STRATEGIC PLANS IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION IN PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANISATIONS IN THE GAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper assessed strategic plans implementation procedures and evaluation processes of public service organisations (PSOs) in The Gambia. The study adopted "cross-sectional survey design", through the administration of structured questionnaire of five-point Likert scale among the selected PSOs. A sample size of 211 respondents, representing 20% of the sample frame were selected for the administration of copies of questionnaire using probability proportional-to-size sampling technique. Two hundred and three (203) copies of questionnaire were retrieved from field, representing 96.2% of the total number of questionnaire administered in the study. The study established that PSOs formulated formal strategic plans, and followed formalised strategy implementation procedures and evaluation processes. The results of the study found evidence of strategic plans implementation and evaluation practices for public service delivery (PSD) in the sampled PSOs in The Gambia. The findings concluded that the selected PSOs had current strategic plans that contained essential components of a viable strategic plan and they had a track record of implementing and evaluating strategic plans in PSD.
Key Words: management, strategy, plans, implementation, evaluation, service, organisations, and delivery.
JEL classification codes: H83, D78, G38, L38, L88, M10

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern public service organisations are increasingly becoming interested in strategic management practice because of the significant role it plays in public service delivery. To effectively deliver on "sustainable economic and social improvements", especially in public service delivery, "efficient public sector institutions, institutional development plans, country-level strategies, and reforms" (Obeta & Ike, 2019, p. 88) are required.During the Second Republic, many developmental strategies such as: "Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP I)" (1994-2000), "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP I/SPA)" (2002-2005), with the creation of Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Coordination Office (SPACO), "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II)" (2007-2011), were formulated. In addition, "National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)" (2007-2011), "Republic of The Gambia Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme" (2008-2013), "The Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP)" (2011-2015), "Civil Service Reform Programme" (2012-2015), and "Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE)" (2012-2015) were developed.

Furthermore, to help achieve the country's Vision 2020, strategic plans were developed for the various ministries and public service organisations including: "Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Strategic Plan for Human Resources for Health" (2005-2009), "Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH) (now called Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH)) Strategic Plan" (2005), "Personnel Management Office (PMO) Strategy for Improving Recruitment and Reducing Attrition in the Civil Service" (2005), "Ministry of Education Sector Strategic Plan" (2006-2015), "Ministry of

Health and Social Welfare Health Master Plan" (2007), and "Ministry of Youth and Sports Strategic Plan" (2010-2014) among others. The choice of the study period was informed by the fact that Vision 2020 was designed in 1996.

Strategic management has been widely investigated in the past few decades (Leiblein & Reuer, 2020). However, the problem of this study is to establish how strategic plans were implemented and evaluated for improved public service delivery in the Gambian context. Strategic management scholars are of the opinion that if strategic decisions are successfully implemented, organisational aims and objectives could be achieved (Schweiger & Sandberg, 1991; Elbanna, Thanos, & Colak, 2014; Bryson, Edwards, & Van Slyke, 2017; Ijewereme, 2018; Kabeyi, 2019). This is also applicable to public service organisations once plans crafted by top management team are appropriately implemented, could lead to the achievement of organisational results, attributable to top management decisions, and suggest that public organisations are the controllers of their fate (Elbanna, Andrews, & Pollanen, 2015).

However, in spite of the acknowledgement of the significant role that strategic management plays in influencing the accomplishment of organisational aims and objectives, there were limited studies with little or no emphasis on strategic plans implementation and evaluation procedures and public service delivery in The Gambia hence the study. The main objectives of this paper are to: (1) assess strategic plans implementation procedures of public service organisations (PSOs) in The Gambia; and (2) examine strategic plans evaluation processes of PSOs in the country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Strategic management and Strategic Planning
Strategic management as an applied and interdisciplinary academic concept draws from various social sciences' methodological competences. It has therefore assumed a critical role in service delivery within the public sector.One of the administrative roles and functions of the government consists of planning and development aimed at transforming the states' resources into services that would cater to the needs and desires of its population (Lasisi, Adereti, & Olamilokun, 2021). According to Bryson (2011: 26), strategic management is "the integration of strategic planning and implementation…in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfillment of mission, meeting of mandates, and sustained creation of ….value". Across the globe, strategic management is required for public policy making, good governance, performance enhancing, and public service delivery (PSD). It is considered an efficient and effective managerial technique that improves service delivery in organisations through judicious decisions, strategy creation, and execution. The term "strategic management" emerged within the private sector, however; the public sector's interest in adopting it has grown over the last decades (Smith, 1994; Llewellyn & Tappin, 2003). Several relevant strategic management frameworks and techniques like Bryson's framework of strategic management, Stewart's strategic approach to policy, Joyce's decision flow diagram, and McKinsey's 7 'S' framework among others can be adopted by public service organisations to ensure efficiency in public service delivery.

2.1.2 Environmental Scanning (Assessment)
Environmental scanning or assessment includes monitoring, assessing, and distributing information from both external and internal environments' major stakeholders within the organisation. It aims to identify the internal and external strategic forces that will dictate the future of the organisation. The easiest method to assess the environment is by doing a SWOT analysis of an organisation (Poister & Streib, 1999; Bryson, 2010, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; Sammut-Bonnici, 2014; Bryson, 2017; Ferlie and Parrado, 2018; and Kabeyi, 2019). SWOT means strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which are strategic forces for a particular organisation. The external forces comprise the opportunities and threats that are external to the organisation and not usually within the short-term control of top management (Bryson, 2010, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger,

2012; Sammut-Bonnici, 2014; Bryson & Edwards, 2017; Ferlie and Parrado, 2018; and Kabeyi, 2019). Figure 2.2 depicts environmental forces which form the setting within which the organisation subsists and operates. These forces and trends may be common within the natural or societal environments or particular forces that operate within an organisation's particular environment known as its industry. The internal environment of an organisation comprises the forces of strengths and weaknesses that are internal to the organisation itself and are not normally within the short-term control of top management. These forces form the background within which work is carried out and entail the organisation's structure, culture, and resources. Major strengths include a set of core competencies that the organisation can employ to obtain competitive advantage (Bryson, 2010, Bryson 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; Sammut-Bonnici, 2014; and Bryson & Edwards, 2017).

Bryson (2011) argued that the identification and resolution of strategic issues is the centre of strategic planning process. Issues are regarded as serious challenges that affect the organisation's mandates, mission, products/service level and combination, customers/ consumers or end-users, costs, budgets/finances, and organisational management or leadership (Wauters, 2017).Figure 2.2 gives a comprehensive concept of Bryson's (2011) framework of strategic management and shows strategic issues at the centre of the diagram, which comprise the various phases in the strategic management process.

2.1.3 *Strategy Implementation*

Strategy implementation is the procedure used to execute strategies and policies by creating programmes, budgets, and procedures (Thompson & Strickland, 1998; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; Tamimi *et al*., 2018). This procedure could include changes in the general culture, structure, and/or management system of the whole organisation. Except when such strict organisation-wide changes are required, the execution of strategy is usually carried out by middle-level managers and lower-level managers, while top management reviews (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012). Strategy implementation is sometimes known as operational planning and entails routine or day-to-day decision-making process in allocating resources (Berry & Wechsler, 1995, Bryson, 2010, 2011). Similarly, Håkonsson, Burton, Obel and Lauridsen (2012: 182) described strategy implementation as "the realisation of strategy and what the firm does".

A programme is a statement of tasks or stages required to achieve a single-use plan. It makes a strategy task-oriented and may include restructuring the organisation, altering the organisation's internal culture, or starting a new research effort. A budget is a statement of an organisation's programmes in terms of money. A budget is used in planning and control and states the cost of each programme in detail. The budget is a detailed action plan for executing new strategy and stipulates via pro forma financial statements the expected impact on the future of the organisation's finance. Procedures are occasionally called Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and are a system of chronological stages or methods that explain how a specific assignment is to be carried out. They explain in-depth the various activities that must be done in order to accomplish the organisation's programme (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012).

Strategy implementation entails the continuing effort to accomplish in practice an organisation's mission, goals or objectives, and strategies; constant organisational learning; and creating a value for the public. Strategy implementation emphasises continued action within the limitations of an organisation's mandates, mission, goals and strategies, while being inclined to innovative learning that may influence the agenda for action (Thompson & Strickland, 1998; Bryson, 2010; Bryson, 2011; & David, 2011; Tamimi, Khalil, & Abdullah, 2018).

2.1.4 *Evaluation and Control*

Evaluation and control is a procedure in which organisational activities and performance results are monitored to enable comparison of real performance results with desired performance results. During

the evaluation and control process, managers at all levels adopt the comparable information to make adjustments, make corrections to deviations or errors and solve problems (Bryson, 2011; David, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; Joyce, 2015; Brown, 2016; Tamimi *et al*., 2018; and Kabeyi, 2019). Though evaluation and control is the last key component of strategic management process, it can as well indicate weaknesses in strategic plans that were implemented before and consequently trigger the whole process to restart.

Performance is therefore outcome of activities and entails the real results of the strategic management process. A major significance of practising strategic management within organisations is its ability to promote and enhance organisational performance. To achieve effectiveness in evaluation and control, managers should get lucid, swift and impartial information from their junior employees in the hierarchy of the organisation. Next, managers are expected to employ the piece of information to compare that which is really occurring with that which was previously planned in the strategy formulation stage (Bryson, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012).

2.2 Empirical Review

Bora, Borah, and Chungyalpa (2017) conducted a study on crafting strategic objectives that examined the role of business vision and mission statements. The paper buttressed the significance of business vision and mission statements and how they influence the strategic goals and objectives of the organisation in short and long term respectively. The study investigated and gave an overview of business strategy and deliberated on the mission statement, vision statement and strategic objectives and how the three are interconnected. It also provided guidelines that entail templates on how to formulate effective mission and vision statements. The study used case study design in its approach. The findings revealed that business strategy formulation is highly regarded as a design and plan in the implementation of the resources of an organisation. It observed that in crafting strategies, most organisations carry or conduct an in-depth investigation and valuation of the organisation's internal capabilities and weaknesses, and analysis of the external environment. They viewed that many organisations put less emphasis on describing mission and vision statements before delineating the strategic objectives. The authors recommended that formulating business strategy should begin with describing the mission and vision statements of the organisation and that all strategic objectives should be deliberated in terms of the business mission and vision statements (Bora *et al*., 2017).

Williams and Lewis (2008) conducted a study on "strategic management tools and public sector management". They emphasised the use and effectiveness of value chain and stakeholder analyses as well as established strategic management tools in the milieu of seven strategic consultancy projects for public organisations in the UK. The study strongly justified the use of two models, when used independently, especially together as powerful strategic analytical frameworks they can meaningfully encourage and shed light on strategic discussion in public sector organisations. The study established that value chain analysis, when adopted in the public sector necessitate meaningful adaptation to maximise contribution to comprehending a given condition. The study used practical experience of many consultancy projects in strategic management within an array of public sector activities to demonstrate the application of stakeholder and value chain analysis in assessing their helpfulness on strategic situations, and engaging in strategic discourse with managers in the public sector and other stakeholders (Williams & Lewis, 2008).

The study suggested that strategic analyses of relationships that shape or contribute to the concepts of organisational value do not have adequate significance if the complicated networks of interdependent relations themselves are not clearly shown. Thus, the analysis made a clear case for using the two strategic models, value chain analysis and stakeholder analysis, in a comparable way to demonstrate how strategic understanding in the public sector is enhanced as a result of such interdependence. They concluded that though public sector managers were not acquainted with the use

of private sector standardised strategic management methods, applying these methods were perceived to assist in communicating strategic imperatives to major stakeholders (Williams & Lewis, 2008).

Williams and Lewis (2008) made significant practical and empirical contributions to the use of "strategic management tools" in the public sector. However, they did not study the adoption of strategic management in the public service sector holistically; rather they focused on only two strategic management models i.e., value chain analysis and stakeholder analysis, which could equally be seen as the limitation of their study.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a "cross-sectional survey design" using primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through administration of questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The sample frame (1, 058) comprised senior public servants (grades 8 and above) in five (5) purposively selected public service organisations (PSOs) in The Gambia namely: Gambia Competition & Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC) (21), Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) (200), National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) (500), Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) (32), and University of The Gambia (UTG) (305). The five (5) PSOs were chosen because they produced up-to-date strategic plans and related policy documents. The senior public servants were selected because they were responsible for strategic plans formulation and implementation, and their roles, proficiency and experience in strategic management and public service delivery issues. A set of questionnaire was used for the study. A sample size of 211 respondents, representing 20% of the sample frame were selected for the administration of copies of questionnaire using probability proportional-to-size sampling technique. The distribution were as follows: GCCPC (4), GRA (40), NAWEC (100), PURA (6), and UTG (61). A set of questionnaire was administered on senior public servants of PSOs in The Gambia. Secondary data were obtained from policy documents, strategic plans, journal articles and textbooks, and the Internet. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations with the help of SPSS software version 20.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Features of Respondents (Senior Public Servants)

This section presents the socio-demographic features of the respondents (senior public servants in The Gambia), such as: organisation, designation/rank, gender, marital status, age, educational qualification, as well as years of service of senior public servants. A set of questionnaires was administered for this study. A total of two hundred and eleven (211) copies of questionnaire were administered to senior public servants of PSOs to elicit information on the topic under investigation in The Gambia within the base year 1996 – 2016. Two hundred and three (203) copies of questionnaire were retrieved from field, representing 96.2% of the total number of questionnaire administered in the study.

These bio-data were considered to enhance the reliability of data for this study. As presented in Table 1, out of the total number of respondents, 4 (2.0%), are employees in The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC), 37 (18.4%), worked in The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA), 96 (47.8%), belong to National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC), 5 representing 2.5% of the respondents are employees of Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA); and 61 (30.0%) worked with the University of The Gambia (UTG).

As shown in Table 1, 8 (4.0%), of the respondents were designated as directors in their respective work places; 17 representing 8.5% of the respondents were managers; while 178 (87.7%) were senior officers in their various organisations. This denotes that majority of the respondents have relatively required academic qualifications and experience in providing basic and accurate answers to research questions. This therefore made the findings insightful, detailed and decisive.

Table 1 showed that 139 (68.5%), of the respondents are male; while 64 (31.8%) are females. This gender disparity had no infringement on data collected since the information needed for the study

is not gender-oriented. This is rather a suggestion that strategic management and public service delivery are all-encompassing, and not a gender-skewed issue. In Table 1, 64 (31.8%), of the respondents were single; 138 (68.0%), of respondents were married, while 1 (0.5%) was either divorced or separated.

Table 1 shows that 69 (34.3%), of respondents were between age 21 - 30 years; 74 (36.8%), fell within the age range of 31-40 years; 50 (24.6%), of the respondents were within the age range of 41-50 years; 7 (3.5%), were between 51-60 years; and 3 (1.5%) of respondents had age bracket 60 years and above. This suggests that 95.7% of respondents are considerably matured and at their productive age i.e., 21-50 years, and this engendered very matured and reliable responses for the study.

As presented in Table 1, 12 (6.0%) of respondents had WASSCE education, 56 (27.9%), had either diplomas or higher national diplomas (HNDs), 33.3% representing 67 respondents had either B.Sc. or B.A. degrees; 64 (31.5%) had Master's Degrees; while 4 (2.0%), of respondents are Ph.D. holders.

The socio-demographic information showed that 55 (27.4%), of respondents spent between 1 - 4years; 78 (38.4%), spent between 5-10 years; 27 (13.4%), of respondents had remained in their respective work place for about 11-14years; 25 (12.4%), stayed between 15-20 years in their work place; and 18 (9.0%), lasted between 21years and above in their respective places of employment. This therefore indicates that respondents had varied experiences on strategic management which was useful to this study. It also depicts that the respondents were conversant with the practices of strategic management in public service delivery in The Gambia.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics (Senior Public Servants)

Organisation of the Respondent	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
GCCPC	4	2.0	2.0
GRA	37	18.4	19.4
NAWEC	96	47.8	67.2
PURA	5	2.5	69.7
UTG	61	30.0	100.0
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Designation/Rank of the Respondent			
Director	8	4.0	4.0
Manager	17	8.5	12.4
Senior Officer	178	87.7	100.0
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Gender			
Male	139	68.5	68.5
Female	64	31.8	100.0
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Marital Status			
Single	64	31.8	31.8
Married	138	68.0	99.5
Separated/Divorced	1	0.5	**100.0**
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Age			

21 – 30years	69	34.3	34.3
31 – 40years	74	36.8	71.1
41 – 50years	50	24.6	95.0
51 – 60years	7	3.5	98.5
61years and above	3	1.5	**100.0**
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Highest Educational Qualification			
WASSCE	12	6.0	6.0
Diploma/HND	56	27.9	33.8
B.Sc./B.A.	67	33.3	67.2
Master's Degree	64	31.5	98.0
Ph.D.	4	2.0	**100.0**
Total	**203**	**100.0**	
Years of Service			
1 – 4years	55	27.4	27.4
5 – 10years	78	38.4	65.2
11 – 14years	27	13.4	78.6
15 – 20years	25	12.4	91.0
21 and above	18	9.0	100.0
Total	**203**	**100.0**	

Source: Field Survey (2019)

4.2 *Strategic Plan Implementation Procedures of PSOs*

This sub-section evaluated the strategic plan implementation procedures of PSOs and assessed. A set of assertions were carefully listed for respondents to evaluate the strategic plans implementation procedure of strategic management on public service delivery in the study area. Table 2 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents as well as, the mean score and standard deviation on each assertion. Its values/responses were organised using Likert scale of measurements, such as: strongly agree (5), agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Added to that, the mean value $(\overline{\chi})$ summarised the strength of the respondents for each statement, using a decision rule as thus: where $(\overline{\chi} < 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards disagreement; and where $(\overline{\chi} > 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards agreement.

As shown in Table 2, respondents' organisations clearly defined tasks when implementing strategic plans. The respondents were asked to react on the basis of the extent to which they agreed that respondents' organisations clearly defined tasks when implementing strategic plans. In their reactions, 69 representing 34.0% of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion; with a complementary trend of 71 (35.0%), of respondents agreeing, 42 representing 20.7% of the respondents were not sure of this assertion; while only 6 (3.0%), of respondents strongly disagreed, and 15 (7.4%) disagreed with the assertion. The mean value and standard deviation $(\overline{\chi} = 3.90, SD = 1.050)$ confirmed this frequency distribution. The interpretation of this distribution is that respondents' organisations clearly defined tasks when implementing strategic plans.

Respondents' organisations developed specific initiatives and projects to implement their strategic plans. In the respondents' reactions, 9 (4.4%) of respondents and 15 (7.4%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively; while 54 (26.6%) and 74 representing 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. This data distribution showed that a reasonable number of the respondents seemed to be in agreement with the assertion that respondent's organisations developed specific initiatives and projects in implementing strategic plans, as verified by mean value and standard deviation $(\overline{\chi} = 3.73, SD = 1.071)$.

On the other hand, it was reported that 49 (24.1%) of respondents rated the assertion that top management effectively acted in making strategic plans work, with a strong agreement, while 77 representing 37.9% of respondents only agreed with the assertion. However, 10 (4.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the position that top management effectively acted in making their strategic plans work, while 25 (12.3%) of respondents were believed to have disagreed with the position. A sizeable amount of the respondents 42 (20.7%) were not sure of their positions on this assertion. This implied that top management effectively acted in making strategic plans work, since the mean value (3.64) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. Furthermore, this confirmed that top management effectively acted to implement strategic plans, with mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi}$ = 3.64, SD = 1.123).

As depicted in Table 2, respondents were asked whether respondents' organisations tried to adjust the organisational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plans. In their responses, 34 representing 16.7% of respondents strongly agreed, while 73 (36.0%) agreed with this position. However, 8 (3.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the assertion that respondents' organisations tried to modify the organisational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plans, while 27 representing 13.3% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. Unlike the other respondents, 61 representing 30.0% of the respondents were not sure of their position on this assertion. This rather implied that respondents' organisations tried to adjust the organisational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plans, as verified by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi}$ = 3.48, SD = 1.045).

In addition, it was reported that 59 (29.1%) of respondents rated the assertion that the annual budgets of the respondents' organisations did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plan. with a strong agreement, while 64 representing 31.5% of the respondents only agreed with the assertion. However, 11 (5.4%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the position that the annual budgets of respondents' organisations did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plans and 26 (12.8%) of respondents were believed to have disagreed with the position. This implied that the annual budgets of respondents' organisations did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plans, since the mean value (3.50) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. This confirmed that respondents' organisations did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plans, with mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi}$ = 3.50, SD = 1.123).

As depicted in Table 2, respondents' organisations had monthly plans for implementing strategies. The respondents were asked to react on the basis of the extent to which they agreed that respondents' organisations had monthly plans for implementing strategies. Responding, 68 representing 33.5% of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion; with a complementary trend of 49 (24.1%) respondents agreed. Only 24 (11.8%) of respondents strongly disagreed and 33 (16.3%) disagreed with the assertion. The mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi}$ =3.13, SD = 1.120) confirmed this frequency distribution. The interpretation of this distribution is that respondents' organisations had monthly plans for implementing strategies.

It was assessed whether respondents' organisations frequently reviewed progress against targets when implementing plans. In the respondents' reactions, 19 (9.4%) respondents and 35 (17.2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively; while 62 (30.5%) of respondents and 51 representing 25.1% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. This data distribution showed that a reasonable number of respondents seemed to be in agreement with the assertion that respondents' organisations frequently reviewed progress against targets when implementing plans, as verified by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi}$ = 3.25, SD = 1.206).

On the other hand, it was reported that 77 (37.9%) of the respondents rated the assertion that respondents' organisations initially piloted strategies and then implemented them completely, with a strong agreement, while 57 representing 28.1% of respondents only agreed with the assertion. However, 16 (7.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the position that respondents'

organisations initially piloted strategies and implemented them completely, while 38 (18.7%) of respondents were believed to have disagreed with the position. This implied that respondents' organisations initially piloted strategies and implemented them completely, since the mean value (3.08) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. These results further confirmed that respondents' organisations initially piloted strategies and implemented them completely, with the mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.08, SD = 1.038).

As shown in Table 2, respondents' organisations implemented their strategies gradually, not promptly. The respondents were asked to react on the basis of the extent to which they agreed that respondents' organisations implemented strategies gradually, not promptly. In their reactions, 48 representing 23.6% of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion; with a complementary trend of 87 (42.9%) of respondents agreed. 26 representing 12.8% of the respondents were not sure of this assertion; while only 20 (9.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed and 21 (10.3%) disagreed with the assertion. The mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ =3.53, SD = 2.370) further confirmed this frequency distribution. The interpretation of this distribution is that respondents' organisations implemented their strategies gradually, not promptly.

Respondents' organisations amended their strategic plans where required during the implementation process. Reacting to this, 8 (3.9%) of the respondents and 35 (17.2%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively; while 35 (17.2%) of respondents and 65 representing 32.0% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. The data distribution showed that a reasonable number of respondents seemed to be in agreement with the assertion that respondents' organisations amended their strategic plans where required during the implementation process, as verified by mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.41, SD = 1.084).

On the other hand, it was reported that 71 (35.0%) of the respondents rated the assertion that respondents' organisations effected continuous slight changes to strategic plans to keep abreast with the environment during the implementation process, with a strong agreement while 63 representing 31.0% only agreed with the assertion. However, 10 (4.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the position that respondents' organisations effected continuous slight changes to strategic plans to keep abreast with the environment during the implementation process, and 35 (17.2%) of respondents were believed to have disagreed with the position. A sizeable amount of respondents 24 (11.8%) were not sure of their position on this assertion. This implied that respondents' organisations effected continuous slight changes to their strategic plans to keep abreast with the environment during implementation process, since the mean value (3.28) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. This further confirmed that respondents' organisations effected continuous slight changes to their strategic plans to keep abreast with the environment during implementation process, with mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.28, SD = 1.040).

In addition, it was reported that 69 (34.%) of respondents rated the assertion that the respondents' organisations developed their strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing, with a strong agreement, while 64 representing 31.5% of respondents only agreed with the assertion. However, 8 (3.9%) strongly disagreed with the position that organisations developed their strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing and 33 (16.3%) were believed to have disagreed with the position. This implied that respondents' organisations developed their strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing, since the mean value (3.36) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. These results confirmed that the organisations developed strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing, with mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.36, SD = 1.041).

As delineated in Table 2, respondents' organisations effected slight changes in human resource practices to support strategic plans implementation. The respondents were asked to react on the basis of the extent to which they agreed that respondents' organisations effected slight changes in human resource practices to support strategic plans implementation. In their reactions, 48 representing 23.6%

of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion; with a complementary trend of 84 (41.4%) of respondents agreed. Only 12 (5.9%) strongly disagreed and 27 (13.3%) disagreed with the assertion. The mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$=3.48, SD = 1.091) further confirmed this frequency distribution. The interpretation of this distribution is that respondents' organisations effected slight changes in human resource practices to support strategic plans implementation.

On a final note, respondents were asked whether their organisation used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures. Reacting to the assertion, 55 (27.1%) of respondents strongly agreed with this assertion and 72 representing 35.5% also agreed with the assertion. However, 13 representing 6.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with this assumption that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures, while 25 (12.3%) disagreed with the assumption and 18.7% representing 38 respondents were not sure of their position on this assertion. The result showed a remarkable agreement level with the assertion, though with little disagreement or indecision at 37.4% of respondents. This confirmed that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures, with mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 2.68, SD = 1.193).

Table 2: Strategic Plans Implementation Procedures

Assertions	Strongly Agree f and (%)	Agree f and (%)	Strongly Disagree f and (%)	Disagree f and (%)	Not Sure f and (%)	Descriptive Statistics N=203 Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Our organisation clearly defined tasks when implementing strategic plan	69 (34.0)	71 (35.0)	6 (3.0)	15 (7.4)	42 (20.7)	3.90	1.050
Our organisation developed specific initiatives and projects to implement their strategic plan.	54 (26.6)	74 (36.5)	9 (4.4)	15 (7.4)	51 (25.1)	3.73	1.071
Top management effectively acted to implement their strategic plan	49 (24.1)	77 (37.9)	10 (4.9)	25 (12.3)	42 (20.7)	3.64	1.123
Our organisation tried to adjust the organisational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plan	34 (16.7)	73 (36.0)	8 (3.9)	27 (13.3)	61 (30.0)	3.48	1.045
The annual budget of the respondent's organisation did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plan	59 (29.1)	64 (31.5)	11 (5.4)	26 (12.8)	43 (21.2)	3.50	1.123
Our organisation had monthly plans for implementing strategies	68 (33.5)	49 (24.1)	24 (11.8)	33 (16.3)	29 (14.3)	3.13	1.120
Our organisation frequently reviewed progress against targets when implementing plans	62 (30.5)	51 (25.1)	19 (9.4)	35 (17.2)	36 (17.7)	3.25	1.206
Our organisation initially piloted strategies and then implemented them completely.	77 (37.9)	57 (28.1)	16 (7.9)	38 (18.7)	15 (7.4)	3.08	1.038

Our organisation implemented its strategies gradually, not promptly.	48 (23.6)	87 (42.9)	20 (9.9)	21 (10.3)	26 (12.8)	3.53	2.370
Our organisation amended its strategic plans where required during the implementation process	35 (17.2)	65 (32.0)	8 (3.9)	35 (17.2)	60 (29.6)	3.41	1.084
Our organisation effected continuous slight changes to its strategic plans to keep abreast with its environment during the implementation process	71 (35.0)	63 (31.0)	10 (4.9)	35 (17.2)	24 (11.8)	3.28	1.040
Our organisation developed its strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing	69 (34.0)	64 (31.5)	8 (3.9)	33 (16.3)	29 (14.3)	3.36	1.041
Our organisation effected slight changes in human resource practices to support the strategic plan implementation.	48 (23.6)	84 (41.4)	12 (5.9)	27 (13.3)	32 (15.8)	3.48	1.091
Our organisation used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures.	55 (27.1)	72 (35.5)	13 (6.4)	25 (12.3)	38 (18.7)	3.48	1.123

Source: Field Survey (2019)
NB: *f=*Frequency*; %=*Percentage

4.3 *Examination of the Strategic Plans Evaluation*

This sub-section examined the strategic plans evaluation in PSOs. Eight (8) assertions were carefully listed for respondents to examine the strategic plans evaluation of strategic management on public service delivery in the study area. Table 3 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents as well as the mean score and standard deviation on each assertion. Its values/responses were organised using Likert scale of measurements, such as: Strongly Agreed (5) Agreed (4), Undecided (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1). In addition, the mean value $(\bar{\chi})$ summarised the strength of respondents for each statement, using a decision rule as thus: where $(\bar{\chi} < 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards disagreement; and where $(\bar{\chi} > 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards agreement.

On the first assertion in Table 3, 78 (38.4%) strongly agreed and 46 (22.7%) agreed to the assertion that an independent organisational unit/department was responsible for the strategic plan evaluation process. About 31 (15.3%) of respondents were not sure of this assertion; and an aggregate of 16 (7.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed and 32 (15.8%) disagreed on this assertion. This result showed a significant agreement level with the assertion, though with little disagreement by 23.7% of respondents. The position was confirmed by mean value and standard deviation $(\bar{\chi} = 3.22, SD = 1.127)$.

The respondents were asked to assess whether respondents' organisations benchmarked performance measures against other organisations. In their reactions, 77 (37.9%) of respondents strongly agreed and 60 (29.6%) agreed that respondents' organisations benchmarked performance measures against other organisations. However, 13 (6.4%) and 33 (16.3%) of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to this assertion. This implied that respondents' organisations benchmarked performance measures against other organisations, as shown by mean value and standard deviation $(\bar{\chi} = 3.20, SD = 1.036)$.

On the other hand, it was reported that 55 (27.1%) of respondents strongly agreed that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in evaluation, while 74 (36.5%) of respondents agreed to this assertion. However, 11 (5.4%) respondents strongly disagreed that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in evaluation, while 22 (10.8%) disagreed with this position. This implied that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in evaluation, since the mean value (3.74) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. These results confirmed that respondents' organisations used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in evaluation of strategic plans implementation process. The mean value and standard deviation $(\overline{\chi}=3.74, SD = 2.976)$ further confirmed this frequency distribution.

On the fourth item, respondents were investigated; if respondents' organisations regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to top management. In their reactions, 59 representing 29.1% of respondents strongly agreed that often time, respondents' organisations regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to top management, while 78 (38.4%) agreed on this assertion. However, 10 (4.9%) and 25 (12.3%) of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. This underlines the fact that often time, respondent's organisation regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to top management $(\overline{\chi} = 3.53, SD = 1.040)$.

In addition, respondents were asked to assess whether respondents' organisations regularly reported performance measures connected with strategic plans to the public and stakeholders. Reacting to the assertion, 67 (33.0%) of respondents strongly agreed and 56 (27.6%) agreed that respondents' organisations regularly reported performance measures connected with strategic plans to the public and stakeholders. However, 18 (8.9%) and 36 (17.7%) of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to this assertion. This implied that respondents' organisations regularly reported performance measures connected with strategic plans to the public and stakeholders, as shown by the mean value and standard deviation $(\overline{\chi} = 3.18, SD = 1.138)$.

In addition, it was reported that 64 (31.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that respondents' organisations regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plans, while 72 (35.5%) agreed to this assertion. However, 11 (5.4%) of respondents strongly disagreed that respondents' organisations regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plans, while 30 (14.8%) disagreed with this position. This implied that respondents' organisations regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plans, since the mean value (3.35) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. It further confirmed that respondents' organisations regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plans. The mean value and standard deviation $(\overline{\chi} =3.35, SD = 1.054)$ verified this frequency distribution.

On the other hand, it was reported that 70 (34.5%) of respondents strongly agreed that respondents' organisations used the results of performance measurement to track the achievement of objectives contained in the strategic plans, while 76 (37.4%) of the respondents agreed to this assertion. However, 10 (4.9%) of respondents strongly disagreed that respondents' organisations used the results of performance measurement to track the achievement of objectives contained in the strategic plans, while 26 (12.8%) disagreed with this position. These results implied that respondents' organisations used the results of performance measurement to track the achievement of objectives contained in the strategic plans, since the mean value (3.35) was beyond the mid-point at 2.5. This confirmed that respondents' organisations used the results of performance measurement to track the achievement of

objectives contained in the strategic plans. The mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ =3.35, SD = 0.996) further validated the frequency distribution.

On a final note, the respondents were asked to assess whether respondents' organisations took corrective actions based on reported performance measures. Reacting to this assertion, 54 (26.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 70 (34.5%) agreed that respondents' organisations took corrective actions based on reported performance measures. However, 12 (5.9%) and 37 (18.2%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to this assertion. This implied that respondents' organisations took corrective actions based on reported performance measures, as shown by the mean value and standard deviation ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.34, SD = 1.116).

Table 3: Examination of Strategic Plan Evaluation

Assertions	Strongly Agree f and (%)	Agree f and (%)	Strongly Disagree f and (%)	Disagree f and (%)	Not Sure f and (%)	Descriptive Statistics N=203 Mean Value	Standard Deviation
An independent organisational unit/department was responsible for the strategic plan evaluation process.	78 (38.4)	46 (22.7)	16 (7.9)	32 (15.8)	31 (15.3)	3.22	1.127
Our organisation benchmarked performance measures against other organisations.	77 (37.9)	60 (29.6)	13 (6.4)	33 (16.3)	20 (9.9)	3.20	1.036
Our organisation used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in its evaluation.	55 (27.1)	74 (36.5)	11 (5.4)	22 (10.8)	40 (19.7)	3.74	2.976
Our organisation regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to top management.	59 (29.1)	78 (38.4)	10 (4.9)	25 (12.3)	31 (15.3)	3.35	1.040
Our organisation regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to the public and stakeholders.	67 (33.0)	56 (27.6)	18 (8.9)	36 (17.7)	26 (12.8)	3.18	1.138
Our organisation regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plan.	64 (31.5)	72 (35.5)	11 (5.4)	30 (14.8)	26 (12.8)	3.35	1.054
Our organisation used the results of performance measurement to track the achievement of objectives contained in the strategic plan.	70 (34.5)	76 (37.4)	10 (4.9)	26 (12.8)	21 (10.3)	3.35	0.996
Our organisation took corrective actions based on reported performance measures.	54 (26.6)	70 (34.5)	12 (5.9)	37 (18.2)	30 (14.8)	3.34	1.116

Source: Field Survey (January - June, 2019)
NB: *ƒ=Frequency; %=Percentage*

4.4   Discussion of Findings

This section provides supplementary discussion on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. It synchronises the findings with relevant existing studies on strategic management/strategic planning and public service delivery issues. Furthermore, the discussion of findings confirmed the similarity or divergence of opinions between the results of the study and extant literature. In line with the four objectives, first, the study examined strategic management practices for public service delivery in The Gambia.

The findings on the study objectives are discussed under two (2) minor themes: evaluation of the strategic plan implementation procedures; and examination of the strategic plan evaluation. The findings of the study on the evaluation of strategic plans implementation procedures established that in practising strategic management, PSOs followed fourteen (14) strategic plan implementation procedures with mean values ($\overline{\chi} > 2.5$) for all 14 assertions: clearly defined tasks when implementing strategic plans; developed specific initiatives and projects to implement their strategic plans; and top management effectively acted to implement their strategic plans. Additionally, management tried to adjust the organisational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plan; did strongly support the objectives and priorities established in the strategic plan; had monthly plans for implementing strategies; and frequently reviewed progress against targets when implementing plans.

Furthermore, PSOs initially piloted strategies and implemented them completely; implemented its strategies gradually, not promptly; and amended their strategic plans where required during the implementation process. Also, PSOs effected continuous slight changes to their strategic plans to keep abreast with the environment during the implementation process; developed strategic plans through continuous review process while implementing; effected slight changes in human resource practices to support the strategic plan implementation; and used diverse types of performance measures like financial, customer, internal process and learning measures.

The analysis of the study data on strategic plans implementation procedures showed that PSOs remarkably followed a series of formalised activities and actions needed for implementing their strategic plans because all 14 assertions were rated more than a mean value of 2.5 ($\overline{\chi} > 2.5$). These results corroborated the findings of Elbanna (2013) on extensive application of strategic plans implementation process within UAE public organisations. The findings of the study also supported the assertion of Bryson, Edwards and Van Slyke (2017) that to gain the benefits of strategic planning in the public sector, a group of concepts, procedures, tools, and practices must be utilised thoughtfully and contingently in specific situations.

The findings on objective two, which is examination of strategic plans evaluation discovered that in practising strategic management, PSOs followed eight (8) strategic plans evaluation procedures with mean values ($\overline{\chi} > 2.5$) for all eight assertions verified by standard deviations. The results exhibited a considerable agreement with each of the following assertions for the PSOs: an independent organisational unit/department was responsible for the strategic plan evaluation process; benchmarked performance measures against other organisations; and used diverse types of performance measures such as financial, customer, internal process and learning measures in its evaluation. Added to that, PSOs regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to top management; regularly reported performance measures connected with the strategic plan to the public and stakeholders; and regularly used performance measures to track the implementation of initiatives and projects called for by the strategic plan. Also, PSOs used the results of performance measurements to track the achievement of objectives contained in the strategic plans; and took corrective actions based on reported performance measures.

The analysis of data on strategic plans evaluation indicated that PSOs satisfactorily followed series of formalised activities and actions needed for evaluating the implementation of such strategic plans because all (eight) assertions were rated more than a mean value of 2.5 ($\overline{\chi} > 2.5$). These results validated the findings of Elbanna (2013) on the high degree of evaluation of strategic plans within the

United Arab Emirates (UAE) public organisations, and Hendrick (2003); Poister and Streib (2005); and Androniceanu (2017) that performance measures were used to monitor progress of strategic initiatives.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study showed that the selected PSOs had track record of implementing and evaluating strategic plans and they had current strategic plans that contained essential components of a viable strategic plan. The results of the study found evidence of strategic management practices for PSD in the sampled PSOs in The Gambia. Also, the study established that PSOs followed formalised strategy implementation and evaluation processes in developing strategic plans with key elements included. The findings concluded that the selected PSOs developed formal strategic plans; developed procedures for strategic plans implementation; evaluated strategic plans; and generally registered satisfactory successes in strategic plans implementation. To improve strategic plans implementation and evaluation, the Government of The Gambia should increase the amount of budgetary allocations to PSOs, which will permit them to provide the needed facilities, infrastructure, and professionals in order to fulfil their constitutional obligations of providing the necessary services to the public.

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