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The effects of critical success factors on effective strategy implementation in organisations

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Abstract

Effective strategy implementation is very critical for every organisation, be it in the private or public sector, profit or non-profit, small to medium enterprise or large corporate. Despite its importance in supporting organisational performance, and ascertaining sustainable growth and development, effective strategy implementation has remained elusive for most organisations. This study is an expository discourse on some of the critical success factors that have been proved to enhance the effectiveness of strategy implementation, with a view to continuously improving organisational performance and ascertaining sustainable growth and development. The methodology in this study is an integrative literature review, which entails a critical examination of both theoretical and empirical literature that authenticate the veracity of these critical success factors and the significance of their contribution towards strategy implementation success. Findings from the analysis of empirical literature affirm that organisations that meticulously and diligently pay attention to these critical success factors attain better results in strategy implementation compared to those that do not. The study concludes that while the application of these critical success factors may vary from one organisation to the other, a conscientious focus on, and meticulous application thereof can have significant positive effect on the success of strategy implementation, resulting in improved organisation performance, sustainable growth and development. It is also concluded in this study that these critical success factors are interdependent and complementary in their contribution towards effective strategy implementation, and should, thus, not be focused on in isolation. It is therefore recommended that organisations that desire to improve the effectiveness of their strategy

implementation pay closer attention to these critical success factors.

Key words: development, critical success factors, organisational performance, strategy implementation, sustainable growth

Introduction

Organisations invest precious resources; time, financial, human capital, and technological, among others, formulating strategies that are aimed at improving organisational performance and ascertaining sustainable growth and development (Elbanna, 2016; Esfahani, 2018; Gomera, 2018; Micheli, 2017). The effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organisational objectives has often been hampered by poor implementation, resulting in organisational underperformance, stunted growth, and in certain severe cases, demise of organisations (Čater, 2010; Goromonzi, 2016; Salih, 2013). In a quest to address this shortfall, studies have been carried out on strategy implementation success factors and various factors have been identified (Alatailat, 2019; Amoli, 2016; Gates, 2010; Hudson, 2019; Samba, 2018) as critical success factors for effective strategy implementation. While the concept of critical success factors (CSFs) was developed independent of strategy implementation (Bullen, 1981; Rockart, 1979), its application to strategy in recent times has become more and more prominent (Caralli, 2004; Gates, 2010; Leidecker, 1984; Saade, 2016). Critical success factors (CSFs) are those components of any process that must be executed efficiently and effectively to ascertain organisational success (Gates, 2010). CSFs positively impact strategy implementation and organisational performance through the

way they support the achievement of an organization's goals and ultimately contributing to the success of the organisation's mission. While many factors have been identified as critical for the successful implementation of strategy, this study identifies critical success factors that have been prominent in most studies, both theoretical and empirical. Resource availability, dynamic strategic capabilities, prioritization, buy-in at all levels, organisational culture, strategic focus and flexibility are some of the critical success factors explored in this study. In addition, the study exposes the role of effective leadership, people skills, effective communication, technology, organisational structure, operational planning, control and feedback as other critical factors that support the effective implementation of organisational strategy. These strategy implementation critical success factors are discussed below.

2.1 Strategy Implementation Critical Success Factors

2.1.1 Resource Availability

For any strategy to be effectively implemented, there are certain requisite resources that have to be available within the organisation. These resources include financial, human capital, technologies, plant and equipment, and raw materials (Bryson, 2018; Grünig, 2018). Where these resources are unavailable or available in limited supply the effectiveness of strategy implementation is compromised to the extent of resource limitation (Elbann, 2016; Lemarleni, 2017; Marais, 2017). The deployment of resources should be in a way that best creates sustainable competitive advantage and guarantees improved organisational performance and growth (Ferdousi, 2019).

The results of a study of 188 Chinese firms by Wang, *et al.* (2017) indicate that a firm's resources significantly contribute to the productivity and effectiveness of strategy implementation. In another study involving 612 Russian small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Beliaeva *et al.* (2020) confirmed that financial resource availability towards an organisation's strategic interventions enhances implementation effectiveness and improves productivity. The importance of resource availability is also confirmed in another qualitative study wherein 38 executives from American companies participated on the evaluation of low resource availability and SMEs' ability to effectively implement information security strategies in the retail industry (Holland, 2022).

2.1.2 Dynamic Strategic Capabilities

Knowledge, skills and competencies in thinking and planning strategically are key for any organisation, particularly for those managers that are taking the lead in strategy formulation and implementation (Teece, 2018; Wang, 2012; Yeow, 2018). The dynamic capabilities to implement the planned strategy are also a pre-requisite for strategy success and organisational performance (Fainshmidt, 2016; Fernandes, 2017; Spillan, 2018). While other resources cited above may be available, the absence of relevant skills and competencies to put these resources together in pursuit of the organisation's strategic goals may spell doom for the organisation.

In a study on the impact of dynamic strategic capabilities on strategic entrepreneurship involving 215 respondents, the results confirmed that dynamic strategic capabilities positively influenced the effectiveness of

outsourcing strategy that was being employed by the participating firms (Al-Hawary, 2020). Another empirical study of 387 enterprises in Portugal, confirmed that dynamic capabilities significantly positively, affect performance, facilitate the implementation of strategic decisions and efficient management of change (Ferreira, 2020). In another study involving 209 respondents by Gupta *et al.* (2020), the results affirm the development of dynamic analytical capabilities in achieving superior organisational performance.

2.1.3 Prioritization

Various activities have different degrees of contribution to the effective implementation of organisational strategies. It is thus important to prioritise the allocation of resources to those activities that have a greater impact on strategic goal achievement and organisational performance (Fairbairn, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018). The Balanced Scorecard and strategic maps can be used for prioritizing strategic objectives and the allocation of resources thereto (Philbin, 2011; Rahimnia, 2016; Wu, 2012). Lack of effective prioritization will result in resources being allocated to non-core activities while core activities of the organisation area deprived requisite resources for strategic success (Rahimnia, 2016).

In a case study of an Iranian University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM), Rahimnia, (2016) concludes that prioritisation of resource allocation to strategic objectives is a critical success factor in the effectiveness of strategy implementation. In their study on transparent prioritisation, budgeting and resource allocation, Phillips *et al* (2007) utilise empirical evidence from practical experiences to demonstrate the positive impact of efficient resource

allocation on strategy implementation. Garry, Checchi & Cislighi (2022) also confirm the positive impact of resource prioritisation on strategy implementation through their study on what influenced the provision of non-communicable disease healthcare in the Syrian conflict.

2.1.4 Buy-in at all levels

While the crux of strategy formulation is the core business of strategic leaders at a corporate level, the implementation largely takes place at the business and functional levels of the organisation. It is therefore important that the whole strategic planning process gets buy-in from organisational members at all levels, particularly the lower-level employees that are involved in the day-to-day activities that ensure effective implementation (Bryson, 2018; Elbanna, 2016). Involvement of all employees from as early as the strategy formulation stage is critical to creating ownership of the strategic plan and its effective implementation (Dandira, 2011; Esfahani, 2018; Padmanabhan, 2018).

Various empirical studies have confirmed the importance of employee buy-in as a critical success factor in strategy implementation. In an experimental case study on the use of KANBAN boards for strategy implementation, Vasu (2018) posits that his study findings indicate that employee buy-in at a functional level is one of the key factors for effective strategy implementation. The results of a multiple case study of four UK universities proved that employee buy-in was a critical success factor in the effective implementation of the corporate rebranding strategies that these universities were exploring (Joseph, 2020). In another study involving 353 respondents including police officers and civil employees in Canada, the failure to effectively implement strategy was

ascribed to lack of employee commitment among other factors (Kalyal, 2020).

2.1.5 Organizational Culture

Organisations have different norms, beliefs, behaviours and values that shape their respective cultures and differentiate them from their competitors (Gregory, 2009; Rigas, 2016; Speculand, 2008). These organisational cultures have an impact on strategic planning success or otherwise; what makes a difference is the extent to which an organisation translates values into attitudes and behaviours that positively influence organisational performance (Cadden, 2010; Kavousi, 2016; Laforet, 2017). Some of the cultural factors that (Kavousi, 2016) identified include supportive attitude, encouragement and persuasion of staff to implement strategic planning, sharing the strategy with others, creating incentives, encouraging forward-thinking, observing ethical standards, alignment of employees' beliefs and values to strategic planning. Higher innovation orientation has also been found to have a significant positive impact on organisational performance; measured by such variables as profitability and customer satisfaction (Hafit, 2015; Norris, 2019; Singh, 2011). Levels of formalization or informality, centralization and decentralization are some of the cultural factors that have a bearing on strategy success or otherwise (Carvalho, 2019; Scheepers, 2019; Struwig, 2002).

In a study on influencing organisational culture to improve performance in 10 United States hospitals, Curry *et al* (2017) concluded that those hospitals that successfully fostered organisational cultures that support high performance significantly contributed to the enhancement of clinical outcomes. An experimental case study by Vasu (2018) also revealed that among the critical

success factors for effective strategy implementation are such factors as organisational culture, structure, leadership and communication. The results of a case study of a multinational company with 93 production centres across 10 countries indicated that when an organisation successfully defines its organisational culture that best support its digital strategy, the firm could attain higher levels of strategy implementation success and improve its performance (Martínez-Caro, 2020).

2.1.6 Strategic Focus

Ordinarily, strategy is supposed to give the organisation strategic direction through a clearly articulated vision, mission statement and core values, which gives focus to all organisational members and leads to improved performance (Castelli, 2016; Kaplan, 2001; Juma, 2016). In addition, the strategy formulation process entails setting clear strategic goals with corresponding key performance indicators for tracking the achievement or otherwise of the set goals (Abosedo, 2017; Reemts, 2016; Teo, 2016). The products and services that the organisation has to offer and the markets that the organisation has to compete in are also part of the strategic direction. The strategic focus thus entails ensuring that all projects, programmes, budgets and activities are directed towards achieving the organisational vision (Jacobs, 2018; Latham, 2016; Nielsen, 2020). A clear and consistent strategic focus has a positive significant impact on organisational performance. There have been new approaches to governance wherein organisations focus more on strategy than tactics, emphasizing learning, team problem-solving and coaching. (George, 2019; Mohamed, 2019). Divergence from the set strategic direction or lack of strategic focus may spell doom for the organisation's strategy.

In a study of 136 teams by Ateş *et al* (2018), the findings confirm that visionary leadership positively influences team strategic focus and consensus, and subsequently contributes to team strategic commitment. Results from another study of manufacturing firms in China revealed that strategic leadership has a significant positive impact on strategic focus and alignment, leading to improved firm performance (Chen, 2022).

2.1.7 Flexibility

The business environment continues to be fluid and many dynamics continue to change, creating volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Alexander, 2018; Atan, 2018; Babatunde, 2008; Dreyer, 2004). While the concept of strategic planning entails long-range focus, responsiveness to changes in the operating environment is very critical to ensure that the strategy remains relevant in creating competitive advantage and ensuring sustainable organisational growth (Dibrell, 2014; Sumiati, 2019; Ugboro, 2011). It is, therefore, necessary for strategic leaders to be flexible and agile enough to accommodate necessary changes to the initial strategy, in response to the dynamism of the business environment (Akintaro, 2019; Dogan, 2015; Kenneth, 2014; Zhou, 2010). Rigidity and lack of agility in responding to changes in the business environment may result in missed opportunities and failure to effectively implement the strategy.

The development of strategic options and its relationship to strategic flexibility is investigated in exploratory qualitative research on a large regional retailer in the United Kingdom. The results affirm that strategic flexibility facilitates the implementation of competitive differentiation as a strategy (Combe, 2012). In

another study of strategic flexibility of business organisations involving 150 entities cutting across small, medium and large enterprises, the results also confirm that flexibility is a critical success factor in strategy implementation (Radomsaka, 2015). Empirical evidence from a study on the influence of strategic planning flexibility on entrepreneurial orientation of SMEs in Osun State, Nigeria supports the assertion that flexibility positively influences the effectiveness of strategy implementation (Akintaro, 2019).

2.1.8 Effective Leadership

Effective strategy implementation requires strategic leadership (Johnson, 2018; Mapetere, 2016). Everything rises and falls on leadership (Maxwell, 2007). Organisational leaders, therefore, ought to have strategic foresight and the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies to lead the strategic planning process; environmental scanning, formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control (Andersen, 2019; Maddalena, 2012; Olivier, 2018). Strategic leadership is necessary for creating “strategic coherence” through effective and efficient coordination, integration and alignment of all strategic processes (Jarzabkowski, 2009; Lusiani, 2018; Vilà, 2008). In addition, strategic leaders have to take a leading a role in creating, among all organisational members, shared meaning and common strategic direction of the firm, executing strategic knowledge management, facilitating innovation, which leads to sustainable competitive advantage and improved organisational performance (Juma, 2016; López-Nicolás, 2011; Mohamed, 2019).

In a study investigating the influence of strategic leadership involvement on strategy implementation in 187 Kenyan parastatals, the results showed that where leaders provided strategic direction, focus and were actively involved in strategic processes, there was significant improvement in the implementation of laid down strategies (Kheyley, 2018). The results of a study on the impact of strategic leadership practices on education quality improvement in Palestinian universities showed a strong and statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership practices and improvement of the quality of educational services (Alayoubi, 2020). In a study on financial performance of Kenyan financial institutions, wherein one of the objectives was to assess the role of leadership in enhancing financial performance, Kirui *et al* (2018) concluded that resources, leadership and organisational culture are critical in creating competitive advantage and subsequently improving financial performance.

2.1.9 People

Effectiveness of strategy is dependent upon having the right people, with the right knowledge, skills and competencies in the right positions at all levels of the organisational hierarchy (Chakraborty, 2020; George, 2017; Malinen, 2018). Talent management is thus a very crucial aspect of effective strategic planning (Amoli, 2016; Irfan, 2017; Kearney, 2019). Employee retention, motivation, professional training and development, and redeployment maximizes employees' productivity and reinforces organisational performance (Chakraborty, 2020; Naim, 2017; Shende, 2019). These human resource planning interventions facilitate the alignment of employees' knowledge, skills and competences to the firm's business strategy and the

translation of the strategy into actionable goals. Enhanced employee performance becomes a source of sustained competitive advantage for the firm (Chakraborty, 2019; Delery, 2017; Ferdousi, 2019).

In a study examining human capital management in the Indian information technology industry, the results affirm that good human capital management practices such as talent development, knowledge management, performance management, and reward management have a significant positive impact on the effectiveness of strategy implementation (Naim, 2017). Succession planning practices and retention plans positively influence firm's competitive edge leading to efficacious performance of the firm and strategic sustainability (Chakraborty, 2020). Hamadamin (2019) carried out a study involving 600 employees from Iraqi universities and the findings exposed a linear and positive impact of strategic HRM on competitive advantage sustainability and also established that strategic HRM positively influence human capital development and employee commitment to the institutions.

2.1.10 Effective Communication

Effective communication at all levels within the organisation is critical for strategic planning. For example, the organization's vision, mission, values, key result areas and overall strategic direction has to be clearly articulated to all employees and management so that there is a unity of purpose and direction (Foreman, 2005; Sabrina, 2016; Salih, 2013). Timeliness, accuracy, conciseness, adequacy and appropriate frequency are some of the key characteristics of effective communication, requisite for effective strategic planning (Cina, 2018; Greer, 2017; Kimani, 2017). In addition, there is need for

a correct choice of appropriate channels of communication, considering a number of variables such as urgency, confidentiality, cost and audience among other critical factors (Buya, 2018; Shimizu, 2016; Shire, 2018). Communication facilitates the effective integration and coordination of all strategic processes that are necessary for organisational success (Jarzabkowski, 2009; Jin, 2017; Suri, 2017).

Findings from a study on the effect of strategic communication on strategy implementation in the Police Department in Lamu County, Kenya, revealed that communication has a positive and significant impact on strategy implementation (Buya, 2018). Evidence from another empirical case study of an Iranian Bank (Bank Sepah) corroborated the assertion that effective communication is a critical success factor in strategy implementation success (Najafbagy, 2018). In a study focusing on effectiveness of implementing change in the Indonesian public banking sector, the results indicated that training and communication of change had significant positive effects on the implementation of change management interventions (Singh, 2022).

2.1.11 Technology

The rapid and continuous improvement in technology needs to be harnessed effectively and efficiently for creating competitive advantage and organisational success (Chen, 2017; Loghman, 2019; Palladan, 2018). Integration of information technology in strategic planning and implementation is increasingly becoming critical in shaping the strategic direction of organisations (Hameed, 2012; Peterson, 2019; Wraikat, 2017). In recent times organisations have taken a deliberate thrust to incorporate digital

strategies in their overall corporate strategies, deploying cutting edge technologies in their operations for creating competitive advantage and operational efficiencies (Chen, 2019; Dilshani, 2019; Lam, 2016). Information technology has also been used to harness, synthesize, store and disseminate information relevant for strategic decision making (Bala, 2015; Kihara, 2016; Kimani, 2017). Various technology vendors including IBM, for example, are now deploying process mining technologies to direct customers to their business automation and artificial intelligence (AI) portfolios, maximizing on technology advancement to effectively implement their strategies and create competitive advantage (Labbe, 2021). Other organisations are also strengthening their cyber security systems through orchestration (Palo Alto Networks, 2021)

Various empirical studies give evidence to the fact that information technology is a critical success factor in strategy implementation. In a study involving 45 companies active in the electronic insurance industry in Iran, the results indicated that information technology had a positive and significant impact on creating a sustainable competitive advantage and improvement of knowledge management (Bazrkar, 2020). The results from another study on eco-innovation and eco-design in Nordic companies in textile and information technology sectors confirmed the positive impact of technology innovations in propelling strategy implementation success (Salo, 2020). A positive relationship has also been confirmed to exist between organizational process innovation capability and electronic media records implementation success in a case study that sought to evaluate the relationship between the innovation capability of healthcare organizations and their ability to successfully

implement electronic medical records (EMR), a health information technology (HIT) innovation (Parthasarathy, 2021).

2.1.12 Organisational Structure

Does strategy follow structure or structure follows strategy? This question has had a variety of answers, with some scholars asserting that structure follows strategy (Chandler, 1962; Kavale, 2012; Miller, 2017; Waterman, 1988), while other scholars argue that strategy follows structure (Chatzoglou, 2018; Galan, 2009; Hall, 1980; Peters, 1984). Other scholars also contend that both arguments can be subsumed (Boschken, 1990; Burgelman, 1983). By and large, strategy follows a structure as the structure of the organisation facilitates the division of labour among organisational members and the coordination of their input towards the achievement of strategic goals (Maduenyi, 2015; Nelson, 2011; Quangyen, 2013). The organisational structure facilitates the allocation of responsibilities across functional departments, defines authority, and informs intra- and inter-departmental interaction (Chatzoglou, 2018; Greenberg, 2011; Mintzberg, 2009). Well-structured organisations, therefore, facilitate the effective formulation and implementation of strategy, creation of competitive advantage and continuous improvement of organisational performance.

Cater & Pucko (2010) study 172 Slovenian companies to gather empirical evidence on factors for effective strategy implementation. The results of their study indicate that aligning organisational structure to a chosen strategy as part of strategy implementation positively affect organisational performance. Luhangala & Anyieni (2019) conducted a study on strategy implementation

and organisational performance in secondary schools in Kenya and their findings revealed that organizational structure and top leadership had a positive impact on strategy implementation in public secondary schools in the Nyamira County. The positive effect of a good organisational structure on effective strategy implementation is also confirmed by the results of a study investigating the relationship between organisational structure and strategy implementation among Kenyan oil companies (Yabarow, 2020).

2.1.13 Operational Planning

Operational planning entails the configuration of functional departments and the coordination of their interface in the whole strategic planning process (Alvarez, 2020; Feng, 2017; Lam, 2016; Larsen, 2019). While strategic planning is long term, focusing on the broader organisational vision, covering period ranging from 5 to 7 years, operational planning is short term and more detailed, covering one-year periods, or even shorter, the latter focusing on departmental activities and their input into the broader scope of the former (Bajgiran, 2016; Romanovskaya, 2020; Towbin, 2018). Operational systems design, procedures and processes and the development of work programmes and projects that are designed to facilitate the effectively implemented all constitute operational planning (Carvalho, 2019; Dandira, 2011; Lam, 2016). The success of a strategy depends on how well the organisational operations are planned and the extent to which the plans are followed in effectively implementing strategy (Akhtari, 2019; Heischmidt, 2018; Sun, 2019). A well-formulated strategy may fail if the operational plan to implement it is either not clearly articulated or it is not meticulously followed or lacks both elements.

Empirical evidence from various studies confirms the value of operational

planning in strategy implementation. Findings from the analysis of the US Federal Tox21 Program give evidence to the importance operational plans in strategy implementation (Thomas, 2018). Through the analysis of three case studies of companies that effectively implemented digital transformation strategies, Correani *et al* (2020) confirm that the development of operational plans support effective strategy implementation. In another study focusing on supply chain risk management and operational performance, Munir *et al* (2020) analyse data from 931 manufacturing companies and the results internal integration, a part of operational planning, positively impacts strategy implementation and organisational performance.

2.1.14 Control and Feedback

Strategic control entails continuous monitoring of all strategic processes and ensuring that they are following laid down plans, programmes, procedures and processes (Hosseini, 2018; Kamala, 2019; Pratistha, 2016). Lack of effective control, both financial and operational, can lead to the derailment of the whole strategic process, leading to the organisation losing competitive advantage (Elbanna, 2016; Nikzat, 2019; Nuhu, 2019; Seifzadeh, 2019). Organisational systems should also facilitate the communication of feedback at all levels, whether positive or negative. Feedback in relation to strategic control ensures that where there is a deviation from set standards, procedures, or strategic path, corrective measures are taken in good time to ensure consistent compliance and conformity (Bryson, 2018; Danielsson, 2020; Obeidat, 2017). Positive feedback is also important for maintaining, reinforcing and supporting actions and processes that support organisational strategy and create scope for sustainable competitive advantage (Cancino, 2017; Putsis, 2020; Plant, 2006).

Overall, feedback is critical for continuous system and process improvement, which ultimately contributes to sustainable competitive advantage and improvement in organisational performance (Faber, 2019; Simiyu, 2018; Saygin, 2019).

In a qualitative study of high-performance organisations in Indonesia, Ridwan (2019) demonstrates that performance feedback is critical for successful strategy implementation. The value of feedback and control in strategy implementation is demonstrated in a study of a process of optimizing biohydrogen production from organic solid waste (Jimenez-Ocampo, 2021). Findings from another study focusing on improving academic performance of students in a secondary school system affirmed the positive contribution of indirect corrective feedback in improving the students' writing performance (Aprilla, 2022).

The theoretical literature and empirical evidence presented above confirm the importance of the critical success factors examined in this study to the strategy implementation process.

2.2 Contribution of Critical Success Factors to Effectiveness of Strategy Implementation

Table 2.1 (Appendix A) summarises the critical success factors that have been identified in this study and how each contributes to the effectiveness of strategy implementation.

2.3 Interdependency, Complementarity, Relatedness and Interaction of Strategy Implementation Critical Success Factors

The strategy implementation critical success factors would not effectively achieve strategy implementation in isolation. There is interdependency and complementarity among these strategy implementation success factors. Their collective impact on the effectiveness of strategy implementation is envisioned in the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 2.1 (Appendix B).

The strategy implementation critical success factors can be categorized into three groups according to their relatedness; resource factors, skill factors, and process and functionality factors. The resource factors focus on the requisite resources that an organisation would ideally need to effectively implement its strategy for achieving organisational goals and objectives. These include financial, human capital, material, technological, plant and equipment resources. For these resources to be deployed in a manner that supports effective strategy implementation, those leading the strategy implementation process should possess certain critical skills, which include dynamic strategic capabilities, strategic focus and effective leadership. While the human capital element can be viewed as a resource factor, it can dually be considered under the skill factors as the aspect of requisite skills and competences is not only confined to organisational leaders but to staff at all levels if strategy implementation is to be effective. The application of diverse skills in deploying resources for effective strategy implementation should ideally occur in a structured manner (organisational structure), within a conducive environment (shaped or defined by an organisational culture). It is within this

environment that operational planning is meticulously executed to optimize both the resource and skill factors towards achieving organisational goals. Prioritisation in resource allocation, focusing on the key strategic interventions, flexibility and responsiveness to dynamisms and volatilities of the operating environment, effective communication, feedback and control are the other process and functionality factors that support effectiveness of strategy implementation. The ultimate outcomes include the creation of competitive advantage, leading to improvement in organisational performance, in both financial and non-financial terms, and sustainable organisational growth and development.

Figure 2.2 (Appendix C) summaries the interdependency and complementarity of the strategy implementation critical success factors. Resource factors are critical primary elements that an organisation requires in driving effective strategy implementation. On one hand, the skills factors facilitate the exploitation of the resource factors in facilitating effective implementation, while the other hand the process and functionality factors also create a conducive environment within which more resources can be generated to support strategy implementation. Skills factors drive the organisational processes and functions that convert the resource factors into strategic outputs and outcomes, which enable an organisation to meet its strategic objectives. Process and functionality factors require both resource and skills factors for the effective functionality of an organisation.

3. Methodology

This study employed an integrative literature review methodology; a systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research and combining perspectives in addressing a research problem. The researcher carried out a qualitative expository analysis of literature on the critical success factors for effective strategy implementation with a view to developing comprehensive evidence on the extent to which these factors significantly contribute to the effectiveness of strategy implementation in organisations. Both theoretical and empirical literature was examined in identifying the various factors that support the effective implementation of organisational strategies, contributing towards improved performance and sustainable growth and development. The various critical success factors were identified and their impact on strategy implementation was evaluated. Through an integrative review of literature and integrating findings and perspectives from multiple empirical studies, the study improved the understanding of the value of these critical success factors in improving the effectiveness of strategy implementation in organisations (Synder, 2019).

4. Findings

Evidence from various studies confirm that CSFs positively impact strategy implementation and organisational performance through the way they support the achievement of an organization's goals and ultimately contributing to the success of an organisation's mission. Organisations that effectively managed resource availability and prioritisation as critical success factors have proved to achieve operational efficiency and sustainable competitive advantage (Bryson, 2018; Elbann, 2016; Ferdousi, 2019; Grünig, 2018;

Lemarleni, 2017; Marais, 2017). Through allocative efficiency, such firms consistently prioritise the allocation of resources to those activities that have a greater impact on strategic goal achievement and organisational performance (Fairbairn, 2017; Philbin, 2011; Rahimnia, 2016; Rodriguez, 2018; Wu, 2012). The study also established that knowledge, skills and competencies in thinking and planning strategically are pre-requisites for strategy implementation success and organisational performance, confirming the importance of dynamic strategic capability as a critical success factor in effective strategy implementation (Fainshmidt, 2016; Fernandes, 2017; Spillan, 2018; Teece, 2018; Yeow, 2018). Study findings from empirical literature confirmed that strategic leadership, as a critical success factor, is necessary for creating “strategic coherence” through effective and efficient coordination, integration and alignment of all strategic processes. Strategic leaders create shared meaning and common direction among organisational members, facilitates innovation, leading to sustainable competitive advantage and improved performance (Andersen, 2019; Juma, 2016; Lusiani, 2018; Mohamed, 2019; Olivier, 2018; Vilà, 2008). The involvement of employees (buy-in) at all organisational levels has been confirmed to create a sense of belonging and ownership, and enhances effectiveness of implementation (Bryson, 2018; Dandira, 2011; Elbanna, 2016; Esfahani, 2018; Padmanabhan, 2018). Organisations that have strong organisational cultures consistently uphold and promote norms, beliefs, behaviours and values that differentiate them from their competitors and create a competitive edge. Study findings confirm that such results-oriented cultures and professional work ethics support effective strategy implementation (Carvalho, 2019; Hafit, 2015; Kavousi, 2016; Laforet, 2017; Norris, 2019; Rigas, 2016; Scheepers, 2019). Good organisational

structure facilitates division of labour, the allocation of responsibilities across functional departments, defines authority, and informs intra- and inter-departmental interaction, which all support effective strategy implementation (Chatzoglou, 2018; Maduenyi, 2015; Nelson, 2011; Quangyen, 2013). Through empirical literature analysis, the study found out that effective communication is critical for lubricating organisational functionality; facilitating the integration and coordination of all strategic processes that are necessary for effective strategy implementation and successful achievement of organisational goals (Buya, 2018; Cina, 2018; Greer, 2017; Jin, 2017; Kimani, 2017; Sabrina, 2016; Salih, 2013; Shimizu, 2016; Shire, 2018; Suri, 2017). Flexibility facilitates responsiveness to changes in the operating environment which is very critical in ensuring that the strategy remains relevant in creating and maintaining competitive advantage, ascertaining sustainable organisational growth (Akintaro, 2019; Alexander, 2018; Atan, 2018; Dibrell, 2014; Dogan, 2015; Kenneth, 2014; Sumiati, 2019). Operational systems design, procedures and processes and the development of work programmes and projects that are designed to facilitate that the strategy is effectively implemented all constitute the operational planning CSF. (Akhtari, 2019; Alvarez, 2020; Carvalho, 2019; Larsen, 2019; Romanovskaya, 2020; Sun, 2019; Towbin, 2018). Incorporating digital strategies in their overall corporate strategies, has seen organisations deploying cutting edge technologies in their operations for creating competitive advantage and operational efficiencies (Chen, 2019; Dilshani, 2019; Labbe, 2021; Loghman, 2019; Palladan, 2018; Peterson, 2019). Effective human capital management through the alignment of employees' knowledge, skills and competences to the firm's business strategy has been confirmed to facilitate the maximisation of employees'

productivity, resulting in the translation of the strategy into actionable goals and reinforcing organisational performance (Chakraborty, 2020; Ferdousi, 2019; Kearney, 2019; Malinen, 2018; Naim, 2017; Shende, 2019). The study also established that organisations that have a good strategic focus clearly articulate their vision mission and key result areas, and ensure that all projects, programmes, budgets and activities are directed towards achieving the organisational vision (Abosedo, 2017; George, 2019; Jacobs, 2018; Mohamed, 2019; Nielsen, 2020). The control and feedback CSF facilitates reinforcement of positive performance and correction of deviations from set standards and procedures, which are paramount to effective strategy implementation (Cancino, 2017; Elbanna, 2016; Faber, 2019; Hosseini, 2018; Kamala, 2019; Pratistha, 2016; Putsis, 2020; Saygin, 2019; Simiyu, 2018).

5. Conclusion

Both theoretical literature and empirical evidence support the veracity of these critical success factors as supporting effective strategy implementation, significantly contributing towards improved organisational performance and sustainable growth and development. Effective strategy implementation requires resources; financial, material, human, and the allocation of adequate resources to strategic interventions cannot be over emphasised. Dynamic strategic capabilities, human capital with the requisite skills and competence levels, and effective leadership are also critical in driving effective implementation. In order for all internal stakeholders to rally behind the strategy and apply themselves in executing the strategy, the aspect of buy in at all levels becomes key. Organisational culture and structure also inform the internal environment within which strategy is to be implemented. Strategic focus and prioritization of strategic interventions have a significant bearing on

the extent to which strategy implementation can be effective. Given that the operating environment is dynamic, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, flexibility and responsiveness to changes in the environment also becomes very critical if the organisation is to remain on course in implementing its strategy. Operational planning at the unit or departmental level, effective communication, strategic control and feedback also anchor effective strategy implementation. In recent years where technology continues to dominate the operating environment, organisations have significantly improved the effectiveness of their strategy implementation through harnessing and deploying digital strategies. While many other factors influence the extent to which strategy implementation can be effective, consistent focus on these critical success factors collectively has a greater positive impact in ensuring that organisations are successful in achieving their set goals, ultimately leading to the realisation of their mission and fulfilment of their vision. These critical success factors are interdependent and complementary in their contribution towards the effective implementation of strategy and improvement of organisational performance. Different organisations assign different levels of importance to these critical success factors, but from the empirical cases examined in this study, there is evidence that organisations that have managed these critical success factors well have greater levels of success in strategy implementation than those that have not done so.

5. Implications of the study to Industry

Organisations that can effectively identify these critical success factors can immensely benefit from improved strategy implementation without overly

relying on strategic management consultants. Improved effectiveness in strategy implementation is envisaged to contribute towards productivity and superior organisational performance as these critical success factors are actually strategy implementation enablers that significantly contribute towards the achievement of organisational goals. Through effective strategy implementation, organisations can also create competitive advantage and achieve sustainable growth and development.

6. Recommendations

While organisations invest resources in formulating strategies for the realisation of their goals, mission and vision, it is important that they pay more attention to the effective implementation of those formulated strategies. There is no single universally accepted formula for effective strategy implementation but the evidence presented in this study through empirical literature analysis point to the fact that the critical success factors that have been identified have a significant positive impact on the effectiveness of strategy implementation. Organisations are therefore recommended to prioritise these critical success factors when implementing their strategies if they are to achieve greater success in improving organisational performance and attaining sustainable growth and development. Further empirical studies could be explored in examining the effect of these critical success factors in specific sectors or industries, since this study examined these factors from a general view point.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Critical Success Factors	Contribution to Effectiveness of Strategy Implementation	Authors
1. Resource Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates requisite operational efficiency • Creates sustainable competitive advantage 	(Bryson, 2018; Elbann, 2016; Ferdousi, 2019; Grünig, 2018; Lemarleni, 2017; Marais, 2017)
2. Prioritisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates the allocation of resources to those activities that have a greater impact on strategic goal achievement and organisational performance 	(Fairbairn, 2017; Philbin, 2011; Rahimnia, 2016; Rodriguez, 2018; Wu, 2012)
3. Dynamic Strategic Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, skills and competencies in thinking and planning strategically are pre-requisite for strategy implementation success and organisational performance 	(Fainshmidt, 2016; Fernandes, 2017; Spillan, 2018; Teece, 2018; Wang, 2012; Yeow, 2018)
4. Effective Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic leadership is necessary for creating “strategic coherence” through effective and efficient coordination, integration and alignment of all strategic processes. • Strategic leaders create shared meaning and common direction among organisational members. • Facilitates innovation leading to sustainable competitive advantage and improved performance 	(Andersen, 2019; Jarzabkowski, 2009; Juma, 2016; López - Nicolás, 2011; Lusiani, 2018; Maddalena, 2012; Mohamed, 2019; Olivier, 2018; Vilà, 2008)
5. Buy-in at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of employees at all organisational levels creates a sense of belonging and ownership, and enhances effectiveness of implementation. 	(Bryson, 2018; Dandira, 2011; Elbanna, 2016; Esfahani, 2018; Padmanabhan, 2018)
6. Organisational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms, beliefs, behaviours and values can be moulded to create a culture that differentiate the organisation from its 	(Cadden, 2010; Carvalho, 2019; Gregory, 2009; Hafit,

7. Organisational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good organisational structure facilitates division of labour, the allocation of responsibilities across functional departments, defines authority, and informs intra - and inter -departmental interaction, which all support effective strategy implementation. 	(Chatzoglou, 2018; Galan, 2009; ; Greenberg, 2011; Hall, 1980; Maduenyi, 2015; Mintzberg, 2009; Nelson, 2011; Peters, 1984; Quangyen, 2013)
8. Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication lubricates organisational functionality; facilitates the integration and coordination of all strategic processes that are necessary for effective strategy implementation and successful achievement of organisational goals. 	(Buya, 2018; Cina, 2018; Foreman, 2005; Greer, 2017; Jarzabkowski, 2009; Jin, 2017; Kimani, 2017; Sabrina, 2016; Salih, 2013; Shimizu, 2016; Shire, 2018; Suri, 2017)
9. Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility facilitates responsiveness to changes in the operating environment which is very critical in ensuring that the strategy remains relevant in creating competitive advantage and ascertaining sustainable organisational growth. 	(Akintaro, 2019; Alexander, 2018; Atan, 2018; Babatunde, 2008; Dibrell, 2014; Dogan, 2015; Dreyer, 2004; ; Kenneth, 2014; Sumiati, 2019; Ugboro, 2011; Zhou, 2010)
10. Operational Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational systems design, procedures and processes and the development of work programmes and projects that are designed to facilitate th at the strat egy is effectively implemented all constitute operational planning. 	(Akhtari, 2019; Alvarez, 2020; Bajgiran, 2016; Carvalho, 2019; Dandira, 2011; Feng, 2017; Heischmidt, 2018; Lam, 2016; Larsen, 2019; Romanovskaya, 2020; Sun, 2019; Towbin, 2018)
11. Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating digital strategies in their overall corporate strategies, has seen organisations deploying cutting edge technologies in their operations for 	(Bala, 2015; Chen, 2017; Chen, 2019; Dilshani, 2019; Hameed, 2012; Kihara, 2016; Kimani,

12. People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective human capital management; • Ensures right knowledge, skills and competencies in the right positions at all levels of the organisational hierarchy, • maximizes employees' productivity and reinforces organisational performance, • facilitate the alignment of employees' knowledge, skills and competences to the firm's business strategy and the translation of the strategy into actionable goals. 	(Amoli, 2016; Chakraborty, 2020 Delery, 2017; Ferdousi, 2019; George, 2017; Irfan, 2017; Kearney, 2019; Malinen, 2018; Naim, 2017; Shende, 2019)
13. Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic focus clarifies organisational vision mission and key result areas, • Ensures that all projects, programmes, budgets and activities are directed towards achieving the organisational vision. 	(Abosedo, 2017; Castelli, 2016; George, 2019; Jacobs, 2018; Juma, 2016; Kaplan, 2001; Latham, 2016; Mohamed, 2019; Nielsen, 2020; Reemts, 2016; Teo, 2016)
14. Control and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate reinforcement of positive performance • Correction of deviations from set standards and procedures 	(Cancino, 2017; Elbanna, 2016; Faber, 2019; Hosseini, 2018; Kamala, 2019; Pratistha, 2016; Putsis, 2020; Saygin, 2019; Simiyu, 2018)

Table 2.1: Contribution of Critical Success Factors to Effectiveness of Strategy Implementation

APPENDIX B

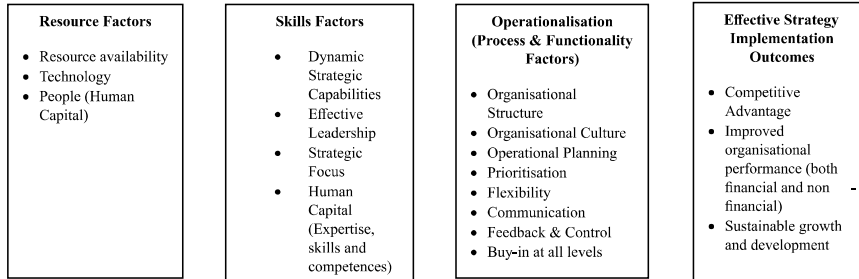


Figure 2.1: Authors' Conceptual Framework: Relatedness and interaction of critical success factors in improving effectiveness of strategy implementation

APPENDIX C

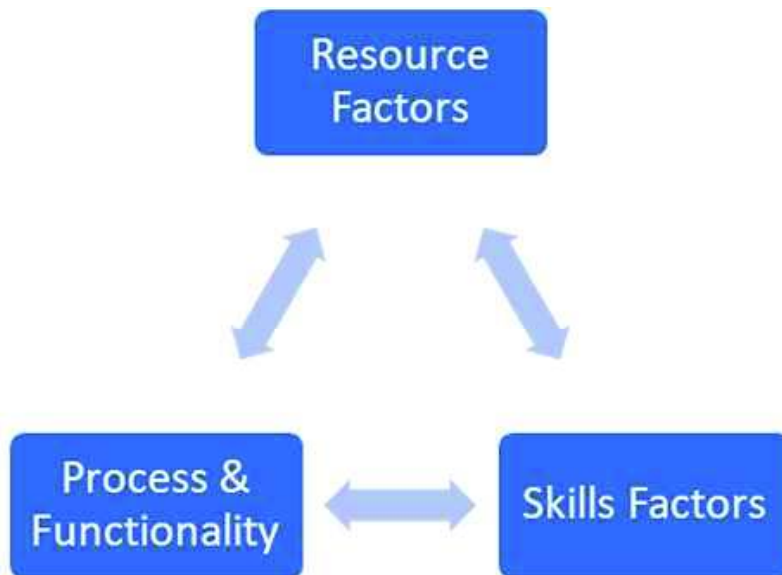


Figure 2.2: Interdependency and complementarity of the strategy implementation critical success factors