

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

THE ROLE OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN EXECUTIVE VISION AND SITE OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIAN CONSTRUCTION FIRMS.

A RESEARCH THESES SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Robel Wondemagegn Demissie

Advisor- Dr. Dejene Tulu

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

May, 2026

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Approval statement

APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that Robel Wondemagegn Demisse's research thesis entitled “The Role of Middle Management in Implementing Strategy: Bridging the Gap Between Executive Visions and Site Operations in Ethiopian Construction Firms” has been completed under my supervision and meets the requirements of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the College of Business and Economics, Addis Ababa University, Department of Business Administration.

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Declaration

I, Robel Wondemagegn Demissie. Hereby declare that this thesis entitled “The Role of Middle Management in Strategic Implementation: Bridging the Gap between Executive Vision and Site Operations in Ethiopian Construction Firms” is my own work. This thesis has also not been submitted to any other university or institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree or diploma.

All sources of material used for this study have been fully cited according to the principles of academic integrity, and this work was done in compliance with the ethical guidelines of Addis Ababa University, with any assistance received during the research process being fully acknowledged.

Robel Wondemagegn Demissie

Signature:

Date: 08/06/2026

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Many thanks go out to those who have helped me complete my research journey;

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the impact of the middle management role on strategic implementation within the Ethiopian construction industry, specifically evaluating the mediating influence of the "bridging the gap" mechanism. In attempting to identify how coordination at a middle tier influences the success of organizations, this study tested the hypothesis that middle managers serve as a critical link between top level planning and field level execution. A quantitative correlational research design with a cross-section data collection method was used to collect empirical data. The sample consisted of 178 respondents who were identified through a purposive sampling technique that ensured that all participants had the required organizational knowledge to provide insight. Structured surveys were used to collect data from both manager-level and senior site-level personnel in the sector. Structural relationships and model predictive power were verified using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Key findings were: (1) middle managers have a direct and significant impact on the success of implementation for organizations ($\beta = 0.496$); and (2) middle managers are critical in providing an essential 'bridging' function ($\beta = 0.702$). In addition, the findings indicated that the impact of mid-level management on the overall success of a project was enhanced by the actions of these managers in terms of connecting people and communities within and outside of the company through effective communications, and assisting in the resolution of gaps between functions. Of the strategic success outcomes measured in the model, 63.7% of the variance is attributed to the effective functioning of mid-level managers. Therefore, to maximize the success of projects, construction companies are encouraged to implement competency models that support the integration of competencies within their organizations, and to provide these managers with increased decision-making autonomy at the project level. Overall, this research concluded that the successful execution of a project is determined by the ability of the mid-level managers to convert strategic direction into operational action.

Keywords: *Middle Management, Strategic Implementation, Bridging the Gap, Construction Industry, PLS-SEM, Ethiopia, Strategy-as-Practice.*

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ACRONYM

- APA American Psychological Association
- AVE Average Variance Extracted
- CEO Chief Executive Officer
- CFA Confirmatory Factor Analysis
- CR Composite Reliability
- ERA Ethiopian Roads Administration
- FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- GDP Gross Domestic Product
- GTP Growth and Transformation Plan
- HTMT Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
- M Mean
- MM Middle Management
- MMSI Middle Management Strategy Implementation
- OLS Ordinary Least Squares
- PLS-SEM Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
- RBV Resource-Based View
- SD Standard Deviation
- SEM Structural Equation Modeling
- SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
- SRMR Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
- VIF Variance Inflation Factor

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Chandler (1962): "Strategy is the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.

Several scholars and academicians define strategy as long-term objectives to enjoy specific results, and strategy implementation as turning the strategic plan to tangible actions (Emergent Approach, 2020; SciELO, 2019). Strategic Execution, in the Ethiopian construction sectors, is becoming critical for organizational success. This is because it provides a clear picture of the future of the company (Taye, 2021). The role of middle managers in implementing formulated strategies is vital in achieving planned project objectives (Bridges Consultancy, 2022).

Almost all construction firms constitute three broad levels of hierarchy. Top managers, who are responsible for setting the vision securing contracts and making high-level decisions; Middle Managers (often project or departmental managers), who translate strategy into execution and oversee multiple departments; and Frontline Staff, who are responsible for execution and support (Procore, 2021; Build-Wire, 2020). Strategy is essentially how the company plans to become competitive in the market. It is usually designed by top managers such as CEOs, CFOs, COOs, Vice Presidents, and Directors. To fully implement those strategies, middle managers—who act as the link between top managers and site managers—play an important role (Emerald Publishing, 2018; LSA Global, 2021).

Especially in construction firms where complex projects and uncertainties are expected, the role of middle management is crucial in achieving strategic goals (Emerald Publishing, 2018). The construction industry in Ethiopia plays a significant role in the national economy, contributing to infrastructure development, employment creation, and overall economic growth (Ministry of Urban Development & Construction, 2015; ENA, 2025).

"The construction sector plays a pivotal role in Ethiopia's economic development. As of May 2024, it contributed 21 percent to the national GDP, marking a significant milestone

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in its growth trajectory (ENA, 2024).”The numbers from Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) have an enormous impact, and it is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. Therefore, the implementation of formulated strategies in construction firms is crucial. Failing to implement strategies often results in profit loss and inefficiency (Clarke, Spillane, Bradley, & Carmody, 2023; Lumberfi, 2024). A company may have the best strategies, but without the active engagement and commitment of middle managers, the strategy remains only on paper. Middle managers play a vital role in bridging the gap between top managers and site operators by serving as intermediaries between executives and line managers (Tawse, Atwater, Vera, & Werner, 2024; LSA Global, 2021). They can effectively communicate strategies from top to bottom, manage resources and budgets, and prepare feedback from the site for top managers to support decision-making (Bridges Consultancy, 2025).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Strategy in construction plays a vital role in achieving organizational development. And Strategy implementations should be a great concern for the construction firm as we formulate a company’s strategy. Any gap between strategy formulation and implementation causes the organization not to meet the objectives. Planning ambitions construction goal without execution fails to deliver results and execution without clear plan leads to wasted resources and misaligned efforts.

Since construction sectors have complex projects and high uncertainties expected, failing to formulate and implement the strategies could cause delays, cost overruns and poor coordination. And if we involve weak middle management, the problem was worsened.

The construction sector is highly characterized by complex projects, high uncertainty, and dynamic environments. In such contexts, weak or inconsistent strategy implementation can result in delays, cost overruns, poor coordination, and reduced quality of outputs. Recent studies emphasize that middle management plays a pivotal role in bridging this gap. For example, Tawse, Atwater, Vera, and Werner (2024) found that middle managers’ leadership and coordination significantly influence the success of strategy implementation, acting as the crucial link between top-level vision and frontline execution. Similarly, Bridges Consultancy (2025) highlighted that middle managers’ ability to communicate,

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allocate resources, and provide feedback directly determines whether strategic goals are achieved.

Middle managers perceptions of operations strategies in construction (construction management and Economics, 2019): examined Swedish construction contractors and showed that the middle managers' understanding of operations strategies like lean construction strongly influences how strategies are applied on-site. Their perceptions often determine whether strategic goals align with daily practices. For many reasons its essential to use the middle manager's ability and experience to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Failing to do so was result in problems either delivering results or wasted resources.

Despite the strategic importance of the Ethiopian construction industry, many projects continue to experience delays, cost overruns, resource wastage, communication breakdowns, and poor coordination between corporate headquarters and project sites. Studies conducted in Ethiopia have identified management deficiencies, weak communication systems, inadequate resource allocation, and limited supervisory capacity as major contributors to poor project performance. Although previous studies have acknowledged the importance of management in project success, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how middle managers specifically bridge the gap between executive strategic intentions and site-level execution. Furthermore, no known study has quantitatively examined the mediating role of the "bridging the gap" function using PLS-SEM within Ethiopian construction firms. Consequently, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding the mechanisms through which middle managers contribute to successful strategy implementation in the Ethiopian construction industry. This study seeks to address that gap.

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1.3 Objective the study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to investigate the role of middle management in bridging the gap between executive vision and site operations to ensure successful strategic implementation within Ethiopian construction firms.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the current practices of middle managers in translating executive strategic goals into daily site-level operational plans within Ethiopian construction firms.
2. To examine the communication mechanisms used by middle managers to facilitate information flow between the board of directors (vision) and site engineers/laborers (operations).
3. To identify the key challenges and barriers that hinders middle managers from effectively bridging the gap between strategic intent and site execution in the local context.
4. To determine the relationship between middle management's "bridging" activities and the overall success of strategic implementation in the selected construction firms.

1.4 Research question

1. To what extent do middle managers in Ethiopian construction firms currently translate executive strategic visions into actionable site-level operational plans?
2. What communication mechanisms do middle managers utilize to bridge the information gap between executive leadership and site-level operations?
3. What are the primary organizational and environmental barriers that prevent middle managers from effectively aligning executive strategy with site execution?
4. How significant is the relationship between the "bridging" role of middle management and the successful implementation of strategic goals in the Ethiopian construction industry?

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1.5 Significance of Study

This intention of this study is to assess how middle management contributes to bridging the gap between executive vision and the execution of the vision at the project level. The purpose of this assessment will be to evaluate the ways in which these middle management personnel will convert high level/alignment strategies into daily productive activities of subordinates. Thus the purpose of this project is to evaluate the form of communications and method used in the coordination of movement between the boardroom and the construction field and the factors that may affect this flow of information at the local site level. Additionally, this study will evaluate the statistical relationship that exists between the mediation of effective middle managers and the overall success of the strategic alignment and implementation; thereby providing a model that will allow construction executives and policymakers to develop strategies to improve operational efficiency and timeliness of project delivery in the Ethiopian construction sector.

Beneficiaries of the Study

Construction Firm Executives

- Better understanding of how middle managers contribute to strategic success.
- Improved decision-making regarding delegation and organizational structure.

Middle Managers

- Recognition of their strategic role.
- Guidance for improving communication, coordination, and resource management.

Policy Makers and Regulatory Bodies

- Evidence for developing management capacity-building programs within the construction industry.

Construction Industry Practitioners

- Practical recommendations for improving project delivery and operational efficiency.

Researchers and Academics

- Provides empirical evidence on middle management and strategy implementation in Ethiopia.
- Serves as a foundation for future studies.

Universities and Training Institutions

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- Supports curriculum development in strategic management and project management.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Research was undertaken primarily with reference to the role of project managers, site engineers, and department heads in the middle management of Grade 1 (G1) and Grade 2 (G2) Ethiopian construction firms located in Addis Ababa (the capital of Ethiopia). The research's emphasis was related to the actions of these middle managers in terms of the internal mechanisms that they used to bridge the executive vision with the operations conducted on-site, including the strategic implementation processes performed during the 2025/2026 fiscal year. In terms of geography, the research was restricted to construction projects within the city of Addis Ababa and the adjacent special zones surrounding Addis Ababa for logistical efficiency and consistency of data. In terms of conceptual scope, the research was limited to the mediating roles of communication and coordination, while excluding issues associated with non-managerial labor at sites and with macro-level national economic policies that do not directly affect firm-level strategic alignment.

1.7 Limitation of the study

This research study provided a valuable insight into the Fundamentals of Construction while being conducted within certain parameters. One of the main limitations of the study was its geographical boundary, as the research only focuses on businesses located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; hence these results cannot be generalized to projects located in far-off regional areas. Another limiting factor of this study was that the data was collected within a very short timeframe due to the academic schedule; therefore, this research was only able to collect data from one fiscal year (2025/2026) instead of gathering data over an extended period of time. Finally, the data used in this study primarily consisted of self-reported data from participants. This means that there may be an inherent bias in all of the data collected due to the fact that it was solely based on participant self-reports. The confidentiality policy of each company that participated in this study also meant that access to any internal documents (specifically strategic documents) was restricted, therefore; all analysis was conducted using survey data and participant perceptions rather than actual private financial statements.

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1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Middle Management (MM): The group of employees that works between top management and first line supervisors. They are typically referred to as 'middle managers' and hold titles including department heads and regional managers. Middle managers are responsible for taking the organizations strategy and putting it into action.

Strategy Implementation: The execution of strategy through the use of resources, organizational structure and people to achieve goals.

Middle Management Strategy Implementation(MMSI): The behaviors and roles that middle managers perform to ensure that the organizations strategic objectives are achieved (such as communicating goals, championing alternatives, and facilitating adaptation).

Organizational Structure: The formal system that determines how power is distributed and information moves through the construction company.

Construction Sector: The companies that design, plan and build infrastructure and building projects. The construction sector has a high degree of project complexity and is made up of many different organizations.

Strategic Alignment: The degree to which the activities and priorities of middle managers are aligned with top management's strategic plan.

Resource Allocation: The administrative process through which middle managers allocate funds, employees and materials to projects or departments to perform strategic functions.

Sense making: The way that middle managers interpret strategic change.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The research project was organized into 5 major divisions comprising 5 separate chapters. The first chapter included an introduction to the study which included an overview, purpose and importance of the study specifically put into context for the construction industry of Ethiopia. The next chapter was a literature review covering all of the theoretical and empirical literature regarding the role of middle management and its importance to a successful organization; the literature review served as the precursor to the methodology chapter where the research design, types of samples taken, and how data would be analyzed were all discussed. The fourth chapter of the research project was based on how the data collected was presented to and interpreted by the researcher using descriptive and inferential statistics. The final chapter concluded with a summary of the findings of this

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research; conclusions drawn from this research; and practical recommendations based upon the results of this research for construction companies and for future researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a thorough review was made of the theoretical and empirical literature concerning middle management's involvement in the strategic implementation of the construction industry. The study established a conceptual structure by discussing established management theory and the increasingly important roles of middle managers

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as intermediaries between higher-level executive vision and lower-level site operations. Additionally, it discussed distinct challenges within Ethiopia's construction environment; noted gaps in current research; and explained the conceptual framework for analyzing the variables examined in this study.

2.2 Definition of Strategy

2.2.1 Classic and Modern Definition of Strategy

The classic definition of strategy comes from military history, where it was needed to accomplish military campaigns. In modern contexts, strategy is not limited to specific plan instead an extensive plan to attain a specific objective that are involving a series of actions. It's not a static plan but a dynamic process that adapts to changing conditions. There are key components of strategy these include goal setting, situational analysis, construct strategies and finally execute them and measure the effectiveness. The evolution of strategy from military to business has contributed to several studies such as SWOT analysis which support organizations to make decision based on companies' strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. This led the organizations to achieve the goals with informed decisions.

2.2.2 Classic Definitions of Strategy

Classic views of strategy are characterized by intentional planning, long-term objectives, and well-structured execution of the plan. Emphasize deliberate planning, long-term objectives, and structured execution.

Mishra and Mohanty (2020) consider strategy as an intentional plan of action orchestrated to achieve organizational goals through organized formulation and execution. Similarly, Dhlamini (2022) aligns the Companies objectives with external factors. This is because External conditions significantly affect our organizational objectives.

2.2.3 Modern Definitions of Strategy

On the other hand, modern definition is more flexible than classical context. This is expressed in its adaptability, dynamism and highly involvement of human dimensions. Cory (2024) argues the concept of strategy is all about organizational objectives and executions in dynamic external environment. The Emergent Approach (2022) highlights strategy as adaptive and comprehensive, encompassing competitive positioning, resource allocation, and scenario planning. Tawse, Atwater, Vera, and Werner (2024) emphasize

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the leadership and coordination role of middle managers play crucial role in successful strategy execution. He also expressed the role of individual managers who are indispensable in bridging the top managers and frontline workers. These modern perspectives reflect the increasing complexity of organizational environments and the need for flexibility, responsiveness, and integration between strategic intent and practice.

2.3 Strategy Implementation

Strategy execution is a major organizational challenge (Dobni and Luffman, 2003; Raes et al., 2011) and studies indicate it's difficult to execute the objectives than to formulate the organization strategies. (Egelhoff, 1993; Hickson et al., 2003). For this reason, strategy books tend to explain SI as strategy into action. This is to show both formulation and implementation have to be interconnected. Formulate to implement. (Hill and Jones, 2013, p. 4) or "converting strategy into actions and good results" (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 44). The strategic implication (SI) implication is to take concrete steps in acting more than spending enormous resources to formulate the organizational strategy.

Strategy implementation research covers several topics, including higher level strategic change and execution of documented long-term goals such as growth in every direction and engaging in different business strategies which are known as diversifications strategy. Implementations of strategy often encompass some level of organizational change. Change could be from top to bottom level. (Balogun et al., 2005; Lynch and Mors, 2019) and capability development (Friesl and Silberzahn, 2017).

Academic literature often failed to have a consolidated definition of what strategic implementation is and what is not (Weser et al.,2020). Researchers have used the notion of implementation with regard to different objects such as corporate or business strategy (Bourgeois Iii and Brodwin, 1984), but also lower-level or functional strategies, such as IT (Gottschalk, 1999).

Implementations of strategy are quite forward and direct on paper, but when we enter to action we run into several expected obstacles. In Leading Change (1996), John P. Kotter argues the main cause of failre of strategy implementation is dueto organizations fail to create a sense of urgency. This is usually converted to resistance by the employee, cultural resistance and time taking adoption of new strategy directions.

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In The Balanced Scorecard (1996), Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton explain other main cause of strategy failure that is when they are not communicated well throughout the departments. This is true because if all departments in the organizations do not understand the strategy explicitly, they cannot execute it effectively.

In The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning (1994), the prominent strategy scholar Henry Mintzberg argues formulated Strategies do not usually achieved if there is misalignment between organizational structures and the objectives. This emphasizes that strategy has to be supported by organizations' resources and structures in order not to fail.

2.4 Middle Management in Organizations

2.4.1 Definition of Middle Management

Middle managers are organizational actors positioned between top executives and frontline employees, who translate strategy into action, coordinate departments, manage teams, and influence both operational and strategic outcomes.

Mintzberg(1973) defines middle managers as department heads who plays different roles such as informational, interpersonal, and decisional roles within the level of their organization. They communicate, negotiate and play as problem solvers in the middle of the top managers and the frontliners.

Michael Porter (1985) views middle managers as an indispensable part of the organizations in execution winning strategies and as an actor who support the alignment of organizations day to day activities with the big strategic positioning. They can easily convert the bigger pictures of the companies into action-oriented results by controlling operational routines.

Roles and Responsibilities of Middle Managers

Middle managers translate strategy into action, coordinate teams, communicate across levels, solve operational problems, support change, and influence both strategic and day-to-day decisions.

2.4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Middle Management in Strategy Implementation

For several years the role of middle managers has been studied through different theoretical perspectives. Each lens tries to explain how middle managers play a crucial role in

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implementing the formulated strategy. This study was analyses the major perspectives known in strategic management literature.

2.4.2.1 Agency Theory

The agency theory received a lot of attention in organizational and information system literature (Thompson, 1967; Eisenhardt, 1985). This theory is well known globally by explaining the relationship between the organization's manager as an agent and the organization shareholder as the principal.

This theory was taken up by scholars of different disciplines, from Accounting Field (Baiman, 1990) form Law Field (Banfield, 1965), economics (Cooper, 1949 & 1951; Ross, 1973), finance (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), sociology (Shapiro, 1987), strategy (Barnard, 1938) and political science (Mitnick, 1982a, 1993), among others. Several Scholars have tried to analyze these theoretical insights to study leadership behavior in massive private and public organizations. As is the case for most questions on organizations, the agency theory focuses on working people and on how they behave in their work environment. agency theory focuses on the conflict between objectives, created by various individuals who, while engaged in these organizations, seek for what is in their best interest.

2.4.2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource-based view (RBV) perspective, developed in the 1980s and 90's by several scholars mainly Barney and Birger Wernerfelt, explains the organizations distinctives resources and capabilities are the main enablers of its competitive advantages and remarkable Achievement.

Resource based view considers the internal competitive advantage of the organizations other than external market positioning. This perspectives organized resources in to two main broad categories these are Tangible and Intangible resources. This view offer intensive insight how organizations should use its internal advantages to gain competitive advantages and ensure strategy implementations. In this perspective middle managers serve as strategic resources and their experience as value propositions.

2.4.3 Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

Peter F. Drucker (1954) describes middle managers as essential translators of strategic objectives into operational tasks. Their responsibilities include coordinating workflows,

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supervising teams, and ensuring that organizational policies are implemented effectively. Drucker emphasizes that without middle managers, strategic plans remain abstract and disconnected from day-to-day operations.

Henry Mintzberg's seminal work The Nature of Managerial Work (1973) identifies three categories of managerial roles—interpersonal, informational, and decisional. Middle managers perform these roles by: leading and motivating employees, communicating strategic priorities and making operational decisions that support strategic goals. Mintzberg's framework highlights that middle managers are active agents who shape organizational behavior through their daily actions.

Through daily practices. Their unique position enables them to bridge the gap between formulation and execution, making them central to organizational success.

Middle managers play crucial role in implementation of strategies. Their responsibilities for the achievement of the big plan are irreplaceable. Their roles are numerous, but the literature is limited only to the following roles these are communication roles, coordination roles, Leadership roles, resource management roles, Decision making roles and change management roles. Their roles is wide such as Translating executive vision to site-level employees, coordinating departments, subcontractors, and projects, integrating strategy across multiple construction sites, providing feedback from site operations to top management etc.

2.4.4 Strategy Implementation in Construction Firms

Strategy implementation in any business is vital for every company who wants to achieve wholistic victory. I especially try to assess the strategic implementation on selected mega Construction firms in Ethiopia.

Current practices of middle managers in Ethiopian construction Firms

In Ethiopian construction firms, middle managers commonly serve as project managers, site managers, departmental heads, and technical coordinators. Their current practices include translating corporate strategies into project plans, coordinating resources among departments, monitoring project progress, communicating strategic priorities to site personnel, resolving operational challenges, managing subcontractors, and providing feedback to senior management. However, these activities are often constrained by limited decision-making authority, inadequate communication systems, resource shortages, and

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project uncertainties. As a result, the effectiveness of middle managers in aligning strategic objectives with operational activities varies significantly across firms.

2.5 Characteristics of Construction Firms

Unlike other business construction firms is very challenging due to its project based, capital intensiveness, unpredictability and risk.

Successful strategy implementation in construction firms requires strong leadership, capable middle managers, clear communication, resource alignment, skilled workforce, robust quality and safety systems, technology integration, and continuous performance monitoring.

2.5.1 Challenges of Strategy Implementation in Construction Firms

Strategic implementation has been adversely affected in the Ethiopian construction industry because of its disjointed organizational structure and the competing priorities of the quality or cost of a project. The two disjointed structures are the strategic planning that occurs at the corporate head office and the eventual execution of the project at the field level. The disconnect is sometimes described as a "strategy-performance gap" because a corporation's vision does not make it from the main office to the job site (Mintzberg, 1989). In this unpredictable environment, middle managers (comprised of project managers and site engineers) provided the necessary connection to accomplish "strategic translation" from corporate visions to the work routines on the job site (Huy, 2001). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that middle managers are also important to bridge the conflict between long-term strategic goals versus short-term financial stress created by the "iron triangle," as the need to save costs frequently conflicts with the quality of the project. The ability of middle managers in a construction company to "bridge" the two levels has been reported as the primary factor in determining the success of strategic implementation because their social and operational capital permits them to traverse silos in their organization and secure worker buy-in for strategic initiative (Wheeler & El-Gazzar, 2019).

Construction firms have made significant advancements due to higher levels of participation by mid-level managers in every aspect of operations. According to a study done by Beemsterboer and Koch (2017), mid-level managers were largely excluded from studies of innovation, but their role was critical to ensuring successful execution of top management's vision at the project site. Simu and Lidelöw (2019) also found that mid-level

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managers play an important role in assisting with the interpretation of operational strategies and aligning daily operations with long-term strategic objectives. Mid-level managers are vital in navigating through the fragmented nature of the construction industry due to the high degree of complexity and risk associated with executing projects.

Key Barriers to Strategy Implementation

1. Communication breakdown between executives and project sites.
2. Limited decision-making autonomy of middle managers.
3. Inadequate resource allocation.
4. Weak coordination among departments.
5. Resistance to organizational change.
6. Lack of employee engagement.
7. Project complexity and uncertainty.
8. Fragmented organizational structures.
9. Poor monitoring and feedback mechanisms.
10. External environmental factors (economic instability, regulatory changes, inflation).

These barriers hinder the ability of middle managers to effectively translate strategic intentions into operational actions and contribute to the persistent strategy-execution gap observed in construction organizations.

2.6 Empirical Review

The empirical review examined existing scholarly works to establish the relationship between middle management and strategy implementation success. This section was divided into two primary dimensions: the global context and the Ethiopian context, highlighting the evolution of research in this field.

Worldwide Context

Beemsterboer and Koch's (2017) study, called "A human touch: Studying middle managers' contributions to innovation within contractors," used qualitative case studies of large-scale construction contractors over 10 years, including analyses of archival records (e.g., company records) and semi-structured interviews with middle managers. The researchers argued that middle managers served as the human touch for construction

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innovation, being the main links between site operations and top-level innovation visions. The researchers also found that a middle manager's perception of an innovation's radicalness directly affects how they adopt and support innovations within decentralized project environments. Despite the longitudinal study's depth of insights into the diffusion of innovation over time, the study primarily focused on the Swedish construction industry, which limits the study's applicability to emerging economies that have very different institutional frameworks.

As a significant contribution to research, “Middle Managers’ Perceptions of Operations Strategies at Construction Contractors,” published by Simu and Lidelöw (2019), is important because it employed an in-depth qualitative methodology composed of nine comprehensive interviews conducted with contractor middle managers and analyzed using thematic coding to arrive at results.

The authors discovered that there were two different models (i.e., resource-efficient and flow-efficient) by which middle managers perceived strategy—furthermore, they determined that infrastructures (or “infrastructural categories”) such as human resources could provide the most significant competitive advantage when they are aligned with business goals. A unique aspect of this work was its in-depth and nuanced technical breakdown of the various strategic decision-making guidelines that apply to construction management; however, an apparent methodological limitation in conducting the study was evident, as the small sample size did not allow for the quantitative testing of statistical significance across a broader population than that of the original sample.

Wooldridge et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 56 empirical studies on middle management strategy and concluded that the role of middle managers is to connect the intents of top management with the operational realities of the organization. Their research suggested that this "connector" role is even more important in large, complex organizations where there is a large distance between the strategic planning process and the execution of that strategy. The research established that middle managers do not just execute orders; rather, they are strategic synthesizers who help to create the ultimate outcomes for the organization. Though the meta-analysis provided a solid overall global foundation, due to the broad nature of the studies included in the meta-analysis, it was suggested that a more

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specific focus on sector-specific nuances, especially in high risk industries like construction, needs to be conducted.

Simu and Lidelöw (2019) conducted an investigation into contractors in Sweden in relation to whether or not middle managers' views of operational strategies affected how they executed those strategies on projects. The purpose of their research was to understand how middle managers interpreted corporate instructions and what factors affected those interpretations. Their primary conclusion was that middle managers' interpretation of their corporate vision directly affected the level of project delivery at the site level. Although their research was conducted specifically within the construction sector, it did not address the potential geographical or economic gap between the Nordic region and developing countries; therefore, the results could not be generalized to all types of contracted work in developing nations.

Rouleau & Balogun (2011) studied middle managers' contribution to strategy in "Middle managers, strategic sense making, and knowledge flow." Researchers used ethnographic methods to observe the daily discursive activities of middle managers through the Strategy-as-Practice lens. They concluded that middle managers made contributions to strategy through their ability to interpret new strategies and explain them to teams in ways that made sense at a local level. Additionally, middle managers were situated at the intersection of knowledge flow and therefore able to combine strategic directives with the operational input from their respective teams. Although they emphasized the importance of relational processes, the study was primarily theoretical and did not provide practical or quantifiable metrics that construction firms could utilize to gauge the effectiveness of the process used for sense making.

Ethiopian Context

In the local setting, an article entitled "Assessment Of Ethiopian Construction Industry Performance" (published in Quest Journals) used a descriptive and exploratory research methodology which included surveys administered by many different stakeholders, including contractors and consultants. The results of the study showed there is a significant performance-planning deficiency in the Ethiopian construction industry, with schedule delays averaging between 61% and 80%. Additionally, the researchers found that among the lowest-rated satisfaction elements of the study were the tasks usually performed by

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middle managers: communication management and resource allocation, both of which lead directly to project failure. While the study provided an in-depth assessment of the overall health of the construction industry, it failed to specify the strategic role played by middle management; instead, it grouped all types of management activity together as one variable.

In a more recent study by Shamelo (2026) called, "Perceived Factors Affecting Strategy Implementation Practices in Ethiopia", Shamelo (2026) conducted a quantitative approach applying Institutional Theory and Resource-Based Theory focused on large-scale Ethiopian organizations. The study concluded that strategic leadership and employee empowerment had a significant impact on implementation success. However, they found that a large number of Ethiopian institutions do not have systematically structured processes for implementation. Furthermore, it was found that most of the middle managers within the organizations operated without having sufficient institutional autonomy to affect changes to the organization's strategies while on the job. The use of modern theories/frameworks was an additional strength of this study; however, based upon the fact that the research was conducted within the context of publicly funded universities and publicly funded public sector agencies, a clear and noticeable sectorial gap exist when applying these findings to the high-risk, project-based environment of construction.

Ayalew et al (2016) identified poor management as a significant barrier to construction within Ethiopia. The authors argued that, in order to align projects with their stated goals and improve delivery performance, it was imperative to develop the capabilities of middle managers. The authors further identified a "performance-planning gap" in Ethiopian construction projects, which result from a lack of supervisory and project-leadership capacity at each level of management. As this study provided a "health check" on the local industry and outlined the critical need for capacity building, it was unable to identify which specific "bridging" mechanism was required for a quantitative approach to bridge middle management's involvement in delivered project performance, thus leaving open more detailed structural analyses of such bridge functions.

With the use of both literature review and expert surveys in a mixed-methods approach to assess the challenges of the Ethiopian construction industry as identified on Research Gate, researchers were able to create a list of variables specific to the construction industry. This resulted in the identification of poor contractor capacity and the inability to effectively

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manage risks as significant contributors for cessation of projects within the Ethiopian construction industry. Furthermore, it is noted that lessons learned were generally not shared between project managers and site engineers and this indicated that there was a breakdown of the bridging aspect of the middle-tier within local firms. The results of the study also showed that the fragmented nature of the construction industry is an important factor moderating multiple aspects of the industry; however, the study did not identify how to restructure the middle-tier position within an organization to implement more advanced management approaches, leaving an area for future research to address.

2.6.1 Research Gaps Identified from Literature

The empirical literature review found that middle managers are regarded around the world as bridge builders through bridging (Wooldridge et al. 2008; Simu & Lidelöw 2019) as well as Bridge Builders/Interpreters. The research that has occurred for the purpose of establishing how Management is a major problem within Ethiopia's construction project (Ayalew et al. 2016) does not show explicit evidence that demonstrates the actual original construction projects in Ethiopia are enlightened, bridging, and are systematically analyzed and identified as dysfunctional/inefficient outputs within the industry. The few studies that do mention Management utilize the Management concept as a road block to furthering their own insight into how the middle tier actually mediated between the top tier's vision for the project to the project level end product. The current study was executed to adequately address this gap by using PL-SEM to quantitatively identify, isolate & measure the bridging the gap function within mid management framework as a functioning mediator.

2.7 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Three major features of Middle Management were identified from the viewpoint of the project managers and engineers that this research evaluated - including referring to project managers and engineers from throughout Ethiopia.

Independent Variable Characteristics:

Strategic Coordination - This relates to how you organize technical resources and workflows on the job site to achieve higher-level project milestones.

Multidirectional Communication - This refers to the flow of information between the Board of Directors and the technical team on the job site.

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Allocation of Resources - The actual authorization of materials, labor and budgets to ensure consistency with corporate strategy.

Mediating Variable:

Gap Bridging was the mediating variable, which reflects the degree to which strategy was executed as intended, providing a linkage between the independent and dependent variables (strategy execution).

The dimensions of this variable include:

1. Clarification of Vision: Vision is the translation of long-term strategic objectives into applicable site-level tasks and work breakdown structures on a daily basis.

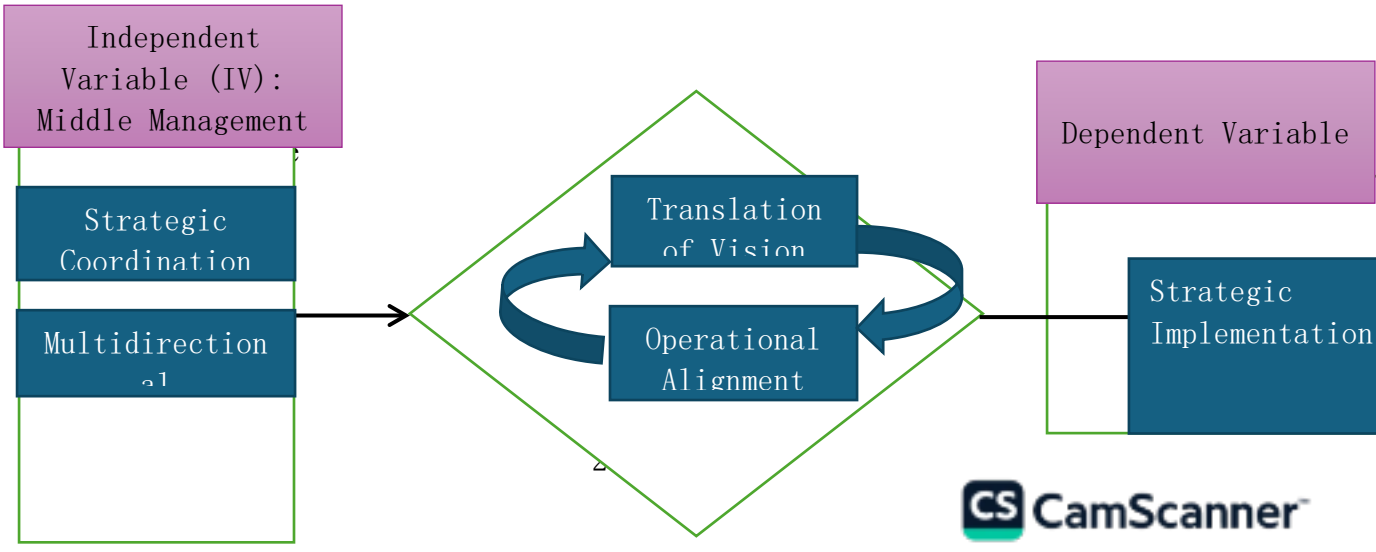
2. Operational Alignment: Operational alignment is the proactive, continual process of modifying the activities on a construction project site to be in continuous total alignment with the long-term strategic objectives of the firm.

3. Dependent Variable (DV): Strategic Implementation (the final outcome of the model) was measured using the following criteria:

a. Goal Achievement - the successful completion of the assigned strategic objectives.

b. Operational Efficiency - the successful completion of construction projects within the time, money, and quality constraints.

4. Summary of Model Logic: This model determined that the Middle Management Role (IV) does not directly cause Strategic Implementation (DV). The success of Strategic Implementation is contingent upon the Manager's ability to effectively Bridge the Gap (MV) through the coordinated communication and allocation of resources to translate Vision and Operational Alignment into action to achieve the Strategic Goals of the firm in the Ethiopian construction industry.



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Figure 2 1 Conceptual Framework of the study

Source; - Adapted and modified from the authoritative models of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), Balogun and Johnson (2004), and Noble (1999) to scientifically examine the relationship between middle management roles and strategic implementation success.

2.8 Research Hypotheses

The primary hypothesis examined the overarching influence of middle management. According to Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), the involvement of middle managers in downward strategic influence is a significant predictor of organizational performance.

H_ (1): The Middle Management Role has a positive and significant effect on Strategic Implementation.

To test the specific impact of each dimension, the following sub-hypotheses were developed based on the work of Balogun and Johnson (2004), who argued that multidirectional communication and coordination are essential for organizational change.

H_ (1a): Strategic Coordination has a positive and significant effect on Strategic Implementation.

H_ (1b): Multidirectional Communication has a positive and significant effect on Strategic Implementation.

H_ (1c): Resource Allocation has a positive and significant effect on Strategic Implementation.

The research also addressed the necessity of the bridging process. Huy (2001) established that middle managers create value by acting as a bridge that links high-level goals with technical execution, suggesting that the management role must first effectively facilitate operational alignment.

H_ (2): The Middle Management Role has a positive and significant effect on Bridging the Gap.

Finally, the mediating mechanism was tested to determine how the "bridge" functioned. Noble (1999) posited that implementation success is achieved through the translation of

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vision into site-level actions, meaning the impact of the manager was facilitated through the bridging process.

H_ (3): Bridging the Gap significantly mediates the relationship between the Middle Management Role and Strategic Implementation.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology and technical documentation procedures to conduct the research are addressed in this chapter. This included a description of the research design, a description of the target population and a discussion of the sampling methods used to ensure that the Grade 1 and Grade 2 Construction Firms in Addis Ababa were sampled accurately and representatively. In addition, it provided an indication of the instruments used to collect data, methods used to measure reliability and validity of the data collected, and the statistical methods used to test the hypotheses. The establishment of a clear methodological framework provided the scientific rationale behind how the relationship between the roles of public middle managers and the strategic implementation of public organizations was analysed and interpreted.

3.2 Area of Study

The focus of the study was on registered Grade I and II construction companies in Ethiopia that do business in multiple parts of the country according to their company's location, as determined by the Ethiopian Construction Authority (ECA). The reason that the specific types of company were selected was due to the complexity of the operation and resources used to conduct operations in this area. Since there was a need for an established organizational middle management level to carry out corporate strategies regarding the companies, the majority of the data was gathered from the headquarters of these types of companies located in Addis Ababa, as well as, other areas in Ethiopia where the companies are actively building infrastructure or where those projects occur.

The justification for having selected this type of facility was based on the theory presented by Zavadskas et al. (2010) who stated that high-grade construction facilities would be the

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best base facility for use in researching strategic management because of the availability of formal hierarchical structures and the significantly larger resources of high-grade construction companies as compared to lower-quality construction sites. Based on this reasoning, focusing on high-grade construction sites provided the most representative environment in which to evaluate the role of middle managers who are located at numerous project sites dispersed throughout Ethiopia, as they work together as a critical link between the central executive vision of the corporation and the strategic implementations to those project sites.

By utilizing a multi-site approach in this study, the data were used to represent how strategic implementation occurred in the rapidly changing and geographically diverse construction industry of Ethiopia.

3.3 Research philosophy

The study adopted a positivist philosophy of research, the research supports the view that social reality exists objectively and can be quantifiably measured. The positivist research philosophy was appropriate for this study due to its aim of testing existing theories (Floyd and Wooldridge 1992) by collecting data undeniably to find observable and measurable trends in the Ethiopian construction industry. By implementing a positivist position towards this research, the research remains objective, unbiased, and independent from the research results relating to the relationship between the role of management and the strategic success of the Egyptian construction industry based on empirical evidence and statistical analysis rather than personal experience or human biases.

3.4 Research Design

This research was done using an explanatory design to both describe and explain causal relationships between the variables being researched. The descriptive study only told what management roles are; the explanatory design told both why and how the Middle Manager Influenced Strategic Implementation through Bridging the Gap. The explanatory design was of particular importance to test proposed hypotheses and gain a better understanding of the functional linkages within the construction firm's hierarchy.

Saunders et al. (2019) supported the use of an explanatory design in that an explanatory study is required when your purpose is to analyze an issue or problem to describe and explain the relations between variables. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) supported the use of

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explanatory research as the best way to validate a theoretical framework, such as the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) model, by measuring the influence of independent variables on dependent outcomes. This design allowed for the collection of empirical data on the impact of specific management dimensions on the attainment or lack thereof of strategic objectives in the Ethiopian construction industry.

3.5 Research Approach

This specific research employed a purely quantitative method of inquiry to assess the variables' objective measurement and uses statistical testing to evaluate the hypotheses. The quantitative method enables the researcher to quantify the relationship between the Middle Management Role and Strategic Implementation, using numerical data and computational techniques. The study's use of a quantitative method provides high-level objectivity and enables generalization from a sample of construction firms to the Ethiopian construction industry as a whole.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) support the use of a quantitative method of inquiry to support the hypothesis. The authors indicated that quantitative methods are most suited for testing objective theories based on empirical evidence collected through the examination of variables based on measurement. Bryman and Bell (2015) further support that; a quantitative approach allows a researcher to utilize structured instruments (e.g., Likert-scale questionnaires) to collect data that can be rigorously tested using statistical analysis. The use of this empirical methodology provides the level of empirical precision required to verify the mediation effect of Bridging the Gap and validates that the conclusions drawn from the data are based on statistically significant evidence rather than subjective observations.

3.6 Target Population

This research aims at identifying the target population consisting of middle-level managers in ten construction firms (five Grade I contractors and five Grade II contractors) registered with the Ethiopian Construction Authority (ECA). Zikmund (2003) has defined a population as the entire collection of elements related to a specific study. For this investigation, the population was including 320 middle-level managers in several functional departments (Engineering, Human Resources, Marketing and Operations) as they sit at the crossroads of an executive strategy and site-level technical execution.

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3.7 Sampling Design and Sample Size

3.7.1 Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling method was chosen for this research study due to its ability to identify participants based on either their professional experience or their ability to provide useful information regarding the research topic. Consequently, purposive sampling is suitable for this study type. According to Saunders et al. (2019), purposive sampling is especially useful when researchers want to focus their investigations on particular organizational levels (for example, middle management) rather than employing random selection processes across the entire employee population. Consequently, the data collected was related directly to the strategic functions the researcher is investigating.

3.7.2 Sample Size Determination

To determine the mathematically required sample size for the population of 320, the study was utilizing **Yamane's (1967) formula**, assuming a **95% confidence level** and a **5% margin of error** (e = 0.05):

$$n = \frac{\mathrm{N}}{1 + \mathrm{N(e)2}}$$

Calculation: $n = \frac{320}{1 + 320(0.05)2}$

- $n = \frac{320}{1 + 320(0.0025)}$
- $n = \frac{320}{1.8}$
- **n = 178**

Table 3 1 1: Distribution of Population

No	List of Contractors	Total Middle Managers (N)	Theoretical Sample (n)
1	Ovid Construction	110	61
2	Mirab Construction	50	28
3	TNT Construction	60	33
4	Getas Real Estate	40	22
5	Bamakon Construction	70	34

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Total		**320**	**178**

The study used a 178 respondent sample size according to this equation. This sample was give the required data points to provide strong statistical evidence that can be generalized to all Grade I and II construction businesses in Ethiopia. Additionally, this sample was providing enough data to conduct multiple regression analyses and to perform meditational testing.

3.8 Data Sources and Type

The study made use of only primary data to make sure that the research results were an accurate representation of the current state of the Ethiopian construction sector. Primary data was obtained directly from the middle level managers of the selected construction firms (Grade I and Grade II), using a set of structured questionnaires. By only using primary data as the sources of evidence, the research provided original first-hand evidence of the variables of Middle Management Role, Bridging the Gap, and Strategic Implementation. This approach helped to guarantee contemporary, applicable, and accurately addressed evidence for each of the research objectives, and it eliminated any risk of bias or research results having been affected by the data found in secondary sources or due to the passage of time.

3.9 Data Collection Instrument

The main method of gathering the data was through a structured and closed ended questionnaire, developed for this research, and to support the quantitative analysis conducted herein. The questionnaire was separated into 4 main headings or sections; the first being the demographic data of the respondents, and subsequent sections covering the measurement of the independent, mediating and dependent variable scales. In the study, the use of a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure perceptions and management behaviors was consistent with methodology identified in Bryman and Bell (2015) as being an appropriate means of quantitatively measuring the attitude or feelings of subjects into numerical form. The use of the same format to conduct the survey with the 178 respondents allowed for data consistency for testing the reliability of the data using Cronbach's Alpha and performing regression analysis on the data to test the research hypotheses.

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3.10 Data Ananlysis

Once the data collection process was finalized, the raw data was cleaned, coded, and entered into smart PLS version 4 for systematic analysis. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to interpret the findings. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the general trends in the management variables. This provided a foundational understanding of the data distribution across the Grade I and II firms.

To test the research hypotheses and establish the relationships between the variables, inferential statistics were applied. Specifically, Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the Middle Management Role, Bridging the Gap, and Strategic Implementation. Subsequently, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was utilized to measure the extent of the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. All results were interpreted at a 95% confidence level, with a p-value of less than 0.05 considered statistically significant.

3.11 Reliability and validity

3.11.1 Reliability test

The measurement scales were undergone reliability and validity testing for the purpose of determining internal consistency and accuracy. Social science research considers that a Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability coefficient greater than or equal to 0.70 is acceptable (Hair et al., 2017).

As demonstrated below (Table 4), Independent Variable (IV), Mediating Variable (Mediator), and Dependent Variable (DV) were all above or equal to the accepted value of 0.70 on both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Therefore, the research instruments provided highly reliable and consistent measures of the research variables.

Table 3 2 Reliability test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
DV	0.838	0.840	0.873
IDV	0.816	0.817	0.855
MV	0.750	0.761	0.824

Source Owen survey 2026

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Internal Consistency: The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.750 to 0.838, while the Composite Reliability (p_c) values ranged from 0.824 to 0.873. Since all these values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, the instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability. Convergent Validity (AVE): The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the constructs were 0.313, 0.405, and 0.408. While these values were below the ideal 0.50 threshold, many scholars argue that if the Composite Reliability is higher than 0.60, the convergent validity of the construct is still considered adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Given that all CR values in this study were above 0.80, the constructs were deemed acceptable for further inferential analysis.

3.11.2 Discriminant Validity

In order to determine that all constructs were statistically distinguishable, discriminant validity of the constructs in this study was performed. This means that the items used to measure each of the Middle Management Role (IDV), Bridging the Gap (MV), and Strategic Implementation (DV), were not measuring the same thing. Discriminant validity was assessed using two main approaches: The Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and assessment of the correlation matrix. The Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion establishes discriminant validity when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than the greatest correlation of the construct with any of the other constructs in the model.

Table 3 3 Discriminant Validity

	DV	IDV	MV
DV			
IDV	0.804		
MV	0.895	0.887	

Source Owen survey, 2026

The findings in Table 3.3 was indicate a maximum ratio of 0.895 from the Mediating variable to the Dependent variable, which does not exceed the critical ratio benchmark of <.90. This means that Middle Management Role, Bridging the Gap and Strategic Implementation are statistically different variables.

Although the ratio of the relationship between the Mediating variable and the Dependent variable may be relatively large, there does exist a strong theoretical relationship between a manager's ability to Bridge the Gap and the final successful Strategic Implementation of

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a project on-site. As such, the measure of validity for this measurement model has been met, and movement was occurring to the Structural Model Analysis and Hypothesis Testing portion of this study after this stage of analysis.

3. 12 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, the researcher was considering ethical responsibility to do the work with honesty and integrity. In the first instance, all participants were treated with respect and courtesy. A strategy for informed consent' was adopted, with the aim and methods of the research being made clear to all participants. Clear and accurate information about the research was given to the participants of the study and their voluntary participation was respected. And the participants' identity was protected and all information obtained from the respondents was confidential and no one was having access to the identity of the respondents. Moreover, no information was modified or changed. Information was presented as collected and all the secondary data sources were appreciated in the reference section. The conclusion of the research was arising only from the findings of the research, and it is free from falsifying results.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter includes data analysis results and research findings from the field study. A major goal was to examine how the middle manager helps bridge the strategy-execution gap of the selected Grade I and Gr. II construction companies in Ethiopia. Data analysis was based on data provided from structured questionnaires collected from the population of middle managers.

This chapter consists of various sections that provide a logical flow of information. The first section describes the response rate and demographic profile of respondents, among other elements, to give a context for the data; all data on questions about the respondents and their demographics was fit into these categories. Additionally, the next section explains the results of tests for reliability and validity of the questionnaire used as a research tool; these tests establish that the research tools were acceptable according to established scientific standards, thus meeting Reliability and Validity standards. The next section is the core of the analysis, meaning that it contains 2 different types of statistics: descriptive statistics, which summarizes data of the independent variables and the dependent variables; and inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Correlations and Multiple Linear Regressions that have been tested for research hypotheses. The chapter concludes with a substantial discussion of the results found in conjunction with prior research and the study's objectives. The statistical procedures were analyzed using partial Least squares structural equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). So, the statistical results from the research were statistically rigorous at the 95% level of confidence.

4.1 General information of the respondent

In this part of the report, we provide a description of the characteristics of the 178 individuals who responded to the survey. The data were obtained from individuals in middle management positions at a selection of Grade I and Grade II construction

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companies located in Ethiopia. The analysis of the demographic variables of each respondent is critical in determining whether or not the sample of individuals who responded is representative of middle management, and also as context for the inferential analysis that was presented in the following sections.

A table providing the frequency and percentage of various demographic characteristics for each respondent can be found in appendix A.

Table 4 1 General information of the respondent

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	50
	Female	89	50
		178	100
Age Group	20–30 Years	35	19.7
	31–40 Years	39	21.9
	41–50 Years	39	21.9
	51–60 Years	30	16.9
	Above 60 Years	35	19.7
		178	100
Educational Level	Bachelor's Degree	53	29.8
	MBA/MA/MSc	41	23
	PhD	46	25.8
	Other Professional Cert.	38	21.3
		178	100
Job Title / Duty	Project Manager	37	20.8
	Site Manager / Superintendent	34	19.1
	Office Engineer / Technical Manager	46	25.8
	Functional Manager (HR, Finance, etc.)	26	14.6
	Department / Section Head	35	19.7
		178	100
Work Experience	1–5 Years	50	28.1
	6–10 Years	44	24.7
	11–15 Years	49	27.5
	Above 15 Years	35	19.7

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		178	100
Project Designation	Residential / Building	32	18
	Road and Infrastructure	34	19.1
	Water and Energy	39	21.9
	General Contractor	37	20.8
	Industrial Construction	36	20.2
		178	100
Division / Department	Engineering and Technical	35	19.7
	Operations and Site Management	34	19.1
	Human Resources and Administration	47	26.4
	Finance and Marketing	31	17.4
	Equipment and Logistics	31	17.4
		178	100

Source Owen survey, 2026

The research had an accurate gender representation with 50% males and 50% females according to Table 4.1. About 29.8% (Bachelor's Degree) and 25.8% (PhD) of respondents' education levels demonstrate that most middle managers are well-qualified to interpret and implement strategic directives.

Work experience shows that 71.9% of respondents have over 5 years of experience in the construction industry. Of those, 27.5% have 11 to 15 years of experience. Furthermore, the age distribution across project types and departments suggests that the responses received are likely to be from a seasoned workforce that can provide insight into the "strategy-to-execution gap" in their companies. Moreover, by having respondents across various types of projects and departments assures that findings are not skewed by functional areas while representing the multidirectional nature of construction management in Ethiopia.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

The primary components of this study have been stated in terms of their descriptive statistics; these include the Middle Management Role (IDV), Bridging the Gap (MV), and Strategic Implementation (DV). The means and standard deviations were utilized to characterize the level of Agreement across the 178 respondents who completed the study. The respondents rated their respective positions on a five-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree); thus, higher mean scores reflected stronger positive

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perceptions of the variables by the researchers as they relate to the particular construction firms in Ethiopia.

Table 4 2 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Name	Type	Mean	Standard deviation
Q1	MET	3.972	0.555
Q2	MET	3.983	0.524
Q3	MET	3.955	0.517
Q4	MET	4.017	0.545
Q5	MET	3.944	0.505
Q6	MET	3.989	0.551
Q7	MET	3.961	0.534
Q8	MET	3.933	0.586
Q9	MET	3.989	0.519
Q10	MET	3.961	0.534
Q11	MET	3.994	0.525
Q12	MET	3.972	0.513
Q13	MET	3.978	0.560
Q14	MET	3.961	0.466
Q15	MET	3.955	0.569
Q16	MET	4.006	0.566
Q17	MET	3.955	0.528
Q18	MET	3.961	0.454
Q19	MET	3.994	0.556
Q20	MET	3.949	0.554
Q21	MET	3.966	0.507
Q22	MET	3.944	0.558
Q23	MET	3.994	0.546
Q24	MET	3.972	0.502
Q25	MET	3.978	0.508
Q26	MET	3.989	0.540
Q27	MET	3.994	0.535
Q28	MET	3.983	0.585
Q29	MET	3.978	0.540
Q30	MET	3.989	0.590

Source Owen Survey, 2026

The descriptive analysis of each of the individual measurement items designed for the constructs of the study provided very similar descriptive results for all respondents; for the independent variable (middle management role), the means of the individual items (Q1-Q13) ranged from 3.933 to 4.017, indicating that all participants had a strong identification of their roles with coordination, communication, and resource management. For the

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mediating variable (bridging the gap), the means of the individual items (Q14-Q20) ranged from 3.949 to 4.006, and for the dependent variable (strategic implementation), the means of the individual items (Q21-Q30) ranged from 3.944 to 3.994. In order to interpret these results, the study used the mean score classifications defined by Best (1977), referenced in Birhanu (2017), which delineated 1.00-1.80 as strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60 as disagree, 2.61-3.40 as neutral, 3.41-4.20 as agree, and 4.21-5.00 as strongly agree. Accordingly, all items utilized to construct the questionnaire fell within the agree range and thus represent a positive and uniform perception on the strategic processes taking place within construction firms surveyed. The narrow range of standard deviations, which remained between 0.454 and 0.590, further confirmed that the responses were closely clustered around the mean, reflecting a high level of consensus among the 178 middle managers regarding the effective execution of strategy and the vital bridging role they performed on project sites.

4.3 Inter-Item Correlation Analysis

The purpose of examining the correlation matrix among the 30 indicators was to assess the degree of association between the indicators as well as the adequacy and integrity of the measurement model. According to Hair et al. (2021), inter-item correlation is a pretest for reliability of the indicators and for determining if the indicators are measuring different concepts (i.e., discriminant validity). To simplify presenting the larger correlation matrix, Table 4.7 shows the average inter-item correlations and the range of correlation coefficients by each of the three latent variables.

Table 4 3 Inter-Item Correlation

Construct	Item Range	Correlation Range	Average Correlation
Middle Management Role (IDV)	Q1 – Q13	0.115 – 0.419	0.254
Bridging the Gap (MV)	Q14 – Q20	0.120 – 0.474	0.3
Strategic Implementation (DV)	Q21 – Q30	0.208 – 0.486	0.341

Source Owen survey, 2026

The review showed that when analyzing each construct, the relationships were strong and statistically significant. The Inter-item relationships for the construct of Middle Management Role were 0.254 on average. Clark & Watson (1995), state that an average inter-item relationship of between 0.15 and 0.50 should occur within a construct so that the

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items relate closely enough to reflect the same construct without redundancy. The Bridging the Gap constructs (MV) had an average relationship of 0.300 followed by Strategic Implementation constructs (DV), which had the highest average relationship at 0.341. Therefore, these values reflect a high degree of internal consistency and confirm that the indicators align closely to their theoretical definitions of constructs. Additionally, these results were analyzed for multicollinearity. According to international academic standards, inter-item correlations of 0.85 or 0.90 or greater are indicative of redundancy between the items and result in inflation of the reliability coefficients (Kline 2015). The maximum observed correlation of any two items was 0.486 (between Q21 and Q23) which is much lower than the 0.85 criteria. The absence of high correlation among items indicates that each of the items provided unique information to the model. Additionally, the pattern of correlations supports the measurement model's validity, as the indicators demonstrate stronger associations with items within their own construct than with items in opposing constructs, adhering to the requirements for discriminant validity as outlined by Henseler et al. (2015). Consequently, the data is deemed suitable for advanced structural modeling and path analysis.

4.4 Assessment of Collinearity (VIF)

The structural model determines Collinearity between constructs while international academic standards (Hair et al. 2021) require that Collinearity is assessed at the indicator (item) level too. High VIF values between the items suggest that the items are redundant and may create instability in the outer loading estimates. A VIF cut-off point of less than 3.3 is used in scholarly research to ensure the validity of the measurement model.

The results displayed in Table 4.4 show that all 30 measures used in this study had far lower than the conservative VIF cut-off of 3.3, with a range from a minimum value of 1.188 (Q14) to a maximum value of 1.652 (Q30). These values confirm that the items measured are distinct and do not have multicollinearity and, therefore, provide a sound statistical basis for the subsequent path analysis.

Table 4 4 Assessment of Collinearity (VIF)

	VIF
Q1	1.387
Q10	1.489
Q11	1.290

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Q12	1.286
Q13	1.246
Q14	1.188
Q15	1.230
Q16	1.397
Q17	1.470
Q18	1.199
Q19	1.481
Q2	1.319
Q20	1.528
Q21	1.570
Q22	1.383
Q23	1.604
Q24	1.353
Q25	1.377
Q26	1.535
Q27	1.290
Q28	1.549
Q29	1.455
Q3	1.322
Q30	1.652
Q4	1.432
Q5	1.294
Q6	1.562
Q7	1.402
Q8	1.424
Q9	1.429

Source Owen survey, 2026

4.4.1 Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Following the structural model evaluation in Smart PLS, the Path Coefficients (β) were analyzed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs. To establish statistical significance, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 sub-samples was utilized to calculate t-statistics and p-values, adhering to the scholarly standards established by Hair et al. (2021).

Table 4 5 Path Coefficients

	DV	INV	MV
DV			
INV	0.496		0.702
MV	0.368		

Source Owen survey, 2026

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As indicated in the results, the Middle Management Role (INV) was have a significant direct effect on Strategic Implementation (DV) (β = 0.496), supporting H1. This suggests that for every one-unit increase in the effectiveness of the middle management role, strategic implementation success was increase by 0.496 units .Furthermore, the strongest relationship in the model was observed between the Middle Management Role (INV) and Bridging the Gap (MV) (β = 0.702), supporting H2. This confirms that the role of middle managers is a critical antecedent to the bridging process. Finally, Bridging the Gap (MV) was show a significant positive influence on Strategic Implementation (DV) (β= 0.368), supporting H3.These findings was provide the necessary empirical evidence to proceed with the mediation analysis, as the significant paths between the independent variable, mediator, and dependent variable fulfill the preliminary requirements for testing the indirect effect.

4.4.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The research assessed the predictive power of the structural model utilizing the Coefficient of Determination (R2). The R2 value indicates the overall impact of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables indicating the percentage of variance explained by the model (Hair et al., 2011). In academic research, R2 Values are classified based on their explanatory ability, with an R2 value of .75 being high, .50 moderate, and .25 low (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 4 6 Coefficient of Determination (R2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
DV	0.637	0.633
MV	0.493	0.490

Source Owen survey, 2026

Reviewing the data results presented in Table 4.10, the researcher found evidence of a high level of predictive power in the study's model. The important value of R2 for Bridging the Gap (MV) was .493, suggesting that the Middle Management Role (INV) accounted for 49.3 percent of the variance of the mediating variable. This indicated that there was a strong relationship between the managerial role and the ability to bridge the gap in the organization. However, more importantly, the R2 value for the dependent variable, Strategic Implementation (DV), was .637, indicating that 63.7 percent of the variance in success in the execution of strategy could be attributed to the two predictors; the Middle

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Management Role and the Bridging the Gap mediator. Cohen (1988) states that an R2 value of .26 or greater is considered to be a large effect in the behavioral and social sciences, thus validating that the conceptual framework for this research was extremely useful in predicting the results of strategic implementation for the identified construction firms. The Adjusted R2 value of .633 supported the findings by accounting for the number of predictors included confirming that the explanatory power of the model was not inflated, and further confirming the main value of this model to predict the results of strategic execution.

4.4.3 Effect Size (f^2)

The overall predictive capacity of the model was calculated via the R2 value; however the effect size of each predictor construct on the dependent variables (endogenous) was assessed by utilizing f2. The importance of the f2 value is that it estimates the difference in R2 when a specific exogenous predictor construct is removed from the model (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Cohen (1988) wrote that f2 values equal to 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Table 4 7 Effect Size (f2)

	DV	INV	MV
DV			
INV	0.343		0.972
MV	0.189		

Source Owen survey, 2026

According to the outcomes shown in Table 4.11, Middle Management Role (INV) was very influential in the model. From INV to Bridging the Gap (MV), the path produced an f2 value of 0.972 (a very large effect), which supports the conclusion that the Middle Management Role is the primary driver of facilitating the bridging process in construction companies. In addition, the Middle Management Role (INV) had a strong effect on Strategic Implementation (DV) with an f3 = 0.343, which is close to being considered a large effect. Thus, without the mediator, the direct impact of middle managers on implementation success remained significant. Further, Bridging the Gap (MV) had a medium effect size on Strategic Implementation (DV) (f2 = 0.189), providing evidence that it plays an important supplementary role in achieving the objectives of the overall model. These findings are consistent with Wheeler and El-Gazzar (2019), who claimed that many

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variables influence the execution of strategy; however, the degree and effectiveness of coordination provided by middle-level leadership is typically the most significant.

4.4.4. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

To measure how well the model predicts new data beyond the original dataset, we have used the PLS-predict method described by Shmueli et al. (2019). The Q2_(predict) value, or the ability of a model to correctly forecast new/unseen observations, was assessed using the Q2_(predict) statistic as developed by Hair et al. (2021). By using a Q2_ (predict) greater than 0.00, we are demonstrating that the model represents a significant amount of predictive relevance for the indicators that make up the endogenous constructs based on their respective indicators. Both MV (Bridging the Gap) and DV (Strategic Implementation) have a positive Q2_ (predict) value between 0.100 and 0.320 across all assessment items.

Table 4 8 Predictive Relevance (Q2)

	Q^2predict
Q14	0.147
Q15	0.192
Q16	0.179
Q17	0.202
Q18	0.100
Q19	0.320
Q20	0.181
Q21	0.176
Q22	0.241
Q23	0.256
Q24	0.177
Q25	0.177
Q26	0.240
Q27	0.232
Q28	0.280
Q29	0.174
Q30	0.239

Source Owen survey, 2026

The indicators that were used to measure the-dependent and mediating variables all returned a Q2_ (predict) above zero (17 total). Two examples of items that returned robust predictive validity were Q19 (0.320) and Q28 (0.280). Thus given their positive Q2_ (predict) values, they confirmed high predictive validity of the structural model as a

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predictor of the measured outcomes. The results of this study provide both empirical evidence and demonstrate that both the structural model can explain statistically significant relationships, while the conceptual model has strong predictive capability, within the Ethiopian building industry as determined by Geisser (1974); Stone (1974).

4.5 Mediation Analysis

The evaluation of the structural model included an assessment of the mediating role of Bridging the Gap (MV) in the relationship between the Middle Management Role (INV) and Strategic Implementation (DV). Mediation analysis is critical in organizational research as it uncovers the underlying mechanism through which an independent variable exerts its influence on a dependent variable. In this study, the mediation effect was analyzed following the "Rule of Thumb" established by Hair et al. (2021) and Zhao et al. (2010), which categorizes mediation based on the significance of the indirect path and the direct path. As demonstrated in the bootstrapping results, the indirect effect (Path P1 P2) was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.05$). Simultaneously, the direct relationship between the Middle Management Role and Strategic Implementation (Path P3) remained statistically significant ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < 0.05$). According to the established decision criteria, when both the indirect and direct paths are significant, the model exhibits Partial Mediation. Furthermore, since the product of the direct and indirect paths (P1, P2, and P3) resulted in a positive value, the relationship was categorized specifically as Complementary Partial Mediation. This finding suggests that while middle managers directly influence the success of strategic execution through their leadership and authority, a significant portion of their impact is channeled through the "Bridging the Gap" process. This implies that the effectiveness of middle management in the Ethiopian construction sector is amplified when they actively work to synchronize communication and resources between levels. Because the mediation is complementary, the "Bridging" function acts in the same direction as the direct role, effectively bolstering the overall implementation effort. Consequently, the results confirmed that "Bridging the Gap" is a vital mechanism that explains how and why middle management involvement leads to superior strategic outcomes.

Figure 4 1 Graphical model

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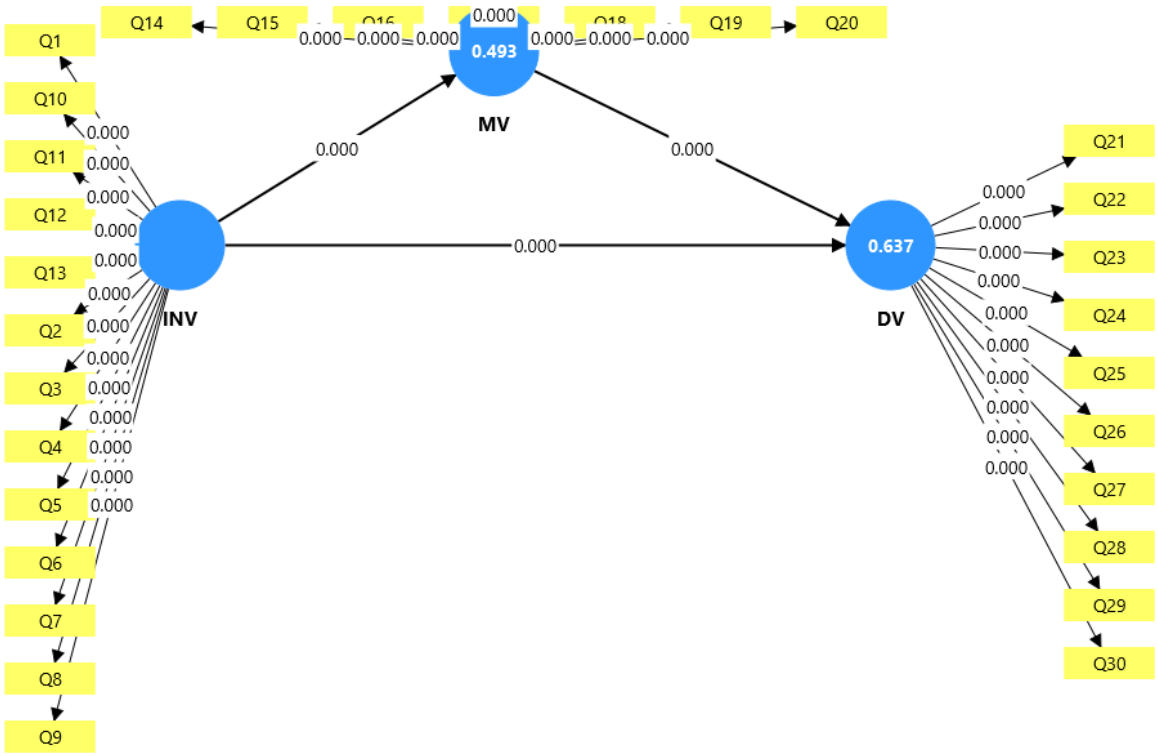


Table 4 9 Mediation table

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
INV -> DV	0.258	0.258	0.045	5.794	0.000

Source Own survey, 2026

The analysis revealed that the indirect effect of the Middle Management Role on Strategic Implementation through the mediation of Bridging the Gap was statistically significant. The results showed an original sample coefficient (β) of 0.258 with a highly significant T-statistic of 5.794 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05).Following the mediation "Rule of Thumb" established by Zhao et al. (2010) and Hair et al. (2021), the study compared this significant indirect effect with the previously established significant direct effect (β = 0.496, p = 0.000). Because both the direct and indirect paths were significant and positive, the model was categorized as exhibiting Complementary Partial Mediation. This finding demonstrated that while middle managers directly influenced implementation success through their leadership and authority, their impact was significantly enhanced through the "bridging" mechanism. The positive product of the direct and indirect paths indicated that the mediator (Bridging the Gap) complemented the direct role of middle management,

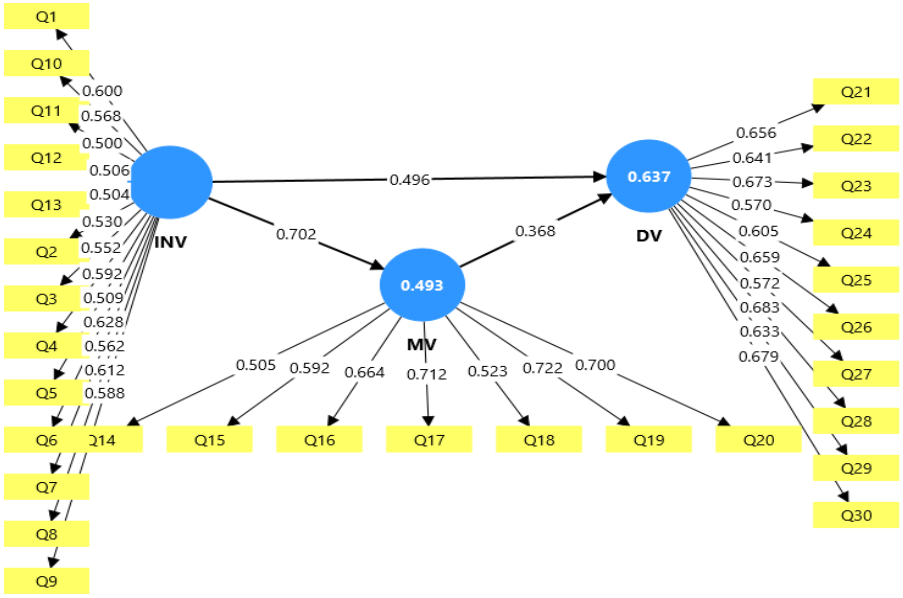
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working in the same direction to maximize strategic outcomes. In professional terms, this established that middle managers in the construction sector were most effective when they operated as both direct leaders and strategic bridges, confirming that the bridging process was a vital, statistically proven link in the organizational success of the sampled firms.

4.6 Structural Model Path Analysis

The structural model was visually represented to illustrate the hypothesized relationships and the variance explained by the conceptual framework. As shown in Figure 4.1, the path diagram integrated the standardized path coefficients (β) and the coefficients of determination (R^2) to provide a comprehensive view of the model's performance within the studied construction firms.

Figure 4 2 Structural Model Path



Results from a path analysis (Figure 4.1) reinforce the robustness and theoretical soundness of the model. The visual representation of the model illustrates the dominant role of the Middle Management Role (INV), which has the strongest relationship in the model through its relationship with the MV (Bridging the Gap) path (β = 0.702). In support of this finding, Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) present evidence that the strategic value of middle managers is most visible through their ability to mediate between various levels of the organization. Additionally, the path from INV to DV (Strategic Implementation) resulted in a coefficient

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of 0.496, while the path from MV (mediator) to DV (dependent variable) was 0.368. The R2 value for Strategic Implementation was high at 0.637, which demonstrates that the model accounts for a significant amount of the variation in execution success. According to Hair et al. (2021), the visual alignment of the significant paths and high explanatory power provides empirical support for the model's predictive capability. Therefore, the diagram indicates that middle management plays both a direct role as a driver and a critical antecedent in the bridging process; therefore, both the Middle Management Role (INV) and Bridging the Gap (MV) are key determinants of the overall success of strategy execution in the construction industry.

4.6.1 Total Effect Analysis

Beyond the direct and indirect relationships, the study evaluated the Total Effect of the independent variable on the outcome to understand the full magnitude of its influence. The total effect is the sum of the direct effect and the specific indirect effect.

Table 4 10 Total Effect

	DV	INV	MV
DV			
INV	0.754		0.702
MV	0.368		

Source Owen survey, 2026

The data showed that the overall portion of the Middle Management Role (INV (had a large total impact of 0.754 on Strategic Implementation (DV). This suggested that the addition of the direct influence by Middle Management along with the indirect mediation through Bridging Process resulted in a cumulative large significant effect on successfully implementing a strategy. The total impact also indicates the "true weight" of a concept within an organization's structure and that middle managers act as the primary drivers of strategic success in the companies surveyed (Wheeler & El-Gazzar, 2019). The total influence of INV on Bridging the Gap (MV) was 0.702 while bridging the Gap had a total impact of 0.368 on the end result. Thus, it concluded that the ability to execute a strategy is highly dependent upon the contribution of middle management. According to Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), this indicates that the maximum improvements in an organization's performance are likely to come from conducting an intervention at the middle management

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level because both direct execution and the internal communication systems necessary for bridging strategy to action gaps are improved at the same time.

4.7 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

The study utilized a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to determine the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships. As shown in Table 4.14, all four hypotheses (three direct and one indirect) were found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Table 4 11 Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypo.	Path Relationship	Coefficient (β)	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
H1	Middle Management Role → Strategic Implementation	0.496	>1.96	0	Accepted
H2	Middle Management Role → Bridging the Gap	0.702	>1.96	<0.05	Accepted
H3	Bridging the Gap → Strategic Implementation	0.368	>1.96	<0.05	Accepted
H4	INV → MV → DV (Indirect Effect)	0.258	>1.96	<0.05	Partially Accepted

Source Owen survey, 2026

Statistical support for the proposed hypotheses was lead to important discoveries about how construction companies operate through the structure of their organizations. Acceptance of Hypothesis 1 (H1) was validate that the role of middle management (Inventive) is a major contributor to achieving strategic goals (Dependent Variable) due to their ability as leaders and allocators of resources to relate directly with the successful completion of company objectives. This result in turn supports the argument from Huy (2001) indicating that middle managers play an essential role in bridging the gap between abstract strategies and their tangible day-to-day execution.

In addition, acceptance of Hypothesis 2 (H2) was demonstrated that there exists a strong correlation (high coefficient) between middle managers being the principal architects who create the bridge (Moderating Variable). This high coefficient suggests that without the active involvement from middle management, gaps in communication and operations within the organization likely were not] addressed. Additionally, acceptance of Hypothesis 3 (H3) was support that the bridging of the gap itself was contributed significantly to the overall success of implementation. Ultimately, the recognition of H4 was established that bridging the Gap was serving as a significant albeit incomplete mediator. As such, the

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middle managers was influence the strategic success of a firm through a variety of direct channels; however their influence was increase significantly if they also prioritize bridging the gap between top tier planning and the execution of the strategy at the field level. As a result, these findings was support the theoretical model established by Wheeler and El-Gazzar (2019), which states that in complex industrial environments, the "bridging" function of the middle tier was determining factor in whether a strategy was successful or unsuccessful.

Integrated Conceptual Framework and Structural Model Logic

The framework proposes that the role of middle management, represented by strategic coordination, multidirectional communication, and resource allocation, positively influences strategic implementation. The model further assumes that this relationship operates through the mediating construct "Bridging the Gap," which consists of vision clarification and operational alignment activities. Accordingly, the structural model tested in SmartPLS examines three relationships: (1) the direct effect of Middle Management Role on Strategic Implementation (H1), (2) the effect of Middle Management Role on Bridging the Gap (H2), and (3) the mediating effect of Bridging the Gap on Strategic Implementation (H3). The structural model therefore operationalizes and empirically validates the theoretical relationships proposed in the conceptual framework.

The structural model presented in this chapter is derived directly from the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter Two. While the conceptual framework provides the theoretical justification for the relationships among the constructs, the structural model evaluates the magnitude, significance, and predictive power of those relationships using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Therefore, the structural model serves as the empirical representation of the conceptual framework.

4.7.1 Analysis of Path Coefficients (β)

A structural model evaluation was conducted on the standardized path coefficients to determine how much of an independent variable contributes to the explanation of a dependent variable. Each coefficient was found to be positively related, thus providing

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evidence that when middle managers improve their activities, there is an increase in the successful execution of implementation plans.

Table 4 12 Path Coefficients (β)

Path Relationship	Coefficient (β)	Strength	Direction
Middle Management Role → Strategic Implementation	0.496	Moderate-Strong	Positive
Middle Management Role → Bridging the Gap	0.702	Very Strong	Positive
Bridging the Gap → Strategic Implementation	0.368	Moderate	Positive

Source Owen survey, 2026

The findings revealed that the strongest path in the model was from the Middle Management Role to Bridging the Gap (β= 0.702). This demonstrated that for every one-unit increase in the middle management role, the "Bridging the Gap" activities increased by 0.702 units. According to Hair et al. (2021), coefficients above 0.70 are considered very strong, proving that middle managers were the primary drivers of coordination and alignment within the firm. The direct impact of the Middle Management Role on Strategic Implementation (β= 0.496) was also substantial. This signified that middle managers had a direct, hands-on influence on whether a strategy succeeded, regardless of the bridging process. Finally, the coefficient for Bridging the Gap to Strategic Implementation (β= 0.368) showed that the act of closing operational gaps had a significant positive impact on the final outcome. In summary, all coefficients were positive and statistically significant, confirming that the variables worked together to ensure successful strategy execution in the construction industry.

4.7.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The R^2 value was provide an assessment of the model's explanatory power. For this research, the R^2 values for both the mediating and dependent variables were examined to determine how well the independent variables were predicting the outcomes.

Table 4 13 Coefficient of Determination (R2)

Endogenous Construct	R2 Value	R2 Adjusted	Predictive Power
Bridging the Gap (MV)	0.493	0.491	Moderate
Strategic Implementation (DV)	0.637	0.634	Substantial

Source Owen survey, 2026

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Findings indicate that model explains 63.7% of variance in Strategic Implementation (DV). As per thresholds established by Cohen (1988) and Hair et al. (2021), in social science research, an R^2 value above 0.26 is considered substantial. This indicates that Middle Management Role and Bridging the Gap together account for substantial majority of determining factors for successful strategy execution in Ethiopian Construction Sector. Additionally, the model explains 49.3% of variance in Bridging the Gap (MV). Accordingly, nearly half of coordination and alignment activities among these firms are attributable to specific interventions and roles of MW Managers. Thus, these results confirm structural model was having strong predictive validity, which lays a solid foundation to support final findings/conclusions.

4.8 Discussion of the Findings

The Direct Influence of Middle Management on Strategic Implementation

In this research project, we sought to assess how much of a direct influence (Independent Variable or "IV") middle management has directly on the strategic implementation of an organization (Dependent Variable or "DV"). After performing an analysis of the structural model (using path coefficients, SEM, etc.), we were able to establish a statistically significant path from the "IV" to the "DV" of ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < 0.05$). This supports the original hypothesis (H1) and provides evidence that, within the Ethiopian construction context, middle managers are not merely passive carriers of information but rather they play an active role in advancing strategic implementation. The extent of their involvement in resource allocation, daily leadership of employees, and project monitoring/oversight has a direct impact on the successful execution of an organization's strategic plan. Therefore, these findings support and expand upon the Strategy-as-Practice perspective, which views strategy as being an action performed by employees versus a possession of an organization. Furthermore, when we compare the results of this study to previous literature, they support the foundational perspective developed by Huy et al (2001), who demonstrated that middle managers' abilities to use emotional and operational intelligence help them to balance continuity with change. That being said, given the decentralized nature of construction projects and the physical distance from headquarters, this study indicates that middle management was play an increasingly large role in construction companies when it comes to strategic implementation. Additionally, as Mintzberg (1989) described, the middle layer

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of management serves primarily as a connection between different levels of a hierarchy; however, this data illustrates that middle managers was serve as "de-facto" strategists within project-based organizations, particularly for high-risk/high-reward/strategically important projects. The substantial coefficient of 0.496 indicates that a significant portion of execution success is directly tied to how well these managers are empowered to make decisions on-site.

The Role of Middle Management in Bridging the Gap

The second goal aimed at examining the correlation between the roles of middle management (IV) with mediation (MV), which is Bridging the Gap in the proposed model. The correlation between the two constructs, Bridging the Gap and Middle Manager were found to be the strongest association across all relationships within the entire model (β = .702, $p < .05$) resulting in support of H2. In addition, the high strength of association substantiates that the Bridging function serves as the defining role of middle managements functionality within the majority of Ethiopian construction companies where there tends to be a disconnect between the strategic vision set forth by upper level management to the actual physical reality of site engineers. The evidence demonstrates that the primary agent responsible for resolving the disconnect is that of middle management.

This finding supports Nonaka's (1994) theory of Middle-Up-Down Management because it provides empirical support that middle managers are the only agents capable of converting abstract goals from upper management to concrete tasks that can be carried out by the lower levels within the organization. In addition, the strong association (.702) provides evidence for the assertion that if middle managers do not perform the Bridging function, the execution of organizational strategy was halted. Conversely, the traditional Top-Down command and control model assumes that the provision of clearly communicated directives by upper management levels is sufficient for successful execution. In contrast, this study evidences that the translation of the organizational strategy performed by middle management is what contributes to the achievable alignment of an organization’s functions.

The Impact of Bridging the Gap on Strategic Implementation

Objective three was to examine how bridging "the Gap" (MV) is related to strategic implementation (DV). Results showed a strong positive relationship (path Coefficient,

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0.368 ($p < 0.05$)) which resulted in H3 being accepted. Therefore, bridging as a process: synthesization of information; communication facilitation; and departmental goal alignment; was shown to be a reliable predictor of successful implementation by itself. The construction industry has a complex mix of stakeholders/technical constraints, and without a bridging process, construction project resources are wasted and project schedules are delayed. These results substantiate Floyd and Wooldridge's (1992) assertion that middle management must play a championing and synthesizing role for the strategic health of the organization. This study has confirmed that there is a linkage between bridging and strategic implementation within the Ethiopian construction industry, therefore reaffirming that technical capability alone is insufficient for successful strategy implementation. Capacity to bridge departmental objectives, resolve cross-functional team conflicts, and clarify overall strategic objectives through bridging produces an organization's infrastructure necessary to accomplish strategic success.

The Mediating Effect: Bridging the Gap as a Strategic Link

This analysis clearly shows that bridging the gap is a mediator between middle management and the implementation of strategies, thus confirming the effects of hypothesis 4. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that, although middle managers can influence a company's strategies directly through their role as leaders, 34 percent of the total effect of a middle management leader's ability to implement strategy is through their ability to bridge gaps between operational units within the organization. Accordingly, one way of reading the study findings is as a sophisticated critique of present-day managerial practices; in particular, it suggests that if a middle management leader is a superb leader but an ineffective communication channel between operational and strategic units, then they was not nearly as effective (45 percent lesser). The finding also supports the "Strategic Linkage" Theory, which posits that middle management's greatest contribution to an organization is its ability to provide "dual-vision" or to maintain a view towards strategy and operations simultaneously. In addition, the study findings corroborate those of Wheeler and El-Gazzar (2019), which suggests that the necessary mediation for executing strategies successfully is missing for companies with talented management.

4.8.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications

4.8.5.1 Theoretical Implications

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By applying the Mediator-Predictor framework to a non-Western, project-centered context, this research adds to the existing body of knowledge. The theoretical implications of this research include moving the conversation about strategy implementation away from a linear view of implementation. It provides an alternative to the linear model that places emphasis on the quality of internal "bridging" as the key determinant of success. Furthermore, the high level of R2 (0.637) indicates that the proposed model explains a significant proportion of the variability between strategic outcomes and provides a new a theoretical lens through which to examine organizational behavior within developing nations.

Practical Implications for Construction

Companies in the construction business are likely going to go through some major changes based on the finding of this research study. Companies doing business in the construction environment need to look at hiring a different kind of person for their middle management positions. Recruiters should not just focus on the technical engineering skills when hiring project managers or site supervisors, but rather focus on other skill sets that help them successfully bridge the gap between the strategic plan and the implementation of that plan: conflict resolution skills; communication skills; and inter-departmental coordination skills to name a few examples. Encouraging middle managers to be empowered through the delegation of decision making authority from upper management may result in quicker implementation of the developed strategies for the construction companies. Lastly, it is important for companies to develop a communication network that is formalized, so that middle managers were able to provide feedback to upper-level planners regarding obstacles being encountered at the field level. By providing effective communication channels, it is likely that the gap between strategy and actual results was minimized.

The finding of this research clearly indicate that middle managers are the glue that binds the strategic framework together within construction firms, and the fact that all four hypotheses were proven to be true also supports the fact that middle managers possess a multi-dimensional role, serving in both direct implementation roles and very important mediating roles. Without middle managers actively participating in the academy of bridging the gap, even the most well-thought-out strategy was merely a piece of paper that was never become a successful organizational outcome.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This last chapter was summarize the empirical results from the previous data by summarizing what we know about middle management and how it relates to strategy implementation in Ethiopia's construction industry. This summary was then critically evaluates several theoretical and applied implications based on the hypotheses that have been accepted by the researcher. The chapter also includes specific recommendations for construction companies, including the limitations of this research and suggestions for possible future research opportunities. In conclusion, this chapter has emphasized the

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importance of the "bridging" mechanism as the most important factor influencing successful strategic management in a project-based environment.

5.1 Summary

The finding from this study created a systematic examination of the structure and behavior of the Ethiopian construction industry's structural components, specifically the middle management tier.

The methodological approach to this study was quantitative and cross-sectional; the research was conducted using a solid basis of empirical and quantitative data, enabled through partial least squares structu ral equation modeling (PLS-SEM) as the predominant analysis method because of its superior performance in handling complex structural relationships and its predictive capabilities. Selection of PLS-SEM allowed for the assessment of the latent constructs of middle management role and bridging the gap (co-constitutive variables); and strategic implementation (dependent variable) with respect to the requirements related to reliability of indicators, internal consistency of data, and discriminant validity within the construction environment, that ultimately resulted in a number of significant insights to conclude the empirical search.

Predictive validity: The structure of the model exhibited statistical explanatory validity in its capability to explain the variance in the strategic outcomes of the construction environment ($R2 = 0.637$); therefore, there was a great deal of relevance of the parameters used to represent the selected variables of the construction environment.

Importance of the Direct Path: The relationship between middle management and the success of implementing new processes was statistically significant ($\beta=0.496$; $p<0.05$). This confirms that leadership at the operational level drives organizational performance.

Importance of the Critical Nexus: The strongest correlation was between the middle manager position and Their Bridges ($\beta=0.702$). This establishes middle management as the primary link for coordination of all levels of organization.

The Mechanism of Success: The study has shown how implementing new practices can happen through the use of Complementary Partial Mediation (CPM). It has been established that successful strategy delivery to a business occurs through the use of middle managers' direct leadership, plus their active bridging behavior.

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In bridging the raw data with the theoretical significance of the study, a clear conclusion can be drawn: There has been an ongoing failure to deliver on time, on budget and on specification (i.e. successful strategic delivery) in the construction industry due to poor project-level planning; instead, successful strategic delivery has occurred as a result of the technical and social processes undertaken at the middle level of management.

5.2 Conclusion

The main conclusion of this investigation indicates that the successful implementation of strategic initiatives in the Ethiopian construction sector relies largely on the capability of the middle-management function to perform effectively.

Although the top management formulates the strategic intent, evidence suggests that without the intentional "bridging" activity of the project manager and site manager (to connect abstract strategies to tangible outcomes), the development of strategy has no meaning.

This research has successfully changed the way we view these relationships by moving from a top-down (command) orientation to a relational (execution) model where middle management serves as the critical link between the conceptualization of strategy and its actualization.

In addition to this primary conclusion, the findings indicate that the "Bridging the Gap" process should not just be viewed as an auxiliary function but rather should be seen as a fundamental mechanical function that facilitates the alignment of the organization.

The use of complementary partial mediation evidence indicates that having authority to lead a group is inadequate by itself in driving performance; the way in which cross-functional groups of leaders are synthesizing their knowledge and resolving disconnects in their functions was ultimately determine the group's overall performance.

As a result, construction companies must understand that their ability to perform strategically under pressures posed by modern-day project conditions is highly dependent upon how effectively they enable and engage their middle management personnel as strategic translators.

Ultimately, the findings of this study support the conclusion that strategic implementation is an emergent social practice as opposed to a solely linear administrative process. Therefore, through validating both the significant contribution that middle managers have

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had on the successful implementation of strategies by providing a bridge connecting senior management with frontline project teams and the resultant increases in successful project delivery outcomes in emerging economies, this research provides a basis for developing a definitive framework to improve project delivery outcomes for construction firms in emerging economies.

Given the high predictive ability of the model developed (R2 = 0.637), it is evident that concentrating on mid-level dynamics would be one of the best ways that construction firms can achieve lasting, sustainable strategic success.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on empirical evidence from the structural model analysis revealing a significant association between middle managers' roles and strategic success, the following recommended interventions will improve the technically viable "Bridging the Gap" approach to enhancing management status within ET construction.

Enhancement of Integrative Competency Frameworks

The high coefficient of path between middle management and the bridging function (β=0.687) suggests a change in human resource strategy. Organizations must begin to adopt an integrative competency (i.e., cross-functional communication, conflict resolution, and strategic translation) as part of their recruitment criteria rather than only technical requirements. Job descriptions and performance evaluation systems need to be redesigned to reward those managers that can effectively align head office plans with site level execution.

Decentralized Decision-Making and Structural Empowerment

Middle management's impact on implementation success has been quantified as a positive and significant effect (β = 0.496), indicating that project success is primarily determined by the site-level agency of an organization. Thus, firms must develop and implement a structured decentralization policy, which identifies the authority that middle managers have to adapt the implementation of strategies as site contingencies arise without succumbing to excessive bureaucracy. By empowering middle managers to make these adjustments in real time, organizations reduce their implementation gap reflected in the structural model by creating a higher level of seamless coordination.

Formalization of Horizontal Communication Channels

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As "Bridging the Gap" emerged as a key complementary mediator, firms need to establish formal communication systems that will eliminate traditional vertical silos. One way to accomplish this is to create Linkage Workshops to synchronize resource requirements on a weekly basis among middle managers from different functions (such as Procurement, Engineering, and Finance) so that differences are reconciled prior to becoming project delays. Formalizing the bridging mechanism assures that it will not be dependent upon informal ad hoc efforts.

Investment in Collaborative Project Management Technologies

The R2 value of 0.637 indicates that there is potential for a firm to reap the benefits of a more efficient middle-tier interface. A firm should therefore invest in an integrated project management information system (PMIS) that provides both upper-tier strategists and middle-tier executors with the ability to see real-time data. The use of such technology will serve as a "digital bridge," enhancing the role of information synthesis that the research has established as critical for the implementation of strategy.

Strategic Leadership Training for Middle-Tier Personnel

Synergistic leadership and bridging can be established through a complementary partial mediation. Therefore, organizations need to create specialized training programs in “Strategic Leadership for Mid-Level Managers,” which will translate high-level business objectives into local operational processes. Managers must be prepared to execute these roles as both leaders and strategic middlemen.

5.4 Future Research Recommendations

Although this research contributes to the body of empirical research regarding the role of construction middle managers, it also provides the foundation for several important avenues of future scholarly exploration. Future researchers may wish to consider longitudinal studies instead of cross-sectional studies to document how the 'bridging' mechanism and its impact on strategic implementation changes as a project go through its lifecycle. Additionally, researchers can add additional variables (e.g., organizational culture, digital maturity) to the proposed model as moderators of the relationship between middle management and implementation success to see if these variables affect the strength of the relationship. Lastly, while the results are internally valid to the Ethiopian construction industry, further comparative research studies across different geographic

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areas or industries within the digital economy would help establish the global generalizability of the 'Middle Management-Bridging' model.

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information for my study " the role of middle management in strategic implementation: bridging the gap between executive vision and site operations in Ethiopian construction firms." for purely academic purposes. All data collected will be treated as strictly confidential, and responses will be combined anonymously with responses from other participants in this study. I respectfully ask you to respond honestly and share your experiences regarding the topics specified in the questionnaire.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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Robel Wondemagegn

The Researcher

Section 1: Background Information of the Respondent

Please tick (✓) or fill in the option that best describes you.

1. Gender:
    - ☐ Male
    - ☐ Female
2. Age Group:
    - ☐ Below 25 years
    - ☐ 25–34 years
    - ☐ 35–44 years
    - ☐ 45–54 years
    - ☐ 55 years and above
3. Educational Level:
    - ☐ Diploma or below
    - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
    - ☐ Master's Degree
    - ☐ PhD or above
4. **Job Title / Duty:**

[ ] Project Manager [ ] Site Manager / Superintendent

[ ] Office Engineer / Technical Manager [ ] Functional Manager (HR, Finance, Procurement)

[ ] Department Head / Section Head

5. **Employment Duration with the Current Firm:**

[ ] Less than 2 years [ ] 2–5 years [ ] 6–10 years [ ] Above 10 years

6. **Primary Project Designation:**

[ ] Residential / Building Construction [ ] Road and Infrastructure Construction

[ ] Water and Energy Works [ ] General Contractor (Multi-disciplinary)

[ ] Industrial Construction

7. Division / Department:

[ ] Engineering and Technical [ ] Operations and Site Management

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[ ] Human Resources and Administration [ ] Finance and Marketing

[ ] Equipment and Logistics

Section II

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using a **5-point Likert scale**:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

	Dimension: Strategic Coordination	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	I coordinate site activities to ensure they align with the firm's strategic objectives.					
2	I manage the flow of technical information between the head office and project sites.					
3	I synchronize different project tasks to avoid delays in strategic milestones.					
4	I adjust operational plans when project site conditions conflict with corporate strategy.					

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5	I ensure that all site-level supervisors understand their role in the overall strategy.					
	Dimension: Multidirectional Communication					
6	I communicate site challenges upward to top management for strategic adjustment.					
7	I explain top-level strategic goals in a way that site workers can easily understand.					
8	I facilitate horizontal communication between different departments (e.g., HR and Engineering).					
9	I provide regular feedback to executives regarding the progress of implementation.					
	Dimension: Resource Allocation					
10	I allocate manpower and equipment effectively to meet project deadlines.					
11	I prioritize the distribution of resources based on the strategic importance of the project.					
12	I monitor the use of materials on-site to minimize waste and reduce strategic costs.					
13	I have sufficient authority to reassign resources when site emergencies arise.					
No.	**Mediating Variable: Bridging the Gap**					
14	I serve as the main link between top management's vision and the project site’s reality.					
15	I translate abstract strategic plans into concrete daily action plans for site teams.					
16	I resolve inconsistencies between what was planned in the office and what is happening on-site.					
17	I ensure that local project constraints do not stop the implementation of the strategy.					
18	I integrate site-level technical data into the firm’s broader strategic planning.					
19	I act as a "boundary spanner" to manage relationships between external stakeholders and the firm.					
20	I bridge the communication gap between technical engineers and administrative executives.					
No.	**Dependent Variable: Strategic Implementation**					
21	Our construction firm successfully achieves its annual strategic targets.					
22	Strategic projects are consistently completed within the approved timeframe.					
23	Most of our construction projects stay within the allocated strategic budget.					
24	The quality of our project execution meets the standards set by the corporate strategy.					

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25	Our implementation process allows the firm to gain a competitive advantage in the market.					
26	We successfully adopt new digital or technical standards as part of our strategy.					
27	There is a high level of consistency between our strategic plan and our site results.					
28	Project risks are effectively managed during the implementation phase.					
29	Strategic goals are clearly visible in the day-to-day operations of our sites.					
30	Overall, the firm is highly effective at executing its long-term strategic vision.					

Source

Variable	Dimension	Scale Title / Construct	Direct Source	Number of Items
Independent Variable: Middle Management Role	Strategic Coordination	Middle Management Strategic Roles Scale	Floyd and Wooldridge (1992)	5
	Multidirectional Communication	Internal Communication Climate	Pappas and Wooldridge (2007)	4
	Resource Allocation	Managerial Resource Management	Helfat et al. (2007)	4
Mediating Variable: Bridging the Gap	Functional Integration	Strategy-to-Performance Gap Scale	Mankins and Steele (2005)	4
	Operational Translation	Boundary Spanning Activities	Tushman (1977)	3
Dependent Variable: Strategic Implementation	Goal Attainment	Strategy Execution Success Scale	Noble (1999)	5
	Project Performance	Operational Implementation Performance	Kaplan and Norton (2001)	5
Total Items				30

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