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**SOCIAL PRESSURES AND STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA**

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## SOCIAL PRESSURES AND STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*Succeeding in a market varies over time and place, that is, organizations change over time and so do the rules of the game. Consequently, for organizations to exist, prosper and prevail there will always be a need to understand the requirements shaped by the market dynamics and respond to them. State corporations like other organizations in Kenya; operate in an environment full of pressures which originate from social, professional, normative and regulatory sources. It is therefore vital for establishments to comprehend the relationship between institutional pressures and their performance. The purpose of this study therefore specifically investigated the relationship between Social pressures and strategic performance of County Governments in Kenya. The study embraced descriptive survey research design. The target population of this study was from the permanent staff employed in Siaya Institute of Technology. Both stratified random and purposive samplings were used in the study. Structured questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. Pilot study was conducted using respondents that were not part of the actual study. The data collected was processed and analyzed using both the descriptive and inferential statistics with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Relationship between independent and dependent variables was determined using Pearson's correlation coefficient, multiple linear regression analysis and cross tabulations. The study strived to establish whether social Pressures significantly affected performance of County Governments in Kenya. Results gave a reflection of top management staff performance being more affected by social pressures. The study therefore recommended the need to sensitize top management officers on social pressures at work places given that they tend to be affected heavily and as such affects the strategic performance in the County Governments. Lastly, the study recommends for further study on similar variables using different methods.*

**Key Words:** Social Pressures, Institution Pressures, Strategic Performance

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, in modern business environment, conformity to institutional pressures is not a case of if but rather a question of how. In the real sense every organization has to maneuver to find a way of complying with the pressures to balance the scale of performance. In international organizations, administrators are often confronted with puzzling institutional pressures in different parts of the world. Kostova and Roth (2002) have studied the manner in which institutional pressures shake international firms. International affiliates face dual pressures; locally, from the host country context, as well as from the parent company located in another country which faces a different set of institutional pressures. Organizational structures replicate extensive understanding of the social reality. Powerful institutional rules and regulations act as restructured myths that organizations incorporate in order to gain legitimacy, resources, and stability and enhanced survival prospects. Emphasis on conformity has irregularly brought about underestimation of the role of interest and agency in adaptation to the institutional environment (Oliver, 1991; Hoffman, 1999). Several authors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995) scrutinized, institutional pressures that face organizations; hence came up with four categories of institutional pressures: social, normative, regulatory and professional pressures, however for the purpose of the study the concentration was on Social Pressures.

The globalized world continues to experience strong pressures of economic and financial crises which result from a number of issues at stake. For the sake of increasing legitimacy, organizations tend to adopt somehow similar or related reform packages which result to various institutional pressures which in turn end up affecting organizations performance (Grossi, Dobija & Strzelczyk, 2020). Banking and financial institutions in Australia exhibit multi-dimensional performance anchored on various aspects which include institutional pressures; hence, coupled with other factors like corporate change, finance and economic legislation, social and

political pressures, and institutional pressures endeavors to internal balance in operations to meet the external expectations (Munir & Baird, 2016). Research evidence from China points towards various aspects of institutional pressures and organizational performance. A study by Huo et al (2013) which examined the impact of three institutional pressure namely; mimetic, coercive and normative pressures on financial performance established that manufacturing firms in China have seriously been inspired to comply to various changes that are accompanied by the institutional pressures which have in turn bolstered financial performance.

Most organization in sub-Saharan African have based on adoption of new practices that endeavor to promote environmental, business and operational changes thanks to the pressures that are exerted both from internal factor and external factors (Ahmed- Gamgum, 2014). With more understanding of applicability of institutional theory, different dimensions have been pursued in effort to meet the strategic goals that are set given the fact that completion from peer organization may affect performance if compliance to both internal and external pressures is not done. Generally, African nations are not only integrating best management skills but are also supplementing it with the use of information technology, a tool that helps organization to comply to a great extent to the institutional pressures that are experienced in organizations (Jazairy & Haartman, 2020). However, the uniqueness of organizations calls for different responses to institutional pressures. For instance, oil companies in West Africa and mining companies in South Africa do experience institutional pressures due to call of environmental and business responsibility than banks and insurance company which face mostly pressures from business responsibility. Finding ground from regulatory pressures, organizations strive to ensure that laws, policies and regulations put in place does not compromise their operations and dwarf their outcomes (Odunguro, 2018).

As a developing nation, Kenya has been faced by both commendable organization growth and questionable trends in performance of some organizations in both private and public sector. Various study scholars in have explored different aspects of institutional pressures based on the institution theory (Gichuke & Okello, 2015). Seeking to establish the influence of institutional pressures on strategy implementation success in public hospitals, Mate (2018), argues that various organization in Kenya face a lot of challenges in effort to implement strategies that are formulated hence affecting the success of strategic goals. However, he establishes that institutional pressures have had a big role in helping public hospitals in Kenya work towards successful implementation of formulated strategies helping to enhance the performance of the hospitals through improved service delivery. Organizations in Kenya are in a cycle initiating changes that align them along with dimensions of strategic orientation. In the wake of increasing professional bodies, strategic responses are being adopted by various organizations to comply with various institutional pressures of the day. For instance, Gichuke and Okello (2015) opine that public universities are working towards a harnessing the benefits that are geared by social and professional normative pressures in order to realize strategic success. Institutions of higher learning in Kenya have not only been able to try and show conformity to professional bodies but have direly marshalled the proper working of the professional bodies to put in place the codes and ethics for work. By so doing, conformity to regulatory pressures have also been eased since employees tend to conduct themselves in accordance to the codes and ethics put in place, avoiding most legal conflicts (Owuoth & Mwangangi, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Wilde (2012) carried out a study in selected universities in the United States with an essence of establishing whether coercive, normative and mimetic pressures contributed to the strategies that

the public MBA programs develop and implement in their mission to differentiate themselves. The study employed in-depth interviews of five current directors of MBA programs in these public institutions of higher learning; hence, Coercive, normative and mimetic pressures together with stakeholders, institutional characteristics and leadership were found to be in play and influenced the MBA programs in these institutions. In Kenya, Munene (2006) examined forces of isomorphism, which he concluded that they explain best the locations of African Virtual University (AVU) within the traditional university set up; hence the author cited normative pressures of professionalization as the forces spearheading isomorphism. However, Munene's study never touched on strategic responses taken by public universities and colleges in Kenya. Siaya Institute of Technology College is currently operating as a State Corporation under the Ministry of Science and Technology. In the recent past, Siaya Institute of Technology faced a number of performance problems including employee turnover, a decrease in the number of graduands, low farm productivity, and a decrease in enrolment and number of job applicants. Management introduced strategic performance to guide attainment of long term goals and mitigate against the said problems in the college. However, strategic performance seems to have brought about institutional pressures like social pressures that affect attainment of the set goals. This study therefore investigated whether there exist relationship between Social Pressures and Strategic performance in the County Governments in Kenya.

### **Objective;**

Investigate the relationship between social pressures and strategic performance of Siaya Institute of Technology.

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Social Pressures and Strategic Performance of Siaya Institute of Technology.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical review;

#### Institutional theory

A theory is a reasonable statement or group of statements which are supported by evidence meant to explain some phenomena. Institutional theory is a theory on the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. It considers the processes by which structures, including schemes; rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior. Institutional theory concerns the influence of external forces on organizational decision-making. Institutional theory emphasizes the role of social and cultural pressures imposed on organizations that influence organizational practices and structures, Scott (1992). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state that managerial decisions are highly influenced by three institutional mechanisms; coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism that develop and diffuse a common set of values, norms, and rules to produce similar practices and structures across organizations that share a common organizational field DiMaggio & Powell (1983).

Institutional arguments originated from the works of Veblen (1898), Commons (1924), Mitchell, Durkheim, Weber and Marx. These different approaches state that organizations do not exist independently, but rather operate in a context of institutional regulations and social processes. The origin of organizational studies stirred interest among sociologists, resulting in an important period of development of institutional theory. Three schools were born, named after American universities: Columbia, Carnegie and Harvard, Scott (1995). The first school was authored by Phillip in the Columbia school. In his work, Selznick discusses processes within organizations that lead to conformity to rules to the point of interfering with the achievement of organizational goals. According to Selznick, organizations are adaptive organic systems affected by the characteristics of its participants as well as pressures from its

environment. Social actions are neither constrained nor shaped by the setting in which they occur. According to Selznick, institutionalization is a process happening to an organization over time as an organization is infused with value beyond the technical requirements at hand Selznick (1957). The organization acquires its distinctive structure, capabilities and liabilities by taking on a distinctive set of values. Merton and Selznick laid the basis for a process model of institutions.

While Merton describes processes of over conformity, Selznick focuses on processes giving rise to a distinctive set of valued commitments. The Harvard school, the second school was led by Talcott Parsons, where he developed his 'cultural institutional' arguments by examining the relation between an organization and its environment. He states that wider normative structures serve to legitimate the existence of organizations, but more specifically, they legitimate the main functional patterns of operations, necessary to implement values. Organizations in different sectors are legitimated by differing values and are governed by differing normative patterns.

Parsons distinguished three vertical levels in organizations: Technical level, concerned with production activities; Managerial, concerned with control and coordination; and institutional, concerned with relating the organization to the norms of the community and society. The third school is the Carnegie school, led by Herbert Simon, which links the limits of individual cognitive capacity with the nature of organizational structure. Organizational structures work to simplify and support decision-making. According to Simon, individuals are expected to adopt organizational value premises as well as rules, procedures and routines to guide their decisions. This minimizes the discretion of individuals to make fewer choices and is more circumscribed in the choices they do make, Simon and March, (1958).

## Neo-institutionalism

Neo-institutional theory was developed during the mid-1970s and it marked the beginning of the second important phase of development in institutional theory. According to both the old and the new institutional theory, an organization's behavior is constrained by institutionalization, but neo-institutionalism gives new sources for this constraint. Neo-institutional theory views institutions as independent variables and it uses a more cognitive and cultural perspective. It also shows more interest in the characteristics of groups of people, which can't be explained from individual behavior (DiMaggio et al. 1991 in Louche, 2004). The development of institutional theory led to significant insights regarding the importance of institutional environments to organizational behavior. Neo-institutional theorists have identified mechanisms, such as norms and regulations, which motivate organizations to respond to institutional pressures in similar ways (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Scott, 1983 in J.D. Goodstein, 1994). Scott, (1987) defines institutions as regulatory structures, governmental agencies, laws, courts, professions, and interest groups while public opinion organizations conform to institutionalized beliefs or practices. Institutional theorists emphasize the survival value and advisability of conforming to the external institutional environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977 in Oliver, 1991). Covaleski and Dirsmith (1988: 563) note that the general theme of the institutional perspective is that the survival of an organization requires that it conforms to social norms of acceptable behavior.

Institutional theory does explain why organizations sometimes adopt a non-choice behavior in the context of taken-for-granted norms and beliefs, through the exercise of habit, convention, convenience, or social obligation, without any

evidence that these behaviors serve the organizations own interests or contribute to organizational efficiency or control (Tolbert, 1985; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Zucker, 1983 in Oliver, 1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991) identify three forces driving institutionalization: coercive isomorphism that emanates from political influence and the need for legitimacy; mimetic isomorphism from standard responses to uncertainty, and normative isomorphism related to professionalization.

The three forces can overlap but they tend to thrive in different conditions. Analytically, only coercive isomorphism is linked to the environment surrounding the organizational field. Mimetic and normative processes are internal forces, which help to explain the spread of roles and structures. When organizations are subjected to external coercive scrutiny, evaluation, and regulation, they react defensively gravitating toward isomorphic transformation. With increased external pressures, organizations are directed to find ways to either diffuse or eliminate this pressure by changing their practices. One of the ways in which they change is by adopting the routines and structures defined by law or government agencies as legitimate. This may minimize conflict and ensure survival.

Institutionalization is closely tied to the idea of organizational field. Fields are a product of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism, and they reflect the slow homogenization and convergence of organizational forms. DiMaggio and Powell contend that fields are constructed and serve as information networks fueling standardization and professionalization. They provide a significant addition to Meyer and Rowan's earlier formulation by spelling out and emphasizing the role of the state in forcing organizations towards isomorphism.

## Conceptual Framework

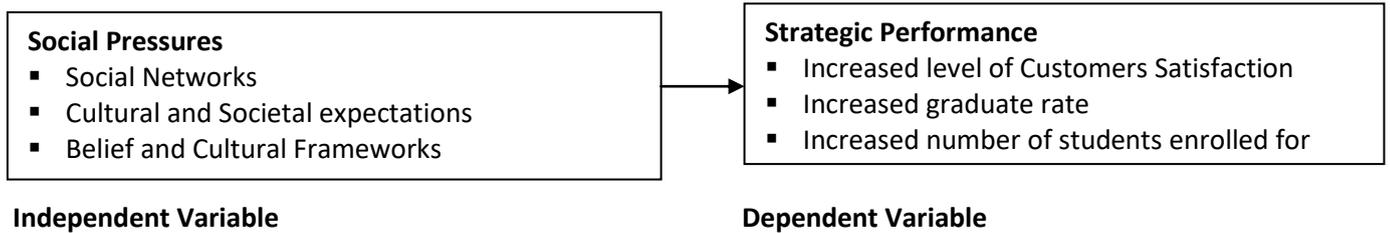


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### Review of study variables;

#### Social Pressures and Strategic Performance

Kwasira (2017) stated that social pressures are concerned with wider societal norms. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, and actualities take on a rule like status in social thought and action, resulting to what author's term as rationalized myths. Starbuck (1976) asserts that these rules may be simply taken for granted or may be supported by public opinion or force of law. Meyer and Rowan state that relational networks can act as a vehicle for diffusion for these normative rationalized myths. These rationalized myths describe elements of formal structure and therefore organizations benefit by shaping their structure in part because of public opinion. According to them many of the positions, policies, programs and procedures of modern organizations are enforced partly by social prestige and public opinion.

Coercive isomorphism relates to regulative pressure as well as social normative pressure, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983). They argue coercive isomorphism is the result of both formal and informal pressure coming from; other organizations on which an organization is dependent, such as governments, which means regulative pressure, and from; cultural and societal expectations, which means social normative pressure. DiMaggio and Powell's normative isomorphism relates more to professional normative pressure, and will be included in the according paragraph. Scott's (1995) describes normative pillar as normative rules that

introduce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension in social life. He notes that normative rules define goals and give an indication of how to pursue them. He further states that normative rules can constrain and empower and that they confer rights as well as responsibilities.

Organizations conform to normative rules because they feel morally obligated to do so. Scott's cognitive pillar is about making sense of the world around you. The cognitive pillar contains elements of mimetic pressure, because organizations make sense of their environment by looking at others. However the cognitive pillar also contains elements of social normative pressure. Socially constructed rules shape an organization's behaviour. Scott argues that rules are largely taken for granted and that social behaviour is based on "the way we do things around here". Cognitive rules determine the way we view our world, how we attribute meaning and how we make sense of things. Rules here are seen to reside in wider belief systems and cultural frames, which find their origins in society as a whole. Therefore the author interprets the cognitive pillar to be a part of social normative pressure.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

Descriptive research survey design was therefore used to determine an association between the conceptualized independent and dependent variables as shown in the study's conceptual model.

### Target Population

This study targeted 150 permanent staff employees of Siaya Institute of Technology.

### Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list of all the items in the population (Cooper & Schinder, (2007). That is, it is a complete list of everyone or everything you want to study or a list of things that you draw a sample from. In this study it consisted of top managers belonging to Siaya institute of Technology

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study sample size was determined by taking up the use of both stratified and purposive samplings of top management of the institution.

### Data collection Instruments

Primary data was collected by means of self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires had structured questions. These questionnaires were structured to suit the study. Section one introduced the researcher, topic of research and its purpose to the respondent.

### Data Processing and analysis

Data collected from the field was coded, cleaned, tabulated and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of specialized Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).version 24 software. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages as well as measures of central tendency (means) and dispersion (standard deviation) was used. Data was also organized into tables for easy reference.

Further, inferential statistics such as regression and correlation analyses was used to determine both the nature and the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis is usually used together with regression analysis to measure how well the regression line explains the variation of the dependent variable. The linear and multiple regression plus correlation analyses were based on the association between two (or more) variables. SPSS version 24 computer software was used to compute statistical data.

Study conceptualized Regression Model;

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

y = Strategic Performance

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$X_1$  = Social Pressures

$\{\beta_1\}$  = Beta coefficients

$\epsilon$  = the error term

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Response Rate

A total of 94 out of 110 questionnaires given were collected. This gave the study 85.5% response rate. According to Smith &Wengland (1993), internal surveys to employees should have a minimum response rate of 30% to 40%. Thus, the response rate in this study was within acceptable range.

### Descriptive Analysis for Social Pressures

The study sought to investigate the relationship between social pressures and strategic performance of Siaya Institute of Technology. Respondents were given different factors where they were required to rate on a five point likert scale (5. Strongly Agree 4. Agree 3. Not sure 2. Disagree 1. Strongly Disagree) based on their understanding of the organization. The descriptive results of perceptions of staff regarding the various types of social pressures at the College are as presented below. The findings indicate that respondents agreed (mean = 4.44, std dev. = 0.554) that recruitment of employees is competent based. These findings were in line with Karimi *et al* study (2019) which ascertains that organization performance has a significant relationship with competent employee recruitment. Respondents were also required to indicate whether employees are taken through induction process upon arrival. Respondents were not sure (mean = 3.11, std dev = 1.369) whether new employees are taken through an induction program in the first two weeks or not. Armstrong (2017) views new employee induction as the best opportunity to introduce the organizations philosophy in employees in order to help them meet the strategic goals. Respondents were also

required to rate the level of institutional computerization. Results indicate that all systems in the institution are not computerized (mean = 2.67, std dev = 1.126). Participants were further undecided (Mean= 3.26, Std dev= 1.075) as to whether trade unions exert pressure of the employer concerning staff issues. Finally, participants agreed (mean = 3.90, std dev = 0.875) that human resource policies offer sufficient protection to staff against discrimination on gender, disability and ethnicity in aspects related to promotion and other privileges. This was in line with Morosan- Danila *et al* (2013) results which indicated that human resource management should represent all interests of people and defend all the groups of people within an organization.

### Inferential Statistics;

#### Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is done in a study to find out the level to which two factors converge or diverge in relation to establishing significance of the relationship. In this case, positivity and negativity of the value of the correlation coefficient determines the relationship. A positive value of the correlation coefficient indicates that the two variables point in the same trend, negative value indicates that the variables move in opposite direction or trend. Essentially, correlation analysis portrays to a given degree, the element of variable influence on another although correlations do not imply a cause- effect relationship. The correlation matrix of the study is shown below.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix**

		Social Pressures	Strategic Performance
Social Pressures	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	100	
Strategic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.468(*)	1
	N	100	100

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for key study variables

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

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The findings revealed significant inter-factor relationships social pressure and regulatory

pressures ( $r = 0.433$ ) and between professional pressures and normative pressures ( $r = 0.488$ ) both at 0.05 level of significance.

#### Relationship between Social Pressures and Strategic Performance

The study analyzed if there exists a relationship between social pressures and strategic performance. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Social Pressures on Strategic Performance**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.487 <sup>a</sup>	.237	.234	.56147	.237	29.130	1	93	.000

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.945	1	23.945	29.130	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	76.483	93	.822		
	Total	100.428	94			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.571	.120		13.092	.000
	Social Pressures	.345	.036	.309	9.583	.000

a. Dependent Variable: strategic performance

From the model summary results in Table 2, the model (independent variables) explained 23.7% of the sum variation in Strategic Performance in Siaya Institute of Technology as indicated by the R square =0.237. From the results of simple linear regression analysis in Table 2, Social Pressures had a statistically significant contribution in the prediction of strategic performance in Siaya Institute of Technology. (B= 0.345, t = 13.092, p=0.000<0.000); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected leading to a conclusion that Social Pressures had a significant influence on strategic performance

Below is the model adopted by the study to predict strategic performance basing on social pressures.

$$Y = 1.571 + 0.345X_1$$

Where;

Y = Strategic performance

X<sub>1</sub> = Social Pressures

Yu, Ramanathan, and Nath (2017), in their study on Integrated and decoupled corporate social performance, explain this relationship by arguing that, external social pressures can encourage easily decoupled processes for all employees. However, the external social pressures can encourage both easily decoupled and integrated processes for top management. The implication of this finding is

explained by Dubey, Gunasekaran, Childe, Papadopoulos, Hazen, Giannakis, & Roubaud (2017) in their recent study on examining the effect of external pressures and organizational culture on shaping performance. They found coercive pressure to have moderation effect on top management behaviors.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that Social Pressures had an impact on strategic Performance. Majority of the respondents were of the view that Social Pressures enhances on the impact of strategic performance. Based on the results of the study, social pressures were found to have an effect on strategic performance. Top management was more likely to be affected by social pressures. In this regard the study concludes that social-pressure had an effect on top management and more so affects the strategic performance.

The study established that Social Pressures had an effect on strategic performance. It is recommended that top management should be sensitized on social pressure effects on the strategic performance.

### Areas for further research

The study recommends further research on similar variables using different methods.

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