



FACTORS AFFECTING STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION LEADING TO SUSTAINABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF SISTER MINISTERS OF THE INFIRM OF ST. CAMILLUS IN KENYA

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Abstract: *Studies have revealed that well formulated strategy, efficient and effective strategy implementation has significant influence on organization's success leading to sustainability, wherein, an absence of sufficient implementation process hinders organization's success. Yet little research if any has been done in religious congregations and none had been carried out in the Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm (MI) which has been in existence in Kenya since 1976. In this study, we empirically examined the extent of strategic plan implementation success in the years 2014-2017 in the Institute of MI. Secondly, the study investigated the critical factors influencing the implementation of the strategic plan. It was guided by two theories, namely: Resource Based View Theory (RBVT) and Upper Echelons Theory (UET). A case study research design was adopted and employed a mixed method approach skewing towards description in generating and analyzing data. The data was collected through questionnaires, individual interviews, and documents of MI. In-depth interviews and surveys were drawn from 28 Sister Ministers of the Infirm in Kenya. The findings revealed that the implementation of the strategic plan was significantly effective. In addition, 3 key success factors that influenced the implementation process were identified, namely: Human capital with greatest influence of 96.4%, Effective leadership, and lastly financial resources. It was concluded that the above factors had significant impact on the strategy implementation process. The study recommends the top leadership of Institute of the Infirm to be more effective, and to renew the strategic plan as it moves towards the Institutes' sustainability; in addition, to invest in the local available resources for an efficient, effective and full implementation of strategies in its efforts towards sustainability. The researchers recommend another study to be carried out in more than one religious Congregation for the sake of valid generalization of findings and significant contribution to theory building.*

Key Words: *Sister Ministers of the Infirm (MI), Strategy Implementation, Effective Leadership, Sustainability, Human Capital & Financial resources*

1.1 Study background

The practice of strategic planning and implementation has become an important aspect in the Church organizations, especially at a time when the Church is faced with the challenge to examine its effectiveness in attaining the goal of charitable service delivery and sustainability. According to Michael Porter (1996), strategy rests on unique activities of an organization bringing out its difference. Strategy means “deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value”. It is holistic and systematic, that is; many parts but one big interconnected sub-system (Porter, 1996). John M Bryson et al. (2018) similarly describe strategic planning as deliberate and disciplined efforts that aims at coming up with essential decisions and actions (Bryson, Edwards, & Slyke, 2018). Strategy implementation is an activity which involves putting the plans into action. An efficient and effective strategy implementation has significant influence on organization’s success leading towards sustainability. Basically, a well formulated, effectively and successfully implemented strategy is key for any organization’s success, continuity and sustainability. However, an absence of effective strategy implementation process can act as a hindrance to organization’s success thus compromising the survival and sustainability of its projects (Raps, 2004; Schaap, 2006; Ngali, 2017).

Globally, success of organizations depends on effective strategic plan implementation, which is hard to attain. According to (Raps; 2004) success rate of implementation ranges from 10% to 30%. A study conducted by Rajasekar (2014) indicated that success rates range from 20% to 50%. Organizations which emphasize on effective strategy implementation evidenced great success in achieving their goals compared to poor implementers (Shah, 1996; Mbithi, 2016). Worldwide, it has been established that despite well formulated strategies, many organizations have failed in the strategy execution due to unsuccessful implementation (Yang Li, 2010). A study conducted by (Verweire, 2014) indicated that there is significant failure rates of 40% to 90% in strategy execution due to quality of the strategy itself, the strategy implementation efforts as well as quality of the leadership team that is in charge of strategy implementation. Due to experience of higher failure rates in strategy implementation by organizations, more focus and attention should be given by top leadership management to implementing the strategy (Shah, 1996; Lorange, 1998; Charles A. O’Reilly, 2010; Suzanne M. Carter., 2013; Rajasekar, 2014).

The literature in the field of organizations strategy shows that effective implementation of strategic plans can lead to significant success and benefits for an organization such as; improving organization’s productivity and product quality by implication of sustainability of an organization (Raps, 2004; Muhoro, 2011). Here sustainability means that the newly and successfully implemented strategic plans continues to deliver the achieved benefits over a longer period of time even after the completion of implementation phase (Stephanie M C Ament., 2014).

A study by (Karimi, 2007) indicated four main determinants of successful strategy implementation in an organization. These included: the awareness of the persons responsible for carrying out the strategy, the changes in organizational structure and design, responsibility of the different departments and the kind of information systems put in place to monitor progress. Similarly, a recent study by (Rajasekar, 2014) proposed factors that may affect the strategy implementation leading towards sustainability. They include: leadership style, human resources, information availability and accuracy, organizational structure and culture, and technology among others (Raps, 2004; Armstrong, 2009; Christopher A. Brumm, 2013; Suzanne M. Carter., 2013; Brueller, 2016). In addition, a recent research study by (Warui 2016) showed that successful strategy implementation compels organization to having a strong leadership and policies that support the strategy.

This study is based on the strategic plan implementation of the period 2014 – 2017 of the MI in Kenya whose mission started in 1976 when they first came to Kenya. However, globally, the Sister Ministers of the Infirm was founded in Italy in 1829 by Blessed Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini whose essence

of the Charism was witnessing the love of God to the sick, while her mission was to visit, assist and serve the poor sick and dying brethren. Hence, this is the mission of the MI worldwide.

The strategic plan was designed with the intent to enhance the success and Institute's sustainability and to fulfil their mission of visiting, assisting and serving the poor sick and the dying.

The study examined the factors that influenced the success case in strategy implementation of the strategic framework 2014 – 2017. There had been significant decline not only in funding of their apostolates but also motivations, including energetic activations, and leadership especially in Kenya. However after the processes there seemed to be significant improvement. Hence, this study investigated empirically the factors influencing strategic plan implementation success and implications for sustainability of the mission activities of the religious organization of the Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St. Camillus (MI) in Kenya.

Not much research study has been carried out regarding the organization's sustainability after a successful strategy implementation phase. This then poses a question: What are the critical factors affecting strategic plan implementation process in the religious organization in Kenya?

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Strategy formulation and implementation in organizations are important aspects of the strategy safari for the success and sustainability of organizations in general. Church institutions such as the Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm are adopting these practices for their effectiveness especially in the wake of new challenge of donor funding. While Miller (Kent Miller, 2002) appreciates strategic management contribution to effectiveness of religious institutions, Gomez & Moore (2006) caution the practices in religious organizations since they are different from Corporations (Gomez & Moore, 2006). However, Drucker (1990) argues that management practices is necessary for all organizations' effectiveness and sustainability. Although strategy formulation is important, its execution is even more important despite the fact that it is the greatest challenging process especially in the top management (Greer, Lusch, & Hitt, 2017). Rajasekar (2014) points out that Poor leadership is the biggest obstacle to strategy execution. The Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St. Camillus (MI) in Kenya had embarked on strategy formulation and implementation in the years 2014-2017 with the aim of enhancing effectiveness leading to self-Sustainance. There were indications that the Institute had made some progress yet no empirical study had been done to verify the observations. Likewise, as Greer et al have stated there is knowledge gap in this area. Hence, the objective of this study was to empirically investigate the extent to which strategy implementation was achieved and to identify critical success factors influencing strategy implementation in the Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St. Camillus (MI) in Kenya.

1.3 Study Objectives

- i. To empirically examine the extent of strategic plan implementation success in the years 2014-2017 in the Institute of MI.
- ii. To Investigate the critical factors influencing the implementation of the strategic plan; focus on Leadership, Human capital and Financial resources.

1.4 Justification

This study contributed to the pool of knowledge and increase in literature on strategic plan implementation within Church Institutions by introducing the notion of leadership style, human capital, and financial and human resources as success factors as seen in the case of the Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St. Camillus in Kenya. The strategic plan implementation plays an important role and greatly

influences success of religious organizations and hence impacting on their efforts towards sustainability.

1.5 Theoretical frameworks

The study was guided by two theories; Resource Based View theory (RBV) and Upper Echelon theory (UET). Resource Based theory was appreciated by Miller (2002) on the study on Competitive strategies of religious organizations.

In 1959, Edith Penrose, wrote a book on the theory of the growth of the firm that provided the intellectual foundation for current resource based theory of the firm. This theory has been considered by many scholars in the field of strategy leading to competitive advantage phase which had later moved to sustainable phase. Her main contribution was our understanding of how organizations grow with resources which are valuable, rare and appropriate. Most RBV researchers (Bhide, 2000; Peteraf and Barney, 2003; and Foss and Knudsen, 2003) as cited in Mbithi (2016) hold it that the resources affect an organizations ability to execute its game plan strategies which in turn affects organizational performance (Mbithi, 2016). Our study is anchored on this most influential theory in the history of management which Drucker (2007) on the practice on management acknowledges as the most influential Institution without whose leadership, the resources remain unproductive. It explains the role played by internal resources that being controlled and utilized by an organization results to high level of performance which in turn enhances organizational sustainability. The Upper Echelons Theory compliments the Resource Based theory by explaining the different positions and roles in an organization and how this affects strategy implementation and realization of set goals and objectives of the organization. The theory is relevant and applicable to this study as it indicates some of the new models for strategic leadership, organizational governance, decision making. Without effective managerial leadership organizations cannot be successful or sustainable.

1.6 Literature Review

The section empirically reviews the main critical factors that influence the success of strategy implementation and the impact on organizational sustainability. Tawse & Tabesh (2020) states that a strategy implementation is a key factor to organizational success to attain its goal. Strategy implementation has been found to be key for survival and sustainability of any organization. Rajasekar (2014) posit that although many organizations have a robust strategy formulation, they fail to sustain their competitive advantages because they lack the processes in implementing the strategies.

Key Factors affecting strategic implementation

The process of implementing strategic plans in any organization is faced by many factors. According to Rajasekar, factors that affect strategy implementation include: leadership style, information availability and accuracy, uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational culture, human resources, and technology. He noted that each of these factors impact strategy implementation at different level with a different force. Following are some of the highlighted factors that affect strategy implementation in organizations.

Human and financial resources

For this study, Human Resources (HR) refers to the people who belong to the Institute of Sister Minister of the Infirm who have taken commitment as members of the Institute and share the common spirituality and Culture. Whereas Human Capital Resource (HCR) is the Institute's aggregate including attitudes, personalities, values, knowledge, skills, motivations, abilities and has a major institute's specific component that is contingent on the strategy being implemented (Geer et al 2017). Uju Violet Alola (2018) noted that a high level of human capital increases productivity hence, a positive effect on

organizational Sustainability. Rajasekar postulated that human resources are key strategic resources and that effective management of the human resources plays an important role in the effective implementation of strategic plans. He continues to say that involving human resources in key aspects such as decision making, which increases their competencies and commitment is very essential. Organizations that get their human resources involved and motivated through rewards are certain to record a positive influence on the implementation of strategy. Thus, according to (Mbithi, 2016) Strategy implementation success is highly dependent on human resource and less on organization and systems related factors. Allocating adequate resources to a given strategy implementation leads to greater organizational performance therefore enhancing organizations' sustainability.

Organizational Leadership

Warui posited that successful strategy implementation compels organization to having a strong leadership and policies that support the strategy and a very high level of focus on activities. Strategy implementation tests leaders' skills, ability to direct organizational change, motivation skills and ability to develop capabilities and organizational culture to support the strategy (Kotter 2001; Warui 2016). He also argues that people's skills are at the center of strategy implementation.

Cater and Pucko (2010) agree with Rajasekar (2014) that poor leadership is the biggest obstacle to strategy implementation and execution. Likewise, Mintzberg (2019) points out that there are too many self-selected and self-serving leaders who think they have leadership qualities yet they do not truly behave as leaders, therefore this will definitely not lead to successful strategy implementation or self-sustenance. Strategy implementation demands change which is a domain of leadership.

Charlie A. O'Reilly (2010) states that to realize performance gains from a strategic change requires that both senior and subordinate leaders effectively communicate the strategy and take actions to ensure its implementation. If subordinate leaders are not committed to the strategy, implementation is at risk.

The success of strategy implementation is a function of effective leadership as echoed by (Jabbar, Hussein, & Kotter, 2017). According to Rajasekar (2014), leaders of organizations are charged with the responsibilities of coordinating organization's activities, streamlining processes, aligning the organizational structure, and keeping employees motivated and committed to strategy implementation. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) as quoted in (Rajasekar 2014) argued that poor coordination across functions and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development are killers of strategy implementation in an organization. Therefore, commitment and leadership of top-level management is essential in strategy implementation. Also, the type of leadership style employed in a given organization determines how the chosen strategies will be implemented.

1.7 Methodology

A single case study design was adopted to identify the extent to which the strategic plan was implemented key success factors influencing strategy implementation plans leading towards Institute's sustainability as perceived by the Sister Ministers of the Infirm in Kenya after their strategic plan implementation. A case study (Mbithi, 2016; Babbie, 2016) focuses on a single organization as a unit of analysis so as to get in-depth information and understanding about the organization.

The researcher interviewed two members at top leadership and other three members at the institute of MI sisters in Kenya who had different professional trainings, and years of experience in their missionary activities. The study design assisted in identifying the critical influencing factors to successful strategic plan implementation and its impact on the road to holistic sustainability of the religious Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm in Kenya.

A qualitative approach was used in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors that led to the success of the MI sisters in their implementation strategy. Also, the survey questionnaires

administered to the twenty eight respondents helped the researcher to obtain their different opinions on both the challenges faced and success factors in strategy implementation in the MI institute in Kenya.

Study Location, population and Sample selection.

The study was conducted in Nairobi Kenya among the Institute of MI Sisters. The 35 Sisters that constituted the study population are from different socio-cultural backgrounds but share the same faith, spirituality and charisms. Being religious sisters, all the participants are female with age range of 25 to 60. Out of 35 participants, all the 28 participants who have lived in the institute for at least 15 years and participated in the formulation and implementation of the strategic plan for 2014 – 2017 were interviewed. Census method was used to select the 28 sisters due to the small number of study population. The 5 participants for qualitative interviews were purposively selected due to their different professional trainings, better knowledge and experience in leadership and implementation of strategic plans.

Research Instruments

The study used two instruments, a questionnaire, and interview guide. The questionnaires and interview guide were used to obtain primary data from the respondents, whereas secondary data were drawn from the MI Institute's documents and statistical records, relevant journals, unpublished research articles, the internet, and published textbooks.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is one of the instruments used by a researcher to gather data in order to get different personal experiences and shed more light on participant's perception on the causes and solutions to a problem under study. The research used one questionnaire for 28 participants. 28 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions to facilitate and make easy data gathering and analysis. The questionnaire was given to the 28 participants of MI Institute including the top leadership. This allowed the study to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, that is section A and B: Section A was primarily concerned with data collection on demographic characteristics of the target population (age, years of stay in the Institute, career training and work experience, education level of participants among others), whereas Section B contained independent variables. The developed questionnaire adopted the following item of a Likert scale (e.g. 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2=Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree). A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the research objective.

It was essential to use this instrument in this study since it had many advantages which include its ability to obtain a detailed information about the members, their progress and challenges in strategic plan implementation process geared to self-sustainability. In addition, questionnaire was appropriate because the respondent's identity remained undisclosed and this gave them the freedom and confidence in responding to the questions asked, and also as noted by Bryman (2012), questionnaires makes it easy to collect data from a wide section of respondents in a relatively cheap process and short duration, in other words, questionnaires are economical to use in terms of time and money.

Interviews guide

Qualitative research was used to understand the views of the MI members, to unfold the meaning of experiences, and to bring to light their own lived experiences during the period of implementation of the strategic plan.

The study used semi-structured interviews for interviewees. A set of structured questions were used to guide the researcher in asking key questions and information on the role of strategic plan implementation on sustainability of MI Institute in Kenya.

The interviews were appropriate because it has the advantage of giving the researcher the possibilities to clarify unclear statements and inquire for more information from the respondents being in direct contact and engage in personal interactions with the respondents so as to get firsthand information from and experiences of the participants.

Two members in top leadership and other three members were interviewed, they were at the same time among the 28 respondents who had been issued with the questionnaires, and this was meant solely for reliability, consistency, and validity check. For validity purposes, piloting was done by testing the questionnaire on a few members before being distributed to all informants. There was seeking of feedbacks from the sisters to get the relevant information.

Validity and Reliability

In line with (Mugenda, 2003; Kisilu 2006; & Babbie, 2016), the validity and reliability of this study was achieved through seeking internal and external expert inputs. In addition, the data were collected from 80% of the informants. The findings were critiqued by the experts after they had been presented to the informants who were the Sister Ministers of the Infirm (MI).

Data Collection Techniques

Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with 5 MI Sisters, 2 of them from top leadership team and 3 Sisters from leadership of different communities and involved in various mission activities in their different communities. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires administered by the researcher to the 28 participants. Data was captured in SPSS version 25 for further coding, editing and analysis. The participants were purposively selected due to their better knowledge and experiences in designing and implementation of strategic plans. Interviews were recorded through notes taken by the researcher.

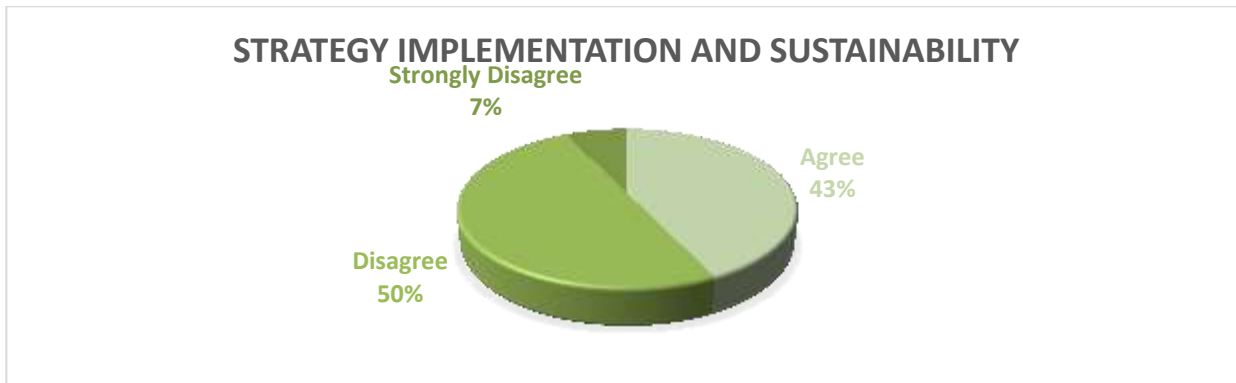
Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics inform of frequencies and percentages was used for the quantitative using SPSS version 25. The data was presented in forms of tables and charts. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded on three occasions with 11 out of 35 members.

1.8 Data analysis and interpretation

The data collected was coded, edited and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in forms of charts, frequencies, percentages, and tables which facilitated description and explanation of the study findings. The data collected and analyzed answered to the research questions on the extent of strategic plan implementation success process and its impact on sustainability of the religious Institute of MI.

Figure 1: The influence of strategic plan Implementation leading to sustainability in the year 2014-2017



Source: Field Data, 2019

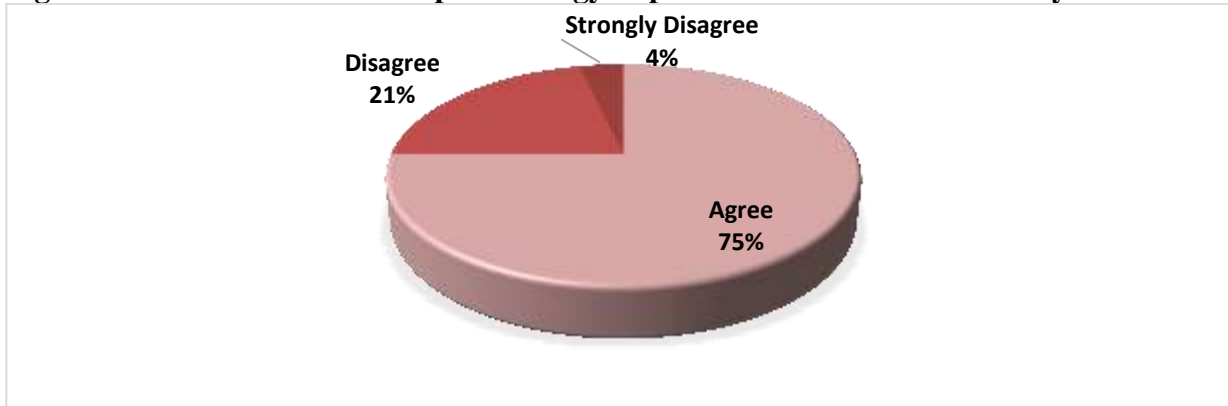
The respondents were asked to indicate if strategic plan implementation had influenced the process leading towards sustainability in their Institute. While 42.9% (12) of the respondents agreed that indeed strategic plan was implemented and was influencing the efforts towards sustainability, 57.1% (16) disagreed. As revealed in the qualitative interviews, this finding can be attributed to the fact that strategic plan issue was something new and the members had not yet clearly and fully understood it. This attests to the findings of (Mutiso, 2017) that at times strategies may take long duration to be implemented especially when majority of the members do not fully understand the strategies of the Institute. Nevertheless, 42.9% of the respondents were interested to understand and developed a positive attitude and found this document very meaningful and useful for the Institute’s efforts to forge ahead towards self-sustainability.

Critical factors affecting strategic plan implementation

This section presents analysis and findings on factors affecting strategy implementation at the Institute of MI in relation to Institute’s performance and sustainability. The questions asked to the respondents were meant to collect views about the various factors affecting strategic plan implementation process. The respondents were asked about their opinion whether the following factors which include: leadership, human capital and financial resources, are important in strategic plan implementation.

Effective Leadership and Strategy Implementation

Figure 2: Influence of leadership in strategy implementation for sustainability



Source: Field data, 2019

Leadership is a key component in the implementation of a strategic plan. Leadership affects implementation by driving the strategy, maintaining focus, being visionary, and acting as a driver for change management necessitated by the new strategy. The findings shown in table 5 indicate that 75% respondents agree that there was effective leadership in the 3 years of strategy implementation, whereas, 21.4% and 3.6% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree. Leadership is acknowledged to be one of the most effective factor in ensuring successful implementation.

Human capital and strategic plan implementation for sustainability

Figure 3: Enhancement of human capital.



Source: Field data, 2019

One of the objectives on the strategic plan set out to be achieved by Sister Ministers of the Infirm was on training and education, increase in the number of sisters, novices, aspirants and candidates. As presented by the statistics, it is clear that the above objective was accomplished at a percentage of 96.4%, with 50% and 46.4% of respondents strongly agreeing that there was an increase in the number of trained sisters whereas, 3.6% disagreed citing that the increase in number of sisters was insignificant.

Qualitative data indicates that one of the major weaknesses under the human resource based in the MI in Kenya has been the underdeveloped human capital, decrease in numbers of human resources and vocations. Regarding the question whether there was enhanced human capital in the institute to steer the strategy implementation and improve sustainability, 96.4% of the respondents attested that there was increase in number and retention of the sisters, new recruits into the Institute, and human capital enhancement through education and capacity building trainings. As confirmed by Armstrong (2017), attracting and retaining human capital as well as getting better returns call for training and developing of the human capital. The percentage presented above may be an indication that the strategic plan implementation successes were realized in some areas which necessitated improved performance leading to the achievement of the goal which is geared towards sustainability of the Institute.

When two top leadership team members were asked about the effect of human capital in strategy implementation, the respondents agreed and considered training and enhancing of the human capital was very critical in the strategy implementation. The major concern in enhancing human capital was to enable the MI Institute to become more efficient and effective in service delivery and so moving towards achievement of the Institute’s sustainability. Human capital enhancement in the Institute improved the productivity and ended with significant number of skilled and motivated members, and their efficiency and effectiveness were observed to some extent.

In another instance, when one respondent was asked about the kind, level and quality of her training and its effect on her apostolic activity, her response indicated that she was not engaged in the apostolate in which she had been trained in, and was not feeling competent and productive and this was likely to affect her efforts in strategy implementation process. She seemed to disagree with the manner of deployment and allocation of responsibilities within the Institute. The finding may imply that even though top leadership considered training and enhancing human capital was critical in strategy implementation, the consideration and placement of human resource needed to be reinforced.

The MI religious Institute leadership will need to ensure proper placement of the trained human resources and continue to provide opportunities and offer relevant training to its members in order to help them gain new knowledge and right competencies that will help them become more effective in their apostolic services. Getting new knowledge and skills will enable them to have a change of mindset, become more reflective and creative so that they enhance their services and hence an opportunity for sustainability of the Institute.

Financial Resources and Strategy Implementation for Sustainability

Table 1. Resources' availability for strategic plan implementation towards sustainability

	Item	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Agree	6	21.4
	Disagree	19	67.9
	Strongly disagree	2	7.1
	Total	27	96.4
Non-response	System	1	3.6
Total		28	100.0

Source: Field data, 2019

Resources both financial and non-financial are essential to ensure the sustainability of the community. While 67.9% of the respondents stated that they disagree based on the presence of resources, 7.1% strongly disagree, and 21.4% agree that there are resources essential to ensure sustainability of the Institute.

On the question of whether there were resources available to ensure the sustainability of the Institute, majority of the respondents indicated that there were no adequate resources particularly financial resources for ensuring sustainability of the Institute, this was because some of the respondent's main focus and perception was on international donor funding. Whereas others confirmed that indeed the funds were raised though not sufficient to implement all the strategic plan activities, and that there were non-financial resources but only needed creative innovation and effective management. This may be an indication that the strategy implementation and sustainability of the Institute is still in want in terms of finances and human capital. This agitates for critical attention to identification and resource mobilization, and resource management since these directly affects the implementation of the other aspects of the strategic plans. This affirms the findings of Barney et al. (2011) who argued that resources tangible and intangible, including skills of managing firms, are critical and useful in the implementation of strategies which in turn are likely to lead to Organization's sustainability.

Although the quantified data in table 1 shows that the majority disagreed on the presence of financial and non-financial resources and its positive impact on strategy implementation process, but on the contrary, the evidence illustrates that the strategic plan implementation was achieved and as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Indicators of finance access and success in strategic plan implementation in MI Institute

Sources of Finances and Projects	Percentage
Local contribution 1. Focused on women and youth empowerment	4%
Local contribution 2. Focused on women and youth empowerment	1%
Donor 3. Funds secured for Pastoral Centre	6%
Private donation 4. Funds secured for Pastoral Centre	5%
Donor 5. Youth Vocation Centre Construction	22%
Local funding 6. Bore hole drilling Project in Molo, Nakuru county	2%
Donor 7. Construction of Dispensary (Health facility in Molo, Nakuru county)	60%
Total Funds raised	100%

Source: (Infirm, 2018)

The success in fundraising was realized as a result of strategy implementation, even though the funds raised could not be adequate to implement all the planned objectives. Table 2 above illustrates the achievement made by the MI Institute within the year 2014-2017, in raising funds for the Institute's new entrepreneurial initiatives. It was observed that the strategic plan was a very useful document as a learning tool over the past three years' journey of the delegation.

1.9 Discussion

Strategy implementation

The study established that strategic plan implementation was achieved as acknowledged by 42.9% of respondents as shown in table 1 despite the fact that 57.1% did not agree perhaps because it was a new process for them and also their point of perception was biased based on the fact that the previous annual general assembly plans had not been implemented. Unlike Gomez & Moore (2006) who caution the practices of strategy formulation and implementation in religious organizations since they are different from Corporations, on the other hand, this study appreciate highly the strategic planning and implementation processes that they can lead towards the sustainability of the religious Institute of Ministers of the Infirm where the study was done.

Since this was a case study, the findings apply to Sister Ministers of the Infirm, however, it may shed light on similar religious Congregations in the environment of funding challenges under the leadership of the African religious Sisters.

Success factors

Effective leadership is essential and needed for effective strategic plan implementation to ensure all organizational effort to achieve organization's set goals. This finding concurs with that of Beer and Eisenstat (2000) who noted that commitment and leadership of top-level management is essential in strategy implementation.

As indicated in the results on table 2, the majority of the respondents agreed that there was a positive improvement in areas of leadership and management of the delegation in the past 3 years, 2014-2017, and that this would guarantee effective strategic plan implementation thus leading to the Institute's improved performance and in turn Institute's sustainability. The top leadership of MI was in the forefront in providing effective leadership to enable strategy implementation. They provided the needed guidance and direction toward achieving the goal of the Institute which is sustainability. The leadership also showed an active team spirit in the strategy implementation process. The 21.4% and

3.6% respondents were of the contrary opinion in regard to the effectiveness of leadership at the MI indicating that effectiveness of leadership and management still need to improve. The vast majority trusts the leadership role in making a strategy work. This is consistent with the findings observed by (Warui 2016) that successful strategy implementation compels organization to having a strong leadership and policies that support the strategy. Leadership is one of the organizational competence that must be developed if an organization is to survive or sustain in a competitive environment. As stated by John Kotter (1999), leadership has the role to inspire change in organizations which implies to Sister Ministers of the Infirm (Kotter, 2001) .

In light of this, the religious Institutes require an effective leadership that enables the Institute to move towards growth and self-sustainability.

The study also revealed that the presence of human capital was crucial in the efforts towards strategy implementation in the religious Institute which is in line with the finding of Uju Violet Alola, (2018) who noted that high level of human capital has a positive effect on organizational Sustainability and Sustaining human capital increases productivity.

This is also echoed by (Mbithi, 2016) who said that strategy implementation success is highly dependent on human resource and less on organization and systems related factors. For instance, the MI Institute observed a significant human capital enhancement which was manifested in the increase in numbers of aspirants, novices and sisters; improvement in levels of education of the members e.g. in the past 3 years, seven sisters increased their knowledge and skills through upgrading in various fields such as degree in nursing, organizational leadership and management, project management, teaching, and accountancy (MI statistic records, 2017). These facilitated the strategy implementation process.

The study noted that strategic plan implementation played a significant role in improving the performance thus leading towards sustainability of the religious Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm through enhancing human capital and developing human resources, providing good leadership, sourcing for financial resources locally and internationally, and deploying these resources in the Institute.

Before the strategic plan formulation, development and implementation, the MI Institute in Kenya depended on the donation from the General Council in Rome and well-wishers. Therefore, one of the objectives in the strategic plans was to raise funds locally and internationally to improve the services and existing apostolates as well as venture into other new entrepreneurial projects.

The success in fundraising was realized as a result of strategy implementation, even though the funds raised could not be adequate to implement all the planned objectives.

1.10 Conclusions

The main objective of the study was to establish the extent to which strategic plan implementation was realized leading towards sustainability of the religious Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm (MI) in Kenya. Secondly, the study empirically investigated the critical factors influencing implementation of strategic plans in the religious Institute. A case study research design was adopted and employed a mixed method approach skewing towards description in collection and analysis of the data.

The study was done in the religious Institute of Sister Ministers of the Infirm where there has not been any such study done before. This study brings a new understanding of strategy in the religious organization context. The second contribution is that the organization's strategic plan was successful in the implementation process which is not normally difficult to attain. In the case study, leadership, human and financial resources have been identified as critical success factors in strategy implementation.

For the Sister Ministers of the Infirm Institute to move towards achieving its goal of sustainability, it is logical to ensure the existence of an implementable strategy and its alignment to effective leadership,

human capital and financial resources. The study concluded that strategy implementation was a critical factor in improving and enhancing the performance which is geared towards sustainability of the religious Institute of MI through providing effective leadership, enhancing human capital and developing more human resources, and sourcing for financial resources.

The study is limited in that it specifically applies to the Sister Ministers of the Infirm but can still inspire other religious Institutions if used cautiously

Strategy implementation needs effective leadership to provide vision which describes the desired future, challenging and inspiring, and positive life-giving. Leadership has the role to help other people perceive and realize benefits and motivations of the strategic safari. Beyond the document which is just symbol of collective future direction to reach the promised land of Canaan, self- sustaining consecrated team with the strategic plan is an effective tool symbolizing God's creative power infused in people, who craft the strategic plan. The managerial leadership role is absolutely critical to effective implementation of strategic plan to reach and celebrate the expected outcomes.

1.11 Recommendations

The Sister Ministers of the Infirm with their goal of self-sustenance, need to ensure that the Institute has effective leadership for strategy development and implementation. The leadership has the role to provide avenues for participation in decision making and regular communication to enable the participants to give their inputs in the policies, goals, and strategies.

Availability and deployment of resources within the Institute should be in line with the implementation of strategic plan.

Based on the limitation of the case study, it is highly recommended to carry out a study in more than one religious Congregation for the sake of valid generalization of findings and significant contribution to theory building.

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