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## An Analysis of the Strategic Planning Practices of Public Institutions in Tanzania

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### **Abstract:**

*This study aimed to analyze the implementation of strategic planning practices in public institutions in Tanzania. The finding of the study is expected to improve the development and implementation of strategic planning in public institutions in Tanzania. The analysis of strategic planning is crucial for public institutions as it will enable them to prioritize resources and align their activities with their goals. The study used a qualitative approach and conducted interviews with 14 senior officials from various public institutions in Tanzania sampled purposively.*

*The study findings inform that despite the recognition of the significance of strategic planning in public institutions, there are several challenges that hinder its successful implementation. The challenges include fragmented planning systems, inadequate coordination and strategic thinking, and insufficient environmental scanning techniques. To address the challenges, the study suggests measures to improve the situation, such as establishing a unique planning system, enhancing understanding of strategic management, promoting strategic thinking, as well as setting measurable and realistic goals.*

**Keywords:** Strategic planning, public institutions, promoting strategic thinking

### **1. Introduction and Background**

According to Leslie (2008), strategic planning can be defined as the fusion of strategy and planning, with the purpose of enabling organizations to effectively anticipate and respond to rapidly changing environments. Similarly, Johnson and Scholes (2002) characterize strategic planning as a sophisticated decision-making mechanism that steers proactive decision-making within pre-established operations rather than a mere routine task. Moreover, Smith (1990) highlights that strategic planning serves as a guiding instrument, delineating objectives and evaluating both internal and external conditions to develop, implement, assess progress, and make essential adjustments to stay on course. Additionally, Robson (1994) emphasizes that a strategic plan should establish a company's long-term goals, identify the optimal approach to achieve those goals and mobilize the necessary resources to execute the plan effectively.

Gouillart (1995) adds that strategic planning is a systematic process of envisioning a desired future, defining goals or objectives, and determining a sequence of steps to achieve them. This vision of the future state of the organization provides direction and energy to begin the journey. Strategic planning provides a framework for managers and others in the organization to assess strategic goals and discuss actions that need to be taken within a reasonable timeframe. It helps organizational leaders to unify the energy of the organization behind a shared vision and a shared belief that the vision can be fulfilled. Moreover, strategic planning helps organizations develop a better understanding of their operating environment, as well as guide resource acquisition and allocation (Gouillart, 1995).

Despite the significance of strategic planning for institutions to achieve their ambitions, the implementation of strategic plans in public institutions has been a subject of concern. The reasons for the subpar implementation of strategic plans vary across institutions. In a study conducted by Omuse et al. (2018) focusing on public institutions of higher learning, several factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans were identified. The research revealed that leadership style plays a significant role in influencing the successful execution of strategic plans in public universities. Additionally, factors such as communication, resource allocation, technology, and innovation were recognized as crucial determinants. The authors recommend that the top management of Kenyan universities should enhance their leadership styles to promote effective strategic plan implementation. They also suggest the establishment of clear communication channels among all levels of management in public universities, along with the provision of adequate financial and non-financial resources by national and county governments to support the implementation of strategic plans.

Against this backdrop, the current study seeks to examine the implementation of strategic planning in public institutions within Tanzania. Ugboro et al. (2011) have highlighted that despite recognizing the importance of strategic plans in improving efficiency and service delivery, many public institutions in Tanzania encounter challenges in effectively executing them. This lack of effective strategic planning practices hampers their ability to achieve objectives and contribute to economic development (Ugboro et al., 2011). Consequently, studying the strategic planning practices of public institutions in Tanzania holds significant value for several reasons.

- Firstly, strategic planning serves as a vital tool for enhancing the efficiency and service delivery of public institutions, thereby fostering overall development within the country.
- Secondly, while strategic planning has been widely embraced in developed nations, its implementation and success in developing countries like Tanzania remain limited (Salum, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to analyze and identify the challenges faced by public institutions in Tanzania, with the intention of improving their strategic planning practices.
- Thirdly, despite the increasing adoption of strategic planning by public organizations, many have struggled to effectively implement it (Salum, 2017). Consequently, there is a pressing need for investigation to identify and bridge existing knowledge gaps while also recommending improvements in strategic planning practices to enable public institutions to achieve their goals and promote sustainable development. The study endeavors to shed light on the challenges encountered by these organizations and develop recommendations that enhance service delivery and efficiency in the public sector.

Overall, the study's findings will have significant implications for policymakers, public administrators, and researchers interested in enhancing the performance of public institutions in Tanzania and similar contexts. The primary focus of the present study is to address questions pertaining to the effectiveness of strategic management practices in public organizations in Tanzania, identify the obstacles impeding their successful implementation in the public sector, and propose measures to enhance the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies in Tanzanian public institutions.

## 2. Literature Review

The chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the strategic planning practices of public institutions in Tanzania. It aims to clarify and define key terms related to the concept of strategic planning and to review both theoretical and empirical literature on the topic. The chapter provides a foundation for the research by analyzing the current state of knowledge on strategic planning practices in public institutions.

### 2.1. Definition of Key Concepts

Strategy, Strategic Planning, and Public Institutions are the most common concepts in this study. They are defined as follows.

#### 2.1.1. Strategy

According to Chandler (1962), the strategy involves identifying the fundamental vision and objectives of an organization, implementing a sequence of activities, and allocating resources to achieve the vision. Andrews (1980) defines strategy as the outline of objectives, goals, key guidelines, and tactics aimed at achieving the goals specified in ways that define the organization's business and type of firm.

#### 2.1.2. Strategic Planning

Johnson and Scholes (2002) assert that strategic planning is a sophisticated modern decision-making tool. It serves as a guiding framework for proactive decision-making on pre-planned operations and the means to achieve them and is not just another routine task (Smith, 1990)

#### 2.1.3. Public Sector Institutions

A public institution refers to an entity that is under the responsibility of a governmental unit or is subject to administrative control by a governmental unit. These institutions encompass upstream core ministries and central agencies, downstream bodies such as sector ministries, regulators, and state-owned enterprises, as well as non-executive state institutions (World Bank, 2012)

### 2.2. Theories of Strategic Planning

Various theories have been proposed to describe the significance of strategic planning, including the Resource-Based Theory and the Power Theory. How the said theories are related to the present study has been discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

#### 2.3. Resource-Based Theory

The Resource-Based Theory emphasizes the importance of resources in an organization and how they are managed (Walker (2013). The theory assumes that a firm's resources are crucial in enhancing its performance, and the effective implementation of a strategic plan is dependent on the availability of required resources. Organizations are viewed as bundles of physical, human, and administrative capabilities that can create sustained competitive advantage, provided they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Kinemo (2020). Organizations must develop ways to exploit these resources, which are also being sought by competitors in the same environment.

Moreover, according to Dlamini et al. (2020), the theory focuses on all the assets, capabilities, organizational processes, information, knowledge, and other capacities controlled by a firm that enable it to develop and implement effective strategies. Resources are viewed as the basis of power for organizations, and the power of an organization over other organizations depends on how the inferior firm depends on the superior firm's resources. Thus, firms with rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable qualities have a competitive advantage over other organizations.

It is also contended that an organization creates a competitive advantage only when its strategy is not executed by other competitors in the same industry and other firms cannot easily replicate the benefits of that strategy. Therefore, the resources of the firm are the basis for sustainable competitive advantage. A firm's resources must have the capacity to exploit opportunities and reduce threats within the environment while offering something rare that cannot be easily imitated or substituted by rivals within an industry.

#### 2.4. Power Theory

The theory of Power explains how strategic change and strategy-making reveal insights into the exercise of power by managers to implement strategic actions (Hardy, 1996). Managers, according to Power Theory, create strategies using their influential power to control middle-level managers and ensure alignment during strategic plan execution (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009). Top management, at the execution level, must provide resources and leadership throughout the process (Burney, 1991). Effective implementation of the strategic plan requires monitoring the implementation process, providing clear direction, and top management support to align the plan with strategic business goals. This includes allocating necessary resources, providing reasonable time to accomplish tasks, and tying management bonuses to the success of projects (Al-Mashari et al., 2003). Furthermore, managers can enhance commitment with the involvement and integration of workers at a lower level, creating a sense of ownership that increases commitment to the new strategy (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). Effective leadership is crucial for the successful execution of strategies, and a well-crafted strategy with a strong and effective pool of skills delivered from human resources positively impacts execution, while poor leadership is considered one of the key obstacles to the execution of strategies in an organization (Cater & Pucko, 2010). Poor communication within an organization negatively affects a firm's ability to execute and refine its strategy (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). Janis and Paul (2005) found that CEOs focus on reputation and branding by prioritizing internal communications, highlighting the link between corporate communication and the execution of strategy.

#### 2.5. Empirical Studies

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of collective effort and top management support in implementing strategic plans in organizations. According to Thompson et al. (2007), an excellent strategy is crucial for managerial excellence and organizational success. Mintzberg (2004) affirmed that the successful execution of strategic plans depends on a learning and development environment that emphasizes openness, collaboration, trust, equity, risk-taking, and continuous improvement. Poister (2010) argued that transitioning from strategic planning to a more holistic strategic management process is necessary to make the strategy more meaningful in the future. This involves managing an agency's overall strategic agenda on an ongoing basis and ensuring the effective implementation of strategies.

To complement this shift, the performance movement needs to move from a focus on measurement to a more comprehensive performance management process that proactively achieves strategic goals and objectives. Furthermore, agencies need to closely link their strategic management and ongoing performance management processes in a reciprocating relationship, with strategizing focused on defining and strengthening overall performance, while performance monitoring helps inform strategy along the way.

Ugboro et al. (2011) studied the effectiveness of strategic planning as a tool of strategic management in public transit agencies. The authors found that effective strategic planning requires the active involvement of top managers in defining the organization's strategic direction and creating an environment that recognizes strategic planning as a tool of strategic management. Additionally, it requires good working relationships between the strategic planning staff, unit or division managers, and the top management team, strategic planning staff located close to top management, integration of unit or division plans into an organization-wide strategic plan, and a flexible planning process responsive to environmental changes and challenges.

In their research, Pina et al. (2011) examined the factors affecting the implementation of strategic management and its impact on the results of 12 local governments across Australia, Spain, Sweden, and the USA. The study identified that introducing strategic management follows different implementation strategies and that personnel play a crucial role in the implementation process. Other factors affecting the implementation process were the priority given by the local government to the initiative, the performance of a previous study about the organization, and the structure of the strategic management system. Additionally, the study emphasized the significance of personnel behavior during the implementation process.

Johnsen (2015) explored the manifestation of strategic management thinking in practice in the public sector, using Mintzberg's framework of ten strategic management schools of thought to map strategic management thinking. Based on a sample of 35 strategic management processes, observation of an agency's strategy reformulation process, and interviews with public sector managers in Norway, the analysis indicates that strategic planning is heavily used in the public sector despite tendencies to downplay formal, mechanistic planning in contemporary strategic management theory. Favoreu (2016) studied the strategy formulation processes in the public sector and identified the strategic approach that best suits this sector. The research proposed a theoretical analysis grid based on the three main approaches to strategy in the public sector and conducted an exploratory case study. The study found that a complex strategic process that combines and alternates rational, collaborative, and political decision-making logic, as well as a planned and incremental development, is crucial for the strategic control of public organizations. The research highlighted the importance of combining different logic and approaches to the strategic management of public organizations, emphasizing the need for public managers to build skills in developing and managing inter-organizational networks and interpersonal relationships to mobilize and channel collective intelligence towards the definition and implementation of public projects and policies.

In 2010, Onder conducted an analysis of the reasons behind the differences in the adoption of reinventing government reforms as strategic management applications in the public sector. The study highlighted critical application problems in the public sector, including shared power within different levels of government, political environment muddying definitions of performance, and public managers having less autonomy and control. The author emphasized the need for political leaders and public managers to have more commitment, get more serious about long-term strategies, and be more strategic in public sector applications. The study also showed that copying normative strategic management from the book without considering critical issues in the public sector can lead to failure.

In 2013, Walker integrated research evidence that applied Miles and Snow's strategic management framework to the performance of public agencies. The study provided six key lessons for the practice of strategic management in public organizations. It found strong evidence for the association between prospecting and defending and performance and for relationships between strategy types and processes and structures. The study suggested that managers must pay attention to the connections between outlined contingencies to generate the best results using the adopted strategy.

In 2021, Irfan assessed the role of project planning and the project manager's competency in project success using a sample of 260 project engineers from public sector organizations. The findings showed that planning and competency have a significant positive impact on the success of public sector projects. The paper confirmed the positive impact of project managers' competencies on project success and proposed that public sector organizations should focus on the knowledge, experience, technological skills, project management awareness, and interpersonal skills of the project manager to increase the likelihood of project success.

In 2017, Ahmed and Anantatmula investigated the influence of a project manager's leadership competence on project performance based on 289 project managers working on public sector projects in Pakistan. The study found that all five leadership competencies of a project manager were significantly related to the achievement of project performance in terms of schedule, cost, and quality, as well as stakeholder satisfaction. The study suggested that these competencies can help engineering and project managers to accomplish success in projects.

Also, in 2017, Salum investigated the influence of top management and organization resources on the implementation of strategic plans in the public sector using five selected executive agencies in Tanzania. The study found that top management influences the implementation of strategic plans, and organizational resources such as human and financial resources were very important in the implementation process of strategic plans. The study suggested that resources such as finance and skilled human resources should be given priority by top management to create value and improve the delivery of quality service in the public sector.

In 2020, Kinemo studied the effectiveness of implementing the strategic plan in the Tanzanian public sector using a case study design and mixed research approaches. The findings revealed that there was poor involvement of staff in the formulation of the strategic plan, inadequate financial ability, inadequate number of staff, lack of expertise in some fields, lack of autonomy in revenue collection and recruitment of staff, uncondusive working environment, and budgetary deficit in the implementation of the strategic plan. The study suggested that more staff should be involved in the planning process, especially at the stage of identifying the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the municipality, to enhance the effective implementation of the strategic plan.

In 2015, Busaka and Kwasira conducted a study on the challenges that affect strategy implementation in public sector organizations in Kenya. The study revealed that adequate financing, competent personnel, effective internal control systems, and enhanced internal communication are essential for effective strategy implementation in such organizations. Information technology was also found to be crucial in providing valuable assistance in implementing strategies.

Mukokho's 2010 study on the University of Nairobi showed that strategic planning affects the performance of public institutions. The study identified several challenges faced by the university in implementing strategic planning, including limited financial resources, overstretched academic facilities, poaching of staff, and increased competition from other universities. The study recommended a high degree of commitment to goals, staff training, workshops on strategic planning, increased financing through income-generating projects, decentralization of operations, and increased stakeholder participation and consultation.

In 2020, Dlamini et al. examined the challenges facing the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services (DTPS) in South Africa and their impact on organizational performance. The study identified challenges such as a lack of strong organizational culture, poor project management skills, corruption, and poor alignment of objectives and performance. The study recommended constant evaluation of public officials, promotion of new public management principles, and incorporation of new ideas and technology to improve decision-making.

In 2019, Daniel investigated the factors affecting the effective implementation of strategic plans by Tanzania's local government authorities. The study found that organizational leadership, culture, and resource allocation significantly influence strategic plan implementation. The availability of adequate funds, rewards and incentives, timely information flow, modern technology, and training also motivate employees to enhance their performance towards achieving strategic objectives.

## 2.6. Literature Synthesis

The importance of collective effort and top management support in implementing strategic plans in organizations has been highlighted by several scholars. An excellent strategy is crucial for managerial excellence and organizational success. Successful execution of strategic plans depends on a learning and development environment that emphasizes openness, collaboration, trust, equity, risk-taking, and continuous improvement. Transitioning from strategic planning to a more holistic strategic management process is necessary to make the strategy more meaningful in the future. Effective strategic planning requires the active involvement of top managers in defining the organization's strategic direction and

creating an environment that recognizes strategic planning as a tool of strategic management. The introduction of strategic management follows different implementation strategies, and personnel play a crucial role in the implementation process. The manifestation of strategic management thinking in practice in the public sector is heavily based on strategic planning, despite tendencies to downplay formal, mechanistic planning in contemporary strategic management theory. A complex strategic process that combines and alternates rational, collaborative, and political decision-making logic, as well as a planned and incremental development, is crucial for the strategic control of public organizations. Political leaders and public managers need to have more commitment, get more serious about long-term strategies, and be more strategic in public sector applications. Planning and competency have a significant positive impact on the success of public sector projects. Project managers' leadership competencies significantly impact project performance in terms of schedule, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction. Top management influences the implementation of strategic plans, and organization resources such as the availability of funds, personnel, and infrastructure are essential factors in the implementation process.

### 2.7. Gap in Literature

Based on the literature review presented, there are several gaps that researchers could explore further. These gaps include:

- The need for a more comprehensive performance management process that proactively achieves strategic goals and objectives and how agencies can closely link their strategic management and ongoing performance management processes in a reciprocating relationship
- The significance of personnel behavior during the implementation of strategic management and how this can affect the success of the implementation process
- The need to explore strategic management thinking in practice in the public sector and how it differs from contemporary strategic management theory
- The role of project planning and the project manager's competency in project success in public sector organizations and how these factors can be optimized to increase the likelihood of project success
- The influence of a project manager's leadership competence on project performance in the public sector and how these competencies can help engineering and project managers accomplish success in projects

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methods, procedures, and techniques utilized in the present study are elucidated. The chapter commences by expounding on the methodological applications, or what Guba (1981) designates as a set of regulations in scientific inquiry. Additionally, the chapter delves into philosophical assumptions, research paradigms, and architecture, along with data collection methods. The research methodology is aligned with the primary research question, which seeks to discern the perspectives and comprehension of strategic planning among public institutions in Tanzania.

### 3.2. Research Method

The current study is qualitative in nature as it seeks to explore the perceptions and knowledge of strategic planning in public institutions in Tanzania. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate. This is because the investigation of the current state of strategic planning involves personal interactions and perceptions, and a qualitative approach can provide an accurate depiction of the processes and views characterizing the status of strategic planning in these institutions. A phenomenological approach can be used to inform data collection by conducting interviews with individuals who have experience with the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were used as a tool for data collection in this study. The study utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data on the knowledge and understanding of strategic planning among public institutions in Tanzania. The technique allowed the researcher to obtain rich and in-depth details of the participants' experiences, opinions, and expectations regarding the relevant phenomenon (Ary et al., 2010). During the interviews, the participants, who were mostly senior officials, shared their insights into the process of strategic planning in public institutions and their general understanding of strategic planning. The use of semi-structured interviews facilitated a collaborative discussion between the interviewer and the informant, resulting in the collection of high-quality data (Patton, 2002).

A total of 14 participants, including Managing Directors, Directors of Finance, Directors of Planning and Research, Members of the Board, and Stakeholders, were sampled purposively and through snowball sampling techniques. This particular demographic representation was appropriate because these individuals were responsible for strategic planning within their organizations and had extensive knowledge and expertise regarding the subject matter. Purposive sampling was used to select organizations and stakeholders who participated in the study. The target group included Managing Directors, Directors of Finance, Directors of Planning and Research, Members of the Board, and Stakeholders, who were chosen based on their professional status, knowledge, and experience in strategic planning, while snowball sampling was used to select potential participants who were difficult to locate or access.

According to Punch (2000), data analysis methods should be disciplined, systematic, and transparent. Researchers must reduce and organize data, identify important trends, and define significance. The process is iterative and ongoing, with data analysis often conducted in tandem with data collection. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) support this view, emphasizing that data analysis is a dynamic and systematic process of uncovering meaning.

Data analysis in this study was done thematically. Miles and Huberman's (1994) stage analysis, which involves the reduction of data, the display of data, and the drawing and checking of conclusions, were carried out concurrently in this study. Initial conclusions were drawn during data collection and noted in field notes. The coding process allowed for reflection on field research activities and participant interactions. Related voices and quotations were grouped into themes and sub-themes, streamlining the presentation of chapter four.

To ensure the rigorosity of the data collected, analyzing a systematic approach is essential for conducting a thorough investigation, encompassing design, data collection, review, interpretation, and reporting of findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research, Guba (1981) proposes four elements (credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability), with the reliability and validity of the data being established by ensuring data credibility. In this study, I aimed to produce credible, reliable, transferable, verifiable, and genuine results (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). By incorporating member-checking, I aimed to ensure verifiable results (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Finally, the researcher can use peer debriefing to improve the accuracy of the account. The researcher employed member-checking, which played a crucial role in analyzing results and interpretations, adding reliability to the analysis (Merriam, 2009). Member checking and methodological triangulation were employed to ensure the quality of the study and enhance the credibility, precision, validity, and transferability of the sample (Yin, 2017). Participant checks were employed to guarantee the reliability and integrity of the work, as they are seen to be effective in achieving reliability and reputation (Bureau & Anderson, 2014). The participants' regular reviews also provided opportunities to collect genuine information, ensuring the collected data were correct and authentic (Yin, 2017). The researcher ensured that the participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and the use of the gathered data. The participants' permission was also acknowledged before recording the conversations to protect their privacy (Britten, 1995)

In addition, the study adhered to a strict set of ethical guidelines, ensuring the data was not manipulated to fit any particular requirements. The researcher upheld the principles of the data security act and prioritized honesty, trust, and the prevention of harm to participants. A letter of consent was obtained from each participant, and their confidentiality was maintained by coding their names and location. Participants of all ages were informed about the nature, purpose, and benefits of the study prior to participation and were given the option to withdraw from the research at any time. The researcher also made it clear to the participants that the research findings would be used for academic purposes only and not for any other purpose. The study was conducted with utmost honesty and trust from start to finish.

#### 4. Limitation of the Study

- Sample size: The study adopted a small sample size, which could limit the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of public institutions in Tanzania.
- Data collection method: The study may rely on self-reported data from participants, which could be biased or inaccurate.
- Cultural and contextual factors: The study may not fully account for cultural and contextual factors that influence strategic planning practices in Tanzania. For example, the study may not account for the influence of traditional hierarchies or power structures on decision-making processes within public institutions.
- Data analysis: The study did not use statistical methods to analyze the data collected, which could limit the accuracy and reliability of the findings.
- Bias: The study may be influenced by the biases of the researchers or participants. For example, the researchers may have preconceived notions about what strategic planning practices are effective, which could impact the way they interpret the data.
- Additionally, participants may have biases about their organization's practices, which could impact the accuracy of the data collected.

#### 5. Presentation of Findings

The objective of this study was to employ a qualitative approach to delve into the strategic planning practices of public institutions in Tanzania. The primary aim of this research is to identify ways to enhance the ability of public institutions to effectively implement strategic planning. After a thorough analysis, the study emerged with themes that are presented in the subsequent sections.

##### 5.1. Views on the Current Practice of Strategic Planning in Public Institutions

A study finding has highlighted that the current approach to strategic planning in public institutions is encountering multiple difficulties. Despite recognizing strategic planning as a vital process for accomplishing organizational objectives, it is frequently perceived as a bureaucratic task that does not produce significant outcomes. The study finding informs that the key challenge with the current strategic planning practices is the disconnect between the planning process and the everyday operations of public institutions. It was noted from the findings that most public institutions entrusted consultants with strategic planning. In support of the above claim, one of the respondents upholds the existing approach to strategic planning in public institutions as follows:

*"We typically have consultants to design our strategy documents, and our role is to provide information only."*

To add on that, another respondent had this to say:

*"The management and board are responsible for this task. We are not extensively involved in the process."*

Based on the views presented by respondents, it seems that public institutions in Tanzania are relying heavily on external consultants to design their strategy documents, and the internal team's role is limited to providing information. The management and board are seen as the ones responsible for this task, and the internal team is not extensively involved in the process. This approach may have some benefits, such as bringing in outside expertise and insights and allowing the internal team to focus on other areas of their work (Favoreu et al., 2016). However, it also raises questions about how well the external consultants truly understand the organization's needs, goals, and context and how effectively they can communicate and collaborate with the internal team (Johnsen, 2015). While it can be useful to bring in consultants for certain tasks, such as strategy document design, it is important for organizations to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their own goals and needs and that they are actively involved in the process to ensure that the end result aligns with their vision and mission.

Other views show that public institutions use the traditional approach to strategic planning to prioritize short-term goals and outcomes over long-term visions and values, leading to a lack of coherence and alignment between an organization's mission, goals, and strategies. The findings show that many institutions involved in the study use this type of approach. To support the claim, three participants had this to say:

*"In our company, we have a documented strategic plan and it is reviewed annually, with specific targets and objectives in place."*

Another respondent added the following on the same:

*"It is a common tendency for our company to hold annual strategic planning sessions in October to review progress and make necessary adjustments based on market developments."*

To show how serious the approach is among public institutions, another respondent from the same company added the following:

*"My company conducts quarterly meetings to track progress against the strategic plan, providing updates to shareholders and stakeholders on the business's performance and alignment with the year's strategy and targets."*

The study findings, as presented, suggest that public institutions in Tanzania have a structured and comprehensive approach to strategic planning. With a documented strategic plan in place, institutions review and adjust their strategy annually, taking into account market developments and changes in their environment. Quarterly meetings are also held to track progress against the plan and provide updates to shareholders and stakeholders on the business's performance and alignment with the year's strategy and targets. This approach is evidence of public institutions' commitment to the traditional strategic planning process, which emphasizes short-term goals and outcomes. By setting specific targets and objectives and regularly reviewing progress against them, institutions ensure they are on track to achieve their strategic goals.

The findings suggest that public institutions in Tanzania have a well-structured strategic planning process that allows them to stay focused and aligned with their mission, goals, and values. However, it is important to recognize that using a traditional strategic planning approach that solely emphasizes short-term goals and outcomes may not be suitable for Public Institutions in Tanzania (Kinemo (2020). Such a focus on short-term goals may lead to a lack of long-term vision and alignment with the organization's mission and values (Omuse et al., 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for public institutions in Tanzania to strike a balance between short-term and long-term planning, depending on their context and goals (Önder (2010).

Additionally, it is essential to ensure that the strategic planning process is inclusive and involves stakeholders at all levels to increase ownership and commitment to the plan's implementation. By addressing these weaknesses, Public Institutions in Tanzania can improve their strategic planning process and increase the likelihood of achieving their goals and objectives effectively and efficiently.

## 5.2. Strategic Management Knowledge and Skills

Another theme that emerged from the analysis is strategic management knowledge and skills. The findings from the study show that strategic management knowledge and skills are critical for organizational success. Strategic management involves the development and implementation of strategies that enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives. The findings showed that strategic management knowledge and skills are very important. The data obtained from the respondents indicate that there is a lack of knowledge and skills regarding strategic planning. The findings further indicated that there was no formally defined mission statement. To substantiate this, one of the participants said the following:

*"About understanding the strategic plan, yes, I understand what strategic planning is and what the strategy documents are spoken about. It is the document that is always used as a mirror for the institution in the implementation of its goals, visions and mission."*

Another respondent commented as follows on the same:

*"For me, I rely much on experts to develop the documents. I will try to learn the skills in the future."*

Similarly, there is another respondent who commented as follows on the knowledge and skills of the strategic plan: 'MD values the process of strategic planning and understands the documents.'

Based on the statements and findings presented, it is clear that all the participants pertain to the concept of strategic planning in public institutions in Tanzania. The participants' responses indicate that they have a thorough understanding of the purpose of strategic planning and the documents that are associated with it. The findings further indicate that participants express a willingness to rely on experts in the field while also acknowledging the importance of developing their own skills in the future. It was further noted that other participants emphasized the significance of the

strategic planning process to the MD and their ability to comprehend the relevant documents. Taking together the findings underscore the importance of strategic planning in public institutions in Tanzania as well as the value of understanding the associated documents.

Based on the evidence produced in the findings, it is possible that there are individuals who do not fully understand the purpose of strategic planning or who do not value the associated documents, despite the importance of these elements in the planning process. While the findings suggest that there is a general understanding of the importance of strategic planning and associated documents in public institutions in Tanzania, it is important to note that not all individuals may fully understand or value these elements of the planning process (Dlamini et al., 2020). This could be due to a variety of factors, such as a lack of training or education on the topic or a lack of awareness about the benefits of strategic planning. It is also worth considering that even among those who do value and understand strategic planning, there may be different perspectives on the most effective approaches to planning and the role that associated documents play in the process (Daniel, 2019).

Some individuals may view these documents as essential for effective planning, while others may see them as overly bureaucratic or unnecessary. Overall, while the findings of this study provides some insight into the attitudes towards strategic planning and associated documents in public institutions in Tanzania, it is important to acknowledge that there may be a range of views and perspectives on the topic among different individuals and organizations.

### 5.3. Public Institutions Do Not Practice Strategic Planning

Public institutions that do not practice strategic planning are another theme that emerged from the study findings. The findings indicate that there are participants from public institutions who showed that they had never participated in the process of strategic planning, nor did they practice it. The findings put forward that even though a strategic plan is an important tool as it is used by institutions to establish objectives, allocate resources, and align their actions with their overall mission and vision, not all members of the institution understand it.

In one of the interviews with participants, one commented as follows:

*"Rather than getting involved, some individuals may rely on the Managing Director, assuming they possess a better understanding of the matter at hand as the head of the organization."*

Another participant had this to add:

*"There is a belief that having a strategic document is not essential to operating within a budget, as what matters most are the available resources."*

Lastly, on the same, another respondent said the following:

*"Once completed, the strategic document may be disregarded and forgotten, with no one in the organization being aware of its existence."*

The findings highlight potential shortcomings in the approach to strategic planning within public institutions in Tanzania.

- Firstly, the tendency for individuals to refer to the Managing Director may result in a lack of diverse perspectives and ideas being considered in the planning process, as suggested by Ahmed & Anantatmula (2017).
- Secondly, the belief that a strategic document is not necessary for budgeting overlooks the important role it plays in providing a roadmap for achieving long-term goals.
- Lastly, neglecting to disseminate and promote the strategic document may result in it being rendered ineffective, as it is not utilized by the organization's members.

In order to maximize the benefits of strategic planning, it is important for organizations to involve multiple stakeholders in the process, recognize the importance of a strategic document, and ensure it is communicated and implemented effectively.

One major weakness highlighted by the findings is the lack of effective communication and implementation of the strategic document. If the strategic plan is not well-disseminated and promoted within the organization, it may be overlooked or forgotten, rendering it ineffective. This weakness can lead to a lack of alignment in the organization's actions and goals, which can result in inefficiencies and missed opportunities for growth and development. To address this weakness, organizations should prioritize effective communication and promotion of the strategic plan, ensuring that all members are aware of its existence, understand its content, and are committed to its implementation.

## 6. Conclusion

The interest of the study was to gather the perceptions of participants regarding the planning practices of public institutions in Tanzania. The results indicate that there were different responses from respondents sharing their views on the planning practices of public institutions in Tanzania. The findings showed that the strategic planning practices of public institutions vary widely depending on the organization, its mission, and the context in which it operates. While some public institutions may not prioritize strategic planning, many do, recognizing its value in setting goals, aligning resources, and achieving objectives. Research has shown that public organizations that engage in strategic planning are more likely to achieve their goals and improve their performance. Furthermore, strategic planning can help public institutions anticipate and respond to changing circumstances, such as shifts in funding, political priorities, or public needs. By taking a proactive approach to planning, public institutions can better position themselves to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise.

Overall, the strategic planning practices of public institutions can have a significant impact on their success and effectiveness. While there may be room for improvement in some cases, it is clear that many public institutions recognize the value of strategic planning and are actively working to incorporate it into their operations.

## 7. Recommendation

Based on the importance of strategic planning in public institutions, the study recommends the following for improved strategic planning practices:

- Encourage leadership buy-in: Effective strategic planning requires strong leadership support and commitment. Public institutions should ensure that senior leaders understand the importance of strategic planning and actively participate in the planning process.
- Engage stakeholders: Public institutions should engage stakeholders, including employees, customers, partners, and community members, in the strategic planning process. This can help to ensure that the organization's goals and priorities are aligned with the needs and expectations of its stakeholders.
- Incorporate data and analysis: Public institutions should use data and analysis to inform their strategic planning decisions. This can include analyzing trends, benchmarking against other organizations, and using data to identify opportunities and risks.
- Monitor and evaluate progress: Public institutions should establish metrics and performance indicators to track progress towards their strategic goals. Regular monitoring and evaluation can help ensure that the organization stays on track and adjusts as needed.
- Foster a culture of innovation: Public institutions should foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. This can include encouraging experimentation, learning from failure, and investing in new technologies and processes.

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