

Assessing the Impact of Leadership on Strategy Implementation in a Telecommunications Company: The Case of Botswana Telecommunications Corporation

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Abstract

The paper investigated the impact of leadership's influence on the strategy implementation at a stock-exchange listed communications service provider company in Botswana, Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC). Following granting of ethical approvals, an online questionnaire was distributed to 58 BTC employees in offices across the country. Following pilot testing of the self-developed data-gathering instrument, data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics analysis on the data collected. Based on a sample of 50 BTC employees generating an 86% response rate, it was found that BTC leaders are aware of the organizational strategy and that they constantly emphasize the strategy to their followers by insisting on strategy-centric initiatives and reviewing progress towards attaining organizational objectives. Secondly, it can be concluded that BTC leaders encourage their followers to be strategy sensitive by constantly reminding them of the strategic objectives and providing resources and training where required for followers to achieve the strategic initiatives. The research assists in illuminating the influence and impact of leadership on implementation of strategy in former publicly owned telecommunications companies in Africa that have been listed and could still be weaning themselves from central government influence on strategy.

Keywords

Leadership, Followership, Impact, Strategy, Telecommunications

1. Introduction

According to Mulyani et al. (2019) for organizations to achieve their goals, de-

depends on the human resources driving various resources inside the company towards attaining set targets. Formulating the organisational strategy is a combination of complex tasks for the leadership of any organisation whether public, private and government sectors. MacLennan (2011) and Radomska & Kozyra (2020) established that the implementation of an approved strategy is even more complex as it requires everyone in the organisation to understand the required changes and the way these changes must be implemented. Previously, scholars have focused on strategy formulation as it is considered as the more vital factor in strategy management. There is developing research interest in strategy execution as other researchers have begun to view strategy formulation as more essential in ensuring outstanding business performance. Leaders have a crucial effect on successful formulation and implementation of strategies.

Recently, further research indicated that the most significant issues in strategy management are not connected to strategy formulation but rather are connected to the strategy implementation and that most failures are due to a faulty implementation of strategic activities, making the implementation the most vital and complex aspect of strategy management. Other researchers propose that when leaders are effective in their roles, the organisation tends to have high performance. This study intended to determine to what extent leadership affects the implementation of the strategy. Research conducted in South African public organisations found that leadership significantly contributes towards successful execution of the strategy (Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). There is limited research performed in the Botswana business environment and for recently stock-exchange listed former public entities such as BTC. This area should be studied further to obtain deeper insights.

BTC is a telecommunications company based in Botswana and listed on the Botswana Stock Exchange (BSE). Despite being the first telecommunications company in Botswana (BTC, 2021), it currently has the least market share of 15% (Telecom statistics, 2021). According to published annual reports (Botswana Telecommunications Limited, 2021) the total subscriber base of BTC has been declining. According to annual reports available on the BSE the organization has also recorded a decline in revenues (Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited, 2021). This study will investigate the impact of the BTC leadership on the implementation of the BTC organizational strategy.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research is illustrated in **Figure 1** below. To investigate the impact of leadership at BTC in engaging leaders and followers to identify the strategy alignment of BTC leaders at all levels of the organizational structure and the sensitivity of followers, leadership styles were considered as the underpinning variable to the strategy alignment and strategy sensitivity (Knippenberger, 2002). This is supported by a demographic analysis that might account for differences in responses. The framework employed is illustrated on **Figure 1** below.

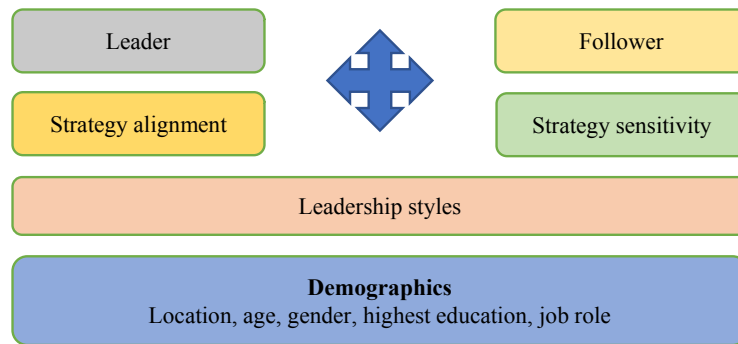


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Figure 1 above indicates how the research conceptualised the relationship among the variables. Leaders mutually influence followers which in turn affects strategy alignment and strategy sensitivity. The relationship and interaction of these four variables is buttressed by leadership styles adopted, which are in turn influenced by demographic characteristics such as location of operations (for example head office and branches), as well as age, education level and job roles of the leaders and followers involved.

1.2. Research Aim and Rationale

The aim of the paper is to investigate leadership's discernible impact on organizational performance and contribute to existing literature on the impact of leadership on the strategy implementation by mainly focusing on a telecommunications company based in Botswana. Furthermore, according to the latest BTC annual reports (Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited, 2021) the company's declining performance in terms of market share and revenues has become a concern for its shareholders, employees, and management, to avoid what are termed the "*silent killers of strategy implementation*" which include inadequate messaging, imagery, and rhetoric (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Carton et al., 2014; Sladan et al., 2014). The research will assist in informing BTC management on areas to focus on in improving performance at BTC.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership and Leadership Theories

Tracy (2014) sees leadership as the ability to evoke extraordinary performance from ordinary people. Jabbar & Hussein (2017) defines leadership as behaviors that enforce people to formulate the organizational goals and motivate them to jointly contribute to achieving these set goals. Leadership is also conceptualized by Tracy (2014) as the ability to obtain followers and that the only effective leadership is where people decide that they are going to follow the direction, guidance, and vision of someone else.

It is important to outline the leadership theories to appreciate the different factors in this area. Fiedler (1967) views leadership theories as schools of thought that try and explain why certain people become leaders. Scholars have used them

to emphasise traits to adopt to establish one's leadership capabilities. **Table 1** below summarizes leadership theories and their definitions:

2.1.1. Great Man Theories

These theories are the first and pioneer leadership theories (Sivaruban, 2021) which propose that leaders are born and not made (Dugan, 2017). According to Carlyle (1795-1881), great man are heroes who are a gift from God and the task for everyone is to recognize this gift and follow them. Mouton (2019) proposes that literature on new theories such as transformational leadership also tends to invoke images which remind us of the Great Man theories. However, Frieze & Wheatley (2011) argue that the notion of hero worship tends to lead to passivity and dependence. Northouse (2016) also argues that the great man theories have a lack of scientific evidence. Moreover, according to Northouse (2016) these theories also encourage inequality in gender as they consider the male gender to be the focal point when there are many women leaders in the business environment. Spector (2016) agrees by arguing that the great man theories are prejudiced and gender-based as they emphasize a male-dominant culture. The researchers acknowledge that these theories were developed many years ago when there were very few women in leadership roles. In support (Northouse, 2016; Bass, 1990), over the years there has been women who rose through the corporate ranks and have effectively led big teams.

2.1.2. Trait Theories

Traits theories assume leaders have superior qualities and traits that differentiate them from followers (Dugan, 2017) and summarize three factors (1) physical factors (2) ability (3) and personality which are often studied and embraced by aspiring leaders. Stogdill (1974) performed an intense study on this area and identified the traits and skills of a leader as being alert and sensitive to the social environment, cooperative, adaptable to different context and situations, dependable, achievement oriented, persistent, and willing to assume responsibility. Harrison (2018) argues that trait theories are not based on any scientific methods but rather personal characteristics developed through professional training or experience. According to Bolden et al. (2016) trait theories specify the characters which make up leaders however, they are unclear on the measurement of these characteristics. There is no detailed information on the measuring the degree of leader traits as it only provides a list of common traits but having some of the traits does not necessarily mean someone will be a leader. Northouse (2019) argues that the predictable nature of the leader behavior which the trait depicts is in reality not always effective as the common traits listed under this theory are not necessarily effective and give similar outcomes in all situations and cases. Trait theories only consider part of the factors influencing leaders and do not consider all aspects of the business environment. It is difficult to come up with an exhaustive list of all qualities of a good leader, furthermore there is no evidence that traits will apply across all situations as argued by Northouse (2019).

Table 1. Leadership theories definitions.

No.	Theories	Year	Assumptions
1.	Great man theories	1900	Leaders are born and not made. Assumes leaders have natural abilities of power and influence
2.	Trait theories	1940's-1950's	Leaders have superior qualities and traits that differentiate them from followers
3.	Behaviourist theories	1950's-1960's	Focused more on what leaders do rather than what they are
4.	Contingency theories	1960's-1980's	Assume leaders act differently depending on the situation
5.	Path-goal theories	1980's	Leaders assist followers to achieve their goals

2.1.3. Behaviorist Theories

According to Knippenberger (2002), this set of theories represents the shift from thinking leaders are born and already have some traits and skills to a perspective that leaders can be made by learning certain behaviors through experience. Behaviorist theory assumes that leaders who express high concern for both people and tasks will be effective (Tracy, 2014). However, Harrison (2018) argues that this theory insists certain behaviors will always determine leadership, but it does not consider situational factors as certain behaviors can be effective at a particular time but ineffective in other situations. Maag (2001) argues that behavioural theory is controversial as some individuals find the concept of positive reinforcement to be controversial. This theory allows leaders to learn the desirable behaviors required. Harrison (2018) proposed that these theories do not consider situational factors as certain behaviours will not necessarily have similar outcomes as situations change. Some of the behaviorist leadership styles are shown below on Table 2 below.

2.1.4. Situational/Contingency Theories

According to Dugan (2017), these theories assume leaders act differently depending on the situation. Knippenberger (2002) proposes that contingency theory suggests that there is no single best way for a leader to lead as their ability to lead successfully is contingent on a variety of situational and behavioural factors (Inyang et al., 2018; Inyang & Jaramillo, 2020). According to Sivaruban (2021), situational theories are based on the view that different leadership styles are required for different situations. For leadership to be effective, it must change according to situations and in alignment with the changing environmental factors. Hanisch & Wald (2012) argues that the situational theories are complex as they assume that for leaders to be effective in different situations, they must change their leadership styles as situations change, which brings more chaos and instability to organizations. Fiedler (1964) argues that the effectiveness of this theory highly depends on the leader's self-awareness and their analysis of the situation so they know when to step into a certain leadership style and

Table 2. Leadership styles and definitions.

Behavioural theories	Findings	Description
	Autocratic leadership	Leaders make decisions without consulting the people.
Lowa university studies	Democratic leadership	Leaders involve others in decision making process.
	Laissez-faire	Leaders have minimal involvement in decision making.
Ohio state leadership studies	Employee oriented	Understanding human relations.
Michigan University studies	Task oriented	Focusing on task.

when to step out. [Harrison \(2018\)](#) argues that situational theories require a leader who is well-rounded and comfortable in various styles, which might be rare. Despite agreeing with [Fiedler \(1964\)](#) that for effectiveness, situational theories require a leader who can interpret situations well and know when to switch leadership styles, these theories have a high chance of effectiveness as the use of different styles ensures they mitigate each other's limitations. Moreover, they increase the awareness of a leader as they require flexibility in applying different leadership styles.

2.1.5. Path Goal Theories

According to [Sivaruban \(2021\)](#), these theories speak on leaders assisting followers to achieve their goals. The effectiveness of these theories depends highly on followers having a clear understanding of the goal and the path to achieving the goal ([Sivaruban, 2021](#)). [Northouse \(2016\)](#) argues that the path-goal theory treats leadership as a one-way event by assuming the leader affects the follower and the follower does not affect the leader. [Northouse \(2016\)](#) further argues that there is a lack of empirical research with this theory as findings do not provide a consistent picture of assumptions of this theory. According to [Bans-Akutey \(2021\)](#), this theory does not address followers and the environment or situations which might arise. [Northouse \(2016\)](#) notes that that there is limited research on the path-goal theories and due to their complexity, it would be a challenge to utilize path-goal in all leadership situations therefore it does not seem to be a practical leadership approach.

2.1.6. Laissez-Faire Leadership

According to [Ikiara & Kariuki \(2018\)](#), the laissez-faire leadership implies the more hands-off approach where members of the team are allowed to make all decisions. This leadership style is mostly suitable for highly experienced and well-trained employees who require little to no supervision. [Sarros & Santora \(2001\)](#) argue that the laissez faire leadership style is seen to be inclusive of non-commitment, laziness, complacency, and avoidance of responsibility. [Northouse \(2010\)](#) argues this style should be considered as lack of leadership as such leaders rarely try to

support their followers leading to followers who are not motivated and less interested in implementing the organizational strategy. [Ikiara & Kariuki \(2018\)](#) proposes that laissez-faire leadership is suitable for highly experienced employees, however not all employees are highly experienced and possess characteristics of decision making therefore for effective leadership this style will have to be supported by another leadership style.

2.1.7. Summary of the Theories

From the great man theories of the 1900s which assumed that leaders are born and not made, to the trait theories (1940's-1950's) which assumed that leaders have some inherent superior traits that differentiate them from followers, to the 1950's to 1960's behaviourist theories which focused on leader behaviours, to the contingency theories (1960's-1980's), consideration of the followers did not feature in much in leadership theories until the 1980's when path-goal theories started to include leader assistance of followers to achieve goals. Followership theories also emerged after much debate on whether transactional styles or transformational styles of leadership could be considered as subsequent to laissez-faire leadership occasioned by development of theories that had formerly vied for explanation of the leadership environment ([Albritton, 1998](#)). This seems to have led to theories of leadership being linked to styles as well as a consideration of followership in theories of leadership as reviewed below.

2.2. Leadership Styles

2.2.1. Transactional Leadership

In transactional leadership, motivation is less ([Hendriks & Reddy, 2020](#)), therefore employees are incentivized ([Oberfield, 2012](#)). According to [Lowe et al. \(1996\)](#), this kind of leadership is important for strategy implementation since it has less risks as it gives attention to time constraints, resources, and efficiency. [Sarros & Santora \(2001\)](#) argue that transactional leaders tend to see performance in money terms and forget that a company exists as a living culture that relies on a mutual exchange among leaders and workers to achieve the strategic goals hence this leadership is limited to material instead of meaningful outcomes. [McCleskey \(2014\)](#) argues that this leadership tends to emphasize temporary exchange of gratification which often creates resentment between the leaders and followers. Furthermore, [Yukl \(2011\)](#) also argues that transactional leadership utilizes a one-size-fits-all approach disregarding other factors such as organizational and situational challenges. [Sarros & Santora \(2001\)](#) propose that transactional leadership sees performance in material exchange terms and fails to form meaningful outcomes but finds the argument by [Lowe et al. \(1996\)](#) to be more persuasive that this leadership has less risks as it gives attention to time constraints, resources, and efficiency making it suitable for achieving short term goals.

2.2.2. Transformational Leadership

According to [Wright et al. \(2012\)](#) this leadership involves inspiring subordinates

by giving them a sense of purpose and making them part of the organizational vision. [Wright et al. \(2012\)](#) writes that this kind of leader would be in a better position to provide direction, and lead employees to implement the organizational strategy. According to [Judge & Piccolo \(2004\)](#), previous studies comparing leadership styles and their effects on performance have generally found that transformational leadership has stronger effects on the employee's commitment and performance. However, [Yukl \(2012\)](#) argues that leadership does not operate in a vacuum and that the effectiveness of various styles depends on different situations and environmental factors. [Griffin \(2002\)](#) argues that a transformational leader has potential of abusing their power as they use emotional aspects to motivate followers to achieve tasks. [Van Knippenberg and Sitkin \(2013\)](#) is of the view that transformational leaders are likely to be manipulative and thrive under emotional control. [Yukl \(1981\)](#) regards transformational leadership as the dark side of charismatic leadership ([Ates et al., 2020](#)). [Uhl-Bien et al. \(2014\)](#) argue that despite transformational leadership focusing on improving the relationship between the leader and the follower, it is still leader-centric as it does not acknowledge initiatives of followers. In agreement with [Wright et al. \(2012\)](#) that this kind of leader would be in a better position to lead employees to implement the organizational strategy as a transformational leader is a path-maker and a visionary who motivates, uplifts, inspires and empowers followers to achieve strategic initiatives, the review went further to consider how followership and followership theories and concepts could further illuminate the issues.

2.3. Followership

According to [Hurwitz & Hurwitz \(2015\)](#) leadership is half the story. Leadership is made up of three elements which must come together, being the leader, follower, and context ([Riggio, 2020](#)). When we leave out any of the triad, we have an incomplete picture of leadership ([Riggio, 2020](#)). According to [Uhl-Bien et al. \(2014\)](#), there is no leadership without followers. [Uhl-Bien & Pillai \(2007\)](#) views followership as deference to one's leader.

2.3.1. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

[Dugan \(2017\)](#) focuses on the engagement of both leaders and followers to generate quality work relationships which will allow them to deliver effective leadership results. The emphasis is on the interactions between leaders and followers and their dyadic relationship. According to [Killian \(2021\)](#) having a high LMX relationship with the team tends to increase job satisfaction and productivity. [Uhl-Bien et al. \(2000\)](#) argues that LMX does acknowledge followers however, it is still more on the leadership side as it considers the leader to be the driver of the relationship-building process. [Bashore \(2020\)](#) and [Blake \(1961\)](#) argue that having out-groups tends to imply that there are outliers and therefore might lead to alienation. [Bauer & Berrin \(2015\)](#) argue that this approach tends to have ethical issues around favouritism and discrimination. This agrees with [Killian's \(2021\)](#) proposition that when leaders focus on building a relationship and engaging with

followers, the team tends to increase job satisfaction and productivity.

2.3.2. Sy's Implicit Followership Theory (IFT)

These are “*cognitive structures and schemas on behaviors and traits which characterizes followers*” (Weick, 1995). According to Bashore (2020), attributes included in IFT are; interest in work, productivity, and being a team player. Kruse (2011) argues that despite implicit followership theories being stable over time, there are sensitive to the context in which they are applied. Bashore (2020) argues that individual expectations of followers might maintain consistency, but they will not be immune to influences from outside. This theory allows followers to understand the difference between leaders IFTs and their own IFTs which will most likely cause them to adjust their behaviour to improve the relationship between them and their leaders. Kelley (1988) summarizes different follower behaviors as shown on Table 3 below.

2.4. Strategy Implementation

According to Mubarak & Yusoff (2019) strategy implementation is the process of putting plans and strategies into action. Mubarak & Yusoff (2019) further view it as a process of transforming strategies into a sequence of activities to get results that achieve the strategic objectives. Hunger & Wheelen (2009) view strategy implementation as all activities and decisions required for the execution of a strategy that involves a set of connected activities to ensure the organization's strategy works. Campbell et al. (2011) observed strategy as how an organization seeks to achieve its long-term goals. Chandler (1990) views strategy as the determination of the long-run goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. According to Johnson et al. (2017) strategy is the long-term direction of an organization.

2.5. Empirical Review: Review of Prior Literature on Implementation of Strategy

This section reviews prior literature on the impact of leadership on the implementation of the organizational strategy. Using a survey of 125 employees at Safaricom, Keter (2015) investigated the challenges of strategy implementation in the telecommunications sector in Kenya. The study established that there are several factors which affect the implementation of a strategy besides just leadership. These could be internal issues which include organizational structure, administrative systems and external factors which include government licensing, strategy alliances and regulations of pricing by the regulating bodies. Secondly, the study also concluded that telecommunications is one of the most dynamic industries therefore there are market factors which will affect telecommunications companies when implementing their strategies. These include the market positions, first-mover advantage and constantly declining or increase of rates in the industry.

Table 3. Types of followers.

Behaviors	Descriptions
Passive followers	These followers do as they are told, not active participants and do not think critically.
Conformist follower	Despite being participants, they do not provide any challenge.
Alienated followers	These followers are independent thinkers who do not willingly commit to leaders.
Exemplary followers	These followers excel in tasks, engage with the group, and provide intelligent support and challenge the leader.
Pragmatic followers	They are in the centre of independence, engagement, and general contribution.

Nwachukwu et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study in which 120 questionnaires were administered to employees of different telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between employee commitment to strategy implementation and employee satisfaction in mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. The findings suggest that organizational leaders should elicit employee commitment to strategy implementation to boost their job of satisfaction. The study further established that employee commitment to the execution of the organizational strategy is one of the key elements of employee satisfaction. Nwachukwu et al. (2018) conclude by suggesting that leaders must create a culture which encourages and supports the commitment of employees to the execution of the organizational strategy.

Another study in Kenya by Koskei (2003) investigated 15 middle managers of different departments to find out the extent of strategy implementation and identify challenges that the company has encountered during implementation. The study highlighted that public corporations operate in unpredictable and unstable complex environments, where organizational objectives fluctuate depending on the government's constantly changing political agenda. In addition, the study revealed that organizational leaders of public corporations do not have absolute freedom to optimize their own performance in implementing formulated strategies. It is acknowledged that poor leadership styles have a significant effect on the implementation of a strategy, however some of the failures might be due to government control which interferes with the organizational leadership's programs.

A quantitative review performed by Mubarak & Yusoff (2019) using a sample of 276 directors, found that companies seem to have difficulty in achieving their strategies and leadership was identified as one of the significant barriers. The study further suggests leadership is considered a significant driver to determine a successful implementation, and that leadership's role should be performed thoroughly while executing the strategic decisions. The study concluded that strategic leadership has positive impact on the execution of the organizational strategy. Moreover, effective execution of the organizational strategy rests on the

leadership skills of motivating, building culture, working through others, and organizing.

O'reilly et al. (2010) studied how the consistency of leadership effectiveness across hierarchical levels influenced the implementation of a strategic initiative in a large health care system with 313 physicians through a survey. The study found out that significant performance of organizations is seen only when the effectiveness of leaders at different structure levels is considered in the aggregate. To understand the impact of leadership and their influence on the performance of employees, leaders at various levels must be considered jointly. The study further suggests that the alignment of leadership across organizational structure level determines the outcomes of the strategy. The study concludes that in large corporations, it may be the aggregate effect of leaders at different levels that either assists or hinders the strategy execution and affects the performance of the organization.

A quantitative survey (Alamsjah, 2020) to examine the impact of leadership styles and strategy implementation on the financial performance of middle managers in Indonesia, suggests that leadership styles and knowing when to apply them, have a notable impact on the successful execution of the strategy. A survey conducted with 500 middle managers found out that for immediate results, transactional leadership will be most suitable. However, for more long-term organizational change, transformational leadership should be applied. Moreover, it is crucial for an effective leader to have both transformational and transactional leadership styles and know when to apply them. Secondly, the study found out that for successful strategy execution, middle managers must have a clear strategic direction from top management and the involvement of the organisation's CEO during implementation as this has a notable impact on the performance of the organization (Waldman et al., 2001).

Ikiara & Kariuki (2018) investigated 210 members of staff to establish the effect of leadership styles on strategy implementation at the national treasury (ministry of finance) in Kenya. The study confirmed that there was need for leaders to provide resources and tools to achieve the strategic initiatives. Furthermore, leaders must ensure followers are given power and encouraged to take responsibility for the group's decisions and actions. Secondly, the study also established that there is need for a collaboration between top management and junior management where top management accepts suggestions and opinions of more junior employees. Ikiara & Kariuki (2018) further suggest that activities and tasks performed as part of the strategy implementation must be evaluated after the allocated duration.

Another quantitative study by Inyang et al. (2018) to explore the role of leadership in influencing the strategy implementation behaviors of salespeople, collected data from a sample of 190 salespeople in different industries. The study established that transformational leadership has stronger results on the strategy implementation behaviour of sales employees when compared to transactional leadership. However, this research further shows transactional leadership tends

to have more positive results in highly competitive environments. The study concluded that it is vital for organizations to ensure their strategy is aligned with activities given to employees. Similarly, [Cespedes \(2014\)](#) also confirmed that activities of employees tend to be divorced from organizational strategy in many organizations leading to a failure in the implementation of the organizational strategy.

[Nyong'a & Maina \(2019\)](#) investigated the influence of leadership on strategy implementation using data collected from 245 employees who are supervisors to the Deputy Commissioner at the Kenya Revenue Authority. The study concluded that strategic leadership has a positive and significant relationship with strategy implementation. The study also established that the commitment of management, participative leadership, motivation system and delegation as leadership practices have a significant and positive effect on the implementation of organizational strategy at the Kenya Revenue Authority. The study also concluded that employee motivation systems at the Kenya Revenue Authority were not sufficient and contributed to inadequate strategy implementation.

3. Research Methods

The quantitative approach was utilized in this research to collect and analyse data pertaining to the impact of leadership on strategy implementation at BTC. The research population and universe was 58 BTC employees from the Officer position to senior management who sit on the BTC executive committee. These are information-rich leaders and managers that are influential in the strategy of the organization. According to [Atieno \(2009\)](#) if researchers know what is being hypothesized, they are most likely to find better results and that if they do not need to be aware of the complexity of the respondents understanding and if the research is testing prior theory rather than constructing new frameworks then researchers should not be using qualitative methods.

The researchers considered several reasons in choosing the quantitative approach. Some of the reasons were that; 1) collecting a sizeable amount of data from a large sample of BTC employees from the lowest structural position to the highest structural position, in a short period of time and 2) using quantitative approach allowed the use of statistical analysis to objectively identify patterns as well as discover relationships. The researchers also decided not to use the qualitative approach as there are high chances of arriving at different conclusions using the same information depending on the researcher's personal characteristics ([Sedgwick, 2014](#); [Pratt, 2009](#)). Since quantitative research involves counting and measuring of events and performing the statistical analysis of a body of numerical data ([Smith, 1988](#)), this analysis will be statistical data with indicatively conclusive findings which are both descriptive and inferential. This approach allowed the researchers to select a population of interest. Moreover, this approach allowed the researchers to use measurable data to produce facts and draw up patterns in research ([Matveev, 2002](#)). [Cassell & Symon \(1994\)](#) contends that

quantitative paradigm measurement is reliable, valid, and generalizable in its clear prediction of cause and effect.

The quantitative approach allowed collection of data from participants in numeric format, to exercise objective judgement to achieve high level of reliability and accuracy (Cohen et al., 2017). Employing the quantitative approach allowed the statement of the research in specific and definable terms, specifying clearly the dependent and independent variables, as well as achieving high levels of reliability of gathered data and arriving at more objective conclusions as the subjectivity of judgment was minimized. According to Creswell (2002) unlike qualitative, the quantitative approach collects numeric data from generalized population which can be statistically manipulated.

However, one of the weaknesses of relying on quantitative approach alone was that it did not allow an in-depth analysis of the opinions and views of the participants outside those that were provided in the pre-defined instrument (Sedgwick, 2014). Matveev (2002) argues that quantitative research has its limitations in that the approach tends to fail to provide researchers with information on the context of the situation where the studied phenomenon occurs. Furthermore, this approach does not encourage the continuous investigation as a research phenomenon evolves unlike the qualitative approach. Atieno (2009) argues that though reliable, quantitative research tends to limit the outcomes of the research to only those outlined in the original plan due to a closed type of questions and structured format.

3.1. Research Methods

Consistent with a quantitative research approach and positivist philosophy (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Wyly, 2009), a survey was considered suitable for collecting data from BTC employees. The questionnaire was considered the most appropriate method. The questionnaire was developed from the literature review and contained the following sections; 1) a demographic section which included location where respondents are based, their gender, age, qualification and current position, 2) a section on strategy management focusing on the employees and their experience and observations of the leader/ follower interactions, 3) the views of the respondent employees on their leadership actions and decisions, 4) a section focusing on the leaders and how they view their own style of leadership and lastly 5) the leaders' views of how they execute their strategic management responsibilities. The questionnaire was self-administered with participants expected to self-complete it online.

3.2. Rationale for Adopting Questionnaire

Using a questionnaire brought some benefits in that as it is the most common method in research, it is familiar to users and it allowed them to complete the questionnaire at their own convenience and allowed them to take time to think about their answers (Muijs, 2004). However, the researchers initially experienced a low response rate and had to send reminders to the participants. As the topic

of leadership and its impact tends to be sensitive, the questionnaire allowed the researchers to guarantee the respondents anonymity as confirmed by Muijs (2004) that with questionnaires, it is easy to guarantee respondents anonymity which may lead to more candid answers than less anonymous methods like interviews. However, the researchers experienced a limitation of questionnaires of struggling to come to a depth understanding of processes just like Muijs (2004) that it is difficult to come to deeper understanding of processes and contextual differences through questionnaire, which are standardized and by their nature limited in length and depth of response.

3.3. Research Population

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018) population is the collection of items, objectives or people that is targeted by an inquiry. Muijs (2004) defines population as the group researchers intend to generalize their findings to. The participants in this study were 58 BTC employees from the officer position to senior management who sit on the BTC executive committee. Of the targeted management, fifty (50) participants responded, making it an 86% response rate which was considered high. Furthermore, the population included both females and males. As BTC operates in different localities, the participants included employees in the head office, Francistown office, Maun office, Palapye office, Mochudi office and Gaborone technology office. The participants were also from different divisions at BTC. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of collected data using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was conducted (Stehlik-Barry & Babinec, 2017).

3.4. Instrument Design

The final questionnaire (in Appendix 1), comprised of (9) questions. Before distributing the questionnaire, the following assurance actions were undertaken to improve the instrument; (1) an expert was employed to check relevance of the content, wording accuracy and to check the arrangement of the questions. According to Streiner et al. (2015) researchers use experts or consultants in relevant fields to review questionnaires. Reviewing of the questionnaire by the BTC training office to ensure the questions do not cause any harm and they are related to the approved area of study also assisted to ensure the ethical aspects of the research were covered as well as to solicit improvements.

3.5. Research Limitations

An initial low response rate was experienced. The researchers sent 58 online questionnaires to the selected participants. The researchers followed-up with telephone calls to remind respondents to participate. The researchers then closed for respondents to start analysis of the data with 50 responses. A further limitation was that some respondents gave feedback that the questionnaire was restricting them to the provided options and indicated that they would have liked to be allowed to clarify and discuss in more detail their responses. Question-

naires generally have a limitation that researchers have no control over who fills out the questionnaire as there is no way to ensure the right person completes it (Check & Schutt, 2012). This instrument allows respondents the flexibility to complete the questionnaire on their own. Some respondents asked for clarity on the questions posed and this could either mean the questions were clear and understandable or they just did not try to request for clarity. Respondents may misinterpret or may not understand questions as questionnaires do not give an opportunity for the researchers to clarify questions to respondents before they answer them (Cohen et al., 2017). While some respondents did not complete all questions, the questionnaire was not times, allowing respondents the flexibility to complete the questionnaire in their own time, and thus some respondents might have been distracted and not completed the questionnaires. Incomplete and duplicated responses were deleted prior to performing data analysis.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Summary of Results

The scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All the 40 items in total have a score of .876. This is a good reliability value. According to Tavakol & Dennick (2011), acceptable values of alpha range from .70 to .95. According to Cronbach (1951) a value of alpha increases when the items in a test are correlated to each other. A lower alpha means items are not related and an alpha above .90 is too high as it suggests that some items are redundant as they are testing the same questions (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The reliability results are shown in Table 4 below.

The Scale statistics had a mean of 147.395 with a variance of 233.102 and a standard deviation of 15.26767 for all the 40 items. This reliability can be considered as good. This is shown on Table 5 below.

4.1.1. ANOVA

ANOVA (analysis of variance) checks if the means of two or more groups are significantly different and checks the impact of one or more factors by comparing the means of each other (Gilchrist & Samuels, 2021). A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the means of the variables. A significance value of .161 ($p = .161$) on my "leader emphasizes on the organizational strategy" is observed meaning there is no statistically significant difference between groups. There was also a significance value of .624 ($p = .624$) on "my leader insists on strategy centric initiatives" meaning there is no statistically significant difference between groups. As $p > .05$, equal variances can be assumed.

There was also a significance value of .030 ($p = .030$) on "my leader inspires and motivates me to reach my greatest potential". As $p < .05$, this reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between means of variables. A significance value of .044 ($p = .044$) on "I take time to talk to employees individually about their work aspirations and future plans". This reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between means of variables.

Table 4. Reliability statistics.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.876	40

Table 5. Scale statistics.

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
147.3953	233.102	15.26767	40

4.1.2. Correlations

According to Jackson (2012) the Pearson correlation coefficient is the “most commonly used correlation coefficient when both variables are measured on an interval or ratio scale” (Jackson, 2012). It measures the strength of linear association between two variables. The correlations of some variables in this study ranges between .683 and .280. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (Thelwall, 2016).

There is a positive correlation of .693 between variables “my leader insists on strategy centric initiatives” and “my leader supports the current strategy by allocating resources and training”. This could mean when leaders are strategy centric, they will insist on allocation of resources and equip employees with training to ensure they implement the strategic initiatives.

A positive correlation of .669 was observed between variables “my leader supports the current strategy through training and allocation of resources” and “my leader emphasis on the organizational strategy”. This is interpreted to mean when leaders allocate resources to support implementation of strategic initiatives, BTC employees view it as an act which shows their leader agrees with the strategy formulators. This result agrees with Ikiara & Kariuki (2018) as stipulated above where they confirmed that for successful implementation of a strategy, leaders must provide resources and tools to achieve the strategic initiatives. This interpretation further agrees with O'reilly et al. (2010) above, which established that there is need for a collaboration between top management and junior management where top management accepts suggestions and opinions of more operational managers.

There is a positive correlation of .608 observed between a variable “my leader insists on strategy centric initiatives (tasks)” and “my leader emphasis on the organizational strategy”. This could mean BTC leaders are ensuring their employees are strategy sensitive by making sure their tasks are aligned with the strategy and they are constantly reminding them of the organizational strategy. This agrees with Nwachukwu et al. (2018) above who concluded that leaders must create a culture which encourages and supports the commitment of employees to the execution of the organisational strategy. The study also suggested that organisational leaders should elicit employee commitment to strategy im-

plementation to boost their job satisfaction.

There is a correlation of .372 between the “age” and the “role” variables. This could mean the longer BTC employees stay in the organization, the higher they go up the organizational structure through either promotions or other opportunities in the organization.

A correlation of .417 is also seen between the variables, “*I see a link between the work I do and the BTC overall objective*” and “*my current position is*”. This result could be due to responses given by general managers and heads of departments who are senior managers of the organization and participated in the formulation of the organizational structure.

Another positive correlation of .346 was observed between variables “*my leader inspires and motivates me to reach my greatest potential*” and “*I see a link between the work I do and the BTC overall objectives*”. This is interpreted to mean BTC employees are inspired and motivated by their leaders to implement the organizational strategy. This conclusion agrees with Mubarak & Yusoff's (2019) study of 276 directors, where they suggested that leadership is considered a significant driver to determine a successful implementation and that the leadership role should be performed throughout while executing strategic decisions. The study further concluded that strategic leadership has positive impact on the execution and that effective execution of the strategy rests on the leadership's skills of motivating, building culture and working through others.

There is also a positive correlation of .359 between variables “*I see a link between the work I do and the BTC overall objectives*” and “*my leader reviews my performance and progress against the strategic objectives during the year*”. This is interpreted to mean BTC employees confirm that their leaders are concerned with ensuring their activities and tasks are in alignment with the organisational objectives and leaders constantly evaluate employee performance against strategic objectives to measure progress. This agrees with Inyang et al.'s (2018) findings, who concluded that it is vital for organisations to ensure their strategy is aligned with activities given to employees.

A negative correlation of $-.347$ is seen between variables “*What is your highest education level*” and “*are you an employee of BTC, where are you based*”. This means these variables are not related. Another negative correlation of $-.345$ is between “*my leader constantly communicates the vision of BTC and makes sure I understand where I fit in the bigger picture*” and “*my leader makes decisions without consulting me*”. This means these variables are not related. A leader who constantly communicates the vision to their followers will not make decisions without consulting them. These correlations are depicted in **Table 6** below.

4.1.3. Hypothesis Testing

The researchers performed a hypothesis testing on the items. Most categories were rejected but two categories were retained. The categories of “*I give others the responsibility to make important work decisions*” are occurring with equal probability of 50/50 meaning some managers give others the responsibility to

make decisions and some managers do not practice this. The categories of “*my current position is*”, also occurs with equal probabilities. The retained categories are depicted on **Table 7** below.

Table 6. Correlations.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	My current position is	My leader insists on strategy centric initiatives (tasks)?	My leaders inspires and motivates me to reach my greatest potential	My leader supports the current strategy? (training, resource, etc.)	I see a link between the work I do and the BTC overall objectives	What is your highest education level	My leader constantly communicates the vision of BTC and makes sure I understand where I fit in the bigger picture
What is your age	2.58	.673	.372**						
My leader emphasis on the organisational strategy?	4.18	.941		.608**					
I see a link between the work I do and the BTC overall objectives	4.34	.939			.346*				
My leader emphasis on the organisational strategy?	4.18	.941				.669**			
My leader reviews my performance and progress against the strategic objectives during the year	4.00	.969					.359*		
Are you an employee of BTC? Where are you based?	1.48	1.09						-.347*	
My leader makes decisions without consulting me	2.71	.842						-.345*	
My leader supports the current strategy. (training, resource, etc)	4.08	1.04	.683**						

Note *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Hypothesis retained.

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
The categories of “my current position is” occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.098	Retain the null hypothesis.
The categories of “I give others the responsibility to make important work decisions on their own” occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.062	Retain the null hypothesis.

Note The significance level is .50.

5. Discussion

The alignment of leaders to the strategy was tested and 90% of leaders said they are aware of the organizational vision. An above average response of 74% leaders said they encourage their teams to be strategy sensitive and review team performance against the strategy during the year. To confirm the leader's responses, 82% followers said their leaders insist on strategy centric initiatives. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation of .608 observed between variables "*my leader insists on strategy centric initiatives (tasks)*" and "*my leader emphasis on the organizational strategy*". The crosstabulation testing performed showed leaders at BTC of all educational levels are aware of the organizational vision. The results were 71% of leaders with bachelor's degree followed by 62% of leaders with master's degrees and 60% leaders with a diploma who responded that they are frequently if not always aware of the organizational vision. Informed by these results, it can be concluded that BTC leaders are aligned with the organizational strategy as they constantly emphasize the strategy to their followers by insisting on strategy centric initiatives, reviewing progress towards attaining organizational objectives and emphasizing on the organizational strategy.

5.1. BTC Leaders' Encouragement of Strategy Sensitivity in Followers

Leadership's contributions in ensuring their followers are strategy sensitive was tested. Above 82% of followers said their leader supports the current strategy through allocation of resources and training to support them in attaining strategic initiatives. A further 73% of followers said their leader constantly communicates the vision of BTC and makes sure they understand where they fit in the bigger picture. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation of .693 between variables "*my leader insists on strategy centric initiatives*" and "*my leader supports the current strategy by allocating resources and training*". Informed by these results, it can be concluded that BTC leaders encourage their followers to be strategy sensitive by constantly reminding them of the strategic objectives and providing resources and training where required, for followers to achieve the strategic initiatives.

5.2. Leadership's Discernible Effect on the Strategy Implementation

It was observed that reviewed prior research showed more similarities and some few differences to this research. Keter's (2015) findings agree with this study that leadership does have a significant impact on strategy implementation in various sectors, however in telecommunications there are more influential factors than leadership as the telecommunications sector is regulated and driven by global communication trends.

Findings from a study performed by Nwachukwu et al. (2018) corroborate this research in that leaders must create a culture which encourages and supports the commitment of employees to execute strategic initiatives. A similar position was

observed from Koskei (2003) in the study of public corporations where it was acknowledged that poor leadership styles have a significant effect of strategy execution however as leaders of public corporations do not have absolute freedom to optimize their own performance in implementing formulated strategies.

The study by Inyang et al. (2018) on the role of leadership in influencing the strategy implementation corresponds with this study where it established that it is vital for organizations to ensure their strategy is aligned with activities given to employees. This position is like this study where BTC followers confirmed that their leaders' place emphasis on the strategy by insisting on strategy centric initiatives.

Ikiara & Kariuki (2018) also agreed with the findings of this research when they concluded that there was need for leaders to provide resources and tools to achieve the strategic initiatives. This is a similar position to that of this research where BTC followers confirmed their leaders allocate resources and provide training to ensure they are equipped to achieve the strategic initiatives.

Research proposes that for successful strategy execution, middle managers must have a clear strategic direction from top management, even planned change such as inpost-merger situations (Alamsjah, 2020; Meyer, 2006; Balogun, & Johnson, 2005; Balogun, 2003). This agrees with findings from this research that leaders of all hierarchical levels at BTC are aware of the organizational strategy.

5.3. How Can BTC Improve?

Recommendations on improvements on the implementation of the strategy at BTC are proposed. Despite majority of leaders and followers confirming that BTC leaders have had a discernible effect on the implementation of the BTC strategy, there were some employees who felt leaders were not present. It has emerged from crosstabulations testing performed that 66% of BTC male followers believe their leaders fairly often and frequently if not always give them the responsibility to make important decisions on their own depicting the laissez faire leadership style. Based on the theories reviewed, it was established that the laissez faire leadership style is considered as lack of leadership as leaders rarely try to support their followers leading to followers who are not motivated and less interested in the strategy and its implementation (Northouse, 2010). It can be recommended that BTC leaders consider adopting both transformational and transactional leaderships as previous studies comparing leadership theories and styles generally found out that transformational leadership has stronger effects on the employee's commitment as well as performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transactional leadership has been found to have less risk as it gives attention to time constraints, resources, and efficiency (Lowe et al., 1996).

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

There are opportunities for further research in this area. This research used a sample of fifty (50) participants and there is an opportunity to expand the sam-

ple to ensure the respondents include employees in all BTC offices across the country. Despite having sent questionnaires to representatives of all BTC offices, some offices particularly BTC shops did not respond. BTC shops are remotely located from the head office, the researchers would have wanted to check if their responses would have led to a saturation of the same views or if their responses are different to responses from employees in head office where strategy is determined. The researchers would have wanted to check if they are aligned to the central strategy.

Secondly, it is recommended that further research can be performed by expanding the scope to include other telecommunications companies in Botswana then analyse if the results are the same or they are unique to BTC. Reviewed prior research indicates that the telecommunications sector is different as telecommunications experiences a higher rate of change. Lastly, it is recommended that a similar review be performed to expand the scope by using mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) for a full exploration of the impact of leadership on strategy implementation. Respondents should be allowed to explain their responses deeply and give more depth in their answers.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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