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Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Strategy in Large Manufacturing Companies: Evidence from Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Most of the organization strategies are not implemented successfully; this high failure rate of strategy implementation should be investigated. Thus, the purpose of this paper was to identify barriers for effective strategy implementation in large manufacturing companies. This study employed a mixed research strategy as a framework to address the research objective, thus primary data were collected through questionnaire and interview. The study is a cross-sectional design in which primary data were collected from 304 top-level and middle-level manager respondents and twelve interviewees of twenty-five manufacturing companies. The six major obstacles to the successful strategy implementation of large manufacturing companies are; ineffective strategy communication to employees, short-range orientation dominates inadequate leadership skill of managers, human resources are not effectively developed to support strategy implementation, lack of alignment between the culture of the department and its strategy, and poor reward systems.

Keywords: Barriers; Manufacturing; Strategy Implementation.

INTRODUCTION:

The manufacturing sector is the most dynamic power of development, and (Weiss, 1988) noted that manufacturing holds the qualities of a motor of development quick profitability development, increasing returns to scale, and fast technological change. In Ethiopia, the industrial sector is one of the envisioned sectors expected to have a significant contribution in the foreign exchange earnings, small and microenterprise development, growth domestic product (GDP), and employment opportunity (MIO, 2013). Due to the vast importance of the sector, it is worthy to identify factors which contribute or affect the performance of the manufacturing firms. Among many more factors which can affect the overall performance of the sector, issues related to strategy implementation might be one of these variables.

The main purpose of most strategic management researches is on understanding why some business firms do better than others (Crook, Ketchen, Combs, & Todd, 2008). Strategy implementation is part and parcel of strategic management and having many decisions and actions in implementing the strategic plan so as to achieve the firm's objective (Pearce & Robinson., 2003). It is very critical than strategy formulation for a given organization, this is because, if the developed strategy is not effectively implemented as per the developed strategy by the employees and management, it is costly and damages grow more than the failure of strategy formulation (Mbaka & Mugambi, 2014). Thus, a formulated strategy must be executed; because a well-designed strategy is useless except if it is viably executed as formulating an excellent strategy which is never implemented will not have any importance. However, it might not be simple and successfully implemented. (Hrebiniak, 2006) has described that strategy execution throughout the organization is a much more difficult task for the management of companies than that of the effort required for formulating an implementable strategic plan.

(Deloitte & Touche, 1992) as cited in (O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2002) believe that strategy implementation is not simple and 80 percent of the organization strategies are not implemented successfully and in many cases, this is

not because of the poor strategic plan. Therefore, a study focused on identifying strategic issues and evaluating their importance to the strategy implementation process of companies assumed as very important.
This research, therefore, aimed to provide empirical evidence from the Tigray region, Ethiopia, on the barriers of effective strategy implementation in large manufacturing companies. Hence, the context provides the novelty to the study, as unlike the prior studies the current study is from companies in the developing country.

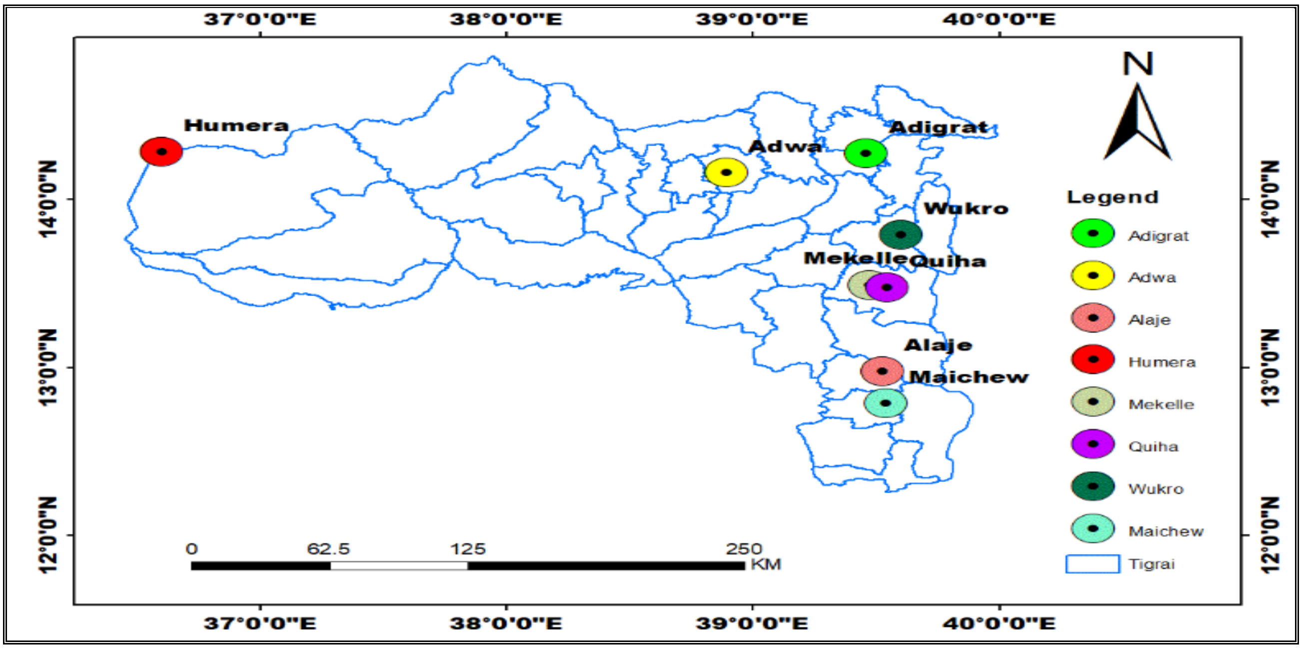
LITERATURE REVIEW:

Strategy implementation is a very important component of strategic management. (David, 2011) defined strategy implementation as a means of mobilizing members of an organization to put the strategic plan into action. Strategy implementation is the most difficult stage in strategic management; it requires personal discipline, commitment, and sacrifice. Effective strategy execution which is more of an art than a science depends upon managers' competence to motivate and lead organization members.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Study Area:
Tigray region, situated between 120 15' and 140 57'N latitude 360 27'E and 390 59'E longitudes, is in the northern part of the nine regions of Ethiopia. It is the northernmost of the nine national, regional states of Ethiopia and it is the 6th largest by area and the 5th most densely populated of the nine regions and has a good strategic position, The region has an area of 54,572 Km^2 and bordering with the Republic of Sudan in the West, Eritrea to the North, the Afar Region to the East, and the Amhara Region to the south and southwest (TBoFED, 2011).
The selected twenty-five large manufacturing companies for the study are located (see in the map below) in different towns of the region in Humera, Adwa, Adigrat, Edaga-hamus, Wukro, Mekelle, Quiha, Adi-gudom, and Maichew.

Figure 1: Map of the Study areas (Tigray regional state, Ethiopia)



Source: The Researchers

Research Purpose:
(Bryman, 2008) suggested that employing descriptive research design helps to explain phenomena as they exist and understand behavior in its particular context. Therefore, based on the above-given explanations, this study was based on descriptive research to describe the barriers of effective strategy implementation.

Research Strategy:
Mixed methods approach refers to an approach which employs aspects of both quantitative and qualitative approach help to capitalize the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches at the same time to

offset any possible weaknesses inherent within one method (Creswel, 2009). Therefore, this study employs a mixed research strategy as a framework to address the research objective. The variable of interest was related to barriers of effective strategy implementation in large manufacturing companies in the Tigray region.

Research Design:
The study used a cross-sectional survey research design to achieve the raised basic questions of the study. Because, cross-sectional research design is the collection of the required data at one-time point (Creswell, 2009).

Population of the Study:
The research population is the body of people, organizations, or any other collection of items under consideration for a research purpose (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). The population of this research compromised all large manufacturing companies (which have strategic planning experience) that are registered in the Bureau of Trade and Investment Tigray regional state. Out of the existing large manufacturing companies in the region, a few of (twenty- eight companies) them had strategic plans. Hence, data was collected from twenty-five manufacturing companies.

Top level managers and upper middle-level managers were respondents of the study. Because of involving both managers in the strategic planning process is very important in order to develop a better and implementable strategy. Middle-level managers are assumed to have sufficient knowledge on the strategy implementation issue and top-level managers in almost all companies have occupied double positions (as vice managers and department heads) which it can let them know more the challenges during the strategy implementation.

(Gaur & Gaur, 2006) as a rule of thumb, they suggest that a sample size of 200-300 should be considered to be adequate for a proper analysis, likewise (Field, 2013) pointed out sample size should be greater than 200. In this study out of the total 356 distributed questionnaires, 320 of it were collected, giving a response rate of 89.9% which is adequate for analysis and lastly, 304 questionnaires were found appropriate for analysis. The eligibility criterion for the participants was greater than three years of experience in the managerial position with the present company.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques
Collection of the required data via questionnaire is more common and accepted in management literature (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, & Newton, 2002). A self-administered questionnaire is used and the questionnaires were completed by the respondents themselves. The primary data collected through the self-administered questionnaire was supplemented with data from the interviewees (strategic planning committee members).

Data Analysis Tools and Techniques:
The researcher used both statistical packages for social science (SPSS) version 22 and AMOS software package version 22. AMOS has a technique to assess a measurement model. Thus, AMOS is more appropriate to assess the measurement model through CFA and convergent validity of the instrument was tested.

Measurement: Set of questions was designed to gauge the perceptions of respondents on the possible barriers of effective strategy implementation. A five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘no extent’ to ‘very large extent’ agreement, modified from Cater & Pucko, (2010); Jooste & Fourie, (2009) was used to measure the perceived barriers to effective strategy implementation. Accordingly, respondents were requested to indicate the level to which they believe that each of the mentioned fourteen-items is a barrier to effective strategy implementation in their companies. Finally, seven items were found appropriate for analysis after EFA carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents:
The demographic profile of the respondents gives the general idea about who have participated in the study. Hence, this becomes important as an idea about the respondents gives the strength to the inferences which are drawn from the data.

Gender of Respondents:
As displayed in the table below, out of the total respondents (from the top and middle-level managers) more than 87% of them were male. This reveals that male dominates female in the managerial position of large manufacturing companies.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender of Respondent	Frequency	Percent
Male	265	87.2
Female	39	12.8
Total	**304**	**100**

Source: (Own Survey, 2018).

Maximum Education Level of Respondents:
Regarding the education level, the majority (64.45 %) of the respondents was first-degree holders and of course, 28.94% were second-degree holders. This implies that most of the respondents had good education level to understand the issue of the research and provide the required data for the researchers.

Table 2: Education Level of Respondents

Maximum Education Level of Respondent	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	19	6.25
First Degree	196	64.47
Master's Degree	88	28.94
Missing	1	0.32
Total	**304**	**100**

Source: (Own Survey, 2018).

Age of Company, Respondents Position and Experience in the Position:
The age of the companies from which the data for this study was collected is ranging from 3 to more than 25 years. The majority (24.34%) of the respondents were from companies' having age of more than 25 years. Many of the respondents (65.12%) were found from companies which stayed in the business for more than one decade. Out of the total, 84.21 % of the respondents were department managers and the next 7.23 % of the respondents were office heads which structurally considered as equivalent to departments and 6.90 % of the respondents were occupied the double position (vice managers and department heads). This all implies that the respondents of the study were more relevant to the issue at hand for providing the required data.

Table 3: Age of Company and Respondents' Position

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Years</th><th>Respondents</th><th>Percent</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Company age</td><td>3-5</td><td>53</td><td>17.43</td></tr>
<tr><td>6-10</td><td>53</td><td>17.43</td></tr>
<tr><td>11-15</td><td>57</td><td>18.75</td></tr>
<tr><td>16-20</td><td>38</td><td>12.50</td></tr>
<tr><td>21-25</td><td>29</td><td>9.53</td></tr>
<tr><td>>25</td><td>74</td><td>24.34</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>Respondents</td><td>Percent</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Respondents' position in the company</td><td>Presidents/ Mangers</td><td>5</td><td>1.64</td></tr>
<tr><td>Double position (V/Manger plus dept. head)</td><td>21</td><td>6.90</td></tr>
<tr><td>Department managers</td><td>256</td><td>84.21</td></tr>
<tr><td>Office Heads</td><td>22</td><td>7.23</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>304</td><td>100.0</td></tr>
</table>

Source: (Own Survey 2018).

Size of Companies:
Companies' size in the study was measured based on the number of full-time employees. As depicted in the Table below, the number of full-time employees of the companies were from the minimum 84 up to the extremely maximum (one company) 5856. The majority (32%) of the companies were having full-time employees in between 84 and 200 followed by 5 (20%) companies with 401 up to 800 employees.

Table 4: Full-Time Based Number Employees

SN	Number of Full Time Employees	Number of Companies	Percent
1	84-200	8	32
2	201-400	4	16
3	401-600	5	20
4	601-800	2	8
5	801-1000	2	8
6	1500-1800	3	12
7	>5000	1	4
Total		**25**	

Source: (Own Survey 2018).

Barriers of Effective Strategy Implementation:
As displayed in the table below, possible obstacles of effective strategy implementation (for the last three years) were asked to respondents in order to evaluate their respective department based on the ten items on five-point Likert scale ranging from very large extent effect (5) to no extent effect (1). The data used for assessing the possible barriers to effective strategic implementation was through case screening such as missing data (4 cases removed), outliers (4 cases removed) and unengaged response(4 cases removed) and 304 cases were found appropriate for further analysis.
Moreover, some basic assumption of data set tests were carried out; such as the normality of the data, both skewness, and kurtosis found between +1 and -1, thus it was normal as suggested by (Garson, 2012), EFA was conducted to investigate the factor loading of factors (all items found greater than 0.70 factor loading), uni-dimentionality all items were loaded in one component, no problem of multicollinearity as determinant is 0.046 which is greater than 0.0001 as suggested by (Field, 2013) and both variance inflation factor (VIF) (less than 5) and tolerance (greater than 1) were checked. EFA showed that all the seven items have found their eigen value 4.05 and the total variance explained by them was 57.8%.
The reliability of the barriers of strategy implementation scale was greater than .88 that confirmed the scale is reliable as suggested by (Garson, 2012). Besides, the scale was also assessed its convergent validity through CFA and found valid as AVE (AVE =0.503, CR=0.87) of the construct was greater than 0.5 which in line with the recommendation of many scholars such as (Kline, 2015). Furthermore, the communality estimates values of all items were above 0.5 indicating that the seven items can be retained in the analysis.

Table 4: Item Loading, % Variance Explained, Cronbach's Alpha (α), AVE and CR of Barriers of Strategy Implementation

	Factor loading	Cronbach Alpha (α)	% of variance	AVE & CR
Barrier of Strategy Implementation in the last three years		.88	57.8	0.503 & 0.87
The department's strategy is not effectively communicated to the employees	.779			
Short range orientation dominates the department	.822			
Managers lack leadership skills for strategy implementation	.732			
Human resources are not effectively developed to support strategy implementation	.786			
There is a lack of alignment between the culture of the department and its strategy	.711			
Reward systems do not stimulate strategy implementation	.722			
The employees do not understand the department's strategy	.766			

(AVE=$\Sigma L^2/n$; AVE=average variance extracted; L=Factor loading of items, n=no. of items CR= $(\Sigma L)^2 / ((\Sigma L)^2 + (\Sigma e))$; CR= composite reliability
Source: (Own Survey, 2018).

The mean score of the responses of the respondents were ranged from a minimum of 2.88 to the maximum 4.00 with a standard deviation of the least 0.76 up to the highest 1.157. The most important barrier reported is related to the information flow, that is the organization's strategies were not effectively communicated to the employees have received the highest value (mean score 4.00 and standard deviation 0.76). The general perception of the respondents on communicating the departments' strategies to the implementers or its employees was very weak. A vast majority (60.20 %) of the respondents strongly agreed that the strategies of their respective departments were not effectively communicated to its employees and the next 23 % of the participants agreed to a very large extent that there were no effective communications on the strategies with their employees. No respondent perceived that the absence of communication on department's strategies with its employees was not a problem for implementing the formulated strategies of their respective department.

The finding is consistent with the interviewees' perception, where most of the participants raised that the absence of effective communication of the strategic plan of their respective company to implementers was hampering the execution of the strategy. They added that middle-level managers were expected to communicate the strategic plan via appropriate channels with their respective subordinates in order to create a shared understanding on the issue and act accordingly; however, this was not effective on reality.

Based on the study in twelve service organizations conducted by (Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002), the strategic plan communication in most of the organizations was large through both written and oral top-down communication. While in this study, weak communication was perceived by the respondents as the most important obstacle to strategy implementation. Similar with our finding, poor or inadequate information sharing was a major challenge or problem in Pennsylvania (Hrebiniak, 2006), in Norway (Heide, Grønhaug, & Johannessen, 2002), in South Africa companies (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). Due to the fact that strategy implementation always involves more people, effective communication of the strategic plan of the company down the organization or across different functional units to its workforce is vital otherwise it may hinder the successful implementation of the strategies of the departments. However, the possible reason for this may be that (1) lack of managers' competence and /or confidence to discuss on the issue with subordinates; (2) missing the importance of creating a common understanding between managers and subordinates; (3) less confidence on employees of the department.

The other critical among the obstacles of strategy implementation was short range orientation dominance of the company. As displayed in the table below, short-range objectives dominance (mean score 3.27 and standard deviation 1.001) of their respective department was the major barrier in implementing the formulated strategies. The majority (35.9%) of the respondents believed that inclining to short-range orientations of their respective departments were to a large extent challenging to the implementation of the formulated strategies. The next a sizable number of participants (27.3 %) also felt that the short-range orientations of their respective departments were to a very large extent barrier for the strategy implementation. No, except 5 respondents missed that the short-range objectives dominance of their respective departments was an obstacle for implementing the strategies.

Majority of the interviewed participants of the study also had the same perception on short-range activities dominance of their respective company. Moreover, the interviewees believed that even some times they were reactive and guiding the activities of their respective companies based on the existing circumstances other than following the strategic plan that could make the company more productive.

Similarly a short-range orientation dominance of companies was a challenge for strategy implementation in micro businesses to large global player companies of Slovenia (Cater & Pucko, 2010), in large and medium-sized companies having more than 200 employees of Slovenia (Zupan & Ograjenšek, 2004). Of course, long-term needs must be translated into short-range objectives in order to manage it. However, over emphasizing on the short-term objectives might be again a problem by itself. This is not simple to set a reason why the departments were focusing on short range orientation but to mention one, the strategic plan may be poorly defined and overlooked major factors that can affect the function of the departments thereby their respective companies.

Managers' leadership skill was also assumed to be a very important factor in strategy implementation of companies. Accordingly, out of the total 304 respondents, the highest number (28.6%) of participants agreed that there was serious lack of leadership skills by managers while the next 28.3 % of the respondents suggested that the lack of leadership skill by managers for implementing the strategies of their respective departments was moderate. However, 26 % of the manager respondents perceived that lack of leadership skills by managers rated as to a small extent.

Likewise, a lack of appropriate leadership skills by managers during the strategy implementation was found as an important obstacle in companies of Slovenia (Cater & Pucko, 2010) and (Zupan & Ograjenšek, 2004), similarly (Alexander, 1985) revealed that leadership and direction provided by department managers were not adequate enough in medium and large-sized of the USA companies. (Hrebiniak, 2006) noted that managers know more about strategic planning than execution because they have been trained to strategy formulation, not implement plans. Thus managers may not have the required skill and knowledge on how to systematically guide and lead the implementation phase of the strategies. Specifically, middle managers need to have both human and conceptual skills in order to perused and influence employees, and finally to get implemented the strategy. The other possible reason, managers may not have guidelines to strategy execution effort.

The majority (30.3 %) of the manager participants have reported that workforce of their respective departments was moderately developed to support strategy implementation, while the next highest number (28 %) of the respondents strongly agreed that human resource was not developed to execute effectively the formulated strategies. On the other hand, 26.3 % of the participants pointed out that there was no human resource skill and experience problem to execute the strategies of their respective departments'.

However, in South Africa companies, human capital was a moderate obstacle to strategy implementation (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). Therefore, this implies that either human resource qualities analysis were not undertaken during the strategic planning or because of different reasons experienced and competent employee are left the departments of the companies under study.

Lack of alignment between the culture of the departments and their respective strategies were also reported as a challenge of implementing strategies. As depicted in the table below, the formulated strategies of the departments do not carefully consider the departments' culture (mean score 3.13 and standard deviation 1.131) and consequently, it was a challenge in executing the strategies of their respective departments. The highest number of manager respondents (29.3 %) pointed out that lack of alignment between the culture of the departments and their strategies were to a large extent an obstacle in executing departments' strategies and it is also found that number of respondents (26.3 %) reported that lack of alignment between the culture of the departments and their strategies were a moderate barrier. However, there were some respondents (11.8%) who reported that lack of alignment between the culture of the companies and their strategies were not an obstacle in implementing the department's strategies in their respective company.

(Ahmadi, Salamzadeh, Daraei, & Akbari, 2012) organizational cultures have significant relationships with the implementation process of strategies of Iranian banks. In companies of South Africa, lack of alignment between the organizational culture and their strategies were a minor barrier of strategy implementation (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). As organizational culture is "beliefs, assumptions, and values that members of a group share about rules of conduct, leadership styles, administrative procedures, ritual, and customs" (Mehta & Krishnan, 2004); (Mintzberg, 1990). Therefore, the finding indicates that the strategies of the departments understudy may not be considered the beliefs and/or the values of the employees.

The perception of the respondents on the employees' level of understanding of their respective companies' strategies were weak. According to the response of the respondents, employees not having sufficient understanding on the company's strategies (mean score 2.88 and standard deviation 1.04) were mentioned as a relatively minor barrier than the other items in the scale. Out of the total, 25.3 % of the respondents noted that the important barrier for proper strategy implementation was employees' having not sufficient understanding on the company's strategies and 29.30% of the respondents feel this was a moderate obstacle for implementing the strategies of their respective companies. However, the majority (32.6%) respondents' perception was employees do understand the organization's strategy and it was only to a small extent problem for strategy implementation in their respective companies.

However, a poor understanding of the strategy by workforce was the top barrier to effective strategy implementation in South Africa companies (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). This could be mainly because of a communication problem between the managers and subordinates as a result of either ineffective communication (inappropriate medium of communication) or complete the absence of communicating the strategic plan to employees.

Regarding the level of control on the implementation of strategies, respondents' perception of the level of efforts exerted to control the implementation of strategies was weak (score 3.06 and standard deviation 1.157). The result suggests that the highest number (31.6%) of respondents replied that implementations of strategies were only to a small extent controlled, In addition, the next 28.6% respondents reported to a large level of strategy implementation control was exercised by their respective company. And a small (9.2%) number of respondents reported that totally there were no controlling efforts on the strategy executions of their respective companies.

Similarly, a considerable number of interviewees linked the strategy implementation problem with weak implementation control by the concerned bodies of the companies. Moreover, the research participants added that the effort made to control and to take correction action when needed was quite poor.

Unlike the result of this study, in companies of South Africa, strategy implementation follow up was not a major

obstacle, it was a minor (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). Leaders and specifically functional unit managers are responsible to evaluate the progress of the strategy implementation through ongoing evaluation of the strategy execution. However, the possible reason why strategy implementation control in the departments of the studied companies was weak, it might be because of managers negligence and assuming everything is going good or managers less interest in the strategy.
Generally, respondents' perception of the reward system of companies for stimulating strategy implementation (score 3.19 and standard deviation 1.092) was weak in the companies under study. The majority (30.3%) of the respondents' opinion about the reward system to support the implementation of the strategy was moderate. While a sizable number of respondents (28.0%) reported that reward system was to a large extent barrier for strategy implementation and some respondents (11.2%) suggested that the reward systems of their respective company were a serious problem.
In line with the finding of this study, reward systems do not stimulate strategy implementation in Slovenian companies (Cater & Pucko, 2010). On the other hand, (Schaap, 2006) revealed that an organization which ties rewards with strategy implementation level is successful and higher in its organizational performance. Therefore, as employees of the departments of the studied companies perceived that the reward system was not attractive, they might not be putting a lot of efforts intentionally or unintentionally, less co-operative in their workplace, do not support department or organizational change, less willingness to receive guidance from managers, and less willingness to spend maximum possible time in work-related activities, which all this hamper the successful strategy implementation.

Table 5: Strategy Implementation Barriers in Large Manufacturing Companies

	Obstacles to strategy implementation	Response of respondents (%)					N	Mean	SD
		very large extent	large extent	Moderate	Small extent	Not at all			
1	The organization's strategy is not effectively communicated to the employees	70 (23.0%)	183 (60.2%)	33 (10.9%)	18 (5.9%)	0	304	4.00	0.76
2	Short range orientation dominates of the department	30 (9.9%)	109 (35.9%)	83 (27.3%)	77 (25.3%)	5 (1.6%)	304	3.27	1.001
3	Managers lack leadership skills for strategy implementation	39 (12.8%)	86 (28.3%)	87 (28.6%)	79 (26.0%)	13 (4.3%)	304	3.19	1.092
4	Human resources are not effectively developed to support strategy implementation	34 (11.2%)	85 (28.0%)	92 (30.3%)	80 (26.3%)	13 (4.3%)	304	3.15	1.068
5	There is a lack of alignment b/n the culture of the department & its strategy	36 (11.8%)	89 (29.3%)	79 (26.0%)	80 (26.3%)	20 (6.6%)	304	3.13	1.131
6	Reward systems do not stimulate strategy implementation	35 (11.5%)	87 (28.6%)	65 (21.4%)	96 (31.6%)	21 (6.9%)	304	3.06	1.157
7	The employees do not understand the department's strategy	16 (5.3%)	77 (25.3%)	89 (29.3%)	99 (32.6%)	23 (7.6%)	304	2.88	1.040
Barrier of strategic Implementation		260 (12.2%)	716 (33.6%)	528 (24.8%)	529 (24.9%)	95 (4.5%)	304		

CONCLUSION:

The overall purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge on the barriers of strategy implementation through a study in large companies in Tigray. Thus, on the basis of the research findings presented and the discussions made in the above section of the paper, the following conclusions are drawn.
The perception of department managers on the strategy execution challenges of large manufacturing companies showed that all the possible obstacles, except one of the strategy implementation (but two dropped in the CFA) in the measurement scale (adapted from research work of others in the area) showed above-average scores (higher than 3.00 point), which implies these items were also important obstacles in the process of strategy implementation of departments of large manufacturing companies of the region. However, the importance levels of the barriers of strategy implementation of the departments were different from one another. Thus, the most

noticed obstacles were related to ineffective strategic plan communication of managers with their subordinates and short-range orientation dominates of the departments. Besides, inadequate managers' leadership skills for strategy implementation, insufficient competence of employees of the departments, lack of alignment between the culture of the department and its strategy, and poor reward systems were also found important obstacles to successful strategy implementation of the departments of the companies under study.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Once the strategic plan is identified as important that can take the company to the desired goals of the company, any barriers in the execution of the strategic plan need to be solved. Unless the obstacles identified in the study are corrected they will have negative consequences in the strategy implementation process. As revealed in the result section of the paper, based on the department managers' perception of manufacturing companies in Tigray, the six most important barriers to the successful strategy implementation are identified.

Therefore, managers, specifically department managers should communicate company's and department's strategy via appropriate channel (written and/or oral) to members of the department for example, let employees participate in the planning process and arranging discussions on the strategy with all employees of the department as successful strategic outcomes are best achieved when member of the organization is also part of the strategy-making process.

Managers should work on making sure that incentives and rewards throughout the organization support strategy execution efforts. This can be realized by through caring out appropriate revision on the existing job description and job specification.

Weak strategy implementation control often resulting in uncoordinated actions and decisions. As complex strategies in departments of large companies often demand effective coordination and communications between managers and subordinates.

As the on the job and off the job training provision of employees can help update the employees, strategic leadership training will help managers to capture adequate knowledge and skill on how to lead and control the strategy implementation.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

All researches have their own limitations that this research is not an exception. Thus, this study is confined to the manufacturing sector; however, it would have been more comprehensive and generalizable, if all types of business sectors found throughout the study area were part of the study.

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