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**Evaluating Strategic Initiatives that Led to the Collapse of Banks in
Ghana: A Case Study of Unibank Ghana**

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ABSTRACT

The stability of a country's economy heavily relies on the resilience of its banking sector. In emerging markets like those in Africa banks often face challenges that can result in institutional failures This research fills an important gap by investigating the measures and legitimacy practices within Ghana's banking sector focusing on UniBank as a case study to uncover the factors contributing to its collapse.

Using a qualitative research method the objective is to gain a deeper insight into the strategic actions and credibility practices in the banking industry of Ghana with a specific focus on UniBank Ghana and shed light on what led to the collapse of Unibank. Through a case study approach the research was conducted through interviews with executives, at UniBank Ghana. The analysis examines reports, regulatory documents, and media outlets to validate the findings. The implications of this research are significant, suggesting that for banks in developing economies, there is a vital need to integrate robust strategic planning with compliance to enhance legitimacy standards to foster stability.

The findings highlight an interaction between strategic management limitations and flawed legitimacy practices as key factors behind banking crises, in Ghana. Despite attempts to uphold credibility through responsibility and community involvement, these factors were not enough to avert the bank's collapse. The discussion highlights the significance of banks in economic environments to strike a balance between expansion strategies, comprehensive risk evaluation, and adaptability in addressing external factors. This study contributes to the discourse on governance and the resilience of institutions emphasizing that strategic frameworks geared towards improving competitiveness must be adaptable based on economic and regulatory landscapes for enduring sustainability, over time.

KEYWORDS: Strategic initiatives, Legitimacy practices, Bank failures, Business Environment

1. INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of bank failures, in markets throughout history, has often indicated a need for examination, especially considering the crucial role of the banking sector in supporting and advancing the economy. This importance has been highlighted by Bello et al. (2019) who stress the significance of the sector, in particular, the African continent. African countries have experienced a significant number of such failures prompting scholarly interest in identifying the root causes and possible solutions. Research by F. Le Gall, R. Daumont, and F. Leroux (2004) on deregulation in English-speaking nations along with investigations by Honohans (1993) and Brownsbridges (1998) into financial instability and Powo Fossos (2000) examination of fiscal factors at the bank level in WAEMU emphasizes systemic weaknesses that contribute to these failures. Their studies collectively point to deregulation sectoral deficiencies and fiscal mismanagement as factors leading to bank collapses emphasizing the critical need for a strong and well-organized financial sector to drive national progress and enhance living standards.

However, despite the instances of bank failures, in Africa, there has been little focus on specific strategic errors within the banking sector specifically in Ghana. Most existing literature concentrates on policies and systemic analyses overlooking the decisions made by individual banks. This oversight hinders the understanding of the operational challenges faced by Ghanaian banks, which are crucial for supporting small traders and SMEs. To address this gap the study investigates measures that may have contributed to bank collapses in response to the call for more focused research by Bello et al. (2019) who emphasized the importance of thoroughly examining strategic weaknesses in sub-Saharan banks to reduce risks in developing economies. By examining UniBank Ghana's decisions and legitimacy practices the study aims to offer insights to prevent collapses. This analysis sheds light on nuances often overlooked in assessments aiming to steer the formulation of

strategies and actions that can enhance stability and prosperity, in Ghana's banking sector. The recent restructuring of the banking sector involving the consolidation of banks and Ghana Commercial Bank taking over two banks emphasizes, the nature of this research exertion. While issues, such as banking practices and regulatory oversight have been highlighted as factors in bank failures, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the managerial decisions and internal strategic changes. Previous research studies, like those conducted by Cox et al. (2014) and Beck et al. (2011) highlight the importance of examining bank's strategies and how they align with pressures. The objective is to expand knowledge and add depth to the understanding of bank failures in developing nations like Ghana, where the banking sector plays a crucial role, in economic advancement and stability.

The purpose of this study is to tap into the research opportunity by answering the following research question: question; How do Strategy initiatives and legitimacy practices contribute to the collapse of banks in Ghana and how can a similar situation be avoided in the future of Ghanaian Banks? To answer this question a qualitative research approach is employed, collecting data through structured interviews with top banking executives and various secondary sources from governmental and academic sources. This method starts with examples and observations which are then broadened into general principles and theoretical concepts. To collect data, detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing for interactions with executives. By engaging with this group of experts the study aimed to access the strategic viewpoints on the matter. Despite some hesitance from interviewees, the promise of confidentiality resulted in valuable insights. This led to an analysis where specific examples contribute to theoretical understandings laying the groundwork, for recommendations designed to strengthen Ghana's banking industry resilience.

The structure of this thesis is carefully laid out. Visually represented in Figure 1 serving as a roadmap to guide readers through the research journey. Chapter One establishes the

foundation of the study offering an introduction that discusses the context and key issues at hand before succinctly stating the problem statement. This pivotal chapter also outlines the goals of the research defines the scope and limitations of the study and highlights the importance of the investigation, for both financial communities. Transitioning to Chapter Two a scholarly discussion unfolds by researching into literature on legitimacy theory and its application in the banking industry. The chapter is accurately organized, commencing with an exploration of legitimacy, in banking practices followed by an analysis of initiatives discussed in management literature. A thorough examination is conducted on how these initiatives impact performance drawing from theories that shed light on challenges faced by companies during strategic implementations. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in this study providing insight into the data collection approach employed. The chapter discusses the choice of data sources, including secondary data and analysis. Chapter Four discusses the research findings providing insights, into the banking sector and examining the causes of bank failures. Lastly, Chapter Five links the research results to existing literature presenting insights, practical implications for managers, and suggestions, for future research.

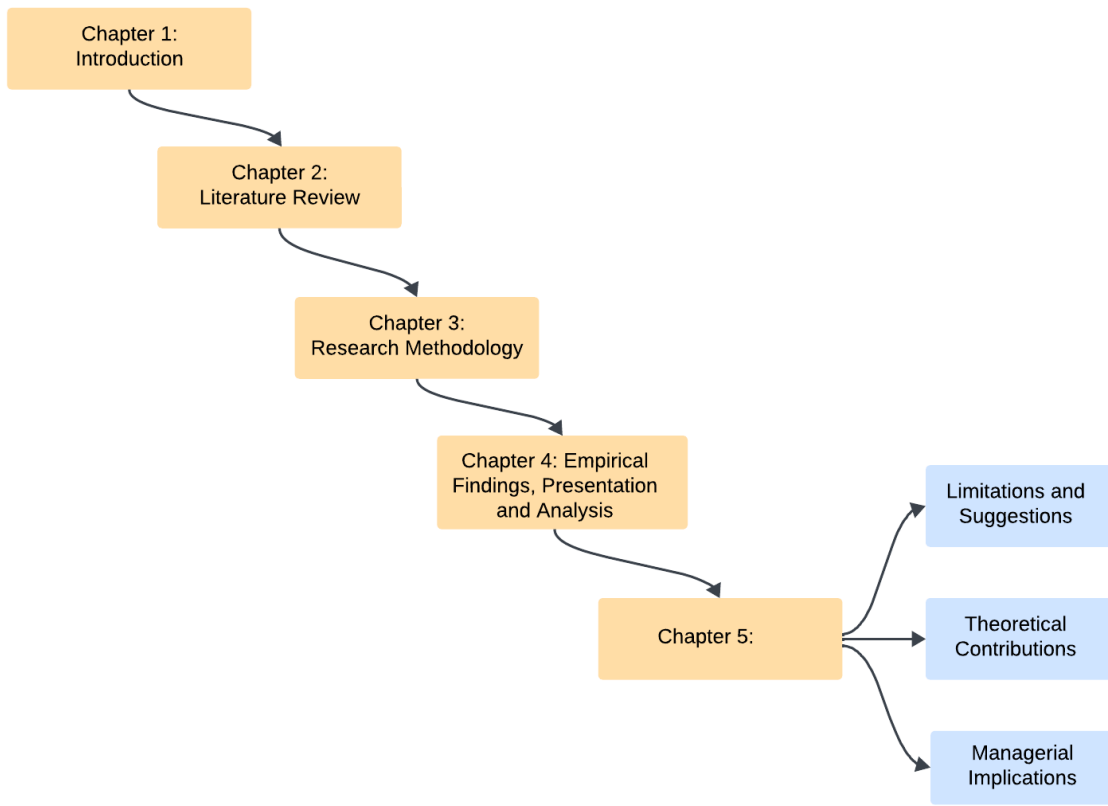


Figure 1: Structure of thesis

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents important topics related to this study. A critical review of comprehensive literature on existing publications, studies on legitimacy theory, and its application. Further emphasis is placed on the “internal and external business environment”, legitimacy theory banking practices, and strategic initiatives that are relevant to the research question. This topic has garnered considerable interest in the development of literature, especially following the collapse of banks in Ghana, given the crucial role banks play in a nation's economic expansion. The chapter also provides an in-depth study of other issues related to the topic with graphs, diagrams, and pictures to provide a better understanding of the analysis and explanation. Existing literature was reviewed and assessed, and the findings helped eliminate any evidence of duplication of previous research.

2.1. The Internal and External Business Environment

The internal and external business environment is a complex and ever-changing aspect of any business. Dzemyda (2014) posits that organizations need to analyze their unique abilities from both a competitive edge and a competitive deficiency perspective during strategic evaluation. It's also been proposed that environmental opportunities and dangers significantly shape these strategies (Barney & Hesterly, 2010). Therefore, having a clear understanding of these threats and opportunities puts the organization in a better position to develop and execute a “good strategy” that is; one that will give a competitive advantage. Identifying opportunities and threats in the internal environment, as well as strengths and weaknesses in the company's internal environment, is crucial to establishing an organization's strategy. This is done by scanning the environment. Wheelen & Hunger (2012) defined environmental scanning as *“the monitoring, evaluating, and disseminating*

of information from the external and internal environments to key people within the corporation". The objective of environmental scanning is to mostly ascertain strategic factors that determine the future of the organization through these internal and external elements. Wheelen & Hunger (2012) continued that using SWOT analysis is the easiest way to which environmental scanning is done. Whereas (SWOT) strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are the company's particular strategic factors; the external environment is comprised of variables such as opportunities and threats that are beyond management control and not within the organization. As a result, corporations exist within the framework of these variables (Wheelen & Hunger (2012)). Figure 2 shows environmental variables that may indicate that a company's specific task environment, for example, may be influenced by general forces and trends and trends within the societal environments or by factors within the natural environment. In contrast, Wheelen et al. (2012) connote that the internal environment entails the factors (strengths and weaknesses) within the organization itself that are not immediately under the control of top management. These internal factors include the structure of the organization, its resources, and its culture. To gain a competitive advantage, organizations can capitalize on their key strengths. Increasingly, technology development has continued this global competition as companies operate across borders instead of just within their domestic markets.

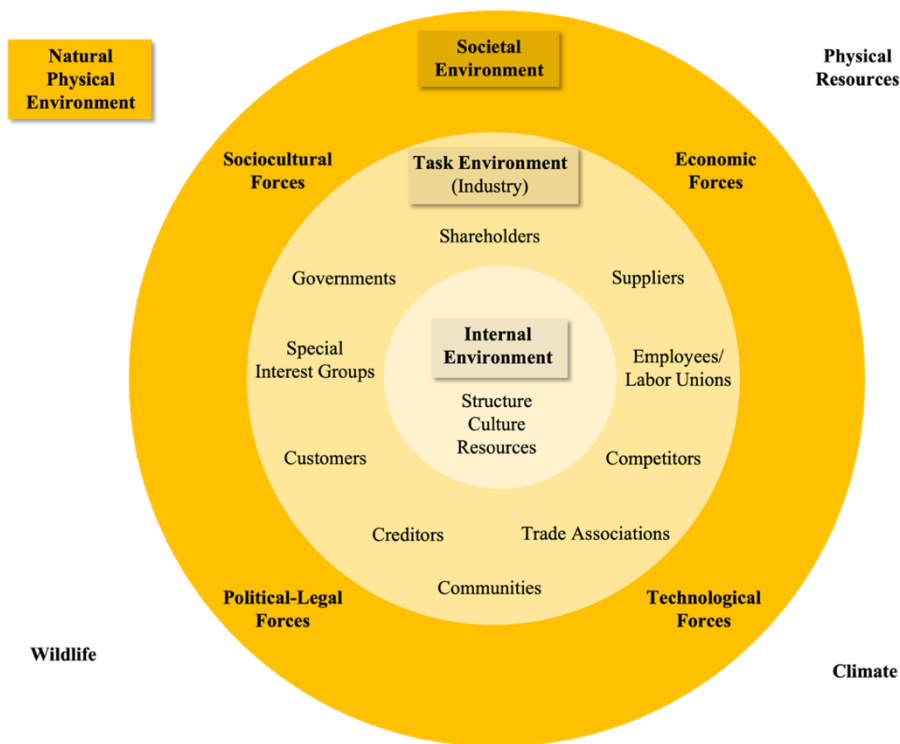


Figure 2. Environmental Variables (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012)

Cillo et al., (2019), suggested that the internal environment is composed of the personnel, resources, and organization of the business. On the other hand, the external environment is composed of customers, competition, industry, government, and other external factors. Within the internal environment, businesses can be controlled to a greater extent by managing their organizational structure, personnel, and resources. However, the external environment is highly unpredictable and prone to fluctuations due to its dependence on market changes, which are mostly beyond the control of the business. Child (1997), argues that an organization can be affected positively or negatively by external factors, depending on how those factors are handled. For example, changes in the economic environment can increase need for a certain good or service, while changes can result in intensified competition in the competitive environment. It is therefore important for organizations to be aware of the internal and external environment to maximize their potential for success.

By understanding how these factors interact and influence their operations, organizations can develop strategies that will enable them to remain competitive in the marketplace.

2.2. Strategic Initiatives

According to Zula and Chermack (2007), a strategic initiative is *“a major project or activity that is undertaken to support strategic objectives and to improve the competitive positive position of an organization”*. This implies that every strategic initiative must have a distinct objective, a precisely defined scope, and quantifiable goals. These are the key drivers of change and are the most important components of a business strategy. Zargun and Al-Ashaab 2014 also defined strategic initiatives as *“a set of actions designed to achieve a goal or solve a problem”*. Initiatives may vary in their purposes such as improving efficiency, expanding market share, or minimizing expenses. The aim of a strategic initiative for organizational development can vary greatly, such as developing a new process or product, undertaking business ventures, acquiring, and integrating responsibilities, or restructuring (Walter et al. 2013). According to Tarakci et. al, (2018), strategic initiatives assist organizations in staying ahead of the competition in the industry setting, and most importantly strategic initiative is a means through which a company translates its goals, long-term and short-term, and visions into everyday practice. Whereas Keshminder and del Rio (2019) claim that it is the future of an organization's development strategy that guides businesses regardless of their sizes and targets future operations bound to increase the organization's value. Typically, strategic initiatives align with the organization's top priority, resulting in high pressure when executed.

Although initiatives are prevalent and important, their success rates are only 30% to 50%. In the quest to better understand how strategic initiatives are effectively managed, many researchers have conducted extensive studies to examine the factors that determine initiative performance. These include the formal and informal context of the organization

or factors such as communication, forcing, compromise, or micropolitical activities that help in the developing process (Walter et al. 2013). Likewise, Walter et al. (2013) noted that previous studies have shown to operate effectively; strategic initiatives with different levels of examination require different organizational structures and processes. Pinto et al. (2020) in their findings argue that for a firm to achieve successful execution of strategic initiatives, management must ensure that strategic initiatives have well-defined goals, should outline feasible steps for accomplishing the goals, must have practicable milestones and timeline, must include a budget, and well-defined measures for evaluation of progress. To determine whether a strategic initiative has been successful or not, the initiative must meet certain expectations. According to Jasti et al. (2019), a successful strategic initiative must have well-defined scopes that refer to the time, resources, and procedures relevant to completing the strategic initiative. Another element of successful strategic initiatives is that such initiatives tend to bridge the performance gap, which is the distinction between the actual results and the ideal results (Kristoffersen et al., 2020). For example, should a company aim to garner a profit of 5 million but only manage to secure 2 million, an effective strategic plan should delineate a timeframe for bridging the 3-million shortfall within a specific period. Additionally, an effective strategic initiative brings transformation to the business by introducing novel activities or reviewing operations toward creating change (DiVenti, 2019). Ultimately, the primary aim of a strategic initiative is to realize the main organizational vision (Tronvoll et al., 2020). Hence any strategic initiative that accomplishes such is considered an effective or successful initiative.

Strategic initiatives may be categorized depending on the level of strategy and these levels include corporate-level initiatives, business-level initiatives, as well as functional-level initiatives. It may be concluded that corporate-level strategic initiatives seek to guide the firm on the markets it ought to compete in that a financial institution that aims to expand into FinTech may use a strategic initiative such as partnering with a digital technology company (Kunisch et al. 2019). On the other hand, business-level strategic initiatives focus

on succeeding in the chosen market of the firm in that the strategies ought to target gaining a competitive advantage. Drotskie and Van Wyk (2019) propose that the business-level strategy “is the plan that an organization develops to assist it in competing in the marketplace on a day-to-day basis and is an expression of how it intends to ‘do things right’”. Functional-level strategic initiatives focus on improving the departmental processes that are required for the success of corporate- and business-level strategic initiatives. The categorization of strategic initiatives may also be conducted based on their function innovative, corrective, defensive, and constructive. Innovative strategic initiatives are plans that focus on introducing novel ideas and products to impact other firms (Hossain's 2022; Chen & Misener, 2021). Hence, the introduction of digital technologies to the operations of a bank may influence other banks to adopt digital technologies. The corrective strategic initiatives are a set of strategies tailored to solve a problem in the firm, and they are usually short-term (Gackowiec, 2019). The defensive strategic initiatives, which usually involve novel approaches, focus on the firm maintaining its extant market position and competitive advantage (Daddi et al., 2019). Further, in Gamil and Rahman's (2019) work, it was concluded that constructive strategic initiatives, which are usually linked with corporate and business-level strategic initiatives, involve the adoption of new approaches or methods of running the business.

2.2.1. Importance of Strategic Initiatives

Firms have adopted and executed strategic initiatives for the benefits that they provide towards the fulfillment of the company’s overarching objective and the generic objectives of all businesses, that is to increase profit and minimize cost. Using cross-sectional questionnaire data from ICT companies in Europe, Asia, and the USA to investigate the relationship between subsidiary strategic initiatives and headquarters-subsidiary relations, Podrug et al. (2021)’s study found that strategic initiatives are important for the development of networking both internally and externally. Also, findings by Tolici (2021)

showed that strategic initiatives improve organizational performance. This is complemented by evidence framed in Podrug et al. (2021) a study that argued that strategic initiatives are important for achieving autonomy, which stems from improved organizational performance. Further, strategic initiatives such as innovative strategies aimed at preserving the environment provide companies with a competitive advantage. Confirming this are findings from a study by Singjai et al. (2018) which reported that green strategic initiatives implemented by hotels in Thailand improved environmental performance as well as offered the hotels an organizational competitive advantage. In the same vein, studies have proven that strategic initiatives such as strategic green marketing promote competitiveness and ultimately provide firms with a competitive advantage in their industries (Papadas et al., 2019). More so, strategic initiatives targeted at the technical aspects of a firm improve the technical operations of the firm in that such activities are improved through the application of innovative approaches such as digital technologies (Chen & Misener, 2021). On the contrary, various small business owners have failed to trust that strategic planning offers their businesses any benefits (Ngwenya, 2014).

2.2.2. Developing Strategic Initiatives

The process of successfully developing strategic initiatives actively involves three stages the initiation of the strategy, the development of the strategy, as well as the implementation. Mitchelmore & Rowley (2010) posited that a thorough comprehension of an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats collectively referred to as a SWOT analysis is integral to the development of strategic measures. The execution of a SWOT analysis plays a pivotal role in pinpointing key determinants of success and potential impediments to realizing enduring objectives. Once the SWOT analysis is complete, the process of developing strategic initiatives can begin. Mitchelmore & Rowley (2010) maintain that despite the complexity involved in formulating strategic actions, they remain

central to an organization's continued prosperity. By understanding its strengths and weaknesses and aligning initiatives with its values and stakeholder support, an organization can attain its long-term aspirations and objectives.

The fulfillment of the initiation of strategic initiatives leads to the development of the strategic initiatives and these include the development of future vision, development of the strategic issues, as well as the development of goals and objectives to be achieved by the strategic initiatives to be concluded on. Creating a strategic plan that remains pertinent now and, in the future, requires management to first establish a vision for continuity. Without this guiding principle or sense of direction, assembling the components of a strategic plan, such as strategies, tools, and tasks, could be challenging. Bryson (2018) contended that sketching out a vision for what lies ahead is crucial to crafting a successful strategic plan, as it provides a clear path to follow. In as much as the issues have been identified and clarified during the initiation stage, it is important that at the development stage, management draws up strategic issues from the overarching issue identified at the initiation stage. These strategic issues provide a clearer objective for the company. Ginter et al. (2018) and Rumelt (2012) argued that without identifying the true and specific challenges the firm seeks to tackle, the development of a strategic initiative may lead to a dead end. Following the successful identification and drafting of strategic initiatives, the firm's management ought to develop specific goals and objectives to suit and tackle each strategic issue identified. According to Rumelt (2012), a good strategic objective ought to have a "diagnosis" that elaborates on the challenge while targeting the crucial aspects of the challenge and the specific hurdles that need to be remedied. He argued that many comprehensive strategic initiatives are triggered by a review of diagnosis. Aside from the diagnosis, a good strategic objective must have a guiding principle tailored to help with the remedying and resolution of the barriers established in the diagnosis. The absence of a guiding principle in a strategic objective implies an absence of policy focus. Another characteristic of a good strategic objective, as postulated by Rumelt (2012), is the existence of a group of coherent activities

required to develop the guiding policy. These actions, which ought to be coordinated and consistent, may include policies, resources allocated, as well as maneuvers conducted. The opposite of these objectives makes bad strategic objectives which may be in two forms – “blue sky objectives” that repeat old objectives or are unachievable (Yu et al., 2022) and “dog’s dinner objectives” that consist of every suggestion from the initiation stage and hence haphazard actions and objectives (Harney, 2012).

2.2.3. Initiation of Strategic Initiatives

Strategic initiatives are triggered by events within the “internal and external environments” of the company (Wheelen et al., 2017). The internal and external components of the firm may be grouped into management characteristics, firm dynamics, and other environmental factors. The management characteristics focus on the degree to which the firm’s management possesses the accurate and applicable initiative skills for them to be able to handle a formal strategic initiative (Ginter et al., 2018). Another management dimension that is crucial to the initiation of a strategic initiative is the duration that the firm’s management is prepared to put on the selected strategic initiative. Some scholars have argued that a short-term period is inimical to change and innovation and is a hindrance to planning initiation, whereas long-term management orientation enhances strategy initiation (Memili et al., 2018). The third management element is the extent to which the management of a business exhibits innovation and entrepreneurship (Memili et al., 2018). This element is crucial to the initiation of strategies in that strategic initiatives ought to be business-oriented and innovative. Finally, in management characteristics, the management’s perception of a current or past successful strategy is important to the strategy initiation by the company (Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014), which is also known as intrapreneurship.

Another significant characteristic of the initiation phase of strategic initiatives is the firm dynamics. Within the firm dynamics characteristic is the factor of competitor orientation which includes the degree to which companies are trained and made to focus on understanding the strategic and tactical capabilities along with the strengths and weaknesses of their existing and potential competitors (Khan & Khalique, 2014). Conceptual corroboration for the link between competitor orientation and strategy initiation is embedded within population ecology theory and the organization-environment relations (Theodosiou et al., 2012). The second factor within the firm dynamics that influences strategy initiation is cultural entrenchment, which means the deeper culture has been entrenched within the organization, the less tendency to successfully initiate a strategic initiative. Zhu (2015) and Hogan and Coote (2014) argue that the effective initiation of strategic initiatives by the management of a company is supported significantly by the firm's organizational climate and culture. In the same vein, studies have proven that businesses that are rich in money and time embark on successful strategy initiation (Cassidy, 2016), whereas the final firm-level dimension that influences the initiation of strategic initiatives has been argued by Lyytinen and Newman (2015) as the political interference from firm managers that are opposed to planning. The environmental-level dimension that influences strategy initiation includes the degree of competitive pressures experienced by the firm. The argument by scholars such as Otim et al. (2015) is that the greater the degree of competitiveness in environmental conditions, the more likelihood of an effective strategy initiation. The second environmental dimension is the industry-wide mindset or microculture of the firm. Enger et al. (2015) argues that the intensity of the firm's strong industry-wide values, assumptions, or artifacts affects the probability of the firm engaging in strategy initiation. Consequently, managers who embark on initiating strategy ought to assess the management, firm, and environmental factors.

Initiation of strategic initiatives involves a series of activities, and these include the identification of stakeholders' needs which refers to the targeting of the relevant issues the

various stakeholders of the organization are concerned about. Employing the applied participatory analysis method of investigating two municipalities in Sweden and Germany, Wamsler (2017) argues that this is the foundation of any effective strategic initiation. The subsequent step involves reassessing the company's organizational purpose to guarantee that it is in line with the expectations of the stakeholders (Fuertes et al., 2020). The third phase of the initiation stage is the clarification of the company's organizational mandates which Bryson (2018) argued that during the initiation stage, the management ought to highlight and focus on the exact responsibilities in the strategic initiative development and initiation. Following the clarification of mandates is the analysis of the company's internal and external strengths and weaknesses using the SWOT or PESTLE analysis respectively. Hunger suggested that for a strategic initiative to kick off successfully, the company needs to thoroughly evaluate its internal conditions.

Baumgartner (2014) employed an extensive literature review of CSR, strategic management, and corporate sustainability to establish the need for external assessment by the firm during the initiation stage of the strategy. The achievement of the initiation objectives guarantees the smooth development of strategic initiatives.

2.2.4. Implementation Plans with Actions Resources and Timelines

The follow-up step to the development of the strategic initiative is how to bring the initiative to light. Strategy implementation may be referred to as the execution of the planned policies developed during the initial phases of the strategic initiative. Strategy implementation is founded on status reports and feedback to make sure that the strategy is effective. Reviews may be done should they be required. The implementation is characterized by resources, actions, and timelines. The resources include human resources and capital with the human resources comprising the specific work required to take on specific roles or leadership. The determination of roles implies the discussion of responsibilities, and this improves accountability among team members. Azhar et al. (2013)

argued about the part that strategic leadership plays in strategic management, concluding that defining these roles enhances responsibility. The next step in the strategy implementation process is the creation of an implementation plan. In an overview of a strategic plan development of a nursing school, findings corroborated the creation of an implementation plan as a step to a successful strategy implementation (Uzarski & Broome, 2019). There is a need for the allocation of the budget during the strategy implementation process. Bourmistrov and Kaarbøe (2013) corroborate this by arguing that resource allocation improves and triggers a better forward-looking and strategy-oriented competition and stimulates the company to be more certain in its implementation. Another crucial step is the alignment of structures and processes. To ensure a successful implementation of strategic initiatives, management ought to review and synthesize the existing structures within the company as well as the existing processes and human resources involved in the implementation process. During the alignment, management ought to communicate the strategy clearly to all stakeholders (Ferrell et al., 2021). This helps the actors make informed decisions. The final step in the execution phase is to monitor and evaluate, report, and review the progress. As the strategic initiative is implemented, there must be records kept at every stage of the process both successes and failures and adjustments may be made in accordance (Bester, 2012). Ultimately, the firm's management must develop an organizational culture that ought to nurture and contribute to the growth of the selected strategic initiatives.

2.3. Legitimacy Theory and its Application

The evaluation of the interactions between businesses and their external environment heavily relies on the notion of legitimacy. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) propose legitimacy theory, which is based on the concept of organizational legitimacy. This concept has been defined as:

“A condition or status which exists when an entity’s value system is congruent with the value system of the larger social system of which the entity is part. When a disparity, actual or potential, exists between the two value systems, there is a threat to the entity’s legitimacy”

Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122

Deephouse et al., 2017, and Zelditch Jr, (2018), also define legitimacy theory as the belief that a company consistently strives to gain acknowledgment and acceptance from the society or community in which it operates. Suchman (1995) suggests that legitimacy is a notion that varies based on the premise that a corporation's conduct complies with social constructs such as values, norms, beliefs, and classifications. This assumption serves as the driving force behind an organization's implementation of activities that conform to societal norms and limitations. Scholars and stakeholders have identified three main forms of legitimacy that companies aim to attain: moral legitimacy, which is based on normative approval; pragmatic legitimacy, which focuses on audience self-interest; and cognitive legitimacy, which is established through clarity and speculation (Brown & Toyoki, 2013). Moral legitimacy is sociotropic in that it is based on judgments about whether a specific activity performed by the organization is the appropriate thing to do. In turn, these judgments usually indicate belief on whether the activity efficiently improves societal welfare as described within the purview of the audience’s socially constructed values. Moral legitimacy may take the form of an evaluation of outputs and consequences, an evaluation of strategies and processes, an evaluation of classifications and frameworks, or an evaluation of leaders and management/representatives (Hampel & Tracey, 2019). The legitimacy of an organization's actions is often determined by the self-interests of its primary stakeholders. This typically involves direct interactions between the company and its audience, leading to pragmatic legitimacy. These acts may also involve broader economic, political, and social interdependencies in which the actions of the company ostensibly impact the well-being of the audience. The audiences usually become the immediate communities who vet the organizational behavior to determine their impact on

the audience (Islam et al., 2022). Cognitive legitimacy is based on the passive affirmative purposely or only because the audience considers it inevitable or the comprehensibility of the organization's practices (Tian et al., 2022). According to the cognitive view of legitimacy, legitimacy is borne from the existence of cultural norms that provide plausible justifications for the organization's existence or practices.

The application of the legitimacy theory by organizations has resulted in diverse corporate strategies with disclosure at the forefront of the strategies used. Over time, the need to achieve legitimacy has translated into disclosures in annual reports with the use of corporate governance to control the extent of disclosures the organization can report (Janang et al., 2020). Organizations seek legitimacy through disclosure-related strategies that are intended to satisfy the three forms of legitimacy: moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy. A significant amount of existing research has focused on understanding the reasons why companies choose to disclose their environmental information in their annual reports. The legitimacy theory has been identified as a prominent explanation for this phenomenon. A recent study by Islam et al. (2022) investigated the role of moral and pragmatic legitimacy in companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX). The findings of this study revealed that organizations incorporated anti-bribery disclosure practices in their annual reports as a way to uphold the legitimacy theory. In addition to this research on moral legitimacy, another study conducted by Richards et al. (2017) discovered that companies demonstrate moral legitimacy by investing in sustainability certification. Similarly, research indicates that companies utilize the cognitive legitimacy theory by implementing strategies that enhance shareholder satisfaction, foster the emergence of fresh business prospects, and facilitate the acquisition of resources. According to Cruz-Suarez et al. (2014) and Tian et al. (2022), the cognitive legitimacy theory serves as the predominant framework guiding corporate behaviors in adapting their operations to align with the cultural norms of their local communities.

Although legitimacy theory has been the subject of scrutiny in organizations and other relevant entities regarding the importance of maintaining public legitimacy for achieving success. However, Suchman (1995) contends that legitimacy is not static but rather an ever-changing process that organizations must continuously handle. This necessitates the implementation of five specific approaches: adherence to legal and regulatory obligations, engagement in socially responsible initiatives, delivery of high-quality products and services, utilization of trustworthy communication, and cultivation of positive relationships with stakeholders. Hamm et. al. (2022) posit that legitimacy theory has had a profound and far-reaching impact on the field of law and legal studies; and by so doing legitimacy should be seen as a tool for understanding the relationship between law and society, rather than a set of predetermined principles that govern the relationship. This shift in perspective has enabled researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how legal systems engage with and are impacted by social and political environments. To establish a comprehensive theory of re-organizational legitimacy, Hamm et. al, (2022) emphasized that the perception of legitimacy is contingent not only on the competence of the provider and the substance of the action but also on the underlying motivations and other related factors.

Legitimacy theory has been widely utilized in various contexts and scenarios of studies most notably in the fields of organizational behavior, the disclosure of social and ecological factors, entrepreneurial initiatives, environmental accounting, and more. The theory suggests that when the profitability of a change in how the public regards an organization increases, the organization has a greater need to manage those shifts in public opinion. To maintain their credibility, organizations may opt to shape public opinion by adapting to or altering societal perspectives, expectations, or values as a means of establishing their legitimacy. This entails adapting to the evolving dynamics of public sentiment and ensuring that their actions and messaging resonate with prevailing social norms. By doing so, organizations can enhance their standing in the eyes of the public and solidify their place in society. There is a consensus that when a business organization shifts its operations or

endeavors to adjust others' views of those operations, these actions must be accompanied by a disclosure of information. If this is not done, the company's target audience will be unaware of the organization's objectives and the legitimacy of its actions may be questioned (O'Donovan, 2002). According to (Olateju et. al, 2021) an organization's legitimate standing is derived from legitimate theory, and it is created when its daily operational activities and practices are strategically aligned to accurately reflect the norms, values, expectations, and demands of society while remaining legally and publicly acceptable. Mousa and Haasan (2015) argue that legitimacy theory has to do with companies that react to the requests of different groups of interest and act to validate their activities. Specifically, legitimacy theory focuses on how companies engage in social reporting to shape public perception of the organization. Although Chedrawi and Osta (2017), point out that legitimate businesses must behave in a certain way to meet social expectations. It suggests that companies will take practical and strategic measures to comply with society's expectations while still maintaining some level of flexibility in their pursuit of profits. These companies need to strike a balance between meeting societal demands and maintaining their autonomy to operate.

3.4 Legitimacy and Banking Practices

The evolution of the impact of banking regulations and reforms has been carried out using the legitimacy theory. According to X Zheng and Y Xi (2020), legitimacy theory can be defined as a concept that explains the success of organizations. According to this theory, organizations that possess legitimacy, which refers to the acknowledgment and acceptance of a particular situation by an organization's surroundings, are more likely to achieve success. In the context of banking regulations and reforms, the legitimacy theory suggests that the acceptance of these regulations and reforms by the environment is crucial for their success. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that the environment accepts banking

regulations and reforms to ensure their success. Lamertz and Baum (1998) share the same perspective and elaborate on how legitimacy theory influences these regulations and reforms, as well as the appropriate methods for evaluating them. It is important to conduct an evaluation that considers the environment's acceptance of these changes as well as their potential impact on the environment to be able to evaluate the likelihood of success for banking regulations and reforms.

Olateju et al. (2021) critically examined in their review that, despite the inability of existing legitimacy theories to offer actionable guidance, corporations have strategically aligned their functions to fulfill societal values, norms, expectations, and demands to attain legitimacy. Additionally, a comprehensive study of reports from 345 financial and non-financial institutions between 2015 and 2019 was conducted to determine the extent and standard of environmental disclosures. It was found that these institutions followed environmental reporting practices to comply with the Green Banking regulations established in 2011 (Akhter et al., 2022). The quality of environmental disclosures is an indication of the attitude towards and social commitment of the management of a company, which is important to inform users (Chandok & Singh, 2017). In banking sectors in countries like Bangladesh, research conducted by Islam et al. (2021) revealed that banks situated closer to their customers tend to divulge less social information compared to banks located further away from their customers. Interestingly, the latter group of banks discloses more social information as a means to meet the expectations of their local community.

According to existing literature, companies participate in social and environmental disclosures due to the ever-increasing pressures from stakeholders about the impact of the company on the environment (Chithambo et al., 2020; Demir & Min, 2019; Eweje & Sakaki, 2015). Attempts to investigate reasons for this disclosure by companies showed the legitimacy theory at the core. It is inferred that businesses disclose their environmental and societal implications in their yearly reports to authenticate their ongoing presence and

activities within a certain community (Belal et al., 2015; Dyduch & Krasodomska, 2017; Lokuwaduge & Heenetigala, 2017). Businesses and corporations devise various strategies to achieve legitimacy. One of the major strategies of legitimacy is communication. Anas et al. (2015) argued that despite the existence and use of many other vehicles of communication such as employee newsletters, public relations exercises, and advertisements by corporations, none of such communication vehicles possess the legitimacy of corporations' annual reports. Ali et al. (2021) believe that the annual report is a strategic document that emphasizes only a particular aspect of a corporation's business performance.

Research conducted by Payandehdoost Masooleh et al. (2022) and Tadros and Magnan (2019) concluded that companies with inadequate sustainability records often resort to poor-quality disclosures. This tactic is employed to veil their true performance and safeguard their reputation, supporting the principles behind the legitimacy theory. Corroborating this argument, Chelli et al. (2014) findings on a group of French companies' reaction to a new law to disclose environmental information showed that companies adhered to sharing environmental information with stakeholders even in the absence of non-compliance sanctions to ensure organizational legitimacy. Meng et al. (2013)'s research revealed an interesting contradiction. Their findings indicated that Chinese corporations' environmental information release was strictly driven by regulatory obligations, with no evidence of voluntary disclosure. As banks expand their services from the traditional allocation of credit and profit making, they aim towards appealing to their society as well as preserving their environment. For this reason, banks, through the legitimacy theory engage in activities such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects. Chiu (2014) argued that responsible and ethical conduct by banks has resulted in benefits that go beyond the protection of the interests of depositors and owners. Moving on from their roles as credit creators, fractional reserves, and intermediaries, banks have sought to present themselves as custodians of green environment, sustainability, and responsible financing. Banks may

create legitimacy through constant interaction with regulators in that management of banks seeks to operate within the confines of the law of each jurisdiction. This places them in good standing with the law. Correspondently, Lamertz & Baum (1998), emphasized how the banking industry is a complex system that relies on a variety of factors such as cultural, political, and economic perspectives to establish the legitimacy of its regulations and reforms. To effectively address legal and ethical issues in banking, it is crucial to consider these perspectives.

Similarly, Caussat et al. (2019), conducted a study that demonstrated that financial institutions seek to establish credibility by actively engaging with the local community. They achieve this by forming alliances with local businesses and establishing subsidiary branches within the vicinity. While these collaborations may not directly align with the primary goals of the bank, they offer possibilities for the institution to gain a competitive edge and expand into untapped markets. Chedrawi et al. (2020) also argued that the most predominant strategy for achieving legitimacy is the adoption of CSR projects by banks within their immediate communities or target communities. These projects are usually centered on the provision of the immediate needs of communities. To facilitate the alignment of bank strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement, institutions like the United Nations have implemented frameworks such as the Principles for Responsible Banking. These frameworks serve as a guide for banks to achieve legitimacy in a structured and straightforward manner while adhering to sustainability commitments (Forsén, 2022).

In a bid to create credit, banks ensure that credit is created ethically through sustainable means. Various scholars have argued that banks, in contemporary times have resorted to lending to high-carbon creation businesses at high interest rates to discourage the use of high-carbon manufacturing materials and decrease carbon emissions into the environment (Campiglio, 2016; Mcloughlin, 2015). This contrasts with the banks originally lending money

to such companies at the same rate as others. Performing the fractional reserve role, banks have had to deal with ethical issues such as fraud and illegitimate contractual arrangements. Nair (2015) asserts that client collaboration is one of the responses to situating the fractional reserve role of banks in legitimacy such that clients are kept well-informed about their banking transactions. The disclosure of such information and the inclusion of clients in decision-making about the use of their deposits is rooted in the bid of the banks to legitimize their operations and activities. Situating the financial intermediation theory of banking within the legitimacy concept requires the ethical process of reduction in transaction cost and the information disclosure to clients, thereby curbing information asymmetry. The financial intermediation function of banks seeks the approval of clients in that it minimizes the restriction of information to its clients. However, to establish legitimacy, this information dissemination is conducted in ways such that the information is accessible to all. The periodic financial reports of banks and shareholder meetings are examples of avenues used to ethically disseminate information to stakeholders and shareholders.

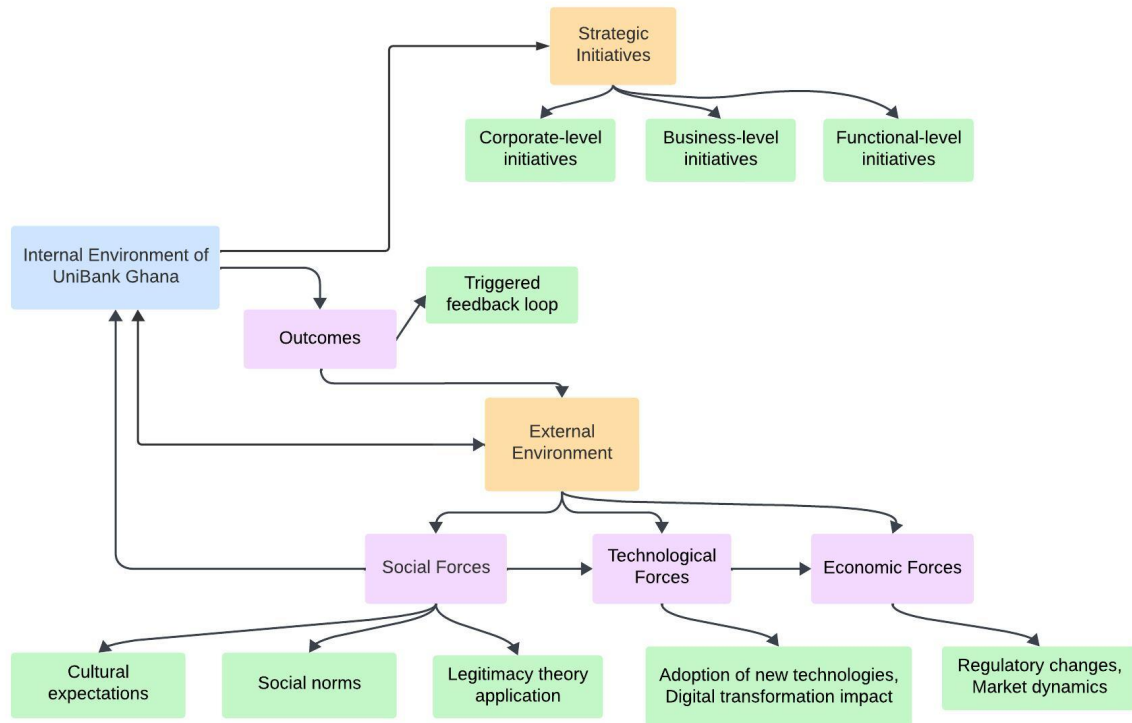


Figure 3: Theoretical framework mapping strategic choices and legitimacy in Unibank.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter integrates insights, drawn from a review of existing literature to create a framework focusing on strategic management within UniBank Ghana. It explores how both internal and external business environments along with actions and legitimacy theory collectively impact the bank's operations and strategic choices. UniBank Ghana divides its strategic initiatives into four distinct classifications innovative, corrective, defensive, and constructive. This is done to align the bank's capabilities with its needs. This alignment ensures that the bank's strategies are adaptable and forward-thinking effectively addressing shifts in the environment and market dynamics. The theoretical framework stresses the significance of these actions interacting with both capabilities and external factors to achieve the bank's objectives while adjusting to influences.

The foundation of this model is built upon the theory of legitimacy, proposing that businesses need to align their practices with societal standards to uphold their reputation. In the case of UniBank Ghana, this synchronization dictates actions by societal expectations and customs, thereby influencing the bank's status and its acceptance within the community. Furthermore, this theory highlights the influence of factors prompting the bank to devise strategies that not only respond to but also shape societal expectations. The literature review, alongside the framework, emphasizes monitoring environmental changes and making strategic adaptations facilitated by SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) analyses. The continuous feedback loops play a role, in ensuring that the bank stays aligned with its goals and maintains its credibility allowing it to quickly respond to changing circumstances. This flexibility helps in making strategic choices and boosts the bank's ability to compete effectively in the market. The results of these efforts are highlighted as they align with requirements leading to more strategic decisions. This emphasis is essential, as it strengthens UniBank Ghana's competitive advantage amid a dynamic corporate environment.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methodologies or procedures that were employed in conducting this research. The processes of collecting pertinent data from both primary and secondary sources were discussed with adherence to common and relevant data collection and analysis techniques. The utilization of a qualitative data collection method was chosen as the means to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand, to accomplish the research objective. The research strategy, in turn, will be centered around the execution of a single case study.

3.1. Research Approach

The qualitative research approach guided by the induction process was adopted for this study. This was because the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to rely on the views of participants to understand their collective and the socio-cultural context within which they live and operate. Bogban and Bilken (1998) explained that qualitative researchers want to know where, when, and how, and understand circumstances under which certain attributes and behavior come into being. Accordingly, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretative, and rooted in the lived experience of people. By adopting a qualitative research approach, the researcher was able to acquire valuable data from the participants through the means of interviews and observations. Using methods like interviews and observations the study seeks to capture participant's perspectives presenting data as vivid stories rather than dry statistics. This approach aligns with a tradition that values narrative and visual elements over numbers as advocated by Bogban and Bilken (1998).

Following an approach outlined by Saunders et al. (2019), the research emphasizes understanding events, within their frameworks recognizing the diverse circumstances that influence and give significance to these events. This method acknowledges the circumstances that influence and give significance to these events. It serves as a guiding tool that leads to a journey of exploration, where information obtained from interviews is not just gathered but carefully examined and integrated with concepts. The end goal is to create a structure, developed from the rich sources of observation and dialogue and crafted into a clear presentation of the researcher's theoretical insights.

3.2. Research Design

This study is based on a case study framework, a decision made to analyze and understand the complex collapse of Unibank. This approach is crucial, for exploring aspects of UniBank's history, operations, and the intricate web of choices that led to its downfall. The case study method acts as a tool allowing us to uncover the core story of Unibank within the landscape. Yin (2003) supports this approach emphasizing its effectiveness in navigating through environments where variables and contexts are closely intertwined. It excels in revealing the nuances of phenomena embedded in layers of complexity.

In line with Yin's view, Hale (2011) sees descriptive case studies as tools especially when dealing with obscure phenomena or those that have not been extensively studied such as the unique case of Unibank. This research strategy enables an exploration enabling us to delve into the specifics and distinctive features of the bank by following its journey, over time. The study's design serves as a roadmap that guides the research process from start to finish. It outlines an approach to tackle the research questions mapping out the journey, from forming theoretical framework to analyzing data. This framework directs how data is collected, analyzed, and synthesized into theories. To illustrate this process visually the study includes Figure 3 which presents the 'research onion' model. This model peels layers

of research methodology to uncover the investigative strategies, choices, and steps taken during the study.

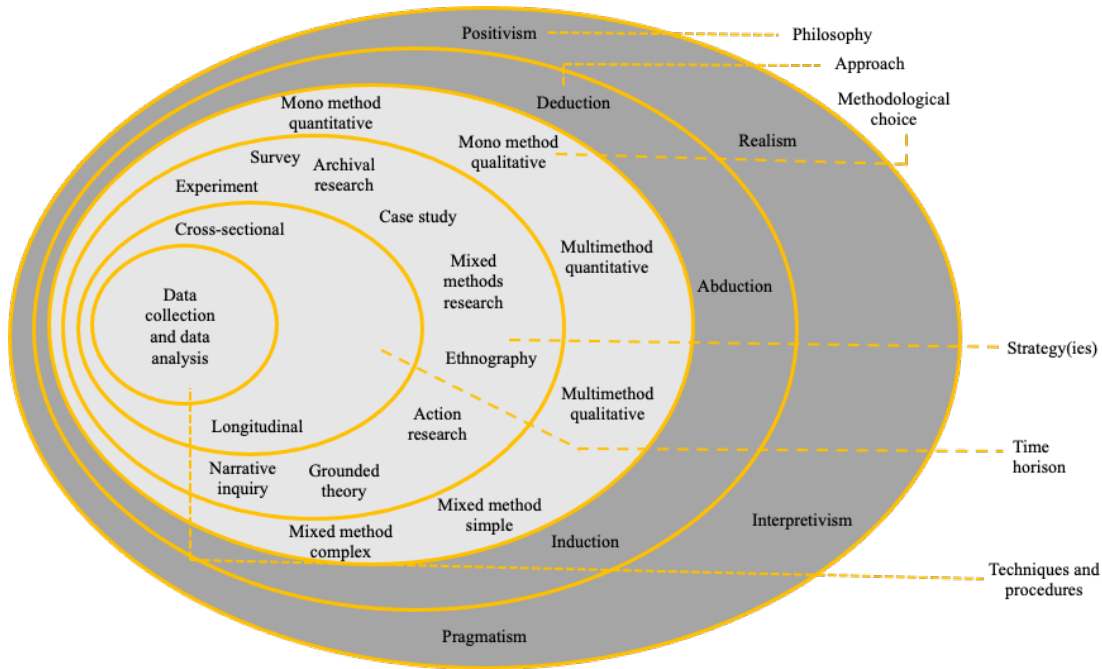


Figure 4. Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016)

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Interviews and document reviews were the main data collection instruments that were used to obtain data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data encompassed views and opinions that were obtained through interviews from available top management of Unibank Ghana. More importantly, Hox and Boeije (2005), explained in primary data collection the researcher collects data on the specific research problem at hand using methods that are appropriate for the research. This data, therefore, enabled

the researcher to vividly describe and document the bank in its totality. On the other hand, the document review which constituted secondary sources provided historical and relevant facts for the study. Secondary data as defined by Schmidt & Hollensen, (2006) is *“information that has been gathered by someone other than the researcher and /or for some other purpose other than the project at hand”*. The data and information used for this study were collected as hard copies from the website of the Bank of Ghana (BoG). These include annual reports, books, introduction files, internal files, quality reports, and other financial reports regarding the company’s strategic initiatives. These sources of information provided insight into how to answer the research question, meet the research objectives as well provide deep insight into the activities of the bank (Saunders et al., 2007).

3.3.1. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with top executives of UniBank Ghana using a semi-structured interview guide. Based on the insights shared by Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005), it has been established that interviews can be remarkably effective in yielding productive outcomes. This is primarily due to the interviewer's ability to explore and address specific issues of concern comprehensively. Consequently, this focused approach in interviews facilitates the generation of constructive suggestions that hold immense value and potential for improvement. The interviews, therefore, enabled the researcher to collect data concerning their emergence and activities as a bank. Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005), again suggested that the interview method of data collection best suited research studies that involve fewer participants.

By employing a semi-structured interview guide, the researcher was allowed to accurately construct a comprehensive array of open-ended questions, thereby providing ample space for the inclusion of follow-up questions and engaging discussions. This approach effectively

catered to the diverse range of situations that unfolded during the interviews, ensuring adaptability and flexibility throughout the research process. In justifying the use of this type of interview, Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) posited that the semi-structured interview format is flexible, easy to administer, and allows for more complex questions since the presence of the interviewer can assist in answering those questions. Thus, during semi-structured interviews, the interviewer adheres to a predetermined outline but retains the flexibility to explore relevant avenues of discussion that may deviate from the initial guide when necessary (Kallio et al., 2016).

'Face to Face' interviews were conducted in the homes and offices of the respondents whilst some follow-up discussions were sometimes held through telephone conversations. According to Bowling (1997), telephone interviews yield as accurate data as 'face-to-face' interviews. The telephone discussions were necessitated because of the long distance between some of the respondents and the researcher. To ensure that the ethics of research were upheld, the interviewees were informed before they were audio-recorded, and their confidentiality was respected. The entirety of the conducted interviews took place exclusively in the English language, serving as the primary mode of communication. Subsequently, the collected audio data underwent the process of transcription, enabling its conversion into written form to facilitate thorough analysis and examination.

For the sake of retaining the anonymity of the interviewees, the real names, surnames, ages, nationalities, and other personal characteristics of the respondents were left at the request of the interviewees. Kumar (2014), noted that when collecting and analyzing data, it is important to consider the socio-cultural environment. This is critical because the study is practice-oriented, so the objective interpretation of data was only influenced by respondents' knowledge and view of the bank and their personal experiences but did not include other factors that would impact further analysis.

3.3.2. Document Review

According to Finn and Jacobson (2008), a document review is a good source of readily available and unobtrusive background information. The process of document analysis involves a structured approach to reviewing and accessing printed or digital materials that are transmitted through computers and the Internet. In a manner like various other analytical techniques employed in qualitative research, document analysis involves the thorough examination and careful interpretation of data, intending to uncover underlying significance, facilitating a comprehensive understanding, and cultivating practical knowledge. To ensure accuracy in qualitative research, document analysis is typically paired with other triangulation methods. Researchers are required to gather information from at least two different sources to confirm and validate their findings. These sources may include interviews, observations, and physical objects. The goal is to achieve consistency and corroboration across various data sources and research methods. The researcher uses triangulation of data to increase the credibility of their study by bringing together evidence from various sources. By analyzing the information gathered through different methods, the researcher can verify their findings across multiple data sets and minimize the potential influence of any biases that may exist in a single study (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, the respondents provided documents in the form of personally authored essays and statements that aided the researcher in adhering to the fundamental principle of triangulation; which entails the utilization of multiple sources and methods to corroborate findings, and to foster a higher level of trust in the veracity of the study's conclusion, deliberate efforts were made to implement various measures aimed at ensuring the validity and reliability of the research.

3.4. Method of Sampling

Sampling refers to a methodical research process that endeavors to handpick a distinct portion from a broader population to appropriately represent the entirety of the group under study (Turkson, 2011). Babbie (1992) reiterated this notion, emphasizing that sampling serves as the method by which a researcher strategically gathers individuals, places, or objects for in-depth study and analysis. For this investigation, the researcher opted for the purposive sampling technique, as advocated by Hox et al. (2005), as it best aligned with the researcher's information needs. Furthermore, Lewis and Sheppard (2006) expounded upon the concept of purposive sampling, elucidating that it involves the researcher proactively determining the specific information required and actively seeking out individuals possessing the necessary knowledge and willingness to share insights based on their expertise and real-world experiences.

This process of sampling involves identifying the informants and meeting or communicating with them. To ensure the research's objectivity and quality, interviewees were chosen based on their level of involvement with the bank and their relevance to the study. The researcher had a direct connection to a contact who had worked with the bank and through this connection, the relevant respondents were selected and interviewed. 7 invitations were sent for an interview out of which 4 confirmed and took part in this research.

3.5. Data analysis

In this study, narrative analysis was purposefully employed as a robust methodological approach aimed at effectively unraveling, interpreting, and gaining deeper insights from the data gathered from the respondents. This approach is particularly effective, in exploring the series of events that shape individual and group identities in the business world. Webster (2010) sheds light on the significance of narrative analysis in research it's not about

gathering stories but about connecting them to create a coherent picture of real-life experiences revealing the underlying forces that shape identity and behaviors in organizational contexts.

After collecting data through interviews a thorough examination began, digging deep to uncover key themes brimming with insights. These themes, like Turkson's (2011) findings were not random but carefully organized to ensure flow and clear understanding. The interpretation process followed Polkinghorne's methodology as noted by Webster (2010) emphasizing the importance of identifying these themes through inference and interpretation a reflection of the researcher's rigor. During the analysis phase, each participant's unique narrative was thoroughly linked, into a cohesive story that reflected methodological precision. The stories were not just creations; they were part of a context and harmony as suggested by Bryant (2006) revealing themes through a deductive method that brought depth to the analysis. In addition, to spoken words, the research made use of materials provided by participants, as elements incorporating their perspectives into the research framework. These items, ranging from papers to notes formed the foundation on which the researcher's arguments were built. Following the ideas of Miles and Huberman (1994), such documentary proof was not secondary but crucial providing a layer to the data and reinforcing the study's results while enhancing the credibility of the conclusions made.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on documenting the banking structure of Ghana, performing both external analyses and tackling the banking crisis. It offers a perspective, on Ghana's banking evolution emphasizing the risks and crises. These elements helped identify recurring trends and patterns that might have led to the collapse of banking institutions. The chapter showcases the results from interviews with representatives of Unibank involved in the case study. A total of four interviews were conducted, each lasting forty-five minutes. Prior consent was obtained from the interviewees regarding recording procedures. They were explicitly informed that data collection was for educational purposes and that their information would be highly protected. The participant's rights, to privacy and confidentiality were fully respected. To maintain anonymity, the interviewees were identified as labels A, B, C, and D throughout the entirety of the process without any mention of their names.

4.1. Banking in Ghana: An Overview

Banking plays a role in Ghana's economy facilitating essential financial activities like creating money, lending, and borrowing. The banking sector in the country is structured around institutions such as the Bank of Ghana which acts as the central bank along with various types of banks like commercial banks, merchant banks, and rural banks. Since its establishment in 1957, the Bank of Ghana has been responsible for managing currency issuance, and reserves and ensuring stability through credit regulations (Zheng et al., 2018). The policies implemented by the bank have a significant impact, on the banking industry and influence capital markets greatly (Gadzo et al., 2019).

Quartey and Afful Mensah (2014) highlight the role of banks in adjusting interest rates to encourage investment by reducing borrowing expenses and how the Bank of Ghana strategically modifies rates to support high-risk industries like agriculture. Throughout Ghana, traditional banks offer a range of services for individuals and businesses including financial solutions and specialized services like brokerage and underwriting tailored to meet the needs of both consumers and companies (Gambacorta and Van Rixtel, 2013; Gakpo, 2020). They also provide long-term assistance to key sectors such as agriculture and industry often accompanied by expert guidance (Salami & Arawomo 2013). Significantly, entities within the banking framework include institutions, like Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) National Investment Bank (NIB), and Agricultural Development Bank (ADB).

The oversight of this expansive banking network is the responsibility of the Central Bank, encompassing 27 banks, comprising both foreign-owned and domestically owned institutions. Historically, the predominance of government-owned banks fostered a non-competitive environment marred by inefficiencies and political meddling (Kusi et al., 2021). The initial Banking Act of 1970, designed to regulate the sector, fell short of providing clear guidelines on critical operational aspects such as capital requirements and risk management, leading to suboptimal supervision practices (Yuni & Attama, 2021). Aimola and Odhiambo (2018) critiqued the inconsistent on-site supervision, compounded by inadequate off-site monitoring plagued by data insufficiencies.

The financial reforms of the 1980s necessitated a recapitalization drive due to enduring non-performing loans and substandard asset management, culminating in a significant sectoral crisis by 1985, prompted by economic stagnation and fluctuating inflation rates (Matsumoto, 2021). In response, the World Bank facilitated the Financial Sector Adjustment Program (FINSAP) from 1988 to 1997, which included the establishment of the Banking Supervision Department within the Bank of Ghana (Gadzo et al., 2019). Subsequent efforts included the introduction of a Banking Act in 2004 which revamped regulations by

increasing capital requirements and prompting a series of bank mergers and acquisitions to meet these standards (Quarshie and Djimatey, 2020). This period also saw the liberalization of the banking sector, inviting a broader array of financial institutions to enhance the system's robustness, although this move did not substantially fulfill its socioeconomic objectives (Alawattage and Azure, 2021). By the year 2021, there was growth in assets and a shift from an oligopolistic to a more competitive market environment in the banking sector. This transition was indicated by the Boone indicator (Oduro et al., 2022). Despite the challenges posed by the COVID 19 the banking industry showed resilience thanks to regulatory assistance and a strong emphasis, on managing risks. By the close of 2021, the banking industry had displayed growth and resilience due to the strategic competitiveness that bolstered financial stability amidst global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (GHAN, 2021; Ofori-Boateng et al., 2021).

4.1.1. The Internal and External Environment of The Ghanaian Banking Sector

Internal Environment Analysis

Market Power and Competitive Dynamics

The Ghanaian banking sector exhibits significant market power, as evidenced by the substantial spread between lending and borrowing rates. This characteristic suggests a less competitive market, where larger banks tend to dominate. Aboagye et al. (2008) identified factors such as bank size, efficiency concerning staff costs, and macroeconomic conditions as key determinants of market power within the sector. Similarly, Klutse and Anane (2016) highlight that despite the mergers and acquisitions aimed at increasing competition, the market structure remains oligopolistic with a considerable concentration of assets within the top banks. However, high lending rates and aggressive policy frameworks may erode customer confidence and inhibit financial inclusion (Antwi and Binfor, 2013). Likewise, the

increasing number of banks intensifies competition, which can lead to unethical practices that jeopardize the sector's reputation (Banahene, 2018). This situation suggests that efforts to enhance competition must address these structural imbalances.

Cultural Orientations and Innovation

Innovation within the banking sector is significantly influenced by organizational culture. Asaah et al. (2020) explore how innovate-oriented and compete-oriented cultures positively affect product innovation. However, the study also notes that external motivators can diminish these positive impacts, indicating a complex relationship between internal culture and external incentives. This insight is crucial for banks aiming to foster a culture that not only promotes innovation but also aligns with external market realities. The introduction of fintech innovations like E mobile money to the Ghanaian banking sector has played a significant role in boosting financial inclusion thereby expanding the sector's customer base (Pobee and Ansong 2022). Recent developments have presented new opportunities for the banking sector. An increase in innovative financial products, such as mortgages, coupled with a rise in financial literacy, has opened new markets within the previously unbanked population (MacCarthy and Dery, 2016; Abor et al., 2018). These technological advancements help bolster the industry's ability to withstand challenges and adapt to changes, in today's changing financial environment.

Internal Controls and Efficiency

The Ghanaian banking sector is characterized by strong liquidity and solvency, crucial for its sustainability and reliability (Seidu et al., 2021). Effective internal control systems are fundamental to the operational success of banks. According to Ayagre et al. (2014), Ghanaian banks typically demonstrate internal controls, especially in terms of control environments and monitoring activities. This strength is vital for meeting compliance requirements and ensuring operational efficiency. Additionally, the efficiency of the banking industry is influenced by factors like expenses and credit risks with the size of the

bank playing a significant role (Winful & Sarpong 2017). These discoveries indicate that maintaining internal controls and enhancing operational efficiency are key, to improving profitability and remaining competitive.

External Environment Analysis

Regulatory Frameworks and Legal Factors

The regulatory and legal framework set by the government has an impact on how banks operate. The Bank of Ghana Act lays down the rules for overseeing and controlling the banking system to ensure the stability of the financial system. (Mawutor, 2015). It's important to keep improving these rules to match standards and keep up with changes in banking. This adjustment is significant to building a competitive banking industry. Following laws like those against money laundering helps protect the sector but can also create challenges for day-to-day operations (Damoah et al., 2020). External factors, such as the developing focus, on banking practices are reshaping traditional banking services to be more environmentally friendly bringing both difficulties and chances to save costs (Chirambo, 2018; Akomea Frimpong et al., 2022).

Economic Impact and Macroeconomic Integration

The performance of the banking industry in Ghana is closely tied to the broader economic conditions. For example, Turkson et al. (2015) delve into how Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) impacts growth through the financial sector emphasizing the need for a stable financial environment to fully leverage FDI benefits. This connection highlights the role of the sector in ensuring national economic stability and growth calling for policies that strengthen the banking sector's capacity to facilitate economic progress. Government policies and economic changes significantly shape the banking sector. Factors like unrest, trade barriers, and tariffs can have negative impacts on banking activities (Adolph, 2013). Conversely,

economic strategies have an impact, on banking performance with a strong economy lifting bank performance while a weak one can lead to challenges (Nkegbe and Ustarz 2015).

Technological Advancements

In the banking sector, the adoption of technology is shaped by a mix of technological advancements, organizational readiness, and environmental factors. According to Agbozo et al. (2017), key elements such as technological benefits, preparedness within organizations, and regulatory backing play crucial roles in embracing Business Intelligence Systems. These tools help in managing risks and enhancing customer service both essential for staying competitive in the banking field. Factors like changes and technological progress also have a significant impact on how banks operate. While there may be some resistance to banking features hindering the uptake of new technologies (Simpson et al., 2020). Generally, technology has largely improved service delivery despite challenges such, as data security breaches (Ozili, 2018; Cudjoe et al., 2015).

4.2. Banking Regulations in Ghana and Crisis

The banking sector in Ghana experienced a severe crisis from 2017 to 2020, a period marked by financial instability and regulatory shortcomings. This crisis prompted the Bank of Ghana to undertake rigorous reforms aimed at stabilizing and strengthening the financial infrastructure (Eklemet et al. 2022). The genesis of the crisis can be traced back to legislative changes; the replacement of Act 673 of the Banking Act 2004 with Act 930 of the Banks and Specialized Deposit-Taking Institutions Act 2016 significantly expanded the supervisory authority of the Bank of Ghana (BoG). This shift allowed the BoG to implement stricter oversight and enforcement mechanisms (Amenu-Tekaa, 2022). In response to the imminent collapse of indigenous banks, threatened by their high non-performing loans from the 2010

recession, the BoG sanctioned a series of mergers and acquisitions from August 2017 through January 2020 (Asiama & Amoah, 2019; Gadzo et al., 2019; Madugu et al. 2020).

The crisis was worsened by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, the banking sector grappled with poor corporate governance, inadequate risk management practices, and weak internal controls, which were significant contributors to the downfall of institutions like Uni-bank Ghana. This bank, specifically, engaged in risky practices such as extending unsecured loans to related parties, which contravened banking regulations (Obuobi et al. 2019). Externally, the banks faced challenges from macroeconomic conditions like high inflation and a depreciating currency, escalating the risk of borrower defaults and deteriorating asset quality.

Despite the crisis, research indicates that Ghanaian universal banks maintained a high average overall technical efficiency of 89%, showcasing a robust operational capacity (Adusei, 2016). Similarly, rural banks, which are critical in the socioeconomic development of rural areas, displayed an average efficiency rate of 80.2% (Oteng-Abayie, 2017). These institutions, however, were not without challenges, suffering from issues such as inadequate funding and poor governance, which were reflected in their service delivery and operational sustainability (Musah & Adutwumwaa, 2020). The cleanup initiative led by the Bank of Ghana had immediate negative effects, such as a significant drop in deposits and a spike in withdrawals, driven by a loss of confidence among consumers (Affum, 2020). These outcomes highlighted the delicate balance required between regulatory enforcement and maintaining public trust in the financial system.

4.2.1. Background of UniBank

UniBank emerged as a resilient and substantial medium-sized financial services entity, displaying a considerable portfolio of total assets valued at US\$433 million, coupled with a

notable shareholders' equity amounting to US\$50 million. Founded in 1997 as a financial services provider, UniBank made its foray into the banking sector in January 2001, marking its official entry following the acquisition of a banking license. Since its inception, the bank strategically positioned itself to cater to the diverse banking requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and individual customers. Notably, in 2009, UniBank expanded its services to include Internet banking and mobile banking, aligning itself with the evolving landscape of digital financial services. UniBank Ghana, with its unwavering commitment to the people of Ghana, stands as a beacon of community-centric banking. The bank served the needs of the population through 15 branches, and the bank's philosophy revolved around the belief that the people it served were its greatest asset. This unique approach, centered on investing in and nurturing the community, has been instrumental in UniBank's success story, particularly in the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) market, fostering both growth and profitability. UniBank's journey unfolded not only as a financial institution but as a dynamic participant in the socio-economic fabric of Ghana, embracing innovation, digitalization, and community engagement to remain a key player in the nation's financial landscape.

4.3. Examining the Extent to Which Adopted Strategic Initiatives Contributed to the Collapse of UniBank

The objective was to find out from the interviewees (executives) of UniBank whether strategic initiatives or strategic changes made may have contributed to the collapse of the bank. To answer this objective five (5) questions were solicited, and the findings were analyzed to ascertain the level of this strategic initiative's impact on the collapse of the bank.

All interviewees had a similar response to what primary changes were implemented between 2015 and 2017. In all four interviews, three strategic initiatives were identified

namely branch network expansion, technological infrastructure development, and customer growth. Interviewees A and D mentioned technological infrastructure which are hardware and software upgrades and branch expansion to other strategic regions of the country. Interviewee C also emphasized technological infrastructure development. What was common among all interviewees was to be able to improve the customer experience for the growing customer base. According to Interviewee B, the changes were an exciting time for the bank and at the same time, several important changes were embarked on. He disclosed:

“During this pivotal period, (2015-2017) we undertook a series of substantial changes with a clear mission—to bring banking services into closer proximity to individuals. Our proactive approach involved the establishment of new branches spanning the entire country, strategically positioned to facilitate enhanced access for customers, especially in areas previously underserved by traditional banking infrastructure.”
(Interview B)

What materialized from the interviews was the desire to make accessible all of Unibank’s services to the wider customer base. The views shared by the interviewees on the primary changes made give further clarity to Zula and Chermack’s (2007), point of view on how organizations undertake projects to support their strategic objectives, aiming to positively enhance their competitive position in the industry market.

The interviewees explained the major reason that necessitated the primary changes was to develop a branch network to serve new markets and promote client growth by bringing banking services closer to underserved areas. The necessity to improve accessibility, adjust to a shifting market, and offer top-notch services to an expanding clientele were all emphasized by the interviewees. As part of the reasons why the major changes were made Interviewee A mentioned:

“The bank’s customer base was increasing and access to the branches was limited to just the existing ones, so the bank wanted to reach out to customers across the country with the exceptional service provided”. (Interview A)

Interviewees C and D both had the same response regarding the need to enhance technological infrastructure and expand the branches to various regions. Whereas Interviewee B stressed the need for product diversification and the focus on retail banking. Although operating these new branches required careful attention, the branch growth was successful, yielding more deposits and a wider reach. The launch of new financial products increased revenue and drew in clients, but there were significant management and communication challenges. A steady client base was effectively drawn in by focusing on retail banking, although it required adjustments and investments Interviewee C noted. The bank's finances were harmed by Interviewee B's assessments on technology advancements for increased accessibility, as credit facilities were tightened to favor increased consumer contributions stating that:

“It affected the financials of the bank. The usual ease to credit facilities was capped to allow for improvement in customer deposits”. (Interview B)

Recognizing the steps taken by UniBank Ghana to implement these changes, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and risks that were identified during this process. Feedback, from interviews revealed obstacles such as upgrades, staff training, and a shift towards prioritizing customer service presented difficulties. These findings align with the principles outlined by Pinto et al. (2020) emphasizing the importance of objectives actionable plans, defined milestones with timelines, allocated budgets, and measurable evaluation criteria for strategic initiatives.

As per interviewee A, the strategic actions were carefully crafted to align with the bank’s principal goals. The decision to expand the branch network was not about growth; it aimed

to enhance accessibility to attract clients while retaining existing ones; a crucial driver of expansion. The bank's investment in technology was viewed as more than an upgrade; it symbolized a move to position UniBank Ghana as a leader in digital banking showcasing a strong dedication to innovation. Interviewee D described these changes as intentional and indicative of a vision suggesting they form part of a long-term plan, for growth and competitiveness. The portrayal of these approaches, as crucial to the bank's goals implies a collaboration aimed at expanding the customer base boosting revenue, and strengthening the institution as a whole. It's, like catching a wind that drives the bank ahead in a financial setting.

“The strategic initiatives undertaken by the bank are closely aligned with the overall goals and objectives of the bank. Here’s how they match up: Expanding the branch network into strategic regions indicates a clear objective to increase the bank's reach and provide customers with easier access to banking services. By reaching out to new regions and improving services, the bank aims to attract new customers and retain existing ones, which is fundamental for growth and market share expansion. Implementing state-of-the-art hardware and software may give the bank a competitive edge in an increasingly digital financial landscape, aligning with objectives of innovation and leadership in the industry.” (Interview C)

The feedback from interviewees regarding Unibank's strategic initiatives from 2015 to 2017, showcased an alignment with the institution's main goals and aspirations. The deliberate expansion of branch networks aimed to improve service access to attract clients and strengthen existing relationships. By embracing cutting-edge technology the bank demonstrated its dedication to leading innovation in the finance sector. Insights from interviewees highlighted efforts that not only achieved success but also followed a purposeful approach resulting in increased revenue, growth in customer numbers, and effective navigation of challenges. These accounts suggest that Uni Bank Ghana's strategic decisions were in line, with its mission and contributed positively to its growth

strengthening its position during that time frame. These initiatives weren't just tactical but also strategic showcasing an understanding of market dynamics and skillful strategic planning.

When discussing the outcomes resulting from implementing measures, a common theme emerged among the interviewees; a common preference, for initiatives that align with and advance Uni Bank Ghana's core objectives. Each individual emphasized the planning behind the changes confirming that these were deliberate steps taken to propel the bank towards its envisioned future. The changes were not strategic in purpose but implemented methodically to align with the bank's fundamental goals. A significant focus highlighted by interviewee D was on the advancements made in technology. These advancements have led to access to banking services and an efficient process for fund allocation. The improvement in the bank's capabilities has played a role in increasing customer engagement demonstrated by the rise in account deposits, faster loan processing, and expanded credit offerings. These enhancements have been pivotal in driving growth and enhancing the banking experience, for Uni Bank Ghana's clientele.

“The significant technological changes made were designed to make it easier and faster for customers to access their information. This update was part of a plan to speed up banking procedures leading to fund disbursement and more efficient banking transactions. The strategic enhancement has increased, in banking activities with a marked rise in customer deposits, faster loan approvals, and expanded credit options from the bank. These improvements have not boosted customer satisfaction. Have also positioned the bank as a more agile and responsive player, in the financial industry.” Interviewee D

On the other hand, Interviewee B looked forward to the improvements, in service speed and customer convenience due to the bank's investment in cutting-edge technology and

branch network expansion. Interviewees A and B highlighted that expanding the bank's locations was a decision to make banking services more accessible, to all customers regardless of their location.

"We anticipated to improve service speed and convenience which we did by the technological upgrade and wider branch access. To increase market penetration which we did by having new branches. To scale services in line with customer growth which was achieved by technology upgrades." (Interview A)

Further to add, the bank's initiatives were designed to improve accessibility, improve service delivery, and adjust to the evolving needs of the customers. Whether it is through product diversification, branch expansions, or technology advancements, a dedication to customer-centric growth, stability, and resilience runs through everything. The interviewee's description of the expected benefits consistently centers on three main points: providing more options, simplifying banking, and ensuring the bank's resilience in the face of difficulties. While maintaining a consistent level of service quality and minimizing financial risks were acknowledged challenges, the expected benefits included attracting more customers and offering a variety of banking choices as well as encouraging expansion and adaptability in the face of difficulties.

Understanding the risks and difficulties related to the bank's strategic initiatives is a shared theme among the four interviewees. Each interviewee focuses on a different facet of these difficulties, offering insights into the complexities encountered at various stages of the projects. Among the difficulties cited are those of the integration of technology; financial strains; unpredictability in return on investment; competitive landscapes; quality assurance; regulatory observance; customer education; and the requirement for cultural and operational adjustment. All interviewees admitted that a short-term financial burden resulted from the expenses of branch expansion and technology infrastructure upgrades.

“There was a financial burden temporarily, as the branch expansion was a cost as well as updating the technological infrastructure (hardware and software cost); liquidity issues.” (Interview B)

Amid the upgrade of Unibank’s services between 2015 and June 2018, Unibank took 1.6 billion cedis of 3.1 billion cedis that was uncollateralized putting the central bank at risk. This was before the dissolution of five other privately owned local banks. Interviewee A identifies that risk of data breaches, the challenge in integrating technology is to do so seamlessly without disrupting existing services; financial considerations posing a variety of challenges, including the requirement for a substantial capital outlay for technological advancements were the primary challenges and risks associated with strategic initiatives.

“One of the primary challenges is ensuring that the new technology integrates seamlessly with existing systems without disrupting service. There was also the risk of data breaches during the transition to new systems. Financially, the capital outlay for both tech upgrades and physical expansion is substantial, with the potential risk that the returns on investment are not immediate. The expansion into new regions faced unforeseen market dynamics, which impeded the bank’s growth strategy.” (Interview A)

The comprehensive insights gathered from the interviewees about strategic initiatives highlight the varied risks and financial responsibilities involved in requiring oversight across various aspects. Each interviewee offered a viewpoint on the phases of plan implementation. However, when combined, their perspectives emphasize the network of challenges and obstacles associated with making decisions and implementing operations in the banking industry. This mutual understanding highlights the complex environment in which banks function when developing and executing strategies.

The interviewees provided a variety of insights, into the challenges faced by Uni Bank Ghana without repeating themselves. They agreed that the bank struggled with difficulties,

including liquidity issues, a reduction in profits, and concerns about having capital. Interviewees A and B discussed how the bank's strategic decisions, those related to transformation and expanding branch networks unintentionally strained its financial well-being. Interviewee B specifically mentioned the short-term setbacks caused by these initiatives. Their observations align with Walter et al.'s (2013) research emphasizing the significance of understanding dynamics and external factors like communication patterns, negotiation approaches, and internal political strategies when developing strategic initiatives. Interviewee D highlighted the task of ensuring compliance while carrying out strategic plans. This sheds light on the challenge of navigating requirements amidst geographical and product diversification. Recognizing these obstacles as hindering customer growth and contributing to Uni Bank's downfall reflects the shared perspective of the interviewees. These viewpoints construct a narrative that captures the web of challenges that played a role, in the bank's decline.

"There were challenges like cash shortages, declining profits, and the struggle to meet capital requirements all contributing to the institution's downfall." (Interview B)

"The bank's decision to pursue directions posed risks to its financial well being especially in the short term. A significant amount of money was invested in upgrading operations and expanding branches, which ultimately strained the bank's resources. Also, despite expectations of growing their customer base, the new branches did not attract as many customers as anticipated." (Interview C)

UniBank Ghana initially aimed to grow and modernize its presence, which seemed promising at first. However as they began implementing these plans they faced a strain due,

to depleting reserves. The bank's expectations of attracting a wave of customers did not match reality, highlighting a disconnect between their goals and their ability to deliver. This mismatch exposed weaknesses in the bank's leadership and strategic planning processes. Adding complexity to the situation the bank had to deal with diverse compliance requirements that varied greatly across markets and product lines which further strained their financial position. These challenges had an effect throughout the organization eroding stakeholder confidence and contributing to instability on a broader scale. Upon reflection, it is evident that these issues extend beyond managing finances responsibly. There is a need to align goals with operational capabilities and adjust regulatory compliance practices to protect the institution's framework. This is essential not for safeguarding but, for strengthening the foundational stability of the banking sector.

4.4. Strategic Initiatives Foresight and Missteps before and during Uni-Bank's Collapse

The results from the interviewees shared similar views, on the challenges faced by Uni Bank Ghana due to external factors. All interviewees acknowledged how uncontrollable economic conditions, such as fluctuating inflation rates and stricter regulations like increased capital adequacy ratios impacted the bank's decisions. These factors include the unpredictability of indicators like inflation and interest rates well as stricter regulatory requirements, particularly in terms of capital adequacy. The combination of these factors limited the bank's flexibility and ability to adapt quickly to environmental change. Interviewee A recognized the impact of government policies on the bank's future although specific details could not be shared due to legal reasons. Interviewee B on the other hand mentioned how changes in capital adequacy regulations had affected standards for banks and had an effect on the banking industry likely impacting Uni Bank Ghana's situation. The accounts from two interviewees, C and D suggested the consequences of policy decisions on the bank's trajectory; however, they could not provide specific information due, to legal constraints. The viewpoints, from these stakeholders show how a financial organization is

dealing with challenging conditions greatly impacted by economic and regulatory factors that significantly shape its strategic decisions and operational capabilities.

“The bank’s direction was significantly influenced by policies set by the government. The outcomes of these impacts are still unknown, due to the proceedings, in the higher courts”. (Interview D)

In a time when economic predictions were as unpredictable, with changing inflation, rates fluctuating, interest rates, and unstable currency values, the bank found itself facing challenges in maintaining its lending activities and upholding client confidence. The implementation of new regulations required fixed capital and a more stringent approach to financial reporting leading to constraints on the bank’s operational flexibility and hindering its growth efforts. The banking industry was highly competitive demanding investments, in digital platforms and employee training programs to stay ahead technologically which further strained the bank’s financial resources. These financial projections and customer trust took a hit from unpredictable economic indicators like inflation and interest rate shifts. Regulatory demands for increased capital adequacy introduced a new tier of financial prudence, controlling the bank's growth ambitions. Amidst this, the technological race demanded heavy investments in a bid to meet the evolving digital expectations of consumers, adding another layer of financial burden.

“There were external factors such as a change in the capital adequacy ratio for banks from GHS 120 million to GHS 400 million for the banking sector stability”. (Interview A)

When interviewees were asked whether Uni-Bank conducted any assessments or evaluations to gauge the effectiveness and impact of strategic initiatives their response

about Uni-Bank Ghana's approach to strategic planning emphasizes a proactive stance in evaluating the effectiveness of their initiatives. Despite this, Interviewee C pointed out that while Uni-Bank Ghana did carry out evaluations to determine the success of their strategic plans, the Bank of Ghana's (BoG) revised capital requirements raising the bar to a minimum of GHS 400 million presented notable challenges. This regulatory shift necessitated major revisions to the bank's strategic fiscal planning and may have restricted the bank's capacity to implement certain growth-oriented strategies. that the bank's strategies were constrained by the central bank's revised capital requirements.

“Assessments and evaluations were made however the BOG, the regulator’s new policy for banks having a minimum of GHS 400 as its capital adequacy”.
(Interview C)

Interviewee D indicates that the bank's strategic initiatives faced headwinds from broader economic instability, especially during a period of economic recession. The subsequent decline in customer spending and borrowing, common in such times, significantly hindered the bank's ability to grow and remain profitable. This implies that even with attempts to grow and update services through new branches and technological enhancements, the bank's operations suffered due to the challenging economic climate.

“The economic changes did significantly impact the success of the bank’s strategic initiatives. For instance, the economic downturn reduced consumer spending and borrowing, affecting the bank’s growth and profitability despite branch expansion and technological improvements”. (Interview D)

Both interviewees A and B affirmed that Uni-Bank Ghana consistently executed in-depth reviews of its strategic initiatives. The purpose of these reviews was to grasp the various effects of their strategies and to verify their coherence with the bank's overarching objectives and fiscal health. Interviewee B also recognized the profound impact that economic and regulatory conditions had on the bank's strategic planning. For example,

shifts in inflation, currency fluctuations, and interest rate variances were highlighted as elements influencing how customers interacted with the bank and their financial decisions.

These evaluations also had to account for the volatility in the economic and regulatory sectors. Fluctuations in inflation, currency, and interest rates were noted to influence customer activity, while updates in regulatory frameworks, such as capital adequacy laws, necessitated strategic realignment to uphold compliance without derailing growth and service standards. This way, the bank's strategic moves were closely tangled with external economic and regulatory shifts, demanding flexibility and resilience in their planning and execution.

When communicating these strategic initiative practices Uni-Bank followed a clear top-down approach, starting from the uppermost leadership layers and flowing systematically to employees at all levels. The goal was to create a comprehensive awareness and consistency with the bank's newly charted strategic path across the entire workforce. The process was interlaced with the bank's established organizational structure, actively involving heads of departments from the outset to cultivate a sense of stewardship, and integrating the initiatives within the bank's standard performance assessment practices. Interviewee A described a formal flow of communications about strategic initiatives that flowed from the boardroom down to the rank and file, indicating a hierarchical, top-down method aimed at informing the entire workforce.

“A communique was sent from the board level through the Bank’s management to all staff”. (Interview A)

In contrast, Respondent B's feedback paints a less favorable picture, pointing to a perceived ineffectiveness in the way these initiatives were communicated. They highlight a concern that the substantial investment in these strategies did not yield the expected financial

rewards, suggesting a possible misalignment between the communicated strategies, their execution, and the financial results they achieved.

“Not so well communicated and I think the substantial investment in these initiatives did not translate into proportional financial gains”. (Interview B)

Interviewees C and D provided a perspective, on Uni Bank Ghana’s approach to communication emphasizing the importance of organized strategies to ensure that all staff members understand and implement strategic initiatives effectively. By sharing information and providing continuous training the bank aimed to integrate strategic goals into the daily tasks of employees. The goal was to incorporate strategies into the bank’s routine operations. Moreover, cross-functional teams were established to oversee the implementation of these initiatives with evaluations conducted to enhance the communication process based on feedback, from employees.

After reviewing the perspectives of the interviewees, it is clear that UniBank Ghana had a strategy, for communicating and implementing strategic plans within its organizational structure. However, the effectiveness of this strategy and how it influenced the bank’s financial success varied. These reports show an effort to embed plans in the bank’s culture through communication and alignment with organizational goals. Nevertheless, the practical impact of these efforts on the results seems to have been inconsistent as seen in the perspectives shared by those interviewed.

The significant variations, in the strategic initiatives employed before the bank’s downfall, were quite noticeable as all interviewees agreed that Uni Bank Ghana’s strategic choices evolved at points in time. Interviewee B specifically pointed out a clear shift indicating that one of the bank’s strategic decisions included a substantial expansion of branches extending its reach nationwide. This indicates an effort, towards expansion during that period.

"Yes, the recent branch expansion for example was aimed at covering all regions, in the country." (Interview B)

Interviewee C elaborated on how the bank adjusted its strategies to align with the economic conditions while expanding its operations actively in times of economic inflation. However, as the economy went downhill, the focus shifted to improving efficiency and managing risks. Initially, the bank's focus was, on establishing a presence in the market but over time it shifted towards emphasizing digital services with the rise of the digital age in the industry. With regulations, in place, the bank refined its strategies to ensure compliance and maintain financial stability.

Undoubtedly, UniBank Ghana's strategic decisions clearly showed flexibility in adjusting to changes, in the ever-changing economic landscape and regulatory requirements. The bank's approach to planning revealed its ability to adapt to both opportunities and challenges indicating a recognition of the importance of being agile in a changing financial environment. This ability to transformation of the bank's strategies from growth, to a controlled compliance-focused position in the unpredictable financial sector reflects an organization navigating through complex and challenging circumstances while staying true to its course.

4.5. Legitimacy practices leading to the failure of Uni-Bank

The insights from interviewees A, B, C, and D provide a nuanced perspective of Uni-Bank Ghana's operational struggles and stakeholder engagement against a backdrop of financial strain and regulatory complexities. Interviewees A and B reveal the bank's financial predicaments, such as profitability dips, capital adequacy issues, and primary governance challenges, alongside the detrimental effects of strategic missteps and regulatory directives on the bank's functioning. Within the context of Uni-Bank Ghana's narrative shared by the

interviewees, the principles laid out by Wheelen and Hunger (2012) are especially relevant. The advocacy for environmental scanning to pinpoint key strategic elements that will dictate the future trajectory of an enterprise. These statements reflect the complex internal and external pressures that intensified the bank's troubles.

“We were dealing with major financial troubles, declining profitability, and capital adequacy problems as well as governance issues, strategy errors, and the impact of regulatory actions”. Interviewee B

“The bank faced serious liquidity issues, deteriorating asset quality, declining profitability, and capital adequacy challenges as well as governance problems, strategic missteps, and the impact of regulatory actions”. Interviewee A

Interviewee C brings attention to the bank's efforts in sustaining relationships in these turbulent times. Stressing transparency and trust, interviewee C illustrates how the bank consciously involved customers in conversations about pivotal changes, particularly technological upgrades, enhancing their sense of participation. Investors were regularly updated to sustain their trust during the bank's financially challenging period. The bank took steps to customize its approaches staying ahead by adjusting its operational methods to align with the latest compliance requirements. The goal was to promote a relationship with authorities. Interviewee D highlights the bank's dedication to preserving a reputation and adhering to societal values by engaging with the community and discussing the bank's goals openly. This was accomplished through involvement in community projects, and being transparent about the bank's future objectives and aspirations.

Interviewee A recognized how economic and regulatory changes influenced the effectiveness of the bank's strategies. The interviewee mentions how economic shifts influenced customer confidence and the adoption of banking methods prompting the bank to adapt to regulatory changes to maintain good relationships with stakeholders. This supports Wheelen and Hunger's (2012) notion that by considering both dynamics and external factors, companies can develop strategies that leverage their strengths, address

weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate risks. Focusing on external factors, Interviewee C also noted the impact of regulatory dynamics, on shaping the bank's strategies effectiveness. The interviewee observed how changes in the economy, affected customer confidence and the acceptance of banking methods while the bank had to adjust to regulatory changes to maintain good relationships, with its stakeholders.

The bank's commitment, to following both the rules and ethical guidelines of the banking industry in terms of credibility and reliability was the core principle guiding its operations. Studies by Caussat et al. (2019) and Chedrawi et al. (2020) emphasize the advantages that banks can gain by building relationships with communities and engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance their reputation and thrive in the market. In discussions about how the bank's legitimacy practices align with industry norms, Interviewees A and B expressed dissatisfaction with the bank's performance citing an increase in non-performing loans as evidence of growing delays in payments, which have negatively impacted the health of the bank's loan portfolio. A decrease in metrics such as asset and equity returns indicated reduced profitability and operational efficiency. This supports the notion that a bank's legitimacy goes beyond its fiscal health. Despite financial difficulties, strategies proposed by Caussat et al. (2019) emphasize how banks can utilize community relationships and establish partnerships as an approach to maintain competitiveness during challenging economic conditions.

"The non-performing loan (NPL) ratio, a crucial measure of a bank's loan portfolio quality, surged, indicating a higher proportion of loans in arrears; The return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE) declined over time". Interview A

Interviewee D reinforces this view, pinpointing the rise in the NPL ratio, a key gauge of a bank's loan portfolio's health, as a concern, highlighting an increased proportion of loans

falling behind on repayment. The interviewee further noted a reduction in vital financial yields, such as ROA and ROE, over time.

Equally, Interviewee C provides an alternative angle, emphasizing the bank's dedication to upholding robust standards of integrity and trustworthiness. The bank's practices were in stringent alignment with the established benchmarks of the industry, encompassing strict legal adherence, transparent reporting, and ethical banking. This interviewee also draws attention to the bank's proactive interactions with regulatory authorities and its commitment to rigorous internal governance and risk management, underscoring a deep institutional commitment to integrity and earning the trust of stakeholders. This resonates with Chedrawi et al. (2020) viewpoint that CSR initiatives stand as a significant means for banks to cement their legitimacy in their operational locales. Commitment to the culture of responsible banking and active participation in CSR can enhance trust among stakeholders, an essential factor when the bank's financial metrics do not paint the full picture.

“We upheld our values and made sure that our operational procedures were in lockstep with the recognized norms of our sector, and this encompassed strict adherence to the legal frameworks governing us, conducting our financial disclosures with utmost transparency”. Interview D

Within the context of Uni Bank Ghana, maintaining credibility involves practices such, as financial reporting, and robust risk management policies. If there is a lack of confidence in these areas it can greatly impact the trust of stakeholders, which is crucial for the continued functioning of the bank. The insights provided by the four interviewees offer an understanding of how Uni Bank Ghana's credibility problems contributed to its downfall and the bank's efforts to address these issues.

“It greatly affected customer perception and hence increased the number of customer withdrawals and reduced customer deposits. The bank's current ratio exhibited a steady decline in the years leading up to its collapse, indicating its diminishing ability to meet short-term obligations”. Interview C

Interviewees B and D reiterated this sentiment by noting the impact, on customer perception, such as an uptick in account closures and a decline in deposits. They mention the decreasing ratio as evidence of deteriorating health and an impaired ability to manage short-term liabilities factors that significantly contributed to the banks' challenges.

“The situation significantly impacted how customers viewed the bank, leading to a spike in the number of account closures and a downturn in new deposits. The bank's liquidity position, as evidenced by a consistent drop in the current ratio, suggested a worsening capability to cover short-term liabilities, a trend that contributed to the bank's downfall”. Interview B

Interviewee C recognizes that the banks' collapse was not solely due to credibility issues but acknowledges their role in the collapse of the bank. Further elaborating on efforts made to rectify the situation including strengthening loan recovery processes enhancing credit risk management practices and revising strategies, for transparency and governance. The bank's approach to transparency and improved governance stated by interviewee C aligns with the strategies proposed by Ali et al. (2021) which highlight the significance of communication, in upholding legitimacy. According to Ali et al. (2021), annual reports serve as documents that often prioritize aspects of a company's performance aimed at maintaining an image of legitimacy even in challenging circumstances.

“In the end despite our efforts to tackle and resolve the credibility issues the bank couldn't turn things around before the collapse. We learned from this experience and looking back we realize that we should have acted faster and with strength”. Interview C

Further to add, Payandehdoost Masooleh et al. (2022) and Tadros and Magnan (2019) offer insights that directly relate to Uni Bank Ghana's situation; suggesting that companies might choose to disclose lower-quality information to safeguard their legitimacy a concept that

can be extended to explain the bank's efforts, in maintaining stakeholder trust through communication strategies despite declining indicators. Often at the time of UniBank's banking crisis, the Bank of Ghana showed a level of patience suggesting that they might have been more forgiving, in their supervisory role. This resulted in them providing an amount of emergency liquidity assistance to these struggling banks, including Uni Bank Ghana. However, most of the emergency funds given to the banks were not used for their intended purpose. For instance, Uni-Bank Ghana diverted funds to Belstar Capital Ltd. using them to buy shares, in Agricultural Development Bank Ltd during its IPO effectively becoming a shareholder. The feedback, from the interviewees, when asked if there were instances of unethical or fraudulent practices that affected Uni-Bank Ghana's legitimacy reveals a range of challenges faced by Uni-Bank Ghana highlighting instances where conflicts of interest and inadequate risk management may have harmed the bank's credibility and led to its collapse.

Interviewee A indicates that conflicts of interest existed within the board suggesting that decisions might have been influenced more by gains than the bank's well-being. This aligns with concerns about governance that can undermine trust among stakeholders and compromise the foundation of a financial institution.

"Yes; Conflicts of interest among board members, which affected decision-making processes, related-party transactions that lacked transparency and raised concerns about conflicts of interest, weak internal controls and risk management practices an absence of a clear strategic direction, and a lack of adaptation to changing market conditions". Interview A

Expanding on this, Interviewees B and D mention shortcomings such as questionable transactions involving related parties and insufficient strategic planning. These failures in governance and strategic oversight reflect an inability to adapt to market changes, which is vital, for maintaining a bank's competitiveness and credibility. The bank's inability to adapt

might indicate difficulties in responding to these changes effectively. This could include not diversifying their product offerings failing to embrace transformation opportunities or struggling to meet regulatory requirements. These challenges were compounded by a lack of strategic response, to the changing banking landscape. Consequently, they eroded the banks' credibility over time leading to the bank's collapse.

Interviewee C on the other hand, assures that despite these issues the bank prioritized behavior and took steps to address any misconduct. This involved strengthening controls and collaborating with authorities to ensure transparency in their practices. Maintaining the integrity, competitiveness, and long-term success of a bank highlights the significance of implementing governance ensuring transparency and fairness, in related party transactions having strategic foresight, and being adaptable.

“The integrity and ethical reputation of Uni Bank Ghana were always our priority; in the way we conducted our operations. However, it's important to acknowledge that no institution is completely immune to the possibility of behaviour. Although there were some instances where individual actions may have deviated from our ethical guidelines these instances did not reflect the overall practices or values of our bank”.

According to Interviewee A, it is crucial to address conflicts of interest and establish risk management practices. This means implementing measures that prevent interests from influencing decision-making and ensuring the identification, monitoring, and mitigation of risks.

“Effective risk management and governance practices, Transparent related-party transactions and conflict-of-interest resolution, Strategic adaptability and long-term planning, and Prudent regulatory oversight and enforcement”

Interviewee C suggests taking a faceted approach, which involves effective risk management, transparent practices (especially in transactions involving related parties)

adaptability in strategic planning, and prudent regulatory oversight. This implies conducting bank affairs when potential conflicts of interest arise. Additionally, it involves being flexible in long-term strategies to adapt to market changes while operating within frameworks. The viewpoints presented by Campiglio (2016) and Mcloughlin (2015) argue that banks are engaging in lending practices to decrease carbon emissions. This aligns, with the importance for banks to adopt legitimate approaches as emphasized by Interviewee A's views on risk management strategies. Nair (2015) further supports this by highlighting the importance of client collaboration and informed decision making which aligns with Interviewee C's point regarding stakeholder communication and involving clients, in the banking process.

From a management perspective, Interviewees B and D highlight the significance of adhering to regulations and ethical standards. They emphasize reinforcing controls and fostering a corporate culture through education and training. Communication with all stakeholders is important as being responsive to technological advancements and customer expectations. This holistic approach encompasses every level of the organization focusing not on compliance and risk management but, on corporate culture and stakeholder relationships.

According to the research conducted by Olateju et al. (2021) Akhter et al. (2022) and Chandok & Singh (2017) it is widely believed that legitimacy, in the banking industry can be achieved by adhering to societal values and norms. This sentiment was echoed by all the interviewees as well. They all agreed that maintaining a bank's integrity and trustworthiness requires a commitment to standards, adaptability in strategic approaches, and active engagement with stakeholders. The literature reviewed supports the interviewees' viewpoint that legitimate banking practices play a role, in ensuring the stability, security, and overall success of institutions within their respective communities.

4.6. Summary of Key Findings and Revised Framework

The objective of the study was to find out how strategic initiatives contributed to the collapse of Unibank Ghana. It was a gradual decline for some Ghanaian banks specifically Unibank between the years 2015 and 2017. The main key points according to the findings that impacted the bank and eventually led to its collapse were technological failures, regulatory pressures, and cultural misalignment. These factors deeply integrated into the bank's strategies highlight the balance between internal choices and external influence.

The findings also suggested that regulatory pressures were one of the factors that added another layer of complexity to the challenges faced by UniBank. The regulatory landscape within which UniBank Ghana operated also contributed a role, to its collapse. The Bank of Ghana imposed rules that had an impact, on the bank's plans. One major change was the minimum capital requirement. Meeting these capital demands turned out to be a financial challenge. The bank made significant financial and operational changes to comply with the regulations. Despite UniBank's compliance with regulations and attempts to connect with the community, these actions were not enough to address the underlying managerial problems within the organization. The cost of adhering to these rules was high leading the bank to allocate resources to meet them and divert funds from areas. The uncertain economic conditions, with varying inflation and interest rates, made things even tougher for the bank. These economic factors affected customer trust and spending patterns affecting the bank's profits and expansion. UniBank Ghana not only dealt with regulatory difficulties but also faced internal cultural clashes within its organization. These clashes disrupted the bank's plans further leading to failure.

Again, cultural discrepancies within UniBank worsened its challenges and deepened its troubles. The strategic choices made by the bank like expanding its branch network and

enhancing capabilities inadvertently strained it's the financial health of the bank. The misalignment between the bank's goals and operational abilities highlighted underlying differences that impeded effective decision-making processes and implementation strategies. The lack of alignment between initiatives and the bank's cultural values and operational methods led to conflicts and inefficiencies in operations. These cultural disparities not only hindered the execution of the bank's strategies but also weakened stakeholder confidence while fostering instability, within the organization.

Technological infrastructure development was a major strategic initiative the bank invested in to make its services accessible to customers to improve customer service through platforms and streamline banking procedures. The purpose of this primary upgrade was to develop a network and product diversification that would promote the growth of its customer base. The bank's efforts to improve its infrastructure to enhance customer service and streamline operations ultimately led to challenges. The introduction of technology brought risks such as data breaches and disruptions to existing services. The substantial financial investment needed for these upgrades strained the bank's resources causing term financial strain. Additionally ensuring an integration of technology while maintaining service quality highlighted the complexities involved in such upgrades. These failures not only affected efficiency but also raised concerns about data security and the bank's financial stability.

The bank focused on expanding its customer base and offering products to increase revenue and remain competitive in the market. While these efforts attracted customers the lack of a risk management system made the bank vulnerable to risks leading to issues of cash flow. Although the goal was to enhance customer experience through these initiatives their execution often fell short of expectations. Technological glitches and the impersonal aspects of expansions alienated some customers resulting in a loss of trust and loyalty. The inability to effectively respond to market changes ultimately led to difficulties for UniBank.

The bank's commitment to maintaining trustworthiness was evident through its involvement in community activities and corporate social responsibility initiatives. These actions were meant to build trust with stakeholders and show the bank's dedication to values. However internal governance challenges like conflicts of interest and transparency issues undermined these efforts.

The results suggest that although UniBank had effective strategies, for growth and modernization they did not match well with the regulatory landscape. This lack of alignment combined with governance problems played a role in the bank's collapse. The study effectively addressed its research question by showing that when strategic initiatives and legitimacy practices are not managed or adapted to environmental and economic conditions, they can lead to institutional collapse. Consequently, the failure of UniBank Ghana highlights the need, for strategic planning and strong governance in the banking industry. These findings emphasize the significance of adaptability, effective governance, and proactive risk management in securing the enduring success of institutions, in emerging markets.

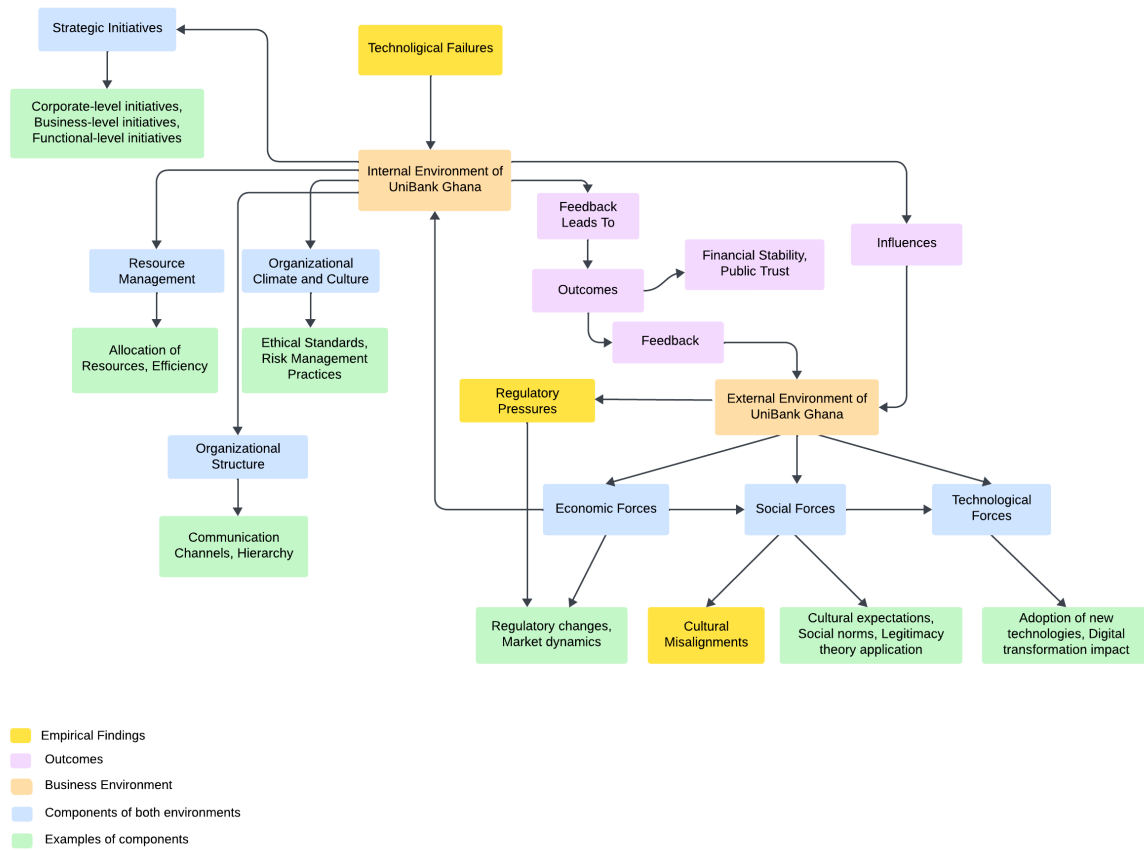


Figure 5: Updated theoretical framework mapping strategic choices and legitimacy in Unibank

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study was intended to fill a gap in research regarding the impact of strategic initiatives on bank failures in sub-Saharan African economies focusing specifically on Ghana. While previous research has explored banking practices and failures it often overlooked the dynamics present in the African context. The main goal of this investigation was to uncover how strategic initiatives contributed to the collapse of UniBank and its broader effects on stability. This inquiry holds importance in developing economies where banks play a role not only as financial channels but also as key supporters of small businesses and local trade which heavily rely on the banking sector for their operations and growth. This study examined the decisions made by UniBank Ghana leading up to its insolvency, shedding light on how these choices impacted both the institution itself and the overall financial ecosystem. It delved into factors such as the environment, regulatory framework, and the consequences arising from strategic choices. The results seek to offer insights for policymakers, regulators, and bank leaders aiming to enhance governance practices, risk management strategies, and decision-making processes, within the industry. This research goes beyond theory offering an analysis that could strengthen the banking industry, in Ghana and help support the underlying economic structure.

This study extends the prior literature of Zula and Chermack (2007) and Walter et al. (2013) by demonstrating that while strategic changes are aligned with organizational goals, their impact can also result in organizational failure if not managed in consideration of external economic and regulatory factors. This means that there are risks that can arise when organizations implement strategic changes even when those changes align, with the company's objectives. Although Zula and Chermack stress the importance of aligning these

changes with objectives for competitive advantage, the case of UniBank Ghana demonstrates that even well-aligned strategic changes can lead to collapse if not attuned to external circumstances. This disparity is attributed to a mix of market dynamics and internal management hurdles that were not considered during the planning phase. For instance, the study highlighted an attempt to modernize and expand the bank's locations and technological capabilities. This mirrors existing literature recognizing these strategic changes as beneficial, for growth. However, interviews suggest that while these initiatives were ambitious and potentially advantageous, they did not consider the prevailing conditions and regulatory frameworks resulting in the outcome of the collapse. Hence, this research further expands on the topic by showing that strategic initiatives even when pursued with goals and a vision, for growth need to adapt to and relate to external economic and regulatory conditions. The example of UniBank Ghana highlights the dangers of not aligning strategies with factors, where significant investments in expansion and technology clashed with economic circumstances and increased regulatory requirements leading to the bank's downfall. It emphasizes the importance for companies to have flexibility in their strategies and a keen awareness of factors to successfully navigate impacts. This study adds to existing knowledge by emphasizing that financial institutions need to anticipate and address risks curtailing from both market influences and internal governance practices to ensure the effectiveness of their endeavors.

Additionally, the study challenges the views put forth by Caussat et al. (2019) and Chedrawi et al. (2020), by suggesting that banks' dedication to relationships and CSR projects may not always protect them from the effects of operational and financial errors. Despite UniBank Ghana's focus on CSR and local partnerships, its collapse indicates a relationship between legitimacy practices and organizational survival than previously assumed. UniBank Ghana's downfall challenges the idea in the literature that banks can strengthen their legitimacy and ensure longevity through commitments to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and local connections. While Caussat et al. (2019) and Chedrawi et al. (2020) propose that such

approaches can provide an advantage and enhance a bank's reputation in the market; UniBank Ghana's failure implies that these efforts may not address underlying financial challenges. UniBank Ghana actively participated in CSR programs and built ties, which should have theoretically boosted its ethical standing, however, this did not prevent the bank from collapsing. This result questions the belief that legitimacy alone gained from approval through CSR activities can shield an institution, from the repercussions of strategic or managerial shortcomings. The study indicates that although Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community involvement are significant they should be integrated into a holistic risk management and strategic planning framework. The key point here is that the connection, between legitimacy practices and a bank's survival is more intricate than previously assumed. Simply aligning values, engaging in community projects, or showcasing responsibility is insufficient. These actions must be complemented by management of clear and strategic communication, and the ability to adapt to market and regulatory shifts. In the case of UniBank Ghana, despite its display of responsible practices, underlying issues such as poor risk management, conflicts of interest, and failure to adjust to evolving market conditions were not resolved. Therefore, this study adds to the field by proposing that legitimacy practices in the banking industry require a strategy. On one side there is a requirement for legitimacy through CSR initiatives and local connections; on the other side lies an equally vital need, for internal legitimacy involving the establishment of strong governance frameworks transparent decision-making processes, and strategic flexibility. Focusing on both internal legitimacies can help banks tackle the challenges they encounter leading to not just survival but also sustainable growth and progress.

To conclude, the UniBank Ghana case study illustrates an advancement, in ethical governance within financial institutions. While traditional governance theories focus on maintaining reputation and complying with regulations, the UniBank situation sheds light on the crucial role of internal governance mechanisms like managing conflicts of interest at the board level and implementing strong risk management practices. It also reinforces

Nair's (2015) theory on stakeholder communication emphasizing that transparent communication must be supported by ethical standards to be effective. This theoretical insight lays the groundwork for creating governance models that combine ethical representation with internal integrity enhancing the stability and credibility of banking institutions. Future studies could further explore this model in banking environments to assess how internal and external governance practices impact a bank's success or failure. This research may offer insights into how banks can strengthen their framework from within, ensuring that their external reputation for conduct is firmly rooted in complete internal governance practices.

5.2. Managerial implications

The research findings suggest that Unibank's strategic initiatives were greatly influenced by the interaction, between conditions and regulatory frameworks. Economic instability led to a loss of customer trust prompting the adoption of banking practices. At the time changes in regulations required strategic adjustments to maintain relationships with stakeholders. Despite efforts to adhere to standards and strengthen community connections through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the bank experienced an increase in performing loans and a decline in key financial indicators. This indicates a gap in risk management and internal controls. The decline, in the bank's performance seems to stem from a framework that failed to foresee and address emerging risks effectively. In response managers and policymakers must prioritize enhancing compliance improving risk assessment methods and fostering a culture of risk awareness that adapts to changing conditions and regulatory demands. This may involve implementing capital adequacy requirements enhancing transparency in disclosures and empowering supervisors to conduct bank inspections. Making these adjustments is vital for rebuilding trust with customers and stakeholders which is key for long-term resilience and success in the banking industry.

Insights garnered from interviews on Unibank strategies highlight a challenge related to integrating technology to meet requirements. These endeavors were ambitious which strained the bank due to investments in technology and expansions that did not yield returns. Issues with liquidity, declining profits, and worries about capital suggest missteps in expansion efforts and technology upgrades without risk assessment or financial planning. The inability of branches to attract business points towards oversights, in market analysis and overestimations of growth potential. These observations emphasize the importance for banks to adopt data-driven planning processes that prioritize risk awareness. Likewise, the bank's focus on growth and modernization overlooked the evolving market landscape and regulatory requirements creating a gap, between strategy development and practical execution. To avoid pitfalls banks need to foster a culture centered around alignment make decisions based on scenario analysis and stress testing, and reassess objectives in response to market shifts and compliance requirements to safeguard the institution's well-being. Additionally, decision-makers should be equipped to balance growth targets with risk considerations to prevent setbacks. These managerial considerations stress the importance of resilience, in banking sector planning by emphasizing an approach when implementing initiatives.

The results of this study highlight governance shortcomings that played a role, in the bank's downfall. At the core were conflicting interests among the leadership and shady transactions that raised concerns about the governance structure. These governance failures undermine the trust that stakeholders have in institutions and point to a systemic issue that may have led to UniBank Ghana's collapse. Despite efforts to address these issues, they seemed insufficient to prevent the bank's failure. The implications of these findings are clear; there was a breakdown in governance marked by inadequate oversight conflicts of interest and a lack of strong checks and balances. Given these insights strengthening governance is not just an option but a necessity. Financial institutions need

to create an environment where independent boards, act as watchdogs to prevent similar crises. Implementing codes and integrating thorough internal controls and auditing processes are crucial steps toward ensuring organizational integrity. Additionally, ongoing education for leaders and board members on governance is essential for preventing collapses. Looking at UniBank Ghana's situation it becomes evident that resistance to market changes and governance misconduct can severely damage trust and lead, to instability. This highlights the need, for implementing governance measures to protect the stability and reputation of institutions.

The impact of a bank's collapse goes beyond its surroundings affecting depositors, employees, and the wider financial community. This often leads to losses and a loss of trust that can spread throughout the system impacting economic stability and efforts towards promoting inclusive finance. In situations, bank leaders need to implement strategies to maintain relationships with stakeholders during times. Transparent communication channels and mechanisms to protect depositor funds play a role in these strategies. Additionally forming partnerships with parties is essential for navigating crises. Taking steps is also vital; banks should strengthen their defenses by building up capital reserves and managing liquidity carefully to safeguard their interests as well as those of their stakeholders thereby boosting confidence, in the financial sector.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

To gain an understanding of the factors that led to the collapse of UniBank Ghana this study took a qualitative approach by conducting, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. While this method provided insights into the bank's decisions, governance practices, and the influence of regulatory environments it is important to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this research. This section explores the constraints of the study promoting

transparency and paving the way for investigations that can expand upon and build on the findings presented here.

In research, one challenge often arises due to the sample size and the difficulty in applying the findings more broadly. This issue is especially noticeable in case studies. As pointed out by Schreier (2018) case studies typically involve several participants even just one case, which limits how widely the results can be generalized. Qualitative research focuses on exploring experiences and perspectives in depth. This detailed examination comes at the expense of broader applicability. The small sample size makes it hard to draw conclusions that can be applied to a population. Therefore, the findings from a case study are specific to the context and individuals involved making it challenging to transfer those findings to scenarios or populations. When evaluating initiatives there is a risk of bias and subjectivity that could significantly impact the assessment process. According to Schreier (2018), bias is often present when evaluating initiatives regarding financial performance metrics. The argument revolves around managers potentially having views, on what constitutes success and focusing selectively on metrics that align with their preconceived notions. This subjectivity could distort the assessment of the effectiveness of an initiative and hinder decision-making. While this study focused on a case it represents a scenario that aligns well with and contributes to the topic at hand. Scholars have suggested that examining specific cases in a particular situation and context is crucial, for researchers (Yin, 2018; L. Haven, et al. 2019). Hence the selection of the case and context for this study was guided by these arguments.

Secondly, the subjectivity of interview responses, potential biases from interviewees, and the retrospective nature of the analysis may not fully capture all aspects of time crises. Subjectivity, in research that relies on interviews, poses a challenge because the interviewee's personal biases and perspectives can heavily influence their responses. The interviewee's individual experiences, roles within the bank, and subjective interpretations

of events may not completely capture reality. Indicative that memories can be selective or flawed. Also, interviewees may consciously or unconsciously provide acceptable or self-favoring responses. For instance, the interviewer's influence through question framing and response can further taint the data with subjectivity. During the analysis phase, the researcher's own biases also shaped the interpretation of interviews potentially leading to conclusions that reflect the researcher's notions rather than the true sentiments of the interviewees. To enhance the depth and reliability of findings in research on banking collapses like that of UniBank Ghana future research could incorporate a rigorous quantitative analysis by examining ratios, over time objective data which can complement the subjective narratives obtained through interviews. Measuring ratios, like liquidity, profitability, and leverage can give us insights into the health and operational efficiency of the bank. This will help understand trends that may not be easily noticeable through data. By analyzing these ratios researchers can pinpoint challenges and link them to strategic decisions, market conditions, and regulatory changes. On the other hand, this approach will also allow future research to identify patterns that either support or challenge the information gathered from interviews.

Another limitation of this study lies in its focus, on UniBank Ghana as the sole case study subject. This narrow concentration means that the findings of the study may not be easily applicable or representative of banking institutions whether they are located within the geographical region or elsewhere. The unique factors that led to UniBank's collapse, such as management, corporate culture, market strategies, or regulatory environment may not necessarily provide a template for understanding bank failures or successes. To enhance the applicability of the findings it would be beneficial to include a range of banks in the study. By examining both failed and successful banks under conditions common patterns can be identified and variations in strategic initiatives risk management practices and responses to regulatory changes across different institutions. Adopting an approach would help determine whether UniBank's collapse was an incident or part of a larger trend within

the banking sector. Furthermore, a study encompassing cases would offer a comprehensive framework for identifying best practices and avoiding unnecessary pitfalls. It could provide insights, into how different banks navigate challenges and seize opportunities contributing to an understanding of what constitutes crisis-resistant banking practices. Further research that expands its scope to encompass banks is expected to produce extensive data. This in turn would facilitate a process of theory development and provide more meaningful recommendations for the banking sector.

One drawback of this study is that it focuses on events potentially missing the nuances of decision-making, in time. It may not fully consider how UniBank Ghana's collapse was influenced by the interaction between market forces. Decisions that appear flawed in hindsight might have been reasonable given the information at the time. This retrospective view might overlook the context in which those decisions were made. Moreover, when looking back at events there is a risk of oversimplifying the correlated factors and their cumulative effects over time. A beneficial approach for studies could involve collecting real-time data and monitoring decision-making processes as they unfold. This would offer an understanding of how banks navigate decisions and their immediate outcomes. Future studies could also incorporate a monitoring system to track a bank's health over time providing warnings of potential difficulties ahead. Research that includes creating scenarios to simulate options and their consequences could help anticipate the impacts of decisions before crises emerge. By adopting these methods an analysis of the banking sector could yield insights for developing strategies, against future collapses.

An inherent challenge, in this analysis involves distinguishing between the correlation and causation of UniBank Ghana's decisions and its subsequent collapse. While observations may suggest an alignment of initiatives with the bank's decline, claiming direct causation requires caution; such connections do not definitively prove causality. This complexity is further complicated when considering factors like fluctuations, local market dynamics, and

regulatory changes all of which could independently influence the bank's trajectory regardless of its strategic moves. To investigate deeper into understanding the cause and effect in this field; future academic research could focus on study designs that accurately track the path of decisions and their consequences. By using models researchers could gain precise control over external variables while time series analyses could provide insights into the critical timing and progression of strategic actions concerning key financial milestones. This approach would enable a nuanced assessment of how such decisions impact an institution's health. Moreover incorporating case-control research frameworks could reveal how management strategies lead to different outcomes between successful banks when their strategies seem similar. This comparative method is especially valuable, for unraveling the connections underlying banking successes and failures. Future studies could explore further, the web of elements that influence the intentions of institutions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix1. Semi-structured interview guide

Professional Background

- Could you give an overview of your work experience and current position?
- How long were you part of UniBank Ghana and what were your roles there?

Segment 1: The Extent to Which Strategic Initiatives Contributed to the Collapse

- Can you share the modifications or significant adjustments that Uni Bank Ghana put into effect between 2015 and 2017?
 - *why these changes were introduced what outcomes they yielded, and whether any risks were involved.*
- 2. How did these strategic endeavors (changes) correspond with the primary aims and objectives of the bank?
- 3. What were the expected advantages or benefits envisioned from enacting these initiatives?
- 4. Were there any obstacles or risks linked to carrying out these initiatives?
- 5. How did the implementation of the initiatives impact Uni Bank Ghana's stability and performance?
- Did they contribute to any issues or compliance concerns that might have precipitated the bank's downfall?
- 6. Were there influences, like shifts, in conditions or regulatory frameworks that influenced whether these strategic initiatives succeeded or failed?
 - *Additionally, could you elaborate further on these influencing factors?*

Segment 2: Identifying Applicable Strategic Initiative Practices

- Did Uni Bank Ghana conduct any evaluations or studies to assess the effectiveness and impact of their initiatives?

- *were there any factors, like changes in the regulatory landscape that influenced the outcomes of these initiatives?*
- How were these strategic practices incorporated into the Uni Bank Ghana's framework?
- Were there any variations in the approaches taken at different periods before Uni Bank Ghana collapsed?
- What can we learn from Uni Bank Ghana's initiatives taking into account both unsuccessful endeavors?

Segment 3: Investigating Factors of Legitimacy Practices

- How did Uni Bank Ghana's efforts to gain acceptance for these changes impact its relationships with stakeholders such as customers, investors, regulators, and the public?
 - *Were there factors that played a role in shaping the success or failure of these moves?*
- To what extent did Uni Bank Ghana's legitimacy practices align, with industry norms and best practices?
- How did the breakdown of Uni Bank Ghana's trustworthiness assessments play a role, in the bank's downfall?
 - *Did Uni Bank Ghana make any efforts to tackle or resolve these concerns prior, to its collapse?*
- Were there any cases of dishonest behaviors that impacted Uni Bank Ghana's credibility?
 - *If so what were these behaviors?*
- What steps can be implemented to improve legitimacy practices in the banking sector and avoid failures moving forward?

