



**INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC THINKING ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN KILIFI COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

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### ABSTRACT

*The fundamental driver of strategy implementation is strategic thinking. The leader's part is vital in determining the strategy execution procedure because it is doable schedule and conclusions about the way it can be fast or hard to drive for change is critical. The focus of the research was on the influence of strategic thinking on strategy execution in Kilifi County. Path-Goal Leadership theory was used in this research. To explain the existing situation and collect data across a number of units, the research utilized a descriptive survey approach. The targeted population was 61 Kilifi County Government officers (11 members of the County Executive Committee, 22 chief officers, and 28 departmental directors). The study used census sample approach, which included all 61 respondents. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect data for this study. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot study with six Lamu County government officials. Data was examined and analyzed using a Software (SPSS) Version 24.0 through descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and cross tabulations was used for presenting the findings. The use of a regression model to determine the type of the link among research variables was included in inferential statistics. It was determined that strategic thinking provided an adequate explanation for how strategies were carried out. Findings revealed that strategic thinking was a reliable indicator of successful strategy execution. Based on the findings, the study concluded that Strategic thinking have a positive and vital effect on strategy execution in Kilifi county government. This study found that strategic thinking managers and leaders in Kilifi County Government who have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis have influenced strategic implementation in kilifi county government. This study therefore recommended that strategic thinking managers and leaders within the county should time to time monitor and evaluate the progress of already implemented projects.*

**Key words:** Strategic thinking, Implementation

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## INTRODUCTION

Strategic implementation in view of Cândido and Santos (2011), is the practice of translating a selected strategy into corporate action in order to attain strategic objectives and goals. Strategy implementation is the procedure in which corporations' advances, uses, and mix corporate structures, controlling systems, and culture to follow strategy whose outcome is enhanced performance and competitive advantage (Ross, 2021).

A three-part approach to strategy execution is suggested by Kafel and Zibicki (2021): a pay more attention on procedure and the systematic nature of implementation; a focus on the execution of specific actions, whether in sequence or at a time, and how such actions result in organizational conduct; and finally, a hybrid model to both procedure and conduct. Corporate structure offers people high-value-adding duties and roles and stipulates the manner in which such responsibilities and roles can be allied in order to enhance effectiveness, excellence, and client happiness, the three competitive advantage pillars. However, simply having a good organizational structure will not be enough to motivate employees (Ahearne et al., 2013).

When an organization's resources and actions are connected to its strategic main concern, when the goals formulated are met, when the major determinants of achievement are recognized, and when configuration reporting and metrics of performance are in place, effective strategy execution occurs (Kaplan & Norton, 2009).

Further, Kazmi, (2008) states that in order for organizational strategies to be executed successfully, there are three issues that must be addressed. Firstly, the transformation process needs to be systemic, which means that problems affecting the company's processes and employees need to be taken into account. The entire organization must address this important issue. Second, during the transition process, candid conversations about the problems that are

preventing the organization from accepting and putting solutions into practice should be had. The most effective technique for ensuring that all employees from all levels of the organization participate completely in open talks is to ensure that all employees are fully engaged. Thirdly, through the building of mutually advantageous alliances, the transformation process should incorporate all essential players.

An organizational control system is necessary for the proper execution of organizational strategy. This management approach provides stewards with incentives for motivation for their staff as well as response on their employees and company's success. Referring to organizational culture, it is about an assortment of morals, attitudes, practices, as well as belief that individuals and groups inside a company hold. In order to successfully execute the plans, it is necessary to establish a unique strategy that is adapted to the external and internal issues. However, in a bid to select the better way, one must first address the issues with the components that influence the strategy's execution (Leonardi, 2015).

Managers who lack the essential skills and abilities are frequently responsible for strategy implementation failures (Kujala et al., 2014). A lack of competency at the top has repercussions across the organization, affecting the plan execution effort as well. Furthermore, workers' commitment to the strategy will suffer as a result of their lack of trust in management's ability to carry out the plan (Banawi, 2017). Organizations invest a tremendous amount of time and money in strategy formulation, yet only a small part of this effort results in successful execution. To improve the overall efficacy of the implementation process, managers must recognize and anticipate potential traps and obstacles that may develop along the process. Knowing what hazards are likely to arise will help you avoid them and take a more proactive approach to problem solving. In order to overcome hurdles, identification is essential throughout the process (Bamberger & Biron, 2006).

Many underlying factors for poor strategy implementation are identified by Beer, (2017), including insufficient leadership, weak communication, and ineffective delegating strategies. Furthermore, these impediments have an effect on a company's quality standards. The implementation of a strategy refers to the process of putting a chosen plan into action. Systems engineering is the process of designing and managing systems in a bid to attain the highest level of integration of employees, structures, procedures, and assets in order to meet corporate goals.

Kenya's constitution of 2010 established 47 county administrations with the purpose of enhancing service delivery efficiency across the country. Kenya's transition from a central to devolved government has been difficult due to a number of difficulties, including inter-governmental contacts, turf contests among leaders, and strikes, among others, which have hampered devolution. According to a Transparency International research published in 2019, over 51% of respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of service given by county governments. A lack of basic communication and leadership skills has hindered the implementation of various development programs within county governments, according to a Transparency International (2018) report.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The process of strategy execution entails designing programs, finances, and processes to put goals, plans, and policies into action (Omeike, 2015). It will be determined if an organization thrives, survives, or dies based on how the strategy implementation process is managed by the stakeholders (Kihara et al., 2016).

The public embraced the concept of devolution government, which was adopted in Kenya in 2013 with the purpose of taking services nearer to the citizens in the most efficient and effective manner. Regardless of the critical role played by county government of Kilifi in the implementation of its strategies, the county is plagued by an inability to

do so effectively, resulting in poor performance marked by a slew of issues including embezzlement of funds, corruption, service delays, and poor delivery of services, to name a few (Dubat & Minja, 2020). Disagreements over budget distribution and utilization have frequently developed as a result of a lack of collaboration between the County Executive and the county legislators, leading to poor delivery of services and loss of public resources (Otwal, 2021).

Previous studies on strategic leadership and strategy implementation include: Tek and Deya, (2020) study on the impact of strategic leadership on the execution of environment and natural resource strategy in Nakuru County; Mutuku et al., (2021) conducted a research using data from the Machakos County Government to analyze the effects of internal variables on plan execution. The study's findings revealed that county governments' strategic implementation wasn't influenced by any categorical policy protocols from the state, and that large percentage of those in responsibility of strategy execution lack strategic creation capabilities and knowhow, making them incapable of providing effective leadership to the process.

Chepkwei, (2021) carried out a research study on Strategy implementation in hospitality industry: Global perspective. Strategy implementation, as measured by competency, communication, and people engagement, as well as strategy execution, were seen to have a favorable and statistically weighty association with the study's outcomes.

The Kilifi county administration has launched a number of short- and long-term initiatives. However, some projects were completed successfully, whilst others are abandoned or only partially completed. According to the 2019 Audit Report on County and Constituency Development Projects, almost 40% of projects launched between 2013 and 2018 were not finished, while others were deemed to be inadequate. Conflicts of interest, political motivations, corruption, and financial mismanagement were some of the factors that contributed incompleteness (Audit report, 2019).

Therefore, the research assessed the effect of strategic thinking on strategy implementation in Kilifi County government.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to the Path-Goal model, a leader's behavior must be adapted to the individual and work environment in order to achieve a goal (House, Mitchell, 1974). In order for employees to contribute more effectively to the team, the aim is to increase their motivation, sense of empowerment, and contentment. The foundation of Path-Goal is Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, which holds that a person will behave in a given way based on the expectation of a particular result and the appeal of that goal to the person. The path-goal idea was first put forth by Evans in 1970, and House (1971) enhanced it further.

According to the path-goal theory, leaders select specific conducts most fitting the needs of their team members and the workplace in a bid to better direct people over their daily tasks (Northouse, 2018). One of the independent variables in this theory is the conduct of leaders; leaders' adapts their approach of conduct to the staff and job features such that the staff's inspiration is to shine at their task. The four categories of leadership behaviors or styles outlined by House (1996) are directive, supporting, participatory, and accomplishment. They are based on two trends that a study team from Ohio State University identified (Stogdill, 1974).

This theory assume individuals have flexibility in that they may alter their conduct or approach based on the environment because the behavior of the leaders is the independent variable. Studies show that although nature may be our inner compass, nurture is our explorer and ultimately determines what we do (Ridley, 2004).

### **Empirical Literature**

In the context of the strategic management process, Asobee (2021) examined how crucial strategic thinking is to strategic planning. Significant studies demonstrated the significance of strategic

thinking at three distinct levels of strategic planning: Prioritizes carefully, makes reasonable trade-offs, and intelligently distributes scarce resources during the course of the project. After the project is complete, selects significant milestones to gauge success. To profit from the unique contributions of each of them in the pursuit of individual or organizational goals, it is crucial for both individuals and corporations to employ strategic planning and thinking as two separate but complementary ideas.

In 2020, Al Zu'bi looked on how Strategic Thinking Affected Al Manaseer Group Entrepreneurship Success. A questionnaire with 26 items was created for research purposes. To find and remove pointless variables, reliability analysis was first used. Additionally, the researcher performed the Kolmogorov-Esmirnov test to look at the normality of the distribution of the variables. Finally, simple and multiple linear regressions were carried out to examine the influence of Strategic Thinking and its dimension on the success of entrepreneurship. In view of the findings, Strategic thinking and its elements significantly improve entrepreneurship success.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To explain the existing situation and collect data across a number of units, the research utilized a descriptive survey approach. The targeted population was 61 Kilifi County Government officers (11 members of the County Executive Committee, 22 chief officers, and 28 departmental directors). The study used census sample approach, which included all 61 respondents. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect data for this study. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot study with six Lamu County government officials. Data was examined and analyzed using a Software (SPSS) Version 24.0 through descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and cross tabulations was used for presenting the findings. The use of a regression model to determine the



type of the link among research variables was included in inferential statistics.

### Response Rate

Out of a target audience of 61 participants, the study's findings revealed that a record of 49 responses were received. This represented an 80.3 percent response rate. A good response rate was seen as necessary for analysis. According to empirical research, a response rate of 50% is sufficient for reporting and analysis, a response rate of 60% is generally good, and a response rate of above 70% is great (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012).

### Data Reliability Assessment

Assessing the internal consistency of the information gathered by the research questionnaires was the major goal of the reliability evaluation. Cronbach Alpha was calculated to determine the trustworthiness of the data gathered in order to measure this. Cronbach Alpha values above 0.7 are considered acceptable for reliability evaluation in research studies (Kothari, 2017). These dependability findings were highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1: Cronbach Alpha for Reliability Assessments**

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha Values
Strategic thinking	5	0.854
Strategy implementation	5	0.837

### Respondents' characteristics

Regarding the gender characteristics, the study found that majority (73.5%) were male while female counter-part was 26.5%. This implied that in Kilifi County Government more men apply and prefer working in the County government. The study found that no member of the Kilifi County government employee was either 20 years old or below. Instead the study indicated that respondents between 21-30 years constituted 4.1% of the total respondents, 32.7% between 31-40 years, 38.8% between 41-50 years while 24.5% above 50 years. This means that majority (38.8%) of the employees working for the

Kilifi County government are of the age bracket 41-50yrs old. This implied that majority of the Kilifi County government workforce have a number of years to serve before they retire.

### Influence of strategic thinking on strategy implementation

The research wanted to evaluate the impact of strategic thinking on strategy execution in Kilifi County government. Table 2 summarizes the respondents' level of thought on the extent strategic thinking influences strategy implementation in Kilifi County government.

**Table 2: Influence of strategic thinking on strategy implementation**

Statements	N	Mean	Std.Dev.
Managers in my county have creative thinking	49	4.0408	.64418
Managers and leaders in my county have market driven thinking	49	3.9388	.77482
Leaders of my county have vision driven thinking	49	4.0000	.73598
Managers and leaders in my county have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis	49	4.0816	.64021
There is ability to differentiate between feasible and non-feasible goals among leaders and managers in my county	49	4.1429	.45644

The statement that managers in my county have creative thinking had a mean of 4.0408 and standard deviation of 0.64418. The statement that managers and leaders in my county have market driven thinking had a mean of 3.9388 and standard deviation of 0.77482. The statement that leaders of my county have vision driven thinking had a mean of 4.0000 and a standard deviation of 0.73598. The statement that managers and leaders in my county have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis had a mean of 4.0816 and a standard deviation of 0.64021. The statement that there is ability to differentiate between feasible and non-feasible goals among leaders and managers in my county had a mean of 4.1429 and a standard deviation of 0.45644. These finding imply that strategic thinking managers and leaders in Kilifi County Government who have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis has influenced strategic implementation in Kilifi county government.

This result was in line with that of Lončar (2017), who discovered that top leadership of enterprises in the retail sector effectively contribute by aligning the institution's corporate strategy with its strategic thinking to create a road to success with appropriate usage of available business resources. This research examined the effects of strategic management and strategic thinking approaches on the business performance of companies operating in the retail sector.

### Strategy implementation as a result of strategic leadership

As a result of strategic thinking, the respondents were asked to express their own views on five distinct assertions relating to strategy implementation in Kilifi county government.

The results were presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Strategic implementation**

Statements	N	Mean	Std.Dev.
There is increased number of completed projects	49	4.2857	.57735
There is timely completion of projects	49	4.2245	.55020
There is economic transformation in Kilifi county	49	3.9796	.59476
There is social transformation in Kilifi county	49	4.1224	.63353
There is positive evaluation reports on progress	49	4.3061	.50843

The statement that there is increased number of completed projects had a mean score of 4.2857 and standard deviation of 0.57735. The statement that there is timely completion of projects had a mean score of 4.2245 and standard deviation of 0.55020. The statement there is economic transformation in Kilifi County depicted a mean score of 3.9796 and standard deviation of 0.59476. The statement that there is social transformation in Kilifi County had a mean score of 4.1224 and standard deviation of 0.63353. The statement that there is a positive evaluation report on progress depicted a mean score of 4.3061 and standard deviation of 0.50843. This implied that the increased number of completed projects is a demonstration of a successful strategy implementation in Kilifi county

government as a result of strategic leadership. This finding is similar to findings of Thomas, (2020) who investigated the impact of leadership styles on strategic plan implementation in Nairobi's Small and Medium Enterprises. According to their findings, firms should employ all three leadership types; autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire to enhance strategic plan implementation. Their research discovered that the fate of SMEs was intimately linked to the manager's leadership style and the strategies they decided to implement.

### Testing of Hypothesis

This study sought to establish the link between the independent variable (strategic thinking) and dependent variable (strategy implementation).

**Table 4: Testing of Hypothesis**

		Strategy implementation	Strategic thinking	Deductions
<b>Strategy implementation</b>	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.140	Positive
	(Spearman's rho)			
	Sig. (P-Value)	.	.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
<b>Strategic thinking</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.140	1.000	Positive
	Sig. (P-Value)	.000	.	Reject H <sub>0</sub>

In the Kilifi county administration, there was a large positive and very significant link between strategic thinking and strategy execution ( $r = 0.140$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) in the Kilifi County administration. Pearson Bivariate correlation was used to compute the correlation between the influences of strategic thinking and strategy implementation in Kilifi County government. There was a strong positive and highly significant correlation between strategic thinking and strategy implementation in Kilifi County government ( $r = 0.140$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Standard multiple regression was conducted and there was positive and statistically significant influence of Strategic thinking on strategy implementation in Kilifi County government ( $\beta = 0.045$ ;  $t = 0.501$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Centered on the results, the study concluded that Strategic thinking has a positive and significant influence on strategy implementation in Kilifi

county government. Some of the strategic thinking aspects influencing strategy implementation include aspect of my county have creative thinking, managers and leaders in my county have market driven, leaders of my county have vision driven thinking, managers and leaders in my county have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis, there is ability to differentiate between feasible and non-feasible goals among leaders and managers in my county.

This study found that strategic thinking managers and leaders in Kilifi County Government who have the ability to develop an in-depth analysis have influenced strategic implementation in kilifi County government. This study therefore recommends that strategic thinking managers and leaders within the county government should time to time monitor and evaluate the progress of already implemented projects.

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