

INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP AS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICE ON PERFORMANCE OF POSTAL CORPORATION IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *Organizations across the world have recognized the importance of strategy formulation in improving service delivery. Good practices in strategy formulation and implementation are among the key pillars of competitive advantage and organizational sustainability. Studies indicate that most managers rightly make effort to formulate strategies, but little investment is made to implement those strategies properly. Therefore, the study explored the effects of strategy implementation practices on performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County (Kenya). Based on the study, this paper presents and discusses the research findings on leadership as one of the strategy implementation practices on organizational performance. The researcher anchored the study on cross sectional survey research design which emphasized on collection of data at a particular point in time rather than over a period of time. The target population of the study was one hundred and thirty two (132) top and middle-level management staff of Postal Corporation drawn from Kakamega, Lugari, Khwisero and Khayega branches. Stratified sampling method was used to sample ninety-nine (99) respondents. Structured questionnaires were then used to collect the data from the sampled managers to which only seventy-six (76) responded. The received questionnaires were sorted, classified; data was then coded and analysed by descriptive statistics (percentages, mean and standard deviation). Inferential analysis was done by multi regression analysis where the result of R square was 0.476 indicating that 47.6% of the performance could be predicted from the study variables. The study found that leadership significantly affected the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County as indicated by a p value of 0.043, which was within $p < 0.05$ level of significance. In light of the findings, the researchers recommended that a related study be conducted in a wider spectrum of both public and private institutions to determine the consistency of the results.*

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Strategy Implementation, Performance, Postal Corporation, Kakamega, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The increasing competitive business environment across the world has forced many organizations to monitor the activities and those of their competitors more closely. More importantly, organizations formulate strategies that, if well implemented, could yield economic advantages to their entrepreneurial agenda. Surprisingly, many organizations have concentrated their effort in formulation of strategies with little attention being paid to the implementation part of the crafted strategy. Zaribaf and Bayramin (2010) do indicate that most executives in organizations spend great deal of time, energy and money in formulating strategies, but do not provide sufficient input to implement them properly.

Strategy formulation is regarded as the easiest part of strategic management process. This view is reinforced by Herbaniak (2006) who argues that making the strategies work through their timely executions are even more difficult hence putting the success of the organization into jeopardy. In addition, Flood, Dromgoole, Carrol and Gorman (2000) emphasize the growing recognition that the most important problem in the field of strategic management is not related to strategy implementation, but that high failure rate of organizational initiatives in a dynamic business environment is primarily due to poor implementation of new strategies.

Successful strategy implementation is anchored on leadership skills that, in turn, enable the firm managers to inspire their workforce and create synergy that propel organization to beat competition in the market. Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) categorize the importance of leadership into three key roles, namely: Managing the strategic process; managing relationships, and managing manager's trainings. Therefore, strategy implementation requires leadership skills, precision planning, marshalling the needed resources and ensuring people commitment to the new strategy. Another study conducted by Koech and Namusunge (2012) on the effects of leadership style on organization performance in State Corporations in Mombasa concluded that Laissez fair leadership style is not correlated to organization performance. Consequently, this leadership approach should be discarded by practicing managers. Koech and Namusunge recommended adoption of transactional leadership style (rewards and recognition of best performing employees) for successful implementation of strategies.

Leadership and Organization Performance

Ramadan (2015) conducted a study on the impact of strategy implementation drivers on project effectiveness in non-governmental organizations in the City of Warsaw, Poland. The strategy implementation independent variables used in the study included leadership, culture, organizational structure and resource allocation and how they impact on project effectiveness. The study adopted quantitative approach to investigate the strategy implementation drivers on project effectiveness. Twenty-five (25) non-governmental organizations were involved in the study and fifty-one (51) employees of NGOs involved in the study responded to the questionnaires that were distributed on the basis of convenience. Inferential statistics was used to analyse data where regression analysis was done to test the impact of strategy implementation drivers on project effectiveness in the NGOs. The findings indicated that leadership styles, organization culture, structures adopted by the organization and resource allocation have a strong positive impact on project effectiveness. While Ramadan conducted the study in Poland, which is a relatively developed country, the research that informed this paper was conducted in Kenya which is ranked among the developing countries.

Rajasekar (2014) has examined the factors affecting effective strategy implementation in electricity distribution companies in the sultanate of Oman. In the study, implementation parameters were based on the role of leadership, the role of culture and the role of organization structure in strategy implementation. One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were distributed to electricity distribution companies that include: Mazoon, Majan, Muscat, Rural area and Electricity holding company. One hundred and twenty-five (125) questionnaires were responded to and data obtained in a five (5) point Likert scale analysed by descriptive statistics using SPSS version. The study adopted a survey research design and the findings indicated that leadership is by far the most important factor influencing successful implementation of strategy in the (service industry) electricity distribution companies. The reviewed study was conducted in sultanate of Oman while the current study was conducted in Kakamega, Kenya. The

reviewed study was also conducted in private electricity distribution companies outside the country whereas Postal Corporation is a public institution.

Another study conducted by Jalali (2012) sought to appraise the role of managers in strategy implementation in export performance in Middle East Countries. It targeted two hundred (200) chief executive officers of food exporter firms. The main focus of the study was on how strategy implementation is linked to the firms export performance with respect to diverse dimensions of performance in international activities. One hundred and thirty-seven (137) CEOs responded to the questionnaires. The analysis of the findings indicated that leadership role in strategy implementation positively impact on export performance in Middle East food organizations. While the reviewed study was conducted in Middle East Countries targeting about 200 CEOs of food exporter firms, the current study was done in Postal Corporation which is a public institution.

A study conducted by Waititu (2016) examined the relationship between strategy implementation and performance of Commercial Banks in Nairobi County Kenya. A total of one hundred and ninety-one (191) top management staff of Commercial Banks listed in the Nairobi Stock Exchange was targeted for the study. A sample size of ninety-one (91) top managers was arrived at through stratified sampling and participated in the study and the data was obtained by use of questionnaires. The objectives of the study were to: To determine whether communication system affect implementation of strategy in the Commercial Banks in Nairobi; establish whether leadership styles affect implementation of strategy in Commercial Banks in Nairobi; establish whether organization structure affect implementation of strategy in Commercial Banks in Nairobi, and determine the influence of organization culture on the implementation of strategy in Commercial Banks in Nairobi. Waititu based the performance measurement on achievement of the organization objectives, increased productivity in the organization, improved efficiency and efficacy in the operations of the organization. The results were analysed by use of inferential statistics. The findings indicated that Commercial Banks that are listed in Nairobi Stock Exchange and are innovative in their communications to customers and have inspirational leadership recorded high level performance. While the reviewed study was conducted in private Commercial Banks in Nairobi, Postal Corporation of Kenya is a public institution.

Another study conducted by Joel (2016) examined the effects of strategy implementation on organization performance, with a case study of Diamond Trust Bank. The researcher used a sample size of five (5) top managers of the Bank Branches in Nairobi. The objective was to establish whether or not allocation of adequate resources, staff training and developments, staff motivation, rewards and fostering good working relationship among the employees and employee's involvement in strategy formulation influence organization performance. The parameters used to measure performance in the study included customer satisfaction, improvement in corporate image, promotion of business excellence, provision of quality services, high profitability registered by the organization and employees satisfaction with their salary packages. The primary data was collected by use of an interview guide administered by the researcher and the data gathered was subjected to content analysis. The research findings showed that leader's role in allocation of adequate resources, staff trainings and developments, staff motivation, rewards and fostering good relationship among the staff and employees involvement in strategy formulation positively impact on the performance of Diamond Trust Bank. The above reviewed study was conducted a private institution (Diamond Trust Bank) whereas the current study was done in a public institution (Postal Corporation).

Njoroge, Machuki, Ongeti and Kinuu (2015) investigated the effects of strategy implementation on the performance of Kenya State Corporation. A cross sectional survey research design was used and the study population consisted of one hundred and eight (108) state corporations and ninety-eight (98) corporations picked for the study. Ninety-five (95) state corporations returned the questionnaires that were analysed and interpreted based on correlational and multivariate analysis. Strategy implementation was operationalized using twelve items, namely skills, systems, structures, management style, processes, resources, cultural values, action description, setting timelines, responsibility, defining output and reward systems. Organizational performance measurement was done on the basis social responsibility, learning and growth, customer's satisfaction, internal processes, environment and financial matters. The findings of the study indicated that strategy implementation had a significant influence on all the indicators of performance used in the research. The reviewed study involved several state corporations whereas the current study was conducted in Postal Corporation in Kakamega.

In their study, Kyalo, Katuse and Kiriri (2016) examined the effects of organizational leadership on strategy implementation in Kenya tourism industry, taking a case of Kenya Government Tourist Agencies. Exploratory survey and descriptive research designs were used to carry out the research. The aspects of leadership considered in the study included employees' motivation, rewards, formulation of workable policy frame work, mission and vision, leaders' competence and the power that the leader wields. The population of the study consisted of one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two (1792) employees of the various tourism agencies. A sample of three hundred and twenty-seven (397) was drawn using Yamane's formula of 2001. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interviews which were then analysed by use of descriptive inferential statistics. The findings of the research indicated that motivation and reward of employees that are key role of organization leaders positively correlated with profit realization which measures the success of strategy implementation. Clear policy, mission and vision coupled with the leader's competence also impact positively on strategy implementation. Although the reviewed study relate to the current research on leadership aspect, it did not take into consideration the impact of strategy implementation systems on the performance of the organization.

Another study conducted by Kivasu (2015) looked into leadership style and implementation of strategy among non-governmental organizations in Nairobi city, Kenya. Systematic sampling technique was adopted to select one hundred and twenty-one (121) NGOs. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the sample. The researcher employed cross-sectional research design and analysed the collected data descriptively to generate means, standard deviation and regression analysis. The findings revealed that most leaders in the NGOs adopt various leadership systems that range from transactional, situational and transformational leadership's styles depending on circumstance of employee's behaviour. Poor leadership and lack of understanding of strategy implementation were the key impediments to successful implementation of the formulated strategies. The study concluded that leadership style influence strategy implementation and recommended that organizations should adopt appropriate leadership styles during strategy implementation process. While Kivasu conducted her research in several NGOs in Nairobi city, the current study was done in a single public organization (Postal Corporation) away from the Nairobi city centre.

A study conducted by Jacqueline (2014) on strategy implementation and performance of firms in telephony industry in Kenya examined Safaricom, Telkom Orange, Airtel and Yu Essar. The objective of the study was to establish factors influencing strategy implementation in telephony

industry in Kenya. The strategy implementation factors examined in the study included top management support, staff personality in decision making, role of coordination and organization culture in strategy implementation. Purposive sampling method was used to arrive at sixteen (16) top managers of the telephone companies and four (4) managers sampled in each firm for the study. The filled questionnaires received from the respondents were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics and content analysis. The study adopted a cross section survey research design. The findings showed that top management support is the propelling force in strategy implementation, staff personality influences strategy implementation, poor coordination prolongs strategy implementation process and organization culture also impacts on strategy implementation. There is a departure from the study reviewed in relation to the current research in that the reviewed study involved four (4) telephone firms in Kenya whereas the current study was carried out in Postal Corporation Kakamega.

Munuhe (2014), in his study, investigated corporate strategy implementation in construction industry in Kenya, with a case of H-Young and Co. East Africa Ltd, Nairobi Kenya. The strategy implementation variables used in the study included top management commitment, effective communication, effective coordination of activities and alignment of organizational culture to the strategy. The dependent variables of the study included; achievement of goals, targets and acceptance by the employees. The study targeted one hundred and twenty-four (124) employees of the organization of the study where a sample size of fifty-six (56) were drawn and issued with the questionnaire. The data collected were analysed by use of descriptive and inferential statistic. Regression analysis was used to test the relationship in the study variables. Descriptive research design was used in the study and the findings revealed that top management commitment, effective communication, effective coordination of activities and organizational culture positively influence strategy implementation. The reviewed study was done in a construction company with branches in the entire East Africa whereas the current study was conducted in Postal Corporation in Kakamega that only provide services.

Another study carried by Wistone (2013) explored the relationship between strategy implementation and performance in Commercial Bank in Kenya. A total of forty-three (43) commercial banks operating in Nairobi constituted the targeted institutions for the study and a sample of eighty-six (86) senior managers was selected with each bank allowing two staff as respondents for the study. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and across sectional survey method of research design used to establish the relationship between strategy implementation and performance in commercial banks. The researcher also used stratified random sampling techniques to give equal representation to top managers, middle managers and low level managers. From the analysis of the data collected, it was established that strategy implementation influences organization performance where banks use various measures such as projected performance of the competitors, goals, past performance of the business and industry growth to assess the degree of their performance. Therefore, the study concluded that effective leadership in strategy implementation positively impacted the performance of banks. In this case, performance was measured by increase in profit, business turnover, volume of sale and overall growth in the industry.

Statement of the Problem

The Postal Corporation of Kenya became a legal entity through an Act of Parliament (State Corporation Act, Chapter 446) in 1998. The Act divorced it from the defunct Kenya Post and Telecommunication, with its mandate revised to distinctively provide members of the public with postal, courier and financial services. This restructuring was deliberately carried out by

the government to improve service delivery to members of the public, minimize cost, strengthen the organizational brand and capitalize on trading privileges extended to it by the government in order to offer efficient services.

According to Postal Corporation Newsletter (2014), the organization entered into strategic business partnerships with DHL on 18th October 2013, Mzoori.com on 19th January 2014 and Kenya Commercial Bank on 21st November 2013. These partnerships were aimed at improving service provision to the customers of the partnering organizations with the end result of increasing their cash flows. Postal Corporation is also an active agent of Safaricom (M-Pesa), Kenya Power and Lighting Company, Kenya Tea Development Agency, Post Bank among others (PCK, 2014). The Corporation also boasts of its Posta Pesa innovation that is currently used to make payment at HUDUMA Centres all over the country not to mention Postal diversification into transport (Posta Liner) business.

Despite the strategies mentioned above, the Postal Corporation of Kenya has continued to lag behind in service delivery resulting in financial losses as confirmed by Edward (2015). The latest audit of financial statements of the organization revealed a net loss of 376,609,480 shillings due to a decline in the revenue stream items such as sale of stamps, box rentals, postage in bulk and receipts from foreign administrations. Therefore study sought to establish the effect of strategy implementation practices on performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. This paper presents and discusses the findings on the role of leadership in strategy implementation on the performance of the Postal Corporation of Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research employed a cross sectional survey research design to establish the effect of strategy implementation practices on performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. The population of interest for the study composed of sixty two (62) top management staff and seventy (70) middle-level management staff of the Kenya Postal Corporation distributed in the four branches (Kakamega, Lugari, Khwisero and Khayega) of the organization hence the total population of the study was One Hundred and Thirty Two (132) managerial staff who were in a position to provide information on behalf of Postal Corporation. The research targeted both Top and Middle management staff of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County drawn from Four (4) branches namely Kakamega (hosting regional offices), Lugari, Khwisero and Khayega.

The sample size for the study was arrived at by use of the Taro Yamane (1964) formula with a margin error of 5%, hence ninety-nine (99) managerial staff of the organization constituted the sample for the study. This represented approximately 75% of the population of the study. The research used stratified sampling method to obtain staff representation from top management level and middle-level management in the four (4) Postal Corporation branches in Kakamega County. Within each stratum, the researchers used simple random sampling method to give all the staff equal opportunity to participate in the study. Questionnaires were used as tools for data collection in the study. The data was summarized and presented by descriptive statistics. To test for hypotheses, inferential statistics (multiple regression analysis) was used to test the level of significance of the independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis for Leadership and Performance

The study sought to establish the extent to which leadership as a strategy implementation practice affected the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. The research findings on this item were as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Leadership and Strategy Implementation

Statements		SA	A	FA	D	SD	Mean
The leadership involves employees in strategy implementation to improve the organization efficiency	F	12	51	11	1	1	2.0526
	%	15.8	67.1	14.5	1.3	1.3	
The leadership is committed to implement the formulated strategy to ensure customers satisfaction	F	24	35	16	0	1	1.9342
	%	31.6	46.1	21.1	0.0	1.2	
The organization support top managers to implement the strategies to enhance efficiency in service delivery	F	18	45	12	1	0	1.9474
	%	23.7	59.2	15.8	1.3	0.0	
Coordination of strategy implementation process is enhanced by the top management to increase customers satisfaction	F	16	46	8	3	3	2.0921
	%	21.1	60.5	10.6	3.9	3.9	
Leaders empower employees to implement the strategies that ensures growth in product line	F	12	39	23	1	1	2.2105
	%	15.8	51.3	30.3	1.3	1.3	
The leadership systematically monitors strategy implementation process to enhance efficiency	F	6	43	23	4	0	2.3289
	%	7.9	56.6	30.3	5.2	0.0	
The organization assist top management to improve their skill in strategy implementation to increase customers satisfaction	F	17	38	19	1	1	2.0921
	%	22.4	50.0	25.0	1.3	1.3	
Leadership motivates employees to implement the formulated strategies aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction	F	15	41	15	4	1	2.1447
	%	19.7	53.9	19.7	5.3	1.4	
The leadership encourage innovation in strategy implementation to improve efficiency	F	4	38	29	4	1	2.4737
	%	5.3	50	38.2	5.3	1.2	

Source: Survey data (2018)

The findings on leadership as a strategy implementation practice in relation to the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County indicate that majority (97.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that leadership involves employees in strategy implementation to improve the organization efficiency while 2.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The respondents also expressed their agreement (98.8%) with the statement that the Organization leadership is committed to implement the formulated strategies to ensure customers satisfaction while 1.2% of the respondents are of the contrary opinion.

A majority (98.7%) of the respondents also agreed with statement that the organization supports top managers to implement the strategies to enhance efficiency in service delivery while 1.3% of the respondent disputed the statement. Most of the respondents (92.2%) also agreed with the fact that coordination of strategy implementation process is enhanced by the top management and 7.8% disagreed. The findings of the study further showed that 97.4% of the respondents agreed with the statement that leaders empower employees to implement the strategies that ensure growth in the product line while minority (2.6%) disagreed with the statement. The analysis from the study revealed that the majority (94.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that the organization leaders systematically monitor strategy implementation process to enhance efficiency contrary to 5.2% who disagreed with the statement.

Another majority (97.4%) of the respondents in the study hold the view that the organization assists top management to improve their skills in strategy implementation to increase customer satisfaction while 2.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The findings from the study also revealed that most of the respondents (93.3%) agreed that the organization leadership motivates employees to implement the formulated strategies aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction and 6.7% disputed the statement. The results from the study further indicated that 93.5% agreed with the statement that the organization leadership encourage innovation in strategy implementation to improve efficiency while 6.5% of the respondents are of the contrary opinion.

Hypotheses Test Results

Regarding leadership, the study tested the hypothesis which stated that *leadership of the organization significantly affects the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County*. The results obtained from the test were as summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of variables significance

Hypothesis	Coefficient Result	P - value	Interpretation
H ₁ : <i>Leadership of the organization significantly affects the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County</i>	.192	.043	Significant effect

Source: Survey data (2018)

Hypothesis One (H₁) predicted that leadership of the organization does not significantly affects the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. The results shown in Table 2 above indicate that leadership of the organization (p-value = .043) significantly affects the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County at $P < 0.05$ level of significance. Therefore, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis that leadership of the organization does not significantly affect the performance Postal Corporation in Kakamega County.

As evidenced by the findings above, the study concluded that leadership of the organization significantly affects the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. These findings were consistent with those of Rajasekar (2014) who examined factors affecting effective strategy implementation in electricity distribution companies in the sultanate of

Oman. He concluded that leadership is the most important factor that influenced successful implementation of strategy in the electricity distribution companies. The research findings were also reiterative of a study by Jalali (2012) on the role of managers in strategy implementation in export performance in the Middle East Countries. Jalali established that leadership role in strategy implementation positively affects performance. Similarly, Waititu (2016), in her study on the relationship between strategy implementation and performance of commercial banks in Nairobi County, concluded that banks with inspirational leadership recorded high performance.

The findings of the study also corroborated those of Kyalo *et al.* (2016) on the effects of organizational leadership on strategy implementation in Kenya Tourism Industry. These scholars found that the competency of a leader has a positive impact on strategy implementation hence better performance by the organization. Another research by Kivasu (2015) on leadership styles and implementation of strategy in NGOs in Nairobi city concluded that leadership style influences strategy implementation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that leadership as part of the strategy implementation practices significantly affect the performance of Postal Corporation in Kakamega County. Therefore, the organization's leadership involves employees in strategy implementation hence an improvement in efficiency. The organization's leadership is also committed to implementing the formulated strategy to ensure customer satisfaction. Moreover, the organization supports top managers to implement strategies aimed at enhancing efficiency. It is also evident that coordination of strategy implementation process is enhanced by the top managers who also empower employees to implement the strategies that ensure growth in product line. The study further concluded that the leadership of the organization systematically monitors strategy implementation process to enhance efficiency. The leadership also assists the top managers to improve on their skills in strategy implementation. Similarly, the organization's leadership motivates employees and encourages innovation in strategy implementation process. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers recommend that it is important for the Postal Corporation leadership to be pragmatic in their approach when dealing with employees, enhance team work and win the hearts of the staff since their actions determines the success in strategy implementation that eventually lead to superior performance.

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