

**FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN HEALTH
INSTITUTIONS IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS, KENYA: THE CASE OF BOMET
COUNTY**

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Abstract

This study focused on the factors affecting successful implementation of strategic plans of health institutions in County Governments and it was carried out at the County Government of Bomet. The specific objectives revolved around; organizational culture, organizational structure, management support and financial resources. The target population of the study included individuals involved in strategic plans implementation in health institutions in Bomet County encompassing 50 respondents from the county ministry of health, county ministry of finance, county assembly members, sub county offices and hospital managers. The study used a combination of random sampling and purposive sampling. Random sampling was used to select respondents who involved a relatively large number of individuals and on the other hand purposive sampling was used to select participants who were categorised to top, middle and low level management among the respondents. A survey questionnaire was used in the collection of data from the study respondents. The collected data was analysed and presented using frequency distribution tables for ease of interpretation. The study employed multiple regression model to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The results show that culturally, poor internationalization of mission and strategic content, lack of participation in making of rules and regulations, lack of operational manuals, insensitive employee development policies, and highly structured downward communication affected employees' mobilization to executing strategic plans. Organizational structures of the health institutions influenced implementation of strategic plans in the forms of task allocation, span of control, employee co-ordination and integration, and structural flexibility. Management did not give employees required independence in performing their implementation duties. Also, health institutions were more centralized than decentralized, making employees wait for instructions from the top. In addition, spans of control were relatively big and difficult for efficient control. Employee leadership influenced implementation of strategic plans through managerial involvement, employee support, downward communication, conflict

resolution, and employee representation in key decision making. The study recommended that employee training and development should be an integral part of each organization's strategy to effective implementation.

Keywords: Strategic plans, implementation, organizational structure, leadership, culture, resources

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Strategic plans are both necessary and useful in the effective operation and management of progressive organizations (Roach and Allen, 2003). The idea behind strategic plans is premised on the consideration of implications of the future within the context of current decisions, alters the plan to reflect the changing market dynamics, creates an analytical business management option and connects the elements of the business to bring out the best as far as a working management system is concerned. The process is important and vital for the business performance and growth (Roach and Allen, 2003). Cartwright (2007) submits that strategic plans that have been found to be effective are not in themselves as analytical or as balanced as literature presents. Robinson and Pearce (2004) on their part assert that the makeup of strategic plans make them more suitable for larger companies and not for smaller businesses; of course, this is still debatable.

Langley (1998) in offering support for the merits of strategic plans highlighted four roles for the need for strategic planning. He noted that first there is the public role that is more concerned with influencing outsiders, then the information role concerned with giving valuable inputs to the management and the decisions they will make. Thirdly, there is the group therapy role that is more about heightening organizational commitment via people involvement in all spheres of the organizational existence. Lastly, there is the control roles that is concerned about the extent to which the strategic plan is able to meet the set goals of the organization. Despite the presence of these conceptualizations, studies have attempted to study for a link between strategic plans and business performance but with mixed results (Cappel, 2000).

Pearce and Robinson (2007), defined strategy as a consensus-based philosophies that are domesticated into operational and functional realities to suit organizational targets. Kotter and Best (2006) on their part agreed with this assertion when they asserted that implementation of strategy is more about who, when, how and where an action will be taken to advance organizational inputs and outputs. Hussey (2000) noted that implementation is premised on a six step progression starting with envision, then activate, followed by install, then ensure and

finally recognize. He also asserts that implementation of strategy is one of the most problematic and complex management activities and that its success is contingent on the best fit strategy selection and effective operationalization of the strategy.

Therefore, the employ of strategic plans to suit effective strategic implementation is necessary for organizations and in the Kenyan set up, necessary for the devolved units of government. Omari, Kaburi and Sewe. (2012) argued that since the inception of devolution that was meant to decentralize power and resources down to the masses, there has been a renewed awareness of the need for strategy to enact effective service delivery and improve performance. This planning is important particularly for the health sector which was devolved to the counties. Now devolved governments are in charge of the new local administrations to oversee functions such as agriculture, health facilities, sanitation, transport and trade licenses, as well as the responsibility to generate revenue for the county. The national government remains in charge of education, security, foreign policy, and national economic policy and planning (Omari et al, 2012). This study focuses on Longisa County Referral Hospital located in Bomet County.

Since the decentralization of health services from the national government to the county governments, in Kenya, there have been a number of challenges facing health services. These challenges range in scope; irregular payments made to medics and improper staffing both leading to regular strikes by hospital workers, improper maintenance of hospital equipment due to insufficient funds, politicizing hiring and transfer processes of hospital staff. All these factors and their interplay affect health service provision in the counties of Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

despite evidence to the fact that strategy formulation is a difficult process for businesses, strategic implementation has been touted to be even more complex and requiring of much tact and consideration (Hrebiniak, 2006). This is so, due to many internal and external forces that could potentially impact on the process towards desirable organizational action. Strategic implementation has been viewed as a creative craft as opposed to a science and its scholarly trajectory has been described variously as eclectic and somewhat fragmented (Noble 1999). It is therefore not a surprise to see that after a company has devised a single strategy, other significant challenges come especially at the implementation stage.

Strategic implementation is now even poignant for county governments in Kenya considering that they face a myriad of problems linked to accountability, capacity building, resource mobilization and the proper use of devolved funds (Omari, et al, 2012). Consequently, the counties have been audited by the Auditor General and found to have performed dismally in the elements of county performance and particularly in resource use. Also, many counties have responded to changes and accountability together with capacity building issues much slower

than anticipated. Therefore, examining factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans by the health institutions is therefore necessary and appropriate if not timely. It is within this context that this study sought to investigate the challenges facing the health institutions in Kenya; specifically in Bomet County by carrying out an analysis of the institutional factors that influence implementation of strategic plans.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objectives

The general objective of this study was to examine factors influencing implementation of strategic plans in County governments.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

The following objectives were used in this study

1. To determine the influence of organizational culture on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.
2. To determine the influence of organizational structure on implementation strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet County,
3. To identify the influence of management support on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.
4. To assess the influence of financial resource on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet County.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Organizational culture does not have a significant influence on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.

H₀₂: Organizational structure does not have a significant influence on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.

H₀₃: Management support does not have a significant influence on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.

H₀₄: Financial resource does not have a significant influence on implementation of strategic plans in the health institutions in Bomet county.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Two theories, namely; electric implementation and adaptive theories were reviewed as they formed the anchor of the concept of the study.

2.1.1 Electric Implementation Theory

This theory is used as postulated by Jofre (2011) and is more concerned with the integration of managerial perspectives linked to theoretical considerations. The theory argues that strategic implementation over the years has been a stand-alone perspective but that to understand it fully, it needs to be integrated so as to translate it to practical perspective. The theory further asserts that making strategic implementation practical makes it useful to improve six critical areas of business; which are economic, logic, operational, efficiency, balance and manageable option.

Jofre (2011) noted that logic is a significant part in electric implementation as apart from providing a rational underpinning for organizational growth, it permits deductive construction from where implementation can be harnessed and understood for organizational growth. The other elements also allow both experiential and instinctive considerations that are useful for implementation of strategy for potential business growth and performance. This theory thus applies closely to the concepts of the present study as it presents a picture of how strategic implementation can work and how it can influence the constructs that are used to measure public entity performance.

2.1.2 Adaptation Theory

Hrebiniak and Joyce, (2006) formulated that adaptation theory premised on the idea that a business needs a congruence between the aspects of expectations and achievements. To achieve this congruence, a business needs to craft an implementation model that lays down the process with which one would achieve the congruence. Consequently, a strong implementation model is one that offers a stronger congruence of the expectations that management has and achievements that have so far been realized. The Implementation according to Hrebiniak and Joyce, (2006) is one that aligns theory to practice and they propose that adaptation theory does just that by considering that implementation of strategy does not just happen in a vacuum but that it is shaped by operational and managerial realities on the ground. This element thus makes the theory relevant to the present study as it offers a fashioned conceptualization of the elements of strategy and how it can be used to measure performance constructs

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Independent variables Dependent variable

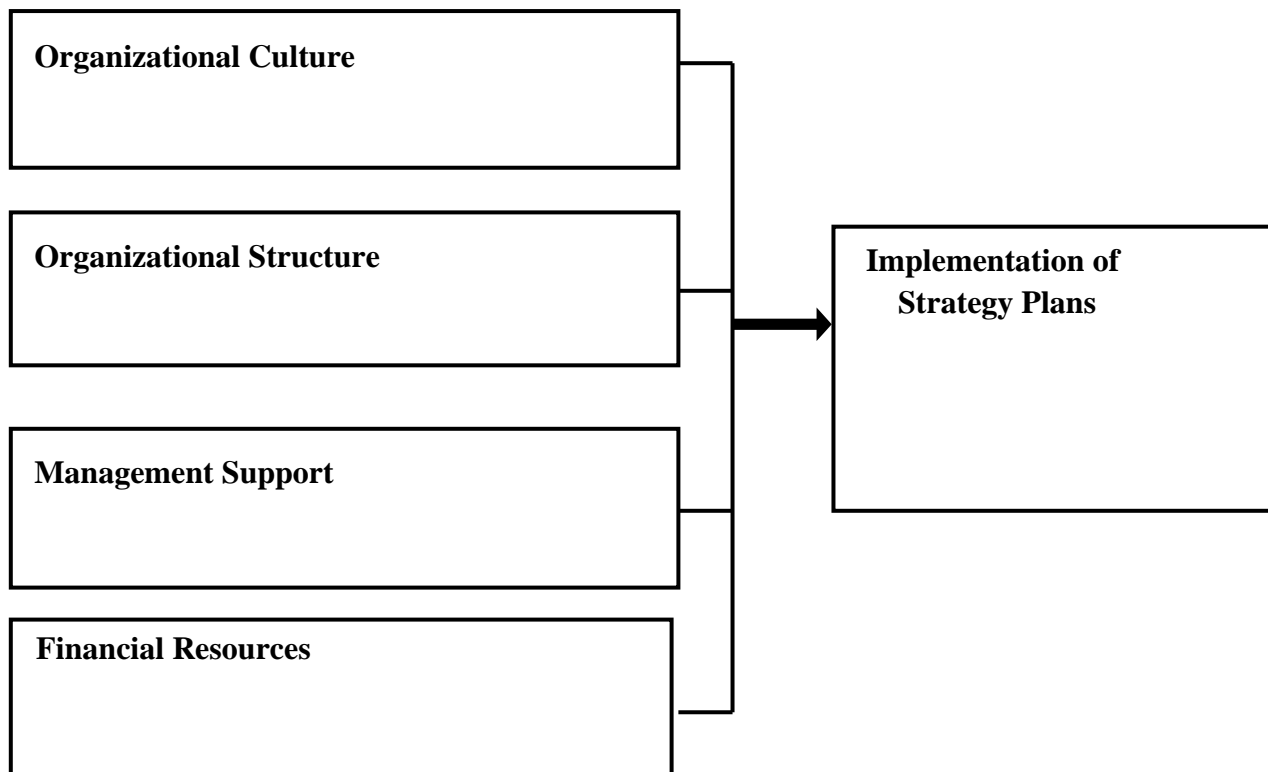


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Empirical Review

Pearce and Robinson (2006) in a descriptive survey design study done in the USA and looking at organizational culture and implementation of strategy noted that culture is a set of established assumptions which characterize the common feel that people have. He noted that in that case, these assumptions that are strongly held have a massive influence on how strategy is implemented and fashioned.

Nutt (2006) on his part examined organizational culture in the light of its extent on improving strategic implementation in Turkey. The study using regressed results found that people's attitude, perception and belief system forge a strong and influential component that drives business operations and implementation process over a long period of time. He noted that the perception and feelings lead inevitably to actions that are geared towards a certain goal.

Other empirical investigations have almost concluded that culture is a central focus for organizations and that it cannot be wished away. The literature is awash with assertions to the extent that organizational culture that is positive inevitably leads to better implementation of strategy (Drucker, 1985; Ireland & Hitt, 1999; Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2000; 2005; Vera & Crossan, 2004). This is important considering that very few reviews on the link between culture and strategic implementation has been done in the Kenyan set up.

Allio, (2005), did an explanatory study in Morrocco and looked at how organizational structure influence implementation of strategy. The study found out that there are certain organizational structures that would not have a positive influence on implementation of strategy like centralization. He however noted that integration structure is the best kind to offer a conducive impetus to effective strategic implementation. How far this was true for the county government was part of the reason for the present study.

Atikiya, (2015) did a review of management support needed to enact effective implementation of strategy. The study reviewed literature on the subject upwards of 50 articles touching on both public and private entities. The study found out that primarily, all implementation of strategy solely depended on management and the support they offered. They noted that management support is the sure way of advancing strategic implementation and that where such implementation failed, the management would be the obvious people to blame.

Bidemi (2009) in his study on the Nigerian sector on choosing strategies noted that strategic implementation depended significantly on the resources available to improve it. Resources, be it financial, human or structural, are necessary if strategic implementation is to happen in such an expansive and intensive manner. the study that was descriptive noted that resources when canvassed and allocated in key areas of the business, like innovation, operations and procurement, would allow for a mechanism where implementation of strategy in these key areas is done on time and effectively.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The research design of the forthcoming study was in the format of a quantitative and descriptive study. A quantitative research design in this case comprises of a collection of data that is numerical in its form (Bryman, 2008). The choice of a quantitative research design is informed by the need to collect factual/objective information on the connection between factors and implementation of strategy.

3.2 Target population

The target population of the study were individuals involved in strategic plans implementation in Longisa referral hospital and constituent health facilities within sub-counties in Bomet namely; Mogogosiek, Koiwa, Sigor and Sotik health facilities. In general the population of interest in a study must be one that shares common characteristics and are investigated for specific reasons such as their project risk management practices (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). As such, the study population in the study encompassed 100 respondents consisting of; 20 respondents from the county ministry of health, 20 from the county ministry of finance, 20 county assembly members, 20 respondents from the sub county offices and Longisa Referral Hospital and 20 respondents who are hospital managers.

3.3 Sampling frame

In essence, it may not be technically feasible to collect data from the entire population of interest. In particular, the researcher may experience difficulties in accessing all potential study participants. It is for this reason that it is important to obtain a sample which is then used to representation that target population. The study's respondents constituted the sampling frame from which 10 of each category of respondents will be picked to consist of 50 respondents.

3.4 Sampling technique and procedure

In the proposed study a combination of random sampling and purposive sampling was used.

Random sampling was used to select respondents who involved a relatively large number of individuals. This was important in order to ensure representativeness. Purposive sampling was on the other hand be used to select participants who were categorised to top, middle and low level management among the respondents. Based on study guidelines from Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a study sample comprising of at least 30% of the sampling frame is deemed as acceptable as it allows for undertaking of a representative study. Consequently the researcher

sought to have a sample of n=45 or more respondents. This was achieved by following up on the participants to ensure a high response rate.

3.5 Data collection instrument

Data was collected using questionnaires and documentary analysis; questionnaires being given to the staffers as they were many and bearing in mind that questionnaires allows for sealing of loopholes that would increase bias. Documentary analysis was used to examine the strategic plans in the county and reports that speak to the extent the plans had been implemented.

3.6 Data analysis and presentation

As aforementioned the data collected in the proposed study was mainly in quantitative form. Consequently, the data was analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The focus was mainly on descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The analysed data was presented using table for easy of interpretation. On inferential statistics, the study employed multiple regression model to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The configured multiple regression model was:
$$Y = a + bx_1 + bx_2 + bx_3 + bx_4$$

Where:

bx1 is an independent or explanatory variable;

bx2 is an independent or explanatory variable;

bx3 is an independent or explanatory variable;

bx4 in an independent or explanatory variable

Y = is the dependent variable;

a= is a constant

sig= is the significance at 5% level of significance

t= is the test statistic value

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Multiple Regression Analysis

The researcher sought to establish whether there was a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In this regard, the researcher used multiple regression analysis model to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. The findings are as indicated in table 1

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis of various variables used in this study.

Model	Independent Variables	T	Sig.
	Constant	4.933	0
Y = a + bx ₁ + bx ₂ + bx ₃ + bx ₄	Organizational culture	-3.716	0.002
	Management structure	-1.114	0.003
	Management support	-918	0.0035
	Organizational culture	-119	0.0036

Dependent Variable: Implementation of strategic plans. From the configured multiple regression model

. From the configured multiple regression model

$$Y = a + bx_1 + bx_2 + bx_3 + bx_4$$

Where:

Y = Implementation of strategic plans.

X₁ = organization of culture (t statistic p value <0.002 <0.05).

X₂ = management structure (with t statistic p value <0.003 <0.05),

X₃ = management support (with t statistic p value <0.0035 <0.05).

X₄ = Organizational culture (with t statistic p value <0.0035 <0.05).

$\beta_0 \beta_1 \beta_2 \beta_3$ = regression equation coefficients

t = is the test statistic value e = error term of the regression equation parameters.

Table 1 indicates that there is a high significant relationship between organizational culture and implementation of strategic plans with (with t statistic p value <0.002 <0.05). This indicates that organizational culture has an impact on implementation of strategic plans. The findings also indicate that there is a significant relationship between organizational structure and implementation of strategic plans (with t statistic p value <0.003 <0.05), management support variable was found to have a significant relationship with the implementation of strategic plans

(with t statistic p value $<0.0035<0.05$) and financial resources was also found to have a significant relationship with the implementation of strategic plans (with t statistic p value $<0.0036<0.05$). Therefore in essence, organizational culture, organizational structure, management support and financial resources have influence on the implementation of strategic plans.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study findings, it is concluded that organizational culture, structure, leadership, and financial resources affected implementation of strategic plans in Bomet County health institutions. Lack of participation in making of rules and regulations, lack of operational manuals, insensitive employee development policies, and highly structured downward communication effected employees mobilization to implementing strategic plans. Organizational structures of the health institutions in Bomet County affected the implementation of strategic plans in the forms of task allocation, decentralization of authority, span of control, hierarchical length, employee co-ordination and integration, and structural flexibility.

Also, authority was more centralized than decentralized, making employees wait for instructions from the top. In addition, spans of control were relatively big and difficult for efficient control. The long hierarchy derailed most of the essential decisions as information flow delayed to a large extent. This also contributed to weakening of employee synergy. Structurally, the authorities were more rigid than flexible as they hardly conducted reviewed regularly. Among others, employee leadership influenced implementation of strategic plans through managerial involvement, employee support, downward communication, conflict resolution, and employee representation in key decision making. The extent to which management committed itself to strategy execution was not satisfactory. This yield employee resistance, meaning that management did not have super support from the shop-floor employees. Moreover, the downward communication was strictly formal and missing the requisite personal touch, while conflict resolutions did not meet the employees benchmark. The way employees were represented was fair but much was desire to enhance individual contributions.

Besides, financial resources affected strategic implementation through budgetary allocations, financial controls, revenue efficiency, and external donor support. The amount allocated for purposes of implementing strategic plans was hardly enough. This was partly caused by lack of funds since revenue collection was inefficient, yet there were well dispersed donor financial aid. Notably, however, financial controls were fairly well executed in quest of avoiding wastages and misallocations.

Thus, based on the study findings, the researcher recommended that the county government take note of cultural dynamics in the implementation of strategic plans in health institutions. There is need to induct employees on their roles and space in service delivery.

Further, it is the recommendation of this study that the health institutions in Bomet County should create organizational structures which are consistent with the strategic objectives being pursued by the county government. Special monitoring and evaluation teams should be established in order to facilitate periodic reviews and ensure effective implementation of periodic plans through monitoring and evaluation. Since county governments do not operate in isolation, organizational structure should be responsive to the environment. This will enhance their competitiveness through timely and quality response to customer. Since organizations do not operate in isolation, organizational structure should be responsive to the environment. This will enhance their competitiveness through timely and quality response to customer. It's also recommended that the county government should take a strong hold on the resources they have in order to have the organization culture treating those resources as part and parcel of the government system and not just assets for an organization.

On management support, it is recommended that top managers undergo executive capacity building sessions to come to realization that their corporate objectives are easily attained through team work and not through strict supervision and instructions. Organization leadership should be converted from a barrier to an enabler by encouraging teamwork and winning support from all the staffers concerned.

It is further recommended that employee Training and Development should be an integral part of each organization's strategy to effective implementation. Special skills in resource development and fundraising need to be put in place. This would provide counties with professionalism in implementation of strategic plans.

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