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DETERMINANTS OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AT THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF TAITA TAVETA

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ABSTRACT

Strategy management is an important aspect in organizations today considering the diverse, fragile and very competitive business environment currently obtaining globally. Consequently, most business and government entities have formulated strategies aimed at enhancing streamlined achievement of their goals and objectives. Regrettably, some of these strategies either fail or are not implemented successfully as envisaged. This research intended to explore the elements impacting the successful execution of initiatives within the County Government of Taita Taveta. The specific objectives were: to assess the impact of organizational structure on strategy implementation, to examine the role of communication in influencing strategy implementation, to investigate the influence of finances on strategy implementation, and to evaluate the impact of employees' technical capacity on strategy implementation at the County Government of Taita Taveta. The study drew upon four theoretical frameworks: Institutional theory, Communication Theory, Resource Based View (RBV), and McKinsey's 7-S model. The study addressed a population consisting of County Executive Committee members (CECMs), Heads of Departments (HODs), senior officials, and members of the county assembly (MCAs), totaling 87 persons. Utilizing the complete population sample approach (census), all identifiable people were included in the research. Data gathering involved the distribution of questionnaires and conducting interviews. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages, as well as inferential statistics like Pearson and regression analysis, were employed to evaluate the data collected using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists. Meanwhile, information from oral interviews was subjected to content analysis. The findings of the study demonstrated a substantial association between the implementation of strategic plans at the Taita Taveta County Government and the independent variables, including organizational structure, communication, finances, and workers' technical competence. Strong positive associations were discovered, with correlation values ranging from 0.830 to 0.924, all statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. The significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.05$) offered further evidence, demonstrating that the independent variables play a crucial role in influencing the effective execution of strategic plans in the County. Understanding and addressing these variables could lead to improved strategic plan implementation at the County Government. Policymakers and stakeholders could consider investing in these aspects to enhance the overall effectiveness and successful implementation of strategic plans.

KEYWORDS: *Strategy implementation, organizational structure, communication, financial resources, Employee technical capacity*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of strategy management in today's dynamic and competitive business environment cannot be overstated. A crucial element and action that helps a company reach its corporate goal is strategy implementation (Fuertes et al., 2020). There are three distinctive procedures that make up strategic management which are interconnected and impact each another. These include strategic planning, strategy implementation and strategy control. According to corporate research, strategic implementation is both the most crucial but mostly undervalued component (Rani, 2019). In the earlier days researchers concentrated their focus on factors contributing to successful formulation of strategies, however, in the recent years researchers are becoming more interested identifying the factors that determine or the influencers of successful implementation of strategies. (George et al., 2022)

For a plan to be properly executed, it requires concerted and purposeful support from all stakeholders (Kabui, 2020). Many executives and academics feel that good strategy execution is just as crucial as, if not more critical than, establishing a brilliant strategy (Fuertes et al., 2020). To achieve an effective strategy implementation process, it is essential to find out if performance exceeds expectation, or if there are any shortfalls (Narika, Namada, & Katuse, 2017). A gap exists between paper and realization (Ajemba & Chinwe, 2022).



Several factors have been identified as key in the implementation of strategic plans. These differ between business entities and government bodies (Vanneste, 2017). Some of the most important factors include, but not limited to effective Communication, organizational structure, adequate finances, and employee's technical capacity among others (Mutuku & Misango, 2020; Chwira, 2021).

Organizational structure, according to Fuertes et al. (2020) assists organizations in implementing their strategies successfully and gain competitive advantage over their competitors. This is evident in that, after organizations develop their strategic plans, the leadership develops organizational structures defining and allocating duties and responsibilities to enable successful implementation of the strategic plans. In Nigeria, telecommunication firms demonstrated that structure influenced strategic plan implementation. According to Tawse & Tabesh (2021), centralized structures impede strategy implementation while specialization structures accelerated strategy implementation.

For a plan to be properly executed, it needs persistent and purposeful backing from every party involved (Kabui, 2020). It is noted that Communication is critical component or tool in an organization and can be used effectively and efficiently to cascade information contained in the strategy to all employees and relevant stakeholders ensuring that they understand their roles, tasks and responsibilities envisaged in the plan, and are able to efficiently execute their mandate to ensure that the Organization achieves its broad goals, strategies, and objectives (Chirwa & Boikanyo, 2022). Lekisima et al. (2022) found that organizational communication had a favorable and substantial impact on successful strategy implementation among energy generation enterprises in Kenya. The study, however, suggested more flexible communication arrangements to allow for the flow of ideas and expertise among people in the business. Furthermore, the study advocated better communication of the strategy to all employees and the emphasis should be on the company's vision and goals for successful strategy implementation.

Shillingi (2017) demonstrates that human and financial resources have an influence on the success of strategic plan implementation. As a result, procedures such as financial controls should be implemented to ensure revenue utilization efficiency (Korir, 2019). Employees, on the other hand, are the ones who must carry out the strategy, according to Smith (2018). Although top management may establish the strategy, it is important that deliberate and concerted efforts are made to disseminate and publicize the strategy to the managers and employees whose are responsible for its implementation. It is important to note that failure to involve or inform the prospective implementors of the plan will lead to failure in its implementation.

Successful plan implementation is crucial for reaching desired performance levels in any firm. Zaribaf and Bayrami (2015) underline that institutions cannot fulfill their aims without a realistic strategy and an efficient implementation method. The implementation of organizational plans relies on numerous variables, including organizational culture, communication features, top management commitment, and individual duties. Despite the necessity of strategy execution for organizational performance (Srivastava & Sushil, 2017), prior research suggest that a majority of strategy implementations are unsuccessful, with success rates average between 10 to 30 percent (Srivastava & Sushil, 2017).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The journey of devolution started with the enactment of the promulgation of the constitution of Kenya (CoK2010). The General Elections of March 2013 marked the beginning of the devolved governance landscape in Kenya. Every county government aimed for excellent performance and exemplary implementation of its projects and plans, through efficient and effective delivery of service to its citizenry. The devolved structure of governance was premised on the framework and a rallying call of bringing services closer to the citizens by promoting political, economic, social and independence of the counties while putting an end to over centralization of power and authority at the National Government. According to Daritsu (2022), many people are dissatisfied with service delivery in county governments. Mule cites lack of advancement, broken campaign pledges, nepotism/ethnicity/corruption as the main sources of citizens dissatisfaction with service delivery by county governments. It is evident that county governments in Kenya have not been able to successfully achieve their objectives despite having in place well formulated five-year strategic plans (Abdi, Mbithi & Kithinji, 2021).

According to Wynn and Olayinka (2021), while 80% of businesses have the appropriate strategy, only 14% of them implement them to the letter. The study by Mwende (2018) focused on Nairobi County and established that County's ability to provide excellent services was eroding due to a lack of a defined strategic plan and insufficient leadership; an aspect of top management. Kavindu, (2021) focused on Nairobi County and established that the involvement of all employees in the strategy formulation as well in the implementation process played a major role towards successful implementation of strategy. The study by Njogu (2016) concluded that



some of the challenges faced by Nairobi City County in implementing strategic plans were loopholes in revenue collection, outdated technology, an aging and unskilled workforce, lack of job descriptions and schedules of duties, lack of supervision and accountability, little or lack of contribution by employees in making or taking important decisions, poor communication within the organization, a dysfunctional organizational structure, culture, transactional leadership style, and political interdependence. Mutuku and Misango (2020) pointed to internal factors as determinants that limit strategy implementation.

OBJECTIVE

To identify determinants of strategy implementation at the County Government of Taita Taveta.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does organizational structure, communication, financial resources and employee technical capacity influence implementation of strategic plans at the Country Government of Taita Taveta?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study drew upon institutional theory to elucidate how the structure of an organization guided the activities, programs and decisions of the county government. It also delved into the realm of communication theory to shed light on the pivotal role that communication plays in the exchange of information among different stakeholders within the County Government of Taita Taveta. It also tapped into Resource-Based Theory to ascertain the profound impact of financial resources and the technical prowess of employees (human resources) in the execution of strategic plans and also tapped into McKinsey's 7S model to expound the influence wielded by organizational structure and technical skills of employees in navigating the progress of strategy implementation.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

The study's empirical review is presented in this section.

Organizational Structure and Strategy Implementation

Moruff, Benneth, and Kazeem (2019) studied how organizational structures in Nigeria affected organizational strategy and concluded that organization's structure had a positive and substantial impact on strategy implementation, and that it accounted for 53% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.5312$) of the variation in a company's strategy.

Waribugo and Etim (2016) evaluated the effect of organizational structure on strategy execution among telecoms enterprises in Nigeria and found that a centralized structure displayed an insignificant positive link with the implementation of budgetary programs and resource control ($r = 0.117$ and 0.111 , respectively).

In their study, Waiganjo et al. (2017) concluded that the type of organizational structure influenced implementation of County Strategy plans.

Communication for Effective Strategy Implementation

Communication is important as it enables flow of information in an organization. Zorlu and Korkmaz (2021) conducted research on the connection between effective organizational communication and strategy implementation in Turkey and found that effective organizational communication developed into a phenomenon that was essential for organizations to successfully fulfill their organizational goals.

Mapetere (2021) conducted an empirical investigation on the communication methods that were utilized in communicating the execution of strategy in Zimbabwe. The results were analyzed using ANOVA and it was observed that communication strategies that were utilized during the implementation of the strategy were successful due to ineffective communication which led to slow reactions to changes in the business environment, absence of receptiveness to organizational goals and objectives and little interest to implementation of the strategy.

Daniel (2020) conducted research to investigate the effect of effective communication techniques on the overall performance of public organizations in Nigeria. According to the findings organizations' overall performance could be significantly improved by implementing communication tactics that are both efficient and effective.

In research exploring the influence of communication on strategy execution within the Administration Police Service, Ishaq et al. (2018) targeted a total of 450 Senior and Junior Police Officers stationed in Lamu County. Their research demonstrated a favorable



and substantial association between communication and strategy implementation, leading to the conclusion that communication had a noticeable beneficial influence on strategy implementation.

Finances and Strategy Implementation

Jock (2019) carried out a study on implementation of strategic plans in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Khartoum, Sudan. Path analysis showed that financial resources played a significant and positive role in the implementation of strategic plans ($\beta=0.355$, $t\text{-value}=3.438$ $p<0.05$).

The study by Shilingi (2017), examined how resources influence strategy implementation in five (5) firms in Tanzania. 67% agreed that human and financial resources influenced the successful implementation of strategic plans.

Tele and Gachunga (2019) explored the factors impacting the execution of strategic plans in the energy industry, especially focused on the Geothermal Development Company (GDC) in Kenya. Both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were applied to examine the acquired data. The results demonstrated a statistically significant association between resources (both financial and non-financial) and the implementation of the strategic plan ($p < 0.05$).

Ngui and Maina (2019) performed a study evaluating the link between organizational resources and strategy execution in non-profit organizations, concentrating on the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). The study was anchored in resource-based perspective and learning organization theories, employing questionnaires issued to all 60 management staff. The research highlighted financial resources among other criteria as crucial in the execution of strategy at KEMRI.

Employees' Technical Capacity and Strategy Implementation

Hamdan (2020) did study in Turkey to analyze the impact of including low-level workers in both the development and implementation of organizational strategy, with the purpose of assuring their understanding of the organization's strategic direction. The results underscored the crucial importance of employee capacity in strategy implementation, stressing that allocating duties and responsibilities to low-level workers without aligning them with the organization's vision and goal might lead to unsuccessful strategy implementation.

Ngui and Maina's (2019) study, as previously noted, evaluated the link between organizational resources and strategy execution in non-profit organizations, utilizing the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) as a case study. The study found among other elements impacting successful execution of strategic plan, the capacity of personnel played a major role, with their engagement in everyday operations contributing considerably.

Mutuku and Misango (2020) evaluated the extent to which internal variables impacted the execution of strategic plans in the County Government of Machakos and the findings underlined that employee technical skills, together with internal considerations, had a vital influence in determining the implementation of strategic goals.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaires were distributed to 67 officials of the county government, and interviews carried out with 20 Members of County Assembly (MCAs). Among the selected 20 MCAs, only 11 participated in the interviews. The overall response rate for the study was 73.6%, considered satisfactory for analysis according to Fincham's (2008). The study included a diverse representation of gender, education levels and period of working at the County Government. The results showed 56.6% of the respondents being male and 43.4% being female, while 56.6%, held Bachelor's Degrees, 41.5% possessed Master's Degrees and 1.9%, held a PhD, in addition to 69.8% had a work history of 2 to 5 years, followed by 26.4% who had worked for 6 to 10 years. A smaller percentage, 3.8%, had 10 years work experience at the County Government. This distribution suggested that the respondents possessed adequate academic qualifications and work experience enabling them to provide informed insights into the subject of investigation.

The respondents were prompted to rate how much they agreed with several statements on the determinants of implementation of strategic plans at the County Government of Taita Taveta which were guided by a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1-to a very low extent; 2-to a low extent; 3- to a moderate extent; 4-to a high extent and; 5-to a very high extent.

The results were provided in tables 1-4

**Table1: Descriptive statistics results on impact of Organizational Structure on Implementation of Strategic Plans**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Organizational structure in the county affects the implementation of strategic plans?	53	4	5	4.77	0.42
A centralized system of structure enhances implementation of strategic plans	53	4	5	4.55	0.80
A specialized system of structure enhances the implementation of strategic plans	53	4	5	4.68	0.78
Organizational structure is clear and employees know what their roles are which enhances the implementation of strategic plans	53	4	5	4.62	0.86
There is a clear structure and resources are well distributed to enable employees perform their tasks and this enhances the implementation of strategic plans	53	3	5	4.60	0.84
There is synchronized operations among departments and employees to ensure that the similar tasks are grouped together and backed with the right resources which checks conflict of interest in the implementation of strategic plans	53	1	5	4.68	0.70
There is flexibility of structure to allow the county to work with strategic alliance partners at county, national and global levels which strengthens the implementation of strategic plan	53	2	5	4.74	0.59

Source: Survey data (2023)

Table2: Descriptive Statistics results on influence of Communication on Implementation of Strategic Plans

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Communication influences the entire strategic planning process from strategic plan formulation to implementation	4.00	5.00	4.91	0.30
Timely communication affects implementation of strategic plans	4.00	5.00	4.77	0.42
The ability of the Country Government to communicate well with stakeholders is an important factor in strategy implementation	4.00	5.00	4.68	0.47
Presence of adequate communication strategies backed by adequate equipment and personnel influences strategic plan implementation process	3.00	5.00	4.60	0.53
Direct engagement by MPs, County Women Representatives, Senators and MCAs through clear communication influences the implementation of the strategic plans in the county	2.00	5.00	4.79	0.53

Source: Survey data (2023)

Table3: Descriptive statistics results on impact of Finances on Implementation of Strategic Plans

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Financial considerations significantly impact the execution of strategic plans.	53	4.00	5.00	4.85	0.36
Inconsistent financing from the National Treasury affects the successful implementation of strategic plans.	53	1.00	5.00	4.79	0.63
The sufficiency of financial resource allocation for different county government functions plays a role in influencing the implementation of strategic plans.	53	1.00	5.00	4.57	0.87



The timely allocation of financial resources affects the implementation of strategic plans.	53	3.00	5.00	4.68	0.51
Effective financial management influences the execution of county strategic plans.	53	3.00	5.00	4.81	0.44
The adequacy of financial resources for employee remuneration has an impact on the implementation of strategic plans.	53	4.00	5.00	4.77	0.42

Source: Survey data (2023)

Table4: Descriptive statistics results on impact of Employees' Technical Capacity on Implementation of Strategic Plans

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employees' technical capacity plays a vital role in executing strategic plans.	53	4	5	4.77	0.75
The educational background of employees impacts the implementation of strategic plans.	53	1	5	2.77	1.32
The professional experiences of employees, both within the government and related organizations, affect the execution of strategic plans.	53	2	5	4.51	0.70
Effectively managing the various competencies of employees within the organization is crucial for strategy implementation.	53	2	5	4.51	0.72
Developing the technical capacity of employees is essential for the successful execution of strategic plans.	53	2	5	4.47	1.07
Hiring skilled personnel in the county government is instrumental in determining the successful implementation of strategic plans.	53	3	5	4.66	0.62
Recognizing gaps in technical expertise within the county and engaging external experts to provide specialized services is important for the implementation of strategic plans.	53	3	5	4.55	1.07

Source: Survey data (2023)

Implementation of Strategic Plans

Finally, the study at evaluated the extent and results of the implementation of strategic plans within the Taita Taveta County Government.

Table5: Descriptive statistics results on Implementation of Strategic Plans

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
There is successful implementation of strategic plans in the County	53	1.00	5.00	4.77	0.75
The County achieves its Mission, vision and goals	53	2.00	5.00	2.77	1.32
Strategic Plans have led to better service delivery	53	3.00	5.00	4.51	0.70
The various targets in the strategic are implemented in a timely manner	53	2.00	5.00	4.51	0.72
There is positive feedback on the achievement of the goals and objectives stipulated by strategic plans	53	2.00	5.00	4.55	1.07
Strategic activities are achieved within the set budget lines	53	2.00	5.00	4.62	0.74

Source: Survey data (2023)



The relationships between the study variables were examined using Pearson Correlation and regression analysis.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant associations between the implementation of strategic plans in Taita Taveta County and the independent variables as indicated below (Organizational Structure, $r=0.830$, $p<0.01$; Communication, $r=0.911$, $p<0.01$; Finances, $r=0.918$, $p<0.01$; and Employees' Technical Capacity, $r=0.924$, $p<0.01$) as shown below

Table 4

		Correlations				
		Structure	Communication	Finances	Employees' Technical Capacity	Implementation of Strategic Plans
Structure	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	53				
Communication	Pearson Correlation	.766**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	53	53			
Finances	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.885**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	53	53	53		
Employees' Technical Capacity	Pearson Correlation	.792**	.868**	.877**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	53	53	53	53	
Implementation of Strategic Plans	Pearson Correlation	.830**	.911**	.918**	.924**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	53	53	53	53	53

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the impact of the independent variables (organizational structure, communication, finances, and employee technical capacity) on the dependent variable (implementation of strategic plans) within the County Government of Taita Taveta.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 6 provides a condensed overview of the results indicating that the independent variables (organizational structure, communication, finances, and employees' technical capacity) collectively accounted for 92.7% of the variation in the implementation of strategic plans in Taita Taveta County ($R^2 = 0.927$). This signifies a highly robust regression model.

Table6: Coefficient of Determination

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.963 ^a	.927	.921	.23366

a. Predictors: (Constant), Structure, communication, Finances, Employees Technical Capacity ,

Analysis of Variance

Table 7 encapsulates the results, demonstrating that the independent variables exerted a statistically significant influence on the implementation of strategic plans in the County Government of Taita Taveta, as evidenced by a significant F test ($F(4, 48) = 151.985$, $p < 0.001$).

Table7: Analysis of Variance



ANOVA ^d						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33.191	4	8.298	151.985	.000 ^b
	Residual	2.621	48	.055		
	Total	35.811	52			

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation of Strategic Plans

b. Predictors: (Constant), Structure, Communication, Finances, Employees' Technical Capacity

Regression Coefficients

The results additionally reveal that the implementation of strategic plans in the county government of Taita Taveta (dependent variable) was anticipated by the organizational structure, communication, finances, and employee technical skills (independent variables), as indicated by the presence of significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.05$). The standardized coefficients for the fitted regression model were as follows:

Implementation of Strategic Plans = $0.157 \times \text{Structure} + 0.244 \times \text{Communication} + 0.288 \times \text{Finance} + 0.336 \times \text{Employees' Technical Capacity}$

Table8: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients			t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.070	.076		-.922	.361
	Structure	.189	.080	.157	2.361	.022
	Communication	.221	.085	.244	2.610	.012
	Finances	.328	.109	.288	3.003	.004
	Employees' Technical Capacity	.344	.096	.336	3.579	.001
	a. Dependent Variable: Implementation of Strategic Plans					

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings, it was evident that there were significant relationships of the variables under study namely: organizational structure, communication, finances, and employees' technical capacity (dependent variables) and implementation of strategic plans (independent variable). The study found strong positive correlations between the implementation of strategic plans (dependent variable) and each of the independent variables (organizational structure, communication, finances and employee technical capacity), with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.830 to 0.924, which are significant at $p < 0.01$. Significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.05$) strengthened the evidence that independent variables played a crucial role in the successful implementation of strategic plans in the county government. In conclusion, the findings indicated that organizational Structure, Communication, finances and employee technical capacity played a critical role in the successful implementation of strategic plans. Taking consideration and ensuring a well-defined organizational structure, ensuring clear lines of communication, availing required financial resources and hiring employees with the necessary technical skills could lead to improved strategic plan implementation in the county government. Policymakers and stakeholders could consider investing efforts to restructure and streamline these aspects to enhance the overall effectiveness and success of strategic implementation efforts.

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