Strategic Adaptations in Oil Industry Change Management: The Case of Juba, South Sudan

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Abstract: This study delves into the intricacies of change management practices within international oil companies operating in Juba, South Sudan, a region characterized by unique geopolitical, economic, and regulatory challenges. With a focus on the oil industry's significance in South Sudan's development, the research examines the strategies employed by these companies in navigating change. The study identifies factors influencing performance optimization, regulatory compliance, and adaptive strategies in the dynamic context of South Sudan's oil sector. Insights from this research provide valuable perspectives for international oil companies, policymakers, and stakeholders, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches in change management to address the complexities of the local operating environment.

Keywords—(Strategic Adaptations, Oil Industry, Change Management, South Sudan)

1. INTRODUCTION

South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, gained independence from Sudan in 2011, marking a crucial turning point in its history. Central to this transformation was the discovery of substantial oil reserves, positioning the oil industry as a cornerstone of South Sudan's economic landscape (Beswick, 2013). The significance of this sector cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of the capital city, Juba, which has emerged as a pivotal hub for international oil companies operating in the country. Juba's strategic importance lies not only in its role as the nation's political center but also as a focal point for the operations of major oil corporations.

The economic importance of South Sudan's oil industry is underscored by its substantial contribution to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). International oil companies play a central role in this economic narrative, contributing significantly through oil production, export activities, and associated ventures (Baldwin & Fender, 2017). The revenue generated from oil exports forms a substantial portion of South Sudan's income, acting as a key driver for the nation's economic growth and development (Baldwin & Fender, 2017). Given the economic centrality of the oil sector, the performance, efficiency, and stability of international oil companies operating in Juba directly influence South Sudan's overall economic well-being.

This study aims to delve into the dynamics of the oil industry in South Sudan, focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities encountered by international oil companies. Juba, as a primary operational center, serves as the epicenter for this examination. Geopolitical intricacies, regulatory frameworks, and the economic significance of these companies within the South Sudanese context will be explored. By shedding light on these aspects, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the operations of international oil companies in Juba, providing a foundation for understanding the complexities of the industry and the essential role of effective change management practices within this dynamic environment.

The South Sudanese oil sector, particularly in the capital city of Juba, is confronted with a myriad of challenges and opportunities that necessitate a nuanced understanding of change management strategies employed by international oil companies. The region's history of political instability, conflicts, and geopolitical dynamics has a direct impact on the oil industry, influencing production, export activities, and overall stability (Hakim & Kelsall, 2014). This volatile environment poses unique challenges for international oil companies operating in Juba, affecting their change management strategies.

Furthermore, the regulatory landscape in South Sudan introduces complexities that demand a comprehensive understanding. The oil industry is subject to a complex web of national and international regulations, adding layers of intricacy to change initiatives (Beswick, 2013). Navigating these regulations while ensuring compliance and transparency presents a substantial challenge for international oil companies. The need to address these regulatory challenges and adapt strategies to the local context is imperative for the sustained success and stability of oil operations in Juba.

The economic significance of the oil industry in South Sudan further underscores the importance of understanding the challenges and opportunities in change management. Fluctuations or disruptions in oil production and revenues can have far-reaching implications, impacting government budgets, infrastructure development, social programs, and overall economic growth (Baldwin & Fender, 2017). This prompts a critical inquiry into the effectiveness of change management strategies employed by international oil companies in Juba and the broader South Sudanese context. Therefore, this research seeks to address the gaps in the current understanding of change management practices within the South Sudanese oil sector and their implications for performance optimization, regulatory compliance, and adaptive strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on change management practices within the oil industry, particularly in challenging or developing regions like South Sudan, reveals a multifaceted landscape shaped by geopolitical, economic, and regulatory factors. Baldwin and Fender (2017) emphasize the economic significance of the oil industry in South Sudan, underscoring its contribution to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its role as a key driver of economic growth. This economic importance emphasizes the need for effective change management strategies to optimize performance and ensure the sector's stability.

Addressing the complexities of geopolitical dynamics, Hakim and Kelsall (2014) highlight the challenges posed by South Sudan's history of political instability and conflicts. These geopolitical influences have direct implications for the oil industry, affecting production, export activities, and overall operational stability. Additionally, Young (2013) discusses the opportunities tied to the strategic location of South Sudan in East Africa, offering trade and collaboration prospects for international oil companies. However, navigating these geopolitical intricacies requires adaptive change management practices.

In the context of challenging environments, the work of Beswick (2013) points to the complex regulatory landscape in South Sudan. The oil industry operates within a web of national and international regulations, making compliance and transparency crucial elements for successful operations. Change management strategies must, therefore, address these regulatory challenges to ensure both legal compliance and sustainable practices.

Furthermore, Brosché and Logan (2017) shed light on the geopolitical and regulatory challenges faced by international oil companies. They discuss the impact of conflicts on oil production and exports, emphasizing the need for effective change management to navigate security threats and political uncertainties. This aligns with the findings of Hakim and Kelsall (2014) on the disruptions caused by political instability.

Considering these insights, the literature indicates that change management in the South Sudanese oil sector necessitates a holistic approach that integrates economic, geopolitical, and regulatory considerations. This context-specific understanding is essential for international oil companies to develop strategies that optimize performance, ensure regulatory compliance, and adapt to the unique challenges of the region. The reviewed literature underscores the importance of addressing the interplay between change management practices and the intricate factors shaping the oil industry in South Sudan.

While existing literature has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within South Sudan's oil industry, certain gaps persist, necessitating further investigation. Baldwin and Fender (2017) have delved into the economic significance of the oil sector in South Sudan, emphasizing its contribution to the nation's GDP and economic growth. Hakim and Kelsall (2014) have highlighted the challenges stemming from political instability, security threats, and governance issues, shedding light on the complexities faced by international oil companies in the region. Young (2013) has explored the strategic opportunities associated with South Sudan's location in East Africa, offering potential for trade and collaboration. Brosché and Logan (2017) and Beswick (2013) have addressed regulatory challenges, emphasizing the importance of compliance and transparency.

However, the existing research does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how international oil companies in Juba specifically manage change within this dynamic environment. There is a notable gap in the literature regarding the intricacies of change management practices employed by these companies in response to the unique geopolitical, economic, and regulatory challenges present in South Sudan. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of change management strategies, performance optimization, and the broader implications for international oil companies operating in Juba. By focusing on the specifics of the Juba context, this research seeks to contribute a nuanced perspective to the existing body of knowledge on change management within the South Sudanese oil industry.

2.1 Methodology

In addressing the challenges and opportunities within South Sudan's oil industry, this study adopts a robust research methodology to explore change management practices in international oil companies operating in Juba. The research design involves a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and document analysis to gather rich and contextspecific data. The choice of a qualitative design aligns with the exploratory nature of the research, allowing for a deep understanding of the intricacies of change management in the oil sector (Neuman, 2014).

To ensure comprehensive insights, the sample selection employs stratified random sampling, considering diverse roles and levels within the organizations (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). This approach aims to capture perspectives from various organizational levels, including executives, middle managers, and frontline employees. The rationale for this sampling strategy lies in the recognition that change management practices permeate all levels of an organization, and a stratified approach ensures representation across these diverse roles.

In-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including executives, managers, and employees, serve as the primary data collection method. This approach allows for the exploration of nuanced experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to change management (Gibbs, 2018). Additionally, document analysis of organizational policies, reports, and relevant publications supplements the interview data, providing a holistic view of change management practices.

The suitability of this methodology lies in its ability to capture the contextual nuances of change management within the South Sudanese oil industry, specifically in Juba. Qualitative methods facilitate the exploration of complexities, allowing for a deeper understanding of how international oil companies navigate change in response to geopolitical, economic, and regulatory challenges (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This methodological approach aligns with the study's objective of providing a nuanced analysis of change management practices within the unique operational context of Juba's oil sector.

3. GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS IN SOUTH SUDAN

The oil industry in South Sudan is significantly influenced by a confluence of geopolitical, economic, and regulatory factors that shape its operational landscape. Geopolitically, the historical context of South Sudan, marked by periods of civil wars and political instability, has direct implications for the oil sector. The nation's border disputes and conflicts with Sudan, its northern neighbor, have posed significant challenges to stability, with ramifications for oil production and export (Brosché & Logan, 2017; Hakim & Kelsall, 2014). These geopolitical dynamics introduce uncertainties, affecting the safety of personnel and infrastructure and, consequently, the operational continuity of international oil companies.

Economically, the oil industry holds immense significance for South Sudan's economic fortunes. Revenue generated from oil exports constitutes a substantial portion of the country's income, playing a pivotal role in government budgets, infrastructure development, and social programs (Baldwin & Fender, 2017). Fluctuations in global oil prices, economic diversification efforts, and the management of oil wealth become critical considerations in navigating the economic landscape of the oil industry in South Sudan (Brosché & Logan, 2017).

Regulatory frameworks further contribute to the complexity of the oil industry in South Sudan. The sector is subject to a web of national and international regulations that shape the legal and operational parameters within which companies must operate (Beswick, 2013). Adhering to these regulations, ensuring compliance, and maintaining transparency are essential challenges for international oil companies. The unique governance structures in South Sudan further complicate regulatory compliance, demanding a nuanced approach to navigate the complexities of the local operating environment.

3.1 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FACTORS ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND THE OPERATIONAL LANDSCAPE IN JUBA.

The interplay of geopolitical, economic, and regulatory factors in South Sudan has significant implications for change management strategies and the operational landscape of international oil companies in Juba.

Geopolitical Implications

The geopolitical landscape in Juba, South Sudan, notably marked by historical conflicts and border disputes, significantly impacts security and stability. Change management strategies must be intricately designed to navigate potential disruptions, ensuring the safety of personnel and infrastructure during periods of political instability. Furthermore, effective stakeholder engagement, including local communities and governments, is imperative. Aligning change initiatives with regional dynamics not only fosters social acceptance but also mitigates potential conflicts. Recognizing and addressing these geopolitical considerations are pivotal elements in formulating robust change management practices for international oil companies operating in Juba.

Economic Implications

The economic significance of South Sudan's oil industry underscores the critical aspect of revenue dependency in change management strategies. With a recognition of the need for economic diversification, these strategies should align with efforts to reduce dependence on oil revenues, promoting longterm sustainability in the context of economic fluctuations. Additionally, economic challenges may influence the availability and allocation of resources, necessitating strategic planning in change initiatives. This approach aims to optimize resource utilization and enhance operational efficiency within the constraints of a resource-constrained environment, ensuring adaptability and resilience in the face of economic uncertainties

Regulatory Implications

In navigating the intricate regulatory landscape of South Sudan's oil industry, effective change management strategies must proactively address and adapt to regulatory changes at both national and international levels. To achieve this, mechanisms should be incorporated into change initiatives to stay abreast of evolving regulations, facilitating timely adjustments for compliance. Additionally, the strategies should emphasize the importance of governance structures and transparency. Addressing regulatory challenges entails not only compliance but also navigating governance intricacies and promoting transparent practices. This dual focus is crucial for maintaining legitimacy within the local context, establishing a foundation for sustained operational success amid regulatory complexities.

4. CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN JUBA

International oil companies in Juba employ diverse change management strategies to navigate the unique challenges of the region. These strategies are shaped by the geopolitical, economic, and regulatory factors influencing the oil industry in South Sudan.

Adaptive Change Strategies:

International oil companies in Juba navigate the dynamic geopolitical landscape through adaptive change strategies. This involves fostering flexibility in operations to swiftly respond to uncertainties and abrupt shifts in the operational environment, as highlighted by Logan and Arjona (2014). Proactive risk management is integral to these strategies, incorporating real-time assessments of geopolitical risks. Strategies are devised to facilitate immediate adaptation, ensuring operational continuity even in the face of unforeseen challenges, as emphasized by Beswick (2013). This adaptive approach not only enhances the resilience of oil operations in Juba but also positions companies to navigate geopolitical uncertainties with agility and responsiveness

Community Engagement and Stakeholder Inclusivity:

International oil companies in Juba prioritize community engagement and stakeholder inclusivity as integral components of their change management strategies. Recognizing the importance of gaining social acceptance in the face of geopolitical challenges, these companies actively seek local partnerships. Collaborative initiatives with communities and stakeholders are strategically forged to foster cooperation and mitigate potential conflicts, aligning with the insights of Logan and Arjona (2014). Moreover, these companies integrate social responsibility initiatives into their change strategies, emphasizing sustainable development projects that bring tangible benefits to local communities. Such initiatives not only contribute to the broader well-being of the community but also enhance the companies' social license to operate, as highlighted by Beswick (2013). This dual focus on local partnerships and social responsibility underscores the companies' commitment to harmonizing their operations with the social fabric of Juba, fostering a positive relationship with the community.

Technology Integration:

In response to the dynamic nature of the oil industry, international oil companies in Juba prioritize the integration of advanced technologies into their operations. This strategic approach involves the adoption of cutting-edge exploration and production technologies, as emphasized by Barney (1991). The incorporation of advanced technologies is aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and safety within the challenging environment of South Sudan's oil sector. By leveraging these technologies, companies not only optimize their exploration and production processes but also demonstrate a commitment to staying at the forefront of industry advancements. This focus on technological innovation aligns with the imperative of adapting to the evolving demands of the oil market and ensuring the sustainable and efficient management of resources in the region.

Strategic Resource Allocation:

In the context of the challenging economic dependencies and uncertainties in South Sudan's oil industry, international oil companies operating in Juba prioritize strategic resource allocation as a key component of their change management practices. As articulated by Barney (1991), this strategic approach involves the meticulous management of human resources, technology, and financial capital to optimize overall performance. Human resources are allocated with a focus on recruiting, training, and retaining skilled professionals who can adapt to the industry's changing demands, a crucial consideration given the variations in operational challenges and local talent availability in Juba. Additionally, strategic allocation in technology ensures the adoption and integration of advanced technologies, contributing to operational efficiency and safety. Financial capital is judiciously managed to address economic challenges and enhance the companies' resilience in the face of fluctuations. By prioritizing strategic resource allocation, these companies aim to navigate the complexities of the operating environment in Juba and contribute to their long-term success in the region.

Regulatory Compliance and Advocacy:

In the complex landscape of South Sudan's oil industry, international oil companies in Juba navigate the challenging terrain of regulatory compliance through proactive change management strategies. As outlined by Beswick (2013), these strategies are characterized by continuous monitoring of evolving regulatory frameworks, enabling companies to swiftly adapt and uphold legal compliance. Moreover, regulatory challenges necessitate active engagement. prompting companies to participate in advocacy and dialogue with regulatory bodies. Drawing insights from Brosché and Logan (2017), this engagement goes beyond mere compliance, involving efforts to influence and shape regulatory frameworks. By aligning regulations with industry best practices, these companies not only ensure adherence to legal requirements but also advocate for frameworks that promote sustainable and responsible operations. This dual approach to regulatory compliance and advocacy underscores the strategic importance of effective change management in maintaining operational integrity and contributing to the long-term sustainability of international oil operations in Juba.

Leadership and Communication:

In the dynamic context of Juba's oil industry, effective change management strategies are integral to the success of international oil companies. The emphasis on leadership, as outlined by Kotter (1996), underscores the significance of strong and capable leadership in guiding teams through the complexities of geopolitical uncertainties. Leadership development becomes a focal point, equipping leaders with the skills needed to inspire confidence and navigate change. Additionally, transparent communication is a cornerstone of these strategies, fostering trust among internal and external stakeholders. Kotter's (1996) insights further highlight the importance of ensuring a shared understanding of the strategic direction through company's transparent communication. In conclusion, the nuanced interplay of leadership development and transparent communication underscores the adaptability and resilience of change management strategies, positioning international oil companies in Juba to effectively address the unique challenges inherent in the region's oil landscape.

4.1 Examples highlighting the effectiveness of certain strategies, their challenges, and their impact on performance optimization.

Drawing insights from analogous contexts and related industries the study illustrates the effectiveness of certain strategies, their challenges, and impact on performance optimization.

Adaptive Change Strategies: Shell's Experience in Nigeria Shell's experience in Nigeria provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of adaptive change strategies amid geopolitical challenges. The company's approach involved significant investments in local development projects, community engagement initiatives, and real-time adjustments to operations based on geopolitical risk assessments (Vickers, 2005). While this strategy improved relations with local communities, persistent security threats required continuous adaptation. Despite challenges, Shell's adaptive approach enabled the company to maintain operational continuity, optimize performance, and cultivate positive relationships with local stakeholders. The Nigerian case study demonstrates the importance of adaptive strategies in navigating geopolitical complexities, offering lessons that are relevant to international oil companies operating in regions like South Sudan.

Community Engagement: Chevron in the Niger Delta

Chevron's experience in the Niger Delta underscores the effectiveness of community engagement as a pivotal element in change management strategies. The company proactively addressed local needs by implementing projects that focused on health, education, and community involvement in decision-making processes (Watts, 2011). Despite these efforts, challenges arose as divergent expectations led to conflicts, highlighting the complex nature of community engagement. The impact on performance optimization, however, was notable, with Chevron's community-centric approach contributing to a more stable operational environment and enhancing its social license to operate. This case study illustrates the intricate relationship between effective community engagement and the overall performance of international oil companies, offering valuable insights for similar contexts like South Sudan.

Technology Integration: ExxonMobil's Deepwater Projects

ExxonMobil's global experience with deepwater projects provides a compelling example of the effectiveness of integrating advanced technologies in the oil industry. The company demonstrated a commitment to cutting-edge exploration and production technologies, particularly in challenging offshore operations (Silloriquez, 2009). While facing technical challenges, such as ensuring equipment reliability in harsh environments, ExxonMobil's continuous investment in technological innovations allowed them to overcome these hurdles. The impact on performance optimization was significant, as the integration of advanced technologies led to increased operational efficiency, enhanced safety measures, and optimized resource utilization. This case study highlights the pivotal role of technological advancements in driving performance optimization within international oil companies, offering valuable insights for similar contexts like Juba, South Sudan.

Strategic Resource Allocation: Saudi Aramco in the Middle East

Saudi Aramco's strategic resource allocation in the Middle East serves as a compelling example of effective performance optimization within the oil industry. The company's adept management of human resources, technology, and financial capital underscores the importance of strategic resource utilization (Riva, 2013). While facing challenges related to the fluctuations in oil prices and global demand, Saudi Aramco's commitment to strategic resource allocation has contributed to its consistent performance and resilience in the dynamic global oil market. This case study offers valuable insights into the significance of optimizing resource utilization for sustained success, providing relevant lessons for international oil companies operating in regions like Juba, South Sudan.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Adaptive Change Strategies and Operational Continuity:

Companies employing adaptive change strategies, characterized by flexibility in response to geopolitical shifts, showed a positive correlation with operational continuity. This adaptability allowed companies to navigate uncertainties and maintain a level of stability in their operations. The positive correlation between adaptive change strategies and operational continuity resonates with literature highlighting the impact of geopolitical dynamics on organizational strategies (Doh & Lucea, 2013). The identified positive correlation between adaptive change strategies and operational continuity aligns with prior research emphasizing the need for flexibility in volatile environments (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997). Companies in Juba should prioritize strategic adaptation to navigate geopolitical challenges effectively. This finding echoes the literature on the significance of agility in response to dynamic external factors (Eisenhardt, 1989).

2. Community Engagement and Social License:

Positive correlations were observed between community engagement strategies and the acquisition of a social license to operate. Companies actively involved in community development projects and stakeholder engagement exhibited a stronger social acceptance, contributing to a more favorable operational environment. The positive correlation between community engagement and social license supports existing literature emphasizing the importance of stakeholder relationships in resource-rich regions (Suchman, 1995). Strengthening community engagement initiatives can enhance social acceptance, contributing to a more sustainable and socially responsible operational environment.

3. Impact of Technology Integration on Efficiency and Safety:

Companies emphasizing advanced technology integration demonstrated positive correlations with operational efficiency and safety records. Investments in cutting-edge technologies positively impacted exploration, production, and overall operational efficiency. The positive correlation between technology integration and operational efficiency aligns with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), highlighting technology as a critical resource. Continued investments in technology are crucial for optimizing operations. This finding supports existing literature on the role of technology in enhancing competitiveness (Teece, 1998).

4. Strategic Resource Allocation and Financial Performance

A positive correlation was identified between strategic resource allocation and financial performance. Companies adept at allocating resources, including human capital and technology, in alignment with dynamic market conditions exhibited better financial resilience and long-term performance. The study's identification of the correlation between strategic resource allocation and financial performance aligns with the resource-based view, contributing to the ongoing discourse on resource management (Barney, 1991). The positive correlation between strategic resource allocation and financial performance resonates with the resource-based view and prior studies on effective resource management (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). Companies should prioritize strategic resource allocation to ensure financial resilience and sustained performance.

Implications

The study's findings underscore the importance for international oil companies in Juba to integrate adaptive change strategies, community engagement initiatives, technological advancements, and strategic resource allocation into their change management practices. Recognizing the correlations between these specific strategies and positive outcomes can guide companies in developing robust risk mitigation plans. For instance, comprehending the influence of geopolitical dynamics on adaptive strategies enables the formulation of proactive risk management approaches. The identified correlations provide a foundation for crafting a performance optimization framework that caters to the distinctive challenges and opportunities inherent in Juba's oil industry.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shed light on crucial insights into change management practices within international oil companies operating in Juba's unique context. The positive correlations identified between adaptive change strategies and operational continuity, community engagement and social license, technology integration and operational efficiency, and strategic resource allocation and financial performance provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play. These findings carry significant implications for practitioners and policymakers in the oil industry, emphasizing the importance of strategic adaptation, community engagement, technology investments, and effective resource allocation. To enhance change management strategies, companies should prioritize these aspects, recognizing their interdependence in optimizing overall performance. Furthermore, this study recommends further research to explore the nuanced interactions between these factors, considering contextual variations and expanding the knowledge base for effective change management in resource-rich and challenging environments.

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