

Please! “On the Same Page” and “Devotion” Matters: The Role of Consensus and Commitment in Implementing Strategy Successfully for Middle Management

Lim Yee Wui *

*Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Utara Malaysia
Email: winniexbn@gmail.com*

Francis Chuah

*Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Utara Malaysia*

** Corresponding Author*

Abstract

Purpose: “On the same page - Consensus” and “Devotion – Commitment” are critical for strategy implementation success among middle management, albeit these have remained under-researched in the field of strategic management. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the middle manager’s consensus (Cs) and commitment (Ct) on the success of strategy implementation (SSI). In addition, the study examines the mediation role of Cs between Ct and SSI. This study offers valuable insight into the integration of theories and concepts by looking at higher learning institutions (HLIs).

Design/ methodology/ approach: Data was collected from 149 middle managers from both public and private higher learning institutions in Malaysia using convenience sampling and examined through partial least squares equation modelling using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings: As predicted, the results reveal that strategic commitment, both directly, and indirectly through strategic consensus, plays a significant role in the successful implementation of the institutions’ strategies. Through the lens of HLIs middle management, the findings indicated that strategic consensus and strategic commitment are substantial for strategy implementation success.

Research limitation/ implications: The study has limitations in terms of generalizability beyond Malaysian higher learning institutions. However, it contributes to the field of theory in strategic management and can guide future research efforts in this area. The study suggests that organisations must pay greater attention to consensus and commitment to enhance the strategy implementation success rate. These findings add to the existing body of knowledge and have implications for practitioners and future researchers.

Originality/ value: Drawing on contingency theory, this study predicts the effects of strategic consensus and strategic commitment toward successful strategy implementation. The study adds to the strategic management literature by focusing on the mediating relationship of the middle manager’s consensus between commitment and successful strategy implementation.

Keywords: Strategic consensus, Strategic commitment, Successful strategy implementation, Middle-management, Higher education, Higher learning institutions

Introduction

“On the same page – Consensus” and “Devotion – commitment” are critical for strategy implementation success, albeit these have remained under-researched in the field of strategic management. The success of strategy implementation is a critical area that must be seriously considered in achieving organisational success. Even a well-planned strategy can fail if it is not implemented properly. The translation of strategic goals and priorities is always more challenging than the crafting of an organisation's strategic plan (Hrebiniak, 2006). Even though the strategic plan is well formulated, the success of implementation by many organisations has been unsatisfactory (Cândido & Santos, 2018; Hitt et al., 2017). The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) recognises that a strategy that has been carefully developed or planned will not be viable without successful implementation. The successful implementation of a strategy may result in the organisation achieving the desired performance objectives. Often, extensive efforts, time and resources are expended to achieve the organisation's strategy. The success of the strategy implementation is usually overlooked, and the repercussions are unpredictable. As noted by Bhimavarapu, Kim and Xiong (2019), it is worthwhile to investigate effective approaches to close the gap in the strategy implementation process.

To date, several studies have demonstrated the importance of developing models for effective strategy implementation (MacLennan & Markides, 2021; Srivastava & Sushil, 2013). Despite past literatures recognising the significant impact of strategy implementation in the field of strategic management (Noble, 1999), little study has been conducted on this aspect of the effective strategic management process, particularly the integration of a framework linking the strategic variables towards organisational success in the implementation process (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021; Gonzalez-Benito et al., 2012). As a result, this study addresses the earlier shortcomings by exploring the link between strategic consensus, strategic commitment, and successful strategy implementation, particularly among Higher Learning Institutions' (HLIs) middle management. What's more, this study intends to add to the existing body of knowledge about the relationship between strategic commitment and successful plan implementation by investigating the intervening linkage effect of strategic consensus on strategy success, which shows a connection with organisational performance, sustainability, and establishing competitive advantage.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Succeeding in Strategy Implementation

The translation of strategic goals and priorities is always more challenging than the crafting of an organisation's strategic plan (Noble, 1999). Even if the strategic plan is well formulated, the success of the implementation of the strategic plan achieved by many organisations has been unsatisfactory (Hitt et al., 2017). The successful implementation of a strategy may result in the organisation achieving the desired performance objectives. Often, extensive efforts, time, and resources are expended to achieve the organisation's strategy. The success of the strategy implementation is usually overlooked, and the repercussions are unpredictable. As noted by Bhimavarapu, Kim and Xiong (2019), it is worthwhile to investigate effective approaches to close the gap in the strategy implementation process. Problems with strategy implementation are mostly the result of the strategy's failure to be implemented successfully in the first place (Hrebiniak, 2006). Franken et al. (2009) reported a failure rate ranging from 60% to 70%. The failure may prevent the achievement of previously planned strategic goals, negatively impact the organisation's performance and ability to sustain a competitive advantage. With the dynamic changes and the need for resilience toward sustainability, organisations need to sustain efforts toward shared understanding and commitment among strategic levels to achieve successful outcomes in the strategy implementation process (Tawse and Tabesh, 2021).

Strategic Consensus

“On the same page” or strategic consensus is a common term that is associated with shared understanding among managers in achieving organisational strategic goals and objectives (Feger, 2014; Tarakci et al., 2014). Traditionally, prominent strategic management scholars delve into research on the importance of being “on the same page” giving rise to organisational outcomes (Wach et al., 2021; Weller, Süß, Evanschitzky and von Wangenheim, 2020) and performance (Homburg, Krohmer & Workman, 1999; Dess & Priem, 1995; Dess, 1987). Bourgeois (1980) found that greater levels of consensus correlate directly with performance improvement. Almansour & Obembe (2021) argued the importance of being “on the same page” in the strategy implementation process. Köseoglu, Altin, Chan, & Aladag (2020) highlighted the paramount prominence of shared understanding during the implementing stage. Past researchers have claimed that having a shared understanding and agreement in place will foster a successful strategy implementation process, which shows a more favourable prospect for organisational performance (Porck et al., 2018; Desmidt & Georger, 2016; Mirzaei, Fredriksson, & Winroth, 2016; Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson; 2002; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992a).

Strategic Commitment

Lack of “commitment” or “devotion” among individuals in an organisation is an obstacle to the success of organisation strategy implementation (Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2009; Bourne et al., 2002). A manager’s commitment has a considerable and significant effect on the organisation’s strategy implementation success. The effects of strategic commitment on organisational success in implementing strategies towards organisational performance have garnered scholars’ attention in recent decades (Fryer, Tucker & Singer, 2018; Dess & Priem, 1995). Several scholars have postulated the significant role of commitment in strategy-related studies. Ramaseshan, Ishak & Rabbane (2013) found that when managers are committed to putting strategies into action, it significantly improves how well the organisation performs. Kohtamäki et al. (2012) reported that the viability of organisational strategic plans might be jeopardised when there is a lapse in managerial commitment. Past scholars have highlighted the significant connection between a manager’s commitment and other factors in enhancing the organisation’s performance (Rashid, Sambasivan & Johari, 2003; Yuan et al., 2018) and strategy implementation success (Dooley et al., 2000; Noble, 1999).

Middle Management

Wooldridge and Floyd (1990) emphasised the pivotal significance of a consensus and commitment among middle management in strategy process involvement. The intermediary and translator’s role of HLI’s middle management in between the stakeholders is essential and is no different than that of any other organisation (Hortovanyi, Szabo & Fuzes, 2021; Mansour, 2020; Radomska, 2014; Salih & Doll, 2013; Fauré & Rouleau, 2011). The success of strategy implementation requires the dedication and involvement of middle-level managers and those who are dedicated to organisational strategies. Middle management serves as a go-between between the top and stakeholders, assisting in the implementation of strategic goals, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organisation, and working on other strategic initiatives (Toegel, Levy & Jonsen, 2021; Davis, van Rensburg & Venter, 2016; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) and strategic change (Kieran, MacMahon & MacCurtain, 2020).

The participation of middle management in the strategy implementation process has a substantial impact on the organisational strategy process and performance (Tawse et al., 2024; Wooldridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008; Guth & Macmillan, 1986). As observed in past studies on the notion of the deliberate strategic role and being the key actors, the middle managers who exhibit adaptable behaviour are critical to the strategy implementation success of an organisation (Jaoua, 2018; Alamsjah, 2011; Huy, 2011; Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Floyd &

Wooldridge, 1992b). The participation and involvement of middle management in the strategy implementation process enhance the quality of strategies and increase the likelihood of successful execution. Insufficient involvement from the managers at the middle level is an unfavourable event for the success of the strategic implementation process (Holmemo & Ingvaldsen, 2016). HLIs' middle management is staffed by a combination of personnel occupying positions of director, dean, deputy dean, head of schools, head of departments, and so on (Pepper & Giles, 2015; Saunder & Sin, 2015).

Underpinning Theory and Proposed Research Model

The contingency theory is highly influential in the strategic management paradigm, which has always received considerable attention in comprehending existing strategic management studies (Mitchell, 2018; Oehmichen, Schrapp & Wolff, 2016; Boyd et al., 2012). Like complex organisations, HLIs consist of various units and divisions, each with its own functions, goals, and structures. Middle managers within HLIs are inherently situational and can differ under specific challenges, opportunities, and complex relationships encountered in respective operations (Tosi and Slocum, 1984). Middle managers in distinct units within a single organisation exhibit diverse behaviour (Govindarajan, 1988) in managing the interests and expectations of diverse internal and external stakeholders. Individual managers adapt contingently in adapting to complexity (Shepard & Hougland, 1978) from different divisions or business units and respond to different contingency factors and/or different forms in implementing HLI's strategies, reflecting the dynamic nature of complex organisations. This aligns with the organisation contingency approach used by past scholars in interpreting managers' views of organisational effectiveness and success (Bourgeois, 1984). This study explores the diverse HLI middle managers' perceptions of strategic consensus, strategic commitment, and successful strategy implementation under contingency theory (Govindarajan, 1988). The proposed research model in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

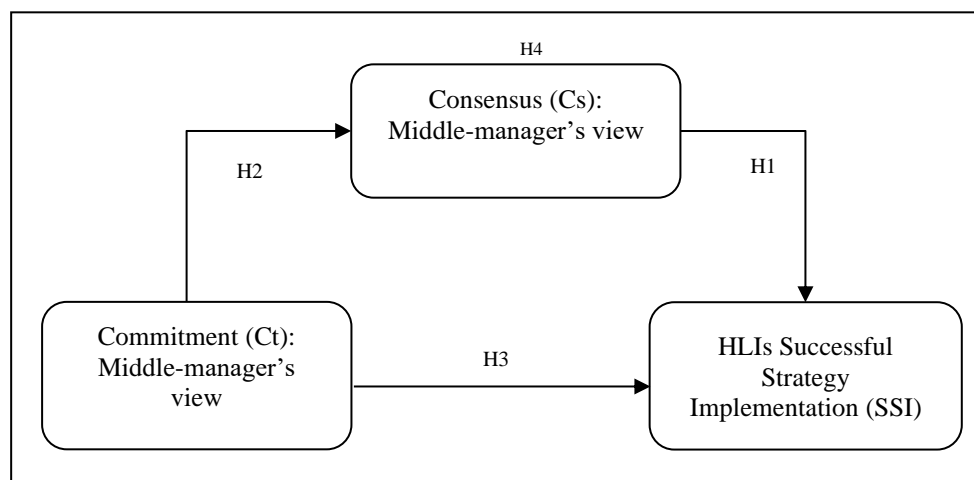


Figure 1: Research model

Hypothesis development

A comprehensive review by Kellermanns et al. (2011) discovered the significant role of strategic consensus on organisational performance in realising and implementing strategies. Strategic consensus gives rise to organisational outcomes and improved organisational effectiveness (Wach et al., 2021; Weller et al., 2020; Desmidt & Georger, 2016; Tarakci et al., 2014; Homburg, Krohmer & Workman; 1999). As noted by Noble (1999), when managers do not have a clear and common consensus, it becomes an obstacle to implementing strategies effectively. Several scholars have highlighted the vital presence of shared consensus in

enhancing the success of implementing organisational strategies (Priem, 1990; Dess, 1987). On the contrary, Gonzalez-Benito et al. (2012) pointed out inconsistent results in the consensus-performance relationship in the strategy implementation process. Both Wooldridge and Floyd (1990) also noted that strategic consensus is related but not tied to improving the organisation's performance. Drawing from such findings, it is postulated that middle managers who are perceived to be on the same page will contribute to successful strategy implementation. Thus, the study hypothesises the following:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between the middle manager's consensus and the success of strategy implementation.

In the past, scholars asserted that there was a significant form of linkage between strategic commitment and strategic consensus (Carney, 2007; Kellermanns et al., 2005; Dess & Origer, 1987). Consensus and commitment among strategic managers in decision-making will be beneficial to the organisation's performance and effectiveness (Rapert, Lynch & Suter, 1996). Floyd & Wooldridge (1992a) claimed the importance of strategic commitment and strategic consensus as pivotal variables in building organisational strategy success. Dess & Priem (1995) identified the significant relationship between strategic consensus and strategic commitment among top management teams. Therefore, within the framework of this study, we suggest that there is a relationship between middle managers' commitment and consensus, hypothesising as follows:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between the middle manager's commitment and consensus.

As observed by Smith (2009), commitment may contribute to a better understanding of strategy implementation. The success of the strategy implementation requires the dedication and involvement of middle-level managers in committing and those who are dedicated to the organisational strategies. Managers who are devoted and committed to strategy implementation enhance organisational performance (Kohtamäki, Kraus, Mäkelä & Rönkkö, 2012). Strategic commitment among managers is associated with the organisation's strategy implementation (Ramaseshan, Ishak & Rabbanee, 2013). A middle-level manager's commitment to ensuring successful strategy implementation has a considerable and significant effect on organisational performance. The effects of strategic commitment on organisational success in implementing strategies towards organisational performances have garnered scholars' attention in recent decades (Fryer et al., 2018; Alamsjah, 2011; Noble, 1999; Dess & Priem, 1995). According to Wooldridge & Floyd (1990), the lack of commitment among middle management may end in unfavourable outcomes in the strategy implementation process. As a result, strategic commitment has the potential to be applied to enhance the success of strategy implementation. Accordingly, we hypothesised that:

H₃: There is a positive relationship exists between the manager's commitment and the success of strategy implementation.

One study by Dooley et al. (2000) described how strategic decision consensus helps build commitment, which in turn facilitates strategy implementation speed and success. In the opinion of several scholars (Yuan et al., 2018; Dooley et al., 2000; Noble, 1999), successfully implementing a strategy can produce exceptional results, culminating in the achievement of the desired organisation's success and outcomes. Commitment among strategic decision-makers (Kohtamäki et al., 2012) is crucial to implementing organisational strategies effectively. Carney (2007) articulated that the managers' involvement and commitment are likely to result in the development of strategic consensus. Consensus and commitment among strategic-level managers in decision-making will be beneficial to the organisation's performance (Rapert et al., 1996). Shared understanding and agreement among middle managers are facilitated by the

presence of shared consensus. This, in turn, can increase the commitment of middle managers in implementing the organisation’s strategy effectively. Some researchers suggested that uncommitted managers can hinder the strategy implementation process (Urquhart et al., 2019; Ramaseshan et al., 2013). Specifically, the paper investigates the mediating effect of strategic consensus on the relationship between strategic commitment and successful strategy implementation. Organisational strategies are more likely to be implemented successfully when middle managers are on the same page and are devoted to committing to successfully implementing the organisational strategies. Hence, grounded by the consensus-performance linkage research (Dess & Priem, 1995; Dess & Origer, 1987) that suggests additional variables, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H4: A positive indirect relationship exists between the manager’s commitment and successful strategy implementation via consensus.

Methods

Sample, Sampling, Data Collection, Measurement

Participants in the study are middle managers from both public and private HLIs. According to the MOHE official website (2019), there are a total of 20 public and 40 private universities registered with higher education institutions in Malaysia. The list of middle managers for this study was extracted from the official websites of these institutions. Email invitations were sent to those bearing the following titles: directors, deputy directors, deans, deputy deans, head of departments, head of programmes, assistant deans, chief operating officers, senior managers, managers, and equivalent to participate in the e-survey. A total of 1388 email invitations were distributed from January to June 2020 to those who held middle-management positions for at least one year across these institutions to participate in this study. A final sample of 149 usable responses was used for analysis as it is considered sufficient, Kock and Hadaya (2018). All the items of measurement were adopted from the previous studies as given in Table 1. A seven-point Likert scale was used in this study.

Table 1: Measurement of Items

Constructs	Items	Sources
Commitment (Ct)	1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that is normally expected in order to help the strategy be successful.	Ateş et al., (2020)
	2. The institution strategy really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	Parnell (2008)
	3. Often, I do not find it difficult to agree with the institution’s strategy.	
	4. I really care about the achievement of this institution’s strategy.	
	5. For me, the institution's strategy is the best of all possible strategies to work on.	
Consensus (Cs)	1. Everyone works hard and closely in implementing the institution’s strategy.	Knight et al., (1999)
	2. The institution seeks advice from all the faculties/departments/divisions when making important strategic decisions.	
	3. Everyone's input is incorporated into the institution's strategic directions and decisions.	
	4. Everyone in the institution is committed to achieving the institution's goals.	
	5. Everyone in the institution works closely to reach a decision when evaluating strategic alternatives.	
HLI’s Successful Strategy	1. The institution implements its strategic plan effectively.	Noble & Makwa (1999)
	2. Each of the institution implementation task has been well completed.	

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| Implementation (SSI) | 3. The institution is satisfied with the implementation of its strategic plan.
4. The institution strategy implementation effort was very encouraging.
5. The implementation of the strategy was generally considered a success in the institution. |
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Data Analysis

This study used MS Excel for descriptive analysis. SmartPLS software for the statistical approach in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM technique is suitable for models with multiple latent constructs and indicators, making it an optimal choice for assessing the relationship's effect in this research model (Ryan, 2020; Memon et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2011). Additionally, PLS-SEM facilitates the simultaneous evaluation of the measurement and structural models, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the model fit (Hair et al., 2011). Furthermore, the predictive capabilities of PLS-SEM align with the objectives of this study (Memon et al., 2021; Shmueli, 2019; Hair et al., 2012). PLS-SEM also allows for more robust validation in testing the hypothesised research model, enhancing its applicability to real-world scenarios, which are commonly found in various research areas (Hair et al., 2019).

Sampling Profile

149 middle managers participated in this study, 57% from public higher institutions and 43% from private higher institutions. Among these respondents, 61% were male and 39% female. Data were collected from participants ranging in six age brackets: 3% (4) of respondents from 30 to 35 years old, 11% (17) from 35 to 39 years old, 20% (30) from 40 to 44 years old, 30% (44) from 45 to 49 years old, 17% (26) from 50 to 54 years old and 19% from 55 years old and above. Respondents from this study must have at least one year of experience in a middle-management role. The majority of the respondents were deputy deans, with 37% (55) and 24% (36) being deans. 14% (21) were heads of different departments and programmes, 11% (16) were directors and 8% (11) held other positions such as assistant dean, chief operating officer, deputy director, senior manager and manager. Similarly, 7% (7) previously held roles including director, dean, deputy dean, head of department and head of programme.

Evaluation of Measurement Model

Both commitment and successful strategy implementation were modelled as reflective measurement models, given that the items measured represent the underlying construct. In line with methodological scholars (Hair et al., 2024; Henseler & Schubert, 2020), the measurement models for this study were assessed for internal consistency and reliability. As demonstrated in Table 2, the reflective measurement model results denote factor loadings (0.783-0.908) and composite reliability (0.926-0.950), which were all above the required threshold of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2017), shows all indicators in the variables are reliable. Besides, the average variance extracted scores (0.713-0.792) of each construct are all greater than 0.50. The convergent validity, discriminant validity and factor loading results show that all the indicators in the variables in this measurement model are reliable and satisfactory, as the results meet the required threshold of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2024).

Table 2: Results of the measurement model

Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Ct1	0.826	0.926	0.713
Ct2	0.891		
Ct3	0.845		
Ct4	0.783		
Ct5	0.875		
SSI1	0.900	0.950	0.792
SSI2	0.908		
SSI3	0.852		
SSI4	0.892		
SSI5	0.897		

No violation against the HTMT.85 threshold was found in this study and the results are displayed in Table 3 indicating that discriminant validity has been ascertained. All HTMT ratios were below 0.85, indicating that the measurement model has discriminant validity.

Table 3: Assessment of Discriminant Validity

	Ct	SSI
Commitment (Ct)		
Successful Strategy Implementation (SSI)	0.762	
	CI _{.85} (0.653;0.848)	

Table 4 shows the results of the formative measurement model assessment. Collinearity was examined by using the variance inflation factor (VIF). The VIF results indicate that multicollinearity is a concern (VIF > 3.3 for some of the indicators). We employ correlation weights (Mode A) (Becker et al., 2013; Benitez et al., 2020) in our estimation since the estimation is not affected by multicollinearity (Henseler & Schubert, 2020). The assessment of weights confirms the relative contribution of each item to the composite ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, the items show an absolute contribution to the composite as the results of the loading are higher than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 4: Formative measurement model assessment

Items	Weights	Std Dev	t	p	VIF	Loadings	p
Cs1	0.211	0.015	14.480	0.000	2.652	0.812	0.000
Cs2	0.245	0.016	15.537	0.000	4.144	0.886	0.000
Cs3	0.232	0.013	17.290	0.000	3.669	0.863	0.000
Cs4	0.223	0.012	18.784	0.000	3.226	0.869	0.000
Cs5	0.240	0.011	21.597	0.000	3.411	0.903	0.000

Structural Model Assessment

After the measurement model's reliability and validity were confirmed, the structural model was evaluated. We investigate the structural model using guidelines from the literature (Hair et al., 2020; Ramayah et al., 2018). We start to examine the lateral collinearity issue in the structural path model, the coefficient of determination and the effect size. The bootstrapping method was run using 10,000 subsamples (Becker et al., 2023). All the VIF values for the constructs (commitment and consensus) in the structural model are not a concern in this study (VIF < 3.3).

The path relationships, coefficients and significance results are presented in Table 5. All four relationships are found to have a t-value ≥ 1.645 , thus significant at 0.05 level of significance. All the proposed relationships, H1, H2 and H3 are supported. The middle managers in the HLIs' perceived commitment is positively related to the manager's consensus ($\beta = 0.784$, $t = 19.599$, $R^2 = 0.615$) and the successful strategy implementation ($\beta = 0.364$, $t = 3.791$). Consensus among middle managers is also positively associated with strategy implementation success ($\beta = 0.436$; $t = 4.359$). Both middle managers' commitment and consensus explain 61.5% of the variability in the success of implementing strategies and they assert medium to large effect size on strategy implementation. The assessment of mediation, on the other hand, yields a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.341$, $t = 4.507$, [LLCI = 0.214; ULCI = 0.454]) suggests the middle manager's consensus mediates the relationship between commitment and strategy implementation success.

The R^2 value of 0.571 is above the 0.50 value as suggested by Hair et al. (2017) which indicates a moderate model. When considering the effect size (f^2), the Cohen (1988) guideline is used. We see that commitment has a substantial effect on consensus ($f^2 = 1.595$), while commitment has a close to medium effect on the successful strategy implementation ($f^2 = 0.119$). Furthermore, the result ($f^2 = 0.170$) observed consensus has a medium effect on strategy implementation success. Following that, we evaluate the model's predictive relevance in Q^2 using the blindfolding procedure. Both the predictive assessment values for the endogenous constructs in the research model are greater than 0.35 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that the model is capable of in-sample prediction.

Table 5: Structural Model Assessment

	β	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	VIF	f^2	R^2	Q^2
Ct -> Cs	0.784	19.599	0.000	0.712	0.842	1.000	1.595	0.615	0.455
Ct -> SSI	0.364	3.791	0.000	0.196	0.510	2.595	0.119	0.571	0.444
Cs -> SSI	0.436	4.359	0.000	0.263	0.585	2.595	0.170		
Ct -> Cs -> SSI	0.341	4.507	0.000	0.214	0.454				

The endogeneity biases of the structural model are assessed through the analysis of the Gaussian copula (Hult et al., 2018). The results are shown in Table 6. The results revealed that none of the copulas in the model were significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, endogeneity is not an issue for the prediction of the relationship in the research model.

Table 6: Endogeneity Assessment (** $p < .005$)

	β	p
GC (Ct -> Cs)	-0.097	0.319
GC (Ct -> SSI)	-0.183	0.184
GC (Cs -> SSI)	-0.120	0.312

Discussion

This study builds on assessing the middle manager's view on the relationship between commitment, consensus and the success of strategy implementation. The findings suggested that managers perceived all the proposed constructs as significant determinants of the success of HLI strategy implementation. These findings are consistent with those of past literatures (Nwachukwu, Zufan & Chladkova, 2020; Dooley et al., 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992). The research outcome implies that the absence of shared consensus can be serious for an institution's success in the strategy implementation process. This study denotes that when middle managers are on the same page, strategy implementation is more successful. Therefore, HLIs should foster a culture and strengthen mechanisms that encourage commitment and

shared understanding among individual managers, as these attributes play a fundamental role in enhancing strategy implementation success. Secondly, it has been observed that a considerable level of manager commitment fosters common understanding during the strategy implementation process. Furthermore, the study also reveals that a manager's commitment influences the effectiveness of achieving the strategies. Hence, institutions should not neglect developing ways of improving managers' commitment, as this builds manager consensus towards greater strategy achievement, which displays greater strategy implementation success. This paper provides a conceptualisation for both academics and practitioners on the effect of successful strategy implementation. Committed and dedicated managers will be more likely to have a strategy successfully implemented (Lozano et al., 2015). Additionally, this study discovered that consensus has a relatively close indirect effect on the relationship between a manager's commitment and the success of strategy implementation. When individual managers perceive they are on the same page, they are more driven and devoted to attaining the strategies successfully. A possible reason for this is that when the manager appears to have a more common understanding, the manager feels more determined to commit to and effectively implement strategies. As a result, institutions should not overlook initiatives to build and strengthen managers' shared understanding, as this fosters managers' commitment to effectively implementing strategies.

The obvious lack of empirical studies on constructs that drive the success of strategy implementation solicits the call for further research, which was duly addressed in this paper. In this study, consensus and commitment are examined in predicting the successful strategy implementation. Thus, this study adds to existing research on strategic management, particularly in the strategy implementation approach. The model was tested by gaining empirical support from a sample of middle managers in the context of higher education. This study comprehends the growing literature, explains the intervening effects of consensus, commitment and successful strategy implementation in strategic management studies considering the theoretical importance of doing so, which has received little attention (Aguinis, Edward & Bradley, 2017).

Conclusion

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

It is critical to take a holistic approach, considering all the constructs involved in bringing strategy to life. While the study revealed some significant findings and contributions, it does have certain shortcomings. Firstly, the geographical scope of the research is restricted to the HLIs in Malaysia. Hence, this study could not be considered generalizable to all. This study examines individual middle managers' perceptions from diverse HLIs. Thus, our findings might not be generalizable to all individuals as different individual managers perceive and behave differently. Besides, this is a cross-sectional study at this point which might increase the potential for common method variance. These findings cannot depict a clear picture of HLIs in Malaysia, with varying individual behaviour changes over time and the levels of commitment and consensus to implementing the HLIs strategies. To acquire deeper insights into theory and practice, it would be interesting for future scholars to extend the model to other settings. The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of the present study at a single point in time, potentially overlooking dynamic fluctuations and trends. Thus, the incorporation of longitudinal research might be necessary for future work to provide a more comprehensive view of the aspects that affect strategy implementation success. Ultimately, this study has demonstrated that commitment and consensus play pivotal roles as predictors influencing the efficacy of strategy implementation among middle-level managers. Future research endeavours could explore other mediator or moderator variables that may exhibit correlations with successful strategy implementation. Future investigations should encompass other contextual factors not considered in this study for robustness and stability of findings.

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