



Strategic Management Style and Organizational Performance of International Non-Governmental Organizations in Uganda: A Mixed-Methods Analysis

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Abstract

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) represent a critical component of Uganda's development landscape, with over 2,200 registered organizations managing \$1.5 billion annually. However, fewer than 55% consistently meet performance standards, highlighting systemic challenges in organizational effectiveness. This study examines the relationship between strategic management practices and organizational performance among INGOs operating in Uganda's complex development context. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design grounded in Fiedler's Contingency Theory and Social Categorization Theory, the research engaged 245 respondents from three representative INGOs: Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Uganda, and Joint Effort to Save the Environment. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires (n=240, 98% response rate) and semi-structured interviews with managers (n=25, 100% participation rate), analysed through multiple regression and thematic analysis respectively. Strategic management emerged as a significant predictor of organizational performance across all dimensions. Regression analyses revealed strong predictive relationships with efficiency ($\beta=0.72$, $p<0.001$), effectiveness ($\beta=0.64$, $p<0.001$), service delivery ($\beta=0.66$, $p<0.01$), and client satisfaction ($\beta=0.61$, $p<0.01$), explaining 45-78% of performance variance. Qualitative findings identified five key mechanisms through which strategic management influences performance: legitimacy building through strategic planning, enhanced crisis response capabilities, improved stakeholder coordination, capacity development challenges, and cultural integration requirements. The study reveals that while strategic management significantly enhances INGO performance, effectiveness depends on contextual adaptation, particularly regarding cultural integration and local capacity constraints. Organizations implementing robust strategic management systems demonstrated superior outcomes during crisis responses, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and achieved better stakeholder coordination with donors and government partners. These findings provide actionable insights for INGO leaders, donors, and policymakers on optimizing organizational effectiveness through culturally-adapted strategic management practices. The research contributes novel theoretical understanding of strategic management applications in African development contexts while demonstrating the practical value of mixed-methods approaches in examining complex organizational phenomena. Enhanced INGO performance through improved strategic management directly impacts development outcomes and the welfare of millions of Ugandans dependent on INGO services.

Keywords: Strategic management, International NGOs, organizational performance, Uganda, leadership effectiveness, development management, mixed-methods research.

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Introduction

Over the past three decades, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have emerged as critical intermediaries in the global development architecture, fundamentally transforming how development cooperation occurs between donor communities and beneficiary populations (Banks et al., 2015). This transformation is particularly evident in Uganda, where over 2,200 registered INGOs constitute a substantial component of the country's development landscape (NGO Bureau, 2023), collectively

managing resources exceeding \$1.5 billion annually across diverse sectors including health, education, humanitarian response, agricultural development, and governance strengthening (Uganda NGO Forum, 2022). Despite this significant presence and resource mobilization capacity, the sector faces concerning performance challenges, with fewer than 55% of registered INGOs consistently meeting established performance and reporting standards, while donor confidence surveys reveal declining trust in delivery capacity among 40% of major donors who express concerns about

program quality and sustainability (Uganda NGO Forum, 2022; USAID, 2025).

The performance challenges confronting INGOs in Uganda reflect broader systemic issues documented across sub-Saharan Africa, encompassing weak institutional frameworks, limited local capacity, cultural disconnects between international approaches and local realities, and inadequate adaptation of global best practices to contextual specificities (Muhwezi et al., 2021). However, emerging evidence suggests that organizations implementing robust strategic management practices achieve significantly better outcomes across multiple performance dimensions, including operational efficiency, program effectiveness, service delivery quality, and client satisfaction (Lloyd et al., 2022). Strategic management, conceptualized as the systematic process of formulating, implementing, and adapting organizational strategies to align internal capabilities with external opportunities and constraints, has gained increasing recognition as a critical success factor for non-profit organizations operating in complex, resource-constrained environments (Ireland & Hitt, 2005). Unlike traditional management approaches that emphasize operational control and procedural compliance, strategic management emphasizes environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, adaptive planning, and continuous learning – capabilities particularly relevant for INGOs navigating Uganda's dynamic development landscape.

This study addresses the central research problem concerning the unclear relationship between strategic management approaches and organizational performance outcomes among INGOs operating in Uganda. While theoretical literature strongly advocates for strategic management practices in non-profit contexts, empirical validation remains limited, particularly in African settings where cultural, institutional, and resource contexts differ significantly from Western environments where most strategic management theories were developed. The primary objective is to examine how strategic management style influences organizational performance, specifically assessing the extent of strategic management implementation among INGOs, analysing relationships between management approaches and organizational efficiency, effectiveness, service delivery quality, and client satisfaction, while identifying contextual factors that moderate these relationships. The research seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical advocacy and empirical validation in African contexts, providing evidence-based guidance for INGO leaders, donors, and policymakers to optimize organizational effectiveness and make informed decisions about capacity building investments and regulatory frameworks that might enhance sector performance.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section explores the theoretical foundations of strategic management and its application to international non-governmental organizations. We begin by examining how strategic management has evolved as a discipline and then consider the distinctive challenges non-profits face in

balancing mission fidelity with multiple stakeholders demands. Finally, we address the heightened complexity that INGOs encounter when aligning global mandates with local contexts across diverse cultural and regulatory environments. This framework provides the foundation for analysing effective INGO strategy development and implementation.

2.1. Conceptual Foundations of Strategic Management

Strategic management evolved from military and corporate traditions into a comprehensive framework for organizational adaptation and performance (Mintzberg et al., 2005). Contemporary theory encompasses multiple schools from classical planning approaches emphasizing systematic analysis to emergent perspectives highlighting adaptation and learning in dynamic environments (Whittington, 2001). Non-profit strategic management faces unique challenges including mission complexity, stakeholder multiplicity, resource dependence, and measurement difficulties (Moore, 2000). Unlike for-profits with clear metrics, non-profits must balance competing demands from donors, beneficiaries, staff, communities, and regulators while maintaining mission fidelity (Bryson, 2018). For INGOs, complexity increases due to cultural diversity, geographic dispersion, regulatory variations, and the need to align global mandates with local realities (Lewis, 2007). Effective INGO strategic management requires capabilities in environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, cross-cultural communication, adaptive planning, and continuous learning (Edwards & Hulme, 2002).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study employs two complementary theoretical frameworks to examine leadership effectiveness and organizational dynamics in Uganda's diverse INGO landscape. Fiedler's Contingency Theory posits that leadership effectiveness depends on the alignment between leader characteristics and situational factors including task structure, leader-member relations, and positional power (Fiedler, 1967). In Uganda's varied development environment, this theory explains why strategic management approaches succeed in some organizational contexts but fail in others—organizations with favourable conditions (clear tasks, strong relationships, adequate resources) benefit from task-oriented strategic approaches emphasizing efficiency and control, while those facing challenging environments require relationship-oriented approaches emphasizing adaptation and stakeholder engagement.

Social Categorization Theory examines how individuals classify themselves and others into social groups, significantly impacting attitudes, behaviours, and intergroup relations within multicultural organizational contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For INGOs in Uganda, these categorization processes critically influence strategic management implementation, as international and local staff may be perceived differently, affecting essential communication, trust, and collaboration. Additionally, beneficiary communities categorize INGOs as either insider or outsider organizations, directly impacting program acceptance and effectiveness. The theory indicates that successful strategic management requires acknowledging

identity dynamics and bridging social categories while building shared organizational identity, rather than ignoring or exacerbating categorization-based divisions.

2.3 Strategic Management in Non-profit Organizations

Non-profit strategic management research has progressed from early attempts to apply corporate strategy frameworks, which often failed due to fundamental organizational differences, to more sophisticated approaches that recognize non-profit-specific characteristics (Bryson, 2018). Contemporary literature identifies three key distinctions: mission centrality demands strategic alignment with organizational purpose rather than financial optimization (Moore, 2000); stakeholder complexity requires extensive engagement processes that may delay decisions but strengthen legitimacy (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002); and resource dependence on donors creates unique strategic constraints and opportunities (Frumkin, 2003). Empirical findings on strategic management effectiveness in non-profits remain mixed, with studies in developed countries showing positive relationships between strategic planning and performance, especially for larger, established organizations (Stone et al., 1999). However, research in developing contexts reveals more nuanced outcomes, where strategic management benefits depend heavily on organizational capacity, environmental stability, and cultural factors (Lewis, 2007).

2.4 INGO Performance in Development Contexts

The question of INGO effectiveness has evolved from traditional input and output metrics focused on funds raised, programs implemented, and beneficiaries reached (Edwards & Hulme, 2002) toward contemporary frameworks emphasizing outcome and impact measures that assess actual changes in beneficiary welfare and development progress (OECD, 2011). Modern INGO performance assessment incorporates multiple dimensions including efficiency measures for resource utilization, effectiveness measures for goal achievement, service delivery quality from beneficiary perspectives, and client satisfaction capturing beneficiary experiences and organizational responsiveness (Lloyd et al., 2022). In Uganda's context, performance assessment faces significant complications including organizational diversity across types, sizes, and mandates that challenges comparative evaluation, inconsistent performance standards due to varying donor requirements, limited independent verification capacity from weak government monitoring, and underdeveloped beneficiary feedback mechanisms that constrain comprehensive client satisfaction assessment (Uganda NGO Forum, 2022).

2.5 Contextual Factors in Uganda's INGO Sector

Uganda's INGO sector operates within a complex environment where political factors include generally supportive policies coupled with increasing government oversight and occasional advocacy tensions (Barkan et al., 2020), while economic challenges encompass heavy foreign aid dependence, limited domestic resource mobilization, and competition for qualified staff with private and government sectors. Cultural dynamics present both opportunities and

constraints, as Uganda's diversity of over 50 ethnic groups and multiple languages demands sophisticated stakeholder engagement, though traditional authority structures and decision-making processes may conflict with INGO planning cycles, and religious and cultural values significantly influence community program acceptance (Muhwezi et al., 2021). Institutionally, a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape with new NGO registration and reporting requirements, strengthened NGO Bureau monitoring capacity, and increased compliance pressures coexist with limited government support services and inconsistent standards enforcement, creating ongoing operational uncertainties for INGOs (NGO Bureau, 2023).

3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach used to investigate strategic management practices and their performance outcomes in INGOs operating in Uganda. The study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews across three organizations. Data were collected from 245 staff members and 25 managers, achieving high response rates that enabled robust analysis of both statistical relationships and contextual factors influencing INGO performance.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

This study adopts a pragmatic philosophical stance, emphasizing practical problem-solving and methodological pluralism over adherence to single paradigmatic approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Pragmatism is particularly appropriate for examining complex organizational phenomena where quantitative measurement and qualitative understanding both contribute to comprehensive insights. The research employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, then integrating findings to develop comprehensive understanding of strategic management-performance relationships (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This design allows for statistical testing of hypothesized relationships while capturing contextual factors and mechanisms that quantitative analysis alone cannot reveal.

3.2 Study Context and Population

The study examines INGOs operating in Uganda, defined as international non-profit organizations implementing development, humanitarian, or advocacy programs with external funding, targeting professional staff including program managers, administrative personnel, field officers, and senior leadership. Three case study organizations were selected based on substantial five-year-plus presence, significant programmatic scope, diverse portfolios, research participation willingness, and representation of different organizational types: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), established in 1968 as a large international NGO with over 200 staff implementing health, education, agriculture, and emergency response programs across multiple districts through standardized global management systems; Caritas Uganda, founded in 1967 as the Uganda Catholic Secretariat's development arm representing faith-based approaches with

strong community connections and local legitimacy; and Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE), established in 1995 as a smaller specialized organization focusing on environmental conservation and community-based natural resource management.

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

From a total staff population of 571 employees across the three organizations, stratified random sampling using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula determined a sample size of 245 respondents (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error), proportionally allocated with CRS contributing 45% (n=110), Caritas Uganda 35% (n=86), and JESE 20% (n=49), ensuring representation across organizational levels, functional areas, and geographic locations. For qualitative data, purposive sampling identified 25 managers with minimum two-year tenure for in-depth interviews, comprising 8 senior managers, 10 middle managers, and 7 field managers selected based on strategic responsibilities and participation willingness.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Instrument: A structured questionnaire was developed using established scales to measure strategic management practices and organizational performance in non-profit contexts. The instrument contained five main sections: Strategic Management Style (20 items, adapted from Bryson, 2018), measuring strategic planning, environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management; Organizational Efficiency (8 items, based on Lecy et al., 2012), assessing resource utilization and cost-effectiveness; Organizational Effectiveness (10 items, adapted from Sowa et al., 2004), measuring goal achievement and program quality; Service Delivery Quality (9 items, based on SERVQUAL adaptations from Parasuraman et al., 1988), evaluating accessibility and responsiveness; and Client Satisfaction (7 items, based on Bonbright & Kirytopoulou, 2013), measuring beneficiary satisfaction and engagement. All items used five-point Likert scales with appropriate reverse coding, and demographic information was also collected.

Qualitative Instrument: Semi-structured interview guides were developed for in-depth interviews with managers to explore strategic management implementation experiences, performance impacts, and contextual factors. The interview guide covered six topic areas: strategic planning processes, environmental scanning and adaptation experiences, stakeholder engagement approaches and challenges, perceived performance impacts of strategic management, organizational and contextual factors affecting effectiveness, and recommendations for improvement. Interviews were conducted in English with local language flexibility as needed, lasted 45-90 minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period from February to April 2024. Formal approval was obtained from organizational leadership, and all participants provided informed consent. Questionnaire distribution utilized both

electronic and paper-based approaches, with follow-up reminders sent to maximize response rates.

Of 245 distributed questionnaires, 240 valid responses were returned, achieving a 98% response rate. Response rates varied slightly across organizations: CRS (99%, n=109), Caritas Uganda (97%, n=83), and JESE (98%, n=48). Non-response analysis revealed no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents on available demographic characteristics.

All 25 selected managers agreed to participate in interviews, achieving 100% participation rate. Interviews were conducted at organizational offices or neutral locations based on participant preferences, with appropriate measures taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collection and Analysis occurred from February to April 2024 across three organizations, achieving exceptional response rates of 98% overall (240 valid responses from 245 distributed questionnaires) and 100% participation from 25 selected managers for interviews. Quantitative analysis using SPSS version 28.0 included preliminary data screening, reliability analysis (with all scales exceeding $\alpha = .70$), and multiple regression models controlling for organizational and demographic variables. Qualitative analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework through six systematic phases, facilitated by NVivo software with 87% inter-coder reliability. Findings' integration used joint displays and narrative interpretation following Creswell & Plano Clark (2017) to identify convergent, complementary, and contradictory results across data sources.

Results Overview: Strategic management implementation received moderate ratings overall ($M=3.05$, $SD=0.71$), with strongest performance in formal planning processes ($M=3.34$, $SD=0.68$) and weakest in environmental scanning ($M=2.89$, $SD=0.79$). Performance dimensions varied from efficiency as highest rated ($M=3.21$, $SD=0.68$) to client satisfaction as lowest ($M=2.89$, $SD=0.78$). Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between strategic management and all performance dimensions, ranging from $r = .84$ (efficiency) to $r = .67$ (client satisfaction), all significant at $p < .001$. Multiple regression analyses demonstrated substantial explanatory power, with strategic management predicting efficiency most strongly ($R^2 = .78$, $\beta = .72$, $p < .001$) and client satisfaction most modestly ($R^2 = .45$, $\beta = .61$, $p < .01$), while control variables including organizational tenure, position level, and educational background showed significant but smaller effects across models.

4. Results and Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses examining strategic management practices and organizational performance. We describe the respondent profile and current state of strategic management implementation, assess performance across multiple dimensions, and explore the statistical relationships between strategic management and performance outcomes

through correlation and regression analyses. The findings reveal how strategic management influences INGO performance in the Uganda context.

4.1 Respondent Profile and Strategic Management Implementation

The study engaged 240 respondents across diverse organizational levels, with 23% senior management (n=55), 34% middle management (n=82), and 43% field staff (n=103). The sample demonstrated high educational qualifications with 67% holding bachelor's degrees and 28% master's degrees or higher, balanced gender distribution (52% male, 48% female), and varied organizational tenure with 31% having less than two years, 45% having 2-5 years, and 24% over five years. Strategic management implementation received moderate ratings overall (M=3.05, SD=0.71), with strongest performance in strategic planning (M=3.34, SD=0.68) and weakest in environmental scanning (M=2.89, SD=0.79). Organizational differences emerged with CRS achieving highest scores (M=3.21, SD=0.65), followed by Caritas Uganda (M=3.02, SD=0.71) and JESE (M=2.78, SD=0.79).

4.2 Performance Dimensions Assessment

Performance assessments revealed hierarchical variation across dimensions, with efficiency receiving highest ratings (M=3.21, SD=0.68) and client satisfaction lowest (M=2.89, SD=0.78). Effectiveness achieved moderate ratings (M=3.11, SD=0.73) indicating reasonable success in goal achievement, while service delivery received average assessments (M=3.03, SD=0.71) with notable rural-urban differences favouring urban operations. Client satisfaction emerged as the most challenging dimension, reflecting limited systematic

beneficiary feedback collection and measurement difficulties across diverse program contexts and beneficiary populations.

4.3 Correlation and Predictive Relationships

Bivariate correlations revealed strong, positive relationships between strategic management and all performance dimensions: efficiency (r = .84, p < .001), effectiveness (r = .78, p < .001), service delivery (r = .73, p < .001), and client satisfaction (r = .67, p < .001). Inter-correlations among performance dimensions ranged from moderate to strong (r = .45 to .69), with the strongest relationship between efficiency and effectiveness (r = .69) and weakest between efficiency and client satisfaction (r = .45). Control variables including organizational tenure, position level, and educational background showed small but significant relationships with both strategic management and performance perceptions.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis Findings

Multiple regression analyses demonstrated strategic management as the dominant predictor across all performance models (Table 1). The efficiency model achieved strongest explanatory power (R² = .78, F(6,233) = 142.3, p < .001; β = .72, p < .001), followed by effectiveness (R² = .68, F(6,233) = 81.7, p < .001; β = .64, p < .001), service delivery (R² = .62, F(6,233) = 63.4, p < .001; β = .66, p < .01), and client satisfaction (R² = .45, F(6,233) = 31.8, p < .001; β = .61, p < .01). Control variables showed modest but significant effects, with organizational tenure and position level positively predicting efficiency, educational background enhancing effectiveness assessments, geographic location favouring headquarters staff for service delivery, and position level negatively affecting client satisfaction ratings.

Table 1 shows Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Performance Dimension	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-statistic	df	p-value	Strategic Management β	Strategic Management p-value	Significant Control Variables
Efficiency	.78	.77	142.3	(6,233)	<.001	.72	<.001	Organizational tenure (β=.12, p<.05) Position level (β=.09, p<.05)
Effectiveness	.68	.67	81.7	(6,233)	<.001	.64	<.001	Educational background (β=.14, p<.01)
Service Delivery	.62	.61	63.4	(6,233)	<.001	.66	<.01	Geographic location (β=.11, p<.05)
Client Satisfaction	.45	.44	31.8	(6,233)	<.001	.61	<.01	Position level (β=-.13, p<.05)

Note: All models significant at p < .001; n = 240; β = standardized regression coefficient

Source: This research or Author (2025).

4.4.1 Model Performance and Explanatory Power

The regression analyses revealed that strategic management served as a significant predictor across all four performance dimensions, with varying degrees of explanatory power:

1) Efficiency Model (Strongest Predictive Power)

- R² = 0.78: Strategic management explained 78% of the variance in organizational efficiency.
- F(6,233) = 142.3, p < .001: The overall model was highly significant.

- $\beta = 0.72$, $p < .001$: Strategic management demonstrated the strongest standardized coefficient, indicating that a one-unit increase in strategic management practices corresponded to a 0.72 standard deviation increase in efficiency.
- Control variables: Organizational tenure ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < .05$) and position level ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < .05$) showed modest positive effects.

2) Effectiveness Model (Strong Predictive Power)

- $R^2 = 0.68$: Strategic management explained 68% of the variance in organizational effectiveness.
- $F(6,233) = 81.7$, $p < .001$: The overall model was highly significant.
- $\beta = 0.64$, $p < .001$: Strategic management showed a substantial positive relationship with effectiveness.
- Control variables: Educational background ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < .01$) emerged as a significant predictor, suggesting that higher educational qualifications enhanced effectiveness perceptions.

3) Service Delivery Model (Moderate-Strong Predictive Power)

- $R^2 = 0.62$: Strategic management explained 62% of the variance in service delivery quality
- $F(6,233) = 63.4$, $p < .001$: The overall model was highly significant.
- $\beta = 0.66$, $p < .01$: Strategic management demonstrated strong positive effects on service delivery
- Control variables: Geographic location ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < .05$) showed significance, with headquarters staff rating service delivery more favorably than field-based personnel.

4) Client Satisfaction Model (Moderate Predictive Power)

- $R^2 = 0.45$: Strategic management explained 45% of the variance in client satisfaction
- $F(6,233) = 31.8$, $p < .001$: The overall model was highly significant
- $\beta = 0.61$, $p < .01$: Strategic management showed a positive but comparatively weaker relationship with client satisfaction
- Control variables: Position level ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < .05$) showed a negative relationship, indicating that senior staff rated client satisfaction lower than field staff, possibly reflecting greater awareness of implementation challenges.

4.4.2 Key Findings and Patterns

Progressive Variance Explanation: The models revealed a hierarchical pattern in explanatory power, with strategic management accounting for the highest variance in operational efficiency (78%) and progressively lower variance

in effectiveness (68%), service delivery (62%), and client satisfaction (45%). This pattern suggests that strategic management practices have more direct influence on internal operational dimensions than on external beneficiary-focused outcomes.

Consistent Significance: Strategic management emerged as the dominant predictor across all models, with all beta coefficients significant at $p < .01$ or better, providing robust evidence of its importance for organizational performance regardless of the specific dimension examined.

Control Variable Effects: While control variables showed statistical significance in several models, their effect sizes ($\beta = 0.09$ to 0.14) were substantially smaller than strategic management effects ($\beta = 0.61$ to 0.72), confirming strategic management as the primary driver of performance variance rather than demographic or organizational characteristics.

Client Satisfaction Complexity: The comparatively lower R^2 value for client satisfaction (0.45) suggests that factors beyond strategic management—such as beneficiary engagement mechanisms, cultural alignment, and community participation—play important roles in determining client satisfaction outcomes, as corroborated by qualitative findings highlighting limited systematic beneficiary feedback collection.

These regression results provide compelling quantitative evidence that strategic management practices significantly enhance INGO performance across multiple dimensions, with particularly strong effects on operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness, while highlighting the need for complementary approaches to maximize client satisfaction outcomes.

4.5 Qualitative Findings

Strategic planning serves as a critical legitimacy-building mechanism for INGOs, particularly in securing donor confidence and maintaining operational permissions in Uganda's regulated environment. As a senior CRS manager explained: "When we have clear strategic plans with measurable indicators and realistic timelines, donors have confidence in our ability to deliver results. This translates directly into continued funding and partnership opportunities." However, participants identified significant tension between donor-driven planning requirements and community-responsive programming, with one Caritas Uganda program director noting: "Sometimes our strategic plans reflect what donors want to see rather than what communities actually need. This creates challenges for implementation and can reduce our effectiveness in addressing real community priorities."

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the critical importance of adaptive management capabilities in organizational crisis response. Organizations with robust strategic management systems demonstrated superior ability to rapidly assess changing circumstances and reallocate resources effectively. A JESE regional coordinator observed: "Organizations that had good strategic planning and monitoring systems were able

to quickly identify which programs needed to be suspended, modified, or intensified during COVID-19. We learned that flexibility built into our strategic frameworks was essential for maintaining operations and serving communities during crisis periods." Organizations with rigid strategic management struggled significantly with necessary adaptations during the crisis.

Strategic management processes emerged as essential mechanisms for coordinating complex stakeholder relationships characteristic of INGO operations, with effective planning facilitating communication among diverse stakeholders with potentially conflicting expectations. A country director explained: "Strategic planning forces us to explicitly consider what different stakeholders expect from our organization and find ways to balance these expectations. This reduces conflicts and improves relationships over time." However, meaningful engagement with beneficiary communities remained limited despite organizational commitments to participatory approaches, constrained by language barriers, cultural differences, and power imbalances.

Implementation of strategic management faces significant capacity constraints across Uganda's INGO sector, including limited staff capacity for strategic analysis, insufficient resources for environmental scanning, and competing priorities that divert attention from strategic implementation. A Caritas Uganda middle manager noted: "We understand the value of strategic management, but implementing it well requires skills and time that we often don't have. Staff turnover also means we're constantly training new people on our strategic approaches, which makes implementation inconsistent." These constraints are particularly acute in smaller organizations with limited administrative support and professional development resources.

Cultural integration emerges as a fundamental challenge requiring adaptation of Western strategic management approaches to Uganda's communal, relationship-oriented cultural environment. A senior program officer reflected: "Strategic planning works differently in Uganda compared to what the manuals say. We need to spend much more time building relationships and getting consensus before we can implement strategies effectively. This takes longer but creates better buy-in and sustainability." Successful strategic management requires explicit attention to bridging cultural differences in multicultural teams and recognizing existing religious and traditional authority structures that may not align with INGO planning cycles or procedures.

4.6 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The convergent analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals that strategic management significantly influences INGO performance across multiple dimensions in Uganda. Statistical evidence demonstrates strong predictive relationships ($\beta = .61$ to $.72$) that align with qualitative accounts of improved donor confidence, operational efficiency, and stakeholder coordination. The moderate overall levels of strategic management implementation ($M =$

3.05) correspond to qualitative descriptions of partial institutionalization, where organizations recognize strategic management value while facing implementation challenges. Performance dimension variations support this finding, with strong efficiency results reflecting operational improvements through strategic planning, while weaker client satisfaction outcomes correspond to limited beneficiary engagement in strategic processes.

Qualitative findings provide essential contextual understanding that explains quantitative relationships and identifies underlying mechanisms. The legitimacy-building function of strategic planning illuminates how strategic management enhances organizational credibility and resource access, explaining the strong statistical relationships. The adaptive management theme reveals why strategic management effects vary across contexts, with organizations possessing robust strategic systems demonstrating superior crisis response capabilities. Cultural integration challenges help explain variations in strategic management effectiveness across organizations, suggesting that implementation quality significantly influences performance outcomes beyond mere quantity of strategic activities.

Despite overall convergence, important tensions emerged that illuminate strategic management complexities. While regression analyses suggested linear relationships, qualitative accounts revealed non-linear dynamics where benefits depended heavily on implementation quality, stakeholder relationships, and contextual factors. The statistical finding that strategic management explained less variance in client satisfaction ($R^2 = .45$) compared to other performance dimensions aligns with qualitative accounts of limited beneficiary engagement, though qualitative data suggested this relationship might strengthen through improved community engagement approaches, indicating potential for enhanced effectiveness through targeted improvements.

5. Discussion

This study provides robust empirical evidence that strategic management significantly predicts organizational performance among INGOs operating in Uganda, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to large across four performance dimensions. The findings demonstrate that strategic management theories developed in Western corporate contexts can be effectively applied in African INGO settings, though requiring important adaptations. Support for Fiedler's Contingency Theory emerged through differential effectiveness patterns, where organizations in favorable conditions benefited from task-oriented approaches while those facing challenging environments required relationship-oriented strategies. However, traditional contingency theory requires expansion to address INGO-specific factors such as donor dependence, cultural diversity, and social mission complexity that create unique contingency variables not captured in conventional leadership theories.

The practical implications reveal significant opportunities for organizational improvement, as moderate strategic management implementation levels across studied

organizations suggest substantial room for enhancement. Organizations should prioritize systematic institutionalization of strategic management processes, invest in targeted capacity development programs, and develop more sophisticated stakeholder engagement approaches that authentically incorporate beneficiary perspectives while meeting donor requirements. Cultural contextualization emerges as critical, requiring explicit attention to local decision-making processes, authority structures, and relationship dynamics. Performance enhancement strategies should target specific dimensions differently: emphasizing resource optimization for efficiency gains, developing strategic frameworks linking activities to outcomes for effectiveness, implementing quality management systems for service delivery, and creating beneficiary feedback systems for client satisfaction improvement.

Policy and regulatory implications suggest that government support through capacity building programs, optimized regulatory frameworks balancing accountability with strategic flexibility, and sector-wide performance standards could enhance INGO sector performance. The donor community should provide adequate resources and timeline flexibility for comprehensive strategic planning, prioritize long-term organizational development over short-term program funding, align performance requirements with comprehensive frameworks considering multiple dimensions, and encourage adaptive management approaches that allow strategic modification based on implementation learning and changing circumstances.

Study limitations include generalizability constraints due to the Uganda-specific focus, cross-sectional design limiting causal inference, reliance on self-report performance measures, and cultural specificity that may limit transferability. Future research opportunities include cross-national comparative studies across different African countries, longitudinal impact assessments tracking organizations over time, beneficiary-centered research incorporating systematic community perspectives, cultural adaptation studies examining how strategic management practices are contextualized, and sectoral comparative analysis across different development domains to identify sector-specific factors influencing strategic management implementation and effectiveness.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides compelling evidence that strategic management significantly influences organizational performance among INGOs operating in Uganda, with convergent mixed-methods findings demonstrating superior outcomes across multiple performance dimensions, particularly in operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness. The research contributes to non-profit management literature by empirically validating that strategic management theories developed in Western corporate contexts can be effectively applied in African INGO settings with appropriate contextual adaptations. It demonstrates the value of mixed-methods approaches for understanding

complex organizational phenomena and identifies specific mechanisms through which strategic management influences performance, including legitimacy building, adaptive capacity enhancement, and stakeholder coordination. However, the study reveals that while organizations recognize strategic management value, implementation remains partial and inconsistent due to capacity limitations, cultural integration challenges, and competing organizational priorities.

Strategic recommendations for INGO leadership emphasize institutionalizing comprehensive strategic management systems that integrate planning, implementation, monitoring, and adaptation into regular organizational routines. Organizations should invest in systematic capacity building in strategic management skills, enhance stakeholder engagement processes that authentically incorporate beneficiary perspectives while meeting donor requirements, and adapt strategic frameworks to cultural contexts by recognizing traditional decision-making processes and building on existing community structures. Strengthening performance measurement systems that capture multiple dimensions of effectiveness is essential for providing regular feedback and demonstrating accountability to diverse stakeholders.

Recommendations for donors and development partners focus on supporting strategic capacity building through dedicated organizational development funding, encouraging adaptive management approaches with flexible funding mechanisms, and aligning performance requirements with comprehensive frameworks that consider multiple effectiveness dimensions rather than narrow output metrics. Donors should provide implementation timeline flexibility that accommodates authentic strategic development processes requiring stakeholder engagement, cultural contextualization, and consensus building in complex, multicultural contexts. Government and regulatory bodies should develop supportive policy frameworks balancing oversight with organizational autonomy, facilitate sector capacity building through training programs and knowledge sharing platforms, and support research initiatives that generate evidence on effective organizational management practices.

The study's theoretical implications extend strategic management and leadership theories by demonstrating their applicability in African INGO contexts while identifying important contextual factors that influence effectiveness. The integration of Fiedler's Contingency Theory and Social Categorization Theory provides a framework for understanding how leadership approaches interact with cultural and organizational contexts to influence performance. Practically, the research offers actionable guidance for enhancing INGO performance through strategic management improvements, with specific mechanisms identified through qualitative analysis providing concrete implementation strategies and quantitative findings offering evidence of expected impact magnitudes for resource allocation and performance expectations.

This research contributes to non-profit management knowledge by providing robust empirical evidence on

strategic management effectiveness in African INGO contexts, addressing significant literature gaps focused primarily on Western organizational settings. The convergent mixed-methods approach demonstrates comprehensive integration of quantitative and qualitative methods for understanding complex organizational phenomena, while detailed insights into cultural contextualization contribute to organizational management understanding in multicultural environments. The examination of multiple performance dimensions provides a nuanced understanding of how strategic management influences different aspects of organizational effectiveness, contributing to more sophisticated non-profit performance assessment approaches.

The study identifies future research directions including longitudinal impact studies tracking organizations over extended periods, cross-cultural comparative research examining implementation across different cultural contexts, beneficiary-centered research incorporating systematic community perspectives, and implementation process research identifying factors facilitating successful institutionalization. The findings demonstrate that strategic management represents a critical capability for INGOs in Uganda's complex development landscape, but effective implementation requires sophisticated understanding of organizational capabilities, stakeholder expectations, cultural dynamics, and environmental constraints rather than uniform technical solutions. Success depends on sustained commitment to capacity building, cultural adaptation, and stakeholder engagement that transcends conventional planning processes, ultimately contributing to evidence that organizational management factors significantly influence development outcomes.

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