

SUCCESS AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANS IMPLEMENTATION ON PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE GAMBIA

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Abstract: *The study investigated strategic planning practices for public service delivery (PSD) in The Gambia, and examined the effectiveness of perceived strategic plans implementation impact on PSD in the study area. This study revealed that strategic plans implementation in public service organisations (PSOs) was remarkably effective, and had positive impact on public service delivery. The study showed that there was an established nexus between strategic plan implementation and public service delivery in the area under review. The findings indicated that strategic planning and implementation played a significant role for PSD in The Gambia. Simple linear regression analysis indicated significant relationship between strategic plans implementation in PSOs and PSD in the country. The findings of the survey objectives concluded that the strategic plans implementation in public service organisations had significant impact on public service delivery in The Gambia since $R = .614 > 0$, $R^2 = .377$, $F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$. Specific policy and general recommendations were proffered to assist public service organisations in achieving the objectives of public service delivery, and to increase the impact of strategic plans implementation on public service delivery at the national level.*

Keywords: *strategy, management, planning, plan, public, organisation, and service delivery.*

Introduction

Global business environment has become very intricate, and so are public service delivery and organisations. To successfully compete in the dynamic and competitive environment, public service organisations (PSOs) must continuously improve its public service delivery through strategic planning and strategic management. Strategic management is a process that determines an organisation's mission, vision and mandate. It analyses the opportunities and threats that exist in the external environment; analyses the strengths and weaknesses within the organisation, and manages the strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation to create sustained value in order to accomplish organisational goals and objectives (Bryson, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; and Kabeyi, 2019). Similarly, Bryson and George (2020) stated that "strategic management is an approach to strategising by public organisations or other entities which integrates strategy formulation and implementation, and typically includes strategic planning to formulate strategies, ways of implementing strategies, and continuous strategic learning". Strategic management equally describes strategies and challenges, and allocates resources to critical organisational issues with a view to improving service delivery, and achieving corporate objectives (Bryson,

2011). Public service delivery refers to “the provision of social or public goods that will promote socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens” (Boris, 2015).

Considering the interaction of competitive forces, efficient and effective strategic plans are becoming increasingly essential in coping with contemporary managerial challenges of the Gambian public service organisations. Such challenges include inadequate capacity, inadequate financial resources, staff attrition, difficulty in recruitment, and governance issues. Added to that, low salaries (remuneration), political interference, lack of top management commitment, inadequate strategic management professionals and expertise, insufficient budgetary allocations, and undesirable employee behaviour among others face strategic plans implementation in the Gambian public service.

Across the globe, public service organisations have worked diligently to improve performance in the delivery of public services in recent times. Most developed nations now focus on the public service sector by deploying strategic management and performance indicators especially during a period of economic crisis. Consequently, strategic management has become a widely accepted benchmark or methods of modernising public policy-making and governance globally. They are significant tools in governance for effective public service delivery in public service organisations and their uses. Furthermore, many governments have made efforts within the public service sector by changing the mode of management, taking into consideration the need for transparency and accountability. This is because the public remains the main engine for development (Hughes, 2010; Chemengich, 2013). Thus, most nations have introduced strategic changes that result in good performance in public service delivery.

Most states of Africa – The Gambia inclusive – no doubt inherited and continued the governance systems bequeathed by the former colonisers. In The Gambia, service delivery in the public sector, and public administration system after colonialism were premised on the skills and knowledge that the colonial masters bequeathed. Strategic management is a major tool utilised by the Gambian Government in managing and governing PSOs for the provision of public services in The Gambia. To this end, Part III, Sections 11 (1 and 2) and 12 (1 and 2) of the Public Enterprise Act, 1990 stipulated that government agencies and public enterprises should have approved strategic plans.

However, in spite of the constitutional requirements for public organisations to have strategic plans, some PSOs have either not formulated or reviewed their strategic plans within the required period. In addition, some PSOs have failed to submit their strategic plans to the National Assembly, and others do not have strategic plans. It is important to note that the formulation and implementation of strategic plans help measure the achievement of the organisation’s mandates, mission, vision, and objectives. Research findings showed a significant connection between strategic planning and improvement in organisational performance (Ijewereme, 2018; Elliott, Day, & Lichtenstein, 2019).

Several reforms (“Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (1980s)”, “Administrative Reform (1987)”, “Civil Service Reform Strategy (2007-2011)”, “Public Financial Management (PFM) Reform Strategy (2010-2014)”, and “Civil Service Reform Strategy Programme (2012-2015)”) among others have taken place within the Gambian public sector. This resulted from growing awareness on the significance of quality service delivery within the public sector. The dwindling nature of public service delivery in The Gambia during the period of study was due largely to the traditional paradigm of centralised government, decision-making, management, and governance. This study focused on

strategic plans implementation success and the effectiveness of its impact on public service delivery in The Gambia. The formulation of national socio-economic development strategy i.e., Vision 2020 in 1996 necessitated strategic planning for several PSOs in the country. Consequently, the study covered PSOs that are constitutionally recognised and have produced the requisite strategic plans. PSOs that did not produce strategic plans as required by the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia were not included in this study. The research questions that this study sought to answer are: Did PSOs achieve any success in their strategic plans implementation in PSD? What is the perceived impact of strategic plan implementation on public service delivery in The Gambia? Consequently, the paper attempted to answer these questions by assessing strategic plans implementation success and its perceived impact on public service delivery in The Gambia.

Conceptual Review

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning has been used extensively in different public and private service sector, or organisations the world over (e.g., governments, local governments, non-governmental organisations, and civil society organisations, private companies, associations, foundations, societies, schools and universities). Heymann (1987: xiii) asserted that the politics of managing a government agency “requires developing a coherent, defensible strategy for the organisation”. Thus, strategic planning does not only chart future plans, but tries to systematically provide directions and pathways to operational management, as well as equates the formulation and achievement of corporate goals (Bryson, 2011; Thorpe & Thorpe, 2012; Hoefer & Chigbu, 2013). Strategic planning could help organisations achieve set objectives or targets, and become more efficient and effective. Bryson, Edwards and Van Slyke (2017) argued that in order to realise the benefits of strategic planning in the public sector, certain concepts, procedures, tools, and practices must be thoughtfully utilised and contingently, in specific situations. Strategic planning advocates affirmed that strategic planning could help organisations think, act, and learn strategically; make improved decisions; and enhance performance in organisations (Feldman, Khademian, Ingram, & Schneider, 2006; Bryson, Crosby & Bryson, 2009; and Tama, 2017). Giraudou and McLaren (2014: 9) underscored that “the publication of strategic plans and annual performance reports provides transparency of government’s operations to the public and organisation’s stakeholders. This transparency leads to increased quality decisions and promote the leadership capacities of institution management”.

Empirical evidences showed that strategic planning could be beneficial to organisations by producing the desired results (Bryson *et al.*, 2017; Sawaneh, 2021a, 2021b). Several studies like Poister and Streib (2005); Ugboro, Obeng and Spann (2010); Elbanna, *et al.* (2015); and Elliott *et al.* (2019) suggested that strategic planning in public organisations had significant effect on performance, i.e., there is a positive connection between strategic planning and performance. Furthermore, meta-analysis of Walker and Andrews (2015) found a positive link between planning processes generally and performance in, mostly US and UK, local governments. The study of Tama (2017) showed that “strategic planning can help leaders and organisations make good decisions, operate more effectively and efficiently, focus on and institutionalise priorities, prepare for contingencies and crises, innovate, provide personnel with a sense of purpose, and serve the public well”. Related studies attested to the fact that applying strategic plan to budget, and in driving the overall

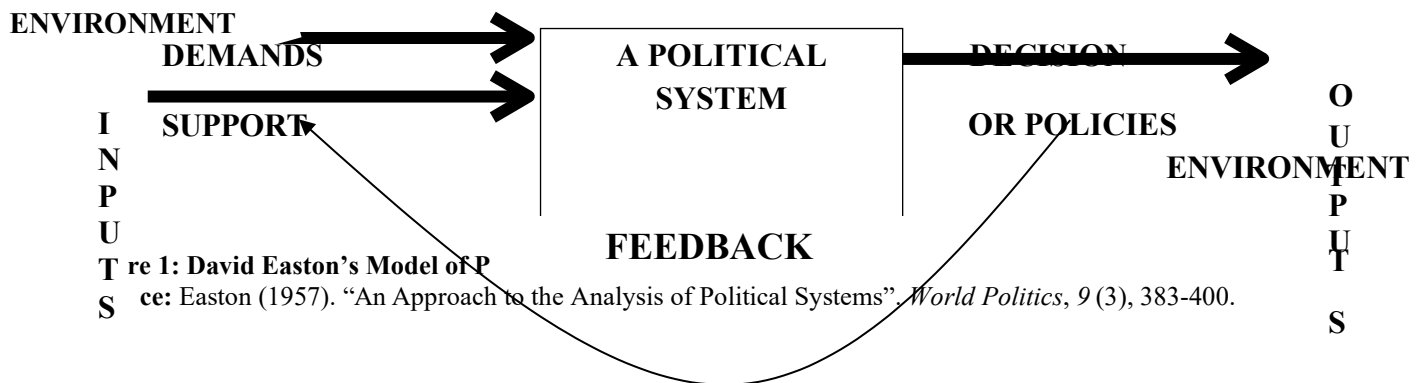
performance management system (Poister & Streib, 2005; and utilising performance measures to monitor progress of strategic initiatives (Hendrick, 2003; Poister & Streib, 2005; Androniceanu, 2017) lead to improved outcomes (Poister *et al.*, 2010). To realise beneficial outcomes of strategic planning, public managers should drive strategic planning through budgeting, measurement, and performance management process (Poister & Streib, 2005; and Leskaj, 2017). A carefully-formulated strategic plan could increase profitability and enhance corporate governance (Kabeyi, 2019). The study of Taiwo and Idunnu (2007) established that strategic planning encourages healthier organisational performance, which in turn (in the long-term) impacts on organisation survival and that managerial, environmental and organisational factors define the strength of strategic planning. They also established a positive relationship between strategic planning, and the survival of an organisation. The objective of this paper is to examine the impact of strategic plans implementation on public service delivery in The Gambia.

Theoretical Review

The study is premised on Easton's (1953, 1957) systems theory in political science. Systems theory originated from biology, and was later popularised by social scientists. The German biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy was the pioneer of the general systems theory (GST) in the 1930s, from which the social scientists developed and created the concept of systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1956, 1962). Bertalanffy (1968) emphasised the importance of viewing systems as a whole, as science had attempted describing observable phenomena by allowing the elementary units to interact. In connection with the human society, a political system comprises various subgroups with various roles and is a collection of these functions that uphold the entire system functionality (Olaniyi, 1995). David Easton's systems theory are categorised into two: those who govern and those that are governed. In analysing political systems, Easton (1957) tried to establish the link between outputs and ensuring inputs of the system. The political system procures inputs from society comprising requests for particular policies and communication of support for the regime and translates into output commanding policies and decisions (Easton, 1953).

The outputs from the system are given as feedback to societies in order to influence the next circle of outputs (Olaniyi, 1998). Outputs are what the governments do or the service they deliver. The extent of success of government's policy is examined through feedback. Thus, policy choice cannot be taken for granted, it must be proved, and to ensure maximum performance (Olaniyi, 1998). Easton (1957) argued that a political system or an organisation is persistently exposed to challenges from its environment and this is essential to its survival. He asserts that the political system and its environment are connected by input-output connection (Easton, 1957). Easton (1965b) contended that the political system itself is perceived as a change procedure, whose task is to translate inputs into outputs and thus assure the existence of the system. The input-output relationship between the political system and its environment is abridged in the following ways. The political system has two main types of inputs: demands and supports. These inputs deliver the raw material or pieces of information the system is to process and the energy that ensures its running. Demands originate from the fact that shortage exists in all societies in relation to most of the things that men need/want or value (Easton, 1965b). Human needs turn out to be demands – and consequently inputs of the political system – when people or groups express a proposal that

the authorities must decide on. The inputs of supports allow the political system to do its job of meeting demands. Supportive behaviour could comprise either open actions or attitudes that influence a person to act in line with the political system (Easton, 1965b). Easton (1965b) asserted that there are three main “political objects” in a system: the authorities, the regime, and the political community. Systems try to uphold a stable flow of support and get the required energy that translates demands to decisions in two primary ways: through outputs that meet the citizens’ needs and political socialisation. Easton (1965b) maintained that outputs of a political system are characterised by decisions and actions of implementation that distribute goods or services in an authoritative manner. He argued that the political system is subject to influences from surrounding its adoption within a typical political life, these inputs are regarded as raw materials, and influences that alter, and destroy the political system (Easton, 1957). Easton (1957) referred to those influences that cause change in the way a system works as “disturbances”. He asserted that disturbances are “stressful” if they stop the system from performing in ways needed to maintain itself. Turbulences that are stressful are conveyed to the political system by variations in the input of demands or supports (Easton, 1957). Ordinarily, pressure occurs when the influx of demands turns too hefty or when inflow of support turns too light. Extreme demands or inadequate supports can threaten those primary roles as important variables on which the life of the political system is contingent, such as allocating goods and/or services for the society and persuading members to accept these provisions as obligatory (Easton, 1965a, 1965b). The result of much demand is “output failure”, i.e., the system’s inability to produce adequate outputs to maintain the required support of the politically important members (Easton, 1965a, 1965b; Omoleke, 2008). Figure 1 depicts Easton’s model of political system as explained in the preceding paragraphs.



Methodology

Research Design

This study employed “cross-sectional survey research design” in examining strategic plans implementation and public service delivery in The Gambia. It involved the selection of a sample of respondents and a systematic collection, presentation and analysis of data on strategic plans implementation success and its perceived impact on public service delivery in the country. The study collected data through the administration of questionnaire on the subject under investigation. Survey research enabled the researcher to examine both independent and dependent variables without attempting to manipulate or control the

respondents. It also allowed the researcher to assess variety of behaviours and other phenomena in a naturalistic setting. The study used questionnaire method for data collection and analysis, which covered quantitative inquiries. Primary data were collected through administration of questionnaire and policy documents. Based on the list of staff obtained from each organisation (2019), a sample frame (1208) was created and comprised senior public servants (grades 8 and above) in five (5) randomly selected public service organisations (PSOs) in The Gambia namely: Gambia Competition & Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC) (21), Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) (200), National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) (500), Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) (32), and University of The Gambia (UTG) (305). The five (5) PSOs that were randomly chosen had up-to-date strategic plans and relevant policy documents. The senior public servants were selected because they were responsible for strategic plans formulation and implementation, and their roles, proficiency and experience in strategic planning, implementation and public service delivery issues. A sample size of 211 senior public service respondents, representing 20% of the sample frame were randomly selected for the administration of first set of questionnaire using probability proportional-to-size sampling technique. The distribution were as follows: GCCPC (4), GRA (40), NAWEC (100), PURA (6), and UTG (61). Convenient sampling was used to select 30 beneficiaries (consumers) for each of the five (5) PSOs, totalling 150 respondents for the administration of the second set of questionnaire. Consequently, two (2) sets of questionnaires were used for the study. The first set was administered on senior public servants in PSOs, while the second set of questionnaire was administered on the beneficiaries of public services such as water and electricity users, telecommunication subscribers, tax payers, students, entrepreneurs and companies, etc. The selection of the beneficiaries was based on their roles as end-users of public services and experience in dealing with the selected PSOs in public service delivery. Secondary data were obtained from policy documents, strategic plans, journal articles and textbooks, and the Internet. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study adopted multi-stage sampling procedures in selecting a sample from the study population (1208). At the first stage, random sampling was used to select five (5) PSOs out of the seventy (70) public organisations (PAC/PEC Report, 2016). The five PSOs that were chosen produced up-to-date strategic plans and related policy documents. At the second stage, a sample frame for senior public servants was created and probability proportional-to-size sampling technique was applied to the sample frame to determine the sample size. This sampling technique was used to select senior public servants on grades 8-12 and above in the selected PSOs for questionnaire administration. Thus, the total sample size for this study was 361 and was determined. This sampling technique was used to ensure adequate representation of the PSOs irrespective of their population. With this, each PSO received copies of questionnaire corresponding to its size within the study population. The senior public servants of PSOs were selected for questionnaire administration because they were responsible for the formulation and implementation of strategic plans, related-policies as well as their roles, proficiency and experiences in strategic planning, implementation and public service delivery issues in the sampled PSOs.

At the third stage, convenient sampling was used to select 30 beneficiaries of public services for each PSO (total of 150 beneficiaries for the 5 PSOs). Convenient sampling was used to select beneficiaries (consumers) of public service because the researcher could not obtain a list containing the number of beneficiaries (consumers) from each PSO, which was one of the limitations of this study. The selection of beneficiaries of public services was based on their role as end-users of public services and experience in public service delivery issues of the selected PSOs. Hence, the study administered a total of 361 copies of questionnaire to the selected respondents from PSOs and beneficiaries. The target respondents for the study comprised stakeholders of PSOs such as Directors, Senior Managers, Senior Public Servants, and relevant beneficiaries (consumers) of the selected PSO. Senior public servants were selected based on their roles, proficiency and experience in strategic planning, implementation and public service delivery issues, while convenient sampling was used to select beneficiaries (consumers) for each PSO. The study addressed the beneficiaries (consumers) of public services directly as representatives of the interests of the Gambian citizenry. The number of senior public service respondents that were randomly selected from each PSO for questionnaire administration was as follows: GCCPC (4), GRA (40), NAWEC (100), PURA (6), and UTG (61). The total number of beneficiaries that were conveniently selected for questionnaire administration was 150.

Measurement of Variables

The independent variable of this study was strategic plans implementation and the dependent variable was public service delivery. These variables were investigated to accomplish two objectives of the study. To accomplish the objectives of the study, assertions were set under each objective utilising Likert rating scales as measurement of variables. Questionnaire was administered to categories of respondents in PSOs in the study areas. These types of measurements of variables produced categorical responses required to achieve the specific objectives of the study. The measurement of variables in this study was based on five-point Likert scale to elicit answers from respondents. The Likert scales that were used in the study were as follows:

For degrees of success: 5 = Excellent (E); 4 = Very Good (VG); 3 = Satisfactory (S); 2 = Fair (F); 1 = Poor (P). For degrees of effectiveness: 5 = Very Effective (VE); 4 = Effective (E); 3 = Not Sure (NS); 2 = Ineffective (I); 1 = Very Ineffective (VI). The Likert scales really helped in measuring the intensity of responses. Consequently, these quantitative responses were analysed utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Validation and Reliability of Instruments

Content validity of the questionnaire and interview guide was face-validated by experts in measurement and evaluation to ensure that test items like the opinions of the subjects on content, language use, and clarity cover all the essential areas and objectives of the study. Experts in the discipline of public administration and social sciences carefully scrutinised and modified the questionnaire and interview guide to ensure the questions were clear, and relevant, and adequately covered the required domains for the variables under study. The responses to the interview guide were also checked against other sources of data such as published documents, textbooks, and journal articles. For the survey method, the researcher adapted some instruments of structured survey questionnaire (Elbanna, 2013; and Elbanna, Andrews & Pollanen, 2015) that addressed issues of strategic planning and

implementation. Subsequently, the researcher contacted, trained and contracted a research assistant from the School of Business and Public Administration of University of The Gambia to assist in the administration of questionnaire. Finally, the researcher and research assistant administered the questionnaire on the targeted respondents in The Gambia.

In addition, reliability measures the extent to which the research instruments seem capable of gathering real responses on the subject matter under investigation. Consequently, the researcher conducted a preliminary study to pre-test the questionnaire by administering it on a subset of the study population. The consistency of responses to the questionnaire ensured the reliability of the instruments. To this end, the reliability of the instruments was derived from the result of test and re-test to find the reliability co-efficient between the results of the test and re-test.

However, internal consistency technique was used to estimate the reliability of measurement scales for this study; and for this purpose, Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicator was used. For this study, Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.8$ which could be interpreted as a correlation coefficient whose value ranged from 0 to 1. It measured the extent to which items in the scales were internally consistent with one another. Generally, Cronbach's coefficients that are below 0.6 are poor, above 0.7 are acceptable, while coefficients that are higher than 0.7 are considered good. Thus, the closer the Cronbach's coefficients are to 1, the better.

Model Specification

To establish the relationship between strategic plans implementation and PSD, the following model was used to examine the extent of impact of strategic plans implementation on PSD in in PSOs in The Gambia:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{PSD} &= f(\text{SPI}) \\ \text{PSD}_i &= \alpha + \beta \text{SPI}_i + e_i \\ \text{where:} \\ \text{PSD}_i &= \text{Public Service Delivery} \\ \text{SPI} &= \text{Strategic Plan Implementation} \\ \text{A prior expectation } \beta &> 0 \end{aligned}$$

Results and Discussion of Findings

The perspectives of the senior public servants and beneficiaries as drawn from two sets of questionnaire, were analysed in this section. It had three (3) sub-sections. The first assessed strategic plans implementation success, the second examined the efficiency of impact of the strategic plans implementation; and the third looked at the effectiveness of impact of strategic plans implementation on public service delivery in the study area.

Assessment of Strategic Plans Implementation Success

This sub-section aimed at assessing strategic plans implementation success in strategic plans application within public service organisations in the study areas. To achieve this, respondents were asked to rate the degree of success on each assertion listed to assess strategic plans implementation success in the formulation and application of strategic plan formulation. The assertions' values/responses were organised using Likert scale of

measurements, such as: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), satisfactory (3), Fair (2) and Poor (1). In addition, the mean value ($\bar{\chi}$) summarised the strength of respondents for each statement, using a decision rule as thus: where ($\bar{\chi} > 2.5$), more respondents tended towards excellent success; and where ($\bar{\chi} < 2.5$), more respondents tended towards poor success.

As shown in Table 1.1, 37 (18.2%) were rated to have excellent success and 51 representing 25.1% rated very good success when asked whether the employees' conditions improved as a result of the strategic plans implementation, while 53 (26.1%) of the respondents were satisfied with the success; and an aggregate of 49 (24.1%) of respondents were believed to have rated the success of this assertion as fair. Also, 13 representing 6.4% rated poor success as regards whether the employees' conditions improved as a result of the strategic plans implementation. This result showed a remarkable level of success with the assertion, though with either fair or poor success by 30.5% of respondents. The position was confirmed by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.25$, $SD = 1.193$).

Furthermore, respondents were asked to rate the degree of success and whether there was an upward shift in the operations of respondents' organisations in service delivery to the public. In their response, an aggregate of 30 (14.8%) rated excellent success and 65 representing 32.0% rated very good success when asked whether there was an upward shift in the operations of respondents' organisations regarding service delivery to the public. About 58 (28.6%) of respondents were satisfied with the success; and an aggregate of 40 (19.7%) of respondents were believed to have rated the success of this assertion as fair, also 10 representing 4.9% rated poor success on whether there was an upward shift in the operations of the respondents' organisations in service delivery to the public between. This result showed a considerable level of success with the assertion, though with either fair or poor success by 24.6% of respondents. The position was confirmed by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.32$, $SD = 1.100$).

Respondents were asked to rate the degree of success and whether the operations of the respondents' organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public. In their response, an aggregate of 40 (19.7%) rated excellent success, and 60 representing 29.6% rated very good success when asked whether the operations of the respondents' organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public. About 62 (30.5%) of respondents were satisfied with the success; and an aggregate of 35 (17.2%) were believed to have rated the success of this assertion as fair, also, 6 representing 3.0% rated poor success on whether the operations of the respondents' organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public. This result showed a remarkable level of success with the assertion, though with either fair or poor success by 20.2% of respondents. The position was further confirmed by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.46$, $SD = 1.082$).

On the other hand, 29 (14.3%) rated excellent success and 68 representing 33.5% rated very good success when asked whether the strategic plans implementation have facilitated the achievement of the respondents' organisations' strategic goals and objectives. About 50 (24.6%) of the respondents were satisfied with the success; and an aggregate of 46 (22.7%) were believed to have rated the success of this assertion as fair, also, 10 representing 4.9% rated poor success on whether strategic plans implementation have facilitated the achievement of the respondents' organisations' strategic goals and objectives. This result showed a notable level of success with the assertion, though with

either fair or poor success by 27.6% of respondents. The position was confirmed by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.30$, $SD = 1.113$).

As presented in Table 1.1, respondents were asked to rate the degree of success to which overall assessment of the rate at which the respondents' organisations successfully implemented strategic plans. In their response, an aggregate of 22 (10.8%) rated excellent success, and 51 representing 25.1% rated very good success when asked whether the overall assessment of the rate at which the respondents' organisations successfully implemented strategic plans. About 56 (27.6%) of respondents were satisfied with the success; and an aggregate of 55 (27.1%) were believed to have rated the success of this assertion as fair, also, 19 representing 9.4% rated poor success on whether the overall assessment of the rate at which the respondents' organisations successfully implemented strategic plans. This result showed a significant level of success with the assertion, though with either fair or poor success by 36.5% of the respondents. The position was confirmed by mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.01$, $SD = 1.156$).

Table 1: Assessment of Strategic Plans Implementation Success

		Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	Descriptive Statistics N=203	
S/N	Assertions	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
i.	The employees' conditions have improved as a result of strategic plans implementation	37 (18.2)	51 (25.1)	53 (26.1)	49 (24.)	13 (6.4)	3.25	1.193
ii.	There was an upward shift in the operations of the respondent's organisation regarding service delivery to the public	30 (14.8)	65 (32.0)	58 (28.6)	40 (19.7)	10 (4.9)	3.32	1.100
iii.	Generally, the operations of the respondent's organisation have positively affected service delivery to the public	40 (19.7)	60 (29.6)	62 (30.5)	35 (17.2)	6 (3.0)	3.46	1.082
iv.	The strategic plans implementation have facilitated the achievement of the respondent's organisation's strategic goals and objectives	29 (14.3)	68 (33.5)	50 (24.6)	46 (22.7)	10 (4.9)	3.30	1.118
v.	Overall assessment of the rate at which the respondent's organisation successfully implemented its strategic plans	22 (10.8)	51 (25.1)	56 (27.6)	55 (27.1)	19 (9.4)	3.01	1.156

Source: Field Survey (2019) NB: f=Frequency; %=Percentage

Effectiveness of Strategic Plans Implementation Impact on Public Service Delivery in The Gambia

This section presented data analysis for assessing the effectiveness of strategic plans implementation impact on public service delivery within the study area. Table 1.2 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on each assertion and its values/responses were organised using Likert scale of measurements, such as: Very Effective (5) Effective (4), Not Sure (3), Ineffective (2) and Very Ineffective (1). In addition, the mean value ($\bar{\chi}$) summarised the strength of the respondents for each statement, using a decision rule as thus: where ($\bar{\chi} < 2.5$), more respondents tended towards ineffectiveness; and where ($\bar{\chi} > 2.5$), more respondents tended towards effectiveness.

As shown in Table 1.2, the following distributions were observed when respondents were asked whether strategic plans helped employees deliver satisfactory services to the public. Responding, 33 (23.2%) of the respondents claimed the assertion was very effective, while 76 (53.5%) of respondents believed it was just effective. However, 3 representing 2.1% of respondents believed that strategic plans helped employees deliver satisfactory services to the public as very ineffective, and 19 (13.4%) claimed it was ineffective. However, 11 (7.7%) of respondents were not sure as regards this assertion. The implication was that strategic plans helped employees deliver satisfactory services to the public and was considerably effective, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.88$, $SD = 0.926$).

Furthermore, when asked whether strategic plans allowed employees accomplish the aims and objectives of public service delivery. Reacting to this, 31 (21.8%) of respondents claimed the assertion was very effective, while 67 (47.2%) believed it was just effective. However, 1 representing 0.7% of the respondents believed that strategic plans allowed employees accomplish the aims and objectives of public service delivery as very ineffective and 19 (13.4%) felt it was ineffective. But, 24 (16.9%) of respondents were not sure as regards this assertion. This implied that strategic plans allowed employees to accomplish the aims and objectives of public service delivery and was considerably effective, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.76$, $SD = 0.967$).

In addition, when asked whether strategic management resulted in improved quality service delivery to the public. Responding to this assertion, 34 (23.9%) of respondents claimed the assertion was very effective, while 63 (44.4%) of believed it was effective. However, 2 representing 1.4% of respondents believed that strategic management resulted in improved quality public service delivery to the public as very ineffective and 22 (25.4%) claimed it was ineffective. The implication was that strategic management resulted in improved quality service delivery to the public and was considerably effective, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.74$, $SD = 1.036$).

As presented in Table 1.2, 30 (21.1%) of the respondents claimed the assertion was very effective, while 64 (45.1%) of respondents believed it was effective, when asked whether strategic plans contributed to the achievement of the organisations' public service delivery objectives. However, 3 representing 2.1% of the respondents believed that strategic plans contributed to the achievement of the organisations' public service delivery objectives, was very ineffective and 16 (11.3%) of respondents claimed it was ineffective. But, 28 (19.7%) of respondents were not sure as regards this assertion. The implication was that strategic plans contributed to the achievement of the organisations' public service delivery objectives with considerable effectiveness, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 4.01$, $SD = 1.052$).

Moreover, respondents were asked to assess the effectiveness in the assessment of operations of public service organisations regarding service delivery to the public. Responding, 29 (20.4%) of the respondents claimed the assertion was very effective, while 48 (33.8%) believed it was just effective. However, 10 representing 7.0% of the respondents believed that assessment of operations of public service organisations regarding service delivery to the public was very ineffective, and 47 (33.1%) claimed it was ineffective. The implication is that the assessment of operations of public service organisations regarding service delivery to the public was moderately effective, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 2.98$, $SD = 1.088$).

Finally, 38 (26.8%) of the respondents claimed that generally, the operations of public service organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public during the study period and was therefore very effective, while 50 (35.2%) believed it was just effective. However, 14 representing 9.9% of respondents believed that generally, the operations of public service organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public and as such, very ineffective and 31 (21.6%) claimed it was simply ineffective. But, 9 (6.3%) of the respondents were not sure as regards this assertion. The implication is that generally, the operations of public service organisations positively affected service delivery to public and was considerably effective, as verified by the mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{\chi} = 3.06$, SD = 1.106).

Table 2: Effectiveness of Strategic Plans Implementation Impact on Public Service Delivery in The Gambia

S/N	Assertions	Very Effective	Effective	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Not Sure	Descriptive Statistics N=142	
		f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
i.	Strategic plans helped employees deliver satisfactory services to the public.	33 (23.2)	76 (53.5)	3 (2.1)	11 (7.7)	19 (13.4)	3.88	0.926
ii.	Strategic plans allowed employees to accomplish the aims and objectives of public service delivery.	31 (21.8)	67 (47.2)	1 (0.7)	19 (13.4)	24 (16.9)	3.76	0.967
iii.	Strategic management resulted in improved quality service delivery to the public.	34 (23.9)	63 (44.4)	2 (1.4)	22 (25.4)	21 (14.8)	3.74	1.036
iv.	Strategic plans contributed to the achievement of the organisations' public service delivery objectives.	30 (21.1)	64 (45.1)	3 (2.1)	16 (11.3)	28 (19.)	4.01	1.052
v.	Assessment of operations of public service organisations regarding service delivery to the public.	29 (20.4)	48 (33.8)	10 (7.0)	47 (33.1)	8 (5.6)	2.98	1.088
vi.	Generally, the operations of public service organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public.	38 (26.8)	50 (35.2)	14 (9.9)	31 (21.6)	9 (6.3)	3.06	1.106

Source: Field Survey (2019) NB: f=Frequency; %=Percentage

To statistically assess the effectiveness of perceived strategic plans implementation impact on public service delivery (PSD), the study subjected the descriptive analysis of senior public servants on the implementation success of strategic plans in public service organisations (PSOs) (See, **Table 1.1**) and descriptive analysis of beneficiaries on strategic plan effectiveness on PSD in The Gambia (See, **Table 1.2**) to simple linear regression using a hypothesis for the inferential test guide. To test this statistical significance, the data in **Table 1.1**, were used to measure the successful implementation of strategic plans in PSOs;

and that in **Table 1.2**, measured the expected effectiveness of impact on public service delivery in The Gambia. Therefore, simple regression analysis was employed to assess the impact of the independent variable (implementation of strategic plans in PSOs), on dependent variable (PSD). **Table 1.3** indicated the model summary of the simple regression equation that predicted significant impact of the implementations of strategic plans on public service delivery in public service organisations since $R = .614 > 0$, $R^2 = .377$, $F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$. The explanations of the values presented were given below.

The model summary table provided useful information on regression analysis especially, the 'simple R' column which is the correlation between the observed independent variable and predicted dependent variable. It stated the proportion (percentage) of the (sample) variable in the dependent variable that could be attributed to the independent variable(s). Thus, the study showed that 61% of most variations in public service delivery in The Gambia could be accounted for through the implementations of strategic plans in public service organisations. This implied that the regression analysis confirmed the hypothesis since $r > 0$ and $p < 0.05$. The outcome of this survey showed that the implementation of strategic plans in public service organisations in The Gambia had significant impact on public service delivery in The Gambia. However, the significance of this impact was not minor.

Furthermore, the effectual level of implementation of strategic plans could only account for one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the changes in public service delivery in The Gambia, as showed by $R^2 = 0.377$, indicating 37% effective level within its 61% significant association. Also, the analysis of regression indicated significant impact between the implementations of strategic plans in public service organisations and delivery of public services in The Gambia ($F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$). However, the adjusted R^2 showed the extent to which the effectual level of the implementations of strategic plans and public service delivery in The Gambia could reach with standard error of 0.884. This is an indication that the extent to which strategic plans implementation impacted on public service delivery in The Gambia during the period of review was high.

Table 3: Model Summary of Simple Regression for the Implementation of Strategic Plans in PSOs and PSD in The Gambia

SD in The Gambia

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
	.614 ^a	.377	.355	.884		
ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	68.068	55	13.614	17.409	.000 ^b
	Residual	112.605	1144	.782		
	Total	180.673	1149			

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

The results of the study on the assessment of strategic plans implementation success indicated that PSOs in The Gambia achieved remarkable levels of success in their strategic plans implementation during the period under review with overall percentages (of excellent, very good and satisfactory) and mean values ($\bar{\chi} > 2.5$) for all five (5) assertions verified by standard deviations: the employees' conditions have improved as a result of the strategic plans implementation; and there was an upward shift in the operations of

respondents' organisations regarding service delivery to the public. Moreover, generally, the operations of respondents' organisations have positively affected service delivery to the public (79.8%); strategic plans implementation have facilitated the achievement of respondents' organisations' strategic goals and objectives (72.4%); and overall assessment of the rate at which the respondents' organisations successfully implemented their strategic plans (63.5%).

These findings acknowledged strategic planning and management scholars (Schweiger and Sandberg, 1991; Elbanna, Thanos and Colak, 2014; Kabeyi, 2019) who posited that if strategic decisions are successfully implemented, organisational aims and objectives could be achieved. Boyne and Walker (2010) asserted that strategy in the public sector is "a means by which organisations can improve their performance and provide better services". The results of this study on strategic plans implementation success of PSOs in The Gambia corroborated this assertion. Also, the study supported the findings of Elbanna, Andrews and Pollanen (2015) that found a positive link between formal "strategic planning and strategy implementation success" in the Canadian public service organisations. The results of this study also confirmed the study of George and Desmidt (2016) that a formal and participatory strategic planning process, contribute to positive outcomes for public organisations as well as findings of Bryson, Edwards and Van Slyke (2017) that strategic planning could be beneficial to organisations by producing desired results. The study also validated the earlier findings of Poister, Pitts and Edwards (2010) that strategic planning leads to improved outcomes, and that of Joyce (2015) that the success of a strategic plan will depend on the skills; motivation and values of the persons spearheading the strategic management tasks, the specified formulation of strategic management procedures being applied, the government organisations that provide the environment as well as the responses of individuals affected by the strategic management intervention.

The findings of the study on the effectiveness of strategic plans implementation impact on public service delivery in The Gambia in the study area showed that strategic plans implementation in the selected PSOs had significant effective impact on PSD with mean values ($\bar{\chi} > 2.5$) for all six (6) assertions: strategic plans helped employees to deliver satisfactory services to the public; strategic plans helped employees accomplish the aims and objectives of PSD; and strategic management resulted in improved quality public service delivery to the public. Strategic plans contributed to the achievement of organisation's PSD objectives; the assessment of operations in PSOs on service delivery to the public is moderately effective; and generally, the operations in PSOs have positively affected service delivery to the public was considered to be considerably effective.

In sum, the overall findings of the survey on objective indicated that the implementation of strategic plans in public service organisations had significant impact on public service delivery in PSOs in The Gambia since $R = .614 > 0$, $R^2 = .377$, $F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$. This implies that the regression analysis confirmed the alternate hypothesis since $r > 0$ and $p < 0.05$. Also, the analysis of regression indicated significant effect between the implementations of strategic plans in PSOs and delivery of public services in The Gambia ($F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$).

The findings of the study corroborated the meta-regression analysis of George, Walker and Monster (2019) that "strategic planning has a positive, moderate, and significant impact on organisational performance in the private and public sectors, across international settings"; study of Tamimi *et al.* (2018) that strategic management practices had significant impact

on performance in public organisations in some Middle East countries; and analyses of Elliott *et al.* (2019) supporting the view that strategic planning made indirect contribution to performance in an organisation. The results also validated the results of Poister and Streib (2005) from the survey of strategic planning in municipal governments in the United States (US) that proposed strategies and developing action plans for implementing strategic initiatives were both positively associated with the perceived impact of strategic planning processes of cities. The study equally confirmed the findings of Andrews, Boyne, Law and Walker (2011), with a positive correlation between rational style of implementation and performance in organisations that highlight a defensive strategy; that an organisation's "strategy and its implementation style matters in the performance of public organisations"; and concluded that implementation style could bring about difference to public services, but the style that works best is dependent on organisational strategy.

Furthermore, this study confirmed the findings of Elbanna (2013), which showed that strategic planning in the UAE federal and local organisations had large beneficial impacts. The findings also supported the study of Pasha, Poister and Edwards (2015) on the US single-purpose local transit agencies, with a positive impact of formal strategic planning; and the study of Elbanna, Andrews and Pollanen (2015) on "strategic planning and implementation success in the Canadian public service organisations", and established a positive link between "formal strategic planning and implementation success", as facilitated by managerial involvement, became more noticeable in the face of uncertainty of stakeholders. The results this study equally affirmed the findings of Sawaneh (2022) who concluded that organisational strategic plan is significant because the "efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery" cannot be achieved without a plan. In addition, the results of this study corroborated the findings of Johnsen (2017) on the "impacts of strategic planning and management in municipal government: an analysis of subjective survey and objective production and efficiency measures in Norway", whose moderated multiple regression analysis of the study indicated that "strategic planning and a defender strategy" had perceivable significant impacts. The analysis of Johnsen (2017) with administrative data for performance revealed slight significant effects of strategic planning, strategy content and stakeholder participation.

Finally, the results of the study's objectives acknowledged Systems Theory of Easton (1957) where the authorities in the political system transformed the inputs from both internal and external environment into outputs i.e., decisions and actions, which might be compared to the Gambian PSOs operating within a wider system, having different directorates, departments, or units; playing significant roles in delivering services to the public. This is because managers of PSOs in The Gambia are responsible for the processing of inputs i.e., human resources and material resources into outputs – services and products.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The study investigated strategic planning practices for public service delivery (PSD) in The Gambia, and examined the success, and effectiveness of strategic plans implementation impact on PSD in the study area. This study revealed that strategic plans implementation in PSOs was remarkably effective, and had positive impact on public service delivery. The study showed that there was an established nexus between strategic planning and public service delivery in the country. Simple linear regression analysis indicated significant

impact between strategic plans implementation in public service organisations and public service delivery in the study area. The findings of the survey objective revealed that the implementation of strategic plans in public service organisations had significant impact on public service delivery in The Gambia since $R = .614 > 0$, $R^2 = .377$, $F(5, 149) = 17.409$; $p < .05$. The findings concluded that strategic planning played a significant role for PSD in The Gambia.

In view of the findings of this study, the following specific policy and general recommendations were advanced for effective public service delivery in The Gambia. These specific policy and general recommendations would assist public service organisations in achieving the objectives of public service delivery, increase the impact of strategic plans implementation on service delivery nationwide:

1. Prepare a Bill and formulate a Policy on public service strategic planning and management that will make it mandatory for public service organisations to formulate, implement and evaluate strategic plans and submit progress reports to their line ministries and the National Assembly after two years of devising the plans.
2. The National Assembly should legislate and establish a development and monitoring agency/commission to be specifically charged with the responsibility of monitoring the formulation, review, implementation and evaluation of strategic and development plans.
3. To increase strategic plans implementation success and its impact on public service delivery, the government should augment the amount of monthly subventions by making sufficient budgetary allocations to PSOs to enable them provide adequate facilities and infrastructure, strategic planning and management professionals and expertise with a view to fulfilling their constitutional mandates of providing the required services to the public.

Implications of the Findings

A few studies such as, Boyne and Gould-Williams (2003); Walker and Boyne (2006); Poister, Edwards, and Pasha (2013); Andrews, Boyne, Law and Walker (2011); and Edwards (2012) have established the relationship between strategic planning and various aspects of performance in the public sector; and Williams and Lewis, (2008); Elbanna (2013); Elbanna, Andrews and Pollanen (2015); Johnsen (2015); Hansen and Ferlie (2016); George and Desmidt (2016); and Höglund, Holmgren, Mårtensson and Svärdsten, (2018) investigated and examined strategic management in the public sector and/or strategic planning and public service organisations with no scholarly attention to strategic management and public service delivery in The Gambia. Nevertheless, there were little documented empirical study (Sawaneh, 2021a, 2021b; Sawaneh, 2022) on strategic management and public service delivery in the Gambian public sector. The framework of the study and contribution to knowledge in the context of public service in The Gambia could help public strategic managers and officers in other organisations to reflect on the outcomes of this study and apply same in their organisations. Consequently, the gap this study addressed could provide an outlook for reflection on previous studies to current research.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are common characteristics of any scientific research particularly in social sciences where researchers are directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation. This study encountered a number of constraints. First, the researcher could not obtain a list containing the number of beneficiaries (consumers) from each PSO, which was one of the constraints of this study. Another major problem faced was the bureaucratic procedure involved in getting approval for the administration of questionnaire for senior public servants of PSOs. The busy schedule and reluctance of some respondents especially, government officials proved difficult in retrieving copies of questionnaire, which resulted in the researcher and research assistant paying several visits to the offices to administer questionnaire. However, a considerable number of copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the field. These constraints, nevertheless, did not hamper the realisation of the study objectives, because the inaccessible information was not part of the main emphasis of this study, and the results of the findings were not seriously affected.

Suggestions for Future Research

To further advance and expand the frontier of knowledge on strategic planning and public PSD in The Gambia and beyond, this study suggested that a study should be conducted on comprehensive strategic management audit of the mainstream civil service of The Gambia to assess the effect of strategic planning on civil service performance. This is because this study did not focus on the central government civil service performance but on public service organisations alone (public agencies/institutions and public enterprises). Furthermore, the study recommended conducting a comprehensive SWOT analysis/assessment of PSOs, reviewing their mandates, visions and missions as well as organisational and strategic leadership.

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