
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of strategy implementation practices on performance of ActionAid International Kenya.

Statement of the problem: Non-profit organizations face a dynamic and often challenging operational landscape, necessitating the deployment of effective strategies to address these complexities. Within the context of Kenya, non-profit organizations encounter significant hurdles such as inadequate funding, limited governmental support, and deficient infrastructure, thereby hindering their ability to fulfill their missions effectively.

Findings: Leadership commitment plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational direction and fostering accountability, thereby facilitating the effective execution of strategic initiatives. Moreover, strategic planning emerges as instrumental in delineating clear objectives and judiciously allocating resources, thereby exerting a tangible influence on the performance outcomes of ActionAid International Kenya. In addition, effective communication serves to align organizational goals and engender synergy in the implementation of strategic imperatives.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the pivotal role of strategic leadership commitment, effective strategic planning, and robust communication strategy are critical drivers of ActionAid International's performance.

Recommendations: The study recommends that ActionAid International should leverage the insights garnered to enhance its strategic planning processes and overall performance. Additionally, managers and decision-makers within the organization should benefit from this study by gaining deeper insights into strategy implementation challenges and effective mitigation strategies.

Keywords: *Strategic implementation practices, strategic planning, organization performance, ActionAid International Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational success hinges upon a multitude of factors, among which strategic implementation practices play a pivotal role. Advocates such as Weiser (2020) emphasize the necessity of a dynamic approach to strategy implementation, which enables firms to align resources, translate ideas into action, establish robust decision-making frameworks, and monitor progress toward strategic objectives (Barrick et al., 2015). The dynamic nature of organizational goals, as underscored by Gagné (2018), often introduces complexity into the implementation process, characterized by resistance to change and resource constraints. Against this backdrop, strategic implementation practices serve as indispensable tools for executing new strategic goals by identifying the requisite team, timing, location, and methodologies for goal achievement (Mišanková, 2014). This study endeavors to examine the nexus between strategic implementation practices and the performance of ActionAid International Kenya.

ActionAid International Kenya, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing social justice, poverty alleviation, and gender equality in Kenya, operates within a community-centric framework that necessitates adaptability. For instance, heightened incidences of gender-based violence demand strategic recalibration to address emergent crises effectively (ActionAid International Kenya, n.d.). Hence, the adoption of strategic implementation practices becomes imperative for organizational success amidst uncertainty, underscoring the pivotal role played by such practices. Strategic implementation practices encompass specific techniques and processes employed by organizations to actualize their strategic plans. These practices encompass elements such as personnel expertise, resource availability (both temporal and financial), and organizational culture, which includes factors like transparent communication and appropriate technological infrastructure (Wabulasa & Kihara, 2023). The modulation of these elements aligns organizational operations with long-term strategic objectives, thereby influencing organizational performance.

Performance serves as a yardstick for assessing an organization's attainment of its mission and objectives, reflecting on outcomes and achievements within a defined timeframe (Costa, 2019). Performance indicators for ActionAid International Kenya encompass organizational sustainability, the efficacy of implemented programs and projects, advancements in social justice and gender equality, and reductions in poverty levels among women and children. Organizational culture mediates the relationship between strategic implementation practices and ActionAid

International Kenya's performance, encompassing shared beliefs, practices, values, and norms. Effective strategy implementation aims to enhance organizational performance amidst competitive landscapes, with Kihara et al. (2016) emphasizing the importance of effective strategic planning and focus for performance improvement. Aldehayyat and Al Khattab (2016) posit that success in dynamic environments hinges upon factors such as strategic goal adoption, enhanced top management involvement in planning processes, and the utilization of strategic analysis tools to navigate high-uncertainty contexts.

Strategic planning emerges as a linchpin for organizational success, with Hall (2013) highlighting the detrimental effects of lacking or ineffective strategic planning on business outcomes. Conversely, organizations equipped with clear strategic plans tend to thrive, with such plans serving as navigational aids toward strategic objectives. Effective strategic planning addresses significant organizational challenges such as financial constraints and resource limitations, underscoring its criticality as a strategic implementation practice (Opano, 2013). Leadership, characterized by the ability to influence, direct, and inspire individuals toward shared goals, plays a central role in strategic implementation. Kapur (2020) posits that effective leadership correlates with followers' enthusiastic engagement, fostering long-term change acceptability. Leaders are entrusted with devising policies and strategies, fostering awareness among followers, and catalyzing organizational growth through synergy and goal alignment. Clear strategic vision serves as a valuable intangible resource during implementation, as highlighted by Mapetere (2012).

Communication emerges as a cornerstone in strategic implementation, albeit prone to crises that impede organizational growth. A robust communication plan is indispensable for ensuring stakeholder comprehension of the organization's vision and mission, thereby mitigating communication barriers (Chirwa, 2022). Formal communication channels are recommended to relay strategic goals effectively to stakeholders. Elena-Iuliana and Criveanu (2016) characterize organizational performance as a subjective construct, necessitating comprehensive consideration of an entity's objectives amidst volatility and contradictions. Scholars advocate for a holistic approach to defining organizational performance, encompassing financial metrics, market outcomes, and observable indices.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Non-profit organizations aspire to effect positive change within communities through community-based programs (Kitonga, 2016), striving to champion equality, justice, eradicate issues like gender-based violence, alleviate poverty, and empower marginalized demographics. Strategic planning serves as a cornerstone for non-profit success, providing a roadmap with clear missions and objectives that enhance organizational identity and guide future endeavors. However, these organizations grapple with strategic challenges including limited governmental funding, budgetary constraints, income stability, external pressures to demonstrate results to donors and sponsors, and a disparity between costs and social impact, often neglecting break-even analysis (Shuria, 2014).

Moreover, non-profits encounter difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified personnel, heightened demands for their services, and the potential obsolescence of organizations upon achieving their primary objectives. A myriad of studies have explored the link between strategy implementation practices and organizational performance across both commercial and non-profit sectors. Inadequate implementation practices and poorly conceived strategies emerge as major impediments to organizational efficacy. Maina (2021) pinpointed key challenges facing non-profits in Kenya, including deficient infrastructure, corruption, accountability gaps, and insufficient governmental support.

Munene and Nyaga (2021) corroborated a positive correlation between NGO performance and strategic planning, underscoring the utility of strategic plans in delineating realistic objectives, shaping organizational mission and vision, facilitating performance evaluation, decision-making, and employee compensation. However, Njeri (2016) highlighted additional barriers to effective strategic planning within Kenyan NGOs, such as management commitment, organizational policies, resource scarcity, and employee motivation. The scholar advocated for the development of feasible policies, fostering a conducive organizational culture, enhancing employee motivation, and addressing resource constraints. Action Aid International Kenya contends with strategic challenges akin to those confronting other NGOs, significantly impacting its performance and ability to achieve its stated objectives.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To determine the effect of strategic leadership on performance of ActionAid International Kenya.

- ii. To examine the effect of strategic planning on the performance of ActionAid International Kenya.
- iii. To assess the effect of communication strategy on the performance of ActionAid International Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a desktop research design, also referred to as secondary research, which entails the collection and analysis of pre-existing data and literature pertinent to the research topic without engaging in primary data collection (Smith, 2018). The primary data collection method adopted herein was a comprehensive literature review, involving an exhaustive examination and analysis of academic literature, reports, articles, and organizational documents pertaining to strategic management practices and the performance of non-profit organizations, with specific emphasis on ActionAid International Kenya. Thematic Analysis constituted the methodological approach utilized, facilitating the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights gleaned from the literature review concerning strategic management practices, leadership commitment, strategic planning, communication, and the organizational performance of Action Aid International Kenya (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Desktop research designs are widely employed across various disciplines, including business management, social sciences, and public policy research. Numerous studies investigating organizational performance, strategic management, and non-profit entities have leveraged desktop research methodologies to analyze existing data and literature.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory.

Proposed by Jay Barney in 1991 (Barney, 1991), the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory underscores that a firm's competitive advantage and performance are primarily determined by its unique resources and capabilities. Resources encompass both tangible and intangible assets, while capabilities denote the firm's adeptness in deploying these resources effectively to achieve strategic objectives. Central to RBV are strategic implementation practices, such as resource allocation, organizational culture, and technology adoption, which directly influence the development and utilization of organizational resources. In the context of this study, RBV informs our approach by

underscoring the significance of strategic implementation practices in optimizing ActionAid International Kenya's resource base. The variables of strategic implementation practices, encompassing personnel expertise, resource availability, and organizational culture, synergistically interact to enhance ActionAid International Kenya's performance indicators. For instance, effective resource allocation, an independent variable, correlates with improved program impact and organizational sustainability, both dependent variables.

Strategic implementation practices directly influence the independent variable of strategic management practices; for example, the presence of adequate personnel and financial resources facilitates effective strategic planning and communication within the organization. These practices, in turn, affect the dependent variable of organizational performance, influencing indicators such as program impact and sustainability (Barney, 1991). Scholars such as Wernerfelt (1984) and Peteraf (1993) corroborate RBV's emphasis on the pivotal role of resources and capabilities in driving organizational performance. They argue that organizations possessing valuable, rare, and non-substitutable resources are more likely to attain sustained competitive advantage and superior performance. Studies by Barney (1991) and Grant (1991) further endorse RBV's proposition that strategic implementation practices aimed at nurturing and leveraging valuable resources contribute significantly to enhanced organizational performance.

Institutional Theory

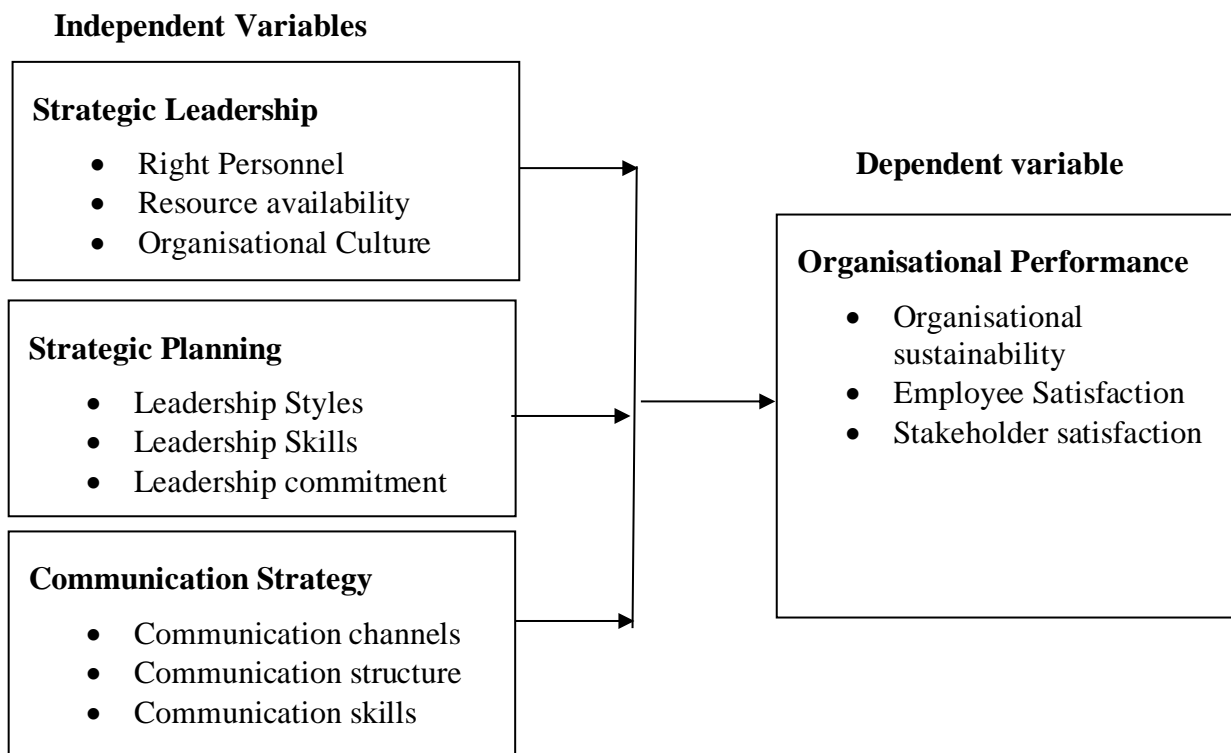
Developed by scholars including Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Institutional Theory posits that organizations are influenced by the social, cultural, and regulatory norms prevailing in their institutional environment. Organizations conform to these institutional pressures to gain legitimacy and support from stakeholders. Strategic implementation practices such as open communication, adherence to industry standards, and alignment with societal values are crucial for maintaining organizational legitimacy and reputation within the institutional context. In this study, Institutional Theory underscores the role of strategic implementation practices in aligning ActionAid International Kenya with institutional norms and expectations. The variables of strategic implementation practices interact to enhance organizational performance indicators by fostering legitimacy and credibility. For instance, open communication practices, an independent variable, contribute to increased stakeholder trust and support, thereby enhancing program impact and sustainability, dependent variables (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Strategic implementation practices related to communication and alignment with institutional norms directly influence the independent variable of strategic management practices, shaping the organizational response to institutional pressures and expectations. Adherence to industry standards and regulations enhances organizational legitimacy and reputation, positively impacting performance indicators such as program impact and sustainability (Suchman, 1995). Authors like Scott (1987) argue that organizations adopt isomorphic practices to gain legitimacy and support from their institutional environment, further supporting Institutional Theory's proposition. Studies by Deephouse (1996) and Suchman (1995) provide empirical evidence of the positive relationship between institutional conformity and organizational performance, particularly within the non-profit sector.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Researchers (2024)

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Strategic implementation stands as a critical determinant of organizational performance, a notion echoed by various scholars across documented journal articles. Both profit-making and non-profit organizations share the objective of enhancing performance, underscoring the significance of strategic implementation practices and organizational performance within the non-profit sector. Understanding their intricate interplay is imperative for enhancing organizational efficiency and societal impact. This section delves into the empirical literature on the issue, drawing insights from studies conducted in diverse contexts. Among the conceptual notions addressed in the literature, the interplay between organizational performance and implementation practices emerges as a salient issue. Elena-Iuliana and Criveanu (2016) delve into this topic, highlighting the challenges in defining organizational performance and emphasizing the paramount importance of operational or strategic implementation practices therein. Non-profit organizations are urged to continually develop and adapt their strategies to ensure alignment with mission-driven goals, laying the groundwork for investigating the dynamics conducive to optimal performance.

Strategic planning emerges as of utmost importance in management performance, as elucidated by the research findings of George, Walker, and Monster (2019). Their meta-analysis underscores the correlation between strategic planning and organizational effectiveness across diverse sectors, with a notable positive relationship observed. This underscores the pivotal role of strategic planning in bolstering organizational effectiveness, serving as the bedrock of strategic implementation and elevating organizational performance beyond the ordinary. Leadership, among other factors, significantly influences strategic implementation and organizational performance, as observed by Hendriks (2020). Delving into leadership styles and strategy implementation within the National Department of Trade and Industry, Hendriks underscores the consequences of different leadership approaches on the implementation process. Visionary and transactional leadership styles are prevalent, yet deeper leadership involvement is imperative to expedite strategy implementation.

Furthermore, Kihara et al. (2016) provides comprehensive insights into the relationships between structural adaptations, strategy implementation, and overall performance in manufacturing firms operating in Thika. Their study underscores the criticality of effective strategic implementation in organizational performance, emphasizing the need to align structural changes with strategic goals. By amalgamating contemporary structural transformations with strategic measures, organizations

can foster new ecosystems, enhancing their capacity to achieve goals and sustain competitive advantage. In the healthcare sector, Munala and Mwasiaji (2023) shed light on strategy implementation processes and organizational performance at the Kenya Medical Training College on a national scale. Their research underscores the transformative impact of fully functional implementation strategies on organizational performance, underscoring the pivotal role of effective operations in attaining desired outcomes.

Additionally, Njeri (2016) addresses challenges in the implementation of strategic planning within non-governmental organizations in Kenya, exemplified by the Red Cross Society of Kenya. Through meticulous investigation, Njeri identifies impediments such as resource constraints, stakeholder disputes, and ineffective communication channels. This research underscores the need for tailored approaches to address challenges hindering the effectiveness and impact of organizational strategies, fostering an enabling environment for non-profit organizations within their unique contexts. In conclusion, empirical literature underscores the vital role of strategic implementation in enhancing the performance of non-profit organizations. Insights from diverse contexts provide a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics, from strategic planning to leadership commitment and organizational adaptability, each facet playing a pivotal role in organizational success. Employing experimental approaches enables organizations to iterate and improve their strategies, thereby enhancing their performance and contribution to societal issues.

FINDINGS

The research delved into the organizational effectiveness of ActionAid International Kenya's Strategic Implementation Practices, yielding crucial insights. By synthesizing diverse secondary sources and scrutinizing pertinent organizational documents, specific themes and patterns emerged. Notably, the findings underscored the significance of several key factors. Leadership emerged as a cornerstone in driving organizational effectiveness. The pivotal role of the team lead in shaping the organization's vision, values, and strategic objectives was evident. An environment fostering accountability, innovation, and collaboration among team members was cultivated, aligning with previous studies highlighting the strong correlation between leadership commitment and organizational prosperity. In addition, strategic planning emerged as a fundamental component of effective organizational performance. ActionAid International Kenya's adeptness in setting

clear goals, optimizing resource utilization, and navigating dynamic environments through strategic planning processes significantly influenced organizational performance. This finding reaffirms the pivotal role of systematic planning in guiding all facets of organizational operations towards long-term objectives.

Lastly, robust communication mechanisms were identified as integral to strategic implementation and organizational success. Open, transparent communication facilitated collaboration, knowledge exchange, and heightened stakeholder engagement, ultimately contributing to favorable outcomes for ActionAid International Kenya. The alignment of stakeholders and robust support mechanisms underscored the importance of effective communication channels in championing organizational initiatives. In summary, the study's findings underscore the importance of adopting a strategic implementation approach to drive positive social change and achieve sustainable development targets for ActionAid International Kenya. By emphasizing leadership commitment, strategic planning, and effective communication, organizations can enhance their effectiveness and contribute meaningfully to societal progress.

CONCLUSION

The study underscores the pivotal role of strategic leadership commitment in driving the performance of ActionAid International. Leadership commitment shapes organizational direction, cultivates a culture of accountability, and ensures effective strategy implementation to attain organizational objectives. This finding resonates with the principles of Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the significance of robust leadership in fostering accountability and achieving development milestones. Moreover, strategic planning emerges as a key driver of ActionAid International's performance, facilitating the establishment of clear objectives, efficient resource allocation, and adaptability to dynamic environments. This aligns with Vision 2030 and the SDGs, highlighting the importance of effective strategic planning in enhancing organizational performance and goal attainment.

The study also underscores the critical role of communication strategy in organizational performance. Effective communication fosters alignment, clarity of goals, and smooth strategy implementation within the organization. This echoes the principles of Vision 2030 and the SDGs, emphasizing the necessity of transparent communication to ensure organizational alignment and effective strategy execution. Furthermore, ActionAid Kenya's adoption of both verbal and written

communication channels to articulate its vision and mission, along with the utilization of the Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS), exemplifies innovative approaches to downward accountability. These mechanisms enable stakeholders, including partners, funders, and program participants, to engage and evaluate the organization's program impact effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations stemming from this study are manifold. ActionAid International should leverage the insights garnered to enhance its strategic planning processes and overall performance. Additionally, managers and decision-makers within the organization should benefit from this study by gaining deeper insights into strategy implementation challenges and effective mitigation strategies. Moreover, NGO professionals should glean valuable lessons from this study to enhance their understanding of strategy implementation challenges and best practices. Government agencies involved in development and poverty alleviation initiatives should find this study instrumental in comprehending how organizations like ActionAid contribute to national development agendas aligned with Vision 2030 and the SDGs.

Lastly, donors and funding organizations supporting ActionAid International Kenya should be keen to understand the organization's performance and strategy implementation practices to ensure their contributions effectively contribute to sustainable development goals and yield a positive impact. Additionally, researchers focusing on strategy implementation, organizational performance, and NGO alignment with national development agendas should find this report invaluable for academic exploration and further studies in the field.

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