

The Influence of Managerial Skills on Implementation of Strategic Plans at NHIF, Kenya

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Abstract

One of Kenya's long-term strategic goals is to enhance Kenyans' overall well-being and indicators by moving the focus from curative to preventative treatment and improving health-care services. Over time, the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) has developed strategic plans to guarantee increased service efficiency. However, it remains unclear whether NHIF has been effectively implementing these plans owing to its reported unsatisfactory performance. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the influence of managerial skills on implementation strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya. The specific objective was to evaluate the influence of managerial skills on implementation of strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya. The study was underpinned by the following theories: path-goal theory and dynamic capability theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was 178 employees which comprised senior management, middle-level management, and technical staff from NHIF. The sample size was 124 respondents which was determined using the Yamane formula. Stratified sampling technique was used for selecting participants in the study. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire which was administered using drop and pick method. Data analyses involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study discovered that the execution of strategic plans in NHIF was positively and significantly impacted by managerial skills. Hence, the study concluded that implementation of strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya was influenced by managerial skills at various degrees across the different management levels. The study recommends that NHIF should continuously invest in managerial skills enhancement in order to ensure successful implementation of strategic plans. The findings of the study are expected to; serve as a theoretical foundation for scholars, researchers and academicians undertaking studies in the area, formulation of relevant policies to enhance strategy implementation in public organizations and assist management at NHIF to focus on the key success factors for implementation of strategic plans.

Keywords: Managerial Skills, strategic plans, contingency management theory, county government

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1. Introduction

NHIF in Kenya faces challenges in strategic management due to high failure rates in strategy implementation. Academic literature shows that 60-90% of strategies fail to achieve their objectives, with less than 15% achieving successful execution. Ineffective strategic plan implementation affects governments globally, affecting the national healthcare system. The consequences of ineffective strategic plan implementation are felt by governments worldwide, affecting the overall healthcare systems (Dlamini, Mazenda, Masiya, & Nhede 2020)

Strategy implementation failure is a significant issue in modern organizations, highlighting the complexity of strategic decision-making and the need for adaptive managerial approaches. High failure rates indicate the need for organizations to constantly reassess and realign their initiatives with market dynamics and internal capabilities to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and organizational success. Addressing this requires understanding the factors contributing to failure, fostering a culture of responsiveness and innovation, and developing robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating strategic progress (Jingwei, 2023).

Efficient execution of strategic plans can compromise essential services, strain resources, and hinder healthcare infrastructure development. Government agencies overseeing public health initiatives often face challenges in meeting diverse needs, leading to service gaps and limited access to quality care for vulnerable populations. Poor strategic plan implementation has long-term socioeconomic implications, impacting the overall development of the country. Osei Afriyie et al. (2021) highlighted the challenges faced by health financing reforms, including lack of transparency, weak revenue accountability, and limited resources, which could be addressed through governance factors.

The government faces challenges in addressing health sector deficiencies due to inadequate resource allocation, poor coordination among stakeholders, and lack of transparency in decision-making processes. To ensure the health sector's effective functioning and sustainability of government-led healthcare initiatives, a comprehensive review of strategic planning practices and enhanced implementation mechanisms is necessary. Authorities should prioritize strategic plan execution, foster collaboration, and establish monitoring mechanisms to create a more resilient and responsive healthcare system (Wang, Wu, Gu, & Hu, 2021),

The Namibian Commission for strategic plan execution in Public Healthcare faced challenges in effectively implementing strategic decisions, often failing during the implementation phase. Despite having the best strategic policies, the commission did not explain the obstacles or organizational structures involved. Senior healthcare organizations faced barriers and aimed to quantify, test, and apply effective execution tactics. Researchers have investigated active failure reasons for strategic plan execution in Namibian state healthcare, and the government determined that contextual dimensions, content dimensions, operational dimensions, and structural dimensions were the primary causes of strategic plan failure in public health care Shopati, Mitonga, and Aipinge (2018).

Jingwei's 2023 study on China's health system found that scaling up health innovations is crucial for global recognition. The research suggests that a 'pilot-diffusion' approach is not enough to allow for local adaptation and policy improvement. The study also found that piloting helped Chinese government officials minimize uncertainties related to complex payment changes and enhance provider customization. A step-by-step process was used to introduce new payment models and evaluate, contrast, and modify them across local settings before rolling them out nationally. This approach was found to be more gradual and efficient, reducing the long-term negative impacts of poorly managed expansion. The study also highlighted the importance of identifying and fixing mistakes and adjusting new policy instruments for successful expansion. Key factors for successful implementation include leadership, practical piloting, proficient staff skills, and efficient learning processes. Stakeholder involvement, resource distribution, and a robust monitoring system were also identified as key factors. However, setbacks were linked to inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and lack of support from stakeholders.

The European Union's 2010 Global Health Strategy aimed to ensure consistency in policies and programs at both national and international levels, focusing on global health governance, achieving universal health coverage, and enhancing health systems and research. Measures were primarily used to strengthen global and third-country capacities to protect against global health threats. However, a civil society shadow strategy document argued that the strategy's implementation was flawed and lacked the necessary coherence and consistency in policies and programs. This could be partly explained by the strategy's lack of clearly defined operational priority areas and the EU's failure to set clear targets or establish a monitoring and reporting framework. The absence of clear accountability mechanisms hindered the effective coordinated implementation of the objectives set out in the EU's Global Health Policy of 2010, as EU actors in the field of global health pursued their mandates.

Skilled managers are essential for organizations to achieve objectives and goals, and as competition increases, they must develop strategic thinking and superior decision-making abilities. In South Africa, organizational strategy is critical for sustaining a company's competitive advantage in a complex and uncertain future. Effective strategic management frameworks help prioritize complex issues and accelerate decision-making processes (Dlamini et al., 2020). Strategic management is crucial for a company to maintain its vitality and image. It allows managers to focus on overcoming specific challenges and implement solutions that are most appropriate for the current environmental conditions, ensuring the company's continued and methodical operation (Wang et al., 2021).

The importance of strategic management in the long-term success of healthcare organizations in Georgia is increasing due to the competitive nature of the medical business. However, many hospitals fail to compare their performance indicators with others and report on the value of actions taken to achieve their strategic plans. This lack of strategic management process affects their position and success in the market. Hospitals can develop strategic plans, but their implementation is not adequately monitored and based on scientifically sound principles. Physicians' low level of strategic planning proficiency is attributed to a lack of information, competency, and motivation. Georgia has similar state intervention practices, mandating a clinical manager and a skilled management system for inpatient healthcare organizations Verulava (2024).

The 2023 strategic plan implementation in Kenya's health sector was influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including resource constraints, stakeholder engagement, leadership effectiveness, and external dynamics

like socioeconomic conditions and political stability. These outcomes have significantly impacted on the health sector's trajectory. Understanding the historical context of these outcomes is crucial for developing effective treatments and achieving long-term progress toward health sector goals. Examining the specific outcomes from 2023 offers a unique opportunity to identify what worked and what still needs improvement, offering a path for future improvements in the area's strategic planning practices. The National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) was established in 1966 to provide affordable, sustainable, and high-quality health insurance to Kenyans. Since then, it has offered inpatient services and expanded to outpatient services in 2015. The fund operates using 'Fee-For-Service' and 'Capitation' business models. Its primary objective is to provide medical insurance to all members and their dependents, including spouses and children. Membership is open to Kenyans over 18 years with a monthly salary (NHIF Handbook, 2023).

The National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) has adopted strategic strategies to improve service delivery efficiency, such as computerized systems, certification of over 5000 medical institutions, outpatient medical plans for public personnel, and point-of-service systems. The NHIF 2023 Regulatory Impact Statement is on ensuring access to safe, effective, and high-quality essential health care. The proposal is to raise the benefit rate from 60% to 100% by 2030. The 2019-2023 strategy plan intended to strengthen customer interactions while also improving service quality. However, mid-term reviews suggest that majority of the scheduled tasks were not completed, and several departments did not meet their objectives.

2. Statement of the Problem

The National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) is one of the key entities driving the implementation of Vision 2030. However, the health insurer frequently has delays in implementing strategic objectives owing to a variety of managerial factors such as managerial skills. It is uncertain if these elements have a substantial impact on the effective implementation of the NHIF's strategic strategy. These complex aspects are linked together in a web of interactions that may either assist or impede the efficient execution of strategic measures to enhance healthcare and extend access to excellent healthcare for Kenyans. To transform the NHIF's strategic vision into good results, it is critical to examine the interaction of these components and have a thorough knowledge of their difficulties and potential. The study explores the impact of managerial skills in healthcare in Kenya. It involves a multifaceted approach, involving senior management, middle-level managers, and technical staff. Senior management provides a top-down perspective on strategic planning and implementation, while middle-level managers offer unique insights into practicalities and challenges faced during strategy execution. Technical staff provides a grassroots-level understanding of how managerial skills influence daily operational activities and decision-making processes. The study aims to provide actionable insights into the intricacies of managerial skills influence on strategic implementation within NHIF-Kenya.

3. Objective of the Study

To evaluate the influence of managerial skills on implementation of strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya.

4 Theoretical Reviews

4.1 Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

Evans (1970) introduced the path-goal theory, which was later updated by House (1971). The primary purpose of this theory was to determine the most effective leadership posture for motivating followers to achieve goals. It is based on Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, which proposes that people's behaviors are influenced by their expectations of outcomes and the attractiveness of these outcomes. The idea emphasizes that a subordinate's success is determined by their interactions with their supervisor, which are significantly impacted by the subordinate's motivation. House (1974) improved on the path-goal theory, which is based on two basic assumptions: A leader's strategic role includes improving subordinates' psychological states so that they are motivated to work hard or content with their employment (House, 1971). Furthermore, leaders must assure clear goals, a clear route, and increased employee fulfilment through extrinsic motivation by being aware of the necessary measures.

This study utilized the path-goal theory of leadership to analyze key aspects of effective leadership within the NHIF organization. It explored different leadership styles, strategic resource allocation, managerial skills, and staff motivation. The analysis helped evaluate how leaders can adapt their styles to team needs, allocate resources effectively, refine managerial skills, and inspire staff to achieve organizational objectives. The theory

helped me understand the role of leaders and the leadership styles used to achieve organizational goals. Adopting the appropriate style helps subordinates meet demands and achieve strategic goals.

The path-goal theory of leadership is a complex theory that may be challenging to apply in practical settings due to its extensive integration of management and leadership ideas, and its inconsistent adoption in the managerial community due to its inability to evaluate efficacy. According to Landrum and Daily (2012), the leadership models provided by the theory are rather unstructured because there is no established code of behavior or supervisory agents. Furthermore, the approach falls short of providing sustainable firms with precise rules for each team member's obligations.

4.2 Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT)

Teece and Pisano (1994) introduced the notion of dynamic capabilities. One method for applying the dynamic capacity theory to various aspects of strategy execution within an organization is to investigate its use in analyzing leadership styles as they relate to encouraging adaptation and creativity. Teece et al. (1997) argued that in an ever-changing market, a firm's competitive advantage would be defined by the internal procedures that enable it to keep up with and adapt to the variety of organizational capabilities available to it. The term 'dynamic' separates one sort of talent from another (Zahra, Sapienza, and Davidsson, 2006).

The study explores the impact of managerial skills approaches on an organization's ability to adapt to external changes, affecting its strategic direction and performance. It also explores resource allocation and how NHIF can effectively utilize resources to maintain competitive advantages in uncertain markets. The dynamic capability theory also examines how managerial skills intersect with adaptability and strategic alignment, crucial for building resilience. The study also explores the relationship between staff motivation and strategy implementation, revealing how motivated employees contribute to NHIF's dynamic capabilities and successful execution of strategic initiatives. However, the theory faces criticism for its theory-congruent proxies, evidence for causal inference, and insufficient framework (Pitelis, 2021).

5. Empirical Review

Rotich (2017) highlights that not everyone feels comfortable in a leadership role, and personal attributes can predict a manager's future success. Insufficient management expertise and a lack of market for a product can lead to business failures, even with growing experience. When implementing a new business strategy, management often feels scared and confused, wondering how to transition from great plans to actions that result in success. To ensure successful implementation, management often ignores easily accessible specialists with thorough knowledge of the industry, company practices, culture, internal controls, and potential threats. These experts are objective, good communicators, curious, imaginative, and critical in their outlook. Many businesses focus on creating a new strategy, but even with a well-thought-out plan, the business may still fall short of the objectives stated in the strategy.

Strategic planning is crucial for organizations to achieve their goals, but understanding obstacles is essential. Higher education institutions face a dynamic environment due to government restrictions, societal expectations, and technological advancements. A study at Zambia's Copperbelt University found that organizational culture, leadership, and resource allocation significantly impact strategy execution. Human capital and a skilled pool are essential resources for strategy success. A flexible organizational structure and adaptable staff members are also crucial. Organizations should ensure they have the necessary time, money, skills, and knowledge to successfully implement their strategies, and knowledge are available to have a successful strategy implementation process (Mubanga & Lesa (2024),

Ahmad, Ahmad, and Alam (2024) conducted a study to understand how strategic planning influences the success of SMEs in Punjab, Pakistan. The study involved 265 owners and managers who completed a self-administered questionnaire. The results showed a strong correlation between strategic planning, business acumen, entrepreneurial and managerial skills, and firm performance characteristics. Strategic planning mediated these relationships, but no hard proof was found for a connection between technical expertise and business success. The study suggests that strategic planning can help legislators, academics, and management of small and medium-sized businesses perform better. It is recommended that owners and managers of SMEs engage in strategic planning to motivate them to perform better and use their resources more efficiently.

Ndegwa (2022) investigates the effect of strategy execution on the performance of Kenyan-owned public firms. It discovered that improved performance may be attained by combining strategic planning and implementation. However, a well-defined and coordinated implementation procedure is required for strategy formulation to succeed in a changing context. The study also discovered that the impact of applying a strategy on organizational success might vary based on factors such as operational environment and available resources. State corporations effectively implemented programs, and the study discovered that the complexity of the operating environment had a substantial impact on the link between organizational performance and plan implementation.

Independent variables

Dependent Variable

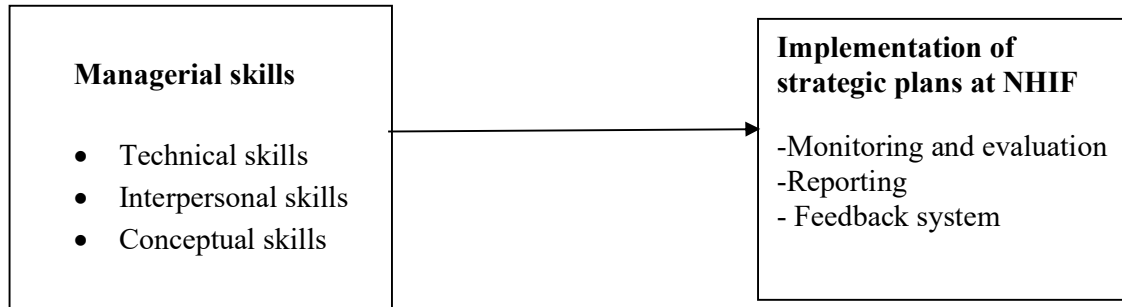


Figure: Conceptual Framework

The National Health Insurance Fund's (NHIF) effectiveness relies on the combination of managerial skills, including decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and team management. These skills enable managers to lead and coordinate resources, guide the strategic planning process, and ensure the organization remains responsive to evolving healthcare needs and regulatory requirements. This relationship is crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of the NHIF.

6. Methodology

This study included both descriptive and inferential strategies. Both Mugenda (1999) and Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010) agree that descriptive and inferential design help with issue structure and comprehension, revealing helpful insights into study problems. This method was used in the study to better understand respondents' perceptions of how strategic management behavior affects the NHIF's strategic goals. We utilized stratified sampling to pick 124 responders among 178 workers. This sample included senior management, middle-level managers, and technical staff from three NHIF branches in Nairobi: the Nairobi region, the Industrial Area, and Westlands.

7. Data Analysis, Findings and Interpretation

This study's research design was a descriptive survey. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) agree with Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010) that descriptive and inferential design helps organize and completely understand an issue. This strategy delivers helpful and reliable information that sheds light on the research topic. The technique was used in the study to better understand respondents' perspectives on how managerial skills affect the achievement of NHIF's strategic objectives.

H03: Managerial skills have no statistically significant effect on implementation of strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya.

The correlation coefficient of the responses were as in Table 4.15 below.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis

	R	Significance at 99% level
Senior Management	.698 ^a	0.000
Middle Level Management	.836 ^a	0.000
Technical Staff	.602 ^a	0.000

The observed correlations between Senior Management ($r = 0.698$, $p = 0.000$), Middle-Level Management ($r = 0.836$, $p = 0.000$), and Technical Staff ($r = 0.602$, $p = 0.000$) provide useful insights into the relationship between managerial skills and strategic plan execution at Kenya's National Health Insurance Fund. The strong correlation values imply a significant positive association between various management levels and the successful execution of strategic objectives. More specifically, the significant positive correlation coefficients show that the better the competency and efficiency of senior managers, middle-level managers, and technical personnel, the greater the likelihood of NHIF achieving its strategic objectives.

These correlations imply that the strategic planning processes at NHIF are influenced by the competencies and capabilities of management personnel. A coordinated effort across various management levels is crucial for the successful execution of strategic goals. Effective leadership, communication, and decision-making skills are essential at all levels to align organizational objectives and efficiently implement strategic plans. The interconnectedness and collaboration of senior management, middle-level management, and technical staff shape strategic planning results. By recognizing and utilizing these connections, NHIF can improve its strategic management procedures and promote ongoing enhancements in strategic execution.

Table 2 Regression Analysis

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Test	t-test	Sign	Unstandardized B	Constant
Senior Management	.487	.476	43.699	6.611	.000	.369	.602
Middle Level Management	.699	.695	178.694	13.368	.000	.834	-.086
Technical Staff	.362	.361	312.106	-17.667	.000	-.175	.594

a. Predictors: (Constant), Managerial Skills

b. Dependent Variable: Strategy Implementation

The correlations determined from the replies, assuming that managerial skills have no statistically significant influence on the implementation of strategic goals at NHIF in Kenya, shed light on the interactions between various managerial levels. The statistical analysis revealed that the R² values for senior management, middle-level management, and technical staff regarding the impact of managerial skills on strategy implementation were statistically significant, with values of 0.487, 0.699, and 0.362 respectively, all at a significance level of $P < 0.05$. These R² values imply that 48.7%, 69.9%, and 36.2% of the diversity in strategy execution can be explained by the managerial skills displayed by senior management, middle-level management, and technical personnel, respectively.

The study reveals the significant impact of managerial skills on the successful execution of organizational strategies. It suggests that organizations can customize training and development initiatives to strengthen management teams at different levels. The findings emphasize the importance of effective management in driving strategic initiatives and the need for continuous skill improvement across all workforce levels to achieve optimal strategic outcomes. By analyzing these percentages and correlations, we may gain a thorough picture of how different levels of management influence strategic plan execution at NHIF in Kenya, which can provide useful insights for future decision-making and organizational growth initiatives. The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant impact (P -value < 0.05 at 99% confidence level), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings are consistent with previous studies done by Ahmad, Ahmad, and Alam (2024), Mubanga and Lesa (2024), Ndegwa (2022), and Rotich (2017). The prediction model for each management tier is $Y = 0.602 + 0.369X$ for senior management, $Y = -0.086 + 0.834$ for middle management, and $Y = 0.594 - 0.175$ for technical personnel.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to evaluate the impact of managerial skills on the successful execution of strategic plans at NHIF, Kenya. Senior management found a moderate but statistically significant impact of managerial skills on the successful execution of strategic initiatives, with a coefficient of determination (R-square) of 0.476. Middle-level management, including department heads and supervisors, found a higher R-square value of 0.699, indicating a more significant impact of managerial skills on strategic initiatives.

The study found that technical staff, including skilled managers, plays a crucial role in implementing NHIF strategies across the Institution's hierarchy. The findings highlight the importance of strong leadership, decision-making, and streamlined communication channels in driving strategic success and achieving desired outcomes for the NHIF as a whole.

The investigation has revealed that continuous development of managerial skills can greatly facilitate the implementation of strategic plans. The management of NHIF can customize their training and development initiatives to strengthen the competencies of their management teams at different levels of the workforce to achieve optimal strategic outcomes.

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