



Organizational Factors and Implementation of Strategies in Public Water Service Providers in Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Successful strategy implementation is key to the survival of organizations. Literature suggests that strategy implementation is usually curtailed by inefficiencies. The study looked into the organizational aspects and their influence in implementation of strategy in public water service providers in Kitui County. The study objectives were: establish organizational leadership effect on implementation of strategies, determine organizational structure effect on implementation of strategies and examine the organizational culture effect on implementation of strategies public water service providers in Kitui County. The study was anchored by resource-based view, institutional and contingency theories. The two public water service providers in Kitui County, KITWASCO and KIMWASCO were the target population for this study. The study used descriptive research approach and apply content validity. Cronbach alpha test was run to check on reliability of the research instruments. The study was adopted descriptive research design, used content validity and Cronbach Alpha Test for reliability. Since the target population was small, a census review was done. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using a computer program called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). ANOVA test, multiple regression and correlation analysis was done to ascertain variable relationships. The established that organizational leadership, organizational structure and organizational culture had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County. The study concludes that organizational leadership enables employee toward fulfilling an organization's mission by making them to understand an organization's mission in alignment with one's strengths, creating a strategic plan in line with that mission, implementing goals and holding teams accountable for accomplishing those goals within an established timeline, and in alignment with the strategic plan. Organizational structure is often important in gaining consensus for a strategy because it will determine who has to be appeased in management and how power is aligned and organizational structure organizational culture enables an organization to have aligned goals by focusing on productivity and getting the organization's primary mission accomplished. The study recommends that the leadership in public water service providers in Kitui County should ensure that they understand better their employees so as to be able to help them improve their personal and professional effectiveness, accountability, and most of all effectively implement strategies formulated by the organization. The public water service providers in Kitui County should have a good structure that provides the right blend of command and control plus employee independence without feeling of resentment that hinders organization pursuit of its mission and that public water service providers in Kitui County should make strategic vision and goals clear and inspirational, translate strategy into a living execution plan that matters to people, capitalize on existing beneficial behaviors, and take action to adjust undesired or obsolete behaviors as needed and change organizational processes to reinforce desired behaviors for the long term and enable alignment with an organization's culture.



Key Words: *Organizational Leadership, Organizational Structure, Organizational Culture, Public Water Service Providers*

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Strategy implementation is the summation of requisite activities and choices for implementation of a strategic plan (Andrew et al., 2011). It involves various management activities that are connected (Cater & Pucko, 2010). Implementation of strategy is curtailed by myriad of forces both internal and external (Brenes et al., 2008; Van Der Maas, 2008; Mutuvi, 2013) and this makes it a very daunting task for many organizations. Organizational and environmental variables must be cojoined to the strategic activities being implemented so as to identify and correct obstacles that may appear during implementation (Cater & Pucko, 2010). The contextual variables that could present obstacles to strategy implementation according to Hrebiniak (2005b) include; change management, top leadership, organizational culture and power structure. The four contexts influence each other and should be synchronized for effective strategy implementation. Li Yang et al (2008) classified organizational factors with respect to implementation of strategies as human (soft), institutional (hard) and mixed factors. Soft factors represent human resource aspects; the hard factors are institutional factors while a combination of people oriented and institutional factors constitutes the mixed factor. Kagumu and Njuguna (2016) identified organizational factors which affect implementation of strategies in organizations as; motivation of employees, change management, leadership, resources, organizational culture and structure.

Strategy Implementation is the process of implementing policies, programs and planned actions so as to competitively exploit opportunities in an ever-changing market environment (Harrington, 2006). Kinyua et al., 2015 define strategy implementation as a process that involves managing forces during action stage, requires special motivation and skills while coordinating many individuals (David, 2013). The other phases of formulation, analysis and choice of strategy cannot ensure success without proper implementation. The translation and operationalization of strategies during implementation remains a key challenge to managers (Hrebiniak, 2006) and It is therefore imperative that the members involved in strategy formulation are also members of the implementation team for successful implementation (Katsioloudes, 2002). Consistency and proper alignment of functions in the organizational is needed to enhance of efficiency in implementation (Allio, 2005). Waweru (2011) observes that most managers know how to develop strategy but not much about executing the strategy which leads to no change in performance even after resources are spent in formulation. According to Kavale and Muthoni (2015), as implementation continues, momentum and focus could be lost due to strategy dissipation. The effect of strategy implementation on organizational performance has been tested both in the private and public sectors (Lehner, 2004; Ranasingne, 2010; Waweru, 2011 & Njoroge, 2015).



1.2 Statement of the Problem

Empirical evidence from past studies has confirmed that implementation still remains a challenging task even after formulation very good strategies (Koske, 2003; Ateng, 2007, Khayota, 2014, Kamau, 2015). Unfortunately, most managers are good at drafting strategies but are ignorant on how they could be implemented (Hrebina, 2006). This explains why organizations achieve only 30% in terms of implementation of new strategies (Miller, 2002). In fact, incompetence in implementation has seen organizations lose 40-60 per cent of the strategy intended value (Mankins & Steele 2005). Khayota (2014) studied strategy implementation and organizational performance in LVSWSB in Kisumu and uncovered that implementation of strategic plans is indeed affected by organizational factors like; leadership, involvement of employees, organizational culture and structure. Similar findings were made by Nzulwa and Odanga (2016) who studied implementation of strategic plans by water companies under AWSB. The study identified organizational factors such as communication, organizational resources, culture and leadership styles. They recommended further studies to be done on other companies under different WSBs in Kenya. Kavale and Muthoni (2015) studied strategic plan implementation among water supply firms in Mombasa County and identified stakeholder involvement, resources, organizational culture and leadership as some contributing factors to successful implementation of strategies.

Cheruiyot (2012) recommended for further studies to be done to understand the concept of strategy implementation under other WSBs after doing a study on water supply companies under TAWSB. The KDHS report of 2014 revealed that access to water is probably the greatest challenge in Kitui County which is highly prone to drought; leading to regular crop failure and food insecurity. Water service providers operate in dynamic environments and face strategy issues (Muganda et al., 2016). Past research has shown that implementing strategies is still a big challenge almost for any organization (Rajasekar, 2014; Muganda et al., 2016, Mwirigi et al., 2014; Mbogo et al., 2020). Even with strategy implementation challenges mentioned above and the perennial plight of water shortage being experienced in Kitui County (UNICEF, 2012; KDHS, 2014; KIPPRA, 2019; Nyaga, 2019), there is still an information gap on organizational factors and implementation of strategies in the public water service providers in the region. The current study tried to address the information gap on organizational factors and implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to investigate organizational factors influencing implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County, Kenya.

Specific objectives were:

- i. To establish the effect of organizational leadership on implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County
- ii. To determine the effect of organizational structure on implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County
- iii. To examine the organizational culture effect on implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County



2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Different theories will be utilized to demonstrate the interrelationships among the study variables. Theories to be reviewed are; Resource Based View, Institutional and Contingency Theories.

2.1.1 Resource Based View Theory

The first concept of the resource based view theory was undertaken by Wernerfeltin 1984 who viewed firms as bundles of resources. Notable proponents of the RBV theory are Barney (1991) and Peteraf (1993) who proposed a consolidated resource based framework for competitiveness. The theory postulates that the core foundation and triggers of firm's competitiveness and better performance in strategic management closely relate to the qualities of the resources which are prohibitively expensive to copy (Mills et al., 2003). The resources have to bear four exclusive characteristics; be Valuable, be Inimitable, be Rare and Non-substitutable (VRIN), Werner (2011). The VRIN framework was later revised to VRIO to add the organizational preparedness to use the suitable available resources (Barney, 2012).

RBV theory suggests that a firm should choose strategies that allow use its competitiveness in an attractive industry (Hitt et al., 2005). The theory underscores the importance of using resources within the organization rather than sourcing auxiliary external resources. Competitiveness is therefore sustainable only when a firm executes a strategy that cannot be executed by the competitors and when the competitors cannot copy the benefits of the strategy. The importance of internal resources cannot be overemphasized (Kasongo & Misango, 2019). Organizational resources include; organizational structure, financial resources, physical structures, planning and control systems and supporting policies and procedures that hold all the other resources together (Kerzner, 2001). Intangible resources include; organizational culture, brand names and patents, customer relations, reputation and other intangible aspects that can lead to a sustained competitive advantage (Kerzner, 2001). Human resources comprises, among others, top directors who provide the strategic leadership required to satisfy the shareholders. The RBV theory has emerged as a popular theory in explaining the source of competitive. The theory is pertinent to this study since it identifies organizational structure, organizational culture and other intangible aspects of the organization which could lead to sustained competitive advantage.

2.1.2 Institutional Theory

This theory according to North (1990) explains social structure aspects such as formation, adaptation, sharing and adoption by employees of an organization. The foundations of this theory could be traced to between 1977 and 1983 when John Meyer and Brian Rowan integrated and extended Max Webber's bureaucratic theory and argued that complex relational networks between organizations and societal rules and norms result in diffusion of formal bureaucracy. Structures later become guiding principles for formal and informal rules that governs the social behavior (Amenta, 2005). Although the environment highly influences the formation of the social structures (Johnson, 2002), organizations may sometimes adopt inefficient structural layouts in order to attain organizational survival in the environment (Meyer & Morgan, 1991).

From the environmental perspective, organizations might bow to institutional pressure which leads to homogenous structures. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991), institutional pressure could take different forms. Coercive pressure comes from other firms that a firm depends on; mimetic



pressure is the pressure to copy successful firms while normative pressure is brought by new employees who join the firm. Although organizations in an industry are governed by similar rules and regulations, their application in daily operations differs and this will impact differently on their performance (Shafraziz, 2012).

This theory postulates that due to organizational pressure, organizations strive to achieve homogeneity in structures but the environments influences each organization differently. There is need for ingenious ways to address respective challenges in a unique way. Meyer and Morgan (1991) further argued that management practice is a product of social and economic pressures to conform to industry pressures and adhere to the set guidelines and regulations. These structures need to be flexible to allow change, enhance efficiency and effectiveness. This structure-strategy interrelationship was highlighted by Chandler (1962) and institutional theory views organizational structure as a manifestation of institutional norms. Strategy implementation in every institution is expected to vary depending on the degree to which members conform to the set guidelines in the operationalization and institutionalization of the structure.

2.3.3 Contingency Theory

This theory anchors on the notion that, every organization is organized uniquely and therefore no single conventional formula can be applied to manage all organizations (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Snow and Hrebiniak (1980) and Miller (1988) supported the contingent perspective and observed that every organization's need is distinctive according to customer clusters and this necessitates a customized approach to addressing customer needs. The theory studies organization behavior and explains how the design and operations of the organization are influenced by unanticipated factors. Therefore there is no single structure that can be applied in all organizations to yield effectiveness in all of them. Similarly different circumstances require different ways of dealing with them whether in the same organizations or across different organizations. The theory advocates that tasks should not be routine and that every decision should be based on the situation at hand. Managers, according to the theory, make discretionary decisions subject to the prevailing conditions. As such, the structure of the organizations will differ subject to the condition at hand. The theory supports strategic planning by calling for differentiated but integrated operations in an organization. Each organization is required to analyze and respond to their circumstances in order to achieve their objectives (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The theory recognizes the vital roles environment and top leadership plays in an organization (Wheelen & Hunger, 2007; Kibera et al, 2014). The study conceptualizes a fit that should exist between organizational contingent factors and implementation of strategies.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Organizational Leadership and Implementation of Strategy

Leadership in an organizational perspective can be viewed as the art of influencing the attainment of a common goal by envisioning and appreciating the contribution of others (Mwirigi, *et al.*, 2014). Making stakeholders accept change, remain committed and be involved in implementation presents a challenge to organizations. Leadership therefore becomes a key change instrument in the organization. Empowerment of employees which can be achieved through authority delegation (Pearce & Robinson, 2007) is paramount in nurturing leadership within the organization. Leaders must show commitment to the strategies being implemented (Rapa & Kauffman, 2005) as this commitment from the leadership sets the organization on the success path by ensuring that



necessary actions are in place for strategy formulation and implementation (Gordon, 2010).

Consensus on the strategy being implemented is vital if implementation is to be successful according to O'Reilly et al.(2010). Leadership should therefore strive to attach a meaning to the strategy, ensure adequate resource allocation and manage change by outlining benefits of the new strategies to the employees. Line managers and supervisors are integral to this consensus since they work alongside the employees on daily basis. They must be convinced that the strategy being implemented will protect their interests since they can sabotage the implementation through delays and redirection of effort (Clarke et al., 2019 & Kieran et al., 2020). Mbogo, Machogu and Juma (2020) did a study on organizational leadership and strategic plan implementation by Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies in Murang'a Town. Through comparative research this specific study established that commitment and support from organization's leadership impacts positively on strategic plan implementation in SACCOs. Through a descriptive research design, a studies by Nzulwa and Odanga (2016) established that organizational leadership influences strategic plan implementation by water companies affiliated to AWSB. A study by Areri and Anyieni (2016), through descriptive research design, showed that implementation of strategic plans and leadership are correlated.

2.2.2 Organizational Structure and Implementation of Strategy

Organizational structure is the way responsibilities are shared for the accomplishment of the organizational goals (Gibson et al., 2005; Pearce & Robinson, 2007). According to Zheng et al., (2010), organizational structure covers aspects of systemization, control and formalization. Systemization describes the authority level where decisions are made; formalization describes the level of regulation of workers towards a certain behavior while control aspect includes target setting, monitoring and feedback (Nahm et al., 2003; Huang *et al.*, 2007). There is however no agreement about the optimum organizational structure but organizations operating in the same line and pursuing similar strategies tends to adopt similar organizational structure. Good organizational structure should be interrelated with the strategy (Pearce & Robinson, 2011). A survey research on service industry in Oman by Rajasekar (2014) established that strategy implementation cannot be done in isolation without giving due consideration to organizational structure. Similarly, organizational structure was found to contribute towards implementation of strategies in NGOs in Kenya (Abok et al., 2013). The study involved NGOs in Kenya. Warui *et al.* (2015) used a descriptive survey design and studied Kenyan rural mission hospitals. The study confirmed a correlation between organizational structure and adoption of strategic planning. Kirui (2013) studied local authorities in Migori County. Using descriptive research design, the study found that implementation of strategies and organizational structures are positively interrelated.

2.2.3 Organizational Culture and Implementation of Strategy

Culture from an organizational perspective can be viewed as the common beliefs, and shared values and assumptions employees hold about the organization (Mehta & Krishnan, 2004). Ahmadi et al., (2012) classified organizational culture in a scope ranging from weak to strong cultures. Friedman et al., (2014) observed that the common beliefs, and shared values and assumptions within the organization should be oriented to the strategy being implemented for successful implementation. Further, strong internal focus and stability consciousness could derail dynamism which is vital in pursuing change initiatives. Strategy implementation could lead to disruption of status quo and therefore organizational culture should be given careful consideration as a driver to the strategy implementation. Ahmadi et al., (2012) empirically provided that



implementation of strategies and the culture of the organization are interrelated. Cultures that are flexible, therefore, significantly contribute to successful strategy implementation process.

A study by Kavale and Muthoni (2015) on water companies in Kenya established that supportive cultures enhance the process of implementing strategies in organizations. The study adopted descriptive research design. Mwirigi et al., (2014) did a survey on registered NGOs within Imenti North district and uncovered that organizational culture contributes to successful implementation of strategies. The study used a survey research design on. A similar discovery was done in LVSWSB by Khayota (2014). The descriptive study established that organizational culture influences strategy implementation.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

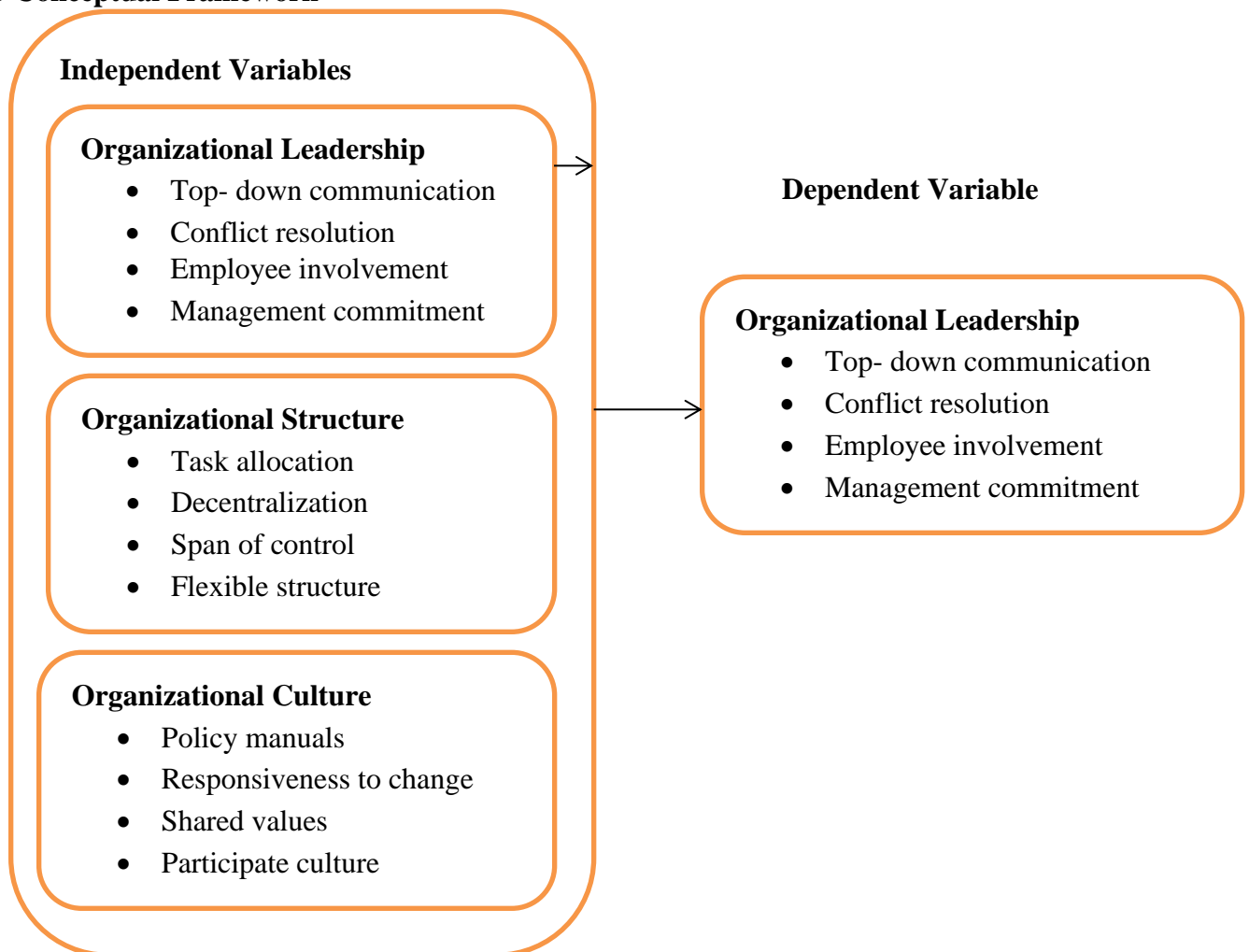


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methods

A descriptive research design was utilized by the study. Target population for the study was KITWASCO and KIMWASCO. The study focused on the supervisors and technical members of staff who were directly involved in strategy implementation. Top level managers were excluded



from the study since their views on implementation could be biased due to their involvement in formulation stages. Data was collected from respondents using research questionnaires. The study used quantitative statistical techniques in data analysis. The collected data was examined to relate variables. Data analysis was done through a computer program called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 21. Further, inferential statistics on the other was conducted in order to establish whether there are interrelationships among variables.

4.0 Data Analysis Results

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was done to quantify the association between the independent and dependent variables. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		Organizational leadership	Organizational structure	Organizational culture	Strategy implementation
Organizational leadership	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 110			
Organizational structure	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.160 .095 110	1 110		
Organizational culture	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.142 .138 110	.703** .000 110	1 110	
Strategy implementation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.572** .000 110	.518** .000 110	.644** .000 110	1 110

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

Source: Survey Data (2022)

The results in Table 1 show that organizational leadership, organizational structure and organizational culture had a strong relationship with the strategic implementation with a Pearson’s r value of 0.572, 0.518 and 0.644 respectively. This is line with Mbogo, Machogu and Juma (2020) who established that commitment and support from organization’s leadership impacts positively on strategic plan implementation in SACCOs. Kirui (2013) study found that implementation of strategies and organizational structures are positively interrelated. A study by Kavale and Muthoni



(2015) on water companies in Kenya established that supportive cultures enhance the process of implementing strategies in organizations and study established that organizational culture influences strategy implementation.

4.2 Regression Analysis Results

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.554 ^a	.707	.687	.710	.307	15.622	3	106	.000

Source: Survey Data (2022)

Adjusted R square is coefficient of determination which tells us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings in Table 2 the value of adjusted r squared was 0.687(68.7%) an indication that there was variation of 68.7% on implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County was due to changes in organizational leadership, organizational structure and organizational culture at 95% confidence interval. This therefore means that factors not studied in this research contribute 0.322(32.2%) of implementation of strategies.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.634	3	7.878	15.622	.000 ^b
	Residual	53.456	106	.504		
	Total	77.091	109			

Source: Survey Data (2022)

The significance value is 0.000^b which is less than 0.05 thus the model is statistically significance in predicting how organizational leadership, organizational structure and organizational culture influenced strategy implementation. The F critical at 5% level of significance was 7.878. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 15.622), this shows that the overall model was significant. The relationship ($p < 0.05$) indicated a linear relationship among the variables under the study meaning there was 95% chance that the relationship among the variables was not due to chance.

The coefficient of determination was carried out to assess how well a model explains and predicts future outcomes. The findings are presented in Table 3.



Table 3: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.865	.580		4.941	.000
Organizational leadership	0.745	.061	1.195	2.382	.019
Organizational structure	0.528	.115	2.523	4.583	.000
Organizational culture	0.701	.158	1.052	1.453	.001

Source: Survey Data (2022)

As per the results in Table 3, the equation ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon$) becomes: $Y = 0.865 + 0.745 X_1 + 0.528 X_2 + 0.701 X_3$

- Where
- Y= Strategy implementation
 - X₁= Organizational leadership
 - X₂= Organizational structure
 - X₃= Organizational culture

According to the regression equation established, taking all the independent variables into constant, implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County will be at a factor of 0.865(86.5%). Also, it is observe that a unit increase organizational leadership will lead to an increase in implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County at a factor of 0.745, a unit increase organizational structure will lead to an increase in implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County at a factor of 0.528 and a unit increase organizational culture will lead to an increase in implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County at a factor of 0.701. The study established that organizational leadership had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County as shown by beta values ($\beta = 1.195$, $p < 0.05$). This finding concur with Nyong’ a and Maina (2019) study that investigated the influence of strategic leadership on strategy implementation at Kenya Revenue Authority, southern region in Kenya and found that strategic leadership has a positive and significant relationship with strategy implementation. The study established that organizational structure had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County as shown by beta values ($\beta = 2.523$, $p < 0.05$). This finding concurs with Muoki and Okibo (2016) study that assessed the role of organizational structure on strategy Implementation of public universities in Kenya: A case study of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of science and technology and the findings indicate that formal orientation programs as a communication element contribute to strategy implementation to a large extent. The study established that organizational culture had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of strategies in public water service providers in Kitui County as shown by beta values ($\beta = 1.052$, $p < 0.05$). This finding is



consistent with Kopar (2015) study that explored the influence of organizational culture on strategy implementation at the University of Nairobi and the study found that culture at the university is inculcated from recruitment of staff to deployment.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that organizational leadership enables employee toward fulfilling an organization's mission by making them to understand an organization's mission in alignment with one's strengths, creating a strategic plan in line with that mission, implementing goals and holding teams accountable for accomplishing those goals within an established timeline, and in alignment with the strategic plan. Organizational leadership is important because it motivates team members, allows for a problem-solving and decision-making mindset, promotes communication, ethics, inclusion, and respect and allows organizational leaders to remain goal-oriented.

The study concludes that organizational structure is often important in gaining consensus for a strategy because it will determine who has to be appeased in management and how power is aligned. A proper structure of an organization gets people work towards common goals thus acting as facilitator in pursuit of organizational goals. The study also concludes that organizational structures determine what actions are feasible and most optimal since good strategy involves taking account of where an organization finds itself in terms of the external stakeholders and its internal organizational structure. The study concludes that organizational structure organizational culture enables an organization to have aligned goals by focusing on productivity and getting the organization's primary mission accomplished. The study also concludes that creating an organizational culture that is open to change starts with a senior leadership team that communicates an organization's strategic priorities often and effectively.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the leadership in public water service providers in Kitui County should ensure that they understand better their employees so as to be able to help them improve their personal and professional effectiveness, accountability, and most of all effectively implement strategies formulated by the organization. The study also recommends that the organizational leaders should foster a culture of accountability because accountability for professional presence, work results, communication effectiveness is the hallmark of effective implementation of strategies. The study recommends that public water service providers in Kitui County should have a good structure that provides the right blend of command and control plus employee independence without feeling of resentment that hinders organization pursuit of its mission. The organization should adopt a superior structure that promotes cultural values, cultivate integration and coordination as it seeks to strengthen relationship of individuals and tasks, a structure that demonstrates how authority and information flows within the organization.

The study recommends that public water service providers in Kitui County should make strategic vision and goals clear and inspirational, translate strategy into a living execution plan that matters to people, capitalize on existing beneficial behaviors, and take action to adjust undesired or obsolete behaviors as needed and change organizational processes to reinforce desired behaviors for the long term and enable alignment with an organization's culture. The study also recommends that for a strategy within public water service providers in Kitui County to develop and be



implemented successfully, it must fully align with the organizational culture. Thus, initiatives and goals must be established within an organization to support and establish an organizational culture that embraces the organization's strategy over time.

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