



AN INVESTIGATION INTO FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN - JUBA

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Abstract: Many organizations have embraced strategic planning, but the implementation process remains a challenge many a times resulting in well-formulated strategies that fail to be accomplished at the implementation stage. Strategy implementation skills are not easily mastered, unfortunately. This study therefore sought to investigate the factors influencing strategic plan implementation in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in South Sudan. Specifically, the influence of communication, organizational culture, leadership and strategic control on strategic plan implementation was examined. A cross sectional study survey targeting 1230 NGOs in South Sudan was conducted using a questionnaire to collect both primary and while secondary data was collected from 113 respondents and from published documents. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis. The findings of the study are control and communication is the most important factors influencing Strategic Plan Implementation in NGOs in South Sudan. Further, communication, leadership, culture and control were found to influence the implementation of strategic plans among NGOs in South Sudan. This study has clarified the relative influence of factors that affect strategy implementation in NGOs in South Sudan which would act as a guide to the improvement in strategy implementation. The study found out that the effectiveness of the communication level in the NGOs determines to a great extent the effectiveness of strategic plan implementation. The findings revealed that lack of sessions in the organizations that informed the employees in the NGOs of their new responsibilities under the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan affected the communication process and therefore impacting the strategic plan implementation. The study also concluded that there exists a positive relationship between organizational culture and strategic plan implementation. There findings also revealed that leaders demonstrated their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process of strategic plan and the NGOs had policy control systems used by leaders to provide mechanisms for keeping their current actions in congruence/in line with future goals. The study found that in most NGOs in South Sudan, there were support policies that ensured that the strategic plans are implemented well. Moreover, most of the NGOs had a budget against which strategic plans are implemented and the NGOs determined the targets against which performance was measured. The study recommends that the NGOs should ensure there are more sessions to sensitize their employees of their respective responsibilities under new strategic plans. The objective of these sessions is to provide proper communication plan including clear explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks and duties need to be performed by the affected implementers.

Keywords: Strategic Plan, on-Governmental Organizations, National Non governmental Organization, Leadership, Implementation, Communication and Culture.

Introduction

A strategic plan is a management tool for organizing the present for the purpose of the projections of the desired future. A strategic plan is a roadmap to lead an organization from where it is today to where it would like to be in three, five or ten years. In business, Weihrich and Koontz (2013) aver that nobody can accurately predict the long-term future, but strategic planning forces managers to think critically and analytically about the future. Schrader (2012) argues that strategic planning can help an organization to clarify future direction, to establish priorities, diversify its products or services, and to deal effectively with the rapidly changing circumstances.

The global business environment has evolved since 1990. According to Gumbus and Lyron (2012), this change has brought companies new realities in the form of new business opportunities for growth and, at the same time has exposed them to new competitors. This has caused companies to invest many resources in devising new effective strategies to take advantage of the new opportunities, whilst protecting their market positions, which are crucial to their continued economic existence (Weihrich & Koontz, 2013). Today most of executive managers of organisations, profit and non-profit, spend considerable resources formulating strategies aimed at achieving the objectives of their organisations. These strategic plans are meant to give organisations a comparative advantage over their competitors and/or increase the profitability (Pearce & Robinson, 2007).

To deal effectively with everything that affects the growth and profitability of a firm, executives employ management processes that they feel will position it optimally in its competitive environment by maximizing the anticipation of environmental changes and of unexpected internal and competitive demands (Pearce and Robinson, 2007). The managers need to come up with a set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives. According to Arieu (2007), there is strategic consistency when the actions of an organisation are consistent with the expectations of management, and these in turn are consistent with the market and the context.

Competition has not spared non-profit making organizations. Donors are increasingly demanding that non-profit making organizations have viable strategic plans as a pre- precondition for grant offers (Mbithe, 2011). The number of non-profit making organizations has increased without commensurate increase in the number of potential donors. This has led to a situation where the potential donors have to choose whom to fund from a large pool of these non-profit making organizations. As a result, non-profit making organizations have been forced to compete for funding from donors. Today, non-profit making organizations are using strategic planning to help them anticipate and respond to the many challenges and opportunities that face them (Burnes, 2004).

Although formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team, making that strategy work is even more difficult (Hrebiniak, 2006). A myriad of factors can potentially affect the process by which strategic plans are turned into organisational action. Unlike strategy formulation, strategy implementation is often seen as something of a craft, rather than a science and its research history has previously been described as fragmented and eclectic (Noble,2009). It is thus not surprising that, after a comprehensive strategy or single strategic decision has been formulated, significant difficulties usually arise during the subsequent implementation process. The best formulated strategies may fail to produce superior performance for the firm if they are not successfully implemented.

Without execution, even the most brilliant strategic plan is useless. Many times strategic plans once completed, often are left to gather dust on the shelves (Burnes, 2004). The plan is either ignored or worse yet occasionally disseminated only externally as a kind of public relations tool, to prove that the organization is well managed, to get a grant, or to lure an unsuspecting donor. Eventually this approach damages the credibility of the organization with external constituencies and breeds cynicism among employees, volunteers, and others inside the organisation. According to Pearce and Robinson (2007), many organizations, however, are willing to implement the plans when they are writing them but end up not implementing them. Taking cognizance of the numerous benefits associated with implementation of well-prepared strategic plans and the high number of organizations that fail in implementing them, the factors that influence implementation of strategic plans in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be investigated.

Statement of the Problem

The three stages of strategic management that involve strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation are all important for an organization's performance. Therefore, an organization can only claim to be strategic, if and only if the three stages are undertaken effectively. According to Gumbus and Lyron (2012), the essence of any organization is being able to satisfy its clients thus gaining competitive advantage. However, many organizations tend to relax and settle at strategy formulation. While strategies which have been effectively implemented bring their organisations success, unsuccessful ones can be a recipe for failure. There exists evidence of gaps in the implementation process of strategic plans within NGOs and especially in South Sudan with many contributing factors. Some studies have focussed on environment under which NGOs fail to implement their strategic plans but did not directly scan the other factors such as control and communication that affect NGO strategic plan implementation. For example, Aosa (2010) focused on managerial involvement related to strategy implementation in manufacturing firms. That represented one aspect of factors that influence implementation, leaving a gap on communication, organizational culture, leadership and control which are the factors being pursued in this study. Thompson, Strickland and Gamble (2007) and Evans (2007) proposed further studies on management in instilling high levels of commitment to strategic success, lack of detailed planning to support goal achievement, poor communication and coordination, as well as strategy and culture misalignment as reasons for failure at strategic implementation.

Scholars have dealt with the strategic plan implementation either holistically or partially rather than delving into the specifics. Analysing factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans by NGOs in South Sudan is therefore under-researched and specifically the communication type, leadership approach, organizational culture type and control type. Therefore, the implementation gaps illuminated by previous studies (Letting, 2009; Arasa, 2008; Cater and Pucko, 2010) such as communication, organizational culture, leadership, and control, was brought into focus.

Objectives

The study sought to investigate the factors influencing strategic plan implementation within NGOs in South Sudan. The objectives for the study were;

- i. To assess the extent to which communication influences strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan.
- ii. To establish how organizational culture influence strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan

- iii. To determine the influence of leadership on strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan.
- iv. To examine the influence of strategic control on strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan.

Theoretical Literature

This study was based on Organizational culture theories, management and communication theories.

Organizational Culture Theory

Different concepts of culture stem from two distinct disciplines, anthropology and sociology. The concepts have been applied to organizational studies since the early 1980's (Schein, 2005). Anthropology views culture as a metaphor for organizations, defining organizations as being cultures. On the other hand, sociology takes on the functionalist view and defines culture as something of an organization possesses. Despite the separate definitions of organizational culture, there seems to be a movement towards a general consensus. The most widely used organizational culture framework is that of Schein (2005) who adopts the functionalist view and described culture as a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation, and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid. This culture therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

In Schein's (2005) model, culture exists on three levels: Artefacts - which are difficult to measure; Values –which deal with espoused goals, ideals, norms, standards, and moral principles, and is usually the level that is usually measured through survey questionnaires; and Underlying assumptions deals with phenomena that remain unexplained when insiders are asked about the values of the organizational culture. The theory also demonstrates that while there is no single type of organizational culture, and while the organizational cultures may vary widely from one organization to the next, commonalities do exist and there are theories developed to describe different cultures. Letting (2009) demonstrated that there are national and regional cultural groupings that affect behaviour of organisations. While O'Reilly, Cardick and Newton (2005) based their belief on the premise that cultures can be distinguished by values that are reinforced with organizations. Culture is the single most important factor accounting for success or failure of organizations. They identified heroes, rites, rituals and culture networks as four key dimensions of culture. Schein (2005) postulates that organization culture theory is a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, feel and think in relation to the problems. Efficiency outcomes are associated directly or indirectly with organizational culture. A culture of efficiency, effectiveness, commitment and oneness is robust and would provide positive outcomes. This study will use the Organizational Culture Theory in finding out the factors influencing strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan.

Management Theories

Management theories are central to implementation of plans in any organization. Managers should strive to create an environment in which others are motivated to put in their best (Bhargara, 2003). It is incumbent upon the leader to provide direction and purpose for the organization and to carry everyone

along with her/him. The manager must get commitment of his subordinates (employees). McGregor and other scholars for example have stressed the importance of mutual goals as a clue to commitment. For many years, the economic theory has proposed to buy worker cooperation by paying wages to be used by wage earners to buy progress toward the personal goals. However, Judge and Robinson (2008) stress the provision of a conducive environment to the employees as key in achieving effectiveness and innovation. Essentially management involves accomplishing goals with and through people. As such, a manager must be concerned about tasks and human relationships. These management concerns seem to be a reflection of two of the earliest schools of thought in organization theory, the 'Scientific Management' movement led by Fredrick W. Taylor in early 1900s and the 'Human Relations' movement led by Elton Mayo and his associates in the 1920s and early 1930s (Cole, 2008).

According to Cole (2008) the Authoritarian Style of management behavior is often based on the assumption that the power of managers is derived from the position they occupy and that people are innately lazy and unreliable (Theory X). The Democratic Style assumes that the power of managers is granted by the group they are to lead, and that people can be basically self-directed and creative at work if properly motivated (Theory Y). Consequently, in the authoritarian style, all policies are determined by the manager, in the democratic style policies are open for group discussion and decision. Theory X employees need to be directed well during strategic implementation because they are not expected to take initiative like Theory Y employees, sometimes they may even need to be coerced.

McClelland (1961) advanced the psychological paradigm which postulates that people with an inner trait of high need achievement (n-arch) are more likely to be more successful at tasks. They feel the need to excel. This theory further states that people who are highly motivated are likely to take moderate risks, have an internal locus of control, have a strong drive to excel and solve problems. Achievement motivated people can be the backbone of most organizations. As we know, people with a high need for achievement get ahead because as individuals they are performers, they get things done. Managers with n-arch are likely to influence their departments and teams towards effective implementation of strategic plans.

Communications Theory

Wolfgang (2006) pointed out that communication is possible only upon a common language between sender and receiver. Marianne, Elain and Zellei (2011) explain Communication Theory as a 'Field' which expanded the conversation regarding disciplinary identity in the field of communication. Theory of communication proposes a vision for communication that engages in dialogue on the practice of communication. In this deliberative process theorists would engage in dialogue about the practical implications of communication theories. Leonarda and Susana (2009) explain communication theory as an outline on how each one of the elements of communication processes would engage the others in dialogue.

There are seven main elements of communication according to communication theory. First, source which Shannon calls the information source, which 'produces a message or sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiving terminal. Second, is the sender or transmitter, who 'operates' on the message in some way to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel. Third, is the channel that is 'merely' the medium used to transmit the signal from transmitter to the receiver? Fourth, is the receiver which performs the inverse operation of that done by the transmitter,

reconstructing the message from the signal Fifth is the destination that is the person (or thing) for whom the message is intended. Sixth is the message from the receiver that confirms receipt that implies information or communication and the seventh item for effective communication is feedback which in strategic terms is the actualization of what has been communicated.

Conceptual Framework

The relationship to be studied is presented in Figure 2.1 which states that strategic implementation depends on communication, organizational culture, leadership and control.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables

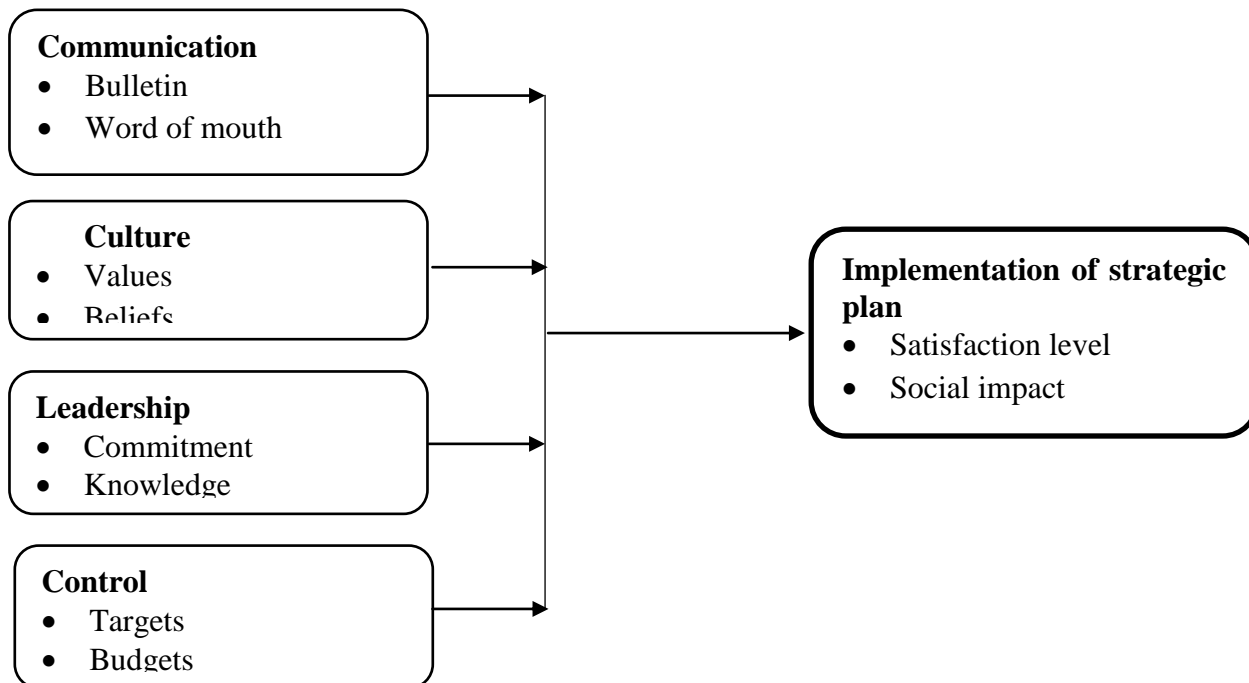


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows how the independent variables: communication, organizational culture, leadership and control interact with the dependent variable. It also shows the moderating and intervening variables which influence the relationship.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design to identify the factors influencing strategic plan implementation within NGOs in South Sudan. According to Reliefweb (2013), there are a total of 1230 NGOs operating within South Sudan. This source was comprehensive since the listing included the date, month and year the organisations were listed. It also contained hyperlinks to all the listed organizations for the researcher to obtain more information. The study being descriptive in nature, 10 percent of the population was taken to determine the sample size. A sample of 123 was selected to represent a total population of 1230 NGOs based in South Sudan. Gay (1981) points out that correlation research requires 30 cases or more, descriptive studies require 10% of the accessible

population and for experimental studies, at least 30 cases per group are required. The population of the study is homogenous thus requires a small sample size. A questionnaire was administered to collect both primary and secondary data. Descriptive data was used to analyse data and was presented through tables, frequency distribution, pie charts, bar charts, percentages, mean, mode and variances. In order to determine the relationship between variables, the study conducted multiple regression analysis.

Results And Discussion

In this research study, 123 questionnaires were given out, of which 113 were dully filled and collected, which is a 91.8% response rate. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) asserts that a response rate of 50 % is adequate while a 70% response rate or greater is considered to be better. Hence, the response rate was satisfactory.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was used in the study investigate the factors influencing strategic plan implementation within NGOs in South Sudan. Table 1 shows the findings.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation	Strategic Plan Implementation	Communication	Organizational Culture	Leadership	Control
Strategic Plan Implementation	1				
Communication	0.846**	1			
Organizational Culture	0.918**	0.865**	1		
Leadership	0.952**	0.836**	0.905**	1	
Control	0.781**	0.645**	0.686**	0.763**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results shown in Table 1, reveal a strong positive correlation exists between leadership and control as indicated by a correlation of 0.763 ($p < 0.01$). This has an implication that an efficient leadership style significantly results to better control thus effective strategic plan implementation. The findings show a strong positive significant correlation between leadership and strategic plan implementation with a correlation of 0.952 ($p < 0.01$). This infers that effective leadership significantly results to effective strategic plan implementation. The findings also show strong positive correlation of 0.918 ($p < 0.01$) between organizational culture and strategic plan implementation. This implies that an effective organizational culture significantly results to effective strategic plan implementation. Furthermore, the findings reveal a strong positive correlation between communication and strategic plan implementation with a correlation of 0.846 ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that effective communication process can significantly influence the effectiveness of strategic plan implementation. The findings show a strong positive significant correlation between control and strategic plan implementation with a correlation of 0.781 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that effective control results to effective strategic plan implementation.

Regression Analysis

The study used regression analysis to measure the strength of association between communication, organizational culture, leadership, control and strategic plan implementation. The Table below shows the findings.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.965 ^a	0.932	0.929	0.09673

a. Predictors: (Constant), Control, Communication, Organizational Culture, Leadership

From the results presented in Table given above, the R square is given as 0.932 which is an indication that predictor variables (communication, organizational culture, leadership and control) explain 93.2% of strategic plan implementation while 6.8% is accounted for by other factors not considered in this study.

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.808	4	3.452	368.930	0.000 ^b
	Residual	1.011	108	0.009		
	Total	14.818	112			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), Control, Communication, Organizational Culture, Leadership

As shown in Table 3 above, the significant value (P=0.000) indicates that there was a strong significant relationship between predictor variables (communication, organizational culture, leadership and control) and outcome variable (Strategic Plan Implementation). The P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 denotes that the model of Strategic Plan implementation is significant at the 5 percent significance level.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	-0.243	0.113		-2.151	0.034
	Communication	0.064	0.053	0.062	1.195	0.235
	Organizational Culture	0.301	0.073	0.276	4.133	0.000
	Leadership	0.571	0.071	0.549	8.058	0.000
	Control	0.119	0.035	0.132	3.381	0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic Plan Implementation

The regression coefficient for communication is 0.064. This shows that the relationship between communication and strategic plan implementations is positive. This suggests that better and efficient communication enhances strategic plan implementation positively and vice versa. The regression coefficient for organizational culture is 0.301. This implies that the relationship between organizational

culture and strategic plan implementations positive. This indicates an efficient organizational culture leads to effective strategic plan implementation and vice versa. There was also a positive regression coefficient between leadership and strategic plan implementation having a coefficient of 0.571. This suggests that when the effective leadership style is in place, strategic plan implementation of the organizations will be highly effective and vice versa. The study found a positive relationship between control and strategic plan implementation having a regression coefficient of 0.119. This shows that putting in place effective control measures influences the effectiveness of strategic plan implementation positively and vice versa.

Discussion

The study revealed a strong relationship between communication and strategic plan implementation. It found out that the better and efficient the communication is the more effective is the strategic plan implementation. These findings agree with Burnes (2004), who asserts that communication is the lifeblood of an organization and without effective communication; the pattern of relationships that we call organizations will not serve anyone's needs. He further suggests that Communication should be a regular rather than a one-off exercise and should be pursued through various channels that management deem fit to access the employees of an organization. People need to be involved in the strategic plan implementation and hence a continuous message effectively communicated will energize people into fully participating in the organization activities. According to Hrebiniak (2006), communication should be a regular rather than a one-off exercise and should be pursued through various channels that management deem fit to access the employees of an organization. People need to be involved in the strategic plan implementation and hence a continuous message effectively communicated will energize people into fully participating in the firm's activities.

The study also revealed a strong relationship between leadership and strategic plan implementation. The effective leadership is the more effective the strategic plan implementation in the NGOs. According to Kaplan and Norton, (2004), leadership and especially strategic leadership is widely described as one of the key drivers of effective strategic plan implementation. However, lack of leadership and specifically strategic leadership by the top management of an organization, has been identified as one of the major barriers to effective strategy implementation (Hrebiniak, 2009). The study findings also concur with Thompson (2007), that effective leadership is required for successful strategy implementation, in a competitively chaotic environment, one essential contribution of a strategic leader is to provide and share a clear vision, direction and purpose for the organization. The CEO's action and the perceived seriousness to a chosen strategy will influence subordinate managers' commitment to the strategy implementation. The personal goals and values of a CEO strongly influence a firm's mission, strategy and key long term objectives.

According to the outcomes of the study, there was a strong positive relationship between organizational culture and strategic plan implementation. This implies the type of organizational culture existing in an organization will significantly have an effect on strategic plan implementation. Different organizations have differing organizational cultures. The management of strategy in organizations calls for different approaches while taking into consideration that the new strategies are compatible with the strategy. According to Deal et al, (2015), organization culture should be changed to fit the strategy. Many studies have shown that the extent to which an organizational culture is aligned or not aligned to strategy to a great extent determines whether or not the strategy is successfully executed and the performance goals met (Lee & Yu, 2014).

The findings show a strong correlation between control and strategic plan implementation. This suggests that effective control results to effective strategic plan implementation. This finding agree with a study conducted by Cater and Pucko (2010) on the activities for and obstacles to strategy execution on a sample of 172 Slovenian Companies. The findings revealed that managers mostly rely on planning and organizing activities when implementing strategies, while the biggest obstacle to strategy execution is poor strategic control. In addition, the study findings also concur with Aosa (2015) who noted that companies which highly involved control were significantly more successful in strategic implementation decisions than those which had low involvement. This is because, involvement of more people in implementation process increases the level of concern producing a common understanding of joint tasks, creating a climate of shared effort and facilitating a smooth implementation process. On the other hand, lack of involvement of other employees other than strategic consultants or elites in the strategy plan creates implementation problems and might lead to open sabotage.

Conclusion

Regarding the first objective, the researcher sought to assess the extent to which communication influences strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan. The study found out that the effectiveness of the communication level in the NGOs determines to a great extent the effectiveness of strategic plan implementation. The findings revealed that lack of sessions in the organizations that informed the employees in the NGOs of their new responsibilities under the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan affected the communication process and therefore impacting the strategic plan implementation. The study therefore revealed that poor communication or lack of communication can minimize the chances of strategic plan implementation.

The study also concluded that there exists a positive relationship between organizational culture and strategic plan implementation. This study finding concurred with the literature review which indicated that an organization's culture determines to a greater extent strategic plan implementation. However, the study found out that some of the organizational cultures of NGOs did allow for proper strategic plan implementation.

The study concluded that leadership has an influence on strategic plan implementation at NGOs in South Sudan. There findings also revealed that leaders demonstrated their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process of strategic plan and the NGOs had policy control systems used by leaders to provide mechanisms for keeping their current actions in congruence/in line with future goals. Thus the study supports the fact that effective leadership is very crucial for effective strategic plan implementation.

In regard to the last objective in the study, there was a positive relationship between control and strategic plan implementation. The study found that in most NGOs in South Sudan, there were support policies that ensured that the strategic plans are implemented well. Moreover, most of the NGOs had a budget against which strategic plans are implemented and the NGOs determined the targets against which performance was measured. Thus effective control facilitates the effective strategic plan implementation.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the NGOs should ensure there are more sessions to sensitize their employees of their respective responsibilities under new strategic plans. The objective of these sessions is to provide proper communication plan including clear explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks and duties need to be performed by the affected implementers. This will ensure that the employees understand the reasons of the new changes in their duties and roles hence enhancing communication of change in an appropriate manner. The NGOs should also ensure their organization cultures are aligned well to the strategic plan implementation. Further, it is recommended that the NGOs management should continuously review their administrative systems and structures since they influence the effectiveness of the leadership which in turn affects strategic plan implementation.

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