectives, as well as the breakdown of each action within an accurate process until it's completed (Krasniqi et al., 2020). As stated by Srpová and Řehoř (2010), management as a function is characterized by more specificity, therefore, in SMEs, due to the limited number of employees, managers are assigned additional responsibilities within their competence. In this regard, informal leadership is more typical among business owners or managers, oral communication predominates over written communication, and there are numerous additional differences. Krasniqi et al. (2020) contend that strategic management can be identified as a map for navigation that establishes clear goals and paths for the future of SMEs and provides a sense of security to employees, and in this way, companies may succeed in the fulfillment of the SGA. From a different perspective, the scholars Aytar and Selamat (2021) noted that the inadequate fulfillment of strategic objectives by managers or owners is

a result of inadequate levels of education, deficiency of competence, and negotiation skills at an inappropriate level as well as multiple other associated ones.

In order to be in time with the dynamic developments of the digital age, SMEs should prioritize research and development (R&D) investments, as these investments play a critical role in assisting SMEs in achieving their strategic goals. Empirical research reveals that investment in R&D has beneficial effects, especially when they are matched with a differentiation strategy, leading to better efficiency and competitiveness (Wang & Qing, 2019). A reinforcing argument, according to Nga et al. (2022), is that SMEs that are devoted to the uniqueness of products or services should invest more in R&D since this influences the achievement of strategic goals and their performance. Therefore, based on the results mentioned previously, the research intends to examine characteristics such as management competencies (MC), gender (GEN), education (EDU), investments in R&D (IRD), negotiation skills (NS), and marketing online strategies (MOS) to determine the effect they have on SGA within the context of SMEs in Kosovo. Examining empirically, we have not come across any research that addresses these parameters, and as such research intends to fill the gap in terms of empirical literature. The research is focused on addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: What influence do managerial competencies have in achieving strategic goals?

RQ2: What role do gender structure and education level play in achieving strategic goals?

RQ3: To what extent can investments in R&D, negotiation skills, and marketing online strategies affect the achievement of strategic goals?

Therefore, addressing this gap and the research questions presented, the studies thoroughly evaluate the parameters laid out, employing a sample of 336 respondents throughout the last quarter of 2023. Moreover, the research aspires to bring perceived evidence in several dimensions. Firstly, the research presents a scientific contribution and fills the gap in the treated parameters. Secondly, the research deals with some of the parameters that have been discussed only briefly previously, particularly within the context of SMEs in Kosovo. Thirdly, the empirical research emphasizes the effect of each parameter on achieving strategic goals, employing the logistic ordinal methodology, which is appropriate for the data employed. Finally, the research aspires to motivate other researchers in the future to extend with additional considerations that can be considered valuable for reaching strategic goals.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 proceeds with the review of the literature. Section 3 analyzes the methodology. Section 4 shows the results. Section 5 provides the discussion, and Section 6 finally presents the conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Determines to measure strategic goal achievement

Concerning SGA, recent academic exploration emphasizes the perception of strategic management, which emerged from business and management in

the 20th century. It is crucial to bring attention that in the beginning, the researchers were unable to reach a consensus. Indeed, recent research in the academic and econometric sense is devoted to the value and importance of this discipline, where it is emphasized that strategic management consists of effective employment of human and natural resources, accessibility to capital, as well as tangible assets to SGA. Hence, strategic management must be reflected in the long term of the business by prioritizing the challenges that will create substantial advantages in achieving the defined objectives (Özbozkurt, 2019). Evaluation of the SGA is mainly handled by scholars in two clusters, where the first cluster measures it through the effectiveness of the performance of SMEs, and the second cluster measures it in terms of the effectiveness and success of the leadership obtainable by the SME, respectively through managerial competencies.

Within the first cluster, researchers Tërstena et al. (2023) measured the effectiveness of SMEs in the context of Kosovo, respectively in terms of education, previous work experience, and the development of new products, whereas via a comparable approach, Spahiu and Durguti (2023) explored education, previous work experience, and barriers causing failure to meet the strategic goals for the SMEs of Kosovo. Edacherian et al. (2025) employed meta-analysis, relying on data from 273 economies, with emphasis on gender diversity, respectively the inclusion of the female gender in executive structures, especially in corporate boards. The recent study conducted by Raghavan (2024) reinforces the aforementioned arguments regarding the importance of SGA, as it provides a detailed review of the scientific literature to highlight the significance of setting specific objectives by business managers or owners. Supporters of the second cluster include Apreku-Djan et al. (2022), who measured the effects of managerial competence (grouping interpersonal skills, leadership skills, fraud and risk skills, etc.) on value-based within financial performance of banking businesses through the multiple regression approach. Gajere (2023), more explicitly, employs the method known as partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with 213 SMEs and examines strategic orientation, market features, acquiring knowledge, and entrepreneurial mindset in enhancing the performance of SMEs. Meanwhile, Oppong and Segbenya (2023) researched the prerequisites of cross-sectoral managerial competencies in distinctive sectors of business, analyzing standard and unique competencies as reflected in the SGA. In the context of ownership structure and the application of innovative strategies, Chen et al. (2024) have found that they have a significant impact on the achievement of SGA through the application of an innovative approach. Their findings argue that common ownership has a meaningful effect, alongside R&D expenditures, and that necessities are reflected in the achievement of SGA. More specifically, this research identifies common ownership as one of the determinants that may cause variations in innovation strategy, which is an integral part of SGA. Therefore, in this mindset, our research supports the creativity of becoming aware in the second cluster.

2.2. Factors affecting the SMEs' strategic goal achievement

Regarding the evaluation and effectiveness of meeting the strategic objectives of SMEs, there is no doubting the fact that they are of particular importance, but the process of selection and focus on the drivers that affect the SGA is challenging. To survive and succeed in an extremely competitive environment, SMEs must continuously be creative to secure and combine fixed capital, intellectual capital, and other related resources that create advantages in fulfilling SGA (Lonial & Carter, 2015). Accordingly, SMEs that employ inventive strategies and concepts obtain long-term benefits by effectively combining their available resources and managerial competencies to effectively accomplish the SGA (Krasniqi et al., 2020). Empirical evidence has revealed that multiple factors can influence the successful completion of SGA. Nevertheless, our concentration will remain on gender, education, managerial competencies, investments in R&D negotiation skills, and marketing online strategies.

The empirical literature provides mixed findings about gender and education in SME performance and the achievement of strategic goals. Tërstena et al. (2023) measured SMEs in Kosovo through the logistic regression methodology and revealed that gender and education have an advantageous effect on the achievement of SGA and the effectiveness of SMEs, respectively. Additionally, the study stresses the fact that from the entire population analyzed, 74.4% of this category is male, whereas the rest of them are female. Vershinina et al. (2022) examined data from 27 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia to explore the effectiveness of SMEs. Results exhibit that gender, education, as well as multiple factors connected to compliance with regulations have a positive association with the effective achievement of strategic goals. Moreover, the authors have discovered an additional attribute, distinguishing that the female gender is more committed to the implementation of the rules compared to the male gender. Through a different perspective, Hassan et al. (2021), by employing a sample of 127 SMEs in the northern area of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, executing the PLS approach, have explored the effect of internal factors (entrepreneurial orientation, human capital, targets, and motives) and external factors (socio-cultural and law enforcement) in the performance of the SME. The results obtained recommend that both factors hinder performance, respectively, in terms of strategic objectives, even though the male population dominates the leadership structures. Additionally, their results demonstrate that SMEs are performing at a comparable level regardless of gender diversity, even though the female gender has lower education as a result of a patriarchal culture. Mubarik et al. (2023) emphasize that entrepreneurial competency, including managerial competencies, contributes to the achievement of the strategic objective of SMEs by enhancing decision-making, leadership, and opportunity recognition. Furthermore, several studies highlight key parameters that are important for the performance of SMEs and the achievement of SGA. For instance, Galavotti and D'Este (2023) have examined the participation of women in managerial structures and the composition of the board of directors, and

finally, in the context of regulatory authorities, Almeajel (2024) has analyzed normative acts in the context of Australia and their impact on the performance of SMEs and the achievement of strategic objectives.

Managerial competencies, which comprise entrepreneurial competency, influence the achievement of the strategic objective of SMEs by increasing sustainable competitive advantages and performance (Sil & Coryanata, 2019). The justification of the results is derived through a sample encompassing 360 respondents submitted through the questionnaire, and the data is treated through the SEM, offering sound empirical evidence that managerial competencies positively influence the SGA. Emmanuel et al. (2023) used a representative group of 394 SMEs, which were selected based on the method known as convenience sampling. The study argues that managerial competencies substantially influence SME performance, with cognitive competency playing a crucial role in SGA. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that the interpersonal competence of SME managers is insufficient, whereas cognitive competence has demonstrated the strongest unique contribution to explaining the performance of the enterprise. Another important factor that complements the issue of managerial competencies is R&D investment, which appears to be crucial in the efficiency and fulfillment of the strategic goals of SMEs. Tärstena et al. (2023) used a survey with 336 participants during the period 2023, through logistic regression, and concluded that investments in R&D for SMEs create advantages in fulfilling strategic objectives, compared to SMEs that do not spend enough on R&D investments. Actually, in this prism, it should be underlined that this factor, according to the logistic approach, has beneficial effects, whereas through the multinomial regression approach, the same factor is harming the SGA. Starting from an alternate angle, empirical research demonstrates that SMEs oriented with a strategic focus on innovations tend to achieve more successful technological positions through R&D investments, which positively impact the achievement of strategic goals (Mendoza et al., 2014).

Matekenya and Moyo (2020), using data from the World Bank enterprise survey of 2020, investigated the determinants that influence the performance of SMEs in South Africa, through a quantile regression approach. The findings of this study provided evidence that R&D spending had a significant positive impact on SME performance, moreover, they found that the introduction of new products/services promotes the performance of achieving strategic goals with a lower growth rate. Meanwhile, regarding negotiation skills, the empirical evidence has a full consensus that the availability of good skills positively affects the efficiency of SMEs and, therefore, the achievement of the strategic goals. Jiang (2022) employs the qualitative approach to examine business negotiation skills from the perspective of the principle of politeness and has concluded that if the language of communication in business is adequate and modest, it is necessarily reflected in the achievement of pragmatic objectives. Negotiation skills positively influence the strategic goals of SME distributors by facilitating market participation, as shown in the empirical analysis of 181 Spanish distribution firms (Gimeno-Arias, 2021). The dynamics of technology development have

contributed to the reformation of the mindset and the application of strategies in the application of marketing. Empirical evidence regarding this variable provides contradictory findings. Saunila et al. (2023), analyzing a sample of SMEs in Finland, came to the conclusion that concentrating only on a digital marketing strategy has resulted in a negative impact on the achievement of the strategic goals of those businesses. From another prism, Gabelaia and Tchelidze (2022) have evaluated the trends of digital marketing, highlighting that it evolves from time to time, and for this reason, SMEs confront obstacles during the selection of marketing strategies. The discoveries of this study emphasized the necessity and significance of digital marketing for business consistency, however, the insufficient execution of this strategy as well as its poor performance, negatively affects the achievement of the stated objectives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study sample

The study employs a methodology founded on surveys to explore certain variables influencing SGA in Kosovo SMEs. The motivation of this survey is to explore the three key sectors of SMEs in Kosovo, namely trade, services, and production. These businesses are being further categorized into seven regions. To determine the representativeness and reliability of results, a random stratification approach was employed to ensure that the sample size was distributed proportionally throughout these sectors. The sample is composed of officially registered SMEs with the Business Registration Agency in Kosovo (BRAK). The study sample had 500 surveys, with specific mechanisms to ensure quality representation of the sample. However, only 336, equating to 67.2% of the surveys distributed, passed rigor criteria and were utilized in this study. The adequacy of sample representation in the current study is justifiable by the finding that the sample size of 120 respondents in the population will be adequate, according to Hair et al. (2010). Regarding an econometric perspective on modeling usage, it is recommended to obtain 15-20 observations for the characteristics being analyzed (Hair et al., 2010). More specifically, relying on the underlined conclusions to analyze the appropriateness of the sample, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett examination was performed.

The relevance of the sample in our specific instance as a result of this test has produced a coefficient of 0.578 (Table 5). Also following this argument is that Bartlett's test has resulted in a probability of $p = 0.000$. These results provide solid evidence that the representative sample is solid and acceptable. Data collection was conducted with a carefully designed survey intended for a comprehensive overview of factors related to the SGA. The survey was designed across multiple sections beginning with the characteristics of the business (for example, gender, age of the company, the sector where they operate), then with the level of education, the experience of managers, investments in R&D, negotiation skills, marketing strategies, etc. The research study was managed and conducted employing online as well as face-to-face manners targeting managers or business owners to contribute and maximize the number of respondents. Initially, SMEs were contacted via

email, followed by phones, and visited in presence where appropriate. More importantly, the information was gathered over more than three months (from September 2023 to December 2023), allowing adequate time for SME managers/owners to formulate responses as realistic as conceivable. Finally, all these collected data have been examined and processed according to the standards of the Likert scale for every response provided (1 — strongly disagree, 2 — neutral, 3 — strongly agree).

3.2. Measurements and selection of variables

Multiple research efforts employed evaluators or alternative techniques to arrive at unique scientific results, thereby rendering the measurement of variables and deciding on econometric methodology recognized as more complex and stressful matters. Every variable included in the analysis was processed and evaluated under the established paradigm, specifically the Likert scale. Honorable, even in the previous version, we have emphasized

that some of the variables have been evaluated with responses 1 — strongly agree and 2 — strongly disagree. Meanwhile, education and managerial competencies are rated as 1 — strongly disagree, 2 — neutral, 3 — strongly agree. Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the category of every variable that was analyzed. Hence, our research framework's motive and methodology for selecting variables relies on research conducted by Lückenbach et al. (2019), taking into account the specific data and econometric methodologies employed.

Meanwhile, the paradigm of applying the econometric approach is motivated in the studies carried out by Tërstena et al. (2023), Spahiu and Durguti (2023), Krasniqi and Durguti (2023), and Gajere (2023). Nevertheless, what provides novelty and distinguishes this research from previous research is its mixture of variables, particularly those that weren't treated sufficiently. Table 1 represents information on the description of the variables, the abbreviations used the number of observations, mean values, and standard deviation.

Table 1. Variables and descriptive statistics

Description	Acronyms	Obs.	Mean	St. dev.
Dependent variable				
Strategic goal achievement	SGA	336	1.541	0.499
Independent variables				
Gender	GEN	336	1.742	0.437
Education	EDU	336	2.101	0.537
Managerial competencies	MC	336	1.763	0.878
Investment in R&D	IRD	336	1.465	0.499
Negotiation skills	NS	336	1.650	0.477
Marketing online strategies	MOS	336	1.592	0.493

Source: Authors' calculations.

Determined by 336 observations, it can be noticed that the mean value of SGA is 1.541, with a standard deviation of 49.9%. Additionally, GEN, MC, and NS, taking into account the mean value has resulted in a variation of 1.650 from the smallest values to 1.763 as the maximum value within these three variables. EDU within the 336 observations resulted in a mean value of 2.101, which is considered to be the greatest, with a standard deviation of 53.7%. Lastly, the variables that have the lowest mean value are IRD with 1.465, respectively MOS with a mean value of 1.592.

3.3. Data analysis approach

Regarding the scientific dimension, various academics have used different models or methodologies to investigate the consequences of independent variables on the dependent one, therefore, it's worth highlighting that in this context, there is no broad consensus about what model should be employed. Therefore, examining the research performed previously, in particular when we are dealing with the provision of data through the questionnaire since the SGA is categorized in two rankings (ranked 1 and 2), undoubtedly the most suitable models are the logistic ones (Osborne, 2015). For evaluating the influence of GEN, EDU, MC, IRD, NS, and MOS on SGA of SMEs, the ordered logistic approach was employed. Finally, the rationale for choosing this empirical approach is supported by several econometric assumptions, which are as follows. First, the applicability of our chosen approach is based on the assumption that when the dependent variable is ranked in two levels (as is the case in our study), it is the most

appropriate approach compared to other methods, as it avoids potentially biased results. Second, the suitability of data treatment is demonstrated, as the questionnaire contains more than two options for each question, and this approach has advantages over others that cannot accurately analyze these variations without losing the specific significance of the response. Third, the data are non-linear, and this approach adequately handles the non-linear relationships between the independent and dependent variables, helping us identify the varying impacts for each category of the included information. Lastly, the use of this approach for studying perception is widely employed by various authors compared to other methods (Cheraghali & Molnár, 2024; Spahiu & Durguti, 2023; Soepriyanto et al., 2023; Cheung & Chung, 2022). Regarding our specific scenario, SGA is a binary variable specified with the value 1 and the value 0 otherwise. In the following, considering the proposed paradigm and the explanation of the econometric approach, we will analyze the fundamental equation of the model, it is as follows:

$$\text{logit}_r = (Y = 1|X) = \varphi(X^t\beta) \quad (1)$$

where, logit_r indicates the projected value of the dependent variable, φ indicates the variance constant based on the probability approach for assessing the predicted β parameters. It follows that:

$$SGA^* = \varphi + \beta_x + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

$$SGA_r = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } SGA_i^* \geq \tau \\ 0 & \text{if } SGA_i^* \leq \tau \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

The justification for the selection of this econometric paradigm is the conclusions by Osborne (2015), nonetheless, a further motive was the inspiration from the research performed by Durguti and Arifi (2021) and Krasniqi et al. (2022). Moreover, as a result of these thoughts and the equations established above, the final equation in our concrete scenario will look like the following:

$$SGA_i (SGA_i = 1|X_i) = \varphi + \beta_1 GEN_i + \beta_2 EDU_i + \beta_3 MC_i + \beta_4 IRD_i + \beta_5 NS_i + \beta_6 MOS_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where, SGA_i indicates that the SME didn't encounter difficulties with reaching the SGA, whereas $1 - SGA_i$ indicates that the SME couldn't manage to accomplish the SGA.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. General statistics summary

The remaining section contains extensive summarized statistical information for the treated parameters. The sample comprises 336 participants' responses regarding different demographic and personal characteristics. The parameters that were examined are SGA , GEN , EDU , MC , IRD , NS , and MOS . Table 2 summarizes the complete information for every parameter, including responses with frequencies and marginal percentages.

Table 2. Case processing summary

Variables	Respondents answer	N	Marginal percentage (%)
SGA	Yes	153	45.5
	No	183	54.5
GEN	Male	250	74.4
	Female	86	25.6
EDU	Secondary school	33	9.8
	Bachelor degree	236	70.2
	Master degree	67	19.9
MC	High level	180	53.6
	Adequate level	58	17.3
	Inadequate level	98	29.2
IRD	Yes	180	53.6
	No	156	46.4
NS	I have negotiation skills	117	34.8
	I don't have negotiation skills	219	65.2
MOS	Yes	138	41.1
	No	198	58.9
Valid		336	100.0
Missing		0	
Total		336	

Source: Authors' calculations.

The early results regarding the SGA parameter revealed that 45.5% ($n = 153$) of respondents had achieved the strategic objectives, whereas 54.5% ($n = 183$) had failed. In terms of gender diversity (GEN) in SME managers, outcomes reveal that males predominate females by 74.4% ($n = 250$) to 25.6% ($n = 86$). According to educational attainment (EDU), the largest percentage of respondents have a Bachelor's degree (70.2%, $n = 236$), preceding those with a Master's degree (19.9%, $n = 67$) and secondary education (9.8%, $n = 33$). The question concerning the degree of managerial expertise or otherwise expressed "competence" (MC) reveals a variation within the answers stated, with 53.6% ($n = 180$) declaring that they have an excellent level of managerial competence, 17.3% ($n = 58$) declaring an adequate level, and 29.2% ($n = 98$) declaring that they don't possess adequate competence.

Depending on the research's results on IRD in the setting of SMEs in Kosovo, 53.6%, or 180 respondents, indicated that they spend resources on R&D, while 46.4% of the respondents indicated that they do not spend money on R&D. Another interesting result is that more than half of respondents, 65.2%, contend that they do not have

appropriate negotiation skills (NS), as opposed to 34.8% who claimed to have adequate skills. Utilization of marketing online strategies (MOS) yields remarkable outcomes, as illustrated by the observation that 41.1% ($n = 138$) of the participants reported utilizing various marketing online strategies, whereas 58.9% ($n = 198$) do not employ such strategies. The data provided offers an extensive overview of the attributes of those surveyed, emphasizing significant patterns and potential subjects for further examination.

4.2. Correlation analysis

To explore the association across SGA and the numerous features covered in this exploration, we performed the correlation analysis. Depending on the outcomes displayed in Table 3, it's emphasized that SGA has a moderately positive association with IRD ($r = 0.276$), and a weakened positive association is reflected with NS , MOS , and EDU , bringing evidence that those businesses that invest substantially in these three categories have positive tendencies to complete the SGA.

Table 3. Correlation matrix

Variables	SGA	GEN	EDU	MC	IRD	NS	MOS
SGA	1.000						
GEN	-0.112	1.000					
EDU	0.005	-0.207	1.000				
MC	0.011	0.078	0.160	1.000			
IRD	0.276	-0.001	-0.042	0.041	1.000		
NS	0.197	0.044	-0.165	-0.111	0.280	1.000	
MOS	0.208	-0.046	-0.147	-0.136	0.134	0.114	1.000

Source: Authors' calculations.

On the other side, the adverse association across *SGA* is only evident with *GEN*. More thorough information is presented in Table 3. This technique is employed as well to discover if the data exhibits any concerns with multicollinearity. In line with the results we obtained, no coefficient surpasses the $\beta \geq 0.28$ threshold value. Gujarati (2004) demonstrated evidence that if the coefficients of this examination remain under $\beta \geq 0.75$. Therefore, the employed data do not experience problems with multicollinearity.

4.3. Principal component analysis

In order to strengthen the stability and reasonableness of the selected approach, our study also performed a principal component analysis (PCA). Based on the findings presented in Table 4, which presents the factor loadings of seven parameters in three main components. Factor loadings indicate how much each parameter contributes to the respective components.

Findings for the first component, *SGA* is found to have a factor loading of 0.605, followed by *IRD* with 0.627, *NS* with 0.652, and *MOS* with 0.547. While within the second component, a significant load has appeared in *GEN* with 0.618 and *EDU* with

0.710, which we can conclude that these components can represent the demographic and educational dimensions. Finally, in the framework of the third component, *GEN* is found to have a factor loading of 0.582, and *MC* with 0.708 is reflected. Therefore, based on the revealed results of this analysis, it is observed that we have no values smaller than 0.5 ($\alpha \geq 0.5$), which provides us with evidence that these parameters are adequately incorporated within the model (Bartholomew, 2010).

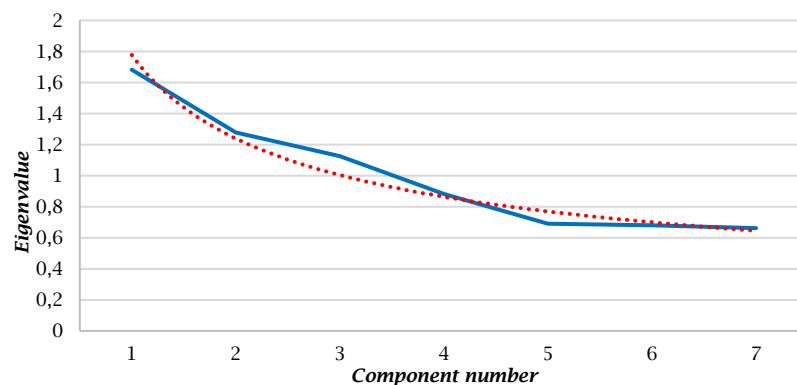
Table 4. Component matrix

Variable	1	2	3
<i>SGA</i>	0.605		
<i>GEN</i>		0.618	0.582
<i>EDU</i>		0.710	
<i>MC</i>			0.708
<i>IRD</i>	0.627		
<i>NS</i>	0.652		
<i>MOS</i>	0.547		

Source: Authors' calculations.

An additional argument about PCA, which supports the argument on the parameters included in the research, is also Figure 1, which gives the impression that all three components have a value greater than 1.

Figure 1. Principal component analysis plot



Source: Authors' calculations.

4.4. Findings based on the model

As emphasized previously, to explore the influence of independent variables on *SGA* in the context of SMEs in Kosovo, we employed ordered logistic regression. Indeed, considering the academic procedure for model fit, certain of the crucial issues on model fitting will be addressed in advance. Offering empirical evidence of reasonableness, we performed a Chi-square to obtain model fitting, and our intercept result has a value of 246,723, which serves as a basis for scrutiny. Considering the inclusion of predictors, the -2 log-likelihood value of the final model decreased to 198,734. Therefore, these 47,989 drops in the -2 log-likelihood

value demonstrate an improvement in model fit (Lee et al., 2022). The results of this analysis with a value of 47,989, as well as the probability value ($p = 0.000$), indicate that the inclusion of predictors significantly boosts the fit of the model (Lee et al., 2022). Goodness-of-fit measurements further reinforce the model. We reinforce the argument via the Pearson Chi-square of 96.174 with a value of $p = 0.159$, as well as the Chi-square deviation value of 116.834 with $p = 0.202$. Consequently, both of these values exceed the $\alpha = 0.05$ threshold, offering scientific evidence that the model is appropriately modified, and confirming that the model adequately evaluates the composition of the data (Pituch & Stevens, 2015).

Table 5. Model fitting and logit outcomes

<i>Model fitting</i>				
<i>Intercept</i>	<i>-2 log-likelihood</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Final	246.723			
	198.734	47.989	8	0.000
<i>Goodness-of-fit</i>				
Pearson		96.174	76	0.159
Deviance		116.834	76	0.202
<i>Parameters estimates</i>				
<i>Parameters</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>Std. err</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
SGA	-1.359	0.404	1	0.001
GEN	0.565	0.285	1	0.047
EDU	-0.298	0.478	1	0.533
MC	0.143	0.364	1	0.004
IRD	-0.952	0.146	1	0.000
NS	-0.648	0.260	1	0.013
MOS	-0.778	0.244	1	0.001
<i>Other diagnostic tests</i>				
KMO sampling adequacy		0.578		
Bartlett's test of sphericity		136.240	21	0.000

Source: Authors' calculations.

The insights reported in Table 5 offer us comprehension that *GEN* and *MC* statistically positively affect *SGA* at the 95% and 99% confidence levels, respectively. In contrast, *IRD*, *NS*, and *MOS* exhibit a statistically significant adverse effect on *SGA* at the 99% confidence level.

5. DISCUSSION

As reported in Table 5, the effects of every parameter on *SGA* were explored. A positive coefficient of *GEN* with a value of $\beta = 0.565$ and the probability value $p = 0.047$ reveals a beneficial interaction in *SGA*. The probability value of $p = 0.047$ is below the significance value of $\alpha = 0.05$, which indicates that *GEN* has a statistically significant influence on the achievement of *SGA*. In other words, each unit increase in the *GEN* parameter, leads to an increase of 0.565 units in the *SGA*, considering that all other parameters remain constant. The conclusions of this study correspond both with the expected results and with the conclusions drawn from the authors (Vershina et al., 2022; Durguti & Kryeziu, 2021; Tërstena et al., 2023; Edacherian et al., 2025). These research insights confirm that gender diversity has a positive connection with business performance and, therefore, acts as a useful driver in the *SGA*. More precisely, Edacherian et al. (2025) discovered that incorporating both genders in executive management structures is more productive in meeting the set objectives after examining 273 companies using meta-analysis.

MC proved positively and statistically significant in impacting *SGA*. The reported data indicate increasing one unit of *MC* leads to an increase of 0.143 units in *SGA*, assuming the remaining parameters are constant. The justification behind this explanation relies on the coefficient ($\beta = 0.143$) and the probability value ($p = 0.004$), corresponding to the 99% confidence interval. The empirical research that deals with *SGA* is limited and has documented inconsistent econometric evidence on the one hand, as well as the interactions of *SGA* through business performance. Krasniqi et al. (2022) discovered that managers with previous experiences tend to be more successful in meeting goals, respectively *SGA*, however Lara and Salas-Vallina (2017) discovered that managerial competencies confirm an immediate beneficial effect in meeting strategic goals, instead Krasniqi et al. (2020), stated

that in the setting of Kosovo, managerial competence doesn't have significant effects, since SMEs have not yet been consolidated with sufficient staff. Our results are in line with expectations as well as with the studies performed by Krasniqi et al. (2022), and Lara and Salas-Vallina (2017) who discovered that management competence has a beneficial effect on the fulfillment of the strategic goals of SMEs. Investments made by businesses in R&D in the present instance were reflected in a statistically significant effect with a negative indication on *SGA*. The computed coefficient for *IRD* ($\beta = -0.952$) with probability value ($p = 0.000$), reveals that for each increase of one unit in R&D, it will be converted to the achievement of the SME objectives by 0.952 units or vice versa. The recent discovery once again confirms the conclusions reported in the descriptive statistics subsection where a substantial proportion of SMEs in Kosovo don't spend or invest funds in R&D. The outcomes obtained, without a doubt, are in disagreement with the expected results. Our results stand in disagreement with the research performed by Matekenya and Moyo (2022), analyzing social tax incentives for SMEs to invest in R&D have significantly contributed to the achievement of objectives as well as boosting the performance of SMEs. Similarly, Tërstena et al. (2023) adopting the logit regression approach discovered that R&D investments provide advantages compared to those SMEs that hesitate to make investments, and also improve the efficiency and achievement of strategic objectives.

During the last decade, *NS* has become widely recognized as an important asset for SMEs looking towards accomplishing their strategic goals. Our research results confirm that *NS* exhibits a statistically significant effect within an interval of 95% confidence, as indicated by its coefficient $\beta = -0.648$ and probability $p = 0.013$. Expressed more effectively, this discovery means that for each unit increase (positive or negative) of *NS* will cause interference with a decrease of -0.648 units of *SGA*. Within our actual example, this metric has a negative sign and validates the data reported in Table 2, wherein 65.2% of the respondents stated that they didn't possess appropriate negotiation skills. Scientific studies in this setting are nearly in perfect compatibility. Jiang (2022) discovered that the application of appropriate vocabulary and modesty during the negotiation process are decisive in meeting the pragmatic goals established forth, in

addition, Lee (2022) analyzed the interaction within the parameters of NS and the accomplishment of strategic objectives, has discovered that cultural context and NS, expertise in business practices and the negotiation process has a crucial role in meeting the SGA. Additionally, Helmold (2020) reached the same conclusion, where NS is highlighted as a crucial aspect of business strategy, emphasizing its significance for meeting organizational goals and maintaining its competitive edge in the market. Therefore, our results are in the opposite context to the apostrophized studies, consequently, SMEs may learn an insightful lesson in strengthening negotiating skills because this feature is regarded fundamental in completing the SGA.

The last measure that was surveyed in our case is MOS. This strategy becomes not only feasible in today's times but also provides SMEs with a never-ending number of options to promote their products or services. The core objective of this strategy is accomplishing the defined strategic objectives. Consequently, the coefficient of MOS ($\beta = -0.778$, with the probability value $p = 0.001$), as indicated in Table 5, reveals that it has a significant adverse effect on SGA in our specific instance. The research outcomes reveal that SMEs in Kosovo have failed to take advantage of the opportunities provided by digitization. As such, this measure is disadvantageous to the performance of SGA. Based on this extrapolation, we can declare that for every one-unit increase — with a minus sign — there will be a resultant reduction of -0.778 units in SGA when all other variables are held constant. The results presented above are consistent with what was established by Saunila et al. (2023) in the study they conducted on SMEs in Finland. They found that concentrating on one digital marketing strategy hurt SGA and firm performance. Further, Gabelaia and Tchelidze (2022) documented the same findings, thus confirming the need and importance of the MOS to keep the firm running. However, a poor or low degree of implementation or effectiveness of MOS would be detrimental to outcomes, yielding mediocre or negative outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

The research is designed to examine the managerial competencies and numerous variables that are associated with the SGA in the background of SMEs in Kosovo. To accomplish the stated objective, information was collected through surveys that employed the combined form (online and, in certain instances, in-person when judged necessary). This approach resulted in 336 responses from over 500 SMEs. The econometric methodology was also developed by employing the ordinal logit technique to examine the effect of the specified parameters as independent variables in accomplishing the SGA of SMEs, considering the characteristics of the treated

parameters. The research has also applied some of the important tests, starting from the adequacy of the sample, the degree of correlation of the parameters, the stability, and the justification of the selection of the applied econometric approach.

The empirical examination indicates that both MC and GEN have a statistically significant positive effect on the SGA of SMEs in the setting of Kosovo. The results obtained demonstrate that the strategic success of these SMEs is significantly influenced by the ongoing enhancement of MC. Additionally, an important positive statistical effect is observed in managerial positions, where the male gender is predominant, indicating that gender diversity is an essential variable in the SGA. Meanwhile, other parameters such as investments in R&D, NS, and the MOS have been shown to have a statistically significant negative impact on the SGA for SMEs in Kosovo. These discoveries in the context of SMEs in Kosovo should be considered important in terms of how they have been addressed, administered, or implemented by these SMEs. The conclusion that follows from this is that R&D investments weren't handled properly or managed seriously to have optimistic reflections in the SGA.

On the other hand, with negotiation skills and the integration of online marketing strategies, it can be concluded that there is a need for fundamental improvement that requires adequate addressing. The overall conclusion of the research emphasizes the significance of continuous improvement in MC, as well as the promotion of gender diversity as among the most important parameters in SGA. In the same vein, the parameters that have turned out with negative consequences provide clear information on the segments or areas that must be identified or addressed to place them into an advantageous context.

The study is noteworthy for future research, as it provides a general overview of several critical factors and their potential impact on the SGA. However, future studies are encouraged to include additional specific parameters on one hand and to apply alternative econometric approaches to assess whether there are any changes in the results. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that our research may have limitations in certain dimensions. First, the reliability of the responses given by managers. Second, the survey was conducted with only 336 respondents, and finally, the absence of a parallel approach to assess whether there might be variations in the results. Nevertheless, these limitations do not in any way alter the direction of the findings. Finally, these conclusions will serve as an appropriate platform for launching wide discussions across all stakeholders involved in this field, especially managers, business owners, legislators, and multiple scholars, for creating a more favorable environment for the development and growth of SMEs.

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