



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

**Assessment of strategic alignment on project success: The case of
school construction projects funded by United Nations Children's
Fund Ethiopia Country Office**

by

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A project paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Project Management

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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Declaration

I, Yonas Mindaye, the undersigned, declare that this project work, “Assessment of strategic alignment on project success: A case of school construction projects funded by United Nations Children's Fund Ethiopia Country Office”, is my original work to the best of my knowledge, has not been presented for a degree in any other higher education institute or university. It is prepared for partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Arts in Project Management.

Candidate Signature

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This is to certify that the above declaration made by the candidate is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Advisor Signature

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Acknowledgement

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List of Abbreviations

UNICEF-ECO: United Nation Children’s Fund - Ethiopia Country Office

SA: Strategic Alignment

PS: Project Success

PSD: Project Success Dimension

Abstract

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is mandated and responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide; laid out Education Strategy 2019-2030 themed “every child learns” strategic goal, implemented through programs and projects. The research paper has an objective to assess the strategic alignment on project success through the specific case study of school construction projects implemented at Somali, Gambella & Beishangul-Gumuz regions after the launch of this strategy. Though defining project success is unequivocal to practitioners, yet it is adopted project success dimension of “Efficiency to schedule”, “Efficiency to budget”, and peculiar project success dimensions of “Impact on beneficiaries”, and “preparation for the future” in setting conceptual framework. The study adopts descriptive research design, employing census with primary data collected using questionnaire from the pertinent professional project team members, followed by descriptive statistics data analysis. The findings reveal on sub project success dimensions of “Efficiency to Schedule” and “Efficiency to Budget” in view of strategic alignment both found to be in fair degree rated as medium-high caliber calling an improvement on the same, in turn for better alignment to organization strategy. On the other project success dimensions of “Impact on Beneficiaries -Overall Performance” and “Preparing for future – investing for excellence” in view of strategic alignment, both are found to be high rated caliber, indicating the need to maintain furthest or strive for utmost. On aggregate, an above-high rating alignment caliber between the dependent variable of project success dimensions to the independent variable strategic alignment, to be exact a 4.1pt on 5pt scale or 82% alignment score is registered. In nutshell, the study pinpoints the significance of the strategic alignment (SA) on project success dimensions (PSD), through conducting an assessment and ultimately help enable uplift project success convergence to organizational strategic alignment. The case study, with all its limitations, reveals the significant of the strategic alignment on project success dimensions, as a high requirement towards meeting organization goal. The project paper recommends a continuous alignment calibration assessment in project phase gates, checking whether strategic aspirations are well aligning to corresponding relevant project success dimensions, and based on the findings adjust the convergence for a high-end organization strategic aspiration.

Key words: Project success, Project Success Dimension (PSD), Organizational Strategy, Strategic Alignment (SA)

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Organization and governments continually carve policies and strategies, within the competitive and complex business environment to cope up with reality of to-date situations and advancement reached in turn for the betterment of humankind. Starting from the inception of strategic intent to layout organization's vision, mission, a strategy is carved followed by stages of scanning & analysis of internal and external business environment, to result in strategy formulation, then for its implementation and evaluation for a complete set. A breakdown in implementing the strategy is achieved through portfolios, programs, and projects; and it is at this bottom breakdown the importance of projects and particularly '*project success*' and its summing up contribution to the bigger picture of '*achievement of the organization strategic aspiration*'.

Project success has a subjective nature to evaluate as different people interpret it in different ways, different meaning to different stakeholders that attribute to their perspectives; the common ones being meeting schedule, budget, and performance goals. However, literatures are nowadays pinpointing that considering time, cost and quality or performance, as called the *iron triangle*, as a primary success measures appear insufficient; so stressing the need for additional project success measurement dimensions applying multidimensional frameworks to assess project success.

A concept of Strategic Project Management (SPM) is coined defined as “the use of the appropriate project management knowledge, skills, tools and techniques in the context of the organizational goals and objectives so that the project deliverables will contribute to company

value in a way that can be measured". The SPM is further described as a "process that takes into account a company's way of doing business, allowing for the possibility of a significant payoff with fewer risks" (Callahan & Brooks, 2004). Building on Stanleigh's strategies, a basic framework for implementing Strategic Project Management methodologies within an organization can be created. The SPM framework stipulates for Strategic Alignment of Projects - an organization should ensure that any project undertaken is aligned with the goals and objectives of the organization.

The research on the topic shows the key to alignment is when all company's interest and actions are directed to company goals and others focused on alignment thorough project selection or portfolio management. It is recently that researchers started to explore the alignment of projects more thoroughly at project level, there is a need to develop a comprehensive view aligning project with business strategy. (Aaron et al, 2007)

With this profound strategy-project "linkage" importance, questions will come in one's mind the need of assessment of its degree in tangible diagnosis, and ways to improve. One of the most important challenges of project management in project-based companies is to identify and build such an alignment. (Srivannaboon, 2006). Another research suggests assessing project success to at least four distinct dimensions of project efficiency, impact on the customer, direct and business success, and preparing for the future. These dimensions of project success grant for a holist view in measurement of the fulfilment of organization strategy through a focus on assessing the level of strategic alignment link with a selected project success criterion.

Coming to the particular of the study area, research show many organizations have overlooked the important fact of aligning projects with corporate strategy; the criticality of "aligning projects with the strategic goals of the organization for project success and return on investment". And in a reverse perspective, a major reason for project failure is that most

organizations do not ensure the projects they initiate are aligned with their organization's core strategies. Further research found that a third of organizations had no systematic approach for prioritizing projects or linking them to corporate and strategic goals. It is of paramount importance to develop a criteria against which projects can be prioritized, their impact on corporate strategy and strategic alignment measured, demonstrate how project's successful execution is supporting the corporate strategic plan, even terminate projects that the linkage to organization strategy cannot be established.

Investigating for research made at national level in the study area, it is observed as scarce, with one study found tried to present a case study in Bank business – IT strategic alignment improvement in a qualitative study in identifying internal and external factors. However, it fails to bring measurable caliber of how much in alignment or non-alignment in reverse view (Belete and Hagos, 2020).

Another national research conducted, made a hypothesis attesting that “strategic management” dimension has a higher significant effect on project success, so declaring the strategic management roles for project success. It concludes that the project management office had to provide advice to upper management, participate in strategic planning, manage benefits, and conduct networking and environmental scanning has a substantial impact on the success of information system projects (Teshale, 2021). In a good note the research has put points of improving success to the strategic management. Nonetheless the research, as in the previous one above, has not expanded to highlight the need of calibration on the degree of strategic alignment, yet measurement is a basic essence of diagnosis before proceeding in alignment improvement. So, this research intends to fill in this gap and pinpoint this significance.

1.2. Problem Statement

The organization United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is mandated and responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide, and in its outcome streams of “Learning and Development” laid out Education strategy 2019-2030 with “Every child learns” strategic goal, implementing through programs and projects.

On its “Every Child Learning’ flagship it upholds in fulfilling to one of Global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and the global UNICEF strategic goals, so checking its alignment to the policy framework in upward line of linkage. The strategy stipulates for a result-based management, laid out outcome, output levels, and components of outputs. It laid out strategy’s performance framework that operates in different management levels to evaluate, monitor and learns from for shaping its future strategic planning.

The organization has cascaded its strategy in what is called country “four flagships” program – *end child marriage; end open defecation; stop stunting; and for every child learning* – in reference to UNICEF Ethiopia country kit. So ‘Every child accessing learning opportunities’ is set as one of the country’s organizational flagship priorities. The goal is for every child, particularly the most marginalized and those affected by humanitarian situations, be provided with inclusive, equitable, quality education and learning opportunities. In its implementation the organization develops a results-based framework as it breaks down to project level, with school construction projects conceived as one, which this study focusses.

Since projects are chosen vehicles to implement the high-level organizational or business strategy, to ultimately meet long-term vision in breakdown sums and so make stand out in today’s ever increasing competitive environment. Ensuring a project to align in substantial degree in the pathway of the organization strategy should be at inherent and core place of a project itself.

With an in-placed strategy in high-end, the drive for result such that a “success” that is aligned to strategy through the very breakdown projects is of logic and basic to seek for. In reverse perspective, the assessment of project success in a dimension of its alignment to the strategic aspiration, would in turn make an input for a revisit of the strategy itself. In reference to previous research tested models, it will be set out based on predefined project success dimensions and criteria that includes the generic ones and further project specifics and assess its alignment to organizational strategy.

Being member of project team in the specific project, witnessing project management disciplines to have been followed but observed lack of a well-structured approach in attuning the strategy-project “linkage” while implementation. In a brief desk review it is noted the missing of a clear calibration to measure the project success with a predefined success dimension of the project then checking for conformity by assessing the degree of alignment towards the organizational strategy, not found explicitly stated. The paper intends to pinpoint in the understanding of key project members, assessing the alignment of organization strategy to project success, and its importance and improvements

The study covers all school construction projects implemented after the launch of the new Education Strategy since 2019, located in Somali, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions to the contribution of the organization education strategy pillar in the country program.

1.3. Research Questions

This project paper intends to answer the below research questions:

1. What is the degree of strategic alignment with respect to meeting the “iron triangle project success dimensions: efficiency to schedule and efficiency to budget”?
2. What is the degree of strategic alignment with respect to other project success dimensions?
3. What is the degree of strategic alignment to overall project success dimensions in summation?
4. How significant is the assessment calibration of strategic alignment to project success dimensions in the case study?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The broad objective of this study was to assess the strategic alignment on to the dimensions of project success of the construction projects that are implemented by UNICEF, to help in informed decisions by the project manager as well to senior organization management level.

1.4.2. Specific Objective

This research paper has specific objective to assess the level of project success dimensions in view of their alignment to the organization strategy on the case of school construction projects funded by UNICEF Ethiopia located in Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella region implemented after launch of recent 2019 Education Strategy. The study focuses with the following specific research objectives:

- a) To treat projects in more strategic way, in diagnosis for weak alignment link, finding structured ways to better align projects with organization strategy, and in turn improve competitiveness.

- b) Guide project manager and project team plan, act more strategically, be responsible and accountable towards better project success- strategic alignment link, in view of the bigger organization strategy, in understanding that it not just about getting a job done

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study enables to uplift project success level through a convergence to organizational strategic alignment in measurable terms. It shows the importance of assessing a strategic alignment of a project throughout its different phase gates. Upon the assessment of strategic alignment to project success dimensions and criteria, it helps the project manager make an informed interpretation through a “helicopter view” as he or she presents to the upper level of organizational strategy management body at different life span of the project.

Based on analysis and result presentations it will support informed decisions and actions of changes, alterations, emphasis to better align the project and its success to the benefit of achieving the organization strategic aspiration. As well in addition it will help acquire inputs, lessons learnt in shaping strategic formulations by the senior management body in cyclic interrelated mode.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study has a scope of assessing the organization strategic alignment to the project success dimensions on school construction projects implemented by UNICEF Ethiopia country office. It has a scope of pinpointing to make measurable the linkage between organization strategy & project success in breakdown of project success dimensions. The school construction projects selected are the ones that had been executed after the launch of the Education strategy in 2019. It studies explain the assessment result and put forward recommendations that can help improve for better alignment strategic alignment to the project success dimensions. However, the research is limited to projects conducted in Somali, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions

to the contribution of the organization education strategy pillar in the country after the launch of the new Education Strategy since 2019, which the strategy alignment is referenced.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The study is carried out in a specific school construction project performed by one organization UNICEF, and particularly in one of its Ethiopia country office to one of education programme after the launch its education strategy in 2019. Hence, the findings of this study would have a limited coverage to apply to other streams of projects, or the broader international organization operating in Ethiopia. An inclusion of other project stream areas and of other agencies would enhance the generalization of the findings to broader project streams and to similar organizations operating in the country, and beyond. The limitation to time, budget, and data availability are constraints to broaden the scope of study to other projects and geographical coverage. Further key limitation is specific data access of the organizational that would require time taking approval processes in the ‘pursuit of studies’ for conducting desk review.

As the respondent’s knowledge and understanding if the study is crucial, the school construction project members are selected to be fit for participants. In data collection modality using questionnaires assuring of validity has limitations as need to depend on respondents to recall to the time project period. Plus, respondents understanding of the strategy of the organization might still be limited and varying; however, to counter this limitation adequate effort is made to explain, issue relevant documents to give insight of the organization strategy applicable for the study to reflect for the best of their response.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This research project is organized in five chapters: *chapter one* starts by covering the introduction of the study, background of the study and organization, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, its scope, significance and limitations thereof, and research questions. Then, *chapter two* follows with literature review regarding the study, focusing on the effect of strategic alignment to success of project. With the *third chapter* the research methodology, research design, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments and data analysis methods to be employed will be outlined. Followed is *chapter four* contains data analysis and interpretation of results, and finally culminates with *chapter five* presenting the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the research.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section provides related literature reviews for both theoretical and empirical to help guide the investigation, discuss previous findings, gaps in study area and review of similar researches.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

2.2.1 Project Success and its dimensions

Project success has a subjective nature to evaluate as different people assess it in different ways; with the most common ones being meeting schedule, budget, and performance goals. Many studies have suggested applying multidimensional framework to assess project success, one suggesting assessing project success to at least four distinct dimensions of project efficiency, impact on the customer, direct and business success, and preparing for the future. These dimensions of project success metrics in perspective of strategic alignment, which this study will focus on digging the link with project success dimensions. (Zolfaghari et al, 2020)

One research studies the dependence of project success on project management success and the success of the end-product, by concluding a clear and strong correlation between achieving project success and successful implementation of project management tools and techniques. There is no indication that project success was achieved in isolation from the optimization of project management tools and techniques. The traditional cost, time and quality criteria though remain as the preferred method to measure projects' success it does not guarantee stakeholders' satisfaction. This is a manifestation of the Iron Triangle (time, budget and performance) does not necessarily fully serve as an appropriate success measurement. Nowadays, considering time, cost and quality, as primary success measures appear insufficient, suggesting additional dimensions shall also be considered for evaluating project success. It is recognized that project management practices and techniques are widely used in successful projects and therefore, project management positively influences project success. It can be concluded from this

research that successfully delivered projects utilize tools and techniques of project management practices. (Al-Hajj, et al. 2018)

The common well-known ones for measure of project success called the *iron triangle of* meeting schedule, budget, and quality, yet some research attempts to map the success dimensions in terms of stakeholder expectations and project outcomes to provide a wider understanding of project success. And still definition of project success varies from stakeholder to stakeholder. With the need of setting a “criterion” defining measurement by which projects can be judged in terms of failure or success, yet projects being peculiar, unique and complex, thus the criteria for measuring success vary from project to project, from stakeholder to stakeholder and according to when the project success is measured (Matthias et al., 2017).

Numerous authors have been researched on project success, but the concept still remains ambiguously defined. Despite the fact that project success is recognized by practitioners and project managers as being connected to the fulfilment of the traditional “iron triangle” criteria, it is more a multidimensional variable that challenges traditional definitions. The project management success would be neither a necessary nor a satisfactory condition for project success. The idea of considering a successful or a failure project when it meets or fails the time, cost and quality purposes, seems outdated. It then became crucial to consider the downstream effect of the end project product or service, evaluating other “dimensions” of success, like the stakeholder’s satisfaction or even the project impact on the organization and business objectives. Based on these findings and on the importance of the BSC as a classical instrument for monitoring organizational performance with the BSC strategic mapping. In this perspective of strategic map, the representation of traditional project success factors by framing their use in a clearer alignment with the organization's strategy is essential, though the research does not address in a methodical approach in this regard. This is however remarked that such integration is not easy to stipulate and practice. The study emphasized the need to align investments in projects with the organization's strategy, combining practices that are commonly used separately, thus advising practitioners to note for detailed insight into the most appropriate

success criteria for approving and evaluating projects, managing the expectations of all stakeholders in realistic manner. (Jorge Gomes, et al. 2015)

Intending to measure the project success, one would start from the basics remarking the importance of measurement as fundamental to managers as it was for scientists. An interest in measurement for driving performance improvements arose from a belief articulated more than a century earlier by a prominent British scientist, Lord Kelvin saying “I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind. *If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it.*”. So as companies intend to improve the management of their intangible assets, need to integrate the measurement of intangible assets into their management systems. The Balanced Scorecard still maintaining the financial metrics in outcome measurement of company success, supplements with metrics from three additional perspectives of customer, internal process, and learning and growth in an aim of creating long-term organization strategic value. (Robert, 2010).

As we wrap up this sub section, from the review of the literature on project success, it is clear that project success is something much more complex than simply meeting cost, schedule, and performance specifications. Determining whether a project is a success or failure is far more complex. A research article by (Frefer et al., 2018) concludes in turn citing numerous literature reviews to have noted the lack of agreement concerning the criteria by which project success to be judged at, as a project can be completed on time within budget but considered as a failed project if it did not meet company strategic objectives. Also the article delineated project success and project management success not be seen as same, and more the success of projects has started to be assessed using multiple criteria, even still observing the social and environmental pillars getting less attention. In an unfortunate attempt, it states trying to establish a set of accepted project success criteria seems like an endless effort. (Frefer et al., 2028). This is in fact agreeable conclusion given the inherent nature of projects, needing their own set of success criteria as they are a unique endeavor individually; in addition to incorporating the most common ones, the iron triangle, and others.

2.2.2 Alignment Measurement

Measurement of alignment is critical for studies that pins under “alignment”, though unfortunately literature provides only limited ways for measuring alignment. One presentation is a conceptualized alignment or fit into six categories: “Fit as Moderation”, “Fit as Mediation”, “Fit as Matching”, “Fit as Gestalt”, “Fit as Profile Deviation”, and “Fit as Covariation”. Studies would choose based on their respective research questions and components from such categories, with “Fit as matching” being one of the mostly used alignment methods. Alignment as matching refers to the match between two variables independent of any anchor. The main argument of this type of alignment is the requirement to get a difference between each related pair. With further analytical schemes a formula represented on a mathematical notation of fit as matching was presented (Taskin et al, 2022).

2.2.3 Project Success – in view of Strategy Alignment

It is repeatedly stated that projects are ways to implement strategies, and a project’s objectives must be directly connected to the organization’s strategic objectives. And it will be of logic given most projects are part of their organizations’ strategic management and so then must be evaluated based on their contributions to the business results.

Projects are conceived with a business perspective in mind, and often with a goal which is focused on better results and organizational performance—more profits, additional growth, and improved market position or competitiveness. Projects in the future will no longer be just operational tools for executing strategy—they will become the engines that drive strategy into new directions. Further, a terminology of “Project strategy” is coined to set a direction in a project that contributes to success of the project in its environment. (Artto et al., 2008). In recent decades, a concept of strategic alignment (SA) has attracted the attention of many researchers and practitioners, being at the heart of the strategic management literature. More keeping this SA fit with the priorities of the organization, i.e through the implementation arms of projects will outshine the response in the competitive business environment, thrust up their organization’s goals and objectives (Ghonim el al., 2020).

Through an understanding the challenges involved in aligning project management and its success and business strategy, further attempts are made to develop a theoretical framework for aligning project management with business strategy, examining multiple streams of related literature. The result interestingly reveals project management elements and its success not only support but also impact business strategy, in a confirmation of a reciprocal relationship of project management/ project success and business strategy. Though such relationship is mainly effective for companies that obtain from their projects information about the ways they adapt their business strategy, a process that is referred as an emergent strategy approach, in redirection of projects. This implies that to ensure project performance, project managers must realign the project strategy, the organization and its culture, and the processes, tools, metrics of realizing projects with a project's progress.

As projects are initiated and selected for their project portfolio to fulfill business needs; so ensuring the quality of the alignment between project success elements and business strategy shall be principal. In a study that outlined a framework to describe the interrelationships between project success elements and business strategy, the need for a mediating process as a control mechanism as the project progresses from one phase to next in a stage gate where these control mechanisms ensure the project is aligning with their expectations providing strategic feedback. (Dragan and Sabin, 2006).

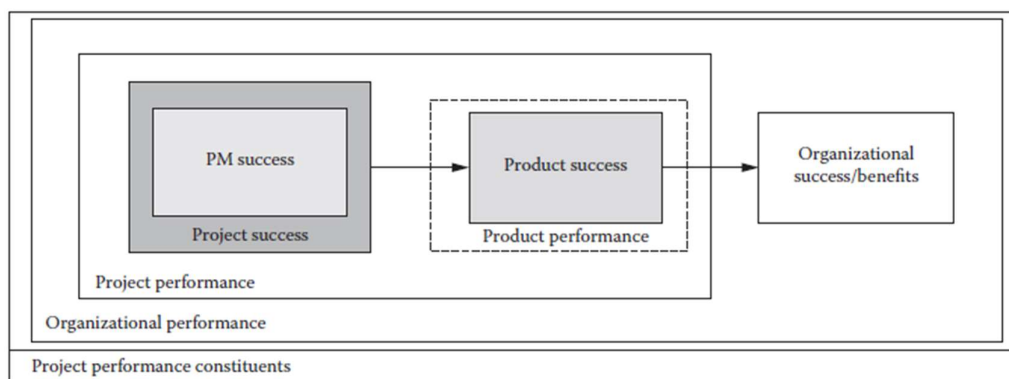


Figure 1. Project performance constituents. (Adopted from Barclay, C., Information Systems Frontiers, 10, 3, 331-345, 2008 and Barclay, C., and Osei-Bryson, K. M., Project Management Journal, 40,4 74-93, 2009.)

In another perspective, many companies are suffering from misaligned projects and a lack of a systematic approach to align project management with the business strategy. Although projects are the basic building blocks of organizational strategy in many companies, project management is not often recognized as a functional strategy and is rarely perceived as a business process, making the achievement of a project management/business strategy alignment even more difficult. (Srivannaboon, 2006). Organizations with policies, procedures, and processes in place for alignment of project deliverables to organizational goals stand positioned to realize the value of investments in projects and succeed in accomplishing defined strategic goals. The achievement of alignment between the organization's strategic goals and the project is critical to the organization's competitiveness and performance (Joan Barnes, 2017).

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Some research findings and limitations suggest that the alignment measurement methodology deserves an empirical study. If such a study uses a comprehensive approach, researchers could standardize the measurement and create a framework for comparative studies of aligning the various project success dimensions and business strategy. This would also enable researchers to work toward determining the degree of alignment required to assure project and business success in relation to different circumstances.

2.3.1 Framework by Zolfaghari et al, 2020

On its significance the research outlines noting the lack of adequate studies in which this alignment affects different dimensions of project success and there has also been no empirical study on the effects of this alignment on project success. It set objectives by empirically testing the effects of alignment between project strategy and business strategy on the project success, articulating the process in which the alignment of project strategy with the organisation's priorities can lead to project success in new product dimensions for project strategy (Figure2)

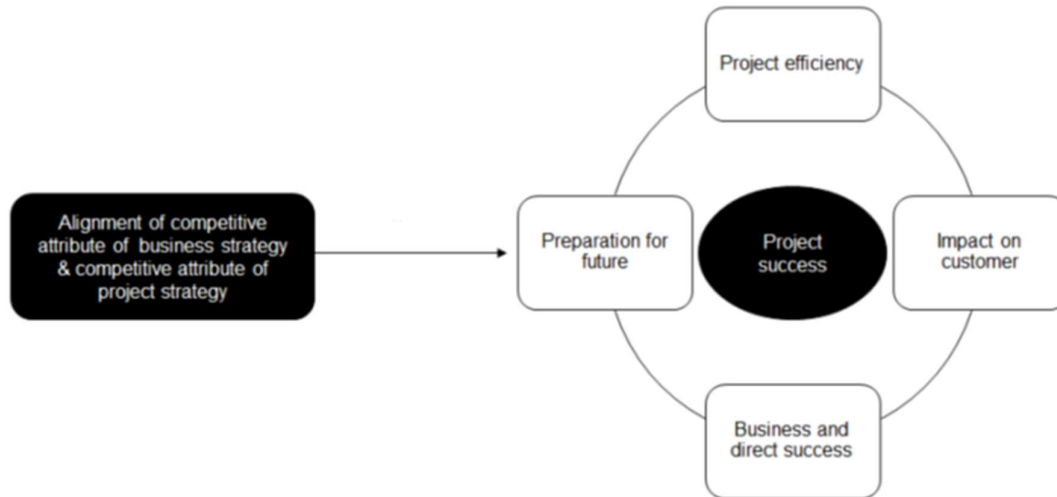


Figure 2. The simplified research model (Zolfaghari et al, 2020)

In its conclusions and managerial implications, the importance of projects as the main building blocks of strategy implementation and project portfolios as strategic weapons brings more attention to the strategic alignment in the contexts of projects and promotes projects to value-adding vehicles for all stakeholders. The paper succeeded in answering some of the questions in this field by investigating the alignment between project strategy and business strategy and its effect on the dimensions of project success, in which the research realised that the alignment of project strategy with business strategy has a significant effect (at least at the 90% confidence level) on the dimensions of project success. Therefore, all managers, whether encountered with strategic projects of New Product Development (NPD) projects, should consider alignment as one of their project success factors. (Zolfaghari et al, 2020). The research however has a limitation that cover only “new” product development, short to cover the extensive project streams which are not innovative types.

2.3.2 Framework by Ramin et al., 2014

The problem statement on the framework by Ramin et al., 2014 is the oversight by top-level managers in develop strategies in project-based organizations in that they don't have a good effect on the operational level of the organization, that the required alignment between business strategies and the selection and conduction of projects is missing.

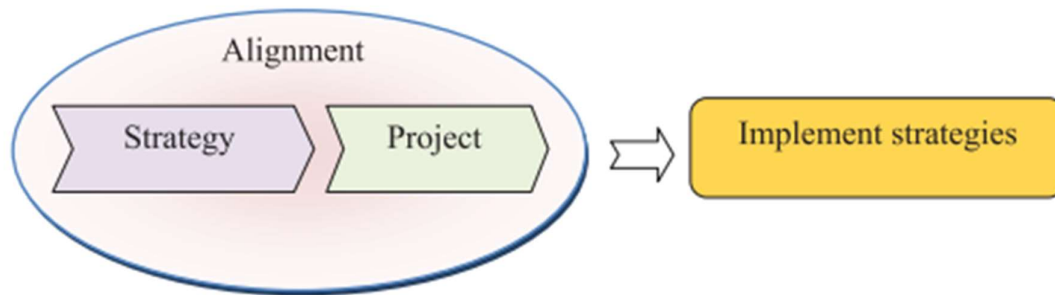


Figure 3. General approach of alignment framework between project management and organizational strategies

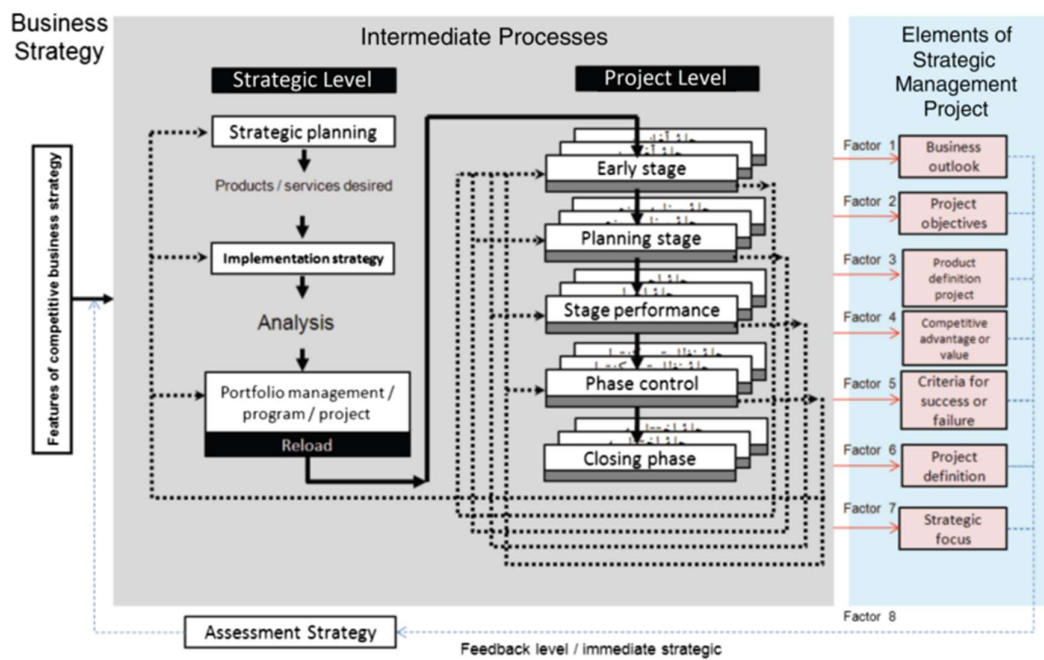


Figure 4. Framework for alignment of projects with organizational strategies (Ramin et al., 2014)

The study presents framework helps managers properly implement organizational strategies in their projects, presents an applicable framework for measuring the alignment between project management with organizational strategies. The proposed framework was applied in a project-

based organization in which 10 strategic projects were investigated, with the results show that this company acted satisfactorily in aligning its projects with the organizational strategies, and this is most evident in its construction projects, in which the operations were more successful. In its result presentation the organization of interest has delivered strategic projects successfully through alignment between strategic management and organization strategies (as demonstrated by the score of 0.713. And concludes the proposed framework can be applied as a simple and flexible framework that serves as an instrument in implementing organizational strategies through strategic projects. (Ramin et al., 2014).

2.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework, in its simplified version is derived based on the literature reviews. Accordingly, an independent variable Strategic Alignment, and dependent variable of project success dimensions is conceptualized, so adding peculiar project success dimensions like impact on beneficiaries, advocacy for similar projects excellence.

As had been highlighted before, project success not only support but also impact business strategy, in a confirmation of a reciprocal relationship of project management/ project success and business strategy. The reciprocal dependency, as indicated in dotted linkage is depicted in the below figure, though is not in the scope of this paper. So the paper put a lock on the reciprocal dependency, as it interested to show the dependency of Project Success metrics in Strategic Alignment verification.

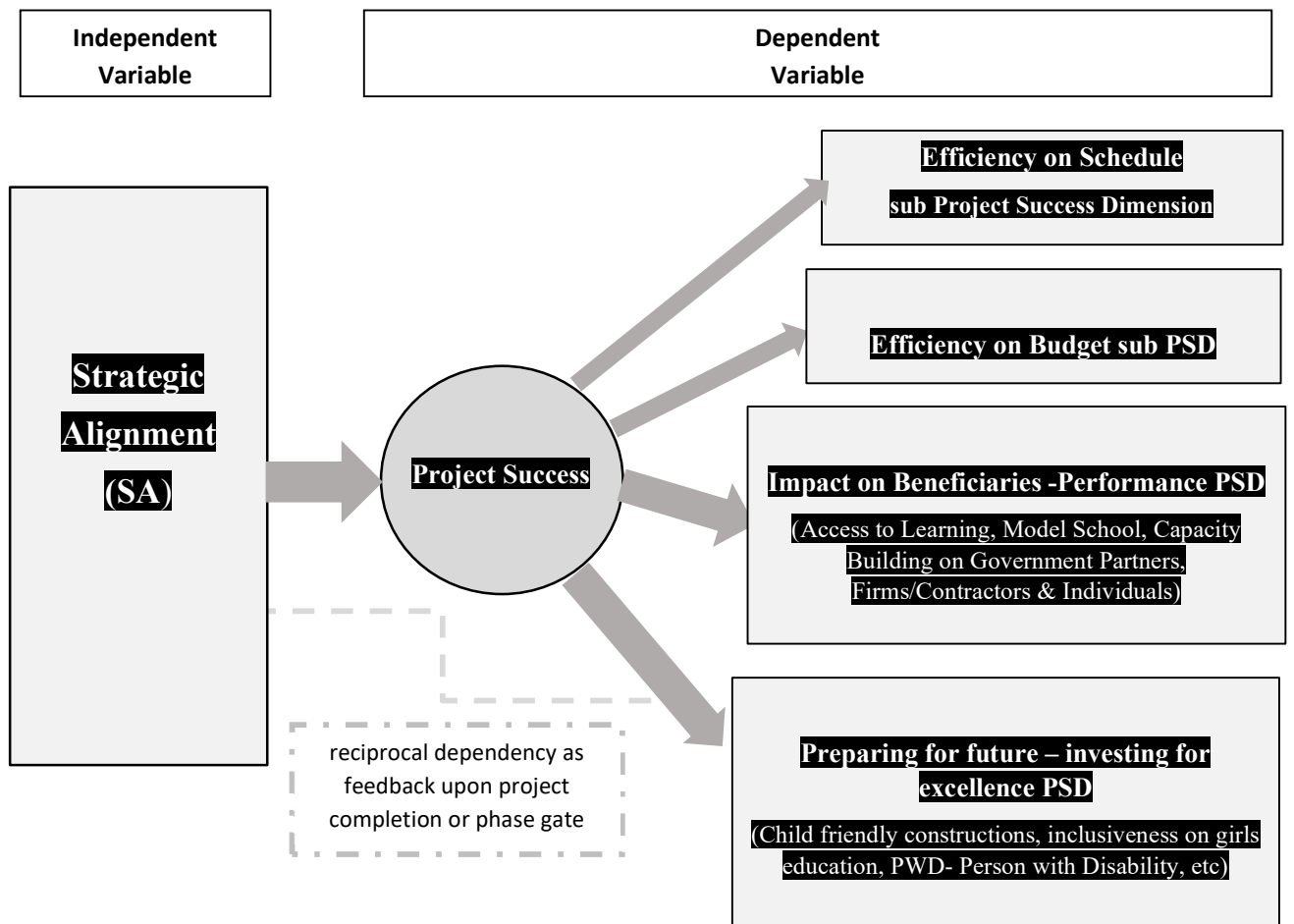


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework (adopted from simplified research model; Zolfaghari et al, 2020)

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This section outlines the research design and approach proposed for the study. Then discusses the source of data, population and census determination for study, data collection method and data analysis proposed to be used in the study sequentially.

3.2. Research Design

The carving of a research design emanates from research questions. Research design facilitates the smooth sailing of the research operations for an efficient and effective yielding of research output with an optimal expenditure of effort, time and money. As a blueprint, it integrates different components and procedures of research activities in a coherent and logical way so ensuring the address of the research problem, for establishment of a framework in variables, data collection, analysis of data, and result interpretation. On purpose of a study, as one of research design descriptors, outlines a descriptive study is concerned with finding out the-what, the-how much questions of a phenomenon, whereas a causal study seeks to study cause and effect relationship. (B. Blumberg, R. Cooper and S. Schindler, 2014)

On this ground, this study adopts a descriptive research design to best suit, as descriptive research design establishes the effects of the strategic alignments to the success of the project selected answering the 'how much' enquiry.

3.3. Research Approach

Quantitative case study methodology provides tools to study a phenomenon within their contexts. A correct application of this approach provides valuable method for the assessment in the study and develop interventions as part of recommendations put forth. The research project would be a descriptive type research, of applied Assessment research. Quantitative data

gathering and analysis is projected suitable for the research project. Primary data will be collected using questionnaires chosen to satisfy the purpose of the research project.

3.4. Population and census

A research population or a target population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects which encompasses the entire group of individuals or objects the focus of a scientific query. (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). However, on the most often question of “what size sample do I need” the answer would be influenced on a number of factors of purpose of the study, the confidence or risk level i.e risk of selecting a unrepresentative or irrelevant “bad” sample, the allowable sampling error or the level of precision, the degree of variability (heterogeneity versus homogeneity) in which the less variable (more homogenous) a population, the smaller the sample size. Although cost considerations make this impossible for large populations, a census is attractive for small populations like 200 or less. A census eliminates sampling error and provides data on all the individuals in the population. In addition, some costs such as questionnaire design and developing the sampling frame are “fixed,” that is, they will be the same for samples of 50 or 200. Finally, virtually the entire population would have to be sampled in small populations to achieve a desirable level of precision. (Israel & Glenn, 2013).

As the respondent’s knowledge and understanding of the study is crucial, in which project members are selected to be fit as participants. Thus, a census is to be used as the small population will be applicable in this study. It is identified the technical project team members that have project management related knowledge, employed from the recent familiar selected school construction projects in Somali, Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz regions of Ethiopia funded by the agency after the launch of the Education strategy in 2019. Selecting key informant in the census for this case study that involved in the selected projects would be then, eleven from officers & consulting engineers, and eight from contractors approached for the questionnaires.

3.5. Data Sources and Types

In order to investigate the research objectives, initially it was planned to collect both secondary and primary data and make analysis. As first stage of the research process an extensive search of articles, reports and professional information related to the study area, using the internet, desk review. In lieu of unavailability of secondary data to provide clear understanding of existing knowledge base in the problem area, it relies on primary data collected, which will provide firsthand data with a help of streamlined questionnaires.

3.6. Data Collection Method

A questionnaire is selected as suitable method of data collection as it provides a streamlined approach to gather data, and further an efficiency in cost and time utilizations by reaching people geographically distance as long as the prospective persons can read, write, understand independently. A primary data using questionnaire is used so getting firsthand data.

Up on receiving responses, in which quantitative data are collected using closed ended questions, where the responses were scored on a Likert scale, then converted in a numerical data. The questionnaires are sent to potential respondents via mail and in physical, with an overview page of the intent of the study and in clarification. A good emphasis made on explanation and adequate clarifications for understanding of the objective. Further for better understanding a web link of the [UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030](#) enclosed to equip the participants for understanding at theirs best and offer sound data. In this regard, the instrument is developed in achieving the objectives of the study adequately.

3.7. Data Quality Assurance

3.7.1. Validity and Reliability

Assurance of a sound measure to its accuracy & consistency is important in research conduction. The research validity is tried to be assured by making sound alignment of the objectives of the research and the research methodology, in which the questionnaire is designed as such. An overview of the project paper is prepared and supplemented in addition to providing a comprehensive streamlined questionnaire, further briefings made ahead of submission, to clear off any bias and ensure the validity of the research.

Reliability concerns if the measurement is repeatable and consistent. The reliability of the questionnaire is judged approaching the respondents with a different approach but a similar enquiry as per the questionnaire, which their responses were consistent to assure reliability of the study.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

The potential respondents are to be approached and asked for a voluntary participation of data collection for the study in a specified timeline, issued in prior with a complete and transparent explanation of the purpose and use of the study, like given it is for academics, assurance of their anonymity and confidentiality in their participation as well as responses. All potential participants took part upon their respective complete willingness.

3.9. Data Analysis Methods

The records of the questionnaires are analyzed. Quantitative data collection will be employed, the numeric data will be analyzed quantitatively using statistical tools of frequencies, percentages. Descriptive analysis statistically describing, aggregating, and presentation will be used to present quantitative data analysis in form of tables and graphical presentations to set forth the findings and result interpretation.

Chapter Four

4. Data Analysis and Result presentation

4.1. Introduction

By this chapter data analysis as a process for results, discussion of the results will be outlined. As had been stated, the data are collected through questionnaires as a primary data collection instrument. The data was analyzed using both excel spreadsheet to synthesize a meaningful result & discussion.

The baseline for the data analysis is the project object of assessing the effect of strategic alignment to the success of the specific projects in a case study – namely the school construction project implemented by UNICEF Ethiopia, in Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz & Gambella regions. The research question would form the pillars to the analysis dimensions; to bring in front here: (i) What is the assessed level of alignment between the organizational strategy per project success dimension? (ii) What is the assessed level of alignment between relevant organizational strategy and net project success?

The study targeted key and all pertinent respondents of project members within the bound of the case study, twenty-one selected owing to their fit in technically and key role players of stakeholders to the selected case project: out of which nineteen responds to the questionnaires, representing an overall successful rate of 90% and so only 10% as unsuccessful response rate.

4.2. Demographic Data

This section presents, gender, level of education, range of years worked at/with UNICEF Ethiopia country office, whether believe to have adequate level of project management skill, and if relevant stakeholder for the school construction project in the case study. The below table depicts the response results in data analysis.

Description	Response	Frequency (No, %)	
Gender	Female	2	11%
	Male	17	89%
Level of Education	Diploma	0	0%
	Undergraduate degree	11	58%
	Master's degree	8	42%
	PhD	0	0%
Work experience with the organization	<1 year	0	0%
	1-5 years	11	58%
	6-10 years	8	42%
	>10 yeas	0	0%
Adequate level of project management skill?	Yes	19	100%
	No	0	0%
Project member in the case study?	Yes	19	100%
	No	0	0%

The finding as tabulated shows gender inclusiveness though low, however verifies the respondents' well qualification in educational level, and with a relatively adequate years of experience with the organization that shows their fit to understand the questionnaires, in turn attributing for a reasonable and sound validity and reliability parameters.

4.3. Specific information of the respondents

This section presents how well and adequately the organizational strategy, in its bound to the school construction project, understood by the respondents. It answers how conversant the respondents are to the strategic aspiration of the organization in relation to the project & project success dimensions they have been involved.

Description	Response	Frequency (No, %)	
		No	%
Rating of organizational strategy awareness & understanding	Ver low (1)	0	0%
	Low (2)	0	0%
	Medium (3)	5	26%
	High (4)	14	74%
	Very High (5)	0	0%
	Aggregate scale 1-5	3.8 on 5 scale (close to high)	

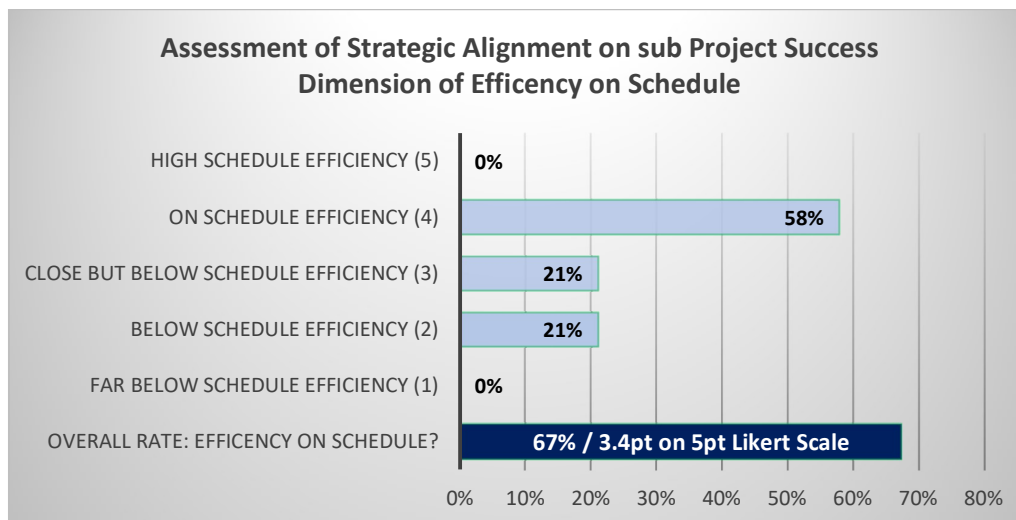
The finding shows respondents have some-how adequate awareness and understanding of the organization strategy in line to the project they have been involved (as rated to close to high) which shows their fit to the responses of other questions, ensuring a reasonable sound validity. Such result will be attributed to pursuant to the former section findings of adequate educational background and knowledge of project management skill, and adequate years of professional engagement with the organization and to the project.

4.4. Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.4.1. Assessment of SA on sub-PSD of “Efficiency on Schedule”

The timely delivery of the project is strategic as an emergency response reaching the vulnerable out-of-school children timely, and beyond to the satisfaction of different stakeholders, like government partners, donors compliance & confidence in same regard.

Dependent variable linkage to independent variable	Response (1 to 5 Likert rating)	Frequency (No / %)	
Assessment of SA on sub PSD of “Efficiency on schedule”?	Far below Schedule/very low Efficiency(1)	0	0%
	Below rated Schedule/ low Efficiency (2)	4	21%
	Close but below Schedule/ medium Efficiency(3)	4	21%
	ON Schedule/ high Efficiency (4)	11	58%
	Ahead of Schedule/very high Efficiency(5)	0	0%
	Aggregate scale 1-5		3.4pt on 5pt scale (medium- high)

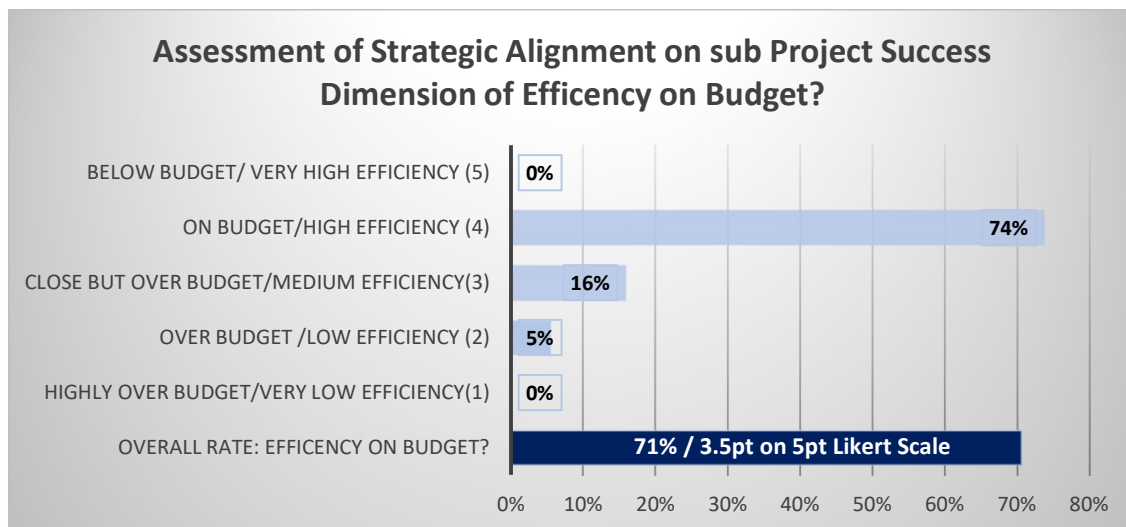


The finding shows also a fair degree of strategic alignment of the project success dimension of Efficiency on Schedule with a medium-high efficiency rating (a 3.4pt on 5pt scale), and two-fifth of the schools constructions were below schedule.

4.4.2. Assessment of SA on sub-PSD of “Efficiency on Budget”

As well an on-budget delivery of the project is also strategic as reaching as much area coverage with a limited monetary resource without additional cost overrun, to the satisfaction of different stakeholders, like government partners, donors compliance & confidence in due regard.

Dependent variable linkage to independent variable	Response (1 to 5 Likert rating)	Frequency (No / %)	
Assessment of SA on sub-PSD of “Efficiency on budget”?	Highly Over Budget/very low Efficiency(1)	0	0%
	Over Budget /low Efficiency (2)	1	5%
	Close but Over Budget/medium Efficiency(3)	3	16%
	ON Budget/High Efficiency (4)	14	74%
	Below Budget/ very high Efficiency (5)	0	0%
	Aggregate scale 1-5		3.5pt on 5pt scale (medium-high)

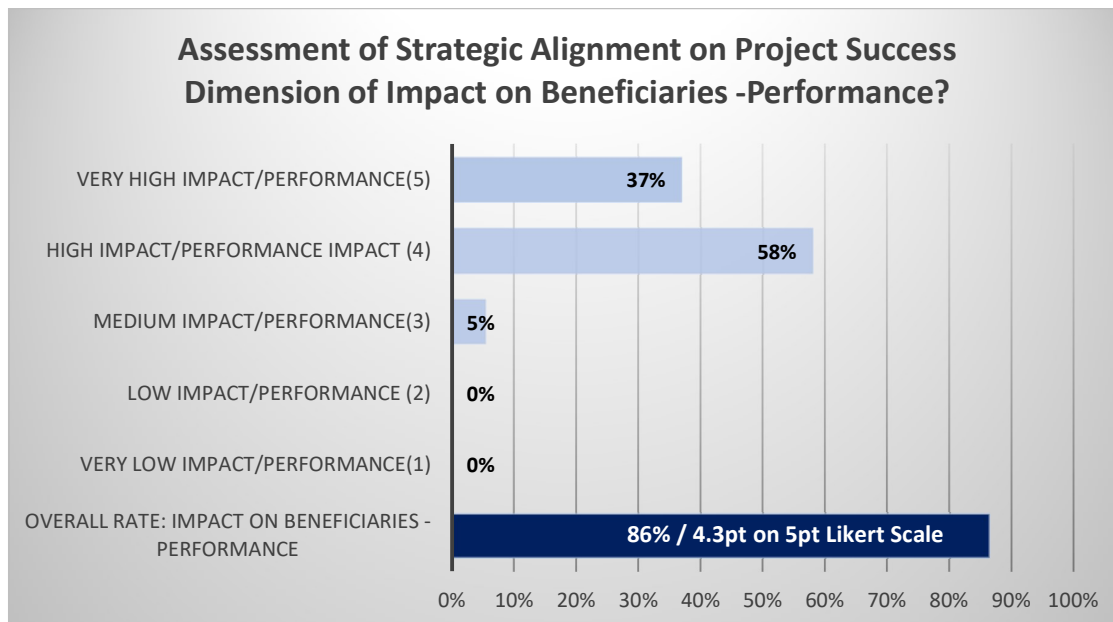


The finding shows also a fair degree of strategic alignment of the project success dimension of Efficiency on Budget with a medium-high efficiency rating (a 3.5pt on 5pt scale), and three-tenth of the school constructions were over budget.

4.4.3. Assessment of SA on PSD of “Impact on Beneficiaries -Performance”

This project success dimension (PSD) attribute to another key stream through evaluating “Impact on Beneficiaries -Performance” dimension in which the effect of strategic alignment(SA) is rated for. This dimension comprises a wide range of attributes within the specificity of the project: creation of access to learning, creation of model school, capacity building on Government Partners, Firms/Contractors & Individuals, and related ones as per the strategic aspirations.

Dependent variable linkage to independent variable	Response (1 to 5 Likert rating)	Frequency (No / %)	
Assessment of SA on PSD of “Impact on Beneficiaries - Overall Performance”? (Access to Learning, Model School, Capacity Building on Government Partners, Firms/Contractors & Individuals)	Very low Impact/performance(1)	0	0%
	Low Impact/performance (2)	0	0%
	Medium Impact/performance(3)	1	5%
	High Impact/performance Impact (4)	11	58%
	Very high Impact/performance(5)	7	37%
	Aggregate scale 1-5		4.3pt on 5pt scale (above high)

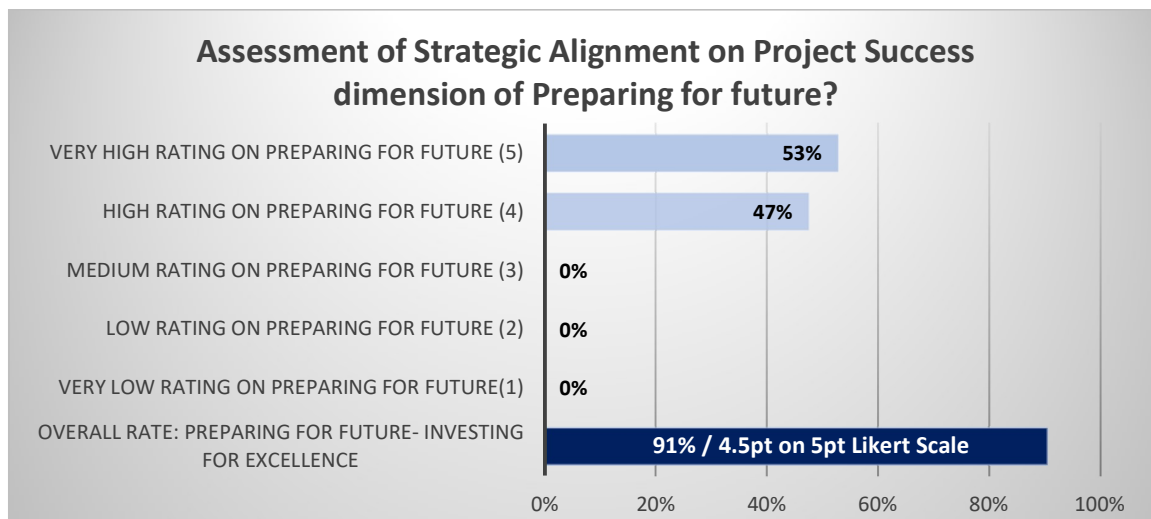


The finding shows a high degree of Impact on Beneficiaries -Performance project success dimension above high rating (a 4.3pt on 5pt scale).

4.4.4. Assessment of SA o PSD of “Preparing for Future – Investing for Excellence”

The fourth project success dimension (PSD) that link to the strategy alignment (SA) is the “preparing for future – investing for excellence” attribute in a long-term goal of the organization. It evaluates how elements of child friendly constructions, inclusiveness on girls education, PWD- Person with Disability, etc as stipulated on strategic aspiration are incorporated in the project, and while evaluating project success.

Dependent variable linkage to independent variable	Response (1 to 5 Likert rating)	Frequency (No / %)	
Assessment of ST ON PSD of “Preparing for future – investing for excellence”? (Child friendly constructions, inclusiveness on girls education- MHM Menstrual Health Management block, PWD- Person with Disability, etc)	Very low rating on Preparing for future(1)	0	0%
	Low rating on Preparing for future (2)	0	0%
	Medium rating on Preparing for future (3)	0	0%
	High rating on Preparing for future (4)	9	47%
	Very high rating on Preparing for future (5)	10	53%
	Aggregate scale 1-5	4.5pt on 5pt scale (close to very high)	



This finding also shows a high degree of alignment on “Preparing for future” project success dimension; a close to very high rating (a 4.5pt on 5pt scale).

4.4.5. Significance assessment calibration of SA on PSD

This section presents how the measurement would be of importance, after ratings made by the respondents in project success dimensions in view of strategic alignment. It answers upon the understanding of the strategic alignment concept, upon findings of a calibration, the strategic alignment would be evaluated per project success dimensions.

Description	Response	Frequency (No, %)	
Significance of assessment calibration of SA on PSD?	Ver low (1)	0	0%
	Low (2)	0	0%
	Medium (3)	0	0%
	High (4)	12	63%
	Very High (5)	7	37%
	Aggregate scale 1-5	4.4 on 5 scale (above high)	

The finding shows respondents have an above high rating, as based on the understanding of the respondents who are key professional member of the case projects and conversant with the particular organization strategy. The result manifests the high significance and requirement a project success- strategic alignment measurement, to help in alignment improvement and ultimately its effect on the organization competitiveness through improved project success.

4.4.6. Aggregate organizational strategic alignment on project success dimensions

This section presents the sum effect of the relation that organizational strategic alignment on project success. It is assumed each dimension takes up equal weight, with sub dimensions to take sub proportions; so the “Efficiency” project success dimension (PSD), the sub dimensions of “Efficiency on Schedule” and “Efficiency on Budget” share half weight each.

Project Success Dimension (PSD)	Dependent variable (PSD) linkage to independent variable	Response (1 to 5 Likert rating)
Sub-PSD-1(i)	Assessment of Strategic Alignment on Project Success dimension of “Efficiency on schedule”?	3.4pt on 5pt scale (medium-high)
Sub-PSD-1(ii)	Assessment of Strategic Alignment on Project Success dimension of “Efficiency on budget”?	3.5pt on 5pt scale (medium-high)
PSD-2	Assessment of Strategic Alignment on Project Success dimension of “Impact on Beneficiaries - Overall Performance”? (<i>Access to Learning, Model School, Capacity Building on Government Partners, Firms/Contractors & Individuals</i>)	4.3pt on 5pt scale (above high)
PSD-3	Assessment of Strategic Alignment on Project Success dimension of “Preparing for future – investing for excellence”? (<i>Child friendly constructions, inclusiveness on girls education-MHM Menstrual Health Management block, PWD- Person with Disability, etc</i>)	4.5pt on 5pt scale (close to high)
Sum Effect	Weighted Average: sub-PSD-1(i) + sub-PSD-1(ii) + PSD-2 + PSD-3	4.1pt on 5pt scale (above high)

The aggregate findings in the above table shows above-high alignment between the dependent variable of project success dimensions to the independent variable Strategic Alignment with 4.1pt on 5pt scale. The data demonstrates a need of improvement on project success dimensions to better align with organization strategy. In addition, ranking for action the Efficiency project success dimensions require more efforts and action for improvement, while other success dimensions of “Impact on Beneficiaries -Overall Performance” and “Preparing for future – investing for excellence” are relatively at high-level alignment (particularly the latter) with organization strategy that calls to maintain if not for a greater level of alignment.

Chapter Five

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

By this last chapter of the project paper will present first summary of the findings will be followed by conclusion and recommendation as derived from the findings. Finally, recommendation for further studies will be set forth.

5.2. Summary of Findings

- i) The demographic finding shows the respondents with maturity, qualified in education and with project management skills, and well acquainted with the selected project implemented by organization highly an important in their sound responses.
- ii) The respondents' rate of organizational strategy awareness & understanding in relation to case project is found reasonably sound showing their fit to the responses of other questions.
- iii) The finding on project success sub dimensions of Efficiency to Schedule in view of strategic alignment caliber a fair degree; as is rated to medium-high efficiency rating (to a 3.4pt on 5pt scale), and two-fifth of the school construction were below schedule. This shows a dimension that needs to be worked so such projects would be aligning to organization strategy. This shows being on-schedule dimension needs to be worked so the project's success dimension alignment to organization strategy is uplifted.
- iv) The other finding on project success of Efficiency to Budget sub dimension in view of strategic alignment calibers also a fair degree; as is rated to medium-high efficiency rating (to a 3.5pt on 5pt scale), with three out of ten school construction were over budget and with one of them as overly. This shows being on-budget success dimension needs to be worked so such projects so alignment to organization strategy is made.
- v) The finding on project success dimension of "Impact on Beneficiaries -Overall Performance" in view of strategic alignment shows respondents is measured to be a good degree; rated to above-high efficiency rating (a 4.3pt on 5pt scale), with 91% of

respondents regarded a high degree strategy alignment attributed to project success dimension of Impact on Beneficiaries -Overall Performance. This shows a need to maintain & excel in future undertakings.

- vi) The finding on project success dimension of “Preparing for future – investing for excellence” in view of strategic alignment calibers to be a good degree; rated to close to high efficiency rating (a 4.5pt on 5pt scale), with 100% of respondents regarded a high or very high degree of strategy alignment attribute to project success dimension of “Preparing for future – investing for excellence”. Also, for this success dimension the result shows a relatively at high-level alignment with the strategy to maintain, if not aspire for a much greater level of alignment.
- vii) Another finding on the “need of measurement of the strategic alignment in project success definition for the case study to assist in diagnosis and improvement in meeting organization goal” reveals an above high rating, to the understanding of the respondents who are member of the case projects and conversant with the particular organization strategy. The result manifests the very importance and requirement of a project success-strategic alignment calibration, that lay foundation for improvement action in meeting organizational goal.
- viii) On overall rating the aggregate findings for the case projects reveals an above-high alignment between the dependent variable of project success dimensions to the independent variable Strategic Alignment with a 4.1pt on 5pt scale i.e **82% Alignment score**, i.e $(4.1)/(5)*100\%$

5.3. Conclusion

The custom metrics for project success are about meeting schedule, budget, and performance goals. However, in recent decades, a concept of strategic alignment (SA) on project success rating has attracted the attention of many researchers and practitioners, which the link between SA and project success is of interest from the bigger organizational or business strategic alignment perspective. The case study, with all its limitations as remarked, once again with all its merits makes assessment of strategic alignment on the dimensions of project success components. This paper answering questions by investigating the alignment between organization strategy to its effect on the dimensions of project success; by signifying the importance of that the alignment of business strategy with project success help project manager and senior management body make informed decision, make adjustments, changes needed to enhance for a closer alignment. The data demonstrates the need of improvement on project success dimensions to better align with organization strategy particularly on the Efficiency project success dimensions (both efficiency to schedule and efficiency to budget); while for the other success dimensions of “Impact on Beneficiaries -Overall Performance” and “Preparing for future – investing for excellence” have resulted a high-level alignment with strategy that needs to maintain if not strive for a much greater level of alignment.

5.4. Recommendation

The study recommends with emphasis for a continuous conduction of such assessments, system-built at different stages of project life span, check in phase-gates whether the strategic aspirations are in well alignment with project undertakings with corresponding relevant project success dimensions, to ultimately converge in achievement of high-end organization’s strategic aspiration and goals. With the data and result interpretations the project manager and senior project management body will make use this for an informed decision for a better alignment to organization strategy. Furthermore, it is advised organization to raise awareness and well understanding of the organization strategy and project success dimensions to project team and project stakeholders to inherently and continuously work on for strategic alignment convergence to predefined project success dimensions.

5.5. Recommendations for further Studies

The study focused on the assessment of the strategic alignment effect on project success dimensions on specific case project. If not for this project paper limitations, the study if conducted on multi projects within an organization or business entity would attest the concept in more depth. Further and deeper studies at different stream of projects other than construction endeavors, and as well on different organizations with different project success dimensions would help develop diverse understanding in the area of the study.

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7. Annex - Questionnaires form

Questionnaire

An overview is enclosed along with this questionnaire to give the topic and aim of the project paper which this questionnaire aims to collect data. The data collected are not going to be used for another purpose other than academic purpose. None of the information of the data provided is going to be disclosed in any case and remains confidential. If you have any questions or clarification enquiries, please forward.

SECTION A: General Information

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Which is your highest level of education?

Diploma Undergraduate degree Master's degree PhD

3. For how long have you been working at/with the organization?

Below 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years Above 10 years

4. Do your academics or trainings or experience involve project management skills?

Yes No

5. Does your work relationship with the organization involve to school construction projects as a relevant member of project stakeholder?

Yes No

SECTION B: Success of Projects and Organizational Strategy¹ and significance of Strategic Alignment on Project Success (please use the below 5-point Likert scale, check/uncheck the box for your response)

6. How do you rate your awareness and understanding of the organizational strategy aspirations in particular to the school construction projects that you had been involved?

(Note: your awareness can be sought from your engagement, communications in the project, as form understanding of the issued organizational strategic documentations)

Very Low Low Moderate High Very High

¹ Organizational Strategy would only refer to the public ones (for confidentiality and ethics) that are accessible in global web site, like UNICEF Education Strategic 2019-2030 with "Every child learns" a link: [\[UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030.pdf\]](#), etc. Please look through these or other organizational strategy public documentations to evaluate your awareness and understanding, retrospectively, during the project implementation. For example, under UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030 (page 28), it sets a priority focus on "equity and inclusion" – an area at the heart of UNICEF's mandate and comparative advantage as an organization; focusing on children excluded on the basis of gender (girl's education), children with disabilities, etc.

7. From the project success dimension of Efficiency and **Efficiency on Schedule** sub dimension how do you rate its alignment to the organization strategy to your understanding?

Far below Schedule/very low Efficiency (1)

Below rated Schedule/ low Efficiency (2)

Close but below Schedule/ medium Efficiency (3)

ON Schedule/ high Efficiency (4)

Ahead of Schedule/very high Efficiency (5)

8. From the project success dimension of Efficiency and **Efficiency on Budget** sub dimension how do you rate its alignment to the organization strategy to your understanding?

Highly Over Budget/very low Efficiency (1)

Over Budget/ low Efficiency (2)

Close but over Budget/ medium Efficiency (3)

ON Budget/ high Efficiency (4)

Below Budget/very high Efficiency (5)

9. From the project success dimension of **Impact on Beneficiaries-Performance** (like creation of access, creating a model school, capacity building on participating government partners, firms/contractors & individuals, etc), how do you rate its alignment to the organization strategy to your understanding?

Very low Impact/performance (1)

Low Impact/performance (2)

Medium Impact/performance (3)

High Impact/performance (4)

Very high Impact/performance (5)

10. From the project success dimension of **Preparing for Future – Investing for Excellence** (like Child friendly constructions, inclusiveness on girls’ education – MHH Menstrual Health Hygiene block, PWD- Person with Disability, etc), how do you rate it in view of strategic alignment?

Very Low rating on Preparing for future (1)

Low rating on Preparing for future (2)

Medium rating on Preparing for future (3)

High rating on Preparing for future (4)

Very rating on Preparing for future (5)

11. Significance of assessment calibration of Strategic Alignment on Project Success Dimension? Does such assist in diagnosis and improvement towards meeting organization goal?

Not related, so not required (1)

Do not know if it is required (2)

Might help so but not a necessary condition (3)

Highly required (4)

Very Highly required (5)