# Determinants of Successful Strategic Plan Implementation: Lessons from the Church Commissioners for Kenya

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**Abstract**
The purpose of the study is to establish the determinants of successful strategic plan implementation using a case of The Church Commissioners for Kenya.The concept and practice of strategic planning has been adopted globally and across sectors because of its supposed influence to organizational performance. However, not all strategic plans get realized and therefore the study seeks to establish those factors that would promote successful implementation of the strategic plans.This study used case study design with the case organization being The Church Commissioners for Kenya. Primary data was gathered by the use of questionnaire instrument from a total of 69 members of Management for the case organization. Data was analyzed with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The findings were presented by the use of frequency tables, graphs and pie charts.The key results of the study indicate that leadership, organizational culture, technology and possession of the unique resources are key determinants of successful strategy implementation. Further results reveal that involvement of the stakeholders at the point of strategy formulation is fundamental for it promotes ownership of the strategy plan during implementation. The study concludes that successful strategy implementation requires a combination of different support factors which would ensure that the formulated strategy is successfully implemented.
**Keywords**; Organizational performance, strategy implementation, strategic plan

## Introduction
This study analyzed the factors which are momentous for successful implementation of strategic plans focusing on case of The Church Commissioners for Kenya. As the need for strategic plan rises, there has been the realization that strategic planning enables companies to be competitive and to be adoptive to the new dynamics in the market place. Organizations today are strategically positioning themselves to follow a particular strategic direction which would enable them realize the set goals and objectives. This realization is only possible if the organizations are willing to formulate and implement strategic plans which would enable them to move towards their desired future having considered the changing business environment. The success of any strategic plan is dependent on the ability to actualize the formulated strategy thus promoting the need to ensure that the formulated strategy is successfully implemented. Without successfully implementing the strategic plan that has been formulated, strategic planning would remain an exercise in futility.

## The Background of the study
Over time the concept and practice of strategic planning has been adopted globally and across sectors because of its supposed influence to organizational performance. Today, many organizations drawn from both the private and public sectors have made the practice of strategic planning a serious tool that can be employed to fast track their performances. Steiner (1999), acknowledged that the framework for formulating and implementing strategies is the formal strategic planning system. Porter (1985), on the other hand argued that despite the criticism leveled against strategic planning during the 1970s and 80s, it was still beneficial and it only needed to be upgraded and recasted. Greenley (1986), supported the fact that strategic planning has potential benefits and intrinsic values that eventually render improved firm performance hence the assumption that it is a vehicle that ensures improved organization performance. The existence of a business is dependent on its capacity to effectively function in uncontrolled and unstable environment in order to execute its strategic activities. The capability of an organization to foretell variations in the environment and react accordingly is largely depends on strategic planning (Uvah, 2005). Organizations however, are interested with the formulation of strategic plan instead of their implementation hence the supposition that a plan is not a plan without actual and quantifiable implementation (Douglas, 2003).

A myriad of literature has suggested many factors that would contribute to successful implementation of strategic planning including but not limited to organizational structure, organizational culture, appropriate

resources, leadership and technology and innovation.

## Problem statement

Strategic planning has been associated with a lot of gains for organizations and its people. However, studies and experience has shown that it's possible to have a good strategic plan document that does not see the light of the study at the point of implementation. Literature shows that the success rate of successful strategy implementation is only 25%. This research therefore undertook to seek to answer the question on those factors that promote successful strategy implementation. Development of a strategic plan is an expensive exercise for organizations and failure of the implementation for the same can be very costly. There are only a few research studies that have been conducted in Kenya on the determinants of successful strategic plan implementation for church owned organizations and this presents a contextual gap in literature which this study also seeks to fill.

## Research objective

The main objective of the study was to determine the effects of implementation of the strategic plan on organizational performance in the Church Commissioners for Kenya

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A strategic plan is a document used to communicate the organizational goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals and all of the other critical elements developed during the planning exercise (Strickland,2006). Strategic planning could also be said to be an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. It also extends to control mechanisms for guiding the implementation of the strategy. Strategic planning became prominent in corporations during the 1960s and it has remained an important aspect of strategic management. Strategic planning is a process which happens in cumulative stages which include; setting vision and mission, conducting situational analysis, setting corporate objectives, strategic analysis and choice, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. In order to establish the future destination of the organization, there is need to have the privy of where it stands, then determine the direction as well as how and how it will get there. The main role of executives therefore is to guarantee continued existence of their organizations.

## Strategic planning

Strategic planning can be defined as the process of using systematic criteria and rigorous investigation to formulate, implement and control strategy and formally document organizational expectations (Higgins & Vincze, 1993; Mintzberg, 1994; Pearce & Robinson, 1994). Successful strategy creation commences with a visualization of the total shape of the company as to where the organization stands at present and what all is needed to progress. The vision about the organization enables the management at the higher level to formulate the mission of the organization. One of the functions of a mission statement is to provide the organization its unique individuality, business weight, and course for progress that usually locates it separate from other correspondingly positioned companies (Pollanen, 2005).

According to Bourne *et al.* (2003), the business of any organization is defined by those needs, which the organization try's to satisfy the targeted customer and by the technologies and competencies it employs and the activities it executes. Excellent mission statements are highly exclusive to the organization for which they are developed. Technology, competencies, and activities are vital while defining a company's business because they indicate the boundaries on which the organization operates. Diversified companies have wide-ranging missions and business definitions than small business enterprises. The industrial challenge in formulating a strategic vision is to assume imaginatively about how to organize the company for the future.

## Organization performance

Organizational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs or goals and objectives. According to Richard *et al*. (2009), organizational performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes which includes; financial performance, profits, return on assets, return on investment, product market performance and shareholder return total shareholder return, economic value added. In recent years, many organizations have attempted to manage organizational performance using the balanced scorecard methodology where performance is tracked and measured in multiple dimensions such as; financial performance for example shareholder return, customer service, social responsibility for example corporate citizenship, community outreach and employee stewardship. Every organization is committed towards good performance of the firm and therefore the strategy of any organization should support organization performance.

**Relationship between strategic plan and organizational performance**
Strategic plan is a document which is used to communicate the organizations objectives, the actions required to achieve those objectives and all of the other critical elements developed during the planning activity (Strickland, 2006). Strategic planning essentials comprises of the vision statement, mission statement, strategies and activities for achieving the objectives, and the ordered implementation scheduled. If these essentials are successfully executed, they can shape and transform performance in an organization (Richard *et al*., 2009). Simmerson (2011), indicated that effective execution of strategic plan in the organization will enable the entire organization and the stakeholders to acquaint themselves with the undertaking of the organization.

The existence of a strong relationship between the strategic plan and the organization performance is demonstrated through the ability of the organization to identify the critical success factors (CSF) within the organization and work on them towards the advantage of the organization (Strickland, 2006). The organization will identify the strengths within the organization and commit their resources strategically towards improved performance and high competency in the market environment.

The organization needs to formulate strategies and actions for the achievement of the objectives. Objectives cannot be achieved without putting in place the needed strategies towards their realization and achievement both in the short run and in the future. Implementation of the formulated strategies ensures that the set organization objectives are met and thus contributing towards the performance of the organization (Barksdale & Lund, 2006).

The relationship between strategic plan and organization performance is evident with the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation. Strategic planning process needs frequent monitoring towards checking on the weaknesses experienced in the process of its implementation. Adequate changes are carried out after the monitoring and evaluation reports are given and therefore the strategic planning process improves the performance after being their successful evaluation (Barksdale & Lund, 2006).

**Factors affecting the implementation of the strategic plan**
**1. Organizational culture**
Dess, Lumpkin and Eisner (2008), define culture as a system of shared values and believes that shapes a company's people, organizational structures and control systems to produce behavioral norms. Corporate culture refers to the sum of the unwritten common values, norms, attitude, and business principles practices that members of the organization share in common (Heibert & Klatt, (2001). Culture is one of the most enigmatic facets and most important of an organization (Hofstede, 1980). Culture is largely invisible to the people inside them; they are rarely questioned, simply assumed. Appropriate assumptions cause the organization to thrive whilst inappropriate assumptions cause it to wither. Organizational culture is composed of several elements namely values, norms and artifacts (Jackson, 1993).

Values are believes in what is the best or good for the organization and what should or ought to happen, values are expressed implicitly in such things as treatment of employees and customers, integrity and ethics ,emphasis on quality service, competence, competitiveness and general goal (Miller & Dess, 1996). Norms are the unwritten rules of behavior that provide informal guidelines on how to behave they include things like how the seniors treat their junior, work ethics, hard work and approachability (Jackson,1993). Organizational culture is important as it represents the social glue that generates the we feeling thus counteracting processes of differentiation. It offers a shared system of meaning which is a basis for communication and understanding.

**2. Organizational structure**
Organizational structure is defined as the set of formal task assigned to individuals and departments, formal reporting relationships, including line of authority to ensure effective coordination of employee's (Daft, 1994). A Successful strategic plan implantation depends in a large part on the firm's primary organizational structure. According to Harrison and John (1994), organizational structure influences the type of strategy used by the organization. For the implementation to be successful the structure should be consistent with the strategy to be implemented. Organizational structure could be defined as the grouping of positions into departments based on similar skills, expertise and resource use (Daft, 1994). According to (Daft 1994), a company can realize importance of the structure through permits of economies of scale and efficient resource use, enhance the development of the in depth skills, employees are motivated to develop their skills, managers and employees are compatible because of the similar trainings and expertise.

**3. Organizational leadership**
Leadership is the ability to influence organization members to adopt the behaviors' needed for the strategic plan implementation (Daft, 1994). A leader is an individual who is able to influence the attitude and opinions of others (Byars, 1991). Leadership includes persuasion, motivation and changes in corporate values and culture. With the business environment changing rapidly, leaders need to look well beyond the routine day to day

operational tactics in order to be successful, thus every leader and ideally every employee needs to think and act strategically (Hiebbert & Klatt, 2001).

For Leaders to succeed there is need for deep level of understanding and commitment behind the implementation of the strategic plan and leaders can achieve this by involving as many people as possible in building and adopting the strategic plan. Transformational leadership is highly recommended for managers involved in the strategic plan implementation (Hacker & Roberts, 2003). This kind of leadership gives more attention to charismatic and effective leadership approach. It is a process that changes and transforms individuals as it concerned with emotions, ethics, long-term goals, values standards.

## METHODOLOGY
Descriptive research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of the employees of Church commissioners for Kenya. The target population of this study was 81 employees which constituted the top level management, senior management, middle managers and the supervisors of the Church Commissioners for Kenya. Purposive sampling was adopted in this study; the researchers purposely targeted a group of individuals who were reliable are knowledgeable about the area of study. Questionnaire was used to gather the primary data from the respondents. Five questionnaires were pretested with a group of employees from the same organization but they were excluded from the main survey. The data analysis was done by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics was used to present the data mainly the frequency tables, graphs and pie charts. The researchers ensured that the research ethics were followed. The questions were administered on the basis of informed and voluntary consent of the respondents.

## RESULTS
### Response rate
Out of the 81 questionnaires that were issued, 69 were received back forming a response rate of 85.19% which was considered to be good enough.

### Respondents' Working Experience
Respondents' working experience was considered an important factor with significant influence on the understanding of the organization's strategic direction. The results are presented in the fig. 4.1 below.
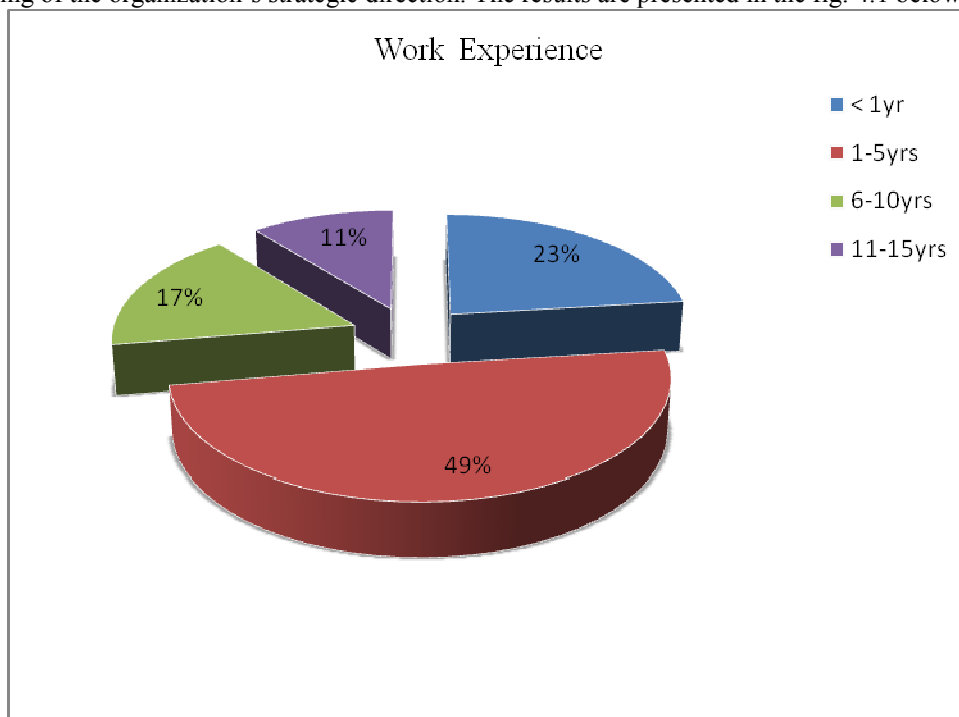


*Figure 4.1: Employees length of service*

The above figure (4.1) indicates that the respondents working experience ranged from less than one year to over 15 years. 49% (32) of the respondents had 1-5 years of working experience. About 17% (11) of the respondents had working experience of 6-10 years while 11 % (7) had worked for 11-15 years. These finding generally suggest that a significant proportion of the respondents had in worked in the organization for a reasonably long

time and therefore they had good understanding for the Church Commissioners for Kenya strategic goals.

**Factors affecting successful implementation of the strategic plan**
The respondents were asked to rate how different factors affect the successful implementation of the strategic plan. A 5 Likert scale was used. The results are presented in the table 4.1 below.
*Table 4.1: Factors that affects the Implementation of strategic plan*

| Questions | Strongly Agree(5) | | Agree (4) | | Disagree(3) | | Strongly Disagree(2) | | Not Sure(1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F |
| Organizational Culture | 4% | 3 | 51% | 35 | 18% | 13 | 8% | 5 | 18% | 13 |
| Environmental turbulences | 21% | 15 | 29% | 20 | 14% | 10 | 26% | 18 | 9% | 6 |
| Technology | 48% | 33 | 30% | 21 | 3% | 2 | 10% | 7 | 9% | 6 |
| Organizational Structure | 30% | 21 | 22% | 15 | 9% | 6 | 39% | 27 | 0% | 0 |
| Organizational Leadership | 45% | 31 | 20% | 14 | 10% | 7 | 15% | 10 | 10% | 7 |
| Resource Availability | 25% | 17 | 22% | 15 | 8% | 6 | 32% | 22 | 13% | 9 |
| Government regulatory Framework | 46% | 32 | 23% | 16 | 20% | 14 | 4% | 3 | 6% | 4 |

**Organizational leadership**
From the statements the respondents were asked if the organizational leadership affect the implementation of the strategic plan. Findings tabulated that 45% (31) of respondents strongly agreed, 20%(14) agreed, 10%(7) disagreed, and 15 %(10) strongly disagreed. This implies that organization leadership determines the strategic planning process implementation. Effective leader according to Drucker (1998), is the one who has ability to cause things to be done. Effective leader is the one who brings staff efficiency and effectiveness and also who brings desired results to the organization by using different ways to achieve organization goals and objectives (Adeniyi, 2007).Leadership determines the present and future position of an organization, good leadership will tend to shape the organization positively while bad leadership affects the performance of the organization (Adeniyi, 2007).

**Organizational structure**
The respondents were asked if the current organizational structure affects the implementation of the strategic. The findings of the study showed that, 30%(21) strongly agreed, 22%(15) agreed, 9%(6) disagreed, and 39%(27) strongly disagreed. Therefore organization structure determines the success of strategic planning process. According to welch (2005), "organizational structure is the blueprint or pattern in which we will relate people roles to one another. It is the framework for getting the job done its purpose is to create an environment for human performance. An important element of the organization structure of the organization is the granting of authority to accomplish the task" (Welch, 2005).

**Resource Availability**
Respondents also respondent on the availability of the resources, through effective use of organizational resources it enhances good decisions on the implementation of the strategic plan. From the result indicated that 25%(17) strongly agreed, 22%(15) agreed, 8% (6) disagreed, 32%(22) strongly disagreed therefore resources availability does not affect strategic planning process. The success and growth of any organization depends on how they make use of their resources (Olsen, 2011).

**Environmental turbulences**
Respondents were also asked if they considered environmental turbulence as a factor affecting strategy implementation. From the result indicated that 21%(15) strongly agreed, 29%(20) agreed, 14%(10) disagreed and 26%(18) strongly disagreed, this implies that environmental turbulence affect the success of strategic planning process. A slight change in the environment does not affects the success of the strategy implementation, organization have to come up with contingency plans towards ensuring that strategic planning process becomes sustainable(Olsen, 2011).

**Technology**
Technology determines the success of strategy implementation in the organization, technology and strategy implementation cannot be separated and therefore the presence of technology will enhance the success of the strategy implementation, the findings of the research study shows that 48%(33) of the respondents strongly agreed, 30%(21) agreed, 3%(2) disagreed, and 10%(7) strongly disagreed, therefore technology determines the

successful implementation of the strategic planning process. High level technology ensures that the strategic planning process will be successful both in the short run and in the long run. Organizations should adopt modern technology for effective strategic planning implementation process (Olsen, 2011).

**Organization culture**
Organization culture is also a factor that influence the implementation of the strategic plan, 4%(3) of the respondents strongly agreed, 51(35)% agreed, 18% (13) disagreed, and 8%(5) strongly disagreed, therefore organization culture greatly influences the success of the strategic planning process. Flexible organization culture encourages the growth and successful implementation of the strategic planning process.

**Government regulatory Framework**
Government regulatory framework determines the implementation of the strategic plan, 46%(32) of the respondents strongly agreed, 23% (16) of the respondents agreed, 20%(14) of the respondents disagreed, 4%(3) Strongly disagreed and 6% (4) not sure. Government regulations are formal procedures which actually affects what a firm intends to adopt in strategic planning process. The implication is that the prevalence of government regulatory framework determines the success of implementing strategic plan in the organization. Government might come up with tough policies and regulations which might hinder the success of effective strategic planning process (Fogg, 1994).

Strategy implementation put simply is the process that puts plans and strategies into action to reach goals. below were the findings;

Table 4.4: *Strategy implementation*

|  | strong agree(5) | | Agree (4) | | Disagree (3) | | strong disagree(2) | | Not sure (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F |
| Senior Leadership is committed to the strategy Implementation. | 28 | 19 | 22 | 15 | 6 | 4 | 38 | 26 | 6 | 4 |
| The organization maintain policy manual | 50 | 35 | 30 | 21 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 5 |
| There is board commitment and support to the implementation of the strategy. | 27 | 19 | 20 | 14 | 20 | 14 | 31 | 22 | 0 | 0 |
| Strategy implementation is consistent with the stakeholders | 18 | 12 | 10 | 7 | 36 | 25 | 36 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| The strategy helps one understand their work | 51 | 35 | 29 | 20 | 17 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Current structure of the organization support implementation of the strategy | 29 | 14 | 14 | 10 | 18 | 13 | 13 | 9 | 33 | 23 |
| Organization recognizes, rewards and reinforce the strategy to be implemented | 20 | 14 | 15 | 10 | 17 | 12 | 39 | 27 | 9 | 6 |
| Organization has a quick way to determine whether failure to achieve goals is due to a poor strategy or just a poor strategy implementation | 10 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 40 | 28 | 35 | 24 |

**Senior Leadership is committed to the strategy Implementation**
From the respondents data 28%(19) strongly agreed, 22%(15) agreed, 6%(4) disagreed, 38%(26) strongly disagreed, and 6% were neutral, therefore top leadership greatly determines the successful implementation of the strategic planning process. Transformational leadership is committed to strategy implementation change in the organization. The success of any strategic planning process depends on the senior leadership who has transformational leadership qualities (Fogg, 1994). The single most important influence on successful strategy implementation is a shared understanding and commitment by the senior leaders. However, even senior teams who think they agree on the strategy often have different interpretations of that strategy.

**The organization maintain policy manual**
The ability of the organization to maintain policy manual 50%(35) of the respondents strongly agree, 30%(21) agreed, 12% (8) strongly disagreed, therefore in most cases organization maintains policy manual. Policy manual needs to be maintained because it gives references and guides the employees in relation to what needs to be undertaken in strategy implementation(Olsen, 2011).

**There is board commitment and support to the implementation of the strategy**
The researcher wanted to find out whether there is board commitment and support to the implementation of the

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strategy, 27%(19) of the respondents strongly agreed, 20%(14) agreed, 20%(14) disagreed, and 31%(22) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The findings shows that the organization board are fairly committed and support the implementation of the strategy. The board commitment and support and support to the implementation of a strategy. Boards members should be informed and be full of ideas in relation to the achievement of the set standards of strategic planning process (Fogg, 1994).

**Strategy implementation is consistent with the stakeholders**
The findings of the research study in relation to whether the strategy implementation was consistent with the stakeholders, 18%(12) of the respondents strongly agreed, 10%(7) agreed, 36%(25) of the respondents disagreed, and 36%(25) strongly disagreed, therefore the organization strategy implementation is not consistent with the stakeholders. Stakeholders needs to play an important role towards the implementation of the strategy, therefore the need for stakeholders towards strategy implementation is crucial. The level of strategy implementation depends on the contributions and idea generation by the stakeholders(Olsen, 2011). Few organizations complete a full SWOT analysis on a regular basis, but most organizations do receive regular survey feedback from customers and employees.

**The strategy helps one understand their work**
Strategy plays an important role in any organization towards the effectiveness of the employees, the organization has to ensure that employees are familiar with the strategy towards effective accomplishment of the duties, the findings of the research study as to whether strategy helps one understands their work, 51%(35) of the respondents strongly agreed, 29%(20) agreed, 17%(12) disagreed, and 3%(2) of the respondents were not sure. The availability of the strategy helps employees to understand their work in the organization. Strategy in an organization helps employees to have a sense of direction and commitment towards the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities (Bryson &Alston, 2010).

**Current structure of the organization support implementation of the strategy**
The researcher intended to find out whether current structure of the organization support the implementation of the strategy, 29%(14) of the respondents strongly agreed, 14%(10) of the respondents agreed, 18%(13) of the respondents disagreed and 13%(9) strongly disagreed. This implied that the organizational structure was fairly structured for the organizational effectiveness. The organization structure greatly contributes towards the successful implementation of the structure therefore the organization has to ensure that they have effective structure in place which supported the implementation of the strategy (Bryson &Alston, 2010).

**Organization recognizes, rewards and reinforce the strategy to be implemented**
Rewards to employees in the organization motivates them towards improved performance, organizations which emphasizes on rewards encourages employees to be determined in implementing the organization strategy. Rewards motivate employees towards committing themselves towards the successful realization of the strategy implementation. The findings of the research study shows that, 20%(14) of the respondents strongly agreed that rewards reinforces the strategy to be implemented, 15%(10) of the respondents agreed, 17%(12) disagreed, and 39%(27) strongly disagreed. The implementation of strategic planning process requires the organization to totally rewards employees based on their commitment to implement the strategy in place. Employees whose performance have improved as a result of strategy implementation needs to be rewarded(Bryson &Alston, 2010).

**Organization has a quick way to determine whether failure to achieve goals is due to a poor strategy or just a poor strategy implementation**
The ability of the organization to determine the effectiveness of a strategy is important because it ensures that the strategy will be geared towards the realization of the desired returns. Strategy evaluation helps organization towards determining the effectiveness and the success of any organization strategy. The findings of the research study shows that, 10%(7) strongly agreed that they have a quick way of determining whether the strategy is successful, 5%(3) of the respondents agreed, 10%(7) of the respondents disagreed, and 40%(28) of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implied that there was not a good and quick way to determine the strategy implementation. The management of the organization should ensure that the undertake monitoring and evaluation on the strategic planning process in place to ensure that the weaknesses and other related challenges has been dealt with at an early stage (Simerson, 2011).

**DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**
The organization culture at CCK has successfully supported the implementation of the strategic plan. The culture of goal orientation, team work and consultation, strong value systems and internal employee drive has significantly contributed to successful implementation of the strategic plan at CCK. The leadership has offered

the necessary guidance and support as well as setting the right work environment through which the employees are clear on their targets. However, There is need for the CCK to ensure that stakeholders are fully involved at all the stages of strategic plan development but mainly formulation. The involvement of employees at the stage of strategy formulation promotes the ownership of the strategic plan during and after strategic plan implementation. The top management of the CCK should disseminate all the information pertaining the development of the strategic planning process. This implies that employees should be briefed in relation to the progress and the milestones achieved at various stages of strategic plan implementation; this would be achieved by considering having an active monitoring and evaluation unit.

## Limitations of the study

This research being a case study was limited to Church Commissioners for Christ and therefore the findings may not be necessarily generalized to other organizations and sectors. This is because CCK may be unique in its own kind and particularly being a church owned organization may subscribe to some practices that other organizations don't. However, CCK has adapted to large extent best practices in strategic planning and therefore the limitation in scope does not limit the significance of this research to CCK. However, further research could be pursued on the determinants of successful strategic plan implementation across many sectors.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there has been good organizational culture, supportive structure and effective leadership that have enabled the successful implementation of CCK strategic plan. The study also concludes that successful strategy implementation would require different support systems including but not limited to leadership, organizational culture, organization structure, appropriate resources and cutting edge technology and innovation. CCK and other organizations alike should consider involving all the stakeholders at the point of strategy formulation for the purposes of ownership during and after strategy implementation.

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