



Competitive Advantages Through Strategy Implementation: the Role of People, Plan, and Process

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Abstract

Based on the notions of an integrated approach, this study investigates the roles of people, plan, and process related activities in strategy implantation success in organizational contexts. Data were collected from 307 top- and mid-level managers working in public and private sector organizations in Kazakhstan. The findings revealed a significant influence of people-, plan-, and process-related activities on strategy implementation success and competitive advantages. However, the study found insignificant moderating roles of hierarchy culture and transactional leadership in strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships. The findings reiterate the importance of an integrated approach in strategy implementation success and provide guidelines to initiate appropriate people, plan and process related activities in future strategic management practices.

Keywords Strategy implementation · Competitive advantages · 3Ps model · Organizational culture · Leadership styles · Transition economies

JEL Classification M1-Business Administration · L1-Firm Strategy · Z0-General

Key Points

- An integrated approach improves strategy implementation practices in organizations.
- Strategy implementation provides higher competitive advantages.
- Transformation leadership moderates strategy implementation-competitive advantage relationships.
- Organizational culture also moderates strategy implementation-competitive advantage relationships.

Summary/Running Head An integrated approach combining plan, people, and process related activities improves strategy implementation and provides competitive advantages.

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

Introduction

In competitive environments, strategy formulation and implementation play significant roles in the success or failure of both private and public sector organizations (Dimitrijevska-Markoski et al., 2021; Elbanna et al., 2020; George et al., 2019; Johnsen, 2021; Kayuni, 2017; Pollanen et al., 2017). However, managers in public sector organizations often see more attention in the strategy formulation process than in strategy implementation practices (Baker & Singh, 2019; Silenskyte et al., 2022; Whittle & Carter, 2020). Research evidence has revealed that almost three quarters of all strategies in public sector organizations were unsuccessful in yielding expected outcomes due to inadequate implementation practices (Bhimavarapu et al., 2020; Oliver & Schwella, 2018). Ironically, despite widespread acknowledgment of the importance of strategy implementation practices, relatively less research has been conducted to identify critical factors to improve strategy implementation successes (Mitchell et al., 2021; Shah & Nair, 2014; Weiser et al., 2020). Although there exists some research on strategy implementation successes, those studies were conducted following specific theories or perspectives and focused on a limited number of factors indicated in specific perspectives (Amoo et al., 2019; Elbanna et al., 2014; Mahmood, 2015; Weiser et al., 2020). Many of these studies have been criticized for not including broad and comprehensive factors from a holistic or integrative perspective (George, 2021; Whittle & Carter, 2020). Therefore, this study investigated strategy implementation practices by integrating factors from three main interrelated perspectives, i.e., people, plan, and process (3Ps) (George, 2021), in organizational contexts. Research on identifying critical factors from a holistic and integrated perspective could help public sector managers to have a better understanding of strategy implementation practices and improve organizational performance and competitive advantages.

Strategy implementation is a complex process and is influenced by multiple stakeholders and many interrelated organizational factors (Bhimavarapu et al., 2020; Candido & Santos, 2019; George et al., 2020; Mahmood, 2010; Vandersmissen et al., 2022). The purpose, scope, breadth, and expected outcomes of plans and strategies in the public sector are much wider than those in private sector organizations (Bryson et al., 2022; Ohemeng & Akonnor, 2023; Oliver & Schwella, 2018; Rondinelli, 1994; Rondinelli & Iacono, 1996; Wildavsky, 1964, 1973). Therefore, strategy implementation in public sector organizations requires a more integrated and holistic approach to meet the expectations of divergent stakeholders (Al-Hashimi et al., 2022; George et al., 2019; Johnsen, 2021; Rondinelli, 1994; Wildavsky, 1964, 1973). An integrated approach categorizing multiple critical factors in three major areas, i.e., plan-, process- and people-related activities, and considering them as a bundle could help to improve implementation levels in public sector organizations (George, 2021; George et al., 2018). Although strategy formulation in public sector organizations is influenced by governments, politicians and other external influential stakeholders, strategy implementation is also influenced by other important organizational-level factors,

such as organizational culture and leadership styles (Aydın et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2017; Weiser et al., 2020). Therefore, in addition to assessing the influence of specific activities related to the 3Ps (i.e., people, process, and plan) model, this study further investigated the moderating roles of organizational culture and managers' leadership styles in the strategy implementation process, which are also less researched in the public sector strategic management research domain. Earlier research also revealed the role of organizational culture in successful operations and the execution of various management practices, although the moderating role is still unknown in empirical research (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008; Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Tawse et al., 2019). As top management guides and leads employees in various decisions, leadership styles also play significant moderating roles in setting goals and helping employees achieve the desired goals (Dimitrijevska-Markoski et al., 2021; Mistry et al., 2022; Schaap, 2012). The findings of the study could help public sector managers and policy makers understand the impacts of those important antecedents and moderating factors from a holistic perspective and undertake initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of strategy implementation activities to gain competitive advantages. In brief, the study investigated the following three research questions:

1. Do factors related to the 3Ps model significantly influence strategy implementation success and help organizations gain competitive advantages?
2. Do top management leadership styles influence strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships?
3. Does organizational culture moderate the relationships between strategy implementation and competitive advantages?

The current study is expected to contribute to the public sector strategic management domain in the following ways. First, it will advance the literature on public sector management and organization theories, specifically on strategic management practices, which is often criticized for a lack of theoretical rigor in conducting empirical research (Weiser et al., 2020). Second, it will provide empirical evidence of the applicability and effectiveness of the integrated 3Ps model in successful strategy implementation practices in public sector organizations. Since the conceptualization of the 3Ps model, no empirical research has been conducted to examine the effectiveness of the 3Ps model of strategy implementation (George, 2021). Therefore, this could be considered a pioneering empirical study to consider interrelated factors from three main perspectives and affirm its effectiveness in improving strategy implementation practices in public sector organizations. Finally, this study examines the moderating role of leadership and organizational culture on the relationship between strategy implementation success and competitive advantage. The findings will provide more empirical evidence of these two aspects with regard to management and organizational successes. Therefore, managers in public sector organizations could develop appropriate organizational cultures and matching leadership styles to implement predetermined organizational strategies successfully.

Theoretical Background: the 3Ps Model - An Integrated Strategy Implementation Perspective

The research questions and objectives of the study were developed based on ideas of the integrated perspective of the 3Ps model (Bryson et al., 2009; George, 2021; George et al., 2018; Johannsdottir & McInerney, 2018; Manninen & Huiskonen, 2022; Weiser et al., 2020), which assesses the effectiveness of antecedents in strategy implementation success and subsequent gains in competitive advantage. Proponents of the 3Ps model argued that successful strategy implementation is influenced by a combination of people-, plan-, and process-related activities (Bryson, 2010; George, 2021; George & Desmidt, 2018; George et al., 2018; Weiser et al., 2020). The seminal works of Rondinelli (1991, 1994) and Wildavsky (1964, 1973) to recent research studies (Bhimavarapu et al., 2020; George, 2021; George & Desmidt, 2018; Oliver & Schwella, 2018; Vandersmissen et al., 2022) identified complex nature public sector organizations and urged to consider multiple perspectives and integrate multiple activities for better formulation and implementation of plans and strategies in public sector organizations. While many different subfactors exist within people, plans, and processes, this research focused on those that appear to be significant and critical according to the findings of earlier research (Bryson, 2010; Elbanna et al., 2016; George & Desmidt, 2018). Earlier research on public sector strategy implementation suggested that strategy implementation needed attention to how employees and managers (i.e., people) are involved in different stages of the strategy process, how strategies (i.e., plans) are formulated and communicated, and how the planned strategy is supported over time (i.e., process) (Bryson et al., 2018; George & Desmidt, 2018; Ohemeng & Akonnor, 2023; Weiser et al., 2020). To ensure successful strategy implementation, the 3Ps model provides a key integrated perspective for successful strategy implementation (Bryson, 2010; George, 2021; George & Desmidt, 2018). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual background and the hypothesized relationships of the study variables.

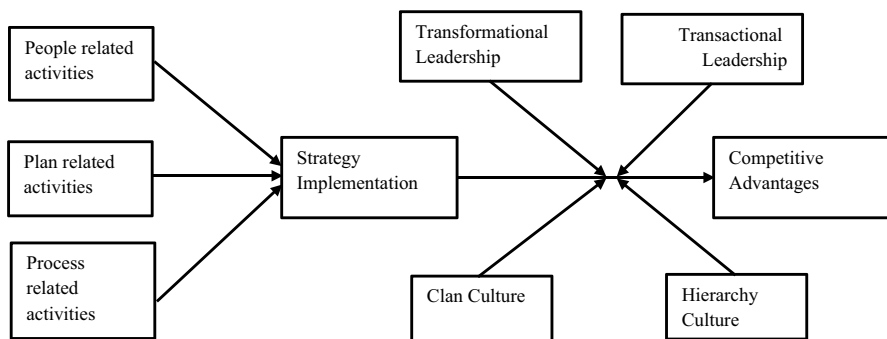


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of the study

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

People Related Activities and Strategy Implementation Success

Based on earlier research and the 3Ps model perspective, it is assumed that four important people-related factors, such as top management participation, employee knowledge and competencies, employee commitment, and employee confidence and trust in top management, could significantly impact strategy implementation (Amoo et al., 2019; George et al., 2018; Mitchell, 2022; Vera et al., 2022). The successful implementation of a strategic plan requires the upper echelons to be committed, motivated, and able to obviate employee resistance (Guo et al., 2017; Mitchell, 2019; Silenskyte et al., 2022). Earlier research identified positive influences of top management's active participation in strategy development as well as successful strategy implementation processes (Al-Hashimi et al., 2022; Candido & Santos, 2019; Mitchell, 2018). In addition to top management involvement, employee commitment is also an important factor in successful strategy implementation (Johannsdottir & McInerney, 2018; Mwawasi et al., 2013; Weiser et al., 2020).

Employee knowledge and competencies are considered essential for successful strategy implementation (De Salas & Huxley, 2014; Elbanna et al., 2016; Saini et al., 2013). Other researchers also found that when employees had sufficient knowledge and competencies, there was a greater success of strategy execution (Al-Hashimi et al., 2022; George, 2021). Finally, employees' confidence and trust in top management could have a significant role in strategy implementation with respect to cooperation and communication (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Trust in top management may indicate how middle managers realize top managers' intentions and stimulate employees to connect their implementation efforts to achieve positive results (Shah & Nair, 2014). Therefore, based on earlier research evidence and theoretical perspectives, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: People related activities will positively influence the success of strategy implementation.

Plan Related Activities and Strategy Implementation Success

From the integrated 3Ps model perspective, plan-related activities such as strategy formulation mode, strategy alignments, strategy comprehensiveness, and stakeholders' involvement in the strategy formulation process could significantly impact strategy implementation success (Elbanna et al., 2014; George, 2021; Mitchell, 2019; Vera et al., 2022). Having an explicit, formal, and well-defined strategy is considered one of most critical factors of the strategy implementation process (De Salas & Huxley, 2014; Merkus et al., 2019). Earlier research on both private and public sector organizations found strong connections between the formal strategic planning process and improved strategy implementation and organizational performance (Bryson et al., 2018; Jacobsen & Johnsen, 2020; Mitchell, 2019; Pollanen et al., 2017). Some

researchers have found that it is critical to align strategies with an organization's internal and external environments for effective strategy implementation (Cândido & Santos, 2015; Meier et al., 2010; Obeidat et al., 2017). Therefore, for successful strategy implementation, it is essential to align strategies with organizational vision and mission, goals and objectives, and values and to allocate necessary funds and resources in different departments throughout the organization (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008; Johnsen, 2022).

Earlier research on strategy implementation further revealed that highly comprehensive strategies allow managers to effectively deal with various organizational issues, increase commitment to the decision-making process, and reduce cognitive biases (Bryson et al., 2018; Miller & McKee, 2021). The level of comprehensiveness indicates to what extent the implementation process of the strategic plan covers the needed activities to put the strategic plan into action. Therefore, strategy comprehensiveness is a key factor for organizations to improve their performance and ensure effective strategic planning. The involvement of different stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, and middle management) could boost the quality of decision-making and reduce resistance to change (Samimi et al., 2020). Many other studies have also highlighted the importance of stakeholder involvement for effectiveness, efficient decision-making, strategic planning, and strategy implementation processes (Bryson et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2020; Poister & Streib, 2005). In addition to the vertical bottom-up process involving employees and middle management, a horizontal process is also necessary to ensure the involvement of other stakeholders, such as customers, citizens, businesses, and other organizations, to build commitment and benefit from their experience, competence, and knowledge as well as strategy implementation (Bryson et al., 2009; George & Desmidt, 2014; George et al., 2016; Poister & Streib, 2005). Therefore, based on earlier research evidence and theoretical perspectives, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Plan related activities will positively influence the success of strategy implementation.

Process Related Activities and Strategy Implementation Success

From an integrative 3Ps perspective, five process-related activities, namely, resource allocation, organization structure, change management, effective communication, and monitoring and feedback, have been identified to significantly influence strategy implementation (Bryson et al., 2018; Elbanna et al., 2016; George, 2021). Mwa-wasi et al. (2013) found that successful strategy implementation depends on whether adequate resources are allocated in line with the operational plan. Earlier research (Miller, 2008; Hickson et al., 2003) highlighted the importance of obtaining the necessary resources (e.g., sufficient time, human resources and finances) as important factors influencing strategy implementation success. At the same time, the availability of sufficient resources does not ensure successful implementation if they are not properly integrated with other elements of the process (Elbanna et al., 2014; Sterling, 2003). After formulating an organization strategy, the usual next step for executives is to design an appropriate organizational structure. Strategy implementation

requires not only changes in the organizational structure but also changes in the methods of approaching employee functioning in the organization based on an efficient communication system (De Salas & Huxley, 2014; Guo et al., 2017). The mutual influence of organizational structure and strategy has been well recognized in strategy research, as strategy changes require changing structures (Jacobsen & Johnsen, 2020). Therefore, strategies and structures need to be closely aligned for successful strategy implementation and improved organizational performance (Cândido & Santos, 2015; Elbanna et al., 2016).

Numerous studies have already emphasized communication as one of the most important success factors within strategy implementation (Amoo et al., 2019; Jiang & Carpenter, 2013; Meier et al., 2010). Effective communication plays a critical role in how responsibilities are distributed among employees, the dissemination of knowledge and information, new requirements, and the assignment of duties and tasks to be performed during the implementation process (Andrews et al., 2011). The success of well-crafted strategies depends on whether there is proper evaluation and timely feedback provided to those involved in the strategy implementation process. In the context of implementing strategy, evaluation plays an important role and allows decision-makers to monitor the efforts and progress toward strategic goals (Okumus, 2003). Bolboli and Reiche (2013) confirmed the relevance of managers' control of subordinates and concluded that inadequate supervision can lead to strategy implementation failure. Other researchers have also identified evaluation and feedback as central elements of the strategy implementation process that can be achieved through techniques such as monitoring and action plans (Elbanna et al., 2014; Manninen & Huiskonen, 2022; Noble, 1999; Weiser et al., 2020). Therefore, based on earlier research evidence and theoretical perspectives, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Process related activities will positively influence the success of strategy implementation.

Strategy Implementation Success and Competitive Advantages

The importance of strategy for successful organizational operations has been well documented in the extant literature (Bryson et al., 2018; Elbanna et al., 2020; George et al., 2019). However, as mentioned earlier, research on strategy implementation is quite negligible compared to its necessity and prevalence in organizational contexts (Cândido & Santos, 2015; Johnsen, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2021). Based on the integrated 3Ps perspective, this study identified several important antecedents of the strategy implementation process and assumed that careful attention to those factors could lead to operational success as well as competitive advantages in the long run (Amoo et al., 2019; George, 2021). Andrews et al. (2011) stated that managers often blame a lack of evidence-based studies on correlations between the strategy implementation process and organizational performance. Hickson et al. (2003) relied on managers' assessments to determine implementation success based on the extent to which performance over time of what was achieved was intended or better, with employees' perceptions and satisfaction also serving as critical indicators of

performance. Based on the above discussions, we presume that successfully aligning the strategy implementation process with budget limitations, performance management, and evaluation of goals and actions will positively influence organizations' competitive advantages.

Hypothesis 4: Strategy implementation success will positively influence organizations' competitive advantages.

Leadership Styles as a Moderator of Strategy Implementation and the Competitive Advantage Relationship

Leadership is one of the core factors influencing employees' commitment, involvement, motivation, trust, and satisfaction through a communication procedure and the achievement of organizational goals and objectives (Guo et al., 2017; Jiang & Carpenter, 2013; Tawse et al., 2019). A successful implementation strategy necessitates that the upper echelons motivate employees, elicit employee commitment to the implementation process, and actively reduce employees' resistance to change (Candido & Santos, 2019; Mitchell, 2018). Top management usually coordinates managerial decisions and actions to assist them in implementing the strategy and facilitate cooperation across cross-functional teams (Elbanna et al., 2014; Vera et al., 2022). The leadership styles examined in this study are transformational and transactional leadership. For transformational leaders to motivate and inspire their followers to achieve outstanding results, they pay careful attention to employees' individual needs and encourage subordinates to develop their own leadership capabilities (Guo et al., 2017; Pollanen et al., 2017). In addition, transformational leaders have faith in their subordinates and stimulate people to provide better organizational performance than intended and to be more committed to strategy implementation (Amoo et al., 2019; Vera et al., 2022). Similarly, transactional leadership is based on bureaucratic processes and the use of authority. Leaders employing this approach concentrate their attention on the completion of the given tasks and employee compliance, connecting their performance to rewards or punishments while also ensuring that employees have the necessary resources to accomplish the tasks (Pollanen et al., 2017; Schaap, 2012). Therefore, based on earlier research evidence and theoretical perspectives, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Transformational leadership (TF) and transactional leadership (TS) will moderate strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships.

Organizational Culture as a Moderator of Strategy Implementation and the Competitive Advantage Relationship

The strategy implementation process takes place within an organization's external and internal environment, with organizational culture being one of the predominant factors in its success or failure (Amar & Romdhane, 2020; Kaul, 2019; Weiser et al., 2020). Organizational culture can either facilitate or disrupt strategy

implementation; thus, it is necessary to match strategy and organizational culture for successful strategy implementation (Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Kaul, 2019; Lynch & Mors, 2019). While explaining organizational cultures, Cameron and Quinn (1999) identified four types of prevalent cultures in organizational contexts: clan, hierarchy, market, and adhocracy. The present study focused on two dimensions of organizational culture and their influence on the relationship between strategy implementation and organizational performance: clan culture and hierarchy culture, as these types appear to be very strong in organizations in the central Asian region (Mahmood et al., 2020). Clan culture, or so-called “family culture,” focuses on the internal issues of an organization with a particular emphasis on teamwork, partnership, and loyalty to groups over organizational matters (Amar & Romdhane, 2020; Njagi, 2021). One important advantage of clan culture in organizations is employees’ high level of commitment coupled with a focus on productivity in the process of execution rather than resistance to changes, regulations or external factors, which prevents successful implementation (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). Hierarchy culture, also known as bureaucratic culture, is characterized by a formalized and structured place to work (Lynch & Mors, 2019). It comprises a clear organizational structure and standardized rules and procedures. For hierarchical culture, it could be concluded that top management’s commitment to strategy can positively contribute to successful implementation (Njagi, 2021), primarily because senior management governs the organization, is responsible for the realization of the strategies, and follows up on them until they are implemented (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). Therefore, based on earlier research evidence and theoretical perspectives, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: Clan culture and hierarchal culture moderate strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships.

Research Methodology

The present study employed a quantitative approach and collected data using the convenience sampling method. Researchers administered 650 survey questionnaires through personal visits, emails, and self-addressed envelopes and finally received 307 responses. The study used 294 complete responses after eliminating defective responses with missing values, outliers, and unmatched cases. The response rate was 45.23%, which is satisfactory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With regard to the response rate, Tomaskovic-Devey et al. (1994) mentioned that a response rate between 35% and 45% is appropriate when the data are homogeneous. Table 1 presents the participants’ information, showing that the majority of the respondents are from service organizations (159, 54.1%), followed by manufacturing organizations (63, 21.4%) and trade organizations (72, 24.5%). The table highlights that most of the organizations were private (234, 79.6%), while only 60 were public. The largest portion of employees (99, 33.7%) were from small organizations, whereas 93 respondents were from large organizations (31.6%). Most employees (126, 42.9%) had been working for more than 15 years.

Table 1 Demographic information of the respondents

| Variables | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Nature of organization | Manufacturing | 63 | 21.4 |
| | Service | 159 | 54.1 |
| | Trade | 72 | 24.5 |
| Ownership | Public (government) | 60 | 20.4 |
| | Private | 234 | 79.6 |
| Total number of employees | 0–50 | 99 | 33.7 |
| | 51–100 | 60 | 20.4 |
| | 101–200 | 42 | 14.3 |
| | 200+ | 93 | 31.6 |
| Year of Operations | 0–5 | 54 | 18.4 |
| | 5–10 | 66 | 22.4 |
| | 11–15 | 48 | 16.3 |
| | 15+ | 126 | 42.9 |
| Total | 294 | 100 | 100 |

Measurement Tools

The study adopted measurement tools employed by previous studies, such as variables related to the 3Ps models and strategy implementation success measures developed from questionnaires used by Amoo et al. (2019), Elbanna et al. (2016) and George (2021). Questionnaires related to strategy implementation were developed based on the ideas of Amoo et al. (2019) and Elbanna et al. (2016). Competitive advantage-related questionnaires were adapted from the Clauss et al. (2021) study. Both transformational leadership and transactional leadership were measured with 3-item scales that were adopted from Rowold et al. (2014). Finally, clan culture and hierarchal culture were measured using items adapted from Wei et al. (2008).

Reliability and Validity Issues of the Study

The measurement model was assessed in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity reflects the suitability of the items representing the measures and Cronbach's alpha, while composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) are the common measures to evaluate the former. The minimum threshold for Cronbach's alpha and the CR is 0.70, and the cutoff value of AVE is 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 reports that the minimum Cronbach's alpha and the minimum CR were 0.892 (effective communication) and 0.921 (effective communication), respectively, which are above the threshold limit, and the minimum AVE was 0.699 (effective communication), which is also above the minimum cutoff value (0.50). Thus, there were no issues with convergent validity, meaning that items underlying the construct truly converged to their own scale rather than others. Discriminant validity measures the scale's distinctiveness and inclusiveness over others, which can be reflected through the demonstration of confirmatory factor

Table 2 Estimates of convergent validity

| Latent variable | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Plan related activities | | | |
| Alignment | 0.927 | 0.945 | 0.773 |
| Formulation mode | 0.921 | 0.940 | 0.760 |
| Comprehensiveness | 0.951 | 0.963 | 0.837 |
| Stakeholder involvement | 0.902 | 0.928 | 0.720 |
| Process related activities | | | |
| Resource allocation | 0.943 | 0.956 | 0.814 |
| Organizational structure | 0.927 | 0.945 | 0.774 |
| Effective communication | 0.892 | 0.921 | 0.699 |
| Change management | 0.923 | 0.942 | 0.766 |
| Evaluation and feedback | 0.927 | 0.945 | 0.774 |
| People related activities | | | |
| Participation | 0.947 | 0.960 | 0.826 |
| Commitment | 0.944 | 0.957 | 0.818 |
| Knowledge, competencies and reward (KCR) | 0.952 | 0.963 | 0.840 |
| Confidence and trust in top management (CTTP) | 0.915 | 0.936 | 0.746 |
| Organizational culture | | | |
| Clan culture | 0.952 | 0.969 | 0.912 |
| Hierarchical culture | 0.953 | 0.969 | 0.914 |
| Leadership | | | |
| Transformational leadership | 0.952 | 0.969 | 0.912 |
| Transactional leadership | 0.918 | 0.948 | 0.860 |
| Strategy implementation | 0.947 | 0.959 | 0.825 |
| Competitive advantages | 0.960 | 0.969 | 0.863 |

analysis (CFA) via a cross-loading table, a correlation matrix (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015; Roemer et al., 2021).

Structural Model Evaluation

The present study applied several criteria to scrutinize the structural model rather than relying on the beta coefficients (β) and coefficients of determination (R^2) (Hair et al., 2017). Whereas β states the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables, R^2 reflects the overall predictability of the model (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, the present study also used the significance level, t-estimates, variance inflation factor (VIF), goodness of fit, and effect size to estimate the overall predictability of the structural model. Collinearity is a common measure to estimate the normality of the data distribution, with higher scores of linearity indicating that the data are subject to a higher standard error that reveals the lower

strength of the regression weight. The collinearity issue was measured by calculating the VIF, whose maximum threshold limit is 10.00 (Field, 2018). Scores higher than 10.00 will be subjected to a higher standard error of the regression weight. The analysis revealed that none of the VIFs exceeded 3.00 (<0.10). Thus, the collinearity issue was not a major concern. We further used bootstrapping (5,000) cases to analyze the data. The structural model showed that the path estimates, significance level, and R^2 were above the recommended threshold limit for all the hypothesized relationships, except for the influence of the transactional relationship on organizational performance, as suggested by Hair Jr. et al. (2017). The strength of R^2 is also an important criterion to judge the strength of the correlations. Cohen (1977, 1988) advocated that an R^2 of more than 0.26 is considered significant. In a way, the R^2 value of each endogenous variable is higher than the threshold limit.

Results, Analysis and Findings

Based on the theoretical background of the study and extensive literature reviews, we proposed a total of six hypotheses to assess the influence of the 3Ps model variables of strategy implementation success and subsequently the competitive advantage of the organization and the moderating effects of leadership and organizational culture on the strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships. Table 3 reports the hypothesized estimates of the relationship between the exogenous variable and the endogenous variables, that is, the relationships between the main independent and dependent variables. Hypothesis 1 assumed that people-related activities would have a significant influence on strategy implementation success. Table 3 reveals a significant association between people-related activities and strategy implementation ($\beta=0.396$, $p=0.000$, CI: 0.218–0.582). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Hypothesis 2 theorized that plan-related activities had a significant influence on strategy implementation. The estimates in Table 3 show that the influence of plan-related activities is positive and significant ($\beta=0.218$, $p=0.038$, CI: 0.008–0.411). Hence, Hypothesis 2 is also supported. Hypothesis 3 proposed that the process significantly influences strategy implementation. Likewise, the influence of the process was found to be significant ($\beta=0.258$, $p=0.012$, CI: 0.082–0.480).

Table 3 Estimates of the hypothesized relationship

| Hypothesis | Path relations | β | Standard error | T statistics | P values | Confidence intervals | | Decisions |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------|----------------|--------------|----------|----------------------|-------|-----------|
| | | | | | | 2.5% | 97.5% | |
| Hypothesis 1 | People \rightarrow SI | 0.396 | 0.094 | 4.221 | 0.000 | 0.218 | 0.582 | Supported |
| Hypothesis 2 | Plan \rightarrow SI | 0.218 | 0.105 | 2.080 | 0.038 | 0.008 | 0.411 | Supported |
| Hypothesis 3 | Process \rightarrow SI | 0.258 | 0.103 | 2.503 | 0.012 | 0.082 | 0.480 | Supported |
| Hypothesis 4 | SI \rightarrow CA | 0.285 | 0.092 | 3.101 | 0.002 | 0.106 | 0.464 | Supported |

SI Strategy implementation; CA Competitive advantages

Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported. Hypothesis 4 suggested that there is a positive influence of strategy implementation on the competitive advantage of organizations. The estimates in Table 3 indicate that the influence is statistically significant ($\beta=0.285$, $p=0.002$, CI: 0.106–0.464). Thus, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Moderating Effect of Leadership and Organizational Cultures

The study also proposed the hypothesis that leadership (e.g., transformational and transactional) would have moderating effects on strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships. Table 4 reports the direct effects of transformational and transactional leadership on strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships (i.e., the moderating effects of TFL (-0.115**) and TSL (0.123**)). The estimates show that the moderating effect of transformational leadership is negative but significant and that the moderating effect of transactional leadership is positive and significant. Thus, the findings support Hypothesis 5. The study also plotted both estimates in Fig. 2a and b, and the estimates show that while a high level of transformational leadership weakens the positive influence of strategy implementation on competitive advantage, it strengthens the positive influence of strategy implementation on competitive advantage.

The study further predicted that clan culture and hierarchal culture moderate the influence of strategy implementation on competitive advantage. Table 5 reports the moderating effects of these two types of organizational culture on strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships, indicating that the moderating effect of clan culture is statistically significant (0.091**), whereas the moderating effect of hierarchal culture is not (0.023). Thus, Hypothesis 6 is partially supported. We plotted the estimates of the moderating effects of Hypothesis 5 in Fig. 3a and b. Figure 3a demonstrates that the negative influence of strategy implementation is

Table 4 Moderating effect of leadership on competitive advantage

| Predictors | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| (Constant) | 6.235 | 3.044 | 2.536 | 2.465 | 1.194 | 2.739 |
| Nature | -0.072 | -0.142 | -0.127 | -0.129 | -0.123 | -0.114 |
| Ownership | -0.061 | -0.346* | -0.386* | -0.383* | -0.356* | -0.345* |
| Size of the firm | 0.154* | 0.104 | 0.069 | 0.074 | 0.089 | 0.087 |
| Years of operation | -0.239** | -0.153* | -0.098 | -0.102 | -0.104 | -0.099 |
| Strategy implementation (SI) | - | 0.667*** | 0.499*** | 0.495*** | 0.729*** | 0.390* |
| Transformational leadership (TF) | - | - | 0.253*** | 0.240*** | 0.496** | 0.830*** |
| Transactional leadership (TS) | - | - | - | 0.029 | 0.035 | -0.569* |
| SI X TF | - | - | - | - | -0.050 | -0.115** |
| SI X CA | - | - | - | - | - | 0.123** |
| R ² | 0.036 | 0.363 | 0.408 | 0.409 | 0.413 | 0.429 |
| ΔR^2 | | 0.327 | 0.045 | 0.000 | 0.005 | 0.015 |

SI Strategy implementation, TF Transformational leadership, TS Transactional leadership, CA Competitive advantages

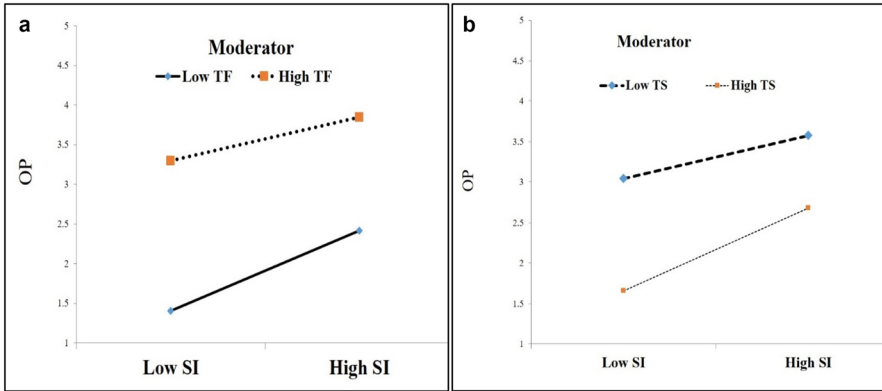


Fig. 2 a Moderating effect of TF L. b Moderating effect of TSL

Table 5 Moderating effect of culture on competitive advantages

| Predictors | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| (Constant) | 6.235 | 3.044 | 2.644 | 2.172 | 4.324 | 5.006 |
| Nature | -0.072 | -0.142 | -0.124 | -0.107 | -0.117 | -0.113 |
| Ownership | -0.061 | -0.346* | -0.299* | -0.289* | -0.278 | -0.283* |
| Size of the firm | 0.154* | 0.104 | 0.123* | 0.104 | 0.105 | 0.107 |
| Years of operation | -0.239** | -0.153* | -0.157** | -0.135* | -0.148* | -0.151* |
| Strategy implementation (SI) | - | 0.667*** | 0.530*** | 0.495*** | 0.076 | -0.046 |
| Clan culture (CC) | - | - | 0.184*** | 0.174** | -0.276 | -0.286 |
| Hierarchy culture (HC) | - | - | - | 0.119** | 0.096* | -0.031 |
| SI X CC | - | - | - | - | 0.090** | 0.091** |
| SI X HC | - | - | - | - | - | 0.023 |
| R ² | 0.036 | 0.363 | 0.392 | 0.406 | 0.421 | 0.421 |
| ΔR ² | - | 0.328 | 0.029 | 0.014 | 0.015 | 0.000 |

CC Clan culture, HC Hierarchy culture, SI. Strategy implementation

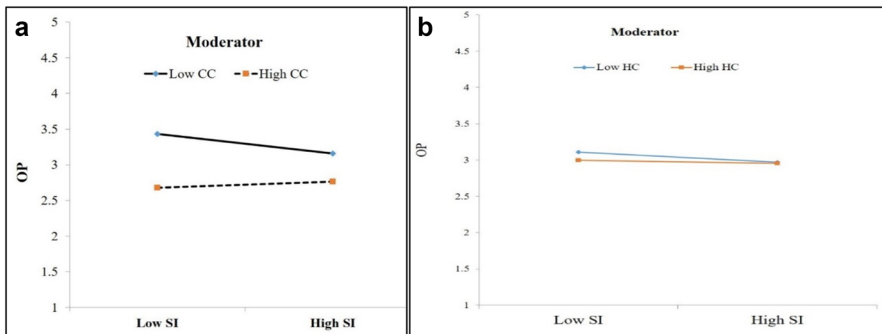


Fig. 3 a Moderating effect of CC. b Moderating effect of HC

neutralized by the presence of a high level of clan culture. However, Fig. 3b shows that there is no significant moderating effect.

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The study mainly investigated three main questions and six related hypotheses. The first research question investigated the role of people, plan, and process related activities on strategy implementation success in organizational contexts, and subsequently, three hypotheses were tested. The findings revealed a positive association between people related activities (e.g., top management participation, employee commitment, knowledge, competencies, confidence, and trust in top management) and strategy implementation success. Earlier research studies also found a positive relationship between people-related activities and successful strategy implementation. In particular, senior-level leadership's active involvement in strategy development plays a significant role and positively influences the success of strategy implementation. Earlier research also identified that cooperation among top management teams leads to greater commitment to the organization's goals and objectives and consequently contributes to successful implementation of the chosen strategy in public sector organizations (Bryson et al., 2009; Vera et al., 2022). Successful strategy implementation requires sufficient employee awareness and commitment at all levels of the organization. Those not committed to a strategy will not be motivated to implement it and attain its aims. Consequently, lower employee commitment is likely to create resistance to change and can even sabotage implementation efforts (Schaap, 2012). George et al. (2018) revealed the importance of employees' commitment to successful strategy implementation in public sector organizations. Similarly, it is important for employees to possess a set of skills and abilities, such as cognitive skills, self-knowledge, emotional resilience, and personal drive, to implement organizational strategies successfully (Candido & Santos, 2019; Mawasi et al., 2013). Maditinos et al. (2014) emphasized that organizations that provide employees with the necessary training to increase their knowledge and competencies have a higher probability of successful strategy execution. Previous studies have shown that confidence and trust in top management make employees more willing to contribute to their strategy activities, thereby increasing the possibility of successful strategy implementation (Elbanna et al., 2014, 2016). Additionally, those researchers indicated that high levels of confidence and trust are fundamental conditions for employee involvement and the implementation of strategic decisions that enable organizations to gain competitive advantages.

The second hypothesis assessed the influence of plan related activities on successful strategy implementation and found that it had significant effects. This research focused on the following important aspects of plan-related activities that could bring about successful strategy implementation: strategy alignment, the strategy formulation process, and the comprehensiveness of strategy and stakeholder involvement. From the seminar work of Wildavsky (1964, 1973) to recent studies (George et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2021; Weiser et al., 2020), it was revealed that strategy implementation depends on the organization's ability to align strategies with the organization's internal environment,

such as employee agreement with the overall vision, mission, goals and objectives. The strategy formulation process plays a significant role in future implementation because it considers an organization's mission and vision, external and internal environment, strength and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Several studies of private sector organizations found that managerial participation in strategic planning positively influences the implementation process by improving the quality of strategic decisions and increasing the level of consensus concerning strategy among managers (Elbanna et al., 2014; Nutt, 1999). The same opinion may apply to public sector organizations where middle management plays an important role in strategy implementation (Guo et al., 2017; Mitchell, 2018).

Hypothesis 3 concerned the relationship between process related activities and strategy implementation success, for which resource allocation, organizational structure, change management, effective communication, and process monitoring were considered important factors influencing strategy implementation. Earlier research also indicated that organizational structure constitutes complex relational networks of coordination and control that influence organizational efficiency and strategy implementation outcomes (Amoo et al., 2019; Jacobsen & Johnsen, 2020). Obeidat et al. (2017) found that effective communication is mentioned more frequently than any other success factor in terms of strategy implementation, as it is a necessary part of information delivery. Noble (1999) defined control as a central element of the implementation process that can be achieved by means of monitoring and action plans. It is important to note that monitoring systems are critical and should be used throughout the entire implementation process. Therefore, senior management must know exactly what to assess from the very beginning, during the process, and at the end.

Hypothesis 4 assumed that there is a relationship between strategy implementation and organizations' competitive advantage. The findings indicated a positive influence of strategy implementation on competitive advantage. Crittenden and Crittenden (2008) affirmed that insufficient employee knowledge and unawareness of their organizations' strategy lead to poor performance and unsuccessful implementation. Organizational members who strongly believe in their strategy and understand its goals are more likely to be willing to make extra efforts on their behalf, which, in turn, results in better organizational performance.

Hypotheses 5 and 6 investigated the moderating roles of two of the most visible leadership styles and two of the most discernable organizational cultures in central Asian organizations in the relationships between strategy implementation and competitive advantage. The results revealed a positive moderating role of transactional leadership and clan culture on strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships. However, transactional leadership appeared to have a negative impact, and hierarchical organizational culture did not have any significant impact on strategy implementation and competitive advantage relationships.

Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

The study could contribute to both theoretical and practical aspects of the public sector strategic management literature. First, it reiterates the importance of

integrated theoretical frameworks as the bases for advancing integrated theoretical perspectives in the area of strategic management. The findings complement the current strategy implementation literature by providing empirical evidence of a holistic view by including a broad range of factors and categories into three main perspectives for the managerial decision-making process. A total of 16 critical factors were selected from three main perspectives related to plan, people, and process, providing a broader view for better strategy implementation practices in public sector organizations. Public sector managers should include those activities for effective strategy implementation in organizational contexts. Second, as the findings revealed the influence of people, plan, and process related factors on strategy implementation success, they provide empirical evidence of the applicability of the 3Ps model in real organizational contexts. Sometimes a lack of empirical research prohibits managers from initiating evidence-based management practices. The findings of the study could provide a much-needed impetus to public sector managers for a holistic approach in the decision-making process. The third contribution is that it presents a holistic model (the 3Ps), which includes strong influencing factors that affect the strategy implementation process in any type of organization. The study findings also provide some practical managerial guidelines for top managers, decision-makers and researchers engaged in strategic management. The findings will provide a better understanding of the factors that impact strategy implementation processes and could help them successfully formulate strategies and implementation guidelines. Furthermore, it identified and empirically tested relevant and possible influencing factors of the strategy implementation process that managers could face in organizational contexts. In this respect, it raises awareness of the challenges and consequently prepares employees and other stakeholders for effective strategy implementation.

Conclusions

While the study provides important empirical evidence of factors influencing strategy implementation practices in organizational contexts, it has some limitations that need to be considered by future studies in this area. First, the study was conducted in a central Asian transition economy context, and therefore, generalization of the findings needs to be considered cautiously. Nevertheless, the results can be generalized to some extent, particularly to other Central Asian or former Soviet Republics that share similarities with Kazakhstan with respect to history, culture, traditions, level of economic development, and market structures. Second, the study collected survey data from top- and mid-level managers who are supposed to be directly involved in the strategy formulation and implementation process. However, employees from other levels could differ from those managerial perspectives. Therefore, future research should include all levels of employees to provide better insights into strategy implementation practices. Finally, the study followed a quantitative survey method and collected data on selected factors identified from the 3Ps perspective. However, future research following inductive and qualitative approaches could identify more factors beyond the hypothesized variables of strategy implementation

practices and competitive advantages. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the study nonetheless could be considered a step forward toward a better understanding of strategy implementation processes and improving the current literature on the strategic management domain.

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Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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