



EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOFT ELEMENTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS: A CASE OF COUNTY ASSEMBLIES OF COASTAL COUNTIES OF KENYA

Abeid, A. A., & Gichinga, L.

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¹ Abeid, A. A., & ² Gichinga, L.

¹ MBA Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

² Doctor, Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of organizational soft elements on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of the coastal Kenya counties. These are Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Tana River and Taita Taveta. The specific objectives of the study were to establish the influence of top management style, shared values, staff processes and employee skills on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of selected coastal counties of Kenya. The study applied descriptive research design and the target population was 169 members of county assembly and heads of departments in all six Coastal counties. The study utilized a questionnaire to collect data which was tested for reliability and validity through a pilot study and expert reviews. Data was collected through the drop and pick method and google forms for those who preferred electronic administration of the questionnaire. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. The data analysis techniques were descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The study results were presented in tables and figures. Based on the findings, the study concluded that the county assembly leadership sets functional examples to the county assembly employees. However, the leadership partly involves employees in strategic decisions. It was concluded that the county assembly management sets a vision that is geared towards better service delivery and the management inspires loyalty and commitment to work in the county assembly employees. The study concluded that the county assembly management provides motivation to the county assembly staff and rewards staff when they meet the work expectations. However, it was concluded that leaders of county assembly have fallen below the bar when it comes to employee mentoring and coaching. The study recommended that the core values of the county assembly should be amplified in every institution's activity and symbols so as to be inculcated to the county assembly employees. This would make it easy for the employees to memorize and understand the core values and county assembly's values, mission and vision. The county assembly should stress on importance of integrity for every employee and should amplify the importance of its employees adhering to the set core values. Employees should be provided with conducive working environment for them to be creative and innovative.

Key Words: Management Style, Shared Values, Staff Processes and Employee Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Implementation of strategic plans is considered as one of the most important processes in the strategic planning process. Cândido and Santos (2016) indicates that strategic plan implementation is considered even more important than strategic plan formulation. However, between 50 and 90 percent of strategic plans fail during implementation. There are various factors that have been indicated to be essential during strategy implementation. These include shared values, leadership, resources effective systems and processes, employees and effective monitoring and evaluation (Awino, 2017). It is critical for the organization to ensure effective integration of the different factors for effective strategic plan implementation.

The challenges of successfully implementing strategic plans have long been recognized in the literature globally. In United States (US), (Zaidi, Zawawi, Nordin and Ahnuar (2018) indicated that implementation of strategic plan successfully in the family owned businesses are moderate. The study further showed that key influencing factors on implementation of strategic plan are the culture of the organization, resource availability and the style of leadership adopted by the top management. In United Kingdom (UK), Alharthy, Rashid, Pagliari and Khan (2017) established that success of strategy implementation amongst local authorities was low. Key factors that influenced strategic plan implementation included staff numbers, employee skills and inadequacy of resources.

In a study in South Africa, Andrews, Beynon and Genc (2017) observes that multinational corporations are challenged in implementing their strategic plans. This is because of challenges such as poor country infrastructure, community expectations, resource nationalism, regulatory challenges and low skill levels of nationals. However, those firms that succeed in aligning their processes, resources and systems to their strategic plans are able to effectively implement their strategic plans and gain competitive advantage. In

Malawi, Shopati, Mitonga and Aiping (2018) decried the dearth of empirical studies conducted to investigate the strategic plan implementation success factors and indicated that availability of resources, top management leadership and monitoring and evaluation have significant influence on strategic plan implementation.

In Kenya, Mnjama and Koech (2019) indicate that various private and public organizations are challenged when it comes to implementing their strategic plans. Most organizations fail to adhere to the best practices of strategic plan implementation. Specifically, organization fail to effectively management the soft factors which include providing strategic leadership, enhancing employee skills, having a culture that supports strategic plan implementation and failure to involve employees. In a study on Kenya police service, Magiri, Ngui and Mathenge (2018) indicated that having strategic leadership, supportive shared values in the organizational culture and involving employees has significant influence on strategic plan implementation.

This study focused on county assemblies of the three coastal counties of Kenya which include Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu. Tana River and Taita Taveta. These are six of the 47 county assemblies established in Kenya after devolution was operationalized and the Constitution of Kenya 2010 came into force (Commission on Revenue Allocation, 2020). The county assembly forms the core entity of the county government. It is responsible for passing laws and putting county executive in to check through oversight. In addition, the county assembly approves policies and plans from the county executive on public resources utilization (Mombasa County Assembly, 2020).

The county assembly consists of members of the county assembly as well as supporting staff. The head of the county assembly is the speaker and is not part of the county assembly member. County Assembly Clerk is responsible for the day to day operations of the county assembly and is the accounting officer. The county assembly clerk also

doubles as the secretary to the County Assembly Service Board (CASB) which is responsible for top decision-making. The county assembly comprises of Finance and Accounting, Procurement, Human Resource and Administration, Research and Library, Legal, Legislative and Procedural, Public Relation, Hansard, ICT and Security department. The duties of the county assemblies in the six counties under consideration is to oversee the executive arm County government of Mombasa, offer representation to the citizens and enact laws for the counties.

Statement of the Problem

When an organization formulates a strategic plan, it should align its processes, resources and systems to ensure effective implementation of that strategic plan (Alenazi, 2018). When a strategic plan is effectively executed, it enables the organization to achieve its financial and nonfinancial objectives, provide value for its stakeholders and attain a competitive advantage (Shopati et al., 2018). Organizations should align the hard and soft elements in order to implement their strategic plans effectively. However, 50 to 90 percent of strategic plans in public organizations are not successfully implemented (Sial et al., 2019). This denies these organizations the benefits that could accrue if they effectively executed their strategic plans. This also points out to possible poor alignment of the soft elements. According to Salum (2018), organizations that fail to align their processes, systems and resources in strategic plan implementation could fail to attain their objectives, experience reduced performance and lose their positions in the market.

According to Mnjama and Koech (2019) county governments and assemblies have failed to effectively implement their strategic plans. This is despite the fact that they formulate five-year strategic plans. This has put them at a disadvantage of being unable to appropriately attain their objectives (Magiri et al., 2018). This study seeks to establish the effect of McKinsey 7S soft elements on

implementation of strategic plans in the county assemblies.

Various studies conducted on soft elements influencing implementation of strategic plans have left various theoretical, conceptual and contextual gaps. For instance, the study by Andrews et al. (2017) in Oman established that strategy implementation in the service sector was influenced by top management style, shared values and organizational resources. This study however, focused on the service sector while the current study is on government agencies. Another study by Sial et al. (2019) in Pakistan established that limited resources, poor top management style and poor culture affects implementation of strategic plan in public companies. Further, Salum (2018) study found that strategic plans implementation in government agencies was influenced by resources, government support and employee skills. In Kenya, Momanyi, Senaji and Were (2018) study found that strategic plans implementation in Nairobi City County was affected by top management style, resource availability and organization culture. However, the study presents contextual gaps by focusing in strategic plans implementation and not organizational soft issues. The current study sought to address these gaps by establishing the effect of McKinsey 7S soft elements on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to investigate the effect of organizational soft elements on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya. The specific objectives were;

- To establish the effect of leadership style on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya.
- To determine the effect of core values on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya.

- To establish the effect of staffing processes on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya.
- To assess the effect of employee skills on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of coastal counties of Kenya.

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses

- **H₀1:** Leadership style has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of selected coastal counties of Kenya.
- **H₀2:** Core values have no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of selected coastal counties of Kenya.
- **H₀3:** Staffing processes have no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of selected coastal counties of Kenya.
- **H₀4:** Employee skills have no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in county assemblies of selected coastal counties of Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The dynamic capabilities theory is the main theory guiding the study. The proponents of the dynamic capabilities theory are Teece, Pisano and Shuen in 1997. The basis of the theory is that a firm can formulate and implement strategies that can enable it to achieve and sustain superior performance by building, integrating and reconfiguring external and internal capabilities as a response to the swiftly changing environments. Dynamic capabilities according to Eisenhardt and Martin (2010) are the strategic and organizational processes, procedures and practices that a firm applies to new expertise configurations commensurate to the changes in the market. Foss (1998) indicated the scope of dynamic capabilities to include shared values in the organizational culture, organizational learning and

intellectual resource accumulation, sharing and application.

Derived from the resource-based theory (RBT), the dynamic capabilities theory has evolved to be an important approach to conceptualize the role played by shared values as a dynamic capability that enables a firm to successfully formulated and implement winning strategies (Teece, 2016). According to Zahra et al. (2016), dynamic capabilities theory provides a link between shares values in strategy formulation and implementation. This is because through shared values, the organization can effectively implement strategies that transform, identify and seize opportunities and cope in the dynamic and volatile external environment. This enables the firm to be able to implement winning strategies effectively (Teece, 2016).

Upper Echelons Theory

The proponents of the upper-echelons theory are Hambrick and Mason in 1984. The theory indicates that the style, perceptions and skills of the top managers has a high influence on the organizational strategic choices which affects organizational performance. The Upper Echelons theory posits that the styles, skills and outlook of top management affects decisions made by them and consequently the actions enforced by the organization that they are in charge of. It is the case due to the demographic elements that are tied to the several cognitive foundations, perceptions and values that affect top management decision making. The theory is founded on the premise of dominant coalition to imply that top management affects the strategic implementation in organizations through the decisions they adopt (Hambrick & Mason, 2010). The theory suggest that top management make decisions that are in line with their cognitive foundations which comprises of two key elements; observable experiences and psychological characteristics which include cognitive models, values and personality factors.

The theory is applicable to the current study in that the style, competence, skills, values and

perceptions of the top managers has a high influence on the organizational strategic choices and how strategic plans are implemented. The focus of the top management is primarily values and intellectual base. When top management show strategic leadership and adopt an appropriate leadership style for the organization during strategy implementation, it is expected that the strategy will be effectively executed. However, when top management is deficient in leadership, the organization or entity will fail to formulate and execute winning strategies.

Resource Based Theory

The Resource Based Theory by Wernerfelt (1984) indicates that an organization should focus on the internal capabilities and resources to establish and sustain superior performance rather than focusing on the external environment. Barney (1991) supports the theory and explains that it emphasizes on the application of the distinctive firm capabilities, processes, resources and competencies in formulation and execution of strategy. However, a key concern for RBT is the transitory nature of organizational processes, capabilities and resources and how they enable the firm to effectively execute its strategies. Atoche (2017) posits that the organizational resources can enable the firm to formulate and execute winning strategies if the resources can be effectively applied. Further, Bowman and Ambrosini (2013) support this view by observing that leaders in the organization should seek to acquire, build, transform, shape and combine material, financial and human resources into strategic capabilities that facilitate the organization to realize to formulate and effectively implement its strategies for sustainable superior performance. One of the key capacities is organizational are the staff processes for recruiting, developing and retaining top talent.

Organizational resources are considered as an essential aspect that serves as a basis and a guiding framework in the strategic management process in the organization. This theoretical approach is relevant for this study to explain how organizational

staffing processes can be applied in strategy implementation to facilitate the organization to attain its objectives. Talaja, Miočević and Alfirević (2017) hypothesized that organizational material, financial and human resources can be utilized to build systems, processes and relationships that ensure planned activities are conducted as and when planned. This enables the firm to effectively implement its strategies.

The Knowledge-Based Theory

The proponents of the knowledge-based theory are Hamel and Prahalad (1994). The authors argue that intellectual assets, know-how, knowledge and competencies are the essentials for effective strategy execution in this age of information. Other authors who consider knowledge as key for organizational performance include Klindžić and Galetić (2015), Farrukh and Waheed (2015), Teece et al. (1997) and Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) among others. These authors argue that knowledge resources are superior to material resources because as material resources decrease with use, knowledge resources increase in value as they are used. When an organization acquires and uses knowledge, it enhances employee skills and learning which improves processes, tactics and capacity of the organizational members. These improvements in the internal processes of the organization enable the organization to effectively implement its strategies.

This theory will be applied in the study to inform how employee skills can enhance organizational learning and enable the organization to formulate and implement winning strategic plans. Hamel and Prahalad (1994) argued that an organization has two types of knowledge; knowhow and information. Knowhow are the skulls by its employees while information is derived from the data collected from internal and external sources. When an organization enhances the skills of its employees, it enables the employees to be capable to execute the strategies of the organization. When these capabilities are shared and utilized all over the organization, it enhances organizational

learning and creates expertise. This expertise is then turned into capability with repeated

application in devising and implementing strategies.

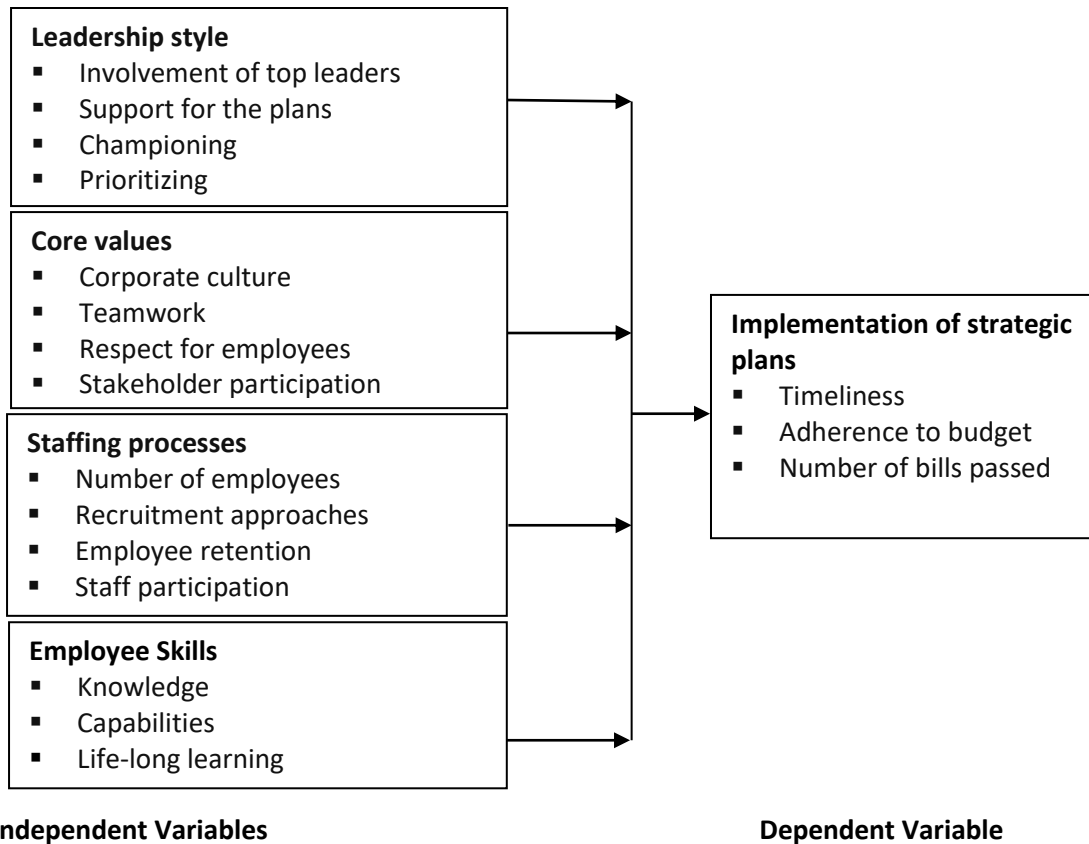


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Review of Study Variables

Leadership Style: Leadership style relates to the symbolic value of top managers, the way they interact, the way they manage the organization, and the actions they take to ensure all organizational members are unified towards attainment of the organizational goals. Effective top management style in strategy implementation include determination of strategic direction, building an organization, shaping effective organizational culture, effective management of organization's resource portfolio, enforcement of ethical compliance, communicating strategy, development of short-term objectives and inspiring others (Radomska, 2016). Leaders in all organizations should appreciate the need to strategically plan the future of their organizations as

well as to partake in the effective implementation of these crafted strategies.

Core Values: Core values are the ideals that members of the organization share that differentiate it from other organizations (Genc, 2017). These shared values are ingrained into the culture of the organization. These shared values include the underlying ways of interaction, assumptions, beliefs and principles that members of the organization share that contribute to the unique psychological and social environment of the organization. When the shared values embedded into the organization has internal perspective, lacks ideas and insights and the members are stuck in routines that are not beneficial, it becomes a hindrance to strategy implementation and organizational performance (Kibicho, 2016).

Staffing Processes: Staff processes focus on the processes undertaken by the organization to ensure that it has the right quantity and quality of staff available. This includes processes in recruitment, training and development, rewarding and motivation (Radomska, 2014). An organization requires effective processes to ensure that it has employees with the rights skills and capabilities. Failure to have effective staff processes, establish a fit between the strategy and resources and utilize the available resources will make strategy implementation challenging.

Employee Skills: Employee's skills are the capabilities that the organization's employees possess. This includes their knowledge, capacities, and competences. The firm relies on these skills during organizational change, and implementing new strategies effectively (Rotich & Osodo, 2016). Training instills these knowledge and skills into employees. Employee training refers to the process of instilling abilities, skills and knowledge that are required to carry out specific tasks and activities in the execution of the new strategy. Mohamud (2014) observed that employee skills are critical for strategic execution and also performance of the organization. on organizational performance. Although the process of instilling skills could be faced with a lot of challenges, it greatly impacts organizational productivity through employee performance.

Implementation of Strategic Plans: Implementation of strategic plans is the process that turns the formulated strategic plans into actions with the purpose of accomplishing the strategic goals and objectives of the organization (Pournasir, 2013). The strategic plan addresses the why and what regarding organizational activities. However, implementation addresses the how, where, who and when (Sitienei & Ronoh, 2017). Koech and Namusonge (2012) that various factors come into play during strategy implementation. These include structure of the organization, culture of the organization (illustrated by the shared values), staff

capacity, organizational resources and the efficacy of the organization's leadership.

Empirical Review

Arma, Ansa and Rita (2019), conducted a research in Accra Ghana. The study was conducted on hotel staff to investigate how employee capacities and competencies affected the hotel performance. A hundred employees that were randomly selected responded to questionnaires. Collected data was analyzed using Statistical Product and Service solution software. The study showed that most of the hotels were two stars and administered trainings to enhance employee knowledge and skills. All the respondents think and believe that employee skills and competencies are meant to enhance their communication and that they should showcase whatever they were trained on to clients. The study also revealed that training enhances employee skills. The study further revealed that orientation is crucial in employee training as it leads in enhancement of skills and improved hotel performance.

A study by Al Khaje (2018), investigated the effect of styles of leadership on the strategy implementation in an organization. The study was based on existing literature. Quantitative approach was utilized for primary research with the assistance of survey questionnaires. Findings from the study showed that charismatic, democratic, transformational, and bureaucratic styles of leadership impact organizational strategy implementation positively. Transactional and autocratic leadership on the other hand, affected strategy implementation negatively since they neither granted employees autonomy nor freedom. Thus, it is important to use the style of leadership that promotes employees' abilities and capabilities.

Halawi and Haydar (2018) researched on how employee skills from two companies in Lebanon affected organizational performance. The investigated companies were Bonjus Company and Khatib & Alami Company. Data was collected directly from 303 employees through questionnaires. SPSS analysis tool was used to

analyze the collected data. These two companies administered training sessions meant to instill short term skills and conducted development programs to impact long term skills. The employees agreed that self-satisfaction, having a clarity of how to achieve their work goals, how to get standard output, and develop skills beyond class, were some of the benefits they got out of these trainings. Through this, organizational performance was enhanced.

A research conducted by Odhiambo (2018) was carried out to investigate the influence of employee skills on organizational performance in Nairobi City County. Three hundred and seventy-seven permanent employees from their head office were chosen to respond to questionnaires. SPSS tool was used for analysis and the results showed a strong relationship of the two variables (performance and training). The study further revealed that the mode of training had a significant effect on their performance. It also revealed that employee assessment is important as it would reveal areas that the employees lacked in, hence, training would be conducted on weakness basis.

Kasaya and Munjiri (2018) did a research to determine what impact staffing processes have on implementation of strategic plans and work performance in the Kenyan research institutes. The research utilized the descriptive survey research style. Population of the study comprised of 867 regional research firms that were selected using Fischer scientific formula. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection and data analysis done using inferential and descriptive statistics. The study found out that the supervisors in these institutions kept the workers updated on future directives. The research further revealed that there are adequate processes of recruiting, training and motivating workers. They further concluded that organizational human resource processes were critical in implementation of strategies in the firms.

Kamaamia (2017) carried out a research on Kenya school of monetary studies (KSMS) to explore on the influence of culture and shared values on

execution of strategic plans and performance. The study applied a population size of 110 Kenya School of Monetary Studies employees. SPSS was used to analyze collected information. From the analysis, Kamaamia deduced that there is a statistically significant correlation between organizational culture, shared values, strategy execution and performance. The shared values investigated were professionalism, work, and mean oriented measures, open system culture and pragmatic approach.

Mise, Obura and Indiya (2017) did an investigation on impact of organization's shared values on public universities' implementation of strategic plan and performance. The study had a population size of 215 people randomly chosen from certified eleven Kenyan universities. Data collection was done through questionnaires in a census survey. Statistical package for social sciences software was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that a positive relationship exists between shared values, strategy implementation and performance of public universities. It is therefore, important to encourage positive beliefs responsible for enhancing and maintaining management systems related to strategy implementation.

Bormann and Rowold (2016), in their studies also investigated on the effects of leadership on strategy execution and performance. They assessed the usefulness of head coaches' transformational leadership style in foreseeing how strategies were executed and performance develop with time. The sample size encompassed 22 coaches and 200 players who were German professional basket ballers. Data from 20 subsequent games was collected and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that transformational leadership had a significant effect as it enhanced acceptance of team strategies and goals and provided unique consideration on player performance development.

Another survey to investigate effect of staff processes on firm performance was carried out in Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) by

Ambani (2016). The study investigated the relationship between training and development processes and employee job performance. The research design adopted during the research was the descriptive study survey. All the 867 employees in KEMRI took part in the research. Structured questionnaires were used to collect information and later analyzed using regression analysis. The study revealed that KEMRI had effective training and development which enabled it to effectively execute its strategies. The available human resources were also updated on the future incentives of the company by the management. Although the management made decisions on how work was to be done, employees were not confined by term and conditions. From the study, it can be deduced that having effective training and development can greatly enhance organizational performance.

Githinji (2015) did an investigation on the effects of employee skills on the performance of international civil servants. The research was done on 144 Somali employees of the United Support Office for the African Mission. Data was analyzed using bivariate analysis using cross tabulations, and the findings presented in tables and figures. The results on the effect of employee skills on engagement revealed that the process led to improvements on how workers handled the strategy implementation process. The effect was more immense on management staff. The study also found out that skill improves employee innovativeness and also made them more passionate about their work. Skills were also found to be a motivating factor to employees as it gave them a sense of belonging. Aligning workers to institutional goals and objectives was also part of the effects of training. With all this, better organizational performance is a sure effect of employee skills and competencies.

METHODOLOGY

The study used cross-sectional research design and descriptive research design. The target population for this study was 229 individuals from six coastal county assemblies. The sampling frame was a list of

the top-level employees in the coastal counties of Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale, Lamu, Tana River and Taita Taveta. The sample size was selected at 95% confidence level and margin error/precision level of 0.05 which means there was 95 chances in 100 that the sample size represents the true population, and was calculated using Yamane (1957) formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2} = \frac{229}{1 + 229(0.05)^2} = 145$$

Where:

N = Total population

n = Sample population

α = Sampling error which is 0.05(95% confidence level).

The study employed stratified random sampling technique whereby the target population was divided into different groups and those with similar characteristics were grouped in the same stratum then sample for the study was selected at random from each stratum. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire contained open ended and closed ended questions that aims on obtaining answers to matters relating to the study objectives. The data for the study was analyzed using quantitative means. The quantitative data collected was keyed in and analyzed with the aid of SPSS. The Quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS statistical software to provide results that can be interpreted using statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies and correlation coefficients. Data was presented using frequency charts, tables and percentages. Pearson correlation was conducted in the study to establish the relationship between the variables. The study utilized multiple regression analysis to find out the effect of the four predictor variables on the dependent variable.

The model is indicated below:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where

Y = Implementation of Strategic plans

α = constant term

β_1 = Coefficients

X_1 = Leadership style

- X₂= Core values
- X₃= Staffing processes
- X₄= Employee skills
- ε = Error

The multiple regression model was used to test the study hypotheses. Before fitting the model, the study assessed whether the collected data adheres to regression assumptions.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive Analysis

This study carried out the following descriptive statistics; mean, standard deviation of all the study variables.

Leadership Style

The study sought to find out the implication of the selected statements on leadership style. A Likert scale data was collected rating the extent of agreement in a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is the strongly disagree whereas 5 is the strongly agree indicator. The mean score for each item was calculated and the findings were shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Leadership Style

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The management in this county assembly sets functional examples to the county assembly employees	4.33	1.017
The top management in this county assembly involves employees in strategic decisions	3.48	.796
The county assembly management sets a vision that is geared towards better service delivery	4.67	.413
The county assembly management inspires loyalty and commitment to work in the county assembly employees	4.11	.630
The county assembly management provides motivation to the county assembly staff	4.73	.881
County assembly management rewards staff when they meet the work expectations.	4.02	.510
Managers in this county assembly always coach and mentor employees	3.85	.369

Results in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed to the statement that the management in this county assembly sets functional examples to the county assembly employees with a mean score of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 1.017. Respondents were indifferent to the statement that the top management in this county assembly involves employees in strategic decisions with a mean of 3.48 and standard deviation of 0.796. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly management sets a vision that is geared towards better service delivery with a mean score of 4.67 and standard deviation of 0.413. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly management inspires loyalty and commitment to work in the county assembly

employees having mean score of 4.11 and standard deviation of 0.630. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly management provides motivation to the county assembly staff (mean=4.73, std deviation = .881), and county assembly management rewards staff when they meet the work expectations (mean=4.02, std deviation=.510). However, respondents were indifferent to the statement that managers in this county assembly always coach and mentor employees (mean=3.85, std deviation=0.369). The study findings agree with Al Khaje (2018) whose study showed that charismatic, democratic, transformational, and bureaucratic styles of leadership impact organizational strategy implementation positively. Also results were

corroborated by Bormann and Rowold (2016) whose study revealed that transformational leadership had a significant effect as it enhanced acceptance of team strategies and goals and provided unique consideration on player performance development.

Core Values

The study sought to find out the extent of core values in county assemblies. The results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Core Values

	Mean	Std. Deviation
This county assembly has core values that each employee is expected to comply with	4.92	1.116
Every employee in this county assembly understands the county assembly's values, mission and vision	4.86	.594
Employees in this county assembly believe that management is concerned about them as people	4.24	1.211
The county assembly stresses on importance of integrity for every employee	4.50	.483
The county assembly has a code of behaviour that each employee adheres to strictly	4.22	.718
The county assembly management encourages employees to be creative and innovative in dealing with the public	4.37	.403
The vision, mission and value of the county assembly are clearly communicated to each employee	4.81	.991
Management encourages employees to engage in creative problem solving	4.53	1.272

From the results in Table 2, it was shown that the respondents agreed to the statement that this county assembly has core values that each employee is expected to comply with having a mean of 4.92 and standard deviation of 1.022. Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that every employee in this county assembly understands the county assembly's values, mission and vision having a mean score of 4.86 and standard deviation of 0.594. Most of the respondents agreed to the statement that employees in this county assembly believe that management is concerned about them as people having mean score of 4.24 and standard deviation of 1.211. Respondents further agreed to the statement that the county assembly stresses on importance of integrity for every employee having mean score 4.50 and standard deviation of 0.483. Further, respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly has a code of behaviour that each employee adheres to strictly and that the county assembly management encourages

employees to be creative and innovative in dealing with the public as shown by a mean of 4.22 and mean of 4.37 respectively. Respondents agreed to the statement that the vision, mission and value of the county assembly are clearly communicated to each employee and that county assembly management encourages employees to engage in creative problem solving as represented by a mean of 4.81 and mean of 4.53 respectively. The findings agree with Mise, Obura and Indiya (2017) whose investigation on impact of organization's shared values revealed that a positive relationship exists between shared values, strategy implementation and performance of public universities.

Staffing Processes

With regard to the effect of staffing processes on strategic plans implementation, data that was collected through the Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents with respect to the given aspects of staffing processes. The results are as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Staffing Processes

	Mean	Std. Deviation
This county assembly has effective systems that attracts and recruits the best talent	2.12	.477
The county assembly has effective orientation process for new hires	4.31	.616
The employees in this county assembly undergo various development initiatives including training, mentorship and coaching	4.26	.519
The county assembly offers competitive remuneration that enables it to attract and retain top talent	4.59	.886
The county conducts frequent talent reviews to establish staffing gaps	4.71	.777
Every time an employee leaves the county assembly, there is an exit interview conducted	4.03	.298

Results in Table 3 indicated that majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement that the county assembly has effective systems that attracts and recruits the best talent having mean score of 2.12 and standard deviation of 0.477. Majority of the respondents were indifferent to the statement that the county assembly has effective orientation process for new hires having mean score of 4.31 and standard deviation 0.616. The respondents agreed to the statement that the employees in this county assembly undergo various development initiatives including training, mentorship and coaching having a mean of 4.26 and standard deviation of 0.519. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly offers competitive remuneration that enables it to attract and retain top talent as indicated by a mean of 4.59. Further, respondents were in agreement to the

statement that the county conducts frequent talent reviews to establish staffing gaps (mean=4.71) and that every time an employee leaves the county assembly, there is an exit interview conducted (mean=4.03). The results are consistent with Kasaya and Munjiri (2018) who did a research to determine what impact staffing processes have on implementation of strategic plans and showed that organizational human resource processes were critical in implementation of strategies in the firms.

Employee Skills

With regard to the effect of employee skills on implementation of strategic plans, data that was collected through the Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents with respect to the given aspects of employee skills. The results are as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Employee Skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation
All employees in this county assembly have the requisite education qualifications	4.90	.211
Key posts in this county assembly are occupied with employees with requisite professional skills and competencies	4.59	.347
The employees in this county assembly have excellent organization and negotiating skills	2.08	.686
The county assembly employees exhibit creativity and flexible thinking	4.47	1.310
The employees in this county assembly have good oral and written communication skills	4.44	.349
The county assembly employees exhibit enthusiasm and commitment for current affairs, policy issues and politics	4.67	.911
The county staff exhibit the ability to work under tight deadlines and effective time management skills	4.21	.538

Results in Table 4 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that all employees in this county assembly have the requisite education qualifications having mean score of 4.90 and standard deviation of 0.211. Majority of the respondents were indifferent to the statement that key posts in this county assembly are occupied with employees with requisite professional skills and competencies having mean score of 4.59 and standard deviation 0.347. However, respondents disagreed to the statement that the employees in this county assembly have excellent organization and negotiating skills having a mean of 2.08 and standard deviation of 0.686. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly employees exhibit creativity and flexible thinking as indicated by a mean of 4.47. Respondents agreed to the statement that

employees in this county assembly have good oral and written communication skills (mean=4.44) and that they exhibit enthusiasm and commitment for current affairs, policy issues and politics (mean=4.67). It was agreed that the county staff exhibit the ability to work under tight deadlines and effective time management skills (mean=4.21). The study findings are supported by Githinji (2015) whose investigation on employee skills and performance of international civil servants revealed that the process led to improvements on how workers handled the strategy implementation process.

Implementation of Strategic Plans

The study sought to determine the strategic plans implementation. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Strategic Plans Implementation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county assembly has effectively attained its set objectives in the past	4.66	.318
The county assembly have been able to adhere to its yearly budgets	4.20	.862
The county assembly has been effective in its legislative function	4.81	.508
The country assembly has made good progress towards attainment of its strategic plan	4.63	1.102
The county assembly effectively plays its oversight role over the executive	4.39	.225

As shown in Table 5, majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly has effectively attained its set objectives in the past having a mean of 4.66 and standard deviation of 0.318. Respondents also agreed to the statement that the county assembly have been able to adhere to its yearly budgets having a mean of 4.20 and standard deviation of 0.862. Respondents agreed to the statement that the county assembly has been effective in its legislative function as indicated by a mean of 4.81 and standard deviation of 0.508. Also

respondents agreed to the statement that the country assembly has made good progress towards attainment of its strategic plan having a mean of 4.63 and the county assembly effectively plays its oversight role over the executive (mean=4.39). The results are consistent with a study by

Correlation Analysis

To establish the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable the study conducted Pearson bivariate correlation analysis. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation

		LS	CV	SP	ES	SPI
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	123				
Core values	Pearson Correlation	.201**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	123	123			
Staffing processes	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.218**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000			
	N	123	123	123		
Employee skills	Pearson Correlation	.333**	.050**	.801**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	123	123	123	123	
Strategic plans implementation	Pearson Correlation	.462**	.211**	.569**	.395*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008	.000	.002	
	N	123	123	123	123	123

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

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

KEY

LS- Leadership Style CV- Core Values SP- Staffing Processes
 ES- Employee Skills SPI- Strategic Plans Implementation

The correlation results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between leadership style and implementation of strategic plans ($r=0.462$, $P=0.000$). Correlation results showed that core values and implementation of strategic plans had a positive and significant correlation ($r=0.211$, $P=0.008$). The correlation

results also showed that correlation between staffing processes and implementation of strategic plans was moderately positive and significant as indicated by $r=0.569$, $P=0.000$. The correlation between employee skills and implementation of strategic plans was positive and significant ($r=0.395$, $P=0.002$).

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.637 ^a	.406	.394	1.00182

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership style, Core values, Staffing processes, Employee skills

b. Dependent Variable: Strategic plans implementation

The model summary results in Table 7 showed a moderate regression between the organizational elements and strategic plans implementation. In the model summary, the R^2 is 0.406 which indicated that independent variables (Leadership style, Core values, Staffing processes, Employee skills) explain

40.6 per cent change in strategic plans implementation in county assemblies, while the remaining 59.4% are un-modelled determinants. The coefficient of correlation (R) is 0.637 implying a positive relationship between organizational

elements and strategic plans implementation. This was tested for significance as follows:

Table 8: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.659	4	.665	20.152	.014 ^b
	Residual	3.892	118	.033		
	Total	6.551	122			

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic plans implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership style, Core values, Staffing processes, Employee skills

From the results in Table 8, the analysis of variance showed the P-value of 0.014 which is less than the significance level of 0.05 thus concluding that the

model was statistically significant in explaining the relationship between organizational elements and strategic plans implementation.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	2.078	.671		3.098	.005			
1	Leadership style	.456	.205	.388	2.224	.027	.614	1.629
	Core values	.122	.045	.079	2.711	.032	.805	1.242
	Staffing processes	.555	.168	.502	3.296	.003	.617	1.622
	Employee skills	.317	.109	.296	2.908	.000	.750	1.618

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic plans implementation

From Table 9, the model would appear as follows:

$$Y = 2.078 + 0.456X_1 + 0.122X_2 + 0.555X_3 + 0.317X_4$$

Where;

Y is the strategic plans implementation, X1 represents leadership style, X2 represents core values, X3 represents staffing processes, and X4 represents employee skills. The model shows that strategic plans implementation would increase by 2.078, given that all the other factors are held constant at zero. Further in the model it shows that a unit increase in leadership style would lead to an increase in strategic plans implementation by 0.456. A unit increase in core values would lead to a positive increase in strategic plans implementation by 0.122, a unit increase in staffing processes would lead to an increase in strategic plans implementation by 0.555, and a unit increase in employee skills would lead to an increase in strategic plans implementation by 0.317. The results imply that all the predictor variables had significant effect in explaining the variation in

strategic plans implementation in county assemblies.

Discussion of Key Findings and Hypothesis Testing

The first null hypothesis (H0₁) was that leadership style has no significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. From the regression results, leadership style had a regression coefficient of 0.456 and a t-value of 2.224. The p-value was p<0.05 implying that it was significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that leadership style has significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. The study findings agree with Al Khaje (2018) whose study showed that charismatic, democratic, transformational, and bureaucratic styles of leadership impact organizational strategy implementation positively. Also results were corroborated by Bormann and Rowold (2016) whose study revealed that transformational leadership had a significant effect as it enhanced acceptance of team strategies and goals and

provided unique consideration on player performance development.

The second null hypothesis (H_{02}) was that there is no significant effect of core values on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. Regression results indicated that core values had a regression coefficient of 0.122 and a t-value of 2.711. The p-value was found to be 0.032 which is less than the significant level of 0.05, ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that core value has a significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. The findings agree with Mise, Obura and Indiya (2017) whose investigation on impact of organization's shared values revealed that a positive relationship exists between shared values, strategy implementation and performance of public universities.

Third null hypothesis (H_{03}) stated that staffing processes has no significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. Regression results showed that staffing processes had a regression coefficient of 0.555, t-value of 3.296 and p-value less than the significant level of 0.05, ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected thus concluding that staffing processes has significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. The results are consistent with Kasaya and Munjiri (2018) who did a research to determine what impact staffing processes have on implementation of strategic plans and showed that organizational human resource processes were critical in implementation of strategies in the firms.

Finally, the fourth null hypothesis (H_{04}) stated that employee skills has no significant effect on strategic plans implementation in county assemblies. Based on regression results, employee skills had a regression coefficient of 3.17 and a t-value of 2.908. The p-value for employee skills was found to be 0.000 which is less than the significant level of 0.05, ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The study concluded that employee skills had an effect on strategic plans implementation in county

assemblies. The study findings are supported by Githinji (2015) whose investigation on employee skills and performance of international civil servants revealed that the process led to improvements on how workers handled the strategy implementation process.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concluded that the county assembly leadership sets functional examples to the county assembly employees. However, the leadership partly involves employees in strategic decisions. It was concluded that the county assembly management sets a vision that is geared towards better service delivery and the management inspires loyalty and commitment to work in the county assembly employees. The study concludes that the county assembly management provides motivation to the county assembly staff and rewards staff when they meet the work expectations. However, it is concluded that leaders of county assembly have fallen below the bar when it comes to employee mentoring and coaching.

The study concluded that the county assembly has core values that each employee is expected to comply with. Also it is concluded that every employee in the county assembly understands the county assembly's values, mission and vision as well as employees in the county assembly believe that management is concerned about them as people. It is also concluded that the county assembly stresses on importance of integrity for every employee and has a code of behaviour that each employee adheres to strictly. The county assembly management encourages employees to be creative and innovative in dealing with the public and that the vision, mission and value of the county assembly are clearly communicated to each employee as well as the county assembly management encourages employees to engage in creative problem solving.

The study concluded that the county assembly possess effective systems that are able to attract and recruit the best talent. However, the county

assembly lacks effective orientation process for new hires. The study concludes that the employees in the county assembly undergo various development initiatives including training, mentorship and coaching and the county assembly offers competitive remuneration that enables it to attract and retain top talent. It is concluded that the county conducts frequent talent reviews to establish staffing gaps and there is exit interview conducted for the employees exiting the county assembly.

The study concluded that county staff possesses the requisite education qualifications and merit to be in their current roles. However, it is not clear, from the study results, on whether key posts in the county assembly are occupied with employees with requisite professional skills and competencies. It is further concluded that there is disagreement on whether employees in the county assembly have excellent organization and negotiating skills but the employees exhibit creativity and flexible thinking as well as possesses good oral and written communication skills enthusiasm as well as commitment for current affairs, policy issues and politics. County employees are able of working with little supervision and have effective time management skills and they work under tight deadlines.

The study recommended that;

- The county assembly leadership should improve on setting functional examples to its staff and this can be complemented by involving employees effectively in strategic decisions. The county assembly management should design vision statement geared towards better service delivery and inspire staff loyalty and commitment to work. The management should design reward systems to motivate its staff whenever they perform exemplary. The management of assembly management should mentor and coach employees so as to develop better work skills and understand the work processes.

- The core values of the county assembly should be amplified in every institution's activity and symbols so as to be inculcated to the county assembly employees. This would make it easy for the employees to memorize and understand the core values and county assembly's values, mission and vision. The county assembly should stress on importance of integrity for every employee and should amplify the importance of its employees adhering to the set core values. Employees should be provided with conducive working environment for them to be creative and innovative. Communication between the management and subordinates should be effective and employees should be incentivized to participate in creative problem solving.
- The county assembly should deploy recruitment systems which are effective so as to attract the best talent. The management should put in place orientation process for new hires which should be effective and employees should undergo various development initiatives including training, mentorship. On matters of remuneration, the county assembly employees should be offered competitive remuneration so as to enable them to perform their duties effectively. The management should conduct talent reviews periodically so as to determine staffing gaps and take corrective measures.
- The county assembly leadership should ensure they hire employees with requisite education qualifications and skills. This should also be replicated in filling key posts in the county assembly since it was revealed that those top offices are not occupied with staff of excellent professional skills and competencies. The county assembly leadership should organize periodic training on its employees on negotiation skills as well as communication skills.

Areas for Further Research

This research provided empirical evidence on the organizational soft elements and strategic plans implementation. The research, however, was

limited to four organizational elements of leadership style, core values, staffing processes and employee skills which accounted for 40.6 percent change in implementation of strategic plans. Therefore, the study recommends another study be

undertaken to include other possible organizational soft elements which may affect strategic plans implementation in other sectors like commercial state corporations and private firms.

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