

INNOVATIONS

Effect of Strategic Management Practices on Affective Commitment of Academic Staff in Public Higher Education Institutions of Ethiopia

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Abstract

Strategic management practice and organizational commitment are two essential elements for the success of an organization. The two concepts have received researchers' interest in academia and outside (corporate researchers). The reasons for more investigation of strategic management and organizational commitment are their association with performance, achievement of organizational goals, and the interest of researchers to explain and understand how an employee commitment and strategy contributor to organizational performance. This study was carried out in this vein setting sights on the Ethiopian public higher education institutions setting. With the overall aim of investigating the effect of strategic management practice on the affective commitment of academic staff, four publicly owned universities in the North cluster were targeted in this study. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted employing a structured questionnaire which was administered to 372 respondents proportionally selected from targeted universities. The collected data was quantitatively analyzed by using descriptive as well inferential statistics. Hence, the study's findings revealed that strategic management practices manifested in environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation are positively correlated with the affective commitment of academic staff in NCPUs Ethiopia. Moreover, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluation significantly impact the affective commitment of academic staff. At the same time, the research failed to show the significant effect of environmental scanning on the affective commitment of academic staff in NCPUs of Ethiopia. Public higher education institutions in the north of the country need to use strategic management practice as a management approach to better engage their academic staff.

Keywords: 1. Strategic management organizational commitment process North cluster Affective University

Introduction

Education is acknowledged as a necessary resource for both individuals and the public. The higher education system/sector is vital in transforming society by providing much-needed human and technological resources to promote and sustain development across many sectors. The provision of quality human resources capable of driving economic growth can be guaranteed by creating a vibrant Higher Education sector.

The role of academic staff is so critical to the proper functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs). They are considered the lifeblood. Without them, institutions cannot discharge their

mandates. The role of academic staff is not limited to teaching, research, community services; it extends to innovation and administration. Altbach (2006) described that academic staff is key actors in accomplishing the mission, goals, and responsibilities mandated HEIs. Further, Iliya and Ifeoma (2015) state that academic staffs are essential elements in the education process since their quality and ability are critical for institutional success. Without high qualified and committed academic staff, no HEI can guarantee quality and sustainability in the long run (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CPID], 2014). In a nutshell, they are the main actors in higher learning institutions, so the organizational commitment of academic staff can be quite imperative to the achievement of institutional goals and objectives.

In the same way, Strategic Management is essential for the success of any organization. It is a collection of management actions that managers carry out. It permits them to keep an institution paralleled with its environment and on the right track of development, as a result of which its objectives and mission are realized (Dess et al., 2007; Morris & Johnson, 1992; Steinthorsson & Söderholm, 2002). To the same degree, strategic management is also praised for providing benefits such as increased discipline, effective coordination, improved communication, minimal resistance to change, enhanced foresight, better decision making, high synergy, and more effective allotment of resources and time for an organization (Greenley, 1986). Analoui and Karami (2003) assert organization's strategy augments competitive advantages and simultaneously decreases the organizations' competitive disadvantages.

For a long time, strategic management has been used in business and associated primarily with private sector enterprises. However, strategic management has become one of the most commonly utilized managerial practices in government and public sector enterprises from a few decades, an increasingly relevant practice in the public sector arena (Hansen Rosenberg, 2011; Weiss, 2017). Strategic management and organizational commitment are two essential issues in the Ethiopian higher education system. Proper practice of strategic management coupled with a solid academic commitment can mean a lot for the success and transformation of the institutions. Investigating the potential impact of strategic management practices on organizational commitment, especially affective commitment, has paramount significance for the leadership as well as stakeholders of the institutions. The affective commitment is the highest-level commitment, which many researchers regard as the essence of organizational commitment. Meyer et al. (2002) assert the most significant predictive relationship exists between affective commitment and outcomes like absenteeism and turnover.

Problem Statement

Many developments in the sector and outside it has challenged the higher education system. Ethiopian tertiary education has been developing rapidly in the last three decades, hosting hundreds of thousands of students per annum. The role of committed staff in addressing some of the most pressing challenges cannot be overlooked.

A well-functioning higher education system is more important than any other industry or commercial sector due to its ability to feed those sectors through the capable workforce, leadership, and research (Lombardi, 2001). The higher education sector is believed to be the engine of economic growth.

The concepts of strategy and strategic management practices are just as relevant and vital in the arena of public sector organizations as of commercial establishments (Whittington et al., 2005).

Several studies established a positive link between Strategic management and organizational commitment. An organization that lacks a committed staff, especially at the top, should not engage in strategic planning (Bryson, 1988).

Management literature has long recognized the positive undoubted impact of employee commitment on the success of an organization. Organizational commitment also provides remarkable benefits to an organization. From committed employees, an organization can get benefits in many ways. For instance, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) stated that OC can contribute to organizational effectiveness to a great extent. Further, Allen and Meyer (1990) ascribed OC to reduce the turnover of employees.

Committed employees are unlikely to leave the organization (Angle & Perry, 1981; Meyer et al., 2002).

Some studies underpinned that organizational commitment's ramification is associated with job performance and withdrawal behavior, such as motive to hunt for alternatives, intention to leave, and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac 1990). Organizational commitment should result in improved relationships and performance (Rylander,2003). In particular, affective organizational commitment has been positively correlated with organizational performance measures (Wright et al., 2005). Interestingly, Shahid and Azhar (2013) indicated that individuals who are committed can frequently get things done still in the absence of very well-established systems, and committed staff is essential for higher productivity.

From the latter half of the 1990s and into the 21st century, the landscape of HEIs experienced new trends such as reengineering, business transformation, and continuous quality improvements, massification, rise in international student population and diversity, increased cross border education, MOOCs, marketization, reduction in state funds, competition for better students and funds, incubation, etc. For the success of any organization, employee commitment plays an irreplaceable role. The topic of organizational commitment has been researched by many researchers and practitioners almost in all sectors across the globe, including higher education. The findings highlight the significance of organizational commitment for the success of organizations. The reason for more investigation of organizational commitment is due to its association with performance, achievement of organizational goals, and the interest of researchers to explain and understand how an employee is dedicated to their organization (Buchanan,1974; Benkhoff, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002; Lumley et al.,2010). However, a limited study reveals how public sector organizations practice strategic management and the strategic management tools in the strategy-making process (Svårdsten et al., (2018). Similarly, Johnsen (2016) also mentioned that too little is known about the adoption and practice of Strategic Management and its potential consequences in public sector organizations. Hence, this study attempted to explore the effect strategic Management practices play on the Affective commitment of academic staff within the context of public higher education institutions of Ethiopia, mainly north cluster public universities, to fill the existing knowledge gap in this regard. Therefore, this research seeks an answer to the following fundamental research questions:

1. What is the level of affective commitment of the academic staff of NCPUs of Ethiopia?
2. Does strategic management practice affect the affective commitment of the academic staff of NCPUs of Ethiopia?

Research Objectives

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the impact of strategic management practices on the affective commitment of academic staff in NCPUs of Ethiopia. Precisely, practices of environmental analysis (scanning), strategy formulation (strategic planning), strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Environmental Scanning impacts Affective Commitment (AC) of academic staff in north cluster public universities of Ethiopia.

H2: Strategy Formulation positively impacts Affective Commitment (AC) of academic staff in north cluster public universities of Ethiopia.

H3: Strategy Implementation positively impacts Affective Commitment (AC) of academic staff in north cluster public universities of Ethiopia.

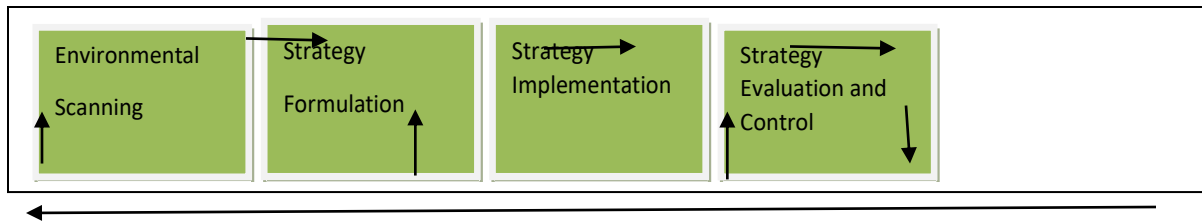
H4: Strategy Evaluation positively impacts Affective Commitment (AC) of academic staff in north cluster public universities of Ethiopia.

Review of Literature Strategic Management

There is no single precise definition for strategic management. Strategic management is an activity concerned with determining an enterprise's fundamental goals and objectives to be achieved in the long term, selecting courses of action, and allocating necessary resources to fulfill the stated purposes (Chandler, 1962). Strategic management is a series of decisions and actions that guide the development of a successful strategy or multiple strategies to assist the achievement of corporate objectives (Glueck & Jauch 1984). Likewise, Teece (1990) Strategic management is all about formulating, implementing, and evaluating managerial activities that maximize the value of an enterprise. Even though there are several different definitions, there are common aspects included in most definitions. Hence strategic management practice represents all the activities done by the institution's leadership to the achievements of institutional goals and objectives. It encompasses mainly the following strategic management process elements.

Strategic Management process

Figure 1 essential elements of SM process



Measurement of Organizational

the strategic management practices incorporate all the significant stages of the strategic management process. Environmental scanning is viewed as the first activity. It is defined as the monitoring, evaluation, and communication of information from both the external (threats and opportunities) and internal (strengths and weaknesses) environment to essential individuals within the organization (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012) after a thorough analysis of the environment the second function is Strategy formulation (strategic planning). According to Wheelen and Hunger (2012), Strategy formulation, commonly described as strategic planning (long-range planning), is a component of strategic management that deals with crafting an organization's mission (purpose), objectives, strategies, and policies. It is the process of deciding what to do to achieve institutional goals and objectives. Strategy implementation is the third practice in the strategic management process in putting the crafted strategy into action. Hitt et al. (2014) describe the strategy implementation phase as initiating organizational practices and policies, as defined in the strategy during the formulation. The final stage strategy development process is Strategy evaluation. Strategy evaluation and control are when organizational undertakings and performance results are assessed to compare actual results with aimed performance (David, 2011; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012).

Organizational commitment

The positive effects of organizational commitment have been well acknowledged in management literature. Employee commitment is a factor that binds them to the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Besides Fornes et al. (2008), Mowday et al. (1992) hinted at its role in aiding the success of an organization. Commitment is also related to positive organizational results such as job performance (Chen et al., 2006), the satisfaction of employees (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002), and turnover (Meyer et al., 2002; Powell & Meyer, 2004).

At first, Meyer and Allen (1984) regarded OC as two-dimensional, particularly affective and continuance. However, after additional research, they came up with a third dimension, namely normative commitment, and developed the three components model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment (OC). Namely, affective, continuance, and normative (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Many studies have provided strong empirical support to validate that the components or dimensions in the Three Components Model (TCM) forwarded are incredibly able to be distinguished from one another (Dunham et al., 1994; Mc Gee & Ford, 1987). This study focuses on the affective component of OC.

Affective commitment (AC)

According to Allen and Meyer (1990), Affective Commitment is defined as "an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization." Hence the affective dimension of commitment is positive feelings of employee's identification with an attachment to and involvement in the job organization.

Porter et al. (1982) defined affective commitment as an emotional bond to an organization demonstrated by acceptance of the organization's values and a desire to remain with the organization. In the workplace, the most highly valued behavior is affective commitment. It is demonstrated by an emotional bond that strengthens the employee's attachment to the organization.

Strategic management and Organizational commitment

Several studies establish a positive link between Strategic management and organizational commitment. Bryson (1988) stressed in the absence of senior management commitment, strategic planning should not be undertaken by an organization. Employee participation in the strategic planning process can help strengthen organizational commitment. Simultaneously, plans developed by engaging employees are more likely to be implemented successfully (Breda, 2000; Kettunen, 2003; Kohtamaki et al., 2012).

Dvir et al. (2004) highlight the critical importance of vision as an influential tool for cementing the attachment of employees on an emotional level toward their organizations. Employee commitment to the organization is associated with a vision statement that aligns personal and organizational values (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). Mission statements are commonly used by organizations as a tool to augment employee commitment. (Campbell & Nash, 1992). Similarly, it is also hinted at the significance of creating an evaluation mechanism that delivers precise feedback in order to keep employees committed to achieving organizational goals (Armstrong, 1982). Furthermore, Dooley et al. (2000) argue that organizational commitment is a factor that boosts the motivation of the employees and shrinks the duration required for strategy implementation. Employees' engagement and commitment are fundamental for successfully implementing Organizational strategic change (Elbanna, 2008).

Based on a review of related literature, it is clear that strategic management and organizational commitment are essential concepts getting attention in higher education learning institutions worldwide in the last decades. The changing landscape of the higher education sector in Ethiopia needs further research. There is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the effect of strategic management practice on the organizational commitment of academic staff in the Ethiopian public higher learning institutions context. As a result, the purpose of this research is to fill the gap that existed in this regard.

Research Methodology

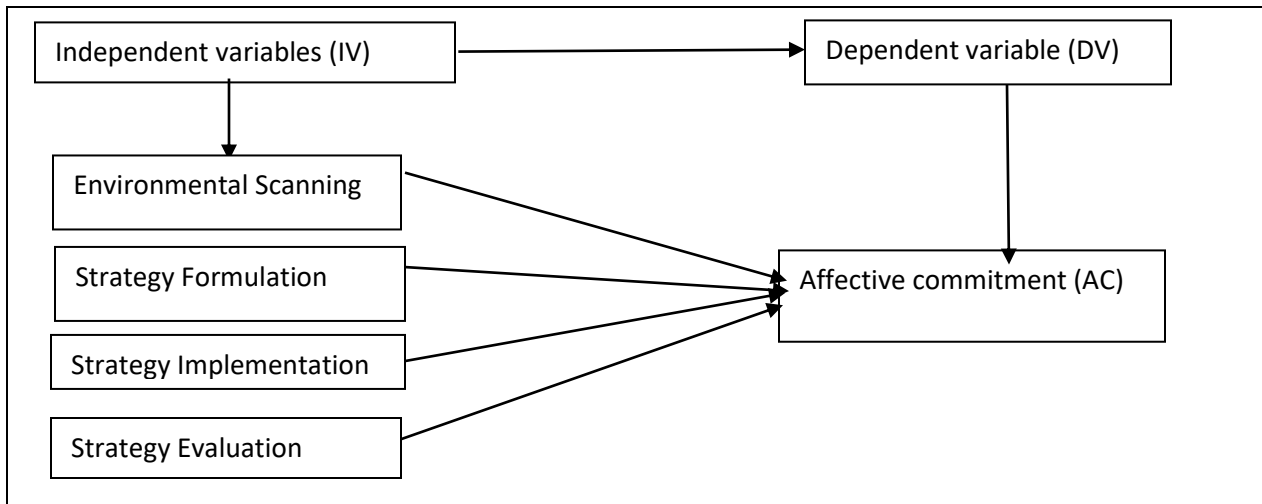
In carrying out this study, a quantitative research design was employed to provide descriptive, correlational, and causal features of the issues under investigation. A cross-sectional survey strategy was utilized for collecting quantitative data from respondents in targeted universities. The study was conducted in four member universities north cluster. They are Mekelle, Adigrat, Aksum, and Samara universities.

The target population of the study was the academic staff and academic leaders. The study's total academic staff population was 5350 (Mekelle, 1800, Adigrat 1500, Aksum 1100, and Samara 950). Samples were selected proportionately from targeted universities. The sample size of 372 was obtained using Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination. Accordingly, samples from participating universities were selected based on the staff number. Hence the corresponding proportionate samples were 125 from Mekelle, 104 from Adigrat, 76 from Aksum, and 67 from Samara. Finally, by utilizing a simple random sampling technique, sample respondents were contacted.

A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree based. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. In this study, five constructs were constructed, of which four constructs measure strategic management practices, and one construct measures Affective commitment (AC). Most of the items in the strategic management practices questionnaire were developed from the literature by the researchers, while the affective commitment scale was adopted from Allen and Meyer's (1991) TCM.

Independent variables were strategic management practices which consist of environmental scanning (ES), Strategy formulation (SF), Strategy implementation (SI), and Strategy evaluation (SE) were regarded as independent variables. While Affective commitment (AC) was considered as the dependent variable, as shown in figure 1

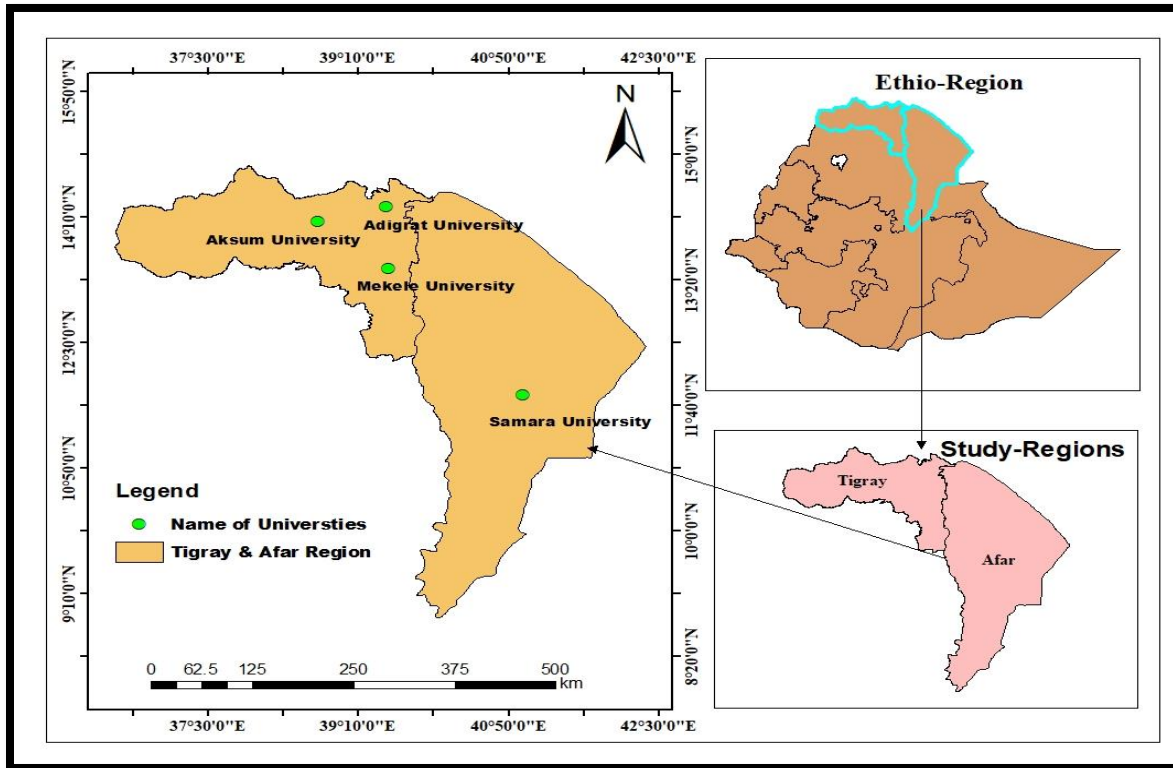
Figure 2 Conceptual framework of the study



Scope and Delimitation of the study

This study examined the effect of strategic management practice on affective commitment (AC) of the academic staff and leaders in North Cluster Public Universities of Ethiopia. Participants were academic leaders (management) and academic staff from member universities in the northern cluster (Mekelle, Samara, Adigrat, and Aksum). Raya University, which was established recently, was not part of this study due to its infant age. The necessary data were collected in 2020/21. Ethiopia is relatively a vast country. Geographically this study is restricted to north Ethiopia, a cluster of public-owned universities in Tigray and Afar regional states. Private colleges and universities and other public universities in other clusters were not considered in this study. Furthermore, the study conceptually was concerned only with the potential effect of strategic management process elements, namely environmental scanning, strategy formulation (strategic planning), strategy implementation, and finally, strategy evaluation on the affective dimension of organizational commitment as forwarded by Meyer and Allen in 1991.

Figure 3 Geographical site of the Study Area



Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings cross-sectional quantitative survey utilized to collect data for this study. For measuring the variables, a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was developed. To interpret the results of descriptive analysis, this study utilized a mean score and std deviations. Hence, a mean score greater than three was taken as agreement, while a mean score less than three was judged as disagreement. Therefore, analysis was made by comparing the computed mean score of the construct with 3.

Descriptive statistics and correlations among Constructs

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Constructs

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environmental Scanning (ES)	372	3.97	.518
Strategy Formulation (SF)	372	3.83	.495
Strategy Implementation (SI)	372	3.06	.831
Strategy Evaluation (SE)	372	3.51	.668
Affective Commitment (AC)	372	3.48	.687

As shown in Table 1 above, the mean score for the environmental scanning construct was 3.97 with a standard deviation of .518. This indicates respondents' agreement to the environmental scanning practice of targeted universities. The result also showcases respondents are agreed with the presence of strategy formulation practice. The mean score for the construct was 3.83, with a standard deviation of .495. Which also reveals the existence of strategy formulation practice in targeted universities.

Regarding the practice of strategy implementation, respondents agreed. The total mean score (mean=3.06, std deviation =.831) for the construct indicates that respondents were agreed on the existence of strategy implementation endeavors in targeted universities.

As one can be noticed from the above table 1, respondents agreed (mean=3.51, std deviation=.668) with the practice of strategy evaluation and control in targeted universities.

Among all the constructs of strategic management practices, environmental scanning received the highest agreement from respondents.

The affective commitment, which is regarded as a dependent variable in this study, respondents expressed their affective commitment towards their universities. the mean score for the construct (mean =3.48, std deviation .687).

The descriptive results show that the main elements of strategic management practice are in place in targeted universities. At the same, the level of affective commitment of academic staff was found to be above average. According to Newman et al. (2001), the Strategic Planning process will not be completed unless the academics commits to it. Employees who perceive a high level of Affective commitment, according to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), are more likely to want to stay with their company.

Before running and analyzing the regression model for testing the research hypotheses, Pearson correlations were analyzed to see the direction and size relationship between all variables. As it can be seen from the correlations table 2 below, all independent variables are correlated positively with the dependent variable. The correlation is significant for all variables. Similarly, the correlation between independent variables is also positive, but they are not highly correlated to one another. Hence there was no issue of multicollinearity. Since the correlation among independent variables were found to be moderate.

Table -2
Correlations among variables

		AC	ES	SF	SI	SE
Pearson Correlation	AC	1.000	.321	.425	.274	.323
	ES	.321	1.000	.576	.277	.410
	SF	.425	.576	1.000	.246	.358
	SI	.274	.277	.246	1.000	.183
	SE	.323	.410	.358	.183	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	A C	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	ES	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	SF	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	SI	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	SE	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
N		372	372	372	372	372

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1 tailed)

Regression Analysis -Multiple Linear

Prior to performing multiple linear regression, a test for basic assumptions like linearity, autocorrelation, normality, multicollinearity was conducted. Accordingly, the data was found to be sufficiently normally distributed. All VIF values were between 1 and 5, and tolerance values were all

above 0.1, which shows the moderate correlation among independent variables and no issue of multicollinearity.

The overall regression model with all predictors (independent variables) included was statistically significant, $F(4,367) = 28.907$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = .24$. which indicates 24% of variances in affective commitment accounts for the four variables. This result reveals SM practices (ES, SF, SI, and SE) together can predict AC significantly.

Table 3

Linear Regression Model Summary							
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	f	sig	Durbin-Watson
1	.489 ^a	.240	.231	.603	28.907	.000	2.045
a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategy Evaluation, Strategy Implementation, Strategy Formulation, Environmental Scanning							
b. Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment							

Looking further into how each variable uniquely significantly impacts the dependent variable and test the research hypotheses:

The first hypothesis (H1) tests if ES carries a significant impact on the affective commitment of academic staff in NCPUs. The dependent variable AC was regressed on predicting variable ES to test hypothesis H1. ES did not impact AC. $F(4,367) = 28.907$, $P > .05$, which indicates that environmental scanning does not significantly impact academic staff's affective commitment in Ethiopia's NCPUs. Hence the hypothesis was not supported.

According to Horn et al. (1994), an organization's internal analysis must include various grounds. Obviously, the commitment of staff is one of the arguments in organizational internal analysis. Likewise, Pashiardis (1996), argues scanning the environment of an organization is critical for successful planning. Many research findings assert that HEIs must conduct an assessment of their internal and external environments in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to maximize their opportunities and minimize potential threats.

The second hypothesis (H2) tests if strategy formulation (SF) carries a significant impact on the affective commitment (AC) of academic staff in NCPUs. The dependent variable AC was regressed on predicting variable strategy formulation to test hypothesis H2. Strategy formulation significantly impacts AC. $F(4,367) = 28.907$, $P = 0.000$ which is $< .05$ which clearly indicates that strategy formulation can play a positive significant role in shaping AC ($b = .428$, $P < 0.001$). These results clearly show the positive effect of SF.

Among the essential components of the strategy formulations process are vision and mission statements. A study by Ahiausu and Asawo (2012) demonstrates a substantial association between Affective Commitment and organizational vision statements, which is the primary activity during the strategy formulation phase. Likewise, it is also reported that organizations frequently practice mission statements as a channel of increasing the level of employee commitment towards the organization (Campbell & Nash, 1992). As per van Breda (2000), involvement in specific parts of a strategy formulation (planning) happens to be associated with an increase in organizational commitment.

The third hypothesis (H3) tests if strategy implementation (SI) carries a significant positive impact on the affective commitment (AC) of academic staff in NCPUs. The dependent variable AC was regressed on predicting variable strategy implementation to test hypothesis H3. Strategy implementation significantly impacts AC. $F(4,367) = 28.907$, $P = 0.001$ which is $< .05$ which clearly indicates that strategy formulation can play a significant role in shaping AC ($b = .131$, $P < 0.05$). These results presented the positive effect of SI.

Alexander (1985) asserts that employee commitment also plays a significant role in successful strategy implementation.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) tests if strategy evaluation (SE) carries a significant impact on the affective commitment (AC) of academic staff in NCPUs. The dependent variable AC was regressed on predicting variable strategy evaluation to test hypothesis H4. strategy evaluation significantly impacts AC. $SE f(4,367) = 28.907, P = 0.001$ which is $< .05$ which clearly indicates that strategy formulation can play a significant role in shaping AC ($b = .177, P < 0.005$). these results showcased the strong positive effect of SE. Thus, the strategy evaluation step had a positive significant impact on the affective commitment of academic staff at NCPUs of Ethiopia. Accordingly, these results substantiate hypothesis H4. The finding is consistent with Armstrong's (1982) argument that signifies the significance of designing a system of evaluation that furnishes correct feedback in order to preserve a commitment to the strategic plans.

Table 4

Summary of Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Regression weight	B Coefficient	f	t-value	P-value	Decision
H1	ES → AC	.038	28.907	.486	0.627	Rejected
H2	SF → AC	.428		5.436	.000	Supported
H3	SI → AC	.131		3.327	.001	supported
H4	SE → AC	.177		3.403	.001	Supported

Alpha=0.05

Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

Conclusion and Recommendation

This particular study was aimed to investigate the direct effect of strategic management practices on the affective commitment of academic staff (faculty) in NCPUs Of Ethiopia. Data were collected from four publicly owned universities in the north cluster. From the above analysis of the results and discussion, it can be concluded that generally, strategic management has a positive effect on the affective commitment of academic staff in NCPUs of Ethiopia; particular the study revealed the significant positive impact of strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation on the affective commitment of academic staff in targeted universities. Unlike other strategic management practices, environmental scanning does not exhibit a significant effect on the academic staff's affective commitment.

Besides, the results of the study showcased the positive moderate correlations between strategic management practices and affective commitment academic staff in targeted universities. Strategic management practices significantly contribute greatly to the affective of academic commitment academic staff of NCPUs of Ethiopia. There is a need to give proper attention to the strategic management process and recognize its pivotal role in enhancing the affective commitment of academic staff among other things. Strategic management practice as a management approach should be properly adopted by the north cluster Public Higher Education Institutions to enhance the affective commitment of academic staff. Hence, committed academic staff can contribute a lot to the improvement of institutional performance.

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