

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTINUOUS PROCESS STRATEGY FOR IMPROVEMENT OF OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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To cite this article (APA): Dike, C., Adebayo, A., & Jimoh, J. (2025). Effectiveness of continuous process strategy for improvement of operational excellence in universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. *AAU Journal of Business Educators*, 5 (1), 205-220.

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of continuous process strategy for the improvement of operational excellence in Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study answered four research questions. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 7627 academic and non-academic staff of three (3) Public Universities out of the four (4) in Lagos State. A sample of 366 was drawn using Taro Yamane's formula. The proportionate sampling technique was employed to select 366 respondents from three Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire survey. 279 copies of questionnaires were retrieved, representing a 76.2 percent response rate. The research questions were analysed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The findings revealed that relationship management strategies such as continuous improvement process, enterprise alignment, cultural enablers and organizational learning culture have improved operational excellence to a moderate extent, while environmental analysis and organizational control system were improved to a low extent. The study, therefore, concluded that there is still need for the implementation of effective relationship management strategies for the improvement of operational excellence of universities in Lagos State. The authors recommended, among others, that Universities should endeavour to encourage employees to identify areas for improvement and provide training and resources in order to support continuous learning.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Operational Excellence, Relationship Management, Universities, Strategies. Continuous Process.

Introduction

Universities play a critical role in advancing knowledge, fostering innovation, and developing human capital, all of which are essential for national development. In Nigeria, the University education is considered as an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004). Every researcher and scholar irrespective of the school of thought agrees to the fact that education is the bedrock of economic, business, vocational, political and technological development of any nation whether the developed and or the less developed (Ogunnaike & Damiduro, 2014). In all human societies, education is meant to pass on to the new generations the existing knowledge of their physical environment, to introduce individuals to the organization of society, teach them skills for performing their jobs and enjoying their leisure, as well as to inculcate sound moral values in them for their own benefit and that of the society. Thus, there is a symbiotic relationship between the education industry and society at large. Education derives inspiration and nourishment from society and in turn, its output contributes to the growth, renewal and development of society. Tertiary education, especially

University education, is relevant for the training of highly skilled specialists in the fields of arts, humanity, science, vocational and technology at various segments of the higher institutions (Olubadewo, 2016). The objectives of tertiary education as stipulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its education policy document emphasize the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies, both mentally and physically as means for the individual to be self-reliant and also contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2014).

Tertiary education is the education given to an individual after post basic education in institutions such as the universities, the polytechnics, the colleges of education and those institutions offering correspondence courses at the tertiary level stated that, tertiary institutions (Universities) worldwide, are regarded as the citadel of knowledge, the fountain of intellectualism, the most appropriate ground for the incubation of leaders of tomorrow. The researcher further stated that the tertiary institutions are knowledge and value providers that they stand or fail in their abilities or inabilities to deliver on the criteria laid by the FRN in 2013. This, according to Nwankwo (2017), explains why merit has been the watch word in the university education system - a system where an undergraduate must first be certified worthy in character and learning before being graduated into the labor market. Society depends on institutions of learning to produce well-adjusted individuals who can fit properly into the human environment. Tertiary institutions, especially the Universities as higher educational institutions, are statutorily charged with the responsibility of producing high level manpower or human capital capable of piloting the affairs of the society. As Allports (2017) puts it, learning at the university level could be described as effective if it results in bringing about the expected transformation in the attitudes, skills and knowledge of the recipient(s) or student(s) over a period. According to the researcher, effective learning at the university level should result in producing graduates who are adequately informed, technically equipped and morally and ethically prepared to become agents and good citizens who would be selfless leaders in society. Education derives inspiration and nourishment from society and in turn, its output contributes to the growth, renewal and development of society.

Operational excellence in higher education institutions is essential to meeting academic goals, enhancing stakeholder satisfaction, and achieving sustained organizational growth. Operational excellence, a concept originally associated with manufacturing and business environments, has increasingly gained relevance in higher education. It involves optimizing processes to improve efficiency, reduce waste, and provide high-quality services. When applied to universities, operational excellence can improve student satisfaction, support faculty productivity, and enhance administrative efficiency (Achumba & Azoroh, 2021). The concept of operational excellence goes beyond using individual tools and techniques. It incorporates Lean principles with organizational culture and management at a strategic level. Operational excellence has been defined because of an enterprise-wide practice of ideal behaviors based on the correct principles or simply as a state where every employee can see the flow of value to the stakeholder and fix that flow before it breaks down. Although these definitions may seem broad, they are the correct principles categorized under six dimensions; Cultural Enablers, Continuous Process Improvement, Enterprise Alignment, Environmental Analysis, Organizational Learning Culture and Organizational Control System that are fundamental to achieving Operational Excellence. To achieve operational excellence, not only do organizations have to implement the correct principles, but the principles must also be deeply embedded within the organization's culture. The culture of excellence ensures that everyone within the organization knows the 'why' behind the how and the what. It is also known as the continuous improvement of processes to deliver superior services and outcomes for all stakeholders (Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006).

Relationship management, in this context, involves strategically engaging with various stakeholders such as students, faculty, administrative staff, alumni, and external partners to foster positive, mutually beneficial relationships, commitment, loyalty, and cooperation, all of which are necessary for achieving organizational goals (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Strong relationship management strategies can enhance operational performance in numerous ways, from improving communication channels to

ensuring smoother cooperation and greater commitment to institutional goals (Palmatier et al., 2006). For instance, building collaborative relationships with faculty and administrative staff can improve teamwork, facilitate resource sharing, and lead to streamlined decision-making processes, all of which are vital for operational excellence in educational institutions (Gronroos, 2011). Relationship management plays an essential role in operational excellence by fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders, which are necessary for effective governance and decision-making. Studies on relationship management in various sectors indicate that strong stakeholder relationships contribute to better organizational outcomes, including improved service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Studies in higher education have demonstrated the positive impact of relationship management on operational effectiveness. For example, research shows that institutions that prioritize stakeholder engagement and collaborative relationships often experience improved performance, greater satisfaction among students and staff, and enhanced institutional reputation (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003). However, there remains limited research specific to Nigerian universities, where unique social, economic, and cultural dynamics might influence the effectiveness of relationship management strategies. Given the growing pressure on Nigeria universities to meet both local and international standards, it is crucial to understand how relationship management can help overcome existing operational challenges and achieve excellence (Ajadi, 2010). Also, in the Nigeria context, where resources are often limited, and administrative challenges are prevalent, relationship management strategies may be particularly crucial for optimizing performance and supporting long-term success (Aina, 2010). In the context of higher education, relationship management strategies are crucial for building positive interactions between the university and stakeholders. These strategies often include effective communication, collaboration, and engagement mechanisms that encourage the sharing of information and resources (Donaldson & O'Toole, 2007). For Universities in Lagos State, implementing these strategies could improve operational efficiency by aligning stakeholders with the institution's mission and objectives. Additionally, it could foster an inclusive culture that supports continuous improvement and encourages a more cohesive and supportive academic community (Afolabi, 2020).

In Lagos State, Nigeria, universities face unique operational challenges, including resource limitations, complex administrative structures, and a diverse range of stakeholders. These issues often hinder universities' ability to achieve operational excellence. To address these challenges, effective relationship management has emerged as a crucial strategy, as it can strengthen internal and external collaboration, enhance service quality, and promote stakeholder satisfaction (Gummesson, 2008). In recent years, universities worldwide have increasingly recognized the importance of relationship management as a critical component of operational excellence. Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria, face numerous operational challenges that hinder the delivery of high-quality education and services. Among these are limited funding, bureaucratic delays, poor communication channels, and the difficulty of maintaining robust engagement with diverse stakeholders. These issues contribute to inefficiencies, lowered morale among faculty and students, and a general decline in service quality and reputation (Oladipo, 2015). Research suggest that effective relationship management strategies could help alleviate these issues by promoting trust, enhancing information flow, and aligning stakeholders with institutional goals, ultimately leading to operational excellence (Pansiri, 2008). However, there is limited research on how these strategies specifically impact Nigerian universities, particularly those in Lagos State.

Strategic management is the process where managers establish an organization's / institutions' long-term direction, set the specific performance objectives, develop strategies to achieve these objectives and undertake to execute the chosen action plans. Strategic management is a combination of strategy formulation and strategy implementation, it is the highest level of managerial activity, and it provides overall direction to the institution. The strategic management function directly involves all managers with line authority at the corporate, line-of-business, line-of-business, functional area and major operating departmental levels. David (2020) defined strategic management as a set of managerial decisions and actions that helps an organization achieve its objectives and vision. In other words, strategic management

is the ability of an institution to be able to look deep into a situation and be able to identify the action suitable to be implemented in order to get to its destination. Hitt et al. (2019) opined that strategic management involves analyzing the organization's internal and external environments, setting strategic goals, and implementing strategies to achieve those goals. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2017) said strategic management is concerned with the long-term direction and scope of an organization, and involves making strategic choices about markets, resources, and capabilities. From all these definitions, we can see common threads linking all of them. These common threads are decisions, actions, strategies and objectives. According to Fidler (2015), opined that strategic management is significant for institutional progress and it is usually linked to success in the university organization or institutions. This is corroborated by Henry (2018). Strategic management approaches are linked to the success of the university business due to the institution's ability to understand its environment. Such institution will formulate strategies that prepare the institution to best adapt to the ever-changing environment in ways that make it stand out from the competitors. Institution with well implemented strategies in the context of environment is thus competitive.

Managers of the nation's universities are individuals who manage the tertiary institutions and they are responsible for determining the direction to be excellent or otherwise. Abas (2017) stated that without learning the skills of strategic management models or approaches, the school leaders will only realize that they are not involved in anything except crisis management. A school manager that does not have a clear strategic management model will be facing difficulty in managing his/her institution effectively. Strategic management in administration, will impact the institution managers to take initiative to act as a change in controlling the new situation and creating strategies. According to Middlewood and Lumby (2014), in order to improve institutional performance, the principles and practices of strategic management should be exploring and its importance be emphasized among the institution managers. He further argued that strategic management is essential for institutions to achieve their goals and improve performance. According to David (2009), among the problems that are associated with the school administration are bureaucratic attitudes and conflicts that occur among the managers and lecturers, imperfection of the school's infrastructure, personnel management and low student academic performance, non-conducive school climate and the complication within the administration itself. Institutions are loaded with many problems mainly because of the weak practice of the strategic management approaches.

Strategy are essentials for achieving excellence in education system because they, clarify goals and objectives, guide decision-making, enhance collaboration and coordination, measure progress and evaluate effectiveness. Strategy according to Grant (2020), 'Strategy is the framework of choices that determines an organization's goals, resources, and actions. Strategy can also be term to be a long term direction and scope of an organization, and involves making strategic choices about markets (Johnson et al., 2017). Strategy as a pattern of actions that organizations use to achieve their goals, and can be deliberate or emergent (Mintzberg, 2018). According to Porter (2019), strategy is the creation of unique and valuable position that enables an organization to sustain competitive advantage. Strategy is important for effective resource utilization, better decision-making, enhance institutional effectiveness, supports continuous improvement and many more. Strategy are essentials for achieving excellence in education system because they, clarify goals and objectives, guide decision-making, enhance collaboration and coordination, measure progress and evaluate effectiveness.

The quality of the relationships differentiates one organization from another. Also, because relationships determine the future value of an organization, there is a need to keep a relationship score card that describes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the relationships (Achumba, 2012). Adopting relationship management effectively tends to give an organization distinctive or comparative advantage over competitors, because it enables them to communicate effectively with the stakeholders and know their needs and wants. It also highlights the reasons why stakeholders continue to patronize the organization's products and services, why some leave the organization, and the strategies to use to manage such relationships effectively. When long-term relationships exist between organizations

and stakeholders, the distance between them becomes shorter and the organization benefits from repeat purchase and the goodwill of the stakeholders. (Jackson, 2015; Gronroos, 2015).

Relationship management is intended for building long-term relationship. Relationship management is a system of managing a company's interactions with current and future stakeholders. Relationship Management can be further characterized as a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective stakeholders to create superior value for the institution and the stakeholders. Relationship Management is one on one affiliation with the organization and its stakeholders. Organizations has to shift from the old paradigm paralysis of mass production to the new technology of mass customization to meet the pressing demands of the stakeholders. Relationship management strategies refer to the processes and activities used to establish, maintain, and strengthen relationships with customers, suppliers, partners, and other stakeholders to achieve mutual benefits and long-term success. Mason (2015) hold the opinion that, the application of relationship management strategies helps to enhance the operational excellence in an organization in formulation and implementation of goals, objectives and initiatives taken by the organizational leaders or executives based on considerations of resources and an assessment of both internal and external environments in which the organization competes.

Adeleye (2018) highlighted that, in recent years, the application of relationship management strategies by Nigerian Universities has become widespread due to the fact that many institutions now find themselves in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in guaranteeing a steady future. The application of relationship management strategies in order to improve operational excellence in the universities is about developing a good match between an institution's activities and the demands on the environment in which it operates. For Nte (2017), Esy and Tunaid (2020), relationship strategy management focuses on the institution's mission, objectives, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strategic management is seen as one of the effective management strategies for achieving positive effect in the management of various aspects of higher educational institutions such areas as staff management, institutional performance management, financial management and the student management. In essence, strategic management aims at ensuring effective and efficient management of organization, establishment or institution and strategic management has some approaches.

Continuous process strategy refers to the ongoing improvement and refinement of business processes to achieve efficiency, reduce waste, and increase productivity. Continuous process strategy according to Stephen and David (2020), involves ongoing incremental improvements to existing processes, rather than radical changes or innovations. It is a strategy that focuses on ongoing, incremental improvements to existing processes, leveraging employee knowledge and experience (Kaplan and Norton, 2019). Cultural enabler's according to Schein (2020), are the underlying values, norms, and assumptions that facilitate or hinder organizational change and innovation. Cultural enablers are the shared values, attitudes, and behaviors that support or undermine an organization's ability to adapt and change (Kotter, 2019). According to Yukl (2018), cultural enablers include leadership behaviors, organizational values, and norms that facilitate or hinder effective organizational performance. Cultural enabler plays a very vital role in the improvement of operational excellence. This is designed to help all organizations on their journey towards excellence. This enable the institution to understand the concepts of respect & humility and how these two principles can be brought to life through the creation of its own ideal behaviours.

Enterprise alignment is getting every person in the organization to row in the same direction which makes the organization stronger and allows achievement of better results. According to Kaplan and Norton (2020), enterprise alignment involves integrating strategy, organization, and culture to achieve common goals and objectives. Enterprise alignment involves integrating business strategy, technology, and organizational capabilities to achieve competitive advantage (Davenport, 2018). Enterprise alignment is said to require aligning organizational strategy, culture, and operations to create shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2019). Environmental Analysis assists organizations in defining factors that can influence their business operations. This is a strategic tools used to identify and assess all external and internal

elements in a business environment. It examines organizational and industry factors that can positively or negatively affect the business and its success. Environmental analysis involves scanning and evaluating external factors that affect an organization's performance and strategy (Kotler and Keller, 2020). According to Mintzberg and Lampel (2019), Environmental analysis involves understanding the external context in which an organization operates, including market, economic, and social factors. Macmillan and McGrath (2018) Stated that environmental analysis involves identifying and evaluating external opportunities and threats that impact organizational performance.

Despite the benefits of relationship management, the extent to which Nigerian universities employ these strategies effectively is unclear. Oladipo (2018) noted that Universities in Nigeria often struggle with outdated administrative structures that inhibit efficient communication and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, Okebukola (2015) observed that Universities in Nigeria frequently lack a strategic focus on relationship-building, which may impede efforts to achieve operational excellence. Given these challenges, exploring the role of relationship management strategies within the operational context of Public Universities in Lagos State is essential to understand how these strategies can be leveraged to improve institutional performance and service quality. This study, therefore, seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of relationship management strategies as a means of enhancing operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State. By evaluating cultural enablers, continuous process improvement, enterprise alignment, and environmental analysis, that are fundamental to achieving operational excellence, this present research provided the insights into how these institutions can implement targeted strategies to overcome operational challenges and improve their performance.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria, have encountered numerous challenges, which impacted their operational efficiency, quality of service, and overall academic excellence. Among these challenges are inadequate resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor stakeholder engagement, and difficulties in fostering productive relationships with students, staff, and external partners. These challenges often lead to reduced service quality, low morale, diminished students' satisfaction, and limited collaboration with external stakeholders, all of which, in turn, hinder the attainment of operational excellence. Absolute use of bureaucracy in the management of tertiary institutions often creates disconnect in the sustainable relationship that should exist among holders of managerial positions, the students, the alumni, and the external partners in the global world. If this precarious situation is left without urgent intervention, it would lead to a decline in students' satisfaction and academic performance, diminish faculty service delivery and staff morale, result in poor alumni relations, and lead to poor reputation and branding of the institution, to mention but a few. Effective relationship management strategies have been identified as key drivers of success across various sectors, enabling organizations to foster engagement, increase loyalty, enhance communication, and improve service delivery. However, in the context of Public Universities, especially in Lagos State, there is a notable gap in understanding how these strategies can be tailored to address the unique needs of educational institutions. This gap includes understanding which relationship management strategies are most impactful for universities, how they can be implemented with existing frameworks, and the extent to which they influence operational outcomes such as efficiency, academic reputation, and stakeholder satisfaction. This present study seeks to address these issues by exploring the effectiveness of relationship management strategies for improvement of operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of the study is to provide insights into the development of effective relationship management strategies that enhance operational excellence in the Universities. Specifically, the study intends to investigate:

1. the influence of continuous process strategy on relationship management strategies.
2. the relationship between cultural enablers and relationship management strategies.
3. the impact of enterprise alignment on relationship management strategies.
4. the effect of environmental analysis on relationship management strategies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

Research Question 1: What are the roles continuous process strategy play in facilitating relationship management?

Research Question 2: What are the roles cultural enablers play in facilitating effective relationship management?

Research Question 3: What are the roles enterprise alignment play in facilitating relationship management strategies?

Research Question 4: What are the roles environmental analysis play in facilitating relationship management strategies?

Methods

Research Design

This present study adopted a descriptive research survey design. This research design is considered appropriate for collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting already existing conditions and other phenomena.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised of 7627 all the academic and non-academic staff in three (3) out of the four (4) of the Public Universities (e.g., University of Lagos, Lagos State University, and Lagos State University of Technology), all domiciled in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population involves the entire universe from where the samples or participants were drawn.

Table 1: Total Population of Academic and Non-Academic Staff of Public University in Lagos State.

Categories	LASU	LASUT	UNILAG	Total
Academic	781	245	1285	2311
Non-Academic	2301	647	2368	5316
Total	3082	892	3653	7627

There is a simplified formula used in calculating a sample size: Taro Yamane: Where; n = sample size; N = population size; e = Level of significance, 1 = constant. In this work, the formula proposed by Yamane has been used. In determining the sample size, the following variables were used: Confidence interval = 95 % e = Margin of error = 5%. Proportional allocation formula was applied thus: $n_h = \frac{nN_h}{N}$ = Where n_h = number allocated each class of customers/ participants, n = total sample size N_h = total population of each class of customer/ participants, N = overall respondents that is, total population.

The sample size for this study was 366 participants, which made up of 108 academic staff and 258 non-academic staff. Yamane (1973) statistic was used to determine the sample size. The simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the academic and non-academic respondents for this study in each sampled University. However, only 279 participants responded. The breakdown of the distribution is

shown in the Table below.

Table 2: Population Sample of Academic and Non-Academic Staff of Public Universities.

Categories	LASU	LASUT	UNILAG	Total
Academic	35	12	61	108
Non-Academic	112	32	114	258
Total	147	44	175	366

Results

Research Question 1: What are the roles continuous process strategy play in facilitating relationship management?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Continuous Process Strategy and Facilitating Relationship Management.

S/N	Items	n	Mean	SD
1	Our institution uses direct observations to evaluate the processes.	279	3.12	.673
2	Employees in our institution are empowered to pursue elimination of defects in the processes.	279	3.06	.626
3	In our institution, managers are empowered to stop a process when defect in a process is identified.	279	3.03	.749
4	Our institution takes counter measures to prevent the reoccurrence of defects in the process.	279	3.26	.773
5	In our institution, improvement in our processes is an integral part of daily work.	279	3.33	.650
6	Our institution has effective tools for gathering reliable data.	279	3.16	.690
7	Our institution immediately provides services on stakeholders demand.	279	3.03	.797
8	Services provided by our institution are flexible according to the demand of stakeholders.	279	3.10	.651
9	Our institution continuously monitors deterioration in services in order to maintain standard.	279	3.27	.572
10	Our institution ensures value addition at each step/processes of services.	279	3.15	.699

Table 3 showed that the institutions use direct observations to evaluate the processes with (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.673), employees in the institutions are empowered to pursue elimination of defects in the processes with (Mean = 3.06, SD = 0.626), in the institutions, managers are empowered to stop a process when defect in a process is identified with (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.749), the institutions takes counter measures to prevent the reoccurrence of defects in the process with (Mean = 3.26, SD = 0.773), In the institutions, improvement in our processes is an integral part of daily work with (Mean = 3.33, SD = 0.650), the institution has effective tools for gathering reliable data with (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.690), the institutions immediately provides services on stakeholders demand with (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.797), services provided by the institutions are flexible according to the demand of stakeholders with (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.651), the institutions continuously monitors deterioration in services in order to maintain standard with (Mean = 3.27, SD = 0.572), the institutions ensures value addition at each step/processes of services with (Mean = 3.15, SD = 0.699). Furthermore, since the reference point is 2, and all the items had their Mean greater than 2.0, hence, continuous process strategy has a role to play in facilitating relationship management in the institutions.

Research Question 2: What are the roles cultural enablers play in facilitating effective relationship management?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Cultural Enablers and Effective Relationship Management.

S/N	Items	n	Mean	SD
1	In our institution, planning process extends respect to the inputs from different levels.	279	3.06	.673
2	In our institution, planning process involves input from different levels of individuals.	279	3.16	.685
3	In our institution, work description is defined for every individual at all levels.	279	3.49	.667
4	In our institution, work description is standardized for every individual at all levels.	279	3.13	.800
5	Our institution encourages employees to adjust personal values to achieve organizational objectives.	279	3.22	.727
6	Our institution defines relevant metrics/data necessary for designated users.	279	2.93	.685
7	In our institution, relationship management initiatives have positively influenced operational excellence in our university.	279	3.13	.809
8	Relationship management strategies are actively implemented in my university to enhance operational processes.	279	3.03	.704
9	In our institution, focus on process is standardized for every individual at all levels.	279	2.94	.854
10	In our institution, all departments are involved in planning process.	279	3.06	.807

Table 4 showed that in the institutions, planning process extends respect to the inputs from different levels with (Mean = 3.06, SD = 0.673), in the institutions, planning process involves input from different levels of individuals with (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.685), in the institutions, work description is defined for every individual at all levels with (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.667), work description is standardized for every individual at all levels with (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.800), the institutions encourage employees to adjust personal values to achieve organizational objectives with (Mean = 3.22, SD = 0.727), the institutions defined relevant metrics/data necessary for designated users with (Mean = 2.93, SD = 0.685), relationship management initiatives have positively influenced operational excellence in our University with (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.809), relationship management strategies are actively implemented to enhance operational processes with (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.704), focus on process is standardized for every individual at all levels with (Mean = 2.94, SD = 0.854), all departments are involved in planning process with (Mean = 3.06, SD = 0.807). Furthermore, since the reference point is 2.0, and all the statements had their Mean greater than 2.0, hence, there is an enhanced enterprise alignment strategy in the institutions.

Research Question 3: What are the roles enterprise alignment play in facilitating relationship management strategies?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Enterprise Alignment and Relationship Management Strategies.

N/S	Items	n	Mean	SD
1	Our institution demonstrates respect for every individual outside the organization such as stakeholders.	279	3.16	.742
2	Our institution demonstrate respect for every individual within organization.	279	3.12	.623
3	Our institution is concerned about the health of their employees.	279	3.17	.780
4	Our institution is concerned about the safety of their employees.	279	3.16	.789
5	Our institution is careful about rights of social community.	279	3.06	.727
6	Our institution considers trainings as an investment for its future improvements.	279	3.37	.751
7	Our institution considers hands-on exposure of its employees as a future investment.	279	3.10	.747
8	Our institution regularly solicits stakeholders' feedback to improve services.	279	3.13	.682
9	Our institution is concerned about the safety of their community.	279	3.29	.749
10	Our institution demonstrates respect for the communities that host them.	279	3.20	.840

Table 5 showed that the institutions demonstrate respect for every individual outside the organization such as stakeholders with (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.742), the institutions demonstrate respect for every individual within organization with (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.623), the institutions is concern about the health of their employees with (Mean = 3.17, SD = 0.780), the institutions is concern about the safety of their employees with (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.789), the institutions is careful about rights of social community with (Mean = 3.06, SD = 0.727), the institutions consider trainings as an investment for its future improvements. With (Mean = 3.37, SD = 0.751), the institutions consider hands-on exposure of its employees as a future investment with (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.747), the institutions regularly solicit stakeholders' feedback to improve services with (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.682), the institutions are concerned about the safety of their community with (Mean = 3.29, SD = 0.749), and the institutions demonstrate respect for the communities that host them with (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.840). Furthermore, since the reference point is 2.0, and all statements had their Mean greater than 2.0, hence, enterprise alignment play a role in facilitating relationship management strategies.

Research Question 4: What are the roles environmental analysis play in facilitating relationship management strategies?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Environmental Analysis and Relationship Management Strategies.

S/N	Items	n	Mean	SD
1	Without environmental analysis strategy, it will be difficult to carry out operational excellence by the University authorities.	279	3.53	.622
2	Environmental laws are considered as a service requirement.	279	3.39	.613
3	Environmental regulations are considered as a service requirement.	279	3.50	.568
4	For Universities to improve their operational excellence, they	279	3.80	.404

	must train administrators on the application of environmental analysis.			
5	Environmental analysis strategy is very effective for the improvement of operational excellence.	279	3.49	.772
6	Environmental impacts are considered as a technical characteristic to allow for their correlation with the stakeholder's quality requirement.	279	3.37	.702
7	Environmental standards are considered as a service requirement.	279	3.16	.697
8	Environmental requirements are considered for the entire service.	279	3.23	.617
9	High levels of cash flow gives institutions discretion to provide new service if they wish to.	279	3.14	.887
10	Good leadership improve operational excellence.	279	3.49	.678
11	Good ethical behaviours improve operational excellence.	279	3.46	.728

Table 5 showed that without environmental analysis strategy, it will be difficult to carry out operational excellence by the University authorities with (Mean = 3.53, SD = 0.622), environmental laws are considered as a service requirement with (Mean = 3.39, SD = 0.613), environmental regulations are considered as a service requirement with (Mean = 3.50, SD = 0.568), for Universities to improve their operational excellence, they must train administrators on the application of environmental analysis with (Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.404), environmental analysis strategy is very effective for the improvement of operational excellence with (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.772), environmental impacts are considered as a technical characteristic to allow for their correlation with the stakeholder's quality requirement with (Mean = 3.37, SD = 0.702), environmental standards are considered as a service requirement with (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.697), environmental requirements are considered for the entire service with (Mean = 3.23, SD = 0.617), high levels of cash flow provides institutions discretion to provide new service if they wish to with (Mean = 3.14, SD = 0.887), Good leadership improve operational excellence with (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.678), and ethical behaviours improve operational excellence with (Mean = 3.46, SD = 0.728). Furthermore, since the reference point is 2.0, and all the items had their Mean greater than 2.0, therefore, environmental analysis play a role in facilitating relationship management strategies in the institutions.

Discussions

The study revealed that continuous process strategy has a role to play in fostering and improving operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria to a moderate extent (see Table 2). The study of Hammond and Chen (2023) found that there should be integration of continuous process strategies with operational excellence to ensure that organizations are not only improving their processes but also aligning these improvements with their strategic objectives, it supports the creation of culture of excellence where continuous improvement is a fundamental aspect of daily operations, leading to enhanced overall performance and competitive advantage. The study of Ogunleye and Bello (2017) also found that continuous process strategies resulted in improved resource management and administrative efficiency. The study also showed that enterprise alignment strategy has a role to play in fostering and improving operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria to a moderate extent (see Table 3). The study of Afolabi and Olayiwola (2018) found that aligning university strategies with institutional goals significantly improved operational performance. Also, the study of Adewale and Oladipo (2021) showed that effective alignment strategies are crucial for operational success.

The study also disclosed that cultural enablers has a role to play in fostering and improving operational excellence in universities in Lagos State, Nigeria to a moderate extent (see Table 4). The findings from the present study corroborated the study of Schein (2017) who found that cultural enablers'

strategies play a crucial role in achieving operational excellence within organizations. The strategies involve fostering an organizational culture that support continuous improvement, employee engagement, and the alignment of individual and organization goals. It also corroborated the study of Ibrahim and Suleiman (2021) who found that cultural enablers', including leadership support and employee involvement, were crucial for achieving operational excellence. The study also disclosed that environmental analysis strategy has a role to play in fostering and improving operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria to a low extent (see Table 5). The study of Nguyen and Phan (2019) found that the environmental analysis strategies a role to play in fostering and improving operational excellence of Public Universities in Latin America also buttressed this finding. Also, the study of Adebayo and Ojo (2020) attested to the fact that the environmental analysis strategies on the operational performance of Public Universities in Nigeria improves operational excellence.

Conclusion

The authors of the present study concluded that despite the effectiveness of relationship management strategies for the improvement of operational excellence in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria, there is still a need to build more collaborative relationship, strategies of the Universities should be made know to the stakeholders, the environmental factors that will support the improvement of operational excellence need to be discover. The authors of the present study also concluded that, the relationship management strategies are still greatly not fully implemented and applied in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The authors of the present further concluded that the effectiveness of these relationship management strategies would, in turn, lead to the improvement of operational excellence.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. The University should endeavor to encourage employees to identify areas for improvement and provide training and resources to support continuous learning. Also, to collect and analyze data on key performance indicators (KPIs) to identify areas for improvement and measure the effectiveness of continuous process strategy. Also to establish a dedicated Relationship Management Office to oversee the development and implementation of relationship management strategies across various departments and units.
2. The University should endeavor to ensure that all employees understand the university's goals and objectives. Conduct regular stakeholder engagement activities, such as surveys, focus groups, and town hall meetings, to understand the needs and expectations of stakeholders, to involve them in the development of a strategic plan that aligns with the University's vision and mission and to identify areas for improvement.
3. The University should endeavor to promote a culture of respect and inclusion, and provide training and resources to support diversity and inclusion initiatives, also provide training and development programmes for all staff members on relationship management skills, including communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution and also recognize and reward employees who demonstrate the university's values and behaviors.
4. The University should endeavor to monitor trends and changes in the external environment, including demographic, economic, and technological changes. Also, the Universities should identify and mitigate risks that could impact her operations,
5. The University should endeavor to provide training and development opportunities for employees to enhance their skills and knowledge, encourage employees to reflect on their experience and identify areas for improvement and capture and share knowledge and best practices across the university.
6. The University should endeavor to ensure that all employees understand the university's goals and

objectives, measure and evaluate employee performance against clear goals and objectives and ensure that employees are held accountable for their actions and outcomes.

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