

# Factors affecting strategy implementation

## A case study of pharmaceutical companies in the middle east

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to study the operational process factors that affect successful strategy implementation in the Middle East.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Five operational process factors were studied (resource availability, communication, operational planning, people, control and feedback). Data were collected using a self-administrated questionnaire from employees who implement and/or are responsible for strategy implementation in 17 pharmaceutical companies. In total, 330 questionnaires were distributed, and a total of 259 were responded with a response rate of 78 per cent.

**Findings** – Findings revealed that four of the operational process factors, namely, resource availability, communication, operational planning in addition to control and feedback, strongly affect the success of strategy implementation. Further, resource availability was ascertained to be the most influential factor, followed by control and feedback, then by communication, while people factor showed no effect on the implementation process.

**Practical implications** – It is advised that, during the implementation phase, company management should provide staff employees with the necessary training and instructions to link employee performance with the overall reward and compensation system in the organization and to strengthen effective communication and coordination.

**Originality/value** – This is one of the few studies that cover operational process factors and successful strategy implementation and is the first study to test the model on companies in the pharmaceutical sector in the Middle East.

**Keywords** Jordan, Knowledge management, Strategic management, Middle East, Pharmaceutical companies, Strategic implementation

**Paper type** Research paper



### 1. Introduction

The current business environment is becoming more uncertain and unpredictable for both profit and non-profit institutions (Abbasi *et al.*, 2015). Hence, managers and leaders of various institutions must think, learn and act strategically (Obeidat *et al.*, 2016; Al-Thuneibat *et al.*, 2016; Masa'deh *et al.*, 2017). An evident approach with wide-range planning techniques,

like the strategic management process, must be adopted so that environmental changes can be controlled and adapted to (Obeidat *et al.* (2016), Alenezi *et al.* (2015).

An institution's strategy is the plan that is used to achieve the institution's objectives, conduct its operations, stake out a market position, attract and please customers and compete successfully and win in the market (Rammal and Rose, 2014; Kvint, 2010; Altamony *et al.*, 2016). The central thrust of a company's strategy is undertaking moves to build and strengthen the company's long-term competitive position and financial performance and, ideally, gain a competitive advantage over rivals that then becomes a company's ticket to above-average profitability (Kash *et al.*, 2014; Masiero *et al.*, 2017).

Although formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team, making that strategy work is even more difficult (Obeidat, 2008; El-Masri *et al.*, 2015). Strategy implementation is the process that puts the strategies and plans into action to accomplish strategic objectives and goals. Implementing the organization strategic plan is as important, or even more important, than its strategy (Sage, 2015; Balarezo and Nielsen, 2017). Strategy implementation is important because failure to carry out strategy can render opportunities lost (Slater *et al.*, 2010). Sadly, the majority of companies who have strategic plans fail to implement them. It was noted through a review of the published literature that many organizations did not succeed in implementing more than 70 per cent of their new strategic plans (Miller, 1997) and 30 per cent fail to achieve anything at all. Further, nine out of ten organizations fail to implement their strategic plan for many reasons (Charan and Colvin, 1999). Accordingly, the focus in the field of strategic management has now shifted from strategy formulation to strategy implementation. Moreover, lack of implementation creates problems in maintaining priorities and reaching organizational goals (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017; Masa'deh *et al.*, 2017). Given these, Bell *et al.* (2010) concluded that the strategy implementation task is commonly the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management. A key cause of missing strategy goals is that leaders do not invest the same amount of time, energy and resources in managing the implementation of the strategy as they do in setting the strategy (Bolboli and Reiche, 2013). They also do not realize that managing strategy implementation requires well-orchestrated management processes and that they need to go beyond the routine course of business processes to make it happen. Moreover, to enhance the probability of successful strategy implementation, it is necessary to identify and analyze the most important, effective factors in strategy implementation in terms of relations and interactions among them (Duarte Alonso and Austin, 2016). This study focuses on the operational factors that affect strategy and its implementation within organizations.

Most of the previous studies focused on the first stage of the strategic decision-making process, and there is lack of available literature concerning the implementation process of a company's strategy and fewer ones that analyze the factors affecting the implementation stage (Miller *et al.*, 2004; Hrebiniak, 2006; McKeown, 2011).

It is obvious that the Middle East is characterized by a turbulent and an unstable environment (Aghimien, 2016; Maji and Goswami, 2016; Niazi and Hassan, 2016). It is also proven that Jordan, as a developing country, is the safest country in the Middle East that attracts many organizations to invest (Bany-Arifin *et al.*, 2016; Moideenkutty *et al.*, 2016; Sharma *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, and owing to these circumstances, the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in the Middle East had become an increasingly competitive one. As mentioned earlier, the environment is very dynamic, uncertain and continuously changing. These circumstances forced most developing countries to adopt more effective, unique and innovative strategies to maintain and improve their performance and to gain a larger portion of the market share (Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, 2014; Almajali

*et al.*, 2016). To the best of the authors' knowledge, the majority of studies related to the factors affecting strategy implementation had taken place in different countries and sectors; few were conducted in the Middle East (Jordan), especially for the pharmaceutical sector. Many researchers discussed factors that affect the implementation process from many perspectives. Some studies focused on individual factors (Alamsjah, 2011 and Jiang and Carpenter, 2013), whereas other studies focused on the "big picture" such as multiple related factors (Higgins, 2005 and Noble, 1999). Hence, this research aims to focus on studies carried out by Pettigrew (2014) and Okumus (2001, 2003) and to examine the operational process factors that affect successful strategy implementation in the pharmaceutical sector in the Middle East.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the published literature, especially previous studies published in the Middle East in general and in Jordan in specific, about strategic implementation process. Section 3 presents the methodology used in this study as well as the proposed theoretical model and hypotheses. Section 4 presents the results of the data analysis. Finally, Section 5 discusses the results and presents the recommendations and implications based on the research findings.

## 2. Literature review

This section reviews the published literature that investigated the factors affecting strategy implementation, and then it focuses on the operational process factors that affect strategy implementation.

### 2.1 Factors affecting strategy implementation

The current research is meant to identify intra-operational process factors affecting successful strategy implementation. There are two distinctive types of strategy implementation studies: those highlighting the importance of individual factors of strategy implementation and those that concentrate on the "big picture" of how such factors interact to form a strategic implementation framework or model.

The first set of studies highlights the importance of individual implementation factors. From an analysis of the literature, 11 key implementation factors were identified: strategy development, environmental uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational culture, leadership, operational planning, resource allocation, communication, people, control and outcome.

The researchers of each school in the field of strategic management further categorized those factors depending on their use, design and characteristics. For example, Okumus (2003) grouped the 11 implementation factors into four categories considering the importance and characteristics of each one of them. The first category consists of strategic content factors and includes the development of strategy. The second consists of strategic context factors, which are further divided into external and internal context; the former includes environmental uncertainty and the internal context includes organizational structure, culture and leadership. The third one consists of the operational process factors that include operational planning, resource allocation, people, communication and control. The last category consists of the outcome, and it includes the results of the implementation process. Whereas, Kazmi (2008) grouped these factors into three activities: activating strategy, managing change and achieving effectiveness. Further, Alamsjah (2011), Jiang and Carpenter (2013) listed the following factors as important dimensions in strategy implementation: degree of uncertainty, clarity of strategy, organizational structure, corporate culture, CEO and top management involvement, people's competencies and commitment, knowledge management, managing change, performance management, communication and implementation plan.

The second stream of research analyzes the factors affecting strategy implementation from a holistic or “big picture” perspective. They do so in two distinct ways: either through the simple categorization of various factors into groups or categories or by grouping them in a graphical framework and organizing them in a Web of causal or temporal relationships.

For example, Skivington and Daft (1991) classified implementation variables into two dimensions: an organization’s framework that is represented by its rules and resources and the organization’s process that is represented by interactions, meanings and sanctions. Later on, and based on their study, Noble (1999) reviewed strategy implementation research from a structural viewpoint (emphasizing organizational structure and control mechanisms) and an interpersonal process view (emphasizing strategic consensus, autonomous strategic behaviors, diffusion perspectives, leadership and implementation style, communication and interaction processes). Noble (1999) added a third view – the individual-level processes view – emphasizing cognition, organizational roles and commitment besides the structural and interpersonal process view. Pettigrew (2014) grouped implementation variables into a larger number of categories: strategic content, context, process and strategic outcome.

Higgins (2005) set up an “8’S” framework of strategy implementation, including strategy and purposes structure, resources, shared values, style, staff, systems and processes and strategic performance. The framework arranges these factors in a simple value chain model. Qi (2005) put forward seven factors for successful strategy implementation, namely, adequate feedback systems, sufficient resources, good leadership and direction skills, motivation for all involved staff, communication and coordination, an appropriate company structure and an appropriate company culture. The framework arranges these factors in a simple value chain model.

The focus of this research is on the operational process factors that affect strategy implementation as categorized in the studies of Pettigrew (2014) and Okumus (2001, 2003).

Following is a review of the literature that studied the operational process factors and what it includes.

## 2.2 Operational process factors

Okumus (2003) defined operational process factors as “those which are primarily used and directly involved in the implementation process”. He assumed that companies have substantial control over these variables, at least in the short-term, and that is why they are used in implementing decisions. Mwawasi *et al.* (2013) emphasized that the process of strategy development should be based on a sound understanding of current operational capabilities. Okumus (2001, 2003) and Pettigrew (2014) agreed on the factors that are included in the operational process factors or strategy process category, namely, operational planning, resources availability, people, communication, control and feedback.

The following sub-sections will review the literature related to each factor separately.

*2.2.1 Resource availability.* Miller (1990, 1997); Miller *et al.*, 2004) and Hickson *et al.* (2003) considered resource availability in terms of personnel, finance and time as one of the most important factors affecting the success in implementation of strategies.

Sterling (2003) indicated that the reason some strategies fail is the shortage in resources allocated to implement these strategies, but he also mentioned that the availability of the required resources alone does not guarantee the successful implementation of a given strategic decision unless it is appropriately combined with other factors that affect that process. Sterling (2003) also mentioned the importance of financial resources on the success of strategy implementation and the importance of having accurate financial criteria to evaluate the strategy plan. The element of time is also an important resource factor (Miller

*et al.*, 2004). Enough time has to be devoted for the process of strategy implementation to increase the probability of its success. Too little time for the implementation process may hinder success. However, too much time can also be considered problematic when the implementation takes more time than was initially outlined for it (Okumus, 2003; Jiang and Carpenter, 2013; Klein and Bhagat, 2016).

Mwawasi *et al.* (2013) studied four factors affecting the implementation of operational strategies in non-governmental organizations in Kenya. One of these factors was resource allocation. They found that majority (72 per cent) of the respondents agreed that alignment of operational strategies with availability of resources ensures greater success in the implementation of operational strategies. They found respondents thinking that resource allocation is important because it ensures availability of the necessary operational equipment and facilities, which enhance the implementation success of operational strategies.

Based on the above discussion, resources that should be available to help in successful strategy implementation are the time allocated for implementation, sufficient financial resources, sufficient human resources, sufficient administrative resources, sufficient technological resources and sufficient physical resources.

**2.2.2 Communication.** As organizations becoming bigger and more complex, managers have to realize the importance of coordinating activities to ensure successful strategy implementation (Obeidat, 2008). Many studies emphasized that communication is one of the most important factors that affect strategy implementation, as it is the way in which the necessary information is transmitted (Jiang and Carpenter, 2013). Bolboli and Reiche (2013) identified communication as the mechanism that sends formal and informal messages about the new strategy.

Numerous researchers have already emphasized the importance of communication in the process of strategy implementation (Rapert and Wren, 2002; Heide *et al.*, 2002; Rapert *et al.*, 2002; Foreman and Argenti, 2005; Obeidat, 2008; Schaap, 2012). According to Foreman and Argenti (2005), communication is mentioned more frequently than any other single item when studying about the factors affecting successful strategy implementation. The dimensions of this communication element include a clear explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks and duties need to be performed by the employees, the reason behind altering job activities and, more fundamentally, the reasons why the new strategic decision was made in the first place (Obeidat, 2008; Behery *et al.*, 2016).

In addition, Peng and Litteljohn (2001) showed that effective communication is a key requirement for effective strategy implementation. Organizational communication plays an important role in training, knowledge dissemination and learning during the process of strategy implementation. In fact, communication is crucial in every aspect of strategy implementation, as it relates in a complex way to organizing processes, organizational context and implementation objectives, which, in turn, have an effect on the process of implementation. Schaap (2006) showed that over 38 per cent of the senior-level leaders do not communicate the organization's direction and business strategy to all of their employees. This study also reinforces findings that frequent communication up and down in an organization enhances strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values.

Based on the above discussion, the most important points to consider in communication are effective co-ordination among different parties, communication of problems requiring early top management involvement, clear explanation of the criteria for success of the strategy implementation and the goals of the strategy; all these points should be well "understood" by employees implementing the strategy.

*2.2.3 Operational planning.* According to [Hendry et al. \(2013\)](#), planning is the process of starting a project and operational planning of the implementation activities and tasks. Operational planning has a great deal of effect on many things within organizations such as:

- the process of preparing and planning different implementation activities;
- participation and feedback from all managerial levels and functional departments when designing the implementation activities;
- initial pilot plans and the knowledge gained from them;
- the time required to make resources available and use them;
- defining the key strategy implementation tasks, duties and activities;
- a good understanding of the role of organizational structure and design in the implementation process; and
- clearly assigning lead responsibilities for strategy implementation to a person or a team in the organization.

*2.2.4 People.* [Saini et al. \(2013\)](#) recognized that recruiting new staff and providing training and incentives to relevant employees is important. Many researchers confirmed the effect of top management on the implementation of strategies ([Schaap, 2012](#); [Maditinos et al., 2014](#); [Hazarbassanova, 2016](#)). [Okumus \(2003\)](#) focused on the role of managers in the implementation process and added that managers must have the necessary training to help them put their best strategies into practice. [Schmidt and Brauer \(2006\)](#) stated that the interaction among the top management team typically leads to more commitment to the institution's targets and strategies, and accordingly, this will help ensure the successful implementation of the institution's chosen strategy. [Schaap \(2012\)](#) hypothesized that effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation and concluded that senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.

[Miller \(1997\)](#) and [Miller et al. \(2004\)](#) emphasized on the interest groups effect and concluded that for managers to guarantee the success of strategy implementation, they have to communicate effectively with the different groups involved in this process to avoid any political problems caused by different needs and expectations. In line with [Shannak et al. \(2010\)](#), [Maditinos et al. \(2014\)](#) concluded that an organization that provides its employees with training has higher probability of accomplishing successful implementation of e-business processes. Moreover, an organization with knowledgeable employees that are familiar with the technology that supports e-business is more likely to compete successfully in an online environment. Furthermore, [Sue and Khawaja \(2015\)](#) approved statistically the crucial effect of employee's sufficient capabilities at all the managerial levels on the success of strategy execution.

*2.2.5 Control and feedback.* [Okumus \(2003\)](#) defined control as the formal and informal mechanisms that allow the efforts and results of strategy implementation to be monitored and compared to predetermined objectives. The main issues to be considered regarding control are as follows:

- the formal and the monitoring activities that should be carried out during and after the strategy implementation;
- communication and operational plans, both key elements to monitor the implementation process and to provide feedback about its progress;
- the impact of uncontrollable factors of external environment on strategy implementation;

- the availability of information systems to monitor implementation;
- the effect of competing activities on strategy implementation;
- the availability of clearly defined and measurable performance standards for each strategy element;
- the availability of an organized system for monitoring how well those performance standards were met;
- reviewing the organization's monitoring data regularly and revising the strategic decisions as appropriate; and
- identifying major problems that could have surfaced during strategy implementation previously.

Katsimpra (2004) and Bolboli and Reiche (2013) agreed on the importance of direct supervision of subordinates by managers and concluded that even the implementation of best decisions can fail if there is inadequate supervision of subordinates.

Because strategy is about making the right choices while implementation is about taking the right actions, to conduct a successful implementation, Speculand (2014) advised managers with these five recommendations:

- (1) focusing on paying equal attention to both constructing and implementing the organization strategy;
- (2) overseeing and staying committed to the implementation process constantly through sharing information, communicating with employees and checking the current status;
- (3) adapting and adjusting the strategy and implementation plan when required because it is rare that what was agreed to in the boardroom happens during the implementation;
- (4) create the right conditions for strategy implementation by ensuring a culture that supports the implementation process; and
- (5) following up the implementation process.

*2.2.6 Strategy implementation.* One of the first studies on successful implementation was carried out by Alexander (1985), who defined successful implementation as that which achieves the initial goals and objectives of the strategic decision, remains within the limits of the initial budget and obtains the expected financial results. Other studies also used financial results as a criterion to measure the performance or the outcome of the implementation process (Hamilton and Shergill, 1992; Boyd, 1991).

However, it is difficult to isolate the effect of an individual decision on a specific financial outcome. At the same time, it may be possible to show decreasing cost resulting from the implementation of a strategic decision. Hickson *et al.* (2003) supported this and suggested that, "In tangible projects financial criteria are often neither appropriate nor available, so general indicators of success, achievement of goals, satisfaction, and so forth provide useful outcome measures".

If the implementation of a strategic decision is unsuccessful, even the most superior decisions will be considered to be useless. Furthermore, failure of implementation will affect the members inside the organization as well as the organization itself. Successful decisions can be considered as those decisions that help the organization to improve its own performance, that of those affecting the competitive advantage of the organization and that of those achieving its members' objectives and goals.

Miller (1997) and Okumus (2003) used three criteria to measure the success of strategic decision implementation.

The first criterion is referred to as the *completion* of the implementation process. This is the degree to which everything intended to be done is done within the time frame. The second criterion is *achievement*, which is the degree to which everything, which was done, performs as intended. The final criterion is *acceptability*, which refers to the degree of satisfaction of those involved in the implementation or affected by it. According to Miller (1997), implementation will not be successful if organizations satisfy only the first two criteria without satisfying the third.

This research follows the precedent of researchers in strategic implementation studies who used the assessment of managers to define the success of strategic decision implementation. Hickson *et al.* (2003) commented that managers themselves are aware of whether a decision was successful and satisfied their expectations in both the short and long term and used the managers' assessment to identify success as "the extent to which the performance over time of what was done was as intended or better".

Based on the research discussed earlier, this study aims to test the below hypotheses:

*H1.* There is no statistical significant relationship between the operational process factors (operational planning, people, communication, resources availability, control and feedback) and the success of strategy implementation.

To prove this hypothesis, the following sub-hypotheses were formulated:

*H1.1.* There is no statistical significant relationship between resource availability and the success of strategy implementation.

*H1.2.* There is no statistical significant relationship between communication and the success of strategy implementation.

*H1.3.* There is no statistical significant relationship between operational planning and the success of strategy implementation.

*H1.4.* There is no statistical significant relationship between people and the success of strategy implementation.

*H1.5.* There is no statistical significant relationship between the control on the implementation process and its feedback and the success of strategy implementation.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1 Theoretical framework

In this study, the variable of primary interest (the dependent variable) is "successful strategy implantation", and the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable, i.e. "the operational process factors", as shown in Figure 1.

#### 3.2 Pharmaceutical industry in Jordan

The pharmaceutical industry in Jordan has steadily grown during the past decade and the number of its companies reached 20 in 2014. However, many of these were merged or restructured to become 17 companies by 2015 (Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, 2014). Jordanian medications and pharmaceutical products are now distributed worldwide in more than 60 countries owing to its excellent quality, very good reputation and reasonable prices. From exportation side, 81 per cent of the Jordanian production is exported to foreign markets and 90 per cent of it is going to Arab markets. In



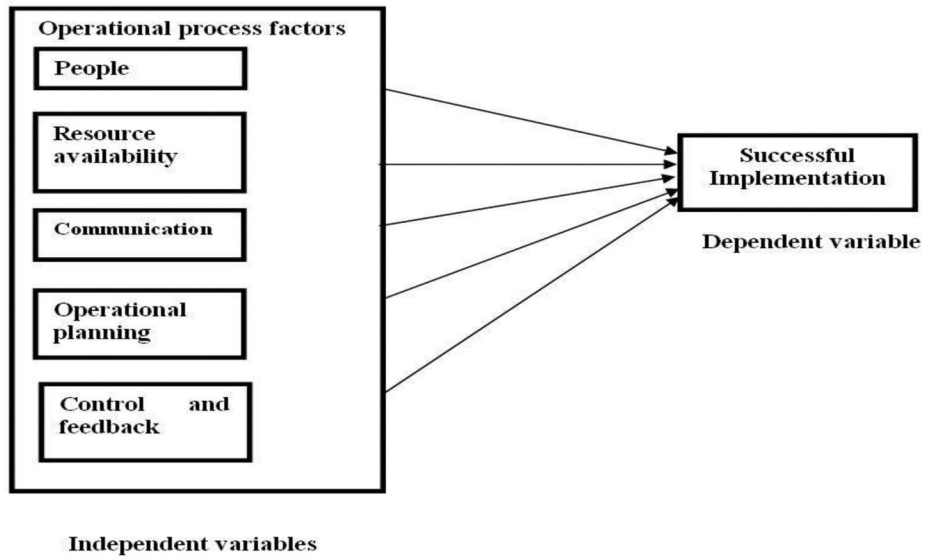


Figure 1.  
Research theoretical  
framework

addition, some of the Jordanian pharmaceutical companies have joint ventures and subsidiary branches in eight foreign and Arab countries (Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, 2014).

Nowadays, the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector has become an increasingly competitive one. The environment is more dynamic, uncertain and continuously changing. These circumstances forced the Jordanian pharmaceutical companies (although the majority companies produce generic products, which are not regarded as innovators but rather as companies that produce copies of original products to be launched at patent expiration) to adopt more effective, unique and innovative strategies to maintain and improve their performance and to gain a larger portion of the world market share (Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, 2014).

Pharmaceutical drugs expenditures account for a large per cent of healthcare costs in Jordan, and the total pharmaceutical expenditure (TPE) in 2008 was 496.4 million JOD (US\$ 701 m). The total pharmaceutical expenditure accounts for 3.08 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and makes up 35.94 per cent of the total healthcare expenditure (Jordan Pharmaceutical Country Profile, 2015; Jordan National Health Accounts, 2008). These reasons highlight the importance of studying the Jordanian market.

### 3.3 Research population, sample and data collection method

As mentioned earlier, the Middle East is full of wars and is characterized by a turbulent and an unsafe environment; accordingly, it was very difficult to cover all pharmaceutical companies that operate there. Jordan as a Middle Eastern country has proven to be the safest country in the Middle East. Therefore, the current research considers the case of pharmaceutical companies in Jordan as a developing country in the Middle East. The research population consisted of all the employees who implement and/or are responsible for strategy implementation in the 17 pharmaceutical companies in Jordan. The participants were selected from staff to senior managers (for example, project managers) within all the departments that are responsible for implementing the company strategy at both business

and operational levels. Data were collected using a snowball sampling technique (or chain sampling), which is a non-probability sampling technique. In this study, the researchers started with meeting the top manager of each concerned department in each company, and then the researchers asked him/her to nominate other subjects who implement and/or participate in implementing the organization strategy. The researchers then met the nominated subjects and continued in the same way until they interviewed sufficient number of subjects (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

The questionnaire was originally designed in English and then translated into Arabic language, and it was distributed to the targeted sample in both versions to be filled according to their preference. The questionnaire was designed based on an extensive literature review and discussed with a number of experts in the field of strategy formulation and implementation (academic scholars and market professionals) for comprehensiveness, language and consistency of questions; it was modified according to their suggestions. After that, the questionnaire was pilot-tested before its actual use in the field to gain feedback on the feasibility of the study protocol and data collection. The pilot test was also aimed to capture the response rate and the time required for filling the questionnaire. Employees included in the pilot test were not included in the study.

In total, 13 out of 17 pharmaceutical companies in Jordan accepted to participate in the study. All participants were volunteers, and they were briefed on the main aim of the study and informed of their rights not to participate and withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any time during data collection. No financial incentive or rewards in kind were offered. Participants took about 15 min to complete the questionnaire that consisted of 36 items. Specifically, 330 questionnaires were distributed between the period of January to May 2015, and 259 were returned indicating a 78.5 per cent response rate. After deleting the missing questionnaires, 221 were considered as usable questionnaires.

#### 4. Data analysis

##### 4.1 *Descriptive analysis for demographic factors*

As can be seen in Table I, there were 120 (54.3 per cent) male and 101 (45.7 per cent) female participants. The results also show that 30.3 per cent of the respondents had less than 5 years of experience while 56.6 per cent of the respondents had more than 5 years' experiences. This indicated that the results of the analysis would be more realistic as the majority had long experience. In addition, the majority of the participants (43.4 per cent) were middle-level managers, 23.1 per cent were supervisors, and 12.2 per cent were top-level managers. Finally, the results showed 112 (50.7 per cent) working in large companies with number of employees over 500.

##### 4.2 *Descriptive analysis of independent and dependent variables*

The extent to which the operational process factors affect successful strategy implementation in pharmaceutical companies in Jordan was assessed through their mean scores. Also, levels of importance were measured to differentiate between the highest and lowest items to give an indication about the rank of the items and help in discussing the result. The results showed that the degree of influence of operational process elements used in this study (operational planning, people, communication, resources availability, control and feedback) was relatively positive, as the means for all the variables were high (3.96-4.44) and their standard deviations were close to 1. It can be concluded that the most important independent variable is the resource availability factor, followed by control and feedback factor, and then communication factor and operational planning factor and, finally, people factor that shows the lowest importance compared with other factors. The achievement

RIBS 27,3	Category	Frequency	(%)
<b>396</b>	<i>Gender</i>		
	Male	120	54.3
	Female	101	45.7
	<i>Experience</i>		
	Less than 1 year	29	13.1
	1: less than 5 years	67	30.3
	5: less than 10 years	57	25.8
	10: less than 15 years	43	19.5
	Over 15 years	25	11.3
	<i>Position</i>		
	Top management level	27	12.2
	Middle management level	96	43.4
	Supervisory level	51	23.1
	Other	47	21.3
	<i>Number of employees in the company</i>		
50: less than 150	35	15.8	
150: less than 300	35	15.8	
300: less than 500	39	17.6	
Over 500	112	50.7	

**Table I.**  
Respondents'  
demographic profile

factor shows the most important influence on successful strategy implementation, its overall mean being 3.17. It is then followed by completion and acceptability. This result indicates that the employees in pharmaceutical companies consider that achieving the financial goals rather than other strategy goals is related to successful strategy implementation. **Table II** shows the overall mean and standard deviations of the independent and dependent variables.

#### 4.3 Hypotheses testing results

The main hypothesis of the study and the sub-hypotheses were determining whether operational process factors have a significant effect on successful strategy implementation.

Variables	Mean	SD	Mean level	Order
<i>Independent variables</i>				
<i>Operational process factors</i>				
Resource availability	3.92	0.449	High	–
Communication	4.44	0.582	Very High	1
Operational planning	3.84	0.64	High	3
People	3.76	0.698	High	4
Control and feedback	3.69	0.544	High	5
	3.88	0.386	High	2
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
<i>Successful strategy implementation</i>				
Achievement	3.117	0.93526	Moderate	–
Completion	3.176	0.993	Moderate	1
Acceptability	3.104	1.101	Moderate	2
	3.01	1.053	Moderate	3

**Table II.**  
Mean average score  
and standard  
deviation (SD) of  
research variables

In this regard, the multiple regression technique was used; the model fit was tested using the model summary table of multiple regression and the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

One main hypothesis was suggested to investigate the relationship between operational process factor and successful strategy implementation. Five sub-hypotheses stemmed from the main hypothesis. This study attempted to test the null hypothesis, starting with the main hypothesis, followed by the sub-hypotheses.

4.3.1 Main hypothesis testing. H1: There is no significant relationship between the operational process factors (operational planning, people, communication, resources availability, control and feedback) and the success of strategy implementation.

The results of testing the main hypothesis using multiple linear regressions and ANOVA are shown in the following two tables (Table III).

The first step was performing multiple linear regressions that allowed us to statistically test the main null hypothesis. Following is the multiple linear regressions table:

The multiple correlation coefficient  $R = 0.454$  indicated that there was a medium positive correlation between operational process factors (operational planning, people, communication, resources availability, control and feedback) and the success of strategy implementation. It proved that the independent variables and dependent variable changed in the same direction.

$R$ -square represents the variability. The value of  $R^2 = 0.206$  indicated the amount of variations in the successful strategy implementation variable that was accounted by the fitted model and was explained by the operational process factors. It also means that higher the applicability of the operational process variables, the higher is the success rate of implementation (Table IV).

The adjusted  $R^2$  indicated the generalizability of the model. It allowed us to generalize the results taken from the respondents to the whole population. In this case, it was 0.187.

The next step was ANOVA that allowed us to statistically test the main null hypothesis. Following is the ANOVA table.

The table shows that the F-ratio for these data was 11.146, which was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  (alpha in this case equals sig = 0.000). Therefore, we concluded that there is a statistically significant effect of operational process factors on the success of strategy implementation and thus rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis.

Model	$R$	$R$ -square	Adjusted $R$ -square	Standard error of estimate
1	0.454 <sup>a</sup>	0.206	0.187	0.81894

**Note:** <sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Resource Availability, Communication, People, Operational Planning, Control and Feedback

**Table III.** Model summary table of main hypothesis

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	$F$	Significance
Regression	37375	5	7.475	11.146	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	144.192	215	0.671		
Total	181.567	220			

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Resource Availability, Communication, People, Operational Planning, Control and Feedback; <sup>b</sup> dependent variable: successful strategy implementation

**Table IV.** ANOVA<sup>b</sup> of main hypothesis

The other part of multiple regression analysis was concerned with testing the effect of each predictor included in the model (that is beta) on the dependent variable. By using the value of beta and significance level, we inferred the acceptability of each of the sub-hypothesis and the extent of application of each predictor.

The  $\beta$  (standardized beta coefficient) values indicated the individual contribution of each predictor (independent variable) to the model when the other predictors were held constant. Table V shows the standardized coefficients for each of the operational process dimensions. For resource availability,  $\beta$  was 31.5 per cent, for operational planning it was 22.7 per cent and for control and feedback it was 15.2 per cent. These values are considered to be high.  $\beta$  for the communication factor was 18.3 per cent. The people factor had a small value of 1.9 per cent.

We inferred from the  $\beta$  values that the variable that had the highest contribution in the model was resource availability, followed by operational planning.

4.3.2 *Testing the sub-hypotheses.* This step involved testing the acceptability of the sub-hypotheses:

*H1.1.* There is no significant relationship between resource availability and the success of strategy implementation.

The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the significance level was less than 0.05 and the  $t$  value was higher than 1.96. As can be seen in Table V, the significance level of the resource availability variable was 0.000, which is lower than 0.05, and the  $t$  value was 3.97, which is higher than 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This means that there was a significant effect of resource availability on successful strategy implementation.

*H1.2.* There is no significant positive relationship between communication and the success of strategy implementation.

The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the significance level was less than 0.05 and the  $t$  value was higher than 1.96. As seen in Table V, the significance level of the communication variable was 0.047, which is lower than 0.05, and the  $t$  value was 1.994, which is higher than 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, which means that there was a significant effect of communication on successful strategy implementation.

*H1.3.* There is no significant positive relationship between operational planning and the success of strategy implementation.

Model	Un-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Significance	Results
	B	Standard error	Beta	$t$		
(Constant)	0.630	0.611		1.031	0.304	Reject null hypothesis
Resource availability	0.492	0.124	0.315	3.97	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Communication	0.260	0.130	0.183	0.1,994	0.047	Reject null hypothesis
Operational Planning	0.296	0.117	0.227	2.532	0.012	Reject null hypothesis
People	0.032	0.133	0.019	0.236	0.814	Fail to reject null hypothesis
Control and feedback	0.357	0.171	0.152	2.093	0.308	Reject null hypothesis

**Table V.**  
Coefficients of  
independent variables

**Note:** Dependent variable: successful strategy implementation

The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the significance level was less than 0.05 and the  $t$  value was higher than 1.96. As seen in Table V, the significance level of the operational planning variable was 0.012, which is lower than 0.05, and the  $t$  value was 2.532, which is higher than 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, which means that there was a significant effect of operational planning on successful strategy implementation.

*H1.4.* There is no significant positive relationship between people and the success of strategy implementation.

The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the significance level was less than 0.05 and the  $t$  value was higher than 1.96. As seen in Table V, the significance level of the people variable was 0.814, which is higher than 0.05, and the  $t$  value was 0.236, which is lower than 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted, which means that there was no significant effect of people on successful strategy implementation.

*H1.5.* There is no significant positive relationship between the control on the implementation process and its feedback and the success of strategy implementation.

The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the significance level was less than 0.05 and the  $t$  value was higher than 1.96. As seen in Table V, the significance level of the control variable was 0.038, which is lower than 0.05, and the  $t$  value was 2.093, which is higher than 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, which means that there was a significant effect of control and feedback on successful strategy implementation.

## 5. Discussion and recommendations

The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of operational process factors on strategy implementation and the determinants of successful implementation in Middle East as a case study of a developing country. To the authors' knowledge, the present study is the first in Middle East, focusing on strategy implementation in pharmaceutical companies.

Results revealed that operational process factors have great effect on the success of strategies in pharmaceutical companies. The mean score for each factor was relatively high, as shown in Table V, and their order of importance was as follows: resource availability (4.44), communication (3.84), operational planning (3.76), people (3.69) and control and feedback (3.88). This indicated the essential role of all factors that are crucial in enhancing the success of strategy implementation.

Further, results showed that strategies in pharmaceutical companies were implemented successfully, as the mean score of each of the success elements was 3.176 for achievement, 3.104 for completion and 3.01 for acceptability with an average mean score of 3.11, which is considered to be high. This may strongly suggest that the pharmaceutical sector in Jordan as part of Middle East is currently engaged effectively in successful strategy implementation. The results of this study are consistent with Miller's (1997) study, which suggests that the implementation of strategic decisions is not considered successfully unless all three implementation aspects are considered to be achieved.

The main null hypothesis of this study was to investigate the effect of operational process factors on successful strategy implementation. Based on Table V in the previous section, the main null hypothesis was rejected, which means that successful strategy implementation was influenced by at least one of the operational process factors ( $R^2 = 0.206$ ,  $f = 11.146$  with significant level = 0.000). Accordingly, the operational process variables explained about 20.6 per cent of the variance influence successful implementation.

The results also indicated that pharmaceutical companies give careful attention to operational process factors; they focus on introducing new products and services and enhancing their administrative systems.

It is well known that resource availability is considered to be a key factor in influencing the success of any strategy implementation. This study revealed that it was the most important factor that affects strategy implementation, with the highest mean score of 4.44. Literature confirmed that the largest impediment for strategic implementation is the shortage in the organizational resources; [Reid et al. \(2014\)](#) found that shortage in financial and human resources were the main obstacles for successful implementation. [Shah and Sid Nair \(2014\)](#) confirmed that an institution's financial position and resourcing are significant limitations in successful implementation. [De Toni et al. \(2015\)](#) emphasized the importance of availability of technical resources, especially software, in the implementation phase of any strategy.

[Shah and Sid Nair \(2014\)](#) found that communication and staff engagement with reward incentives could improve the implementation process, which is consistent with the results of this study. The mean score of the communication variable was 3.84, and as shown in [Table IV](#), its effect was statistically significant.

Operational planning was proved to be an important factor affecting strategy implementation in pharmaceutical companies. The study findings are consistent with [Reid et al. \(2014\)](#) who revealed that two-thirds of highly successful organizations consider operational planning to have either a large or critical impact on overall organizational success. In addition, [De Salas and Huxley \(2014\)](#) found that a difficulty in decomposing goals for lower levels of the organization (especially when strategy is not clearly linked to department, team and individual goals as a function of operational planning) will lead to a common difficulty in implementing strategy results.

The fourth factor was people. The surprising result obtained after hypothesis testing was that there was no significant influence of the people variable on successful strategy implementation; however, its mean score was high (3.69), which proved its substantial contribution to successful implementation. This result could be explained by the fact that some people inside the organization will dislike the changes accompanied with implementing a strategy (Radford, 1986). Miller (1990) identified the work of Hage (1980) in which it was stated that, "the more radical the change, the more prolonged and difficult is the implementation period and the greater will be the conflict and resistance by the members of the organization" (Miller, 1990, p. 70). That's why it is important to motivate the people who are responsible for or affected by the implementation process and involve them from the beginning to ensure their support, feeling of ownership and commitment. Another reason is the presence of interest groups who try to drive the strategic decision in a way that supports their own agendas and try to impose and advocate for their favorite solutions with other disagreeing groups. Interest groups will try to steer the process in a different direction, making implementation more difficult ([Miller et al., 2004](#); [Miller, 1997](#)). [Obeidat et al. \(2012\)](#) explained that many managerial problems in Arab organizations are caused by the large power distance and the collectivist outlook, which are considered to be the characteristics of Arab culture ([Tarhini et al., 2015, 2016](#)). This makes the employees loyal to individuals rather than to the organization itself ([Tarhini et al., 2014](#)). This also leads to another serious problem, i.e. a non-cohesive and less-elaborated organizational structure, that reflects the poor coordination and connection between tasks, jobs and positions inside the organization.

The study findings revealed that the control and feedback, with a mean of 3.88, was the second most important factor that affects strategy implementation ([Table V](#)). This finding is consistent with [Reid et al. \(2014\)](#) who found that control and feedback reporting on regular

basis with staff and the board is an important differentiator between more and less successful organizations. Highly successful organizations are more likely to discuss progress at staff meetings, review mission alignment at least annually and assess and report on progress regularly. *Shah and Sid Nair (2014)* also recommended that to improve strategic implementation, monitoring of the implementation process and presence of performance measures should be ensured. *Nijaz (2014)* considered that using information technology in designing, developing and implementing the organization strategy is a main component of its enterprise and success.

As discussed above, the findings of this study are similar to those of previous research. This shows that there might be a difference in the way different organizations in different countries implement their strategies (whether such organizations operate in developed or developing countries), but it is shown that similar factors affect such implementation. Accordingly, the results of this study show that culture has a minimal effect on the implementation process; hence, it can be used to explain the effect of the factors that affect the implementation of strategy.

This research paper focuses on factors that affect the successful implementation of strategies within the pharmaceutical companies in the Middle East. The five operational process factors of this study were found to be statistically significant. This strongly suggests the need to adopt certain guidelines and mechanisms to reduce these obstacles in achieving successful implementation of formulated strategies. A suggestive list is provided for each of the implementation problems in *Table VI*.

Implementation problems	Suggested guidelines/Adoptive mechanisms
Took more time than originally allocated	Develop and evaluate strategies that expedite implementation
Major problems surfaced that had not been identified earlier	Spend more time on identification of problems in implementation
Co-ordination was not sufficiently effective	Appoint cross-functional/supply chain teams for implementation purposes
Capabilities of employees involved were insufficient	Train employees in strategic implementation skills
Training and instructions given to lower level employees were inadequate	Have higher involvement of lower-level employees in strategic planning inputs and feedback
Leadership and direction provided by departmental managers were inadequate	Link departmental manager performance to implementation and effective feedback mechanisms
Key implementation tasks and activities were not sufficiently defined	Clarify and prioritize information on key implementation tasks and activities
Information systems used to monitor implementation were inadequate	Track and disseminate information on implementation of major tasks and activities
Advocates and supporters of strategic decision did not play active role in implementation	Involve strategic influencers in recommendations/support of follow-through implementation tasks
Overall goals were not well understood by employees	Involve employees in formulation of goals
Key formulators of strategic decision did not play active role in implementation	Involve key decision makers in developing implementation tasks
People are not measured or rewarded for executing the plan	Tie incentive and reward systems to success in implementation of formulated strategies
Lack of understanding of role of organizational structure and design in execution process	Clarify role of organizational structure and positions in implementation of strategies

**Table VI.**  
Implementation problems and suggested guidelines/ adoptive mechanisms



Finally, the results of this study emphasize the importance of operational factors in the implementation process of strategies within the pharmaceutical companies in the Middle East. Accordingly, company management must ensure that a supportive structure is in place to provide employees with the necessary training and instructions during the implementation phase. It is also recommended that company management should link employee performance during implementation phase with the overall reward and compensation system in the organization. Thirdly, it is shown that managers should develop a good information system that can be easily used to update those who are involved in the implementation process with the tasks needed to successfully implement the strategy. Fifth, managers in pharmaceutical companies, to enhance the effectiveness of communication and coordination during implementation processes, have to be involved and maintain focus during the process. Additionally, they have to align their own organizational structure to what the strategy is calling for. Finally, the results of this study show that there is almost no difference in the factors affecting the implementation process between Middle East countries as developing countries and other developed countries. However, there might be a difference among such countries in the way they implement strategies, which gives scope for future research.

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