Strategic Management Practices of Regional Level Public Sectors in Oromia Regional State: The Case of Selected Public Sectors

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Abstract

Strategic management practices in the context of public service involve a systematic approach to decide the strategic direction of public sectors and implementing plans that promote effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness to the public. The objective of this study was to assess strategic management practice of selected public sectors at regional level in public sectors of Oromia Regional State. Quantitative and Qualitative approaches were employed in this study. Descriptive research design was also employed using quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. The Primary data were collected from managers and employees of sample sectors using interviews and questionnaires respectively. Secondary data were obtained through review of relevant documents. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentage and mean. Qualitative data that were obtained from key informant interview, open ended questions of the questionnaire and reviewed document were analyzed using narrative description method. The analysis was also made by using logical arguments, triangulations and comparisons. Accordingly, the results reveal that public sectors had adequate attention to internal and external analysis with minor gaps in external analysis, public sectors were also reluctant to involve stakeholders in environmental scanning, stakeholders' involvement in strategy formulation process was not exhaustive and as per the level expected, gaps were also there in the allocation of adequate resources and capacity building, poor reward system and employee turnover were also among the challenges in strategy management practices in the public sectors. In general, although the effort made to successfully implement the strategy management process is commendable, public sectors are expected to work more in their strategic management practice in a way they will be effective in achieving their strategic goals. As a result, it is recommended the involvement of stakeholders in strategic management process, capacity building of employees, adequate resource allocation, and revision of reward system as well as strengthening monitoring and evaluation system of public sectors.

Key words: Strategy, Management, Regional Level, Public Sectors

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1. Introduction

Strategic management encompasses a series of decisions made by management to set long term goals and the means to achieve them, including environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008). Interest in strategy emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, with Chandler significantly shaping its concepts. Initially, the focus was on strategy formulation, but there has been a recent shift toward implementation (Okumus, 2003).

The complexities of globalization, rapid technology changes, competition, and shifting economic conditions in the 21st century have made strategic management essential for organizational survival and performance (Alkhafaji, 2003). David (1988) emphasized that strategic management involves formulation, implementation, and evaluation, facing challenges at each stage. Effective implementation of strategies is crucial for generating value for organizations and their stakeholders (Hitesh, 2010).

In Ethiopia, a strategic planning dates back to 1955 and includes initiatives like the Growth and Transformation Plans and the recent Pathway to Prosperity (2020-2030). The Oromia Planning and Economic Development Commission oversees strategic management in the region's public sectors, ensuring their alignment with national goals. This study aims to assess the strategy management practices in selected public sectors at the regional level to evaluate their status and effectiveness.

Every five years, public sector entities at both federal and regional levels, including local administrative units, undertake the development and implementation of strategic plans tailored to fulfil their missions. However, evidence indicates that the strategic management system within these sectors requires significant improvement to effectively achieve their goals and enhance customer satisfaction. In the Oromia Regional State, public sectors create strategic plans informed by their specific organizational contexts; yet, reports from the Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission reveal that the execution of these plans often falls short of expectations.

This discrepancy raises critical questions about the appropriateness of the strategic planning processes utilized and suggests a pressing need to identify the root causes hindering effective implementation. Preliminary discussions with experts in the planning department have highlighted several issues, including inadequate stakeholder participation, overly ambitious planning timelines, and inconsistent baseline surveys—all of which impede the progress of the strategic plan known as the Pathway to Prosperity (2020-2030).

Scholars like Finkelstein (2003) and Miller (2002) have outlined various factors that contribute to the failures of strategic planning, including leadership challenges, cultural homogeneity, and structural memory issues. Additionally, a common problem in strategic planning is the establishment of clear goals; ambiguity in objectives can obstruct clarity in priorities and responsibilities across organizational units. Achieving effective strategic management requires a comprehensive understanding of organizational resources and skills (Duncan and Swayne ,2008).

Given these challenges, this study aimed to critically examine the strategy management practices of selected public sectors within the Oromia Regional State, with particular emphasis on environmental scanning, strategy formulation, and the inherent challenges faced in these areas. By investigating these elements, the study sought to uncover the root causes obstructing effective strategy management, with the hope of providing solutions that will facilitate the successful implementation of the ten-year Pathway to Prosperity plan. Overall, this research intends to contribute valuable insights into the strategic management practices of public sectors at the regional level, focusing on critical variables related to strategy implementation and evaluation.

The study specifically sought to address the following research questions: 1) To what extent do selected regional public sectors engage in environmental scanning during their strategic management processes? 2) How do these selected public sectors develop their strategies? 3) What is the current status of strategy implementation within these regional public sectors? 4) What mechanisms are established for strategy monitoring and evaluation in the selected public sectors? 5) What are the major challenges faced in strategy management practices within these regional public sectors?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Concept of Strategic Management

Strategic management involves making critical decisions and taking corrective actions to achieve an organization's long-term goals. It encompasses the practices and processes that guide an organization through its daily operations while striving for these objectives (Alkhafaji, 2003). This discipline integrates both the art and science of crafting, executing, and assessing cross-functional decisions that allow a company to fulfil its mission (AbuBakar, Tufail & Yusof, 2011; Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

The term "strategic management" refers to the decision-making by management regarding long-term goals and the necessary strategies for their achievement. It addresses complexities stemming from unpredictable events that can significantly influence the entire organization rather than isolated activities (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008). Central to strategic management is strategy itself—long-term plans designed to help organizations meet their missions effectively. Strategies are pivotal in creating a competitive advantage by aligning resources to meet market demands and stakeholder expectations (Higgins, 2005; Johnson et al., 2008). Key components of strategic management include environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998).

2.2 Environment Scanning

Understanding organizational resources and skills is vital for building strengths that lead to competitive advantage in strategic management (Duncan, Gintei & Swayne, 1998). The success of any strategy relies on its alignment with the external environment, necessitating an environmental scan as a foundational step in the strategic planning process (Alkhafaji, 2003;

Azhar et al., 2013). This process involves analyzing economic conditions, market trends, and industry structures, often referred to as environmental assessment (Roney, 2010).

Environmental scanning entails collecting data on external events and trends that inform management decisions and help identify the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). It serves as an essential phase in strategic planning, establishing a baseline for corporate objectives and informing the strategic direction (Hussey, 1998).

2.3 Strategy Formulation

The process known as strategy formulation is crucial for organizations to address long-term environmental opportunities and challenges. This process begins with leaders aiming to shift perspectives within the organization (Azhar et al., 2013). It involves key decisions regarding which businesses to pursue and how to allocate resources effectively, alongside creating a mission, vision, and long-term goals (Kibicho, 2014; Baroto et al., 2014).

Strategic planning is a formal and systematic approach to developing these strategies. As noted by Grant (2003), it is an integral part of strategic management that helps organizations anticipate future opportunities and challenges to attain a competitive advantage (Scarf, 1991, as cited in Alkhafaji, 2003). Moreover, Haycock, Cheadle, and Bluestone (2012) characterize it as a methodical and rational process of strategy identification.

According to Liedtka (2006), strategic planning is an analytical process that culminates in a strategic plan based on pre-set strategies. Furthermore, involving employees in this process enhances their sense of ownership, which can contribute to building organizational competencies (Salih & Doll, 2013). Finally, developing clear mission and vision statements is essential in the strategic management process across various types of organizations (Phanuel & Darbi, 2012).

2.4 Strategy Implementation

Making strategy happen or ensuring that established and planned plans actually work in practice is what strategic implementation or strategy in action is all about (Johnson, et.al. 2008). Implementation entails putting the chosen plans into action, as well as the tools and tactics employed to do so. All measures, activities, and processes dedicated to integrating a newly established strategy into an existing business organization are defined as strategy implementation by Krassnig, James, and Ribière (2011). For them, strategy execution is a critical step in bringing the plan to life. "The assigning of tasks and obligations to people or groups within an organization," says Alkhafaji (2003). It entails putting the chosen strategies into action, as well as the methods and tactics used by the business to carry out management's strategy.

Strategy implementation, according to Zafar et al. (2013), is the process of making a plan work as intended or putting a chosen strategy into action. It entails determining the structure of the company, allocating resources, building decision-making processes, and managing human resources. Individuals and organizational subunits must go all out to successfully execute their

component of the strategic plan as part of the process of putting the strategy into action (Nedelea & Paun, 2009).

Implementation, according to Azhar et al. (2013), is the process of converting planned plans into actual activities. The dynamic activity of putting plans and policies into action within the strategic management process is known as strategy implementation (Sorooshian, Norzima, Yusof & Rosnah, 2010). The sum total of efforts for putting strategic plans into action is known as strategy implementation, and it is a vital cornerstone and ally in the development of a strong company (Smith, 2011). No company strategy can flourish without good implementation (Andersen & Lie, 2013).

2.5 Strategic Management in Public Sectors

In the era of results-oriented governance, effective public administration increasingly depends on the development of strategic management capabilities. Strategic management serves as a core managerial function that integrates an organization's primary activities and aligns them with its overarching strategic objectives. Its purpose is to enhance the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of public sector organizations, both in terms of policy outcomes and administrative competence. By harmonizing various management processes, strategic management provides a coherent and systematic framework for setting, pursuing, monitoring, and revising strategic goals.

A robust strategic management capability is essential for ensuring alignment between public organizations and their external stakeholders. It also supports results-based management within a defined framework of mission, mandates, values, and vision. This is particularly important given the complex and evolving political and institutional environments in which many public agencies operate (Streib & Poister, 1999). Although strategic management has historically received limited attention in public administration literature, several foundational works such as those by Koteen (1989), Nutt and Backoff (1992), Rabin, Miller, and Hildreth (1989), and Steiss (1985)—have contributed to its conceptual development. Today, strategic management is increasingly recognized as a critical concern across the public sector.

2.6 Challenges in Strategic Management

Recent studies continue to highlight persistent challenges in strategic management that hinder effective strategy execution. Common obstacles include lack of leadership support, poor communication, misalignment between strategy and organizational structure, and limited staff capacity. For example, AL Mansour (2020) identified several strategic planning failures in public sector institutions due to inadequate leadership engagement, weak performance monitoring systems, and inconsistent resource allocation. Similarly, Appiah-Adu and Amoako (2021) emphasized the negative effects of internal resistance to change, poor coordination, and insufficient training, particularly in strategy implementation phases.

A frequent issue in strategic management is strategic drift, which occurs when an organization's strategy no longer aligns with its external environment, leading to performance decline (Grant, 2021). Failure to adapt to changing political, economic, and technological

landscapes often results from out-dated strategic plans and a lack of continuous environmental scanning (Ginter, Duncan & Swayne, 2022).

Organizational inertia and a lack of clarity in roles and goals can also hinder execution. For instance, Mulili and Wong (2020) found that strategy failures in East African public agencies were frequently due to leadership bottlenecks, poor strategy-to-operations alignment, and inadequate stakeholder engagement. According to Mensah and Boso (2022), the absence of inclusive planning and unclear accountability mechanisms contributed to disconnection between formulated strategy and actual implementation outcomes.

Challenges to strategy execution can broadly be categorized into four key areas: the strategic planning process, quality and feasibility of the strategy, implementation capability, and organizational structure and culture (Candido & Santos, 2021). Ineffective systems, limited organizational readiness, and misaligned resources often create barriers. Additionally, environmental factors such as competitive pressures, regulatory changes, and socio-economic shifts introduce external complexities that organizations frequently fail to account for (Umar & Hassan, 2020).

Resistance to change, insufficient communication of strategic goals, and failure to align incentives with strategic objectives are also widely reported as internal barriers (Galli, 2020). Miscommunication of strategic direction leads to poor buy-in from frontline employees, which significantly weakens execution efforts.

3. Methodology of the study

The study utilized a mixed research approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. A descriptive research design was chosen to analyse strategic management practices in various public sectors, answering fundamental questions about the situation under consideration. The population consisted of 1,498 employees across seven regional level selected public sectors in the Oromia Regional State. A sample size of 375 employees, representing 25% of the population, was determined to be a suitable representation for this heterogeneous group, with all employees expected to have knowledge with regard to the topic under study. The Planning and Economic Development sector was purposefully selected due to its planning responsibilities, while other sectors were chosen randomly.

Primary data came from employees and heads of public sectors, collected via questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data were sourced from published and unpublished documents including books and reports.

For data collection methods, a combination of questionnaires, key informant interviews, and document reviews were employed. The questionnaires aimed to gather both quantitative and qualitative information related to strategy management practices. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 key informants holding managerial positions across seven public sectors, utilizing semi-structured interview guides.

Table 1: Population and Sample size

S.No.	Name of the Public Sector	Number of Employees
1	Agriculture	374
2	Trade	166
3	Employment Creation and Skills	206
4	Women and Children Affairs	88
5	Education	230
6	Health	326
7	Planning and Economic Development	108
	Total Population	**1498**
	Sample Size 25%* 1498 = 375	

Source: Oromia Region Civil Service and Human Resource Development Bureau, 2024

The methods of data analysis included presentation in tables, thematic analysis of qualitative data, and use of SPSS software for quantitative data analyses. Descriptive statistical tools like percentages and means were applied, and findings were interpreted alongside reviewed literature and researcher observations.

Before collecting data, permission was obtained from public sectors. Respondents were informed about the study's purpose, benefits, and their right to refuse participation. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants' privacy was respected, and all assistance and sources of information were duly acknowledged.

Table 2: Mean Score Standard

Low	Moderate	High
≤ 2.60	2.61 – 3.40	≥ 3.41

Source: Yalegama, Chileshe & Ma (2016)

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

In this section, the analyses and discussions focus on the results from a survey of employees, interviews with managers, and the review of relevant documents regarding assessment of strategy management practices. Key aspects covered include environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as challenges encountered in implementation. The survey results are presented in tables and discussed narratively, incorporating insights from interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale for responses, which guided the analysis of agreement levels among participants, as well as percentage and mean calculations. Guidelines for interpreting mean scores to categorize levels of agreement (low, moderate, and high) are provided, as referenced from prior studies and indicated in the above section.

A total of 375 questionnaires were distributed to employees in selected regional level public sectors of the Oromia regional state, with a response rate of 93.3% as 350 questionnaires were completed and returned.

4.2 Demographic Information of Respondents

The respondents' distribution in table 3 below shows that the health sector had the highest number of respondents, with 98 individuals (28%), while the women and children affairs sector had the least, with only 20 respondents (5.7%).

Table 3: Respondents' Sector

Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Education	52	14.9
Health	98	28
Agriculture	63	18
Employment Creation and Skills	47	13.4
Women and Children Affairs	20	5.7
Trade	37	10.6
Planning and Economic Development	33	9.4
Total	**350**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

It's important to note that all employees from the sectors had the chance to respond to the questionnaire, and the variations in the number of respondents are primarily due to the differing employee counts across organizations.

Table 4 illustrates the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the total, 248 respondents (70.9%) being male, while only 102 respondents (29.1%) female. This indicates that the public sector at the regional level is predominantly male, highlighting the need for increased efforts to encourage female participation in these organizations

Table 4: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	248	70.9
Female	102	29.1
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that among the respondents, 94 (26.9%) occupied managerial positions; while a substantial majority of 256 (73.1%) had expert roles. This indicates that the majority of respondents were employed at the expert level.

Table 5: Job Position of Respondents

Job Position		Frequency	Percentage
Managerial		94	26.9
Expert		256	73.1
	Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The information presented in Table 6 shows that 42% of respondents fell within the 31 to 40 age range, while 32.9% were in the 41 to 50 age group. Additionally, 14.6% of respondents were aged 18 to 30, and 10.6% were between 51 and 60 years old.

Table 6: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	51	14.6
31-40	147	42
41-50	115	32.9
51-60	37	10.6
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The information regarding the educational qualifications of the respondents indicates that 225 (64.3%) held a first degree, while 108 (30.9%) possessed a second degree. Additionally, 5 respondents (1.4%) had diploma, and 9 respondents (2.6%) were at grade 12 or below. Lastly, 3 respondents (0.9%) had completed their PhD. This data reveals that nearly all respondents have at least a first degree, with the majority being first degree holders.

With regard to service year of the respondents, the data indicate that 132 (37.7%) had served for 16 to 20 years, 78 (22.3%) had served for 11 to 15 years, 75 (21.4%) have service years of 21 or more, 49 (14%) had served for 6 to 10 years, and 16 (4.6%) had service years ranging from 1 to 5 years.

4.3 Assessment on the Issues Related to Environment Scanning

As mentioned in earlier sections, the assessment of strategic management practices in the studied sectors takes into account several variables such as environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, along with the challenges faced during the implementation process.

Accordingly, the questions were formulated to determine whether the organizations under study conducted environmental scans. With regard to questions posed related to the existence of responsible body for purpose of planning, all respondents affirmed the existence of a responsible entity for planning activities within their organizations. This indicates that the regional government of Oromia demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing planning-related issues. Furthermore, it has effectively structured these organizations to establish planning departments

that play a crucial role in guiding the planning process, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of their respective sectors.

Moreover, as indicated in Table 7 below 79.2% of respondents confirmed that an internal analysis was conducted during the strategy formulation process, while 15.1% moderately agreed, and only 5.7% disagreed. Interviews with managers supported this finding, indicating that internal analysis was implemented rigorously. Additionally, a review of planning documents verified the presence of these practices in the public sectors. The mean score of 4.04, categorized as high according to the standards in Table 1 further validates that most respondents acknowledged the importance of internal analysis. Therefore, it can be concluded that public sectors at the regional level prioritize internal analysis during strategy formulation.

In terms of external analysis, the data shows that 72.3% of respondents believed that such analysis was incorporated during strategy formulation, while 20.6% moderately agreed and only 7.1% disagreed. Interview findings supported this, although participants raised concerns about the analysis's scope not adequately addressing the unique characteristics of their sectors. With a mean score of 3.84, the majority affirmed that external analysis was part of the strategy formulation process. Thus, it can be concluded that external analysis occurs in public sectors at the regional level, although some limitations were noted regarding the specificity of the analysis in relation to the respective public sectors.

Another aspect assessed was how effectively the internal analysis results help organizations pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses. As shown in Table 7, 73.1% of respondents agreed that the results aided their organizations in this identification, while 18.6% moderately agreed and only 8.3% disagreed. Interviews with managers further supported this finding, indicating that the analysis was indeed useful for recognizing strengths and weaknesses within their organizations. The high mean score of 3.99 reinforces the belief among most respondents that internal analysis results significantly facilitated the identification process. In conclusion, it is clear that the organizations benefited from the internal analysis results in clearly identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

In reference to the findings from the external analysis outlined in Table 7, 74.3% of respondents reported that the results assist their organization in identifying opportunities and threats. Additionally, 18% moderately agreed, while only 7.7% disagreed. Managers also recognized the analysis's value, though they expressed concerns regarding employees' knowledge and experience, which may hinder a thorough examination of all points to effectively identify opportunities and threats. The high mean score of 3.95 further indicates strong agreement among respondents on the analysis's contributions. Consequently, it can be concluded that the results from the external analysis are valuable for the organizations, though addressing gaps in employee capacity through training and development programs is essential.

Another aspect evaluated was the participation of stakeholders in the environmental scanning process. As shown in Table 7, 61.7% of respondents agreed that stakeholders were involved in this process, while 26% moderately agreed and 12.3% disagreed. Managers were also asked about the extent of stakeholder involvement in environmental scanning and acknowledged that

stakeholders had not been fully engaged. The high mean score of 3.71 indicates a positive level of stakeholder participation. Therefore, it can be concluded that regional public sectors are making efforts to include stakeholders in environmental scanning, but there is a need for greater focus to ensure all stakeholders are effectively involved.

Table 7: Responses Related to Environmental Scanning

Declarative Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Internal analysis is usually made in my organization during strategy formulation process	113 (32.3%)	164 (46.9%)	53 (15.1%)	13 (3.7%)	7 (2%)	4.04
External analysis is made in my organization during strategy formulation process	76 (21.7%)	177 (50.6%)	72 (20.6%)	14 (4%)	11 (3.1%)	3.84
The result from internal analysis enables my organization to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses	126 (36%)	130 (37.1%)	65 (18.6%)	23 (6.6%)	6 (1.7%)	3.99
The result from external analysis enables to clearly identify opportunities and threats in the organization	103 (29.4%)	157 (44.9%)	63 (18%)	22 (6.3%)	5 (1.4%)	3.95
Due emphasis is given to make stakeholders fully involve in environmental scanning process	82 (23.4%)	134 (38.3%)	91 (26%)	35 (10%)	8 (2.3%)	3.71
I believe that environmental scanning process in my organization was effective and helpful to formulate appropriate strategy	141 (40.3%)	141 (40.3%)	42 (12%)	16 (4.6%)	10 (2.9%)	4.11

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Environmental scanning plays a crucial role in developing effective strategies, as demonstrated by the data in Table 7. The results indicate that 80.6% of respondents recognized its value in strategy formulation, with an additional 12% expressing moderate agreement and only 7.5% in disagreement. Managers showed strong confidence in the benefits of environmental scanning for creating relevant strategies. Additionally, the mean score of 4.11 reflects a high level of agreement on the effectiveness of this process. Consequently, it can be concluded that

environmental scanning is viewed as highly beneficial for formulating appropriate strategies within the regional public sectors of Oromia.

4.4 Assessment Related to Strategy Formulation

Strategy formulation is a key component of the strategic management process. To develop effective strategies, it's vital to take various factors into account. Respondents were asked a series of questions to assess their understanding of how strategies are developed within their organizations.

The data in Table 8 indicate that 76% of respondents agreed that the strategy formulation process includes relevant stakeholders, while 21.4% moderately agreed and only 2.6% disagreed. However, managers expressed some reservations about the extent of stakeholders' involvement. Despite these reservations, the mean score of 4.01 indicates that a significant majority view stakeholder involvement positively. Given that managers play a crucial role in the strategy management process, their concerns cannot be overlooked. Thus, it can be concluded that while stakeholder involvement exists in strategy formulation, it does not appear to meet the expected level of thoroughness.

A substantial majority of respondents, 93.1%, believed their organization's vision statement to be achievable, inspiring, and easy to understand. Meanwhile, 15.4% moderately agreed, and a mere 1.5% disagreed. Managers shared similar views, with a high mean score of 4.20 reflecting strong confidence in the clarity and relevance of the vision statements. However, document reviews and observations revealed challenges in fully gauging respondents' sentiments regarding these statements. Some organizations' vision statements were found to be unclear and resembled mission statements rather than distinctly outlining the organization's vision. Consequently, it is recommended that organizations revise their vision statements to enhance clarity and inspiration.

The assessment included an evaluation of the mission statements from the organizations. The data indicate that 93.1% of respondents felt their mission statement accurately reflects their organization's main activities, with 5.4% moderately agreeing and 1.5% expressing disagreement. Managers echoed this sentiment, resulting in a mean score of 4.42, indicating a strong consensus among respondents regarding the relevance of their mission statements. However, after analysing observations and documents, it appears that many organizations' mission statements do not include essential elements necessary for a standard mission statement. Consequently, while the mission statements of these organizations generally align with their core activities, they fall short in incorporating other critical components required for a comprehensive mission statement.

Still another area assessed was the formulation of goals and objectives. As indicated in the data, a significant 89.4% of respondents agreed that the goals were attainable, while 9.7% disagreed, and only 0.9% expressed strong disagreement. Managers' responses aligned closely with this view. With a mean score of 4.34, indicating a strong agreement, the majority believed that the goals and objectives were not only attainable but also relevant. Consequently, it can be concluded that public sector entities at the regional level in the Oromia Regional State have effectively developed attainable and relevant goals and objectives.

Table 8: Responses Related to Strategy Formulation •

Declarative Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
The strategy formulation process in my organization involves concerned stakeholders	99 (28.3%)	167 (47.7%)	75 (21.4%)	7 (2%)	2 (0.6%)	4.01
The vision statement of my organization is achievable, inspiring and easy to understand	180 (51.4%)	146 (41.7%)	19 (15.4%)	2 (0.6%	3 (0.9%)	4.20
The mission statement of my organization reflects the purpose / main activity of the organization	180 (51.4%)	146 (41.7%)	19 (5.4%)	2 (0.6%)	3 (0.9%)	4.42
The goals and objectives of my organization are attainable	159 (45.4%)	154 (44.0%)	34 (9.7%)	2 (0.6%)	1 (0.3%)	4.34
The goals and objectives of my organization are relevant	176 (50.3%)	144 (41.1%	27 (7.7%)	2 (0.6%)	1 (0.3%)	4.41
The corporate strategy of my organization is appropriate to the attainment of mission, vision, goals and objectives	162 (46.3%)	146 (41.7%)	35 (10%)	3 (0.9%	4 (1.1%)	4.31

Source: Field Survey, 2024

A majority of respondents, 88%, felt that the organizational level strategy was appropriate for achieving the mission, vision, goals, and objectives, while 10% moderately agreed, and only 2% disagreed. Insights from an interview with a manager echoed these sentiments, although some concerns were raised about the level of stakeholder involvement, which could enhance the strategy's effectiveness. The mean score of 4.31 indicates strong agreement on the strategy's appropriateness. However, it's important to consider the managers' reservations. While the corporate strategy is viewed as appropriate, greater stakeholder involvement could further enhance its effectiveness.

4.5 Assessment Related to Strategy Implementation

Once a strategy is formulated, the next critical step is strategy implementation. If the formulated strategy is not executed effectively, the time and resources invested are wasteful. To evaluate the effectiveness of strategy implementation, respondents provided their input on various points.

Respondents were asked about the effectiveness of communication regarding the organization's strategy. As Table 9 indicates, that 71.7% agreed that the strategy was communicated effectively, while 22.9% moderately agreed and 5.4% disagreed. This perspective was consistent among managers, with a mean score of 3.92 indicating a high level of belief in

effective communication of the strategy. Consequently, it can be concluded that communication of strategies is not an issue within the public sectors at the regional level.

In relation to organizations' commitment to a customer-focused approach in their strategy implementation, the data indicated that 81.1% of respondents acknowledged the presence of such an approach, while 15.7% moderately agreed, and 3.1% disagreed. Managers exhibited similar beliefs. The mean score of 4.11 (indicating high agreement) suggests minimal variation in respondents' opinions. However, the researcher noted customer complaints stemming from dissatisfaction with services in certain public sectors. This suggests that the customer-focused approach may not be a priority across all public sectors.

The issue related to continuous improvement in strategy implementation was highlighted in the feedback from respondents. Accordingly, 82% of participants agreed that their organizations consistently strive to enhance their strategy implementation processes. In contrast, 14% showed moderate agreement, while 4% disagreed. Managers also affirmed that their organizations are committed to on-going improvement in strategy execution. The high mean score of 4.2 further indicates that a significant majority of respondents support this view. Consequently, it can be concluded that organizations are dedicated to continually enhancing their strategy implementation efforts.

The data indicated that 63.8% of respondents believe their organizations are strongly committed to on-going employee development programs, while 25.7% expressed moderate agreement and 10.9% disagreed. Although managers showed some uncertainty about the effectiveness of these programs, the overall mean score of 3.75 suggests a generally high level of agreement on the matter. Additionally, the data reflects a majority consensus on the organizations' commitment to providing necessary resources. Therefore, it can be concluded that regional public sector organizations are dedicated to implementing continuous employee development programs and are making efforts to allocate the required resources.

Regarding employees' ability to implement strategy, the data indicate that 75.5% of respondents felt that employees were sufficiently capable, while 18.6% moderately agreed, and 6% disagreed. The mean score of 3.90 reflects a high level of confidence among the majority in employees' capacities. However, the opinions of those who moderately agreed and disagreed should not be overlooked. Therefore, taking into account the concerns of these respondents and the researcher's observations, it can be concluded that while many employees are skilled at implementing strategy, there are also some who lack the necessary knowledge and skills.

Participants were also asked to assess the effectiveness of strategic planning implementation and its success in achieving intended goals. Accordingly, 69.4% of respondents felt that the implementation was successful, while 23.7% moderately agreed and 6.8% disagreed. Managers also noted gaps in both the implementation process and the attainment of objectives, which were corroborated by document reviews. Despite this, the mean score of 3.83 indicates a high level of overall agreement among respondents. Thus, while there is consensus on the effectiveness of the strategic plan, it is clear that there are areas for improvement in the implementation process to fully meet objectives set.

Table 9: Responses Related to Strategy Implementation

Declarative Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
The organization's strategy has been effectively communicated to all concerned	98 (28.0%)	153 (43.7%)	80 (22.9%)	11 (3.1%)	8 (2.3%)	3.92
The role of each work unit and individuals in ensuring achievement of the strategic plan is communicated well	114 (32.6%)	160 (45.7%)	61 (17.4%	8 (2.3%)	7 (2.0%)	4.05
Customer focus approach is the concern of my organization in the implementation of strategic plan	123 (35.1%)	161 (46.0%	55 (15,7%	4 (1.1%)	7 (2.0%)	4.11
My organization always strives to deliver its best and improve its strategy implementation from time to time	158 (45.1%)	129 (36.9%)	49 (14.0%)	3 (0.9%	11 (3.1%)	4.20
There is strong commitment in my organization to arrange continuous employee development programs to enhance employees capacity	86 (24.6%)	136 (38.9%)	90 (25.7%)	30 (8.6%	8 (2.3%)	3.75
There is strong commitment in my organization to fulfil required resources that help the smooth implementation of stragegic plan	73 (20.9%)	150 (42.9%)	106 (30.3%)	11 (3.1%)	10 (2.9%)	3.76
I believe that the workforce in my organization is capable enough to implement strategic plan	80 (22.9%	184 (52.6%	65 (18.6%)	14 (4.0%)	7 (2.0%)	3.90
I believe that the implementation of strategic plan was going well and achieved its intended objectives	76 (21.7%	167 (47.7%)	83 (23.7%)	20 (5.7%)	4 (1.1%	3.83

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.6 Assessment Related to Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in managing strategies within organizations. It is essential for organizations to prioritize the development of robust monitoring and evaluation

systems. These systems help assess the progress of strategy implementation and determine if the intended goals are being met. They also provide guidance for taking corrective actions when discrepancies arise. To evaluate the monitoring and evaluation status in the public sector at the regional level, a set of questions was posed to respondents.

Respondents were asked if their organizations employ effective tools for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of their strategic plans. According to the results indicated in Table 10, 68% of respondents agreed that their organizations utilize appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools, while 22.9% moderately agreed, and 16.8% disagreed. Additionally, managers expressed discomfort regarding the current monitoring and evaluation practices.

Some respondents also voiced criticism regarding their organization's monitoring and evaluation system in response to open-ended questions in the questionnaire. They pointed out that evaluations were often conducted in meetings with employees lacking solid and precise evidence on the implementation status. Additionally, they mentioned that monitoring and evaluation activities were primarily focused on reporting rather than effectively overseeing strategy implementation, which is essential for identifying and rectifying any deviations. While a mean score of 3.85 indicates a general consensus among respondents, the expressed concerns highlight significant issues that need to be addressed concerning the tools used for monitoring and evaluating strategy implementation. Ultimately, despite on-going efforts to improve these tools, there remain substantial gaps that must be filled to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation practices.

In terms of the responsible body's ability to monitor and evaluate strategy implementation, the data gathered show that 76.8% of respondents expressed confidence in their capability, while 17.1% showed moderate concern. Only 6% disagreed. The mean score of 3.95 reflects overall agreement among respondents regarding their capacity. However, some managers and participants who responded to the open-ended questions raised concerns about gaps in the employees' abilities to carry out these tasks. The researcher noted that these gaps, particularly in regard to the development of effective evaluation tools and measurement standards, indicate a deficiency in capacity. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a need for improvement in designing proper evaluation tools and establishing acceptable measurement and evaluation procedures.

The other aspect assessed was the commitment of managers to utilize evaluation reports for revising and formulating new strategies. The results showed that 70.2% of respondents agreed that managers demonstrated this commitment, while 20.9% somewhat agreed and 8.9% disagreed. With a mean score of 3.96 (indicating high agreement), it can be concluded that most respondents recognized managers' willingness to re-evaluate strategies, although there remain gaps in producing high-quality monitoring and evaluation reports.

Table 10: Responses Related to Monitoring and Evaluation

Declarative Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
My organization uses proper tools for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of strategic plan	77 (22.0%)	161 (46.0%)	80 (22.9%)	18 (15.1%)	6 (1.7%)	3.85
The measurement standards set to evaluate the strategic plan implementation were appropriate in line with expected outcomes	77 (22.0%)	161 (46.0%)	88 (25.1%)	20 (5.7%	4 (1.1%)	3.82
The organization follows appropriate evaluation procedures to clearly assess the status of the strategic implementation so that to take corrective measures in case of deviations	72 (20.6%)	165 (47.1%)	93 (26.6%)	13 (3.7%)	7 (2.0%)	3.81
The responsible body in the organization is capable enough to monitor and evaluate the implementation of strategic plan	90 (25.7%)	179 (51.1%)	60 (17.1%)	16 (4.6%)	5 (1.4%)	3.95
There is commitment on the part of management of the organization to use evaluation report as an input for revision of strategies and new strategy formulation	130 (37.1%)	116 (33.1%)	73 (20.9%)	21 (6.0%)	10 (2.9%)	3.96
I am confident enough in the way the implementation of strategic plan is monitored and evaluated in my organization	109 (31.1%)	136 (38.9%)	80 (22.9%)	17 (4.9%)	8 (2.3%)	3.92

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.7 Assessment Related to Challenges in the Practice of Strategy Management

Challenges are a natural part of any journey, especially for those that demand extra effort. Organizations often encounter difficulties during strategy implementation. Respondents were asked to share their level of agreement regarding several potential challenges.

As indicated in Table 11, 31.7% of respondents believed their organization's structure impedes strategy implementation, while 22.9% moderately agreed and 45.4% disagreed, indicating that nearly half of the respondents do not see it as an issue. The mean score of 2.8 suggests a moderate level of agreement regarding the impact of organizational structure on strategy implementation. Additionally, managers did not view the structure as a significant challenge; instead, they raised concerns about the capacity and experience of individuals responsible for strategic tasks. Furthermore, document reviews did not identify any significant structural issues affecting strategy implementation. Consequently, organizational structure is generally not regarded as a challenge in the strategy implementation process.

The assessment also highlighted that poor communication systems could hinder the effective implementation of strategies. The data indicated that 26.6% of respondents acknowledged poor communication as a challenge, while 20.6% moderately agreed, and the majority, 52.9%, disagreed. With a mean score of 2.94 (indicating moderate agreement), responses varied regarding whether communication issues were seen as obstacles to strategy execution. Managers noted significant gaps in regular and consistent communication both within and between departments, which could impede employees' understanding of the overall strategy. Thus, it can be concluded that improvements are needed in how issues are communicated to employees, as these deficiencies could adversely impact strategy implementation.

The survey revealed varying opinions on the challenges posed by inadequate financial and material resources in strategy implementation. Specifically, 36% of respondents identified these constraints as a significant challenge, while 24% expressed moderate agreement, and 40% disagreed. The mean score of 2.57 indicates a low level of consensus among respondents regarding the severity of this issue. However, managers and some respondents emphasized that resource limitations significantly hindered the smooth implementation of strategies. The researcher observed similar sentiments. Consequently, it can be concluded that despite efforts to allocate necessary resources, constraints still adversely affect the implementation of strategies.

A key challenge identified by respondents was the lack of adequate knowledge and skills. Specifically, 25.2% agreed that this deficiency hindered the effective execution of strategy, while 28.6% expressed moderate agreement and 46.3% disagreed. The overall mean score of 2.71 indicates a moderate consensus, suggesting no definitive agreement on whether this was a significant challenge. Managers acknowledged existing gaps in knowledge and skills that impede strategic implementation and some respondents reinforced this perspective in their comments. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are indeed gaps in necessary knowledge and skills that need to be addressed for successful strategy execution.

Table 11: Responses Related to Challenges in Strategy Management Practice

Declarative Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
The structure of the organization is not appropriate (in terms of coordination and span of control) for smooth implementation of strategic plan	44 (12.6%)	67 (19.1%)	80 (22.9%)	92 (26.3%)	67 (19.1%)	2.80
There is poor communication system in the organization to aware all concerned about issues related to strategic plan	27 (7.7%)	66 (18.9)%	72 (20.6%)	98 (28.0%)	87 (24.9%)	2.57
Inadequacy of financial and material resources hinders the smooth implementation of strategic plan	52 (14.9%)	74 (21.1%)	84 (24.0%)	80 (22.9%)	60 (17.1%)	2.94
There is Lack of appropriate knowledge and skill to effectively implement strategic plan	30 (8.6%)	58 (16.6%)	100 (28.6%)	105 (30.0%)	57 (16.3%)	2.71
There is employees turnover that exposed organization to less experienced employees to implement strategic plan	56 (16%)	45 (12.9%)	92 (26.3%)	86 (24.6%)	71 (20.3%)	2.80
The poor reward system in the organization didn't initiate employees to implement strategic plan with full commitment	73 (20.9%)	67 (19.1%)	71 (20.3%)	93 (26.6%)	46 (13.1%)	3.08
There is less commitment on the part of management body to implement strategic plan	31 (8.9%)	46 (13.1%)	72 (20.6%)	94 (26.9%)	106 (30.3%)	2.43

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data indicated that employee turnover had a moderate mean value of 2.8, while the poor reward system had a mean value of 3.08, also categorized as moderate. In contrast, the commitment level of managers has a low mean score of 2.43. These results reflect differing levels of agreement among respondents. Additionally, interviews with managers highlighted employee turnover and the ineffective reward system as significant challenges. Consequently, it can be concluded that employee turnover, an inadequate reward system, and a lack of managerial commitment are obstacles to effectively implementing strategies in the public sector.

5. Conclusion

The study highlighted critical areas for improvement in the strategy formulation and implementation processes within regional level public sectors. While there is recognition of the importance of both internal and external assessments, the insufficient focus on external analysis especially in adapting to the unique contexts of the sectors suggests a need for more comprehensive environmental scanning.

Additionally, while mission and vision statements exist, they require refinement to align with best practices, ensuring they effectively guide organizational direction. Although goals and objectives are generally achievable, significant deficiencies in employee development and resource allocation impede the effective execution of strategies. The presence of capable staff that still lack essential skills further complicates this challenge.

The study also pointed out the shortcomings in the evaluation and monitoring systems, which are critical for assessing progress and making necessary adjustments. The persistence of resource constraints, coupled with ineffective reward systems and high employee turnover rates, underscores systemic issues that must be tackled to foster a more supportive environment for strategy implementation.

Overall, addressing these gaps particularly in stakeholder engagement, skill development, and resource management will be essential for strengthening strategic outcomes in the public sector. By focusing on these areas, public sectors can enhance their capacity for effective strategy formulation and implementation, ultimately leading to improved service delivery and organizational performance.

6. Recommendations

Finally, the study presents several recommendations for public sectors to enhance strategic management practices. Key suggestions include:

- Public sectors should develop a systematic approach to environmental scanning that prioritizes external factors relevant to their specific nature.
- Public sectors should create mechanisms to increase stakeholder involvement in the strategy formulation process that encourage participation and gather diverse perspectives.

- Public sectors should identify specific skill deficiencies through assessments and provide targeted training opportunities, mentoring programs, and leadership development initiatives to enhance employees' capabilities.
- Public sectors should prioritize strategic investments in areas that directly impact strategy execution and ensure sufficient financial and human resources are directed toward critical initiatives.
- Public sectors in collaboration with concerned bodies should reconsider their reward and recognition systems and implement performance-based incentives, professional growth opportunities, and a positive work environment to encourage staff retention and commitment to organizational goals.
- Public sectors should establish dependable monitoring and evaluation system and set clear metrics for assessing strategy progress.

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