

REVIEW

## Pitfalls on strategy execution of an organization: A literature review

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to explore the pitfalls on strategy execution of an organization as organizations often unable to meet objectives and most likely fails, and this is normally attributed due to the inefficiency on the strategy implementation process. To address this gap, the research employed a deductive approach with exploratory research design by focusing on qualitative data as a systematic review of theoretical and empirical studies are more vital for this type of research. The study focused on a systematic literature review (SLR) of 22 peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical studies. By using a review and generalization of the existing approaches followed by synthesizing with relevant model portrayed organizations seriously faced a challenge on implementation phase and the inability to properly address the pitfalls on strategy execution process costs a lot especially to senior and top executives as they are primarily responsible for the successful execution of an organization strategy. Hence, organizations shall establish a clear evaluation system and sense of ownership for successful implementation of a strategy. As a future direction the paper also identified that a more in-depth and field work research in an organizations are vital in order to examine and address the challenges on the implementation phase.

**Keywords:** pitfalls, strategic management, strategy formulation, strategy execution, strategy evaluation

## 1 Introduction

Though it is not uncommon to see an organization that engaged on strategic planning process, the great challenges coming on is the implementation part which refers to as strategy execution. Scholar's pointed out that strategy is a pillar and a driving force for an organization that leads to success, able to satisfy the volatile of customers' needs and use to maintain competitive position in the market despite the failures being unresolved. Though, strategy implementation is being the most central point and critical stage in the planning process, it is indispensable that almost all organizations that formulated a strategy plan has a difficulty of at least once in a month getting initiation to talk about execution of strategy and evaluating how implementation process is going on. Despite a great number of scholar's being estimated the percentage rate of failure in implementation process, as Candido et al. (2019) [1] pointed out that a failure in strategy implementation is estimated between 30% and 70% and the researcher of this article found out this can be considered as a big loss and by itself which requires an intensive study to prove it.

On the other hand, though organizations have all adequate resources (financial and non-financial), technical and managerial skills or capability at hand, unless they would properly exert their effort to execute the strategic plan document, there is a great chance of failures on implementation process and it is a normal scenario to reason out for the possible challenges or problems in strategy execution. This related mostly to lack of a general framework to implementation process. The idea is also underpinned by scholar's views that even if strategic planning is an involved, intricate and complex process that takes an organization into uncharted territory, it does not provide a ready-to-use prescription for success and hence it is likely to face potential pitfalls on strategy execution process [2].

The purpose of this study therefore was to conduct a systematic review of literatures that point out the pitfalls on strategy execution process and thereby addresses the research problems or gaps and meets objectives. Hence, based on this the article is first organized on assessing the related works; like, on review of theoretical, empirical study and then developed a conceptual model, then the methodology part is elaborated followed by a result, discussion and finally a conclusion and future direction is framed.

### 1.1 Research objective

The objectives of the study include assessing the strategic making processes, and identifying the pitfalls or challenges on the execution process.

## 1.2 Research questions

- (1) Do organizations have a mechanism to properly evaluate the implementation of strategy?
- (2) What are the pitfalls in strategy execution of an organizations and how to overcome it?

## 2 Theoretical review

Literature review is the milestone or the backbone for every type of research to undertake as without a theoretical background the researcher assumed to be just a ship in big ocean without a compass. In this regard scholar's like as Creswell (2009) [3] states "one component of reviewing the literature is to determine what theories might be used to explore the questions in a scholarly study." Based on this notion the concepts that related to this topic are put forward.

### 2.1 Making a strategy

Theories and empirical review elucidated that the making of strategy is not an easy task as the success or failures in implementation would arise from exhaustive formulation of a strategy. Hence, to identify the shortcoming in implementation the researcher believes that reviewing the essence of strategy and strategic management process have to be an imperative task.

Theoretical research portrays the word 'strategy' is derived from the Ancient Greek 'strategia' or 'strategike'. It was used inconsistently, sometimes meaning ruse, sometimes 'the art of generalship', especially in the definition of the East Romans (Byzantines) [4]. The author also noted that strategy is initially and widely exercised in military activities as strategizing all resources would be considered a techniques to won in battle field. Another definition reveals "strategies are the means by which long-term objectives will be achieved" and it requires the potential actions of senior management for taking decisions and use of large amount of resources [2]. When we say strategy it is a way to reach some points that predetermined a head of time. In this respect, according to Armstrong (2006) [5] "strategy is about deciding where you want to go and how you mean to get there." It is intent of declaration. It is about what we want to do and how we intend to achieve it. Normally it is a longer-term goal but more importantly it focuses on how it can be achieved

"Strategy is often a blueprint, a design of how to build something or make something happen." (Stump & Mullen, 2014: 46). Besides as Hitt et al. (2009) [6] states "strategy is an integrated and coordinated set of commitments and actions designed to exploit core competencies and gain a competitive advantage."

Strategy is also associated with the plan, scope, directions, set of ideas, conception, intentions, prospects of an entity, internal regulations, guidance and actions that deals about how to achieve results by using the available resources [7]. According Jofre (2011), "strategies are a combination of deliberation and impulsiveness on the base of new and past ideas and actions". Besides, as M. Porter recently addressed to CEO of big companies in one international forum in India, Mumbai that "strategy cannot be a popularity contest where everyone gets a vote because the essence of strategy is about choices," and in addition to that he remarks "though formulating a sound strategy sounded simple, in reality, it was not" [8].

The author of this article found out that though scholar's explanation and definitions about strategy are enormous that contributed for accomplishment of organization goals in practice strategy still remains as a roadmap for organizations to reach a desired level, despite pursuing the steps to reach the ultimate goals or objectives continue as devastating tasks which normally called as challenges or failure in strategy implementation. From this notion, despite many enterprises are operating there business or functions without a formal strategic plan, at the end of the day they would face a threat that led to instability and failures in organization.

Hence, from the theories outlined above the author of this article induced that though organizations have a good strategy to meet future objectives, coordinating and mobilizing all resources for successful implementation has to be a more demanding task or jobs especially to managers or top executives. Once, we do understand about the notion of strategy the most prominent step is getting a clear and workable practice or developing of strategic management which systematically reviewed as follows.

### 2.2 Strategic management process

Despite the fascinating theme of strategy remains a hot issue in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there needs more research and working with respect to strategic management process, especially to implementation aspect and hence, to dig out the reason for failure in implementation process, the author of this study focused to review scholar's contribution on strategic management.

The strategic management process does not get involved in the day to day running of the organization's operations, but instead creates the strategies for the accomplishment of Long

term objectives. However, to attain this objectives a holistic approach of an integrated strategic management process requires, in this regard some scholars pointed out the strategic management process involves four stages and the other scholar's identified as there are three stages in which by taking environmental scanning into strategy formulation steps. Accordingly, Zafar et al. (2013) [9] there are four key elements to strategic management; like, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, evaluation and control which stated below.

As David (2011) [10] stated "strategic management allows an organization to be more proactive than reactive in shaping its own future" which able an organization to initiate and influence than responding to activities that able to exert control over its own destiny. Besides, the great point which raised by the author that really most small business owners, chief executive officers, presidents, and managers of many for-profit and nonprofit organizations have recognized and realized that the benefits of strategic management has been indispensable.

"Strategic management is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives." Strategic management is not only to meet objectives but eventually it is about maintaining a competitive position in the market as it needs a holistic approach of integrating different functional units or departments towards successful accomplishment of strategic plan [2].

Besides, accordingly to Hitt et al. (2009) [6] stated that "the strategic management process is the full set of commitments, decisions, and actions required for a firm to achieve strategic competitiveness and earn above average returns." Besides the role of management bodies also vital on strategic management process and as Okpara (n.d.: 2) [11] dictates "management must create tomorrow through strategic management to maintain the organization as a "going concern" and for continuous improvements in the operations of the organization and its relevance in the marketplace. From the above notion, the researcher of this study pointed out that for successful implementation of strategic management it needs a holistic approach of an organization; especially, the roles of management bodies are prominent in such a way that they would able to create an integrated approach and systematic evaluation of strategic management process that drive them to proactively take appropriate measure before failures come after.

The literature reviews indicates evolving the strategic management process has to follow certain major steps; like, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation and strategy evaluation, though the purpose of this study was to review the challenges on implementation step. According to Hitt et al (2009) [6] 'the firm's first step in the strategic management process is to analyze its external and internal environments to determine its resources, capabilities, and core competencies—the sources of its strategic inputs. With this information, the firm able to develop its vision, mission and formulates its strategy.

Hence, the author tried to systematically review each steps from the perspective implementation phase.

### 2.2.1 Environmental scanning

Environmental scanning is a process of evaluating the environmental factors at macro and micro level in order to identify the organizational threats and opportunities. A sound and a great strategy formulation begin with these scanning processes in which eventually leads to best strategic selection and successful implementation process. Thus, the environmental scanning is divided into:

#### External Environmental Scanning

External environmental scanning is very important for any organization. Sometimes, the sudden change in the corporate environment sector or an economic crisis may prove fatal for an organization. Over the years many models have been evolved for analyzing the external environment. Normally, the external environment is ascribed by SLEPT/ PESTEL Analysis; such as, Social, Legal, Economic, Political, Technological Environmental analysis. Though the interpretation and uses of these factors differ from country to country, company to company, some of the common variables in these factors are as follows:

- (1) Political factors refer to, political stability and security issues, government policy, tax policy, foreign trade policy, corruption, labour law and trade restrictions;
- (2) Economic factors include economic growth, inflation rates, interest rates, exchange rates, unemployment rates, disposable income of consumers and infrastructure facilities;
- (3) Social factors refer to income distribution, population growth rate, age distribution, career attitudes, safety emphasis, health consciousness, lifestyle attitudes and cultural barriers;
- (4) Technological factors include automation, level of innovation, research and development, awareness to technology;
- (5) Environmental factors refer to weather, climate change and pollution effect;
- (6) Legal factors include health and safety law, antitrust law, employment law, copyright and

patent law and consumer protection law.

This research figured out that an assessment of those external factors have to be completed when once it inextricably intertwined with internal environmental assessment of an organizations as at the end of the day it used for a good strategic formulation and implementation process as well.

#### **Internal environmental scanning**

Since the success or failures of an organization is mostly attributed to internal analysis of an organization, getting a clear picture and understanding of own capabilities and weaknesses are as important as scanning the external environment. Based on this notion, examining the external and internal analysis would be essential which can be carried out on assessing the SWOT analysis which stipulated below. SWOT is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are normally internal to an organization that can assess, evaluate and change overtime through the strategy formulation and implementation process and if organizations exhaustively explored these factors a head of time then they would able to put a company on the right track and able to draw a good strategy as the human element and resources of an organization are a key players on the implementation phases.

Whereas opportunities and threats are external to an organization, behind their control and unable to change, however if organizations properly assess opportunities and able to exploit it and also identify threats a head of time and design an actions to overcome or minimize threats then the researcher of this article believes that organizations would have a good capacity to formulate a strategy and able to develop a proper implementation plan.

Besides to the scanning of an environment, it would be imperative to examine and synthesize with Porter's five forces of the bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of sellers, the threats of substitutes, the threat of potential entrants and the threats of existing competition. Since assessments of these forces are vital to formulate a proper strategy, to enter into a new industry or remain competitive in the industry, lacking of a proper attention eventually leads to failure in strategy implementation. This article therefore systematically examines each force from the perspective of formulating a good strategy that also uses to reinforce the implementation phase easier.

#### **Bargaining power of buyers**

At this point it is important to consider like concentration of the buyers and bargaining powers, significance of high fixed costs on purchasing, or products homogeneous and standardization that use to avoid any switching costs as at this force there are few buyers who dominate the industry. During strategy formulation this has to be examined seriously and counter measures have to be taken as strategy choices to avoid failure in strategy implementation.

#### **Bargaining power of sellers**

Powerful suppliers or sellers would able to capture the market and dominate the industry by charging high prices, limit the quality of products or services provided and also shifts the costs to the industry as they are few in number, and hence in strategy design process organizations have to make exhaustive study and may put alternatives; like, by outsourcing some requirements or on backward integration whichever is suitable to industry scenario.

#### **Threats of substitutes**

This is normally considered as a threat to industry or sectors as competitors perform the same function and there is a substitute product or service in which the buyers have a choice to decide and it seems high if buyers have low switching cost. In strategy formulation process this can be avoided if organizations aware of all substitutes in the market, however since there is an information gap already then failures arose in an organization.

#### **Threat of potential entrants**

This is attributed to any barrier imposed or that can affect the business or organization functions; like government policy, industry retaliation, any switching costs, product differentiation, capital requirements and economies of scale which should be examined for strategy design process.

#### **Threats of existing competition**

This competition or intensity of rivalry has to be done exhaustively to develop a good strategy which comprises among others are assessing the diversity of competitors in the industry, similarity of competitors, how high is fixed or storage costs, is there high strategic stakes and/or high exit barriers and also the rate growth of the industry [12].

Though theoretical reviews portrayed such forces at comprehensive manner, the practical implication is still daunting in which at the end of the day paralyzes the strategy implementation process and failures come after. Keeping these assessments into consideration organizations

would able to evolve strategic management process that requires to exhaustively developing each stages in strategy design.

Regarding to strategic management process, Davies (2011) [10] and David & David (2017) [2] states the strategic-management process consists of three stages and as they pointed out strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. Strategy formulation includes developing a vision and mission, identifying an organization's external opportunities and threats, determining internal strengths and weaknesses, establishing long-term objectives, generating alternative strategies, and choosing particular strategies to pursue. Since external opportunities and external threats are beyond the control of an organization that would significantly benefit or harm an organization in the future. Hence, strategy-formulation issues include deciding what new businesses to enter, what businesses to abandon, how to allocate resources, whether to expand operations or diversify, whether to enter international markets, whether to merge or form a joint venture, and how to avoid a hostile takeover.

### 2.2.2 Strategy formulation

Strategy formulation is one of the most important tasks and process that managers in every organization need to perform, has a range of approaches that enjoyed different levels of support and recognition over time, and forces an organization to carefully look at the changing environment in order to combat the possible changes that may occur [13]. Though, this stage is assumed to be one of the major steps in strategic management process, ignoring or giving little attention to strategic formulation and poorly framed the formulation process eventually lead challenges in implementation process.

### 2.2.3 Strategy implementation

Strategy implementation is a very crucial part in strategy planning as mostly failure arises at this stage though the reasons require further study. In this regard review of literatures indicates "strategy implementing is a tough and time consuming challenge." And, further pointed out that it would be easier to develop a sound strategic plan than it is to make it happen since it requires a managerial skill that able to put strategy into effect and get the organizations moving in the chosen direction [13]. Besides, another scholar stated that "strategy implementation has become an essential part of business strategies for companies to stay internationally competitive." To successfully implement strategy it involves some process; like, it should start with a good strategic input, the implementation works when there is a clear strategic action plan, resource allocation is also another critical factors, employee involvement and corporate cultures as it is important for organization performance [14].

The major resources that play a key role in strategy implementation process are employees of an organization in which "when employees are committed to the strategy, they recognize that their efforts are an integral part of the organization's successful strategy implementation" [15].

### 2.2.4 Strategy evaluation

The evaluation part is the other most important part if it is taken positively and a quality leadership there in an organization it serves as feedback to take immediate remedial action and get backs all resources (financial, non-financial and human resources) on the right track. In line with as the other authors states "strategy evaluation involves setting control processes to continuously review, evaluate and provide feedback concerning the implemented strategies to determine if the desired results are being attained such that corrective measures may be taken if needed." [13].

Though, theoretical studies of strategic management elaborated more about strategy formulation process and implementation as well, as Iheanachor (2022) [16] states "the phenomenon of strategy execution in particular and strategy in general, is as complex as other concepts in social and behavioral sciences".

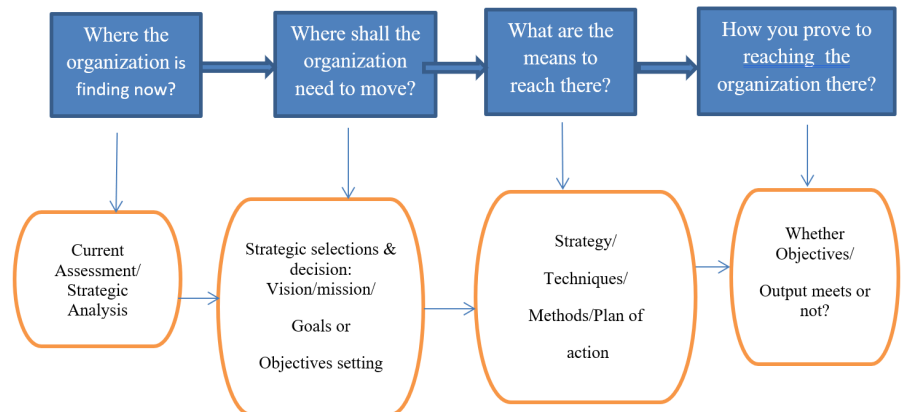
Hence, the author of this article perceived that studying about the strategic management process especially with respect to implementation phase and the causes to failure are still a daunting field of study that need extensive research and based on this notion the critical review of strategic management and shortcoming in implementation are assessed below.

## 2.3 Strategic management processes in an organization

Hence, as to maintain an organization as a going concern management bodies of an organization would require to clearly put the strategic management process with the nature of their business. Especially, when organizations inculcate the notion of strategic management it is indispensable to raise the point that where we found an organization after a certain period of time which is from the perspective of practical implication.

Figure 1 indicates how the organizations move and place there after a certain time.





**Figure 1** Strategic management processes in an organization (Source: Own research, 2022)

We can perceive from the above diagram that on the strategic management process organization has to assess the present or current situation first which is normally called strategy analysis and at this stage an organization able to examine both the internal and external environments. In internal assessment, the organization has to examine its strengths and weaknesses whereas in external assessment it should examine the industry situation (which is competitor analysis), opportunities and threats.

Since strategic analysis is the most fundamental part in strategic management process, according to Graham & Hede (2016) [17] strategic analysis used for managers to examine first what is happening in an organization, able to explore the reason why it happened and determine a head of time its impacts on performance. Besides the authors mentioned important steps in strategic analysis stages; like, reviewing the previous performance that had a notable impact on the organization's bottom line, assess its positive or negative impacts, identifying the type of each action, determining the origin of each action as being either a new initiative or a response to an internal or external circumstance, developing strategic intentions (plans) for the next cycle and lastly modifying the organization's ongoing planning and reporting processes to accommodate emergent actions in the future.

Though scholars pointed out their views on strategic analysis, the critical argument is that conducting the analysis part is somewhat different from organization to organization, business to business and one industry to others and that is why the real challenges or failure in implementation existed. After strategic analysis carried out organizations have to focus on strategic selection and decision process which mainly focus that on strategic selection process it requires to exhaustively examine the strategic options evolved from the perspective of real business scenarios.

If the strategic selection process is done wisely, it would pave the way to make a good strategic decision as strategic failures usually arise due to poor strategic decision process. This point is further supplemented by Papulova & Gazova (2016) [18] that "strategic decision-making belongs to the one of the most important areas of current management and plays a crucial role in achieving success and survival of the company.

Hence the researcher point of discussion is that once organizations have developed a strategic analysis and selection process, it moves to develop a vision, mission, goals and objectives in which it indicates after a certain period of time where shall the organization has to be, then it is important to design the strategy/techniques/methods or plan of action in which the organization able to reach its vision, mission goals/objectives or it is considered as the output required from strategic plan. Though defining those common terms such as vision, mission, goals, objectives, critical success factors are not the objective of this research, in most situations, organizations set forth these terms as a guiding principle or mottos despite being no strategy plan formulated before.

However, the researcher found that the implementation process is a bit challenging as an inadequate or poor plan of action is a result of failure in implementation process. This point is augmented by an academicians that strategic implementation need a serious action of categorizing important issues, decisions and coherent relationships to complete the task that set before [19]. Lastly, whether an organization reaches what desired before or not will be measured on evaluating the objectives or outputs which enable to take corrective action. Hence, these steps are very crucial on strategy executions process despite the implementation and evaluation part needs a big attention.

To sum up, the purpose of strategic management process is to exhaustively examine all

steps and put forward strategic choices and alternatives which eventually enable to reach a best decision. Taking these actions seriously is crucial as organizations are moving in turbulent environments and there is no question to raise the concept and importance of strategic management which also enable to develop achievable strategic plan. This point is advocated by Phiri et al (2019) [20] as “strategic management process is every manager concern as any failure in determining strategies which matches with resources and capabilities of the organization is devastating to its overall sustainability survival and growth. Companies without clear strategies may achieve some success in the short run, but as soon as competitive conditions stiffen or an anticipated threat arises, they usually “hit the wall “and fold.”

### 3 Reason for strategy failure

Research carried out so far on strategy implementation is still in its early stage with a limited number of empirical studies completed and historically most of the effort has been focused on strategy implementation [21]. This is because the numerous researches carried out for decades elucidates majority of strategy failure has been arisen at implementation phase. In this context, despite formulating the strategy plan being one of the fascinating works in an organization, the greatest challenges come from in the implementation process in which usually noted when failures come. Though the reasons for failure in strategy differ from organization to organization, empirical research found out that there are some major reasons for failures.

Accordingly, as Arnoud (2014) [22] pointed out the major reasons for strategy failures are incompetent management, a vague strategic vision, an inadequate strategy, lacking implementation plan, inadequate planning and control, neglect of political interests and a culture of fear. Available on <https://www.cascade.app/blog/7-top-reasons-why-strategic-plans-fail>.

Besides as Tom (2021) [23] identifies also there are seven reasons to strategy failures such as lack of buy-in from the team, unclear objectives, failure to account for business as usual, loss of momentum, unwillingness to iterate, lack of alignment and failure to celebrate success.

From the above reasons the author of this article perceived that whatever and a best strategy you design, without proper buy-in from all staff, cascading and communication it would be unrealistic to successfully implement strategy plan.

### 4 Pitfalls/challenges in strategy execution process

The author of this paper noted that strategy execution is normally attributed to bridging the gap between what an organizations aspire and the result or output attained. If the gap is filled it is a success for organizations and when failures occurred it is due to weak execution process in which normally ascribed to management dormancy or inefficiency. Empirical studies also portrayed that “strategy implementation can influence the whole texture of a company including its performance” [14]. Regarding proper execution of strategy, literatures revealed that a successful strategy formulation often leads to success in strategy execution, however to make an integrated approach to strategy issues, organizations must focus on ensuring that adequate measures are established a head of time [16].

On the other hand, scholar’s figured out only a small percentage of planned strategy got success, in this respect as Vigfússon et al. (2021) [21] state research carried out on strategy implementation is still at early stage, with only limited number of empirical studies so far completed and most of the organizations efforts have been focused on strategy formulation and process by giving less attention on strategy implementation.

Based on this introductory phrase some of the pitfalls or challenges on the strategy execution process that sort out by scholars are portrayed as follows:

- (1) Using strategic planning to gain control over decisions and resources;
- (2) Doing strategic planning only to satisfy accreditation or regulatory requirements;
- (3) Too hastily moving from mission development to strategy formulation;
- (4) Failing to communicate the plan to employees, who continue working in the dark;
- (5) Top managers making many intuitive decisions that conflict with the formal plan;
- (6) Top managers not actively supporting the strategic-planning process;
- (7) Failing to use plans as a standard for measuring performance;
- (8) Delegating planning to a “planner” rather than involving all managers;
- (9) Failing to involve key employees in all phases of planning;
- (10) Failing to create a collaborative climate supportive of change;
- (11) Viewing planning as unnecessary or unimportant;
- (12) Becoming so engrossed in current problems that insufficient or no planning is done;
- (13) Being so formal in planning that flexibility and creativity are stifled [2].

A systematic conviction of the author reviews induces it would be arguable for the notion that a successful strategy formulation often leads to success in strategy execution or not since the challenges in strategy execution remains a ruinous issue.

## 5 Empirical review

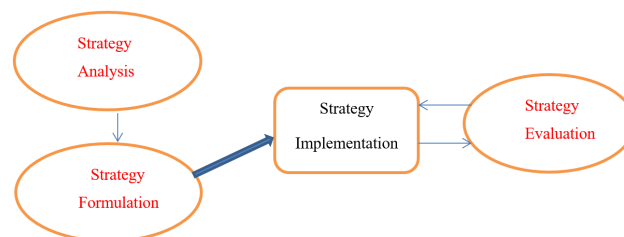
Although there are numerous theories with respect to strategy analysis, strategy formulation and strategy evaluation, the most critical part is examining strategy implementation as the success or failures in strategy is most likely arises at this stage and due to this reason assessing some empirical reviews is crucial for the study. To this context empirical review elucidates employees are more in-charge of the implementation phase as understanding of vision and mission by employees, developing clear strategic action plan, allocating adequate resources, providing sufficient training to employees, involvement of employees on decision making process, rewarding system and establishing a strong corporate culture are very important for successful implementation of strategy [3].

In addition, an empirical research proved that proper implementation and execution of strategy is very crucial and significantly affects the success of an organization [3]. Doelman et al. (2021) [24] states also in the field of management studies organization mostly focuses on the formulation of strategy and neglects the implementation stages that leaves the field of study still remain under-researched and due to this reasons senior executives largely consumed their time on strategy formulation than implementation stage. Besides, as Hrebiniak (2006) [25] portrays formulating strategy is difficult but making strategy work – executing or implementing it throughout the organization – is even more difficult, and the author further noted that without effective implementation, no business strategy can succeed. Unfortunately, most managers know far more about developing strategy than they do about executing it.

From the empirical review above the author of this article deduced that numerous number of managers are more aware of developing strategy analysis and formulation and they disregard or give little attention to the strategy evaluation and implementation stages in which ignoring of these processes coupled with poor participation of employees and lack of sound communication at organization level drive them to incur a huge cost and time that eventually lead to failure in strategy implementation.

## 6 Conceptual model of strategic execution process

The foundation of theoretical and empirical reviews enable researcher to get a clear picture of the gaps or problems on the study and this in turn uses to build a conceptual model that the research questions or hypothesis have to be addressed. Based on this notion depicting the nexus, interaction and reaction of strategy analysis, strategy formulation, implementation and strategy evaluation are important as shown below for a proper execution of strategy and the evaluation part as well to take a corrective action as one stage or step use as a precondition to assess and examine the next steps. (see Figure 2)



**Figure 2** Model of strategic execution process (Source: Own research, 2022)

Despite the stages of strategic management process being assessed above the above model indicates after examining of strategy analysis; such as internal and external evaluation, a strategy formulation is carried out in which it is one of the big task as it usually requires a detail analysis of organization competence with respect to industry average and on identifying a suitable generic strategies. Though examining the strategy variants of Porter’s generic strategy is not purpose of this study, it would be imperative to elucidate slightly in the strategy formulation and execution process.

The Porter generic strategies are essential in strategy formulation process and the concepts imply when a company employed differentiation strategy, firms able to offer unique products or services that able to charge a premium price, in case of low- cost strategy firms able to focus to achieve competitive edge in the market by offering a standardized products whereas in focus



strategy by linking differentiation and low-cost strategy in the niche market firms would be able to concentrate in specific regional market, product line or group of buyers to make a higher profits [26]. Besides the generic strategy stipulated above it is also equally important for an organization to examine and associate with competitive advantage as research demonstrated there is a positive association between Porter generic strategies and competitive advantage of an organization [27] since assessing this part is very crucial in strategy formulation process.

Once organizations identify the right generic strategies, it would use to develop a clear strategy implementation plan, however, since most of organizations leaders don't give adequate time to examine about how strategic process is going and the paradox in which everything is unable to go as we anticipated it would be inevitable that a strategy execution process demands a good leadership and management excellence. Hence, to check the implementation stage and take appropriate action on time the strategy evaluation plays a great role. Accordingly, a strategy evaluation process requires measures like whether the implementation process goes smoothly or not, and to measure these a proper action plan and a key performance indicators/KPI/ have to be set ahead of time. So the objectives of strategy evaluation are not only to examine and identify the gap or weakness of strategy implementation instead it gives a feedback and recommend remedial action to correct the mistakes which in turn would be able to avoid bottlenecks and able to drive for a successful implementation of strategy plan.

## 7 Methodology of the study

To explore the pitfalls in strategy implementation the research employed a deductive research approach of an exploratory research design in which it focused a review of qualitative data's with systematic research review and narrative explanation as these were vital to explore and investigate the problem of a study. Accordingly, as a criteria for the research and to synthesize the study a qualitative review of scholar's research; specifically, published books and journal articles are used. The samples taken for a systematic review have been 22 peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical studies with longitudinal time series of 5 years (2018 to 2022). Based on systematic theoretical and empirical review a conceptual model is developed to further evaluate and synthesize the challenges on implementation process and would eventually lead to descriptively and critically analyze the result of the study.

## 8 Results and discussion

There is a general thought that when an organization able to develop strategy comprehensively, the rate of failures get lower and lower regardless of this requires an investigation by itself. However, the result of this study depicts though organizations have developed a good strategic plan on taking each steps of the strategic management process, the great insight that can be drawn from the finding is that how organizations would be able to overcome the challenges on the implementation phase; specifically, it targeted on the readiness of managers to work closely with employees and also their initiation of designing an achievable action plans and the mobilization of all resources for successful implementation are more important.

Hence, one of a great gap identified in this process and the author of the article critically evaluates that lack of proper strategy evaluation is a major drawback as it enables to examine how the implementation process is going and further give a feedback to managers to take appropriate actions in time. This point is underpinned by a theoretical foundation that effective strategic actions require an achievable process that has to be done by integrating strategy formulation and implementation which also uses to get a desired strategic outcome [6].

Besides, the major finding of the study revealed that the failure in strategy implementation is mostly attributed to inefficient management bodies as they ignored the participation of all employees in execution process and disregard for the proper communication. This point is reinforced by empirical study that the failure of strategy execution characterized by weak communication, insufficient senior leadership, inadequate skill, lack of approved strategy, insufficient details, poor accountability, weak monitoring and evaluation process, limited reward and its consequences, leadership style as well as conflicting priorities [16].

This point is also supplemented with this research finding that the common pitfalls identified on strategic execution process are lack of proper communication, weakness of top managers not to support the planning process, managers are looking strategic planning only for accreditation or regulatory requirements, inability to use plan for measuring performance, viewing planning as a waste of time, money and unnecessary and also failing to involve key employees on the process are the major ones [2].

As a discussion of the study the researcher pointed out that managers and organizations shall thoroughly examine each stages of the strategic management process by giving equal weights to

each phases and finally give more emphasis on implementation and evaluation phase so that they would able to overcome the pitfalls pointed out on this article.

## 9 Conclusion and future scope

The purpose of the study is to assess the strategic making processes and identify the pitfalls or challenges on the execution process and put forward a possible recommendation as a future direction. In this regard, systematic reviews of the study portrayed that organizations have to design a proper strategic management process by giving emphasis and equally integrating each stages in the process. Based on this notion the researcher try to address the research questions of do organizations have a mechanism to properly evaluate the implementation of strategy, the systematic review of the study revealed that despite organizations and management bodies being exerted all efforts and resources to design a good strategy, the great challenges stem from the inability to have a proper evaluation system which leads to failure in strategy implementation.

In this regard, historical and practical lessons in an organization indicate after a good strategy is formulated, mostly managers drop it on the shelf, unable to give a time at least once a month for a progress discussion instead they used the document only for propagation purpose. Hence, as it stated in the review of this paper an organization managers/executives require to develop and design a mechanism or detailed action plan that would be measured and assessed besides that of the involvement of management initiation and commitment which in turn pave the way to make the evaluation process easier.

The second question of identifying the pitfalls in strategy execution of an organization and the ways to overcome it is addressed by systematic review of the articles in which facing a challenge in implementation process is a common scenario that mostly attributed to inefficiency or ignorance of management bodies. As theoretical finding reveals although the notion of strategic management process is a very fascinating issue, the most challenging and least ignored part is the implementation phase as senior executives and managers couldn't give proper attention and at the end of the day organizational failures arises. To overcome such challenges the finding of this article delineated that organization managers have to be serious on the whole approach of integrating the strategic management processes that needs coherence from top management to lower level and especially an effective communication and a cascading process are very crucial for successful implementation of strategic plan. This result is a major limitation for mangers in execution process and it would have a great implication to get lesson from it.

As a future direction, conducting a more in-depth and a field work research on strategy execution process are vital as the paradox on implementation process still remains an exigent task.

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